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# Tiered Interventions and RTI in High Schools: Preliminary “Lessons Learned”

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Midwest High School SIG Conference  
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**National Center on Response to Intervention**  
[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)



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# While You Are Getting Settled...

- **Complete the survey at your table:**
  - What contextual factors pose the biggest challenge to you and your staff/colleagues as you implement (or think about implementing) RTI/tiered intervention in your school?
  - Indicate your **top 3 choices**; these will be presented
  - All others will be discussed amongst participants at your tables during discussion time

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# Getting to Know You

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- What are your roles?
- Currently using (or planning to use) RTI/tiered interventions in your school?
- Thinking about using RTI/tiered interventions in your school?

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# Session Overview

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- About the High School Tiered Interventions Initiative (HSTII)
- Essential components of RTI and high school examples
- Contextual factors unique to tiered interventions in high schools
- Overview of available resources

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# High School Tiered Interventions Initiative

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- Collaboration among three national technical assistance centers
  - National Center on Response to Intervention
  - National High School Center
  - Center on Instruction (Special Education Strand)
- Goal is to enhance the understanding of how tiered intervention models are emerging in high schools

# HSTII Approach

- Identified high schools implementing tiered interventions based on recommendations from RCCs, RRCs & SEAs
- Contacted 51 high schools
- Interviewed 20 high school administrators
- Convened Technical Advisory Group
- Conducted 8 site visits

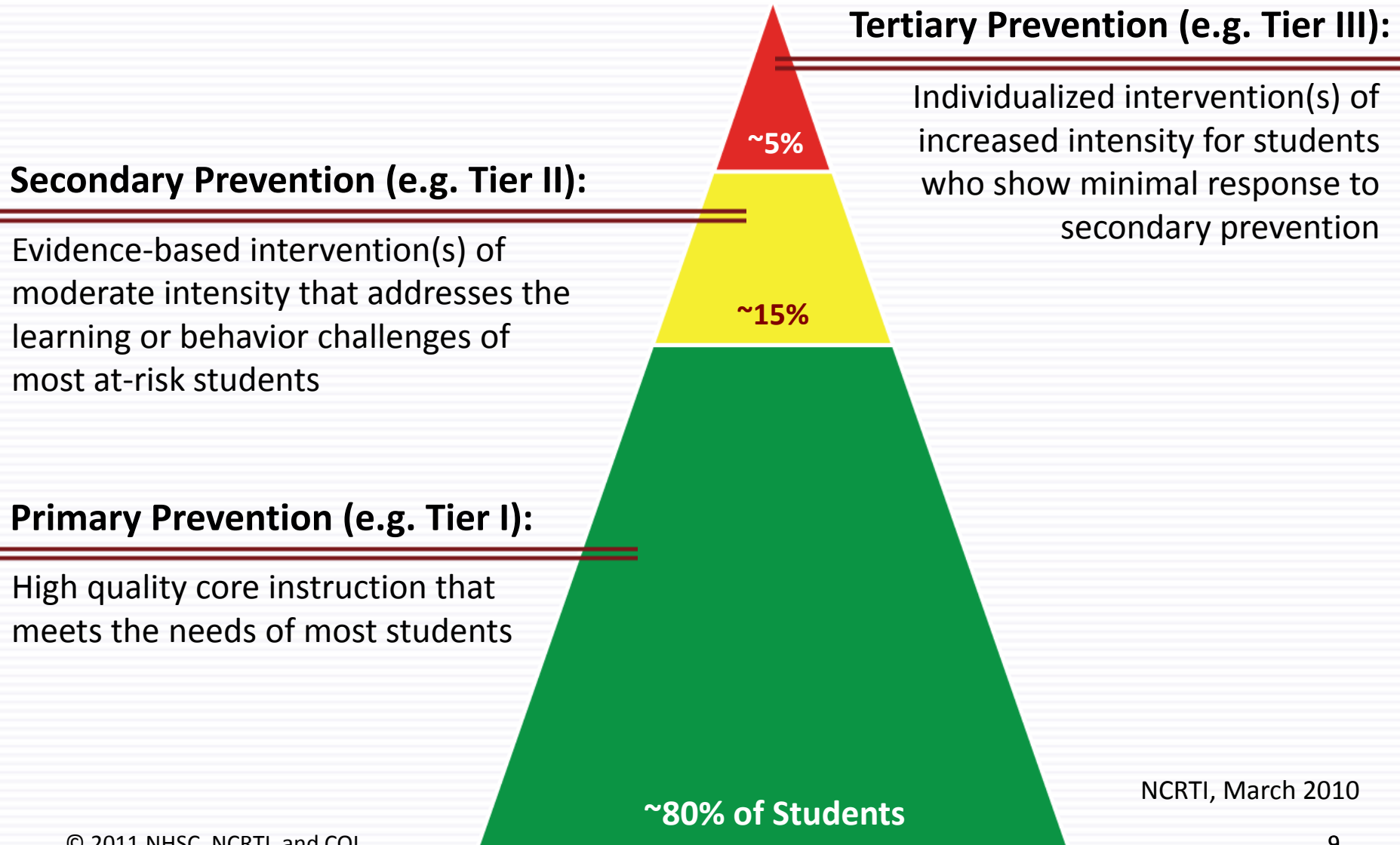
# What is Response to Intervention?

Response to Intervention:

- integrates **assessment** and **intervention** within a **multi-level prevention system** to
- maximize student achievement and to
- reduce behavior problems.

National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI), March 2010

# Conceptualizing the Framework



# Principles Key to RTI Implementation

The HSTII team considers the following principles to be key to RTI implementation in any academic or behavioral domain and at any grade level:

1. The majority of students' educational needs are met through **research-driven instructional (academic and/or behavioral) practices** within core, or Tier I, instruction (Primary Level).
2. Students are **screened** to identify those in need of more intensive instruction, provided in the form of interventions.
3. **Progress monitoring** yields data to assess students' learning and academic performance and to determine whether a specific intervention is effective for a particular student.
4. **Interventions increase in intensity** in proportion to students' instructional needs, and interventions are monitored to ensure that they are delivered with high levels of fidelity.
5. **Using data** from screening and progress-monitoring measures, schools can assess both the students' responses and the interventions' effectiveness. These data may also be used in the special education eligibility process.

# Essential Components of RTI

- Screening
- Progress Monitoring
- School-wide, Multi-level Prevention System
  - Primary Prevention (Core instruction for all)
  - Secondary Prevention (Interventions of moderate intensity for some)
  - Tertiary Prevention (Intense interventions for a few)
- Data-Based Decision Making for:
  - Instruction
  - Movement within the multi-level system
  - Disability identification (in accordance with state law)

(NCRTI, March 2010)

# Caveats

- The majority of research on RTI exists at the elementary school level; a few middle school studies.
- Essential components of RTI may be the same at both levels.
- Translation of the framework and essential components into effective practice in high schools may differ from elementary school due to structural, organizational differences.



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# WHAT MIGHT RTI LOOK LIKE IN HIGH SCHOOL SETTINGS?

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# Establishing a Focus

- All sites identified improving student achievement as primary goal
  - 9th and 10th graders, English and/or mathematics
- Various goals:
  - Reducing D's and F's
  - Existing initiative for reducing number of tardies
  - Reducing behavior referrals
  - Increasing graduation rate

(NHSC, NCRTI & COI, May 2010)

# Focus: Guiding Questions

- What is the purpose and scope of tiered interventions in the school?
- How do existing initiatives fit into the tiered interventions framework?
- How do current special education and instructional support practices align with tiered interventions?
- Do other initiatives hinder the implementation of tiered interventions?
- If the school is structured using academies, how do the academies affect the focus of the tiered interventions framework?

(NHSC, NCRTI & COI, May 2010)

# What is Your “WHY?”

- What is the primary need or area of concern in your school? District?
  - Academics? Behavior? Both?
  - Literacy? Math? Other content areas?
  - Attendance?
  - Particular grade levels?
  - Other?
- Purpose statement: “RTI/tiered interventions will help my school/district to....”



# Screening

	Typical Implementation (Elementary)	Possible High School Implementation
<b>Purpose/ Focus</b>	Identify students who are at risk of poor learning outcomes	Identify students who are at risk of dropping out or not graduating
<b>Who</b>	All students	Could be a specific group of students in high school or all students
<b>Tools</b>	Brief assessments that are valid, reliable, and demonstrate diagnostic accuracy for <i>predicting</i> learning or behavioral problems	Ideally valid & reliable measures based on school's RTI focus. Have been early warning system tool; existing data (from 8 <sup>th</sup> grade; grades/multiple failures; attendance and behavior tracking logs); additional tests administered at beginning of 9 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>Timeframe</b>	Administered three times per year (e.g., Fall, Winter, Spring )	Varies based on school's RTI focus and screening tools

Varies based on school's RTI focus!

# Examples of High School Screening

Area of Focus	Measure	Frequency
<b>Reading</b>	Maze CBM	Conducted at the end of the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade year for students attending feeder middle schools; administered by the guidance department for new students within 6 weeks
<b>Grades</b>	Failure of one or more content area classes	Review conducted by guidance department 3 times a year
<b>Exit exams</b>	Failure to pass a state exit exam on its first administration	Review conducted by guidance department at the end of each school year
<b>Behavior</b>	Number of Office Discipline Referrals	Review conducted by guidance department in December and May

# Progress Monitoring

## Typical Implementation (Elementary)

## Possible High School Implementation

### Purpose/ Focus

Monitor student's response to primary, secondary, or tertiary instruction in order to estimate rates of improvement, identify students who are not demonstrating adequate progress, and compare the efficacy of different forms of instruction and intervention

Monitor student's response to primary, secondary, or tertiary instruction in order to estimate rates of improvement, identify students who are not demonstrating adequate progress, and compare the efficacy of different forms of instruction and intervention

### Who

Students identified through screening as at risk for poor learning outcomes (those receiving secondary or tertiary)

Students identified through screening as at risk for poor learning or behavior outcomes

### Tools

Brief assessments that are valid, reliable, sensitive to small changes, and measure what is being taught

Ideally valid and reliable tools, based on school's RTI focus. Have been diagnostic measures; CBMs; class quizzes and tests; practice or benchmark graduation tests; attendance and behavior tracking

### Timeframe

Students are assessed at regular intervals

Varies based on school's RTI focus and assessment & instructional tools

Varies based on  
school's RTI  
focus!

# Examples of Progress Monitoring in High Schools

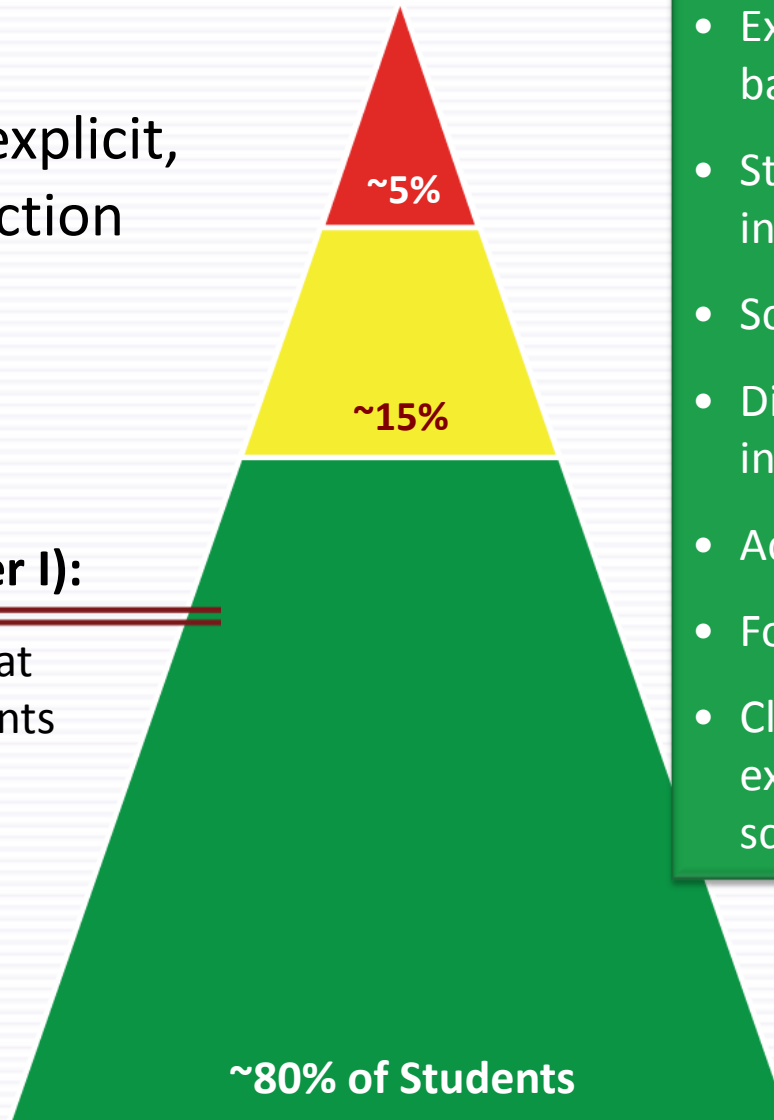
Level of Instruction	Measure	Frequency
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ongoing formative assessment</li><li>• Common math assessment</li><li>• Common writing prompts</li><li>• Grades</li><li>• Attendance</li></ul>	Daily Monthly  Semester/quarter 1st 20 days of school, quarterly
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher-developed Algebra CBM</li><li>• Maze passage</li><li>• D/F reports</li><li>• Time-sampling for behavior</li></ul>	Every other week  Weekly
Tertiary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Measures embedded in intervention program</li><li>• Behavior tracking sheets</li></ul>	Daily

# Primary Prevention

**ALL** students receive explicit, research-based instruction

## Primary Prevention (e.g. Tier I):

High quality core instruction that meets the needs of most students  
(NCRTI, March 2010)



## What we observed:

- Explicit, research-based instruction
- Standards-aligned instruction
- Scaffolding
- Differentiated instruction
- Academic literacy
- Formative assessment
- Clear behavior expectations taught school-wide

# Secondary & Tertiary Prevention

## Secondary Prevention (e.g. Tier II):

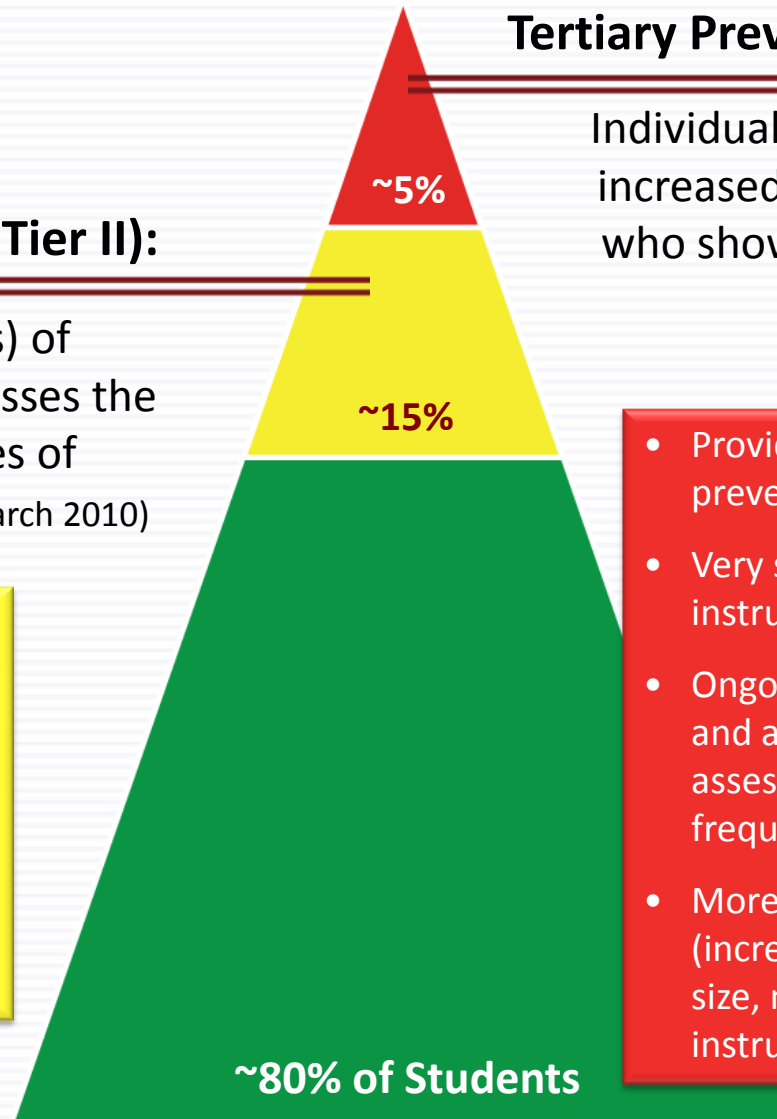
Evidence-based intervention(s) of moderate intensity that addresses the learning or behavior challenges of most at-risk students (NCRTI, March 2010)

- Provided **in addition to** primary prevention (core)
- Teacher-led, small group instruction
- Ongoing progress monitoring and appropriate diagnostic assessment as needed

## Tertiary Prevention (e.g. Tier III):

Individualized intervention(s) of increased intensity for students who show minimal response to secondary prevention (NCRTI, March 2010)

- Provided **in addition to** primary prevention (core)
- Very small group (1:3) or 1:1 instruction
- Ongoing progress monitoring and appropriate diagnostic assessment as needed (more frequent)
- More intense instruction (increased time, reduced group size, more explicit & systematic instruction, increased feedback)



# High School Example: Secondary Prevention

	English/Language Arts	Algebra	Behavior
<b>Time in Intervention</b>	55 minute periods, 5 days a week, 1 semester	55 minute periods, 5 days a week, 1 semester	40 minute period, 1 day a week during advisory, 1 semester
<b>Instructional Content</b>	Vocabulary; comprehension strategy instruction; fundamentals of writing (organization); study skills	Preteaching and reteaching concepts from core curriculum	Ex., Check and Connect
<b>Instructional Delivery</b>	Large group with small group/pairs work; explicit & systematic; frequent feedback; scaffolding; differentiated	Small groups within large group instruction; explicit & systematic; frequent feedback and PM to ensure mastery of each math objective	Creation of positive learning environment; posting of behavioral expectations and explicit teaching of strategies
<b>Assessment</b>	Ongoing formative assessment; journal checks (writing samples); CBM (maze passages)	Teacher-developed CBM organized around state standards	Monitoring of office discipline referrals and grades for particular students

# High School Example: Tertiary Prevention

	Reading	Behavior
<b>Student Need</b>	Many grade levels behind; struggling with decoding and reading of connected text	Consistent poor behavior that interferes significantly with student learning
<b>Instructional Content</b>	Phonics, fluency, comprehension via a published intervention program	Social skills intervention
<b>Instructional Delivery</b>	Small, teacher-led groups within large class; special education teachers and teacher aids; explicit, systematic, fast-paced	Delivered in a full class period by behavior specialist
<b>Assessment</b>	Program-based assessment; diagnostic testing done twice per semester	Functional Behavior Assessment

# Data-Based Decision Making: Types of Decisions

- Use of screening and progress monitoring data to make informed decisions regarding:
  - Instruction
  - Movement within the multi-level prevention system
  - Disability identification (in accordance with state law)



(NCRTI, March 2010)

# Examples of Data-Based Decision Making in High Schools

- **Instruction/Movement between tiers:**
  - Ongoing PM leads to intervention teachers modifying instruction to target student needs (“bump” up or down)
  - Data reviewed during department and professional learning community monthly meetings to inform PD needs
  - Data shared with entire faculty during “data days” (1/2 days of PD held 3 times a year)
  - Students receiving secondary and/or tertiary instruction given the opportunity every other week to view their progress monitoring data, set goals, etc.
- **Disability identification:**
  - In most cases, not applicable to high schools

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# Table Discussions

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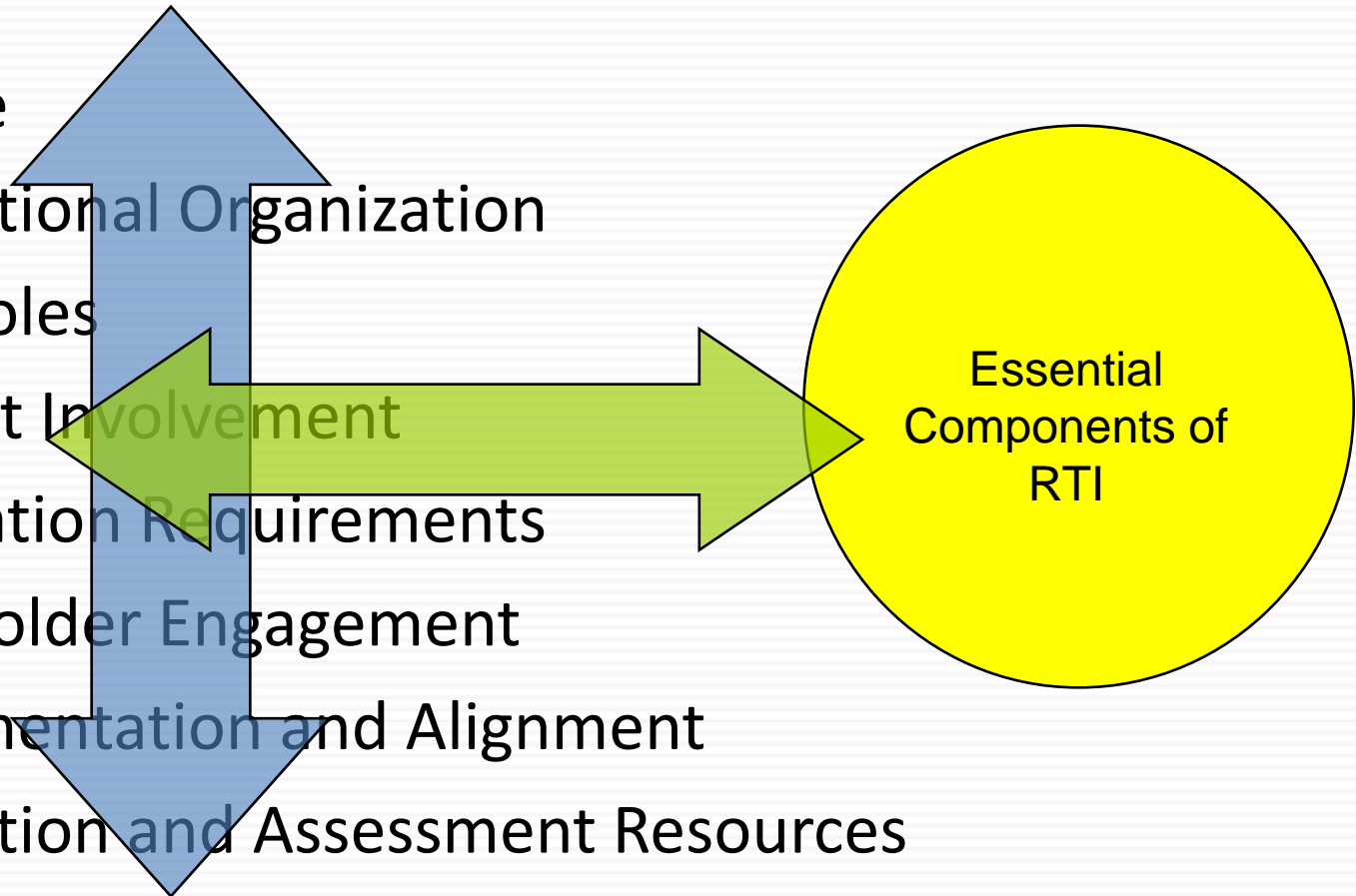
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From your perspective, what do you see as the potential benefits to implementing RTI, or tiered interventions, in high school?

Potential barriers/pitfalls/challenges?

# Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in High Schools

- Focus
- Culture
- Instructional Organization
- Staff Roles
- Student Involvement
- Graduation Requirements
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Implementation and Alignment
- Instruction and Assessment Resources



# School Culture: Guiding Questions

- In what ways do current practices, beliefs, and behaviors align with the goals and purposes for the tiered intervention framework?
- Where did the motivation for adopting the framework originate, and how might that affect staff buy-in?
- How do current prevention efforts map onto a tiered framework?
- What changes might be required for staff members to collaborate, examine student data, and act on what they learn from those data?
- What changes might be required to ensure that the needs of all students are addressed?

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# School Culture: Examples from Site Visits

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- Synergy between current beliefs and RTI language
- Small learning communities to facilitate connections among students and between students and teachers

# Instructional Organization: Guiding Questions

- How does the staff create and/or adapt a master schedule that addresses the needs of the school?
- How do single class periods, block scheduling, or a combination of the two best support the focus and delivery of tiered interventions?
- Does the current infrastructure present obstacles?
- Does the school provide additional instructional interventions through extended days, Saturdays, and summer programs?
- How does the school support teachers in designating time to collaboratively make data-based decisions?

# Instructional Organization: Examples from Site Visits

- Master Schedule
  - Administrator as a “master scheduler”
  - 4x4 block schedules use “seminar”
  - Traditional 6-8 periods
    - Guided study halls
    - Elective time
  - Professional learning communities for staff

# Staff Roles: Guiding Questions

- Who provides the additional interventions? How does the school support this role?
- How do special education, ELL, and/or behavioral specialists support the implementation of tiered interventions?
- If tiered interventions are implemented in more than one content area, how does the school support content teachers in becoming more than “teachers of content?”
- What supports, if any, do teachers need to deliver Tier I, II, or III instruction?

# Staff Roles: Examples from Site Visits

- Intervention/Classroom Instruction
  - Co-teaching Classes
- Data Team Members
  - Content Teachers
  - Special Education Teachers
  - Administrators
  - Paraprofessionals
  - Literacy Coach
  - School Psychologist
  - Integrated Program Staff



(NHSC, NCRTI & COI, May 2010)

# Student Involvement: Guiding Questions

- How are students involved in the implementation of tiered interventions?
- How do students monitor their own progress?
- What role do students play in determining movement between tiers?
- How do students learn about the tiered interventions framework?

# Student Involvement: Examples from Site Visits

- Student-Centered Problem Solving Approach
  - Collaborative decision making process
- Student Data Tracking
  - Graphic representations



(NHSC, NCRTI & COI, May 2010)

# Graduation Requirements: Guiding Questions

- How do the additional tiered interventions affect graduation requirements?
- What credit do students receive for the intervention classes?
- How does the tiered interventions framework support career and postsecondary education pathways?

# Graduation Requirements: Examples from Site Visits

- Dependent on schedule modifications
  - Additional interventions in lieu of study hall did not receive credit
  - Additional interventions in lieu of electives received elective credit

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# Stakeholder Engagement: Guiding Questions

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- How does the school involve stakeholders in the design and implementation of tiered interventions?
- How does the school engage the appropriate stakeholders early enough to ensure buy-in for the tiered interventions framework?
- Do in-school and wraparound services for at-risk students and students with disabilities align and coordinate with one another?
- What types of training and support are needed to effectively engage and prepare stakeholders?

# Stakeholder Engagement: Examples from Site Visits

- Stakeholder Involvement
  - Parents invited to problem-solving meetings
  - Build upon existing initiatives
- Training and Support
  - Overall RTI framework PD
  - PD on individual interventions
  - Small learning communities

# Implementation and Alignment: Guiding Questions

- What current or planned instructional and student support initiatives does the school integrate to support the focus of tiered interventions?
- How do those efforts align with the tiered interventions, especially in Tiers II and III?
- What options exist for scaling up tiered interventions over time to broaden the number of students, content areas, and/or interventions?
- How does the school leverage existing human and fiscal resources to facilitate the implementation and scaling up of tiered interventions?
- How are district departments (C&I, Title I, etc.) involved in school-level implementation of tiered interventions?

# Implementation & Alignment: Examples from Site Visits

- Coordinated Initiatives
  - Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
  - Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
  - Check and Connect
  - Other school-wide programs
- Leveraged Resources
  - Staff roles (literacy coach, school psychologist, security staff, counselors, etc.)
  - Prioritizing (existing PD, time, staff meetings, classroom space, etc.)

(NHSC, NCRTI & COI, May 2010)

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# Instruction and Assessment Resources: Guiding Questions

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- How do school leaders and teachers determine the quality of instruction delivered in Tier I?
- How do school leaders select interventions?
- What data support the use of these interventions?
- What evidence informs the selection of data sources for screening and progress monitoring?
- How does the school determine whether selected measures are reliable and valid?
- How is educational technology used in assessment of interventions?

# Instruction and Assessment Resources: Examples from Site Visits

- Professional/Teacher Learning Communities
  - Weekly
  - Focused on student data
- Determining Interventions & Data Sources
  - Data from previous school
  - Avoidance of duplicating feeder intervention programs

# Handout on the Contextual Factors of Implementation

Contextual Factors of Implementation

1

HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS GUIDING QUESTIONS ACTION STEPS

INSTRUCTIONAL ORGANIZATION

Organizing instruction in high schools How does the staff create and/or adapt a

2

HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS GUIDING QUESTIONS ACTION STEPS

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

With assistance, secondary students How are students involved in the

3

HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS GUIDING QUESTIONS ACTION STEPS

IMPLEMENTATION AND ALIGNMENT

With the numerous initiatives What current or planned instructional

4

HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS GUIDING QUESTIONS ACTION STEPS

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With the numerous initiatives What current or planned instructional

Contextual Factors of Implementation

National High School Center  
of the American Institutes for Research

National Center on Response to Intervention  
www.rti4success.org

CENTER ON INSTRUCTION

Source: National High School Center, National Center on Response to Intervention, & Center on Instruction. (2010). *Tiered interventions in high schools: Using preliminary "lessons learned" to guide ongoing discussion*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.


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# Final Thoughts



What are **one or two ideas** you've heard about here today that you feel your school/district might want to try out?


# Additional Resources



## TIERED INTERVENTIONS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

USING PRELIMINARY 'LESSONS LEARNED' TO  
GUIDE ONGOING DISCUSSION



MAY 2010



National Center on Response to Intervention  
www.rti4success.org

CENTER ON  
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National High School Center  
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## Meeting the Needs of Significantly Struggling Learners in High Schools:

### A Look at Approaches to Tiered Intervention

By Helen Duffy, American Institute for Research

#### THE CHALLENGE

When high school students are significantly lagging behind their peers, schools have too often guided those students into special education services, even if they do not actually have a disability (Counsell & Christ, 2014). Adopting more targeted, instructional strategies earlier within the general education setting would, in many cases, be more appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of many struggling learners.

Although some elementary schools are beginning to better implement tiered interventions to provide more targeted and appropriate academic, social, and behavioral supports to their struggling students, not all schools get the appropriate level of assistance they need to succeed. Few high schools have systematically implemented tiered interventions. Schools often organize interventions into levels that represent an increase in support. These levels include universal interventions available to all students, such as more classroom instruction on a particular subject; targeted interventions, wherein students are provided more support than peers, such as tutoring; and intensive interventions that involve more individualized services tailored to the unique needs of the individual student.

Effective tiered intervention strategies depend on accurate diagnostic information and data about what is or is not working for students and what new adjustments need to be made, such as whether to move a student into or out of a more intensive level of support. One increasingly popular approach to gathering and adjusting to key diagnostic information is Response to Intervention (RTI), which may utilize progress monitoring as one of its components.

When identifying students with learning disabilities (LD), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004 (IDEA 2004) allows educators to use a process, such as RTI, that is based on a child's response to scientific, research-based interventions. IDEA 2004 allows educators to use an approach such as RTI instead of, or in addition to, the IQ achievement discrepancy approach.<sup>1</sup> To date, much attention has been focused on the possible RTI model as an alternative method to identify students with LD in the early grade.

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# For More Information

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- National High School Center  
[www.betterhighschools.org](http://www.betterhighschools.org)
- National Center on RTI [www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)
- Center on Instruction  
[www.centeroninstruction.org](http://www.centeroninstruction.org)
- Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support <http://www.pbis.org/>

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