



# Response to Intervention RtI Manual

Updated Fall 2015

## Response to Instruction

RTI is the practice of meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students through a variety of services containing the following key elements:

- High-quality instruction and scientific research-based tiered interventions aligned with individual student need
- Frequent monitoring of student progress to make results-based academic and/or behavioral decisions
- Application of student response data to important educational decisions (such as those regarding placement, intervention, curriculum, and instructional goals and methodologies)

The instructional approaches used within the general education setting should result in academic and/or behavioral progress for the majority of the students. Struggling students are identified using data-based student progress monitoring and provided intensive instruction. The use of scientifically validated curricula and teaching methods expected in an RTI model leads to data-based school improvement.



## Benefits of Rtl

RTI holds the promise of ensuring that all children have access to high quality instruction and that struggling learners, including those with learning disabilities (LD), are identified, supported, and served early and effectively. Driven and documented by reliable data, the implementation of RTI in Texas schools can result in

- More effective instruction;
- Increased student achievement;
- More appropriate LD identification;
- Increased professional collaboration; and
- Overall school improvement.

## Fidelity of Implementation

Current research indicates that the most common cause of failed intervention is a lack of fidelity of implementation. Scientific research may indicate that an intervention model is successful, but that success can only be dependably duplicated if teachers are provided sufficient on-going program-specific training, agree to implement all aspects of the model as designed and as tested, and uphold that agreement. Fidelity to the researched design should be documented; gaps in fidelity should be identified and corrected.

## Assessment Leading to Data-based Decisions

To determine the effectiveness of an intervention, student progress is monitored through formative assessments that are sensitive to small changes in student behavior and performance. The following three types of assessments are typical of RTI:

1. Universal screening of all students identifies those not making academic or behavioral progress at expected rates.
2. Diagnostics determine what students can and cannot do in academic and behavioral domains.
3. Progress monitoring determines whether academic or behavioral interventions are producing the desired effects.

Progress monitoring helps teachers choose effective, targeted instructional techniques and establish goals which enable all students to advance appropriately toward attainment of state achievement standards. RTI decision-making processes are dependent upon reliable student performance data and data-collection systems.

## Benefits of Progress Monitoring

- Accelerated learning due to appropriate instruction
- Informed instructional decisions
- Effective communication with families and other professionals about students' progress

# Multi-Tiered Model

To ensure that appropriate instruction directly addresses students' academic and behavioral difficulties in the general education setting, a multi-tiered service delivery model is used. Included are layers of increasingly intense intervention responding to student-specific needs.

## Tier 1

Teachers use high-quality core class instruction aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The provision of group interventions within the general education classroom is part of the core instructional program. If adequately differentiated to meet the needs of a varied population, 80-90% of the students will achieve established benchmarks. This tier is the crucial foundation of the RTI instructional model.

*Students are referred to the Student Support Team (SST) if academic concerns persist and the student does not demonstrate progress in the classroom.*

## Tier 2

Tier II is for students who are falling behind on basic academic skills and need additional support to meet grade level expectations. Students are identified for individual or small group intervention in addition to core class instruction. The SST meets to

- Determine **area(s) of difficulty** (target skills) based on results of formative and summative assessments. (collect baseline data)
- Generate hypothesis and possible intervention strategies
- Design an intervention plan to meet student's specific needs to include frequency of sessions, progress monitoring (every two weeks), group size, and duration (6-weeks)
- Implement the intervention plan
- Analyze/evaluate the data and review/revise plan as needed

This level includes scientific research-based programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier 1 activities. Tier 2 addresses the needs of approximately 10–15% of the students. This is 30 minutes 2-4 times per week in addition to the core instruction.

# Tier 3

Tier 3 should be initiated if the student has not responded adequately to Tiers 1 and 2. This level of intervention is aimed at approximately 5–10% of the students. Tier 3 instruction includes scientific research-based programs, strategies, and procedures designed to remediate identified deficits. This is 30-60 minutes for a minimum of 4 days a week in addition to core instruction.

## *The SST Meets and Reviews the Following:*



- Analysis and evaluation of intervention results provided in Tiers 1 and 2.
- Confirmation of the area(s) of difficulty (target skills);
- New targeted intervention plan that either increases frequency of intervention, decreases group size, moves student to a different group, or changes intervention.
- Intervention instruction provided at a **minimum** time per week in addition to the core academic instruction.
- Assignment of progress monitoring on a weekly basis.
- Teacher responsible
- Establish follow up meeting date after 6 weeks of intervention.
- Parent communication continues during Tier 3.

## **If an Intervention Doesn't Work**

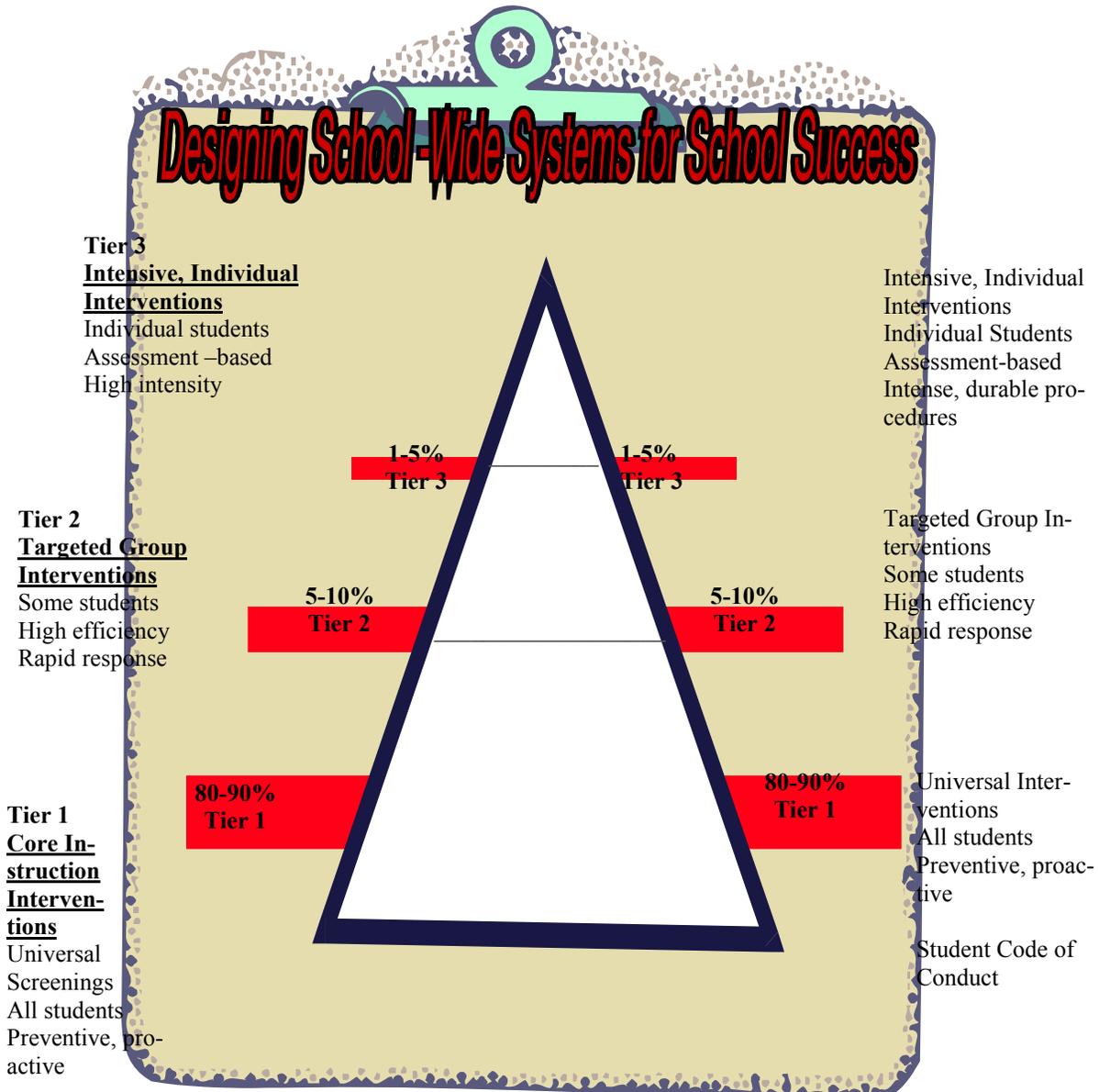
There are 4 choices when data show that student's scores are not on or above the aimline:

- Add time to intervention
- Lower Group size
- Move student to a different group
- Change intervention



# EDUCATION

	Tier 1: Core Class Curriculum	Tier 2: Small Group Intervention	Tier 3: Intensive Intervention
Focus	All students	Identified students with marked difficulties who have not responded to Tier 1	Identified students with marked difficulties who have not responded to Tier 1 and Tier 2
Program	Scientific research-based curriculum and instruction	Specialized scientific research-based intervention	Individualized
Grouping	As needed	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:5-10)	Homogeneous small group instruction (1: 3-6)
Time	Core Class Instruction Schedule	30 minutes 2-5 times a week in additions to core instruction	30-60 minutes per day for a minimum of 4 days a week in addition to core instruction
Assessment	Universal Screening	Bi-weekly progress monitoring on target skill(s)	Weekly progress monitoring on target skill(s)
Interventionist	General Ed Teacher	Determined by Student Support Team	Determined by Student Support Team
Setting	General Ed Classroom	Determined by Student Support Team	Determined by Student Support Team



### Who serves on the Student Support Team?

*The SST can be as small as the classroom teacher, instructional specialist, and campus administrator. Other team members may include counselor, additional classroom teachers, and parent.*

### How often should the SST meet?

*The SST may meet as little as weekly, once a month, or once a grading period.*

### Where are SST meeting decisions documented and maintained?

*All SST meeting decisions for students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 should be documented in a student portfolio and maintained in a designated area.*

## The Nuts and Bolts of Intervention

Interventions involve modification and/or accommodations to the core curriculum and interventions which are in addition to regular instructional practices already in place. Interventions must be systematic, research-based, matched to student needs and responds to progress monitoring.



Interventions must be categorized by skill deficit or targeted skill.

Reading Skills	Math Skills
Phonemic Awareness	<b>Numbers, Operations, and Quantitative Reasoning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division</li> </ul>
Phonics	<b>Patterns, Relationships, and Algebraic Reasoning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison of Graphic organizers</li> </ul>
Fluency	<b>Geometry and Spatial Reasoning:</b>
Vocabulary	<b>Measurement</b>
Comprehension	<b>Probability and Statistics</b>
	<b>Underlying Process:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem Solving</li> </ul>

### Instructional Practice:

- Student-Centered Activities:** lead to a high level of engagement whereby students are more motivated and involved in the instructional activities; they are active participants and take more responsibility for their learning.
- Flexible Grouping:** facilitates more explicit teaching ; ensures that acceleration as well as remediation are achieved, enabling teacher to provide targeted lessons; can be homogeneous, heterogeneous, whole group, small group/individual
- Learning Centers/Stations:** promote optimal use of materials and resources in support of sound instruction, including , but not limited to technology which is a valuable and critical element of best practice.

# The Next Steps

1. Teacher has tried Tier 1 Interventions and requests Tier 2 Support.
2. SST meets to review student data. Review Exclusionary Factors Form. Determine Specific Skill(s) Targeted. Plan Interventions, Frequency, Time, Interventionist, and place using the Meeting Form. (Use a separate Meeting Form for each time you meet.)
3. Intervention Plan is followed.
4. Progress Monitoring Begins. Either use the data (graphs, and other documentation) from I-Station or the Reading or Math Progress Monitoring Forms in manual. Try intervention for at least 3 weeks. Determine if intervention needs to be changed in anyway or is intervention successful.
5. Review SST Meetings as often as needed.
6. Tier 3 should be initiated if student has not responded to Tier 2 interventions.
7. At the time determined by the SST, the team will evaluate the effectiveness of the Interventions. Discuss and Document all potential Exclusionary Factors. Make sure the Exclusionary Factors form is completed.
8. Campus administrator will complete the Intervention Plan Fidelity Checklist and make referral to appropriate committee. (Special Education Referrals and Dyslexia Referrals are sent to the Special Programs Department.)

# Special Education Referral

At the time determined by the SST, the team will evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and the results of strategies implemented. If the student is making progress given the identified interventions, a referral for special education would be unnecessary. In this case, needs are being met by general education.

The SST should discuss any potential exclusionary factors and there must be evidence that none of these factors are the primary cause of the academic deficits before considering special education referral. These factors include visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, emotional disturbance, attendance issues, lack of transiency, limited English proficiency, environmental or cultural, or situational trauma. This evidence is documented on the Exclusionary Factor Form.

In addition, the team must provide evidence the student has been provided appropriate instruction in the identified skill deficit area. The team will provide documentation of the frequency and duration of the intervention. The team will provide evidence of progress monitoring either every two weeks for Tier 2 or every week for Tier 3. Provide students strengths and weaknesses.

After interventions have been implemented as outlined through the RtI process, the Student Support Team will determine the need to proceed with referral

The SST will request the appropriate committee to begin the referral process. (Admission, Review, and Dismissal or the 504 Committee)

The Campus Administrator will complete the Fidelity Checklist and request a referral to the appropriate committee.

# Eligibility Criteria for Special Education

**Auditory Impairment (AI):** hearing is so severe with or without amplification devices which adversely affects educational performance.

**Autism: (AU)** a developmental disability which effects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, which adversely affects educational performance.

**Deaf-Blindness (DB):** concomitant hearing and visual impairments, which causes severe communication and other developmental and educational delays.

**Emotional Disturbance (ED):** a condition exhibiting behavioral characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree to which it adversely affects a child's education.

**Intellectual Disability: (ID)** significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning which is concurrent with deficits in adaptive behavior.

**Multiple Disabilities (MD):** concomitant impairments.

**Non-categorical Early Childhood (NCEC):** disability for children age 3 through 5 who is experiencing developmental delays.

**Orthopedic Impairment (OI):** severe orthopedic impairment caused by congenital anomaly or disease.

**Other Health Impairment (OHI):** having limited strength, vitality or alertness, due to chronic or acute health problems.

**Specific Learning Disability (SLD):** a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process effecting oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, math calculations, math problem solving.

**Speech or Language Impairment (SI):** a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language or voice impairment.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force to the head.

**Visual Impairment (VI):** an impairment in vision that even with correction effects a child's educational performance.

# Strategies and Tips

# Tier 1 Accommodations for All Students

*Select practices to help students master instructional objectives.*

## **Presentation Techniques**

- Make learning visible and explicit
- Use clear, simple directions
- Adjust pacing
- Highlight key information
- Reduce amount of information/skills presented at one time
- Use study guides, semantic maps, and graphic organizers
- Activate background knowledge
- Allow alternative ways to demonstrate learning
- Increase the amount of small-group instruction weekly
- Change grouping from small groups to pairs

## **Practice Techniques**

- Use peer tutoring
- Use games
- Use manipulatives
- Provide more frequent practice on less information or fewer skills
- Use computer programs
- Ensure mastery before moving to next skill
- Provide a variety of practice opportunities

## **Check for Understanding**

- Ask different levels of questions and encourage students to generate questions
- Use a variety of ways for students to respond
- Incorporate sufficient wait time
- Teach self-monitoring, such as graphing progress

## **Textbook/Materials**

- Highlight key points/concepts
- Provide books on tape or CDs with study guide
- Reduce amount of reading
- Use shared reading or have peers read to student
- Provide study guides
- Highlight directions
- Use high-interest, low vocabulary books
- Use trade books/textbooks written at various levels

## **Content**

- Use task analysis to divide tasks into smaller steps
- Identify and check to see if students have prerequisite skills
- Teach the vocabulary of instruction
- Teach technical vocabulary
- Relate concepts to each other using graphic organizers

## **Feedback Practices**

- Use prompts to help student notice, find, and fix errors and responses
- Encourage students with prompts of encouragement

# Five Areas of Reading

## **Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of speech sounds or phonemes. Phonemes are the smallest parts of sound in a spoken word that makes a difference in the word's meaning.

## **Phonics**

Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. It teaches children to use these relationships to read and write words. The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn and use the alphabetic principle—the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between letters and spoken sounds.

## **Fluency**

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. Their oral reading is choppy. Fluency provides the bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

## **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. In general, vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print. Vocabulary is very important to reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean.

## **Comprehension**

Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. As they read, good readers are both purposeful and active. Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies.

# Secondary Checklist for Successful Interventions

## Recommendation 1

**Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.**

- Use longitudinal, student-level data to get an accurate read of graduation and dropout rates.
- Use data to identify incoming students with histories of academic problems, truancy, behavioral problems, and retentions.
- Monitor the academic and social performance of all students continually.
- Review student –level data to identify students at risk of dropping out before key academic transitions.
- Monitor students’ sense of engagement and belonging in school.
- Collect and document accurate information on student withdrawals.

## Recommendation 2

**Assign adult advocates (teachers or mentors) to students at risk of dropping out.**

- Choose adults who are committed to investing in the student’s personal and academic success, keep caseloads low, and purposefully match students with adult advocates.
- Establish a regular time in the school day or week for students to meet with the adult.
- Communicate with adult advocates about the various obstacles students may encounter—and provide adult advocates with guidance and training about how to work with students, parent, or school staff to address the problems.

## Recommendation 3

**Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.**

- Provide individual or small group support in test-taking skills, study skills, or targeted subject area such as reading, writing, or math.
- Provide extra study time and opportunities for credit recovery and accumulation through after school, Saturday school, or summer enrichment programs.

**Recommendation 4**  
**Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.**

- Use adult advocates or other engaged adults to help students establish attainable academic and behavioral goals with specific benchmarks.
- Recognize student accomplishments. Teach strategies to strengthen problem solving and decision-making skills.
- Establish partnerships with community based program providers and other agencies such as social services, welfare, mental health, and law enforcement.

**Recommendation 5**  
**Personalize the learning environment and instructional process**

- Establish small learning communities.
- Establish team teaching.
- Create smaller classes.
- Create extended time in classroom through changes to the school schedule.
- Encourage student participation in extracurricular activities.

**Recommendation 6**  
**Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school.**

- Provide teachers with ongoing ways to expand their knowledge and improve their skills.
- Integrate academic content with career and skill-based themes through career academies or multiple pathways models.
- Host career days and offer opportunities for work-related experiences and visits to postsecondary campuses.
- Provide students with extra assistance and information about the demands of college.
- Partner with local businesses to provide opportunities for work-related experience such as internships, simulated job interviews, or long-term employment.

# Differentiated Instruction Strategies

**Choral Response:** Choral response is a very simple technique in which the teacher asks questions to the class as a whole and the students answer in unison. This is a good way of assessing the class's overall understanding without singling students out.

**Clothesline:** Teacher stretches a string out across the room. One side of the string signifies "know a lot" while the other side is labeled "know nothing" and the students place themselves where they feel necessary for a particular topic.

**Fist of Five:** Students use their fingers as a scale of one to five to express understanding

**Four Corners:** Teacher can choose basically anything to label the four corners of the classroom. For example, the teacher may ask an opinionated question and can label each corner with a different answer. The students go to the corner they agree with.

**Individual Response Boards:** Each student has a small white board or chalk board. The teacher asks the class a question and the students record their response on the board.

**Signal/Pinch Cards:** Fold an index card 4 ways. Number the sections 1-4 or A-D. You can use this for true and false, multiple choice, almost anything. This is a very simple assessment tool.

**Speedometer:** Students move crossed arms from being together to apart to show how much they understand a particular topic. This is a good way for the students to assess their own learning.

**Windshield:** The teacher asks the students if their "windshield" is clear, buggy, or muddy. This shows their own understanding of the content.

**Exit Cards:** You can do anything with these really. The teacher can asks a question before they leave and have them write the answer, have the students reflect on what they learned today. One of my teachers had us write one thing we learned and one question we have.

**Entrance Card/Warm-Up:** Prior to the lesson, the students answer a question or set of question posed by the teacher.

**Index Card Summaries:** This is exactly what it sounds like. After a lesson, have the students summarize what they have learned on an index card.

**One Minute Essay:** After the teach relays new information to the students, give them one

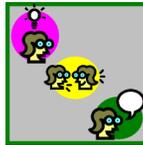
**Jigsaw:** Divide the students up into four groups and provide each group with some material to study. Allow the students to become experts on that particular topic. Then, by choosing one student from each group, develop four different groups and allow the “experts” to share what they studied with the rest of the group. This is fast, effective way to cover new information; it decreases student workload, and encourages collaboration.

**Three Minute Pause:** After the teacher presents a lot of new material, she asks the students to think for three minutes about what they have learned. They can jot down notes or sketches to show what they have learned.

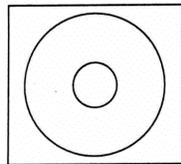
**Idea Spinner:** Teacher creates a spinner with predict, explain, evaluate, and summarize. They review something and ask a question asking the students to do whichever they land on when they spin the idea spinner.

**Inside-Outside Circle:** Half the class makes a circle facing out. The other half makes a circle facing the inside circle. They ask each other review questions then rotate in the same direction. Great for test review!

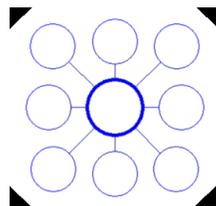
**Think-Pair-Share:** Have the students read or study something. Give them time to think and reflect. Put the students in pairs and let them discuss the material. Let the pairs share what they have learned or their thoughts.



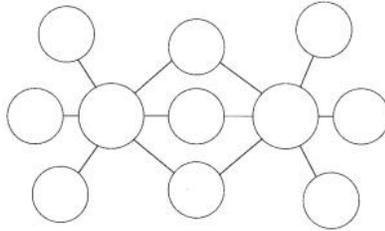
**Circle Maps:** These are great for defining things in context. They are also a great brainstorming tool.



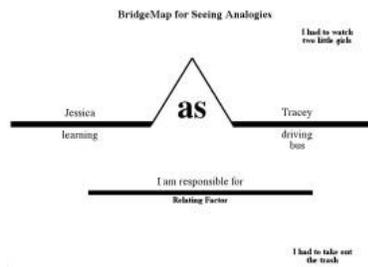
**Bubble Maps:** this is good to design process of describing attributes of something.



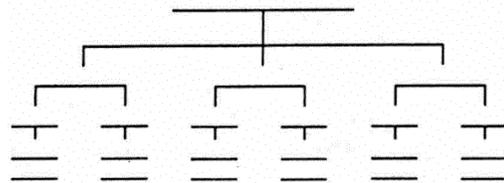
**Double Bubble Maps:** Similar to a bubble map but with two main bubbles. It works well for comparing and contrasting two things.



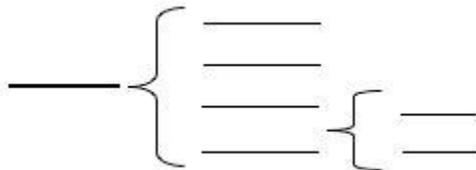
**Bridge Maps:** Bridge maps provide a visionary pathway for creating and interpreting analogies. They are used for developing analogical reasoning and metaphorical concepts for deeper content learning.



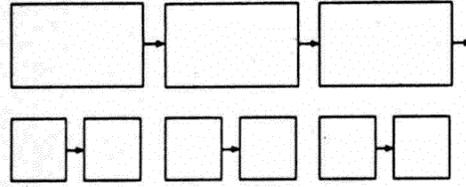
**Tree Maps:** Tree maps are ideal for inductive and deductive classification.



**Brace Maps:** these maps work well when showing parts of a whole as well as physical relationships of an object. It helps tap into spatial reasoning.



**Flow Maps:** These maps show sequencing, orders, time lines, and cycles. They also help to see relationships between stages and sub-stages of events.



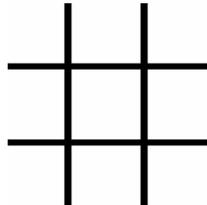
**Multi-flow Maps:** Great to use for cause and effect!

**Colored Cups:** Give students in groups 3 different colored cups. Green means they are doing well. Yellow means they need help. Red means they are stuck and need a lot of help. This is a great way for the teacher to monitor group work.

**Graffiti Wall:** On a white board, poster, or chalk board, students take turns coming up and writing random things that relate to one topic. They can write it big, small, crooked, or anything

**Shape-Ups:** This is similar to think-tac-toe but instead of choosing three in a row, they have to pick one of each shape.

**Think-Tac-Toes:** Give the student a tic-tac-toe grid and allow them to choose three in a row to do for homework, testing, or something else. This is a great way to let them learn by their own learning style.



**Homework Checkers:** See if students have their homework done. If not, let them go somewhere aside to finish it. If they are finished, let them go over their answers. Once they agree on all answers, they staple their work together and turn it into the teacher. This way the teacher only has to grade one set of work.

**Pass the Ball:** The teacher asks a question and then throws a ball to a student who has the answer to the question. If the student answers the question correctly, he/she gets to shoot a basket. If the student answers incorrectly, they pass the ball to a teammate for assistance.

**RSQC2:** In two minutes, students recall and list in rank order the most important ideas from the previous day's class. In two more minutes, they summarize those points in a single sentence. Then they write one major question they want answered. They then identify a thread or theme to connect this material to the course's major goal.

**Walking Through Pages:** This is to familiarize the students with the textbook. Tell the students that they get three minutes to put sticky notes on their most favorite parts of the textbook. When the time is up, discuss with each child what was their favorite and why. As you discuss, put a stick note where the student suggests, marking their names. Now you have an easy interest inventory to refer to all year long.

**Ticket out the Door:** Give the students a short essay to respond to on an index card as they leave for the day. Their names must be on the card.

**Cubing:** The cube has 6 faces with a different activity on each face. Use the 6 levels of Bloom's taxonomy on the cubes. (knowledge, comprehension, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, and application)

**RAFT:** R=Role A=Audience F=Format T=Topic This is a great way to spark the imagination. This motivates students because it appeals to their learning style and interest. It can be presented in many ways and used as a unit hook, a lesson within a unit, an assessment at the end of a unit, a jigsaw, or a test review

**3-2-1 Summarizer:** Students states three things they learned, 2 ways the information relates to them personally, and 1 question they have about the material.

**I Have-Who Has:** This is a great little game for review! Give students cards that have an answer on top and a question on bottom. When one student asks their question, the student with the correct answer says the answer, and then asks their question. This cycle repeats until all questions are asked.



# Other Helpful Tools

**Even Dozen:** Students draw 12 boxes after looking at some material. Group students and have them write main concepts in each box. One student says something about a box and label's it #1. The next student chooses a box, and says something about it that relates to #1. They label that box #2. Continue the cycle.

**ABC Review:** From a container, students draw tiles with letters on them. The student needs to make a statement about the topic beginning with the letter.

**Divide and Conquer:** Divide the class into groups. Each group has a section of the board to write on. Each group is given different problems to solve. The group takes turns going up to answer the problem, but the group can help each other out.

**Trash Basketball:** Wad up a piece of paper. Tape off three lines on the floor each farther away from the trashcan. One by one students come up and answer a question on a flash card. If they get it correct, they choose to shot a 10, 20, or 30 point basket.

**Hot Seat:** using post-it notes, write questions and stick them underneath the students' desks or chairs. Great for review or checking understanding.

**Students using THIEVES:** Students should preview the text selection by looking at the Title, Headings, Introduction, Every sentence, Visuals and Vocabulary, End of chapter questions, and Summary.

**Timed Pair Share:** students pair off then number 1-2. Teacher chooses either 1 or 2 to talk first. That student talks about a topic for a particular length of time. Then the other student speaks for that long.

**Wise Sages:** Teacher announces the topic. Students come up with as many questions as they can about the topic in three minutes. They can put these on post it notes. The group then goes through the questions and initials the ones they know the answer to. They then take turns choosing a question, looking to see who initialed it, then asking them to answer.

**GIST:** Summarize the main idea in your own words, no more than 25. Make sure all points are covered. Then reduce it to 20. Then 15-10. You should be left with the main idea.

**Four-Two-One:** Teacher asks the students to generate 4 words that summarize the main idea of a particular content. They then share with a group and make a list of words they have in common. They then narrow it down to the 2 most relevant ones. Then have them narrow it down to one.

# General Learning Difficulty

Ability Level Learners are students who learn more slowly than their peers, yet do not have a disability requiring special education. A number of factors may account for these learners. Such as a lack of emotional growth, the lack of a secure environment, limited opportunities for learning, and absenteeism from school. It is important for teachers to be aware of this range of problems that can cause a child to be learning at a slower pace. In terms of language learning, these learners may have had negative past experiences of learning and consequently lost interest; they may also be characterized by the inadequate use of learning strategies.

Of course, slower paced language learners' problems are not solely related to language learning; more general problems listed above, and additional factors such as family problems at home, can also be influential.

## Identifying Learners Working at Ability Level

1. Functions at ability but significantly below grade level.
2. Is prone to immature interpersonal relationships.
3. Has difficulty following multi-step directions.
4. Lives in the present and does not have long range goals.
5. Has few internal strategies (i.e. organizational skills, difficulty transferring, and generalizing information.)
6. Scores consistently low on achievement tests.
7. Works well with "hands-on" material (i.e. labs, manipulative, activities.)
8. Has a poor self-image.
9. Works on all tasks slowly.
10. Masters skills slowly; some skills may not be mastered at all.

Their weakest skills are generally writing and reading. Many of these learners show difficulties in perception. They tend to ignore details and go for overall comprehension and production. They do not notice, for instance, the apostrophe or the plural forms when reading.

Students learn more quickly if the teaching methods used match their preferred learning styles. As learning improves, so too does self esteem. This has a further positive effect on learning. Students who have become bored with learning may become interested once again. The student-teacher relationship can improve because the student is more successful and is more interested in learning. A number of strategies are suggested in the literature for supporting and motivating slower paced learners.

- Give daily evaluations.
- Use simple vocabulary in directions and instructions.

- Increase time-on-task rates (more teacher questions, group participation, effective use of signals, gestures, etc.).
- Reduce distractions by providing a quiet, private place to work.
- Emphasize strengths. Use lots of praise and reinforcement frequently.
- Make lessons short. Limit the working time and have several short work periods rather than one long one.
- Add variety to the academic routine. Do active things and use educational games, puzzles, and other techniques as much as possible.
- Work on material that is somewhat challenging but allows success. Work that is too hard or too easy is a turn-off.
- Make learning fun and comfortable. Your positive attitude is very important.
- Communicate with your students.
- Go over his/her daily work to reinforce the learning. Slower paced learners need repetition.
- Provide meaningful, concrete activities rather than abstract.
- Give short specific directions and have your child repeat them back to you.
- Encourage your child to explore areas of interest to him/her. Career opportunities often come from these interests.

## Supporting General Ability Level Learners

- Modify language to suit their level
- Try to develop a good relationship with them
- Make use of excellent students to support slow-paced learners
- Praise them when possible
- React politely to their responses even if they are incorrect
- Mix slow-paced learners with excellent students in group activities to benefit from each other
- Use a variety of techniques to suit the different students' learning styles
- Provide clear feedback
- Analyze and break down difficult tasks
- Use simple vocabulary in directions and instructions
- Try to understand the reasons behind their weaknesses
- Provide longer wait time after asking questions in order to give slow-paced learners a time to think
- Engage slow-paced learners in extra curricular activities
- Anticipate their difficulties and prepare activities to help them

# Web-based Resources

Intervention Central	<a href="http://www.interventioncentral.org">www.interventioncentral.org</a>
RTI Wire	<a href="http://www.jimwrightonline.com">www.jimwrightonline.com</a>
National Center on Response to Intervention	<a href="http://www.rti4success.org">www.rti4success.org</a>
National High School Center	<a href="http://www.betterhighschools.org">www.betterhighschools.org</a>
What Works Clearing House	<a href="http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/">www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/</a>
Center on Instruction	<a href="http://www.centeroninstruction.org">www.centeroninstruction.org</a>
Scientific Research-based Instruction	<a href="http://www.ctserc.org">http://www.ctserc.org</a>
You Can Handle Them All	<a href="http://www.disciplinehelp.com/">http://www.disciplinehelp.com/</a>
The Iris Center	<a href="http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/">http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/</a>
CAST UDL	<a href="http://www.cast.org/udl/">http://www.cast.org/udl/</a>