Response to Instruction and Intervention Framework

TN Department of Education

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and would like to thank all the stakeholders that read drafts, gave feedback and guidance, as well as those who provided research, materials, and support to the RTI² framework.

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Foreword

Dear Educators,

Several years ago, we embarked on a journey together toward a new model for instruction in Tennessee. That model, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²), recognizes the importance and power of high-quality, rigorous, on-grade-level instruction for all students through Tier I and also provides structured support that is tailored to meet students' individual needs through Tier II and III interventions. Our mission is to ensure that all students receive the instruction and focused time necessary to be successful in and beyond K-12. Additionally, we are working toward our state goals of ensuring at least 75 percent of students are reading on grade level at the end of third grade by 2025 and that the majority of our students are going to postsecondary and earning college and career credentials.

This revised manual acknowledges that we learn best from the educators responsible for implementing an initiative. Feedback from teachers, principals, and district leaders has shaped the revisions and updates in this manual. Some of these refinements include guidance around using multiple sources of data for the universal screening process and the inclusion of more detail on Tier I instructional practices, especially in early reading. Thanks to the many educators and administrators who contributed time and guidance as we made these refinements.

Response to Instruction and Intervention is an important focus area for the department: the success of our strategic plan, *Tennessee Succeeds*, and the success of the statewide Read to be Ready campaign hinge on continuously refining RTI² to improve outcomes for all students, especially those at risk of academic failure. We believe that early literacy matters and that excellent Tier I instruction can help more young students become proficient and joyful readers. We believe that it is never too late to address students' needs and to increase their likelihood of career and postsecondary success. Most importantly, we believe that all means all: All students deserve high-quality Tier I instruction; all students can benefit from intervention and enrichment; and all students can graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills to embark upon their chosen path in life.

Since 2013, the department has provided a variety of presentations, trainings, and opportunities for feedback related to RTI² implementation through the work of multiple divisions aligned around a common goal of ensuring all students are growing. Our CORE offices in particular worked closely with districts in different stages of implementation and have been an invaluable support in facilitating RTI² work at the local level. We plan to continue our regional support of districts throughout the coming years to continuously improve RTI² and share the best practices.

At the start of any new program or initiative, we feel excited about its promise. While we have moved beyond the "new" stage with RTI², I remain both excited and even more confident that RTI² is the right path for Tennessee to meet the needs of all of our students. Thank you for sharing this work with us and for continuing to grow and solve challenges on behalf of our students.

With appreciation,

Dr. Candice McQueen

Intent of the Framework

We are pleased to share this updated manual for **Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²), which is Tennessee's framework for teaching and learning that begins with high-quality, differentiated instruction throughout the day and emphasizes intervening with students when they first start to struggle to avoid prolonged academic difficulties.** The goal of this manual is to support educators and empower districts in their continued implementation of RTI² and to ensure that you have the structure and resources necessary to provide all students with access to and support for reaching high standards and expectations.

The Tennessee State Board of Education approved Special Education Guidelines and Standards regarding evaluations for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). The path to identification moved away from a discrepancy model, sometimes called a "wait to fail" approach, and since July 1, 2014, the RTI² model has been our statewide approach to identifying students with SLDs. The Special Education Guidelines and Standards require all districts and schools to use RTI² to determine the eligibility of students to receive special education services for SLDs; however, identification is not the sole purpose of RTI².

The first "I" in RTI² is instruction; **strong Tier I instruction is the foundation of RTI².** Core instruction and grade-level expectations are delivered to all students through the Tier I instructional block. In fact, this is where students spend the majority of their day. The revision of this manual provides refined and more detailed guidance on the hallmarks of effective Tier I instruction: high expectations, standards-based whole group and small group instruction, a balance of skills-based and knowledge-based competencies in reading, differentiation, and purposeful use of data.

RTI² also offers additional instruction with multiple entry and exit points based on students' needs: a student who is on grade level may receive high-quality Tier I instruction and enrichment; another student who is showing slight deficits in specific areas may receive targeted interventions through Tier II for a specific period of time; alternately, a student who has significant needs may receive extended, intensive interventions through Tier III.

Special education services are a continuation of the path through the RTI² tiers. A student who does not show growth in response to an appropriate intervention that is delivered with fidelity in Tier III may be eligible for the most intensive services available, special education services. However, the RTI² model provides instructional opportunities for all students and is not exclusively a path to special education eligibility.

Overview of Primary Refinements

We are committed to providing support to districts and schools as we continue to implement RTI² and identify strong practices and common challenges. The department has listened to feedback from the field and examined current research and best practice. This information has led to the following refinements:

- use of multiple sources of data for the universal screening process,
- a more detailed description of Tier I instructional practices,
- an expanded definition of ongoing assessment and data-based decision making,
- stronger explanation of professional learning expectations, and
- a stronger connection between fidelity monitoring in Tier I and the educator evaluation model.

The manual refinements also provide a stronger conceptualization of the "ready" student under the vision of Drive to 55, more consistent language, and more autonomy for districts. All divisions within the Tennessee Department of Education are committed to supporting RTI² and continually seek to align our work to provide clear guidance to educators. We value your work and your feedback and look forward to our continued partnership.

Introduction

The role of the public education system is to prepare all students for success after high school. Governor Haslam has challenged our state with a critical new mission: the Drive to 55, the drive to get 55 percent of Tennesseans equipped with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025. **Students should leave K-12 education with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be positive members of society.** This includes being able to achieve tasks fundamental to our society, such as continuing their education, pursuing a career path, contributing to their local economy, participating in our democratic process, making healthy decisions for themselves and their families, and advocating for their personal values and beliefs.

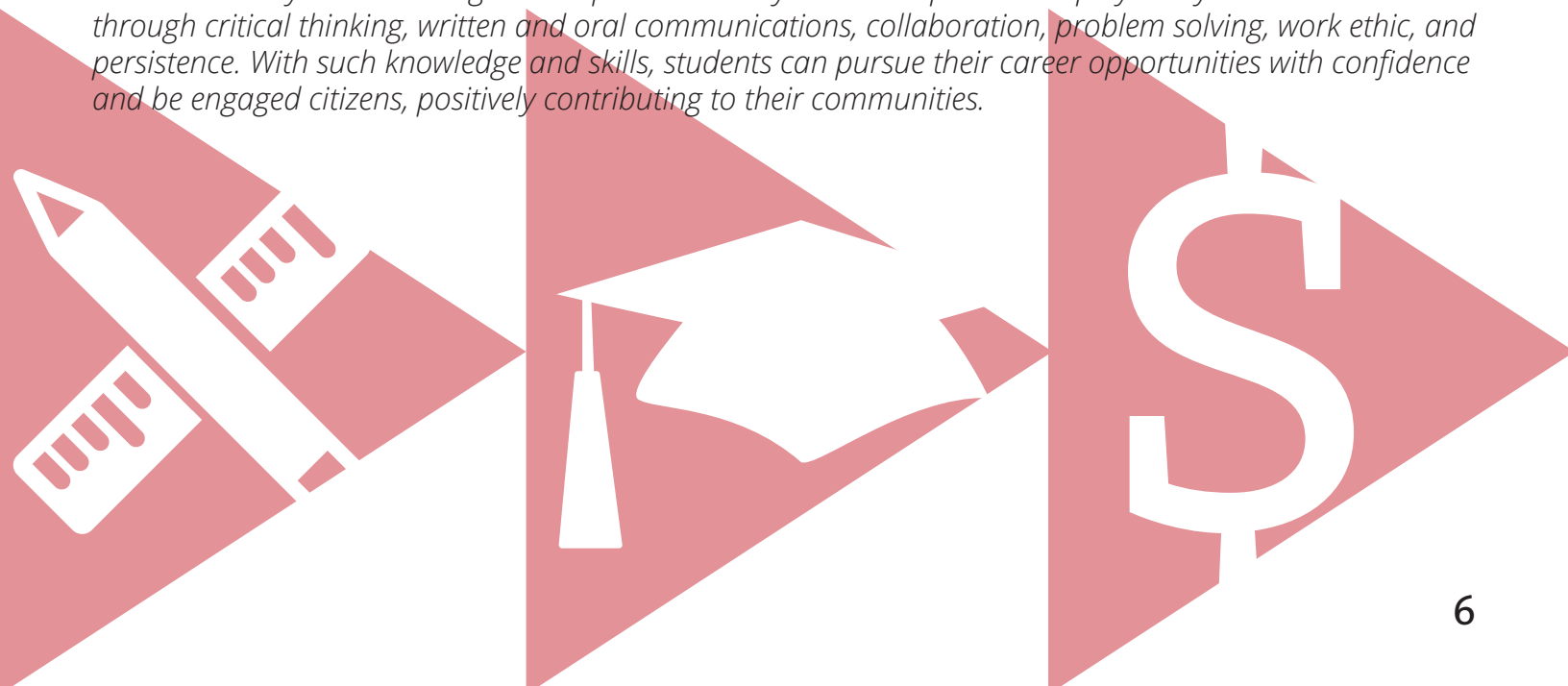
The Tennessee Department of Education believes that it is the responsibility of every person working in K-12 education to ensure all students in Tennessee reach this goal. If we are successful: **Districts and schools in Tennessee will exemplify excellence and equity such that all students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully embark upon their chosen path in life.** This is our unifying vision: success for all students upon graduation from high school. This is how Tennessee Succeeds.

To help clarify this goal, the department recently convened the Career Forward Taskforce, a group representing K-12 education, higher education, industry, nonprofit, state-level agencies, local and state elected officials, state-level advocacy groups, parents, and most importantly, students. The ultimate goal of the group was to craft a vision of a successful K-12 graduate in the state of Tennessee and develop recommendations to support that vision.

The taskforce developed the following vision statement:

In Tennessee, career-ready students are those who graduate K-12 education with the knowledge, abilities, and habits to enter and complete postsecondary education without remediation and to seamlessly move into a career that affords them the opportunity to live, work, and sustain a living wage.

To achieve these outcomes, students should have a clear understanding of their learning pathways from as early as middle school and possess academic and technical knowledge that can be exhibited successfully and consistently across settings and experiences. They must also possess employability skills exhibited through critical thinking, written and oral communications, collaboration, problem solving, work ethic, and persistence. With such knowledge and skills, students can pursue their career opportunities with confidence and be engaged citizens, positively contributing to their communities.



> "The 'ready student' has *strong academic and technical content knowledge and skills*, is *ready for postsecondary and career*, and has developed the *social and emotional skills* necessary to be a productive member of our state's economy."

Defining a "Ready" Student

Students should leave K-12 education with:

- the ability to communicate clearly in a range of contexts,
- to locate and analyze information to answer questions presented to them (including developing and supporting logical arguments),
- to make meaning from appropriately complex texts,
- to identify valid resources,
- to design appropriate experiments/projects, and
- to solve problems.

They should have the ability to use common technology (including social media) and technical skills in select fields that would allow them to **seamlessly enter and complete postsecondary education without remedial coursework and to exit with pliable credentials leading to career pathways that earn living wages.**

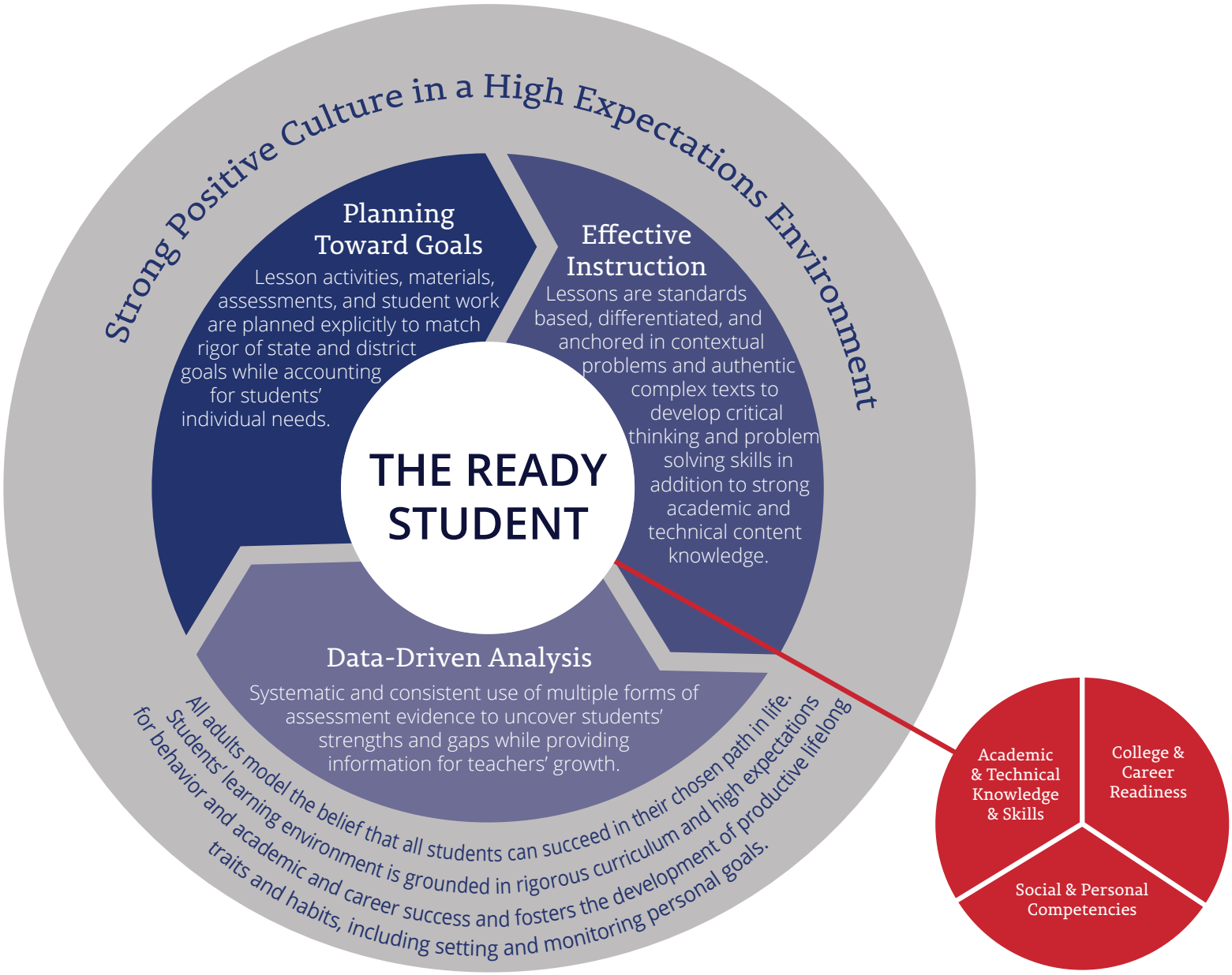
In addition, students should leave K-12 education with:

- a positive view of themselves and all others;
- a combination of self-confidence, creativity, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills that enables them to persevere in the face of challenges;
- the ability to set and achieve ambitious goals individually and as a part of a team and monitor progress along the way;
- operate respectfully at all times, including being dependable, ethical, and acting with integrity,
- benefit from positive relationships with both peers and mentors;
- be able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy behaviors; and
- know when they need to reach out for assistance.

In order to prepare a ready student, all adults in K-12 education must work together to develop students academically, socially, and emotionally in order to develop their overall college and career readiness. With high-quality instruction that includes both planning toward goals and data-driven analysis grounded in a strong, positive culture of high expectations, all students can be met where they are and be supported for growth toward college and career readiness.

On the following page is Tennessee's *Instructional Model for a Ready Student*. **The "ready student" has strong academic and technical content knowledge and skills, is ready for postsecondary and career, and has developed the social and emotional skills necessary to be a productive member of our state's economy.**

The Ready Student Model



The RTI² framework is critical to supporting children in becoming ready students. RTI² helps educators understand where students are and, through a multi-tiered system of support, assists them in moving forward. The framework integrates Tennessee Academic Standards, assessment, early intervention, and accountability for all students. This constant system of support enables students to persist on the path to readiness and is a key measure in ensuring that more and more students are able to ultimately develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be a positive member of society.

> "Educators must provide high-quality, data-driven, differentiated instruction for all students every day."

The foundation of the RTI² framework is twofold:
1. effective instruction, and
2. a culture of high expectations for all students.

In order to achieve the vision of all students graduating K-12 education ready to be successful in their chosen path in life, educators must provide high-quality, data-driven, differentiated instruction for all students every day. This instruction must be based on knowledge of students, including their strengths and opportunities for growth, their goals, and their learning styles. In addition to the specific work in the classroom that students engage with on a daily basis, students must learn in an environment where all adults hold them to high expectations and where they are able to develop productive traits and habits. In a strong, positive culture, educators constantly ask the questions: "What do my students need? And, how can I provide it?" The RTI² framework is a problem-solving methodology designed to answer these questions and ensure all students are able to benefit from strong instruction, receive support when they have a need, and thrive in a supportive environment that focuses on the whole child. **The focus of RTI² should be founded on high-quality core instruction.**

In addition to strong core instruction in a high expectations environment, the RTI² framework includes supports for students who need it. **Tiered interventions in the areas of reading, math, and/or writing occur in general education depending on the needs of the student.** If a student fails to respond to intensive interventions and is suspected of having a specific learning disability, then the student may require special education interventions (i.e., the most intensive interventions and services). As always, parents reserve the right to request an evaluation at any time (see component 5-OSEP memo 11/07).

Historically, the primary option available to students who were not successful in the general education classroom was a placement in special education. In the past, educators used a discrepancy model to look for gaps between a student's achievement and intellectual ability. Because these gaps often did not appear until later in elementary, this model was coined the "wait to fail model."

> "RTI² framework represents a continuum of intervention services in which general education and special populations work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students."

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized to place an emphasis on early intervention services for at-risk children. **Schools can no longer wait for students to fail before providing intervention.** Instead, schools should employ a proactive, problem-solving model to identify and address areas of academic need. It is important to the Tennessee Department of Education that the **RTI² framework represents a continuum of intervention services in which general education and special populations work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students.** This includes shared knowledge and commitment to the RTI² framework, its function as a process of improving educational outcomes for all students, and its importance to the department to meet requirements related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

RTI2 Implementation Timeline:

Subsequent to the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, Tennessee amended its criteria for determining the eligibility of a student with a specific learning disability to allow Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to use either a discrepancy method or a method based on Response to Intervention (RTI). At that time, however, a consistent RTI model was not adopted throughout the state. Since that time, the following events have led to the current policy change:

Spring 2012

In the spring of 2012, a leadership council focused on standards had a discussion surrounding best instructional practice in reading and math. This discussion led to the need for a statewide RTI model to promote consistency and improved instruction.

Fall 2012

In the fall of 2012, these guidelines were released to districts and presented at Tennessee Educational Leadership Conference (LEAD) in 2012. Feedback was gathered from districts and the conversation around RTI in Tennessee continued throughout the fall of 2012. At this time, the department partnered with two organizations with strong research backgrounds to help with the development of reading and math training relative to Tennessee Academic Standards and tiered, supplemental intervention.

January 9, 2013

On January 9, 2013, an RTI task force with members from various leadership roles in Tennessee education was convened to discuss the possibility of a statewide RTI model. The group voted to proceed with a statewide plan and provided recommendations.

January 14, 2013

On January 14, 2013, the proposal for identifying students with a specific learning disability using an RTI² problem-solving model was presented to and passed by the Students with Disabilities Advisory Council. The proposal was then presented to the State Board of Education (SBE) during a work session on January 31, 2013. A public hearing was held on March 19, 2013. The SBE passed the proposal on first reading on April 19, 2013, and was made final upon second reading on June 21, 2013. As of July 1, 2014, RTI² will be the criteria by which a student may be identified as having a specific learning disability in the state of Tennessee.

January 23, 2013

A call for educators to serve on a Reading/RTI Leadership Team went out to districts across the state. After a lengthy application and interview process, the team was selected on January 23, 2013.

February 1, 2013

The Reading/RTI Leadership Team met on February 1, 2013, to start researching and writing the Response to Instruction and Intervention Framework, termed RTI².

January 31, 2014

On January 31, 2014, the SBE adopted a provision which allowed LEAs to apply to the Tennessee Department of Education to extend the effective date for implementation of a research based instruction method. Approved LEAs may continue to use a discrepancy method when determining whether a child in grades 6-8 has a specific learning disability until July 1, 2015, and until July 1, 2016, for grades 9-12 at which time a research-based instruction method is mandatory for such grades.

January 2015

In January 2015, the RTI² manual and Implementation Guide were revised to reflect changes in standards and provide more guidance and support for middle and high school.

November 2015

In November 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education created an internal group assembled to develop guidance on non-academic elements impacting student success. The team is continuing to work on climate and culture, social and personal competencies, behavioral expectations, and supports for students who are not finding success in school. Upcoming resources will address chronic absenteeism, discipline, and other non-academic factors.

2016

In 2016, the Tennessee Department of Education worked with the Tier I Working Group, which sought to refine the guidance in the Tier I section of the manual. The manual was released for public feedback in Fall 2016 and a final revised version was released in Spring 2017.

September 2016

In September 2016, the Tennessee Department of Education released a report called *Supporting Early Grades Student Achievement: An Exploration of RTI² Practices*. The key findings from this report helped to inform the Tier 1 Working Group and the refinements to the RTI² manual.

The department has provided and continues to provide multiple supports to administrators and educators on RTI².

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles provide the foundation for the RTI² framework and should inform all educators' understanding of its intent and goals. The guiding principles are integrated into every piece of the framework, and the department encourages districts and schools to also consider these guiding principles as they implement and refine their own RTI² practices.

We believe...

1. leadership at the state, district, and school level is essential for ensuring the success of all students throughout the RTI² framework.

2. a culture of collaboration and high expectations that is focused on student achievement, for both struggling and advancing students, should include educators, families, and communities.

3. RTI² is a process focused on prevention and early intervention that uses multiple sources of data for instruction, differentiation, intervention, and transitions between tiers.

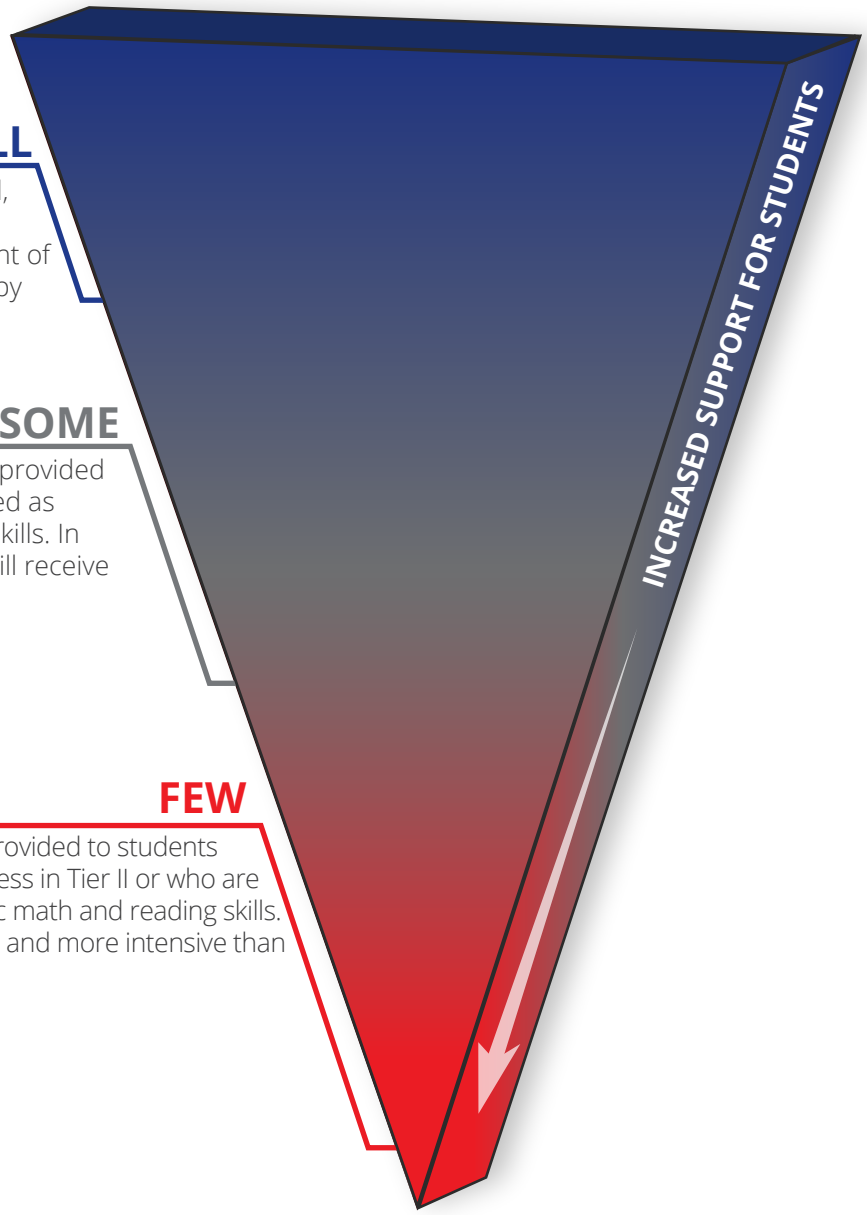
Component 1: General Procedures

Tennessee RTI^2 Model

Response to Intervention and Instruction

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

▸ Leadership ▸ Culture of Collaboration ▸ Prevention & Early Intervention



TIER I **ALL**

All students receive research-based, high-quality, general education instruction. In general, 80-85 percent of students will have their needs met by Tier I instruction.

TIER II **SOME**

In addition to Tier I, extra help is provided to students who have been identified as "at risk" in basic math and reading skills. In general 10-15 percent of student will receive Tier II interventions.

TIER III **FEW**

In addition to Tier I, extra help is provided to students who have not made significant progress in Tier II or who are significantly below grade level in basic math and reading skills. Tier III interventions are more explicit and more intensive than Tier II interventions.

1.1 General RTI² Information

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as reauthorized in 2004, states that a process that determines whether the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions may be used to determine if a child has a specific learning disability. IDEA also requires that an evaluation include a variety of assessment tools and strategies and cannot rely on any single procedure as the sole criterion for determining eligibility.

RTI² will now be used to determine whether a child has a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in basic reading skills, reading comprehension, reading fluency, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving, or written expression for students in grades K-12. Other areas of SLD, including listening comprehension and oral language, in addition to behavioral concerns, may be added in the future.

The RTI² framework is a model that promotes recommended practices for an integrated system connecting general and special education by the use of high-quality, scientifically research-based instruction and intervention.

> "When Tier I instruction is functioning well, it should meet the needs of 80-85% of the student population."

The RTI² framework is a three-tier model that provides an ongoing process of instruction and interventions that allow students to make progress at all levels, particularly those students who are struggling or advancing.

The RTI² model (on the previous page) shows the ideal distribution of tiers in an RTI² system. It represents the goal of what an RTI model will look like. When Tier I instruction is functioning well, it should meet the needs of 80-85% of the student population. Only 10-15% of the student population should need Tier II interventions and only 3-5% should need Tier III interventions. The Tennessee Department of Education recognizes that most school systems in Tennessee are continuing to work toward this goal.

1.2 District/School Team

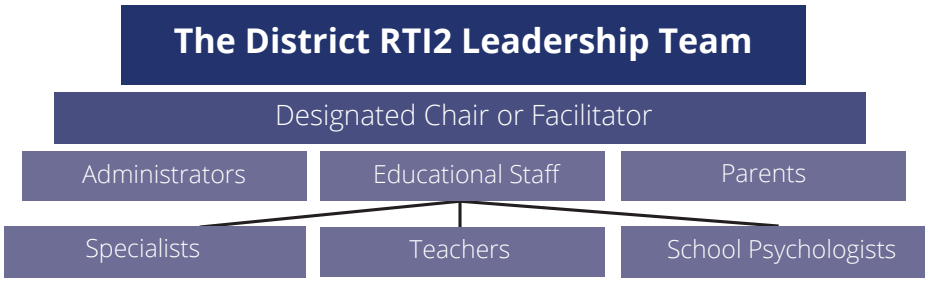
As stated in the Guiding Principles, leadership and a culture of collaboration are essential to the success of the RTI² framework. This is not a process led by special education. **It is a joint effort led by general education.**

> "A Local Educational Agency (LEA) must have a District RTI² Leadership team and school level RTI² support teams."

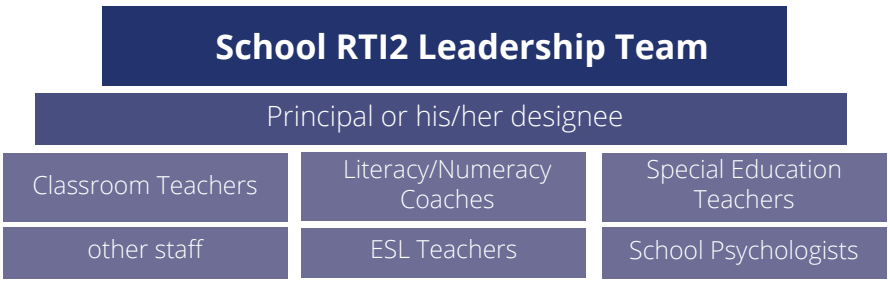
In order to have a strong RTI² program and to support a culture of collaboration, a Local Educational Agency (LEA) must have a district RTI² leadership team and school-level RTI² support teams.

LEAs will have a description of the members of the **district RTI² leadership team** and their roles. **This team meets regularly to ensure the fidelity of the RTI² process.** Typically, this involves looking at district data to ensure that Tier I instruction is meeting the needs of 80-85% of students and that Tier II and Tier III interventions are meeting the needs of 15-20% of students.

The district RTI² leadership team includes a designated chair or facilitator and is comprised of a diverse and representative group of people, which may include: administrators, educational staff (including teachers, specialists, school psychologists, etc.), and possibly parents. This team works to organize professional learning, set and monitor timelines for implementation, and guide the implementation of RTI².



LEAs will have a description of the members of the school level RTI² support teams and their roles. These teams meet regularly to ensure the fidelity of the instruction and interventions, as well as make data-based decisions regarding appropriate student placement in interventions. School teams will ensure that interventions are implemented with integrity. When placing students in interventions, it will require reviewing and discussing student data and student attendance in interventions. **Interventions must be matched to specific area(s) of deficit for each student.**



School teams can include the principal or his/her designee, classroom teachers, literacy/numeracy coaches, school psychologists, school counselors, ESL teachers, special education teachers, and other staff as necessary.

The district RTI² leadership team will indicate the frequency of district RTI² support meetings. The school level RTI² team will meet at least every 4.55 weeks.

1.3 Universal Screening Procedures

As stated in the guiding principles, **RTI² is a process focused on prevention and early intervention that uses multiple sources of data** for instruction, differentiation, intervention, and transitions between tiers. Ongoing assessment (see Component 2.3) is a major component of the RTI² framework. Data derived from ongoing assessment, including the universal screening process, informs data-based decision making.

The requirement that districts must implement RTI² has resulted in districts establishing a universal screening process that best meets the needs of their students. Districts should implement a universal screening process that uses multiple sources of data to identify individual student strengths and areas of need and that provides them with **accurate information for making informed decisions about skills-specific interventions, remediation, re-teaching, and enrichment** for each child. All students must participate in a universal screening process to identify those who may need additional support and/or other types of instruction.

The universal screening process will also play an important role in fulfilling the requirements of Tennessee's dyslexia legislation (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016). Passed during the 2016 legislative session, this law requires that districts implement a screening process for identifying characteristics of dyslexia. Districts with an appropriate, effective universal screening process in place will be able to use the information they collect to make important determinations about dyslexia-specific accommodations and interventions.

> "All students must participate in a universal screening process to identify those who may need additional support and/or other types of instruction"

The universal screening process involves three steps:

Step One:

In grades K-8, districts should administer a nationally normed, skills-based universal screener as part of the universal screening process. According to Hughes et. al., a nationally normed skills-based universal screener is necessary because relying only on local performance could give a false impression of student proficiency. Universal screeners are not assessments in the traditional sense. They are brief, informative tools used to measure academic skills in six general areas (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem solving, and written expression).

In grades 9-12, schools should collect multiple sources of data that can be incorporated into an early warning system (EWS). The EWS may include data from universal screeners, achievement tests (from both high school and grades K-8), End-of-Course (EOC) exams, student records (e.g., grades, behavioral patterns, attendance, retention, and past RTI² interventions), Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) student score projections, and the ACT/SAT exam or other nationally normed assessments. (Note: A template can be found on the department's RTI² webpage under "Instructional Resources.") Districts will establish criteria for identifying students who are at risk using this EWS by determining appropriate thresholds for each indicator (e.g., missing ten percent of instructional days may be a flag for attendance) and weighting each indicator appropriately to appropriately differentiate students based on local context (e.g., student population and school improvement plan goals).

Step Two:

In grades K–12, school teams should use and analyze the results of the skills-based universal screener or EWS compared to other classroom-based assessments. These may include but are not limited to: standards-based assessments, grades, formative assessments, summative assessments, classroom performance, teacher observations, etc. This information should be used to confirm or challenge performance on the skills-based universal screener.

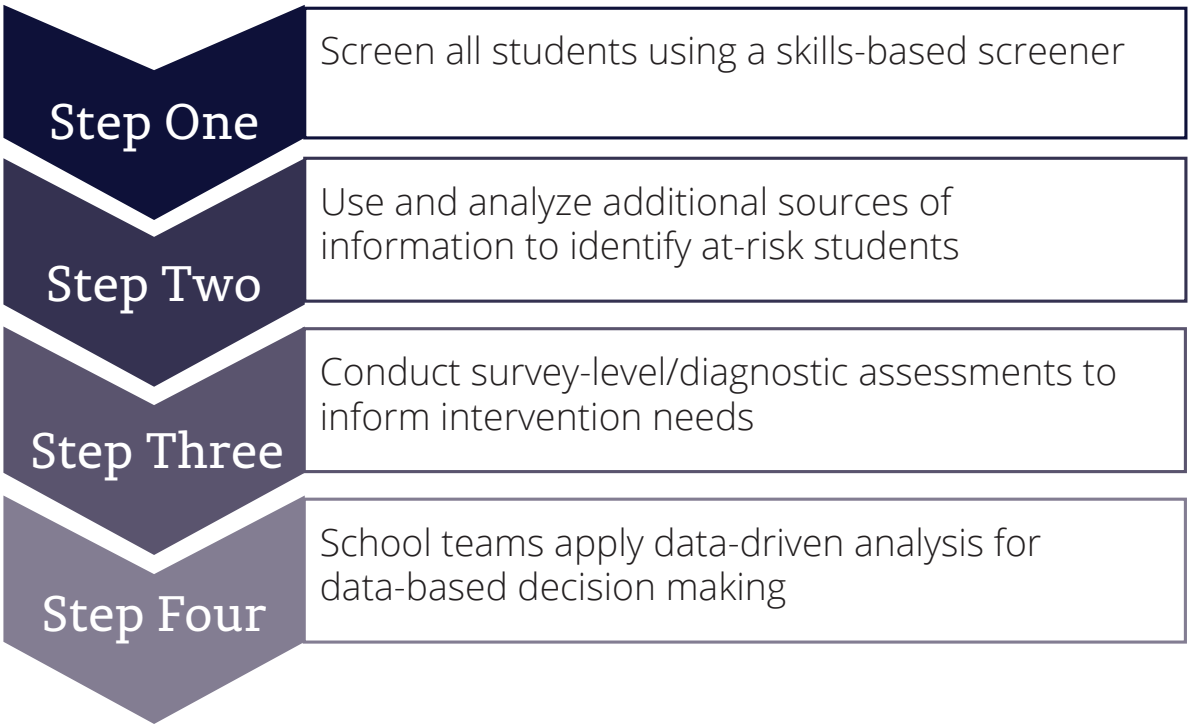
Step Three:

In grades K–12, students identified as "at risk" based on multiple sources of data should be administered survey level and/or diagnostic assessments to determine student intervention needs. As required by the "Say Dyslexia" bill (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016), these survey-level assessments for reading must explicitly measure characteristics of dyslexia to include: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding skills. Please see the department's *Dyslexia Resource Guide* for additional information on these requirements.

Step Four:

In grades K-12, school teams should apply data-driven analysis for data-based decision making. **Data-based decision making is the use of appropriate data gathered through ongoing assessment to inform and drive instructional decisions in Tier I**. It also determines the need for skills-specific interventions, remediation, re-teaching, and enrichment. The school team should have plans in place, based on the results of data, for students who are making adequate progress and for students who are not making adequate progress. (See Components 1.4, 2.3, and 2.4 for more information.)

Figure 1: Universal screening process using a skills-based universal screener

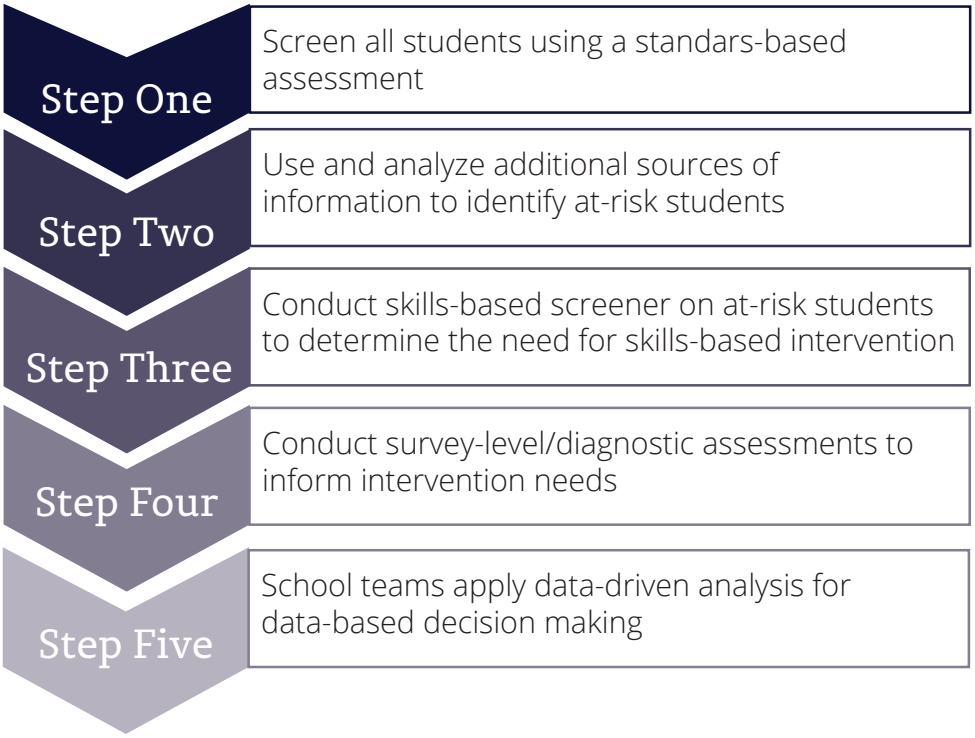


Use of Standards-Based Assessments

If a standards-based assessment is used to screen all students instead of a skills-based universal screener, a skills-based screener is still necessary to identify more specific skill area(s) of focus and to determine alignment of interventions for students identified as "at risk."

A skills-based universal screener is the *most* appropriate, defensible tool for identifying students that have skills deficits and informing the need for a skills-based intervention. If a skills-based universal screener is not used, districts might not identify students with underlying skills deficits or properly align interventions. Further, if districts do not use a skills-based universal screener and are unable to collect accurate data associated with a suspected area of disability, they may run the risk of violating their child find obligation .

Figure 2: Universal screening process using a standards-based assessment

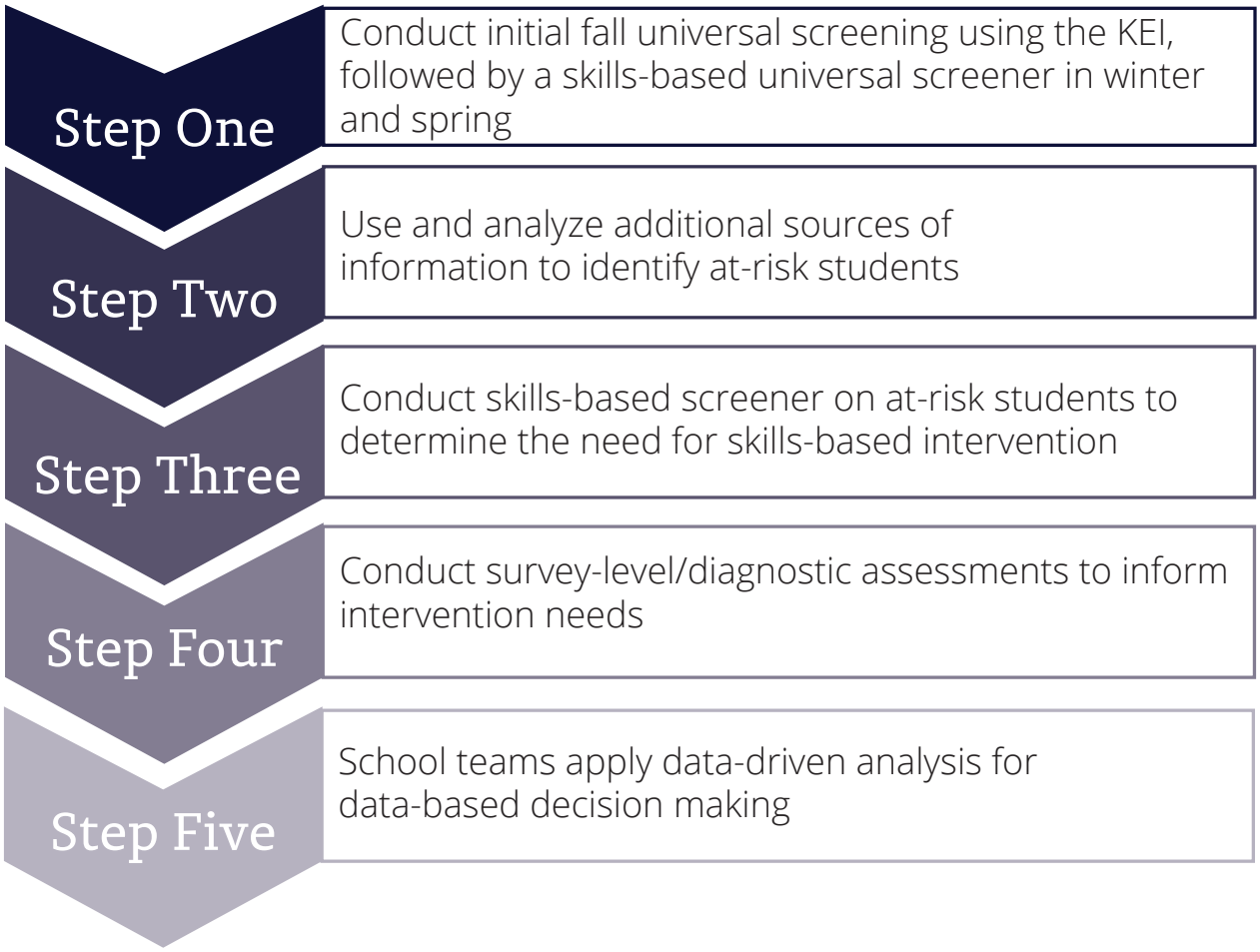


Use of the Kindergarten Entry Inventory

Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, the department will provide districts with a **Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI) in order to better understand where students are as they begin their kindergarten year.** The KEI will help determine how students are progressing towards mastering the grade-level standards and skills necessary for success in their academic journey. Please note, for the first year of KEI implementation, if districts have a comparable tool already in place, they will have the option to continue using their current tool.

One benefit of the KEI is that districts will be able to utilize it in place of the first RTI² universal screener. Districts and schools should closely consider these results when determining student instructional needs at the beginning of kindergarten. If the KEI indicates that a student has not met critical kindergarten academic readiness benchmarks and needs additional support, a skills-based screener and other appropriate classroom-based assessments should be used to inform RTI² decision making and determine intervention needs. Districts should continue administering a skills-based universal screener to all students in the winter and spring of kindergarten.

Figure 3: Universal screening process using Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI)



In general, the information collected from skills-based universal screeners, additional sources of data, and survey-level and/or diagnostic assessments *together* inform important decisions about student learning and serve as a benchmark for measuring the improvement of a group, class, grade, school, or district. Furthermore, the use of additional, appropriate sources of data, including diagnostic assessments, achievement tests, teacher observations, and student records (e.g., grades, attendance, behavioral incidents) may provide additional information helpful for making decisions regarding student academic support.

> “The information collected from skills-based universal screeners, additional sources of data, and survey-level and/or diagnostic assessments together inform important decisions about student learning”

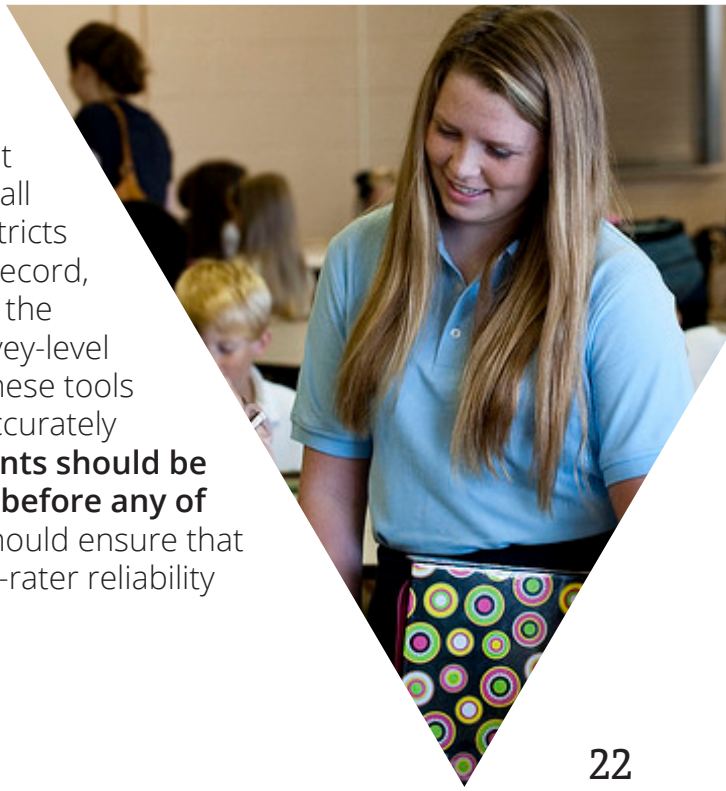
Frequency of Universal Screening

In grades K-5 and in grade 6, the universal screening process should be conducted three times per year: at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. By seventh grade, student performance is relatively stable from one benchmark period to the next; therefore, in grades 7-8, the universal screening process should be conducted once at the end of each school year to inform intervention decisions for the following year. However, if districts have a large number of at-risk students who are struggling to meet grade level expectations, they should continue the universal screening process three times per year and use data from multiple, appropriate sources to adequately support tiered service of interventions and the high level of need for skills based instruction. In terms of general procedures, the same or parallel universal screeners should be used at each administration, and the screening measures should assess students' at their current grade level.

Frequency of Universal Screening by Grade Band			
Grades K-5	Grade 6	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12
Skills based universal screening process three times/year (fall, winter, spring)	Skills based universal screening process three times/year	Skills based universal screening process end of year (spring)*	Early Warning System (EWS) reviewed annually to identify at-risk students
	End of year (spring) results used to place students in interventions the following year	End of year (spring) results used to place students in interventions the following year	End of year (spring) results used to place students in interventions the following year

** If districts have a large number of at-risk students who are struggling to meet grade level expectations, they should continue screening three time per year.*

Districts and/or schools should consider how the universal screener or standards-based assessment and other survey-level assessments will be administered and who will administer them. For example, schools may want to administer the universal screener on the same day to all students or stagger the administration. Furthermore, districts and/or schools should consider whether the teacher of record, interventionist, or other staff member should administer the universal screener, standards-based assessment, or survey-level assessment. Districts and/or schools must ensure that these tools are implemented with fidelity so that student skills are accurately measured. **Personnel responsible for screening students should be appropriately trained in how to administer the tools before any of them are given.** For instance, districts and/or schools should ensure that all individuals administering assessments attend an inter-rater reliability training to ensure consistency.



Universal Screening Tools

In August 2014, the Tennessee Department of Education utilized a statewide RFP process to identify universal screeners and progress monitoring tools that met all the criteria outlined in the RTI² framework.

At the time of the 2014 RFP process, the vendors below met the minimum technical score required and were identified as meeting state criteria for universal screening and progress monitoring.

The goal of the RFP process was to provide guidance for districts. Districts are in no way required to select a vendor or product from this list.

Vendors meeting state criteria and entering into cost negotiation with the state		
Area Assessed	Universal Screening	Progress Monitoring
Reading	**AIMSWEB** NCS Pearson, INC. **EasyCBM** The Riverside Publishing Company	**AIMSWEB** NCS Pearson, INC. **EasyCBM** The Riverside Publishing Company
Math	**AIMSWEB** NCS Pearson, INC. **EasyCBM** The Riverside Publishing Company	**AIMSWEB** NCS Pearson, INC. **EasyCBM** The Riverside Publishing Company
Writing	**AIMSWEB** NCS Pearson, INC.	**AIMSWEB** NCS Pearson, INC.

Vendors meeting state criteria, but not entering into cost negotiation with the state*		
Area Assessed	Universal Screening	Progress Monitoring
Reading	**DIBELS** Amplify Education, Inc., Dynamic Measurment Group, and Voyager Sopris Learning Inc.	**DIBELS** Amplify Education, Inc., Dynamic Measurment Group, and Voyager Sopris Learning Inc.

**The state is unable to enter into a contract with Amplify Education, Inc., Dynamic Measurement Group, and Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc. due to the state's procurement process. However, DIBELS—the product submitted for review—does meet the state's technical score requirement and is identified as a product that meets state criteria for universal screening and progress monitoring. As with all vendors, districts may reach out to these vendors directly for provision of a universal screener and/or progress monitoring tool.*

Use of the Second Grade Assessment

The department intends to propose the use of the second grade assessment, as well as the use of the third and fourth grade assessments, as part of the universal screening process. More guidance and information on how these might be used as part of the universal screening process will be released in Fall 2017 after the first administration of these assessments in Spring 2017. Using data collected from these assessments may give districts more flexibility and autonomy when deciding how and when to administer the universal screener.

1.4 Data-Based Decision Making Procedures

Data-based decision making is the use of appropriate data gathered through ongoing assessment to inform and drive instructional decisions in Tier I. It also determines the need for skills-specific interventions, remediation, re-teaching, and enrichment. The school team should have plans in place, based on the results of data, for students who are making adequate progress and for students who are not making adequate progress.

All data, including data derived from the universal screening process, should be considered when making instructional decisions for students in Tier I. If a student is not making adequate progress in Tier I, another data-based decision could include administering additional assessments that could determine if additional support through Tier II or Tier III intervention is necessary.

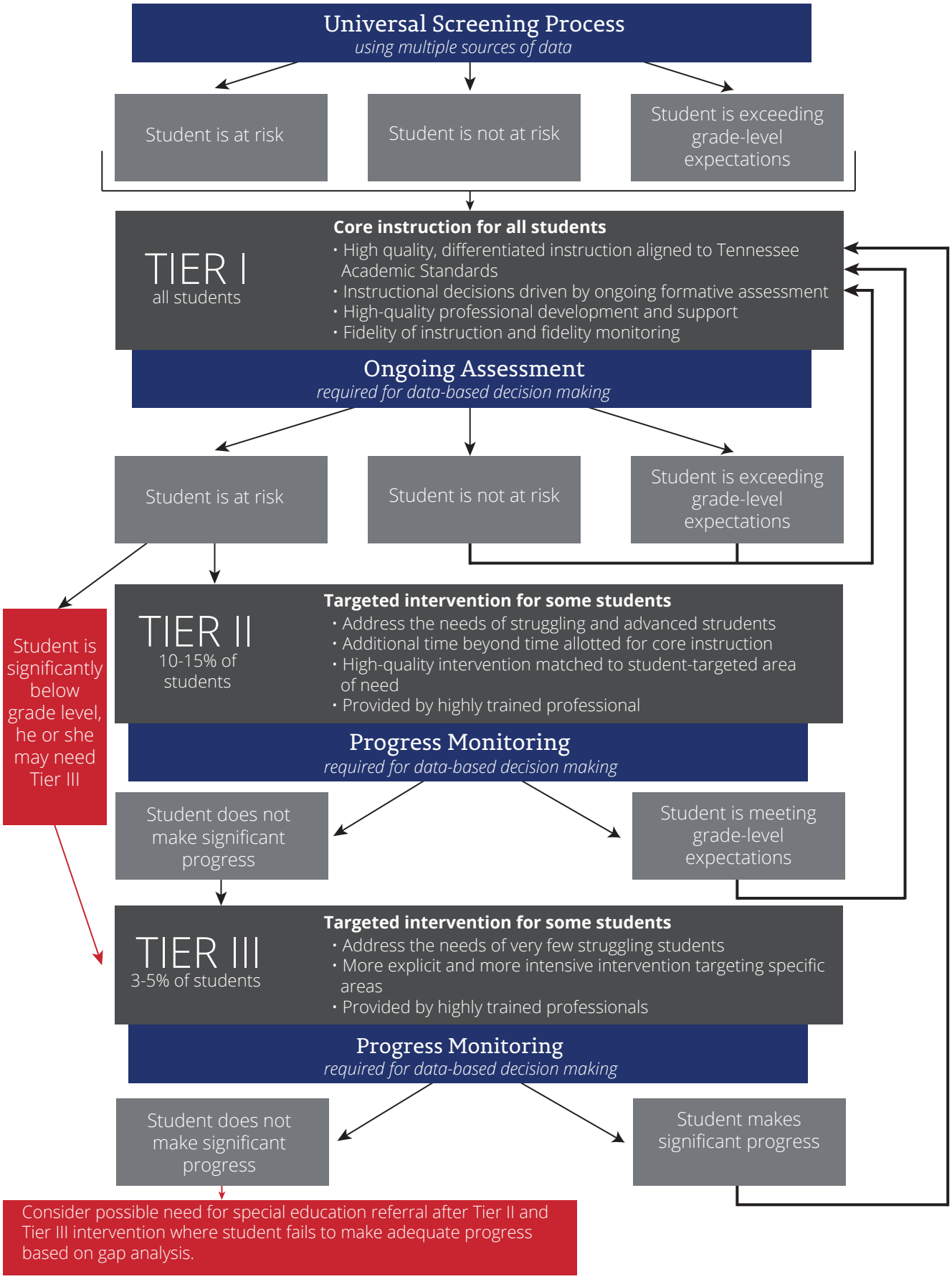
> "All data, including data derived from the universal screening process, should be considered when making instructional decision for students in Tier I."

In particular, the results from the universal screening process can be used to determine the need for intervention in Tier II or Tier III. A skills-based screener is a measure that can be used as an indicator that a student may be struggling due to underlying skills deficits. **The skills-based screener serves as a "temperature check" to identify areas where students may be struggling.** The skills-based screener is not diagnostic and does not prescribe intervention. School teams should use the results of the skills-based screener to identify students that might need to be looked at a bit closer. Additional information, such as formative and summative assessments, survey-level assessments, diagnostic assessments, teacher observations, and classroom performance are all sources of data that should be used when determining intervention needs.

The universal screening process (see Component 1.3) is used to identify students who may be considered "at risk." As a guideline, educators should look at students scoring below the 25th percentile compared to national norms on a skills-based screener, corroborating their performance with additional sources of information (e.g., standards-based assessments, grades, formative assessments, summative assessments, classroom performance, teacher observations, etc.), to determine those who are "at risk." Students who are considered "at risk" should receive appropriately aligned skills-based interventions in addition to Tier I instruction. Students who exceed grade-level expectations may be considered "advanced." Students who are considered "advanced" should receive appropriate enrichment in addition to Tier I instruction.

If a school has a large number of students falling below national norms, a school team may use "relative norms" instead of national norms to guide the identification of at-risk students. Relative norms compare a student's performance to other students in his/her school. **If a school has a high population of struggling students, relative norms allow a school staff to determine which students have the greatest need for intervention.** A school uses relative norms to serve students that are most at risk while addressing Tier I instructional practices for increasing the performance of all students. If a school or district determines the need to use relative norms due to high numbers of struggling students, an actionable plan should be developed to address any instructional implications. **LEAs should continue to use national comparisons for overall program evaluation to determine whether Tier I instructional practices are successful in improving student performance.** Typically, students who are most at risk or who have the most intensive need as identified through the universal screening process should receive interventions first.

The RTI² decision-making process is outlined below in a flow chart showing all three tiers. This chart shows how instructional and intervention decisions are made based on data.



1.5 Students Entering Mid-term

A culture of collaboration that is focused on student achievement should include educators, families, and communities. When students enroll mid-term, a culture of collaboration will be fostered to ensure that the students' needs are met.

Procedures should be in place for students who enroll mid-term or any time after the universal screening is completed. A plan should be in place for administering the universal screening for these students. This plan should include what decisions will be made based on the screening data and who will make these decisions. It should also include how schools will secure the records from the previous school. Every effort should be made to quickly obtain educational records from the previous school. LEAs should also include a plan for students who transfer between schools within the district.

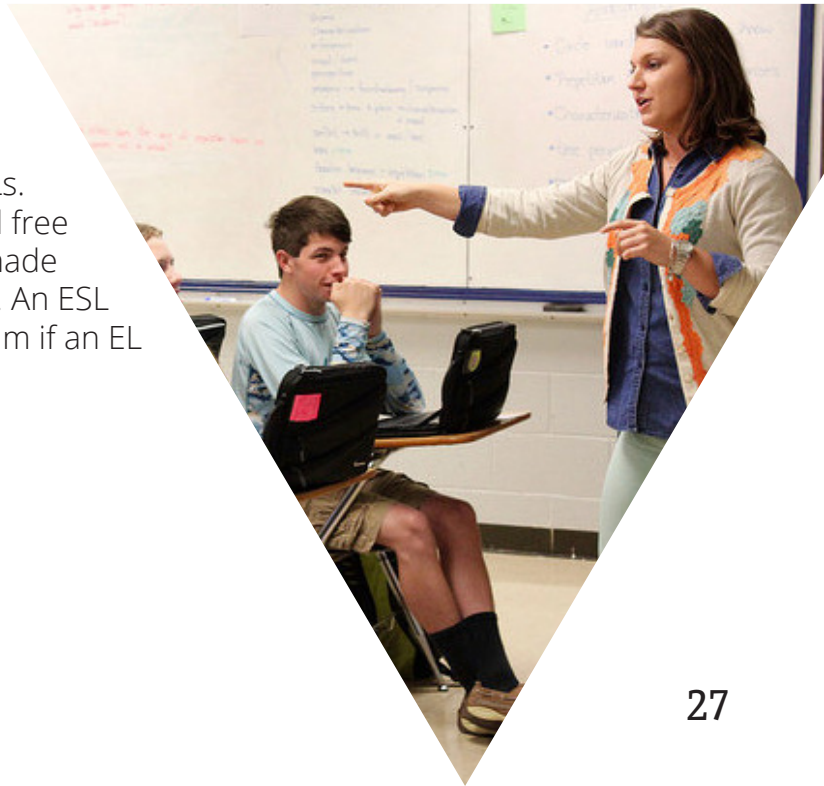
1.6 Parent Contact

Parent contact is an essential component of RTI² and reinforces the culture of collaboration. A variety of means to reach parents may be used, including: automated phone systems, electronic mail, U.S. mail, and student-delivered communications. LEAs must designate a person to coordinate and/or make contact with parents at the school level.

This person must contact parents for each of the following reasons: before initiating or discontinuing tiered interventions, to communicate progress monitoring data in writing every 4.5 weeks for students receiving tiered interventions, regarding a referral to special education, and regarding the dates and duration of universal screenings.

1.7 Procedures for English Learners

As stated in the guiding principles, RTI² is a process focused on prevention and early intervention and designed to ensure success for all students, including English learners (ELs). LEAs should administer a universal screener to ELs. Universal screeners will be culturally sensitive and free of bias, and thoughtful consideration should be made for how ELs will participate in tiered interventions. An ESL teacher should be part of the school-level RTI² team if an EL is being discussed.



Component 2: Tier I Procedures

2.1 Introduction to Tier I Curriculum

Tier I instruction, also known as core instruction, provides rich learning opportunities for all students that are aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards and are responsive to student strengths and needs through differentiation. The entire range of learners, including those identified with disabilities, students who are identified as gifted, and English Learners, are included and actively participate in Tier I instruction. Differentiation, based on multiple sources of data, is a hallmark of Tier I.

Strategic and intensive **Tier II and III interventions occur *in addition* to Tier I instruction.** Tier I provides a scaffolded model of grade-level rigor aligned to the standards; whereas, Tier II and Tier III interventions target and narrow learning gaps, making Tier I instruction increasingly accessible to all learners.

Section 2.1 of this manual focuses attention on effective Tier I practices and is divided into the following sub-sections:

- K-12 ELA Instruction Overview
- K-5 ELA Instruction
- 6-12 ELA Instruction
- K-12 Mathematics Instruction Overview
- K-2 Math Instruction
- 3-5 Math Instruction
- 6-12 Math Instruction
- 6-12 Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, and Career & Technical Education Instruction Overview

While one intent of Section 2.1 is to point out common Tier I practices throughout grade ranges and content areas, it is also important to highlight distinctions between and within grade-level bands, as well as within developmental trajectories.

2.1 (a) K-12 ELA Instruction Overview

Tier I English language arts (ELA) instruction, aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards, is rooted in the following three instructional shifts:

- Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language
- Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational
- Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

Students should practice the standards within the context of these shifts. That is, they should listen, speak, read, and write with the purpose of comprehending complex text, developing academic language, identifying and presenting evidence, and/or building knowledge.

All instructional practices and materials should be supported by evidence and research as required by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2016) and aligned to the expectations and shifts of the Tennessee Academic Standards.

> "The standards should be taught in a balanced and integrated manner that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the strands, and students should be given regular opportunities to apply and connect standards in a range of ways."

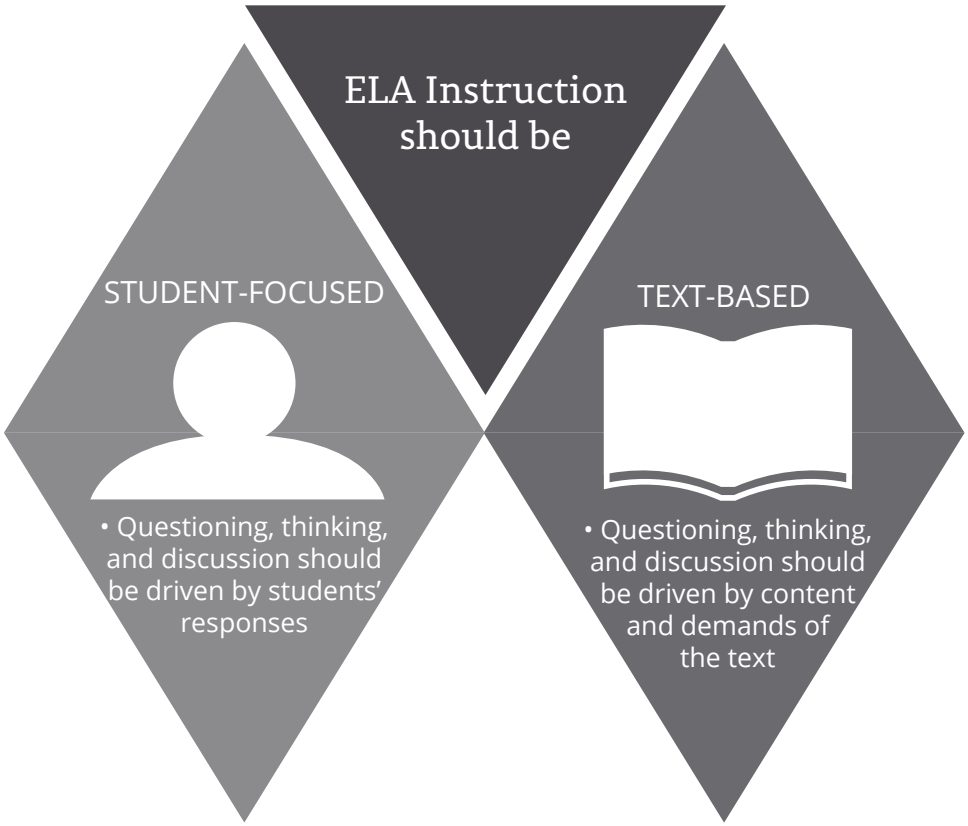
Tier I ELA curricula should include all of the strands of the Tennessee Academic Standards:

- Foundational Literacy (K-5)
- Language (6-12)
- Reading: Literature (K-12)
- Reading: Informational Text (K-12)
- Speaking & Listening (K-12)
- Writing (K-12)

The standards should be taught in a balanced and integrated manner that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the strands, and students should be given regular opportunities to apply and connect standards in a range of ways. For example, students may listen to a narrative story and talk about character development, read an informational piece and write about the author's argument and use of evidence, or identify repeated phonics patterns within a poem and discuss how sound repetitions contribute to the poem's rhyme and rhythm.

Certain standards require students to master specific skills or demonstrate the application of particular strategies. Skills and strategies, such as identifying prefixes or making inferences, should be modeled and practiced explicitly yet always through an integrated approach with a focus on connected texts.

ELA instruction should be student-focused and text-based. That is, questioning, thinking, and discussion should be driven by students' responses and interests, as well as the content and demands of the text. Instruction should support students in developing the necessary skills, including comprehension and stamina, to listen to, read, and write texts of increasing complexity and length.



To promote the integration of standards and the application of skills in context, ELA instruction should focus on:

- listening to, reading, and comprehending appropriately complex texts;
- close reading, including chunking and re-reading particularly difficult sections, to analyze ideas, information, and text structures;
- vocabulary development through the text, with a focus on academic vocabulary;
- volume of reading on one topic at a time in order to build knowledge and vocabulary;
- speaking and writing to address text-dependent questions that promote textual analysis, reasoning, argumentation, and use of evidence to support claims;
- explicit instruction in recognizing when to employ specific word analysis, fluency, and comprehension strategies that enhance understanding of text meaning;
- analyzing, critiquing, and synthesizing text information for multiple purposes;
- speaking and writing for multiple purposes that are authentic and purposeful (e.g., to answer questions or solve problems, to organize information, to pursue an area of interest, to share knowledge with an audience, etc.);
- reading widely across literary genres in order to develop comprehension, intertextual connections, and vocabulary; and
- reading widely across the content areas, including science, social studies, and fine arts, to build historical, cultural, and disciplinary knowledge that can be applied to other academic settings.

Skills-Based Competencies	Knowledge-Based Competencies
• The procedural components necessary for accurate reading • Including print concepts • Word recognition • Fluency	• Comprehension • Making meaning

The goal of K-5 ELA instruction is to support all students in developing both skills-based literacy competencies and knowledge-based literacy competencies. Skills-based competencies include the procedural components necessary for accurate reading, including print concepts, word recognition, and fluency. Knowledge-based competencies are about comprehension or making meaning. They focus on the ability to understand and express complex ideas through knowledge of concepts, vocabulary, and reasoning. Both skills- and knowledge-based competencies are vitally important, and neither serves as the foundation for the other. I**n other words, in grades K-5, students must learn to read while reading to learn.**

ELA instruction in K-5 should engage students in multiple listening, speaking, reading, viewing, drawing, and writing activities that are hands on, concrete, and appropriate for developing children's literacy capabilities. There should be an emphasis on reading with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression while attending to comprehension and the development of knowledge and vocabulary. ELA instruction should encourage students to express their understanding through frequent peer-to-peer discussion and interaction.

A Balanced and Scaffolded Approach
An effective K-5 ELA block takes a balanced, scaffolded, and integrated approach, providing students with opportunities to engage with texts in a range of ways. Through this approach, students are given opportunities to:

- observe teacher-led models and demonstrations;
- participate in shared reading and writing experiences where both teacher and students take ownership for thinking; and
- direct their own application of learning through independent practice.

This gradual release of responsibility supports students in working with texts at a range of levels, including above-grade-level texts, on-grade-level texts, leveled texts, and texts for independent reading.

Additionally, a balanced approach emphasizes the integration of speaking, listening, reading, and writing and provides students with opportunities to learn and apply various standards, skills, and strategies. **Different modes of reading are integrated into the Tier I block, including interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.** These modes provide text access for all learners through a scaffolded approach. As students read text in different ways and for various purposes, they are given frequent opportunities to speak and write about their

learning while listening to others share as well. Systematic and explicit teaching of foundational skills through connected text should be integrated within the various modes of reading.

A Balanced and Scaffolded Approach
An effective K-5 ELA block takes a balanced, scaffolded, and integrated approach, providing students with opportunities to engage with texts in a range of ways. Through this approach, students are given opportunities to:

- observe teacher-led models and demonstrations,
- participate in shared reading and writing experiences where both teacher and students take ownership for thinking, and
- direct their own application of learning through independent practice.

This gradual release of responsibility supports students in working with texts at a range of levels, including above-grade-level texts, on-grade-level texts, leveled texts, and texts for independent reading.

Whole Group	Small Group
• Interactive read alouds • Shared reading • Teacher-modeled mini-lessons • Word study • Student discussion	• Rereading familar texts • Guided reading of new texts • Literature circles • Extra text based skills • Strategy work

Strategic Instructional Grouping
Tier I ELA instruction should include time in both whole group and small group settings. Educators should make decisions about instructional groupings strategically, based on the goals of the lesson as well as students' strengths and needs.

Whole group instruction is important for ensuring all students receive opportunities to observe teacher models and apply content and strategies. Whole group lessons may include interactive read alouds, shared reading, teacher-modeled mini-lessons, word study, and student discussions.

Small group instruction is important for meeting the needs of individual students and student groups. Small group instruction allows educators to teach, review, or extend targeted objectives and provide students with additional opportunities for practice. Small group lessons may include rereading familiar texts, guided reading of new texts, literature circles, or extra text-based skill or strategy work. Student conferencing may occur during this time as well. All students should meet with the teacher in a small group setting a minimum of every other day; it is recommended that struggling readers meet with the teacher every day. Small groups should contain no more than six students. (More information about small group instruction is included in Section 2.2.)

Purposeful Practice
Throughout the Tier I ELA block students should be given opportunities to apply their literacy learning in purposeful and authentic ways. For example, students may write a letter to the principal recommending updates to the school's playground or perform a reader's theater piece to an incoming kindergarten class to teach them about school safety. Purposeful practice also includes the strategic and differentiated development of literacy skills, either to strengthen an area of need

> "Whole group instruction, small group instruction, and students' independent work should focus on advancing student learning: educators should avoid one-size-fits-all assignments or giving students tasks they've already mastered."

or build on an area of expertise. Whole group instruction, small group instruction, and students' independent work should focus on advancing student learning: educators should avoid one-size-fits-all assignments or giving students tasks they've already mastered.

During teacher-led small groups, students not meeting with the teacher should engage in purposeful practice that reinforces the standards and skills being taught in other lessons. Students can complete these activities independently or in small groups. These activities can include independent reading, partner reading, word study activities, independent writing, learning stations, book studies, listening to audio texts, reader responses, or vocabulary study.

Developmental Appropriateness

While effective instruction across the K-5 grade band shares many similarities, there are important developmental distinctions between each grade level. **Educators should be mindful of selecting developmentally appropriate ELA practices, based on the age, strengths, needs, and experiences of their students.** Students in lower grades should still engage with complex texts, practice close reading, read with the goal of building knowledge, etc.; however, they may do so by listening to a teacher read aloud or by working with shorter texts.

Timeframe Guidance

Tier I	Time Recommendation
K-2 ELA	150 minutes daily
3-5 ELA	120-150 minutes daily

In grades K-2, students should spend 150 minutes in Tier I instruction. In grades 3-5, students should spend between 120 and 150 minutes in Tier I instruction. It is strongly recommended that 90 minutes of Tier I instruction be uninterrupted, allowing adequate time for teacher modeling and student practice and the integration of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The entire ELA block should be taught by the same teacher in order to support continuity between whole and small group instruction as well as the integration of ELA strands.

The integration of science and social studies content within the ELA block can support time allocations for fully developing mastery of the ELA standards; however, the use of science or social studies texts should not be substituted for content standards.

These time recommendations allow for:

- deep, meaningful, standards-based instruction;
- adequate time for interactive read alouds and shared reading experiences;
- approximately 60 minutes of small group instruction where teachers meet with 3-4 small groups daily for 15-20 minutes each;
- opportunities for multiple, daily writing lessons, including on-demand writing in response to text as well as extended student-directed composition of narrative, opinion, and informational pieces;
- daily independent reading and reading conferences; and
- systematic and explicit instruction of foundational skills and frequent application of foundational skill to connected texts.

While these time allocations are provided as recommendations, diverse building and grade-level structures, as well as student needs and instructional goals, may influence scheduling within the K-5 ELA block.

2.1 (c) 6-12 ELA Instruction

Tier I ELA instruction in grades 6-12 should focus on constant and critical engagement with text, where teachers guide students to construct their own insights from reading, rather than telling students what the text means. By sixth grade, students should actively and primarily read to gain knowledge, vocabulary, and increase comprehension—although some students may need additional skills-based instruction or intervention.

The majority of the ELA block should be spent reading and responding to grade-level, complex texts and applying grade-level standards. Students should engage in whole-class, small-group, or partner discussions about the text and their interpretations. Discussion should provide numerous opportunities for expanding background knowledge, vocabulary, content knowledge, and shared language. Teacher facilitation should be limited during the discussion.

The majority of student writing should be based on text.

While students are expected to engage in rigorous reading and writing experiences during their ELA class, students should also read and write frequently in the majority of their other classes, including science, social studies, and mathematics.

Timeframe Guidance

Tier I	Grades 6-8 (traditional)	Grades 6-8 (block)	Grades 9-12 (traditional)	Grades 9-12 (block)
ELA	55 minutes daily	90 minutes	55 minutes daily	90 minutes

Tier I ELA instruction should consist of a 90-minute block or 55 minutes in a traditional schedule. It is strongly recommended that all schools move away from the practice of separating English language arts instruction into reading and language arts classes and instead move toward a single, coherent, integrated ELA course model, as the interconnected nature of the Tennessee Academic Standards requires students to work across multiple strands at once.

These time recommendations allow for:

- deep, meaningful, standards-based instruction;
- adequate time to both read and respond to text, including time for peer-to-peer discussion and writing;
- 30 minutes of whole group instruction, which may include practices such as shared reading, close reading, mini-lessons, and student discussion (this 30-minute whole group time may be non-consecutive); and
- regular opportunities for small group instruction, where teachers monitor and interact with students during reading, speaking, and writing activities. Students should have teacher contact a minimum of every other day. Small groups can be teacher-led, transitioning to student-led as students learn to independently own their work. Each small group should contain no more than six students and should be flexible and differentiated to meet students' needs.

While these time allocations are provided as recommendations, diverse school- and grade-level structures, as well as student needs, may influence scheduling within the 6-12 ELA block.

2.1 (d) K-12 Mathematics Instruction Overview

Mathematics instruction should provide students the opportunity to develop conceptual understanding, develop and solidify procedural fluency, and participate in meaningful problem solving application investigations. All three should be treated with equal intensity at each grade level. Emphasis should be placed on the major mathematical work within each grade as identified in the Tennessee Academic Standards. This allows students to move along a mathematical continuum preparing them for college and career expectations. Additionally, it is very important that teachers help students make connections across and between grades. **Students need to be exposed to the many connections that naturally exist within the structure of mathematics.** This coherence gives students the ability to make the necessary connections for them to build conceptual understanding not only within a grade but also from year to year.

> "Many mathematial concepts can be reinforced in subjects outside of the mathematics disicpline."

Tier I mathematics instruction in all grades should incorporate the eight mathematical practices. Additionally, attention should be paid to literacy skills such as using multiple reading strategies, understanding and using appropriate mathematical academic vocabulary, discussing and articulating mathematical ideas, and effectively and efficiently writing mathematical arguments.

Finally, it is important to note that many mathematical concepts can be reinforced, practiced, and referenced in subjects outside of the mathematics discipline. Science courses, as well as career and technical education courses, are ideal places for students to discover the connections that exist between real life application and mathematics. Often this puts into perspective for students the connections existing between mathematics and potential career interests.

2.1 (e) K-2 Math Instruction

The focus for K-2 mathematics instruction lies in four critical areas: developing and extending an understanding of the base-ten number system, building fluency with addition and subtraction, developing an understanding of measurement that culminates in students using standard units of measure, and describing and analyzing attributes of shapes.

Timeframe Guidance

Tier I	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade
Mathematics	60 minutes daily	60 minutes daily	75 minutes daily

Tier I instruction in mathematics should be uninterrupted for 60 minutes in kindergarten and grade 1 and 75 minutes in grade 2. The teacher should help students develop mathematical vocabulary, understand models for different representations of mathematical concepts, and develop an understanding of multiple problem-solving strategies. Shellard and Moyer (2002) identify three critical components for effective mathematics instruction: "Teaching for conceptual understanding, developing children's procedural literacy, and promoting strategic competence through meaningful problem-solving investigations." David Grouws, former president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) states, "it is not necessary for teachers to focus first on skill development

and then move on to problem solving. Both can be done together. Skills can be developed on an as-needed basis, or their development can be supplemented through the use of technology. In fact, there is evidence that if students are initially drilled too much on isolated skills, they have a harder time making sense of them later."

Students should participate in small groups of 3-5 students discussing and sharing ideas on a regular basis. Here, students can explore mathematical ideas together and listen to each other's ideas as they begin developing and sharing their reasoning. Additionally, students should also productively engage in whole class discussion facilitated by the teacher. Here, students can share ideas and demonstrate their reasoning to the class. Students should learn how to present their ideas, as well as listen to and learn from others, in a respectful manner.

Small group time can also be stations set up for students to work individually or collectively on specific skills according to the needs of the students as determined by the teacher through frequent formative assessment data. It is recommended that the teacher have individual daily contact with as many students as possible either through explicit one-to-one instruction or as a part of small group instruction.

2.1 (f) 3-5 Math Instruction

The focus of 3-5 mathematics instruction lies in four critical areas: building fluency with multiplication and division, developing an understanding of and computing with fractional numbers, developing a basic understanding of two- and three-dimensional geometry, and developing fluency with decimal operations.

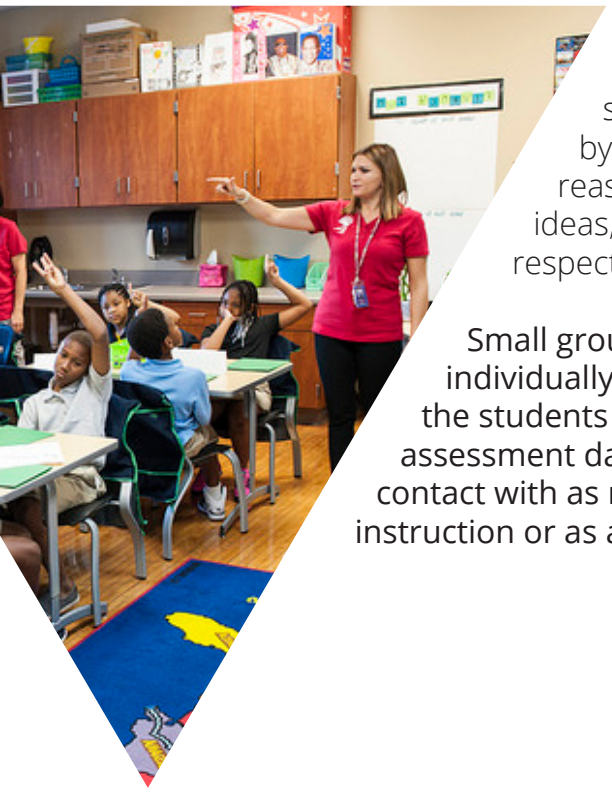
Timeframe Guidance

Tier I	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade
Mathematics	90 minutes daily	90 minutes daily	90 minutes daily

It is strongly recommended that Tier I mathematics be 90 minutes of uninterrupted instruction in grades 3-5. Diverse school- and grade-level structures may have an affect on scheduling. Extended time for mathematics allows students to develop conceptual understanding, develop procedural fluency, and participate in meaningful problem-solving investigations. Students should be participating in activities structured so that they can explore, explain, extend, and evaluate their progress (National Research Council, 1999).

The teacher should help students develop mathematical vocabulary, build conceptual understanding using models for different representations of mathematical concepts, build procedural fluency, and develop an understanding of multiple problem-solving strategies. Teachers should strive for a balance in the types of instruction (e.g., task based, direct, group work, individual think time, etc.) present within the classroom. Each learning goal should be evaluated for which type of instruction best suites the desired outcome.

Students should participate in small groups of 3-5 students discussing and sharing ideas on a regular basis. Here, students can explore mathematical ideas together, revise their thinking, and work collaboratively in authentic problem-solving investigations. Additionally, students should engage productively in whole class discussion facilitated by the teacher where they can share ideas and demonstrate their reasoning to the class. Students should learn how to present their ideas, as well as listen to and critique the reasoning of others in a respectful manner.



Small group time can also be stations set up for students to work individually or collectively on specific skills according to the needs of the students as determined by the teacher through frequent formative assessment data. It is recommended that the teacher have individual daily contact with as many students as possible either through explicit one-to-one instruction or as a part of small-group instruction.

2.1 (g) 6-12 Math Instruction

In grades 6-12, the primary focus of mathematics instruction shifts from computational fluency in mathematics to the application of mathematics and to the development of strong algebraic reasoning skills culminating in students reaching college and career readiness.

Timeframe Guidance

Tier I	Grades 6-8 (traditional)	Grades 6-8 (block)	Grades 9-12 (traditional)	Grades 9-12 (block)
Mathematics	55 minutes daily	90 minutes daily	55 minutes daily	90 minutes daily

Tier I instruction in mathematics should be 90 minutes (55 minutes if on traditional schedule) of uninterrupted instructional time. Diverse school- and grade-level structures may have an affect on scheduling.

It is important to note that students in the middle grades are experiencing important crossroads in their mathematical education. They are "forming conclusions about their mathematical abilities, interest, and motivation that will influence how they approach mathematics in later years" (Protheroe, 2007, p. 52). Thus, instruction in the middle grades should build on students' emerging capabilities for increasingly abstract reasoning, including: thinking hypothetically, comprehending cause and effect, and reasoning in both concrete and abstract terms (Protheroe, 2007).

Across the 6-12 grade band, the teacher should help students continue to build mathematical vocabulary, build conceptual understanding using multiple representations of mathematical concepts, solidify procedural fluency, and solidify an understanding of multiple problem-solving strategies. Teachers should strive for a balance in the types of tasks and materials used. Additionally, time spent in direct instruction, small group or partner discussion, and whole class discussion should also be balanced

> "Teachers should be skilled in frequently assessing student understanding and pressing students toward the mathematical gooals and essential understanding without telling students how to solve problems."

Students should participate in small flexible groups (3-5 students) on a regular basis. Instruction in 6-12 mathematics should be student-focused with constant opportunities for students to engage in mathematical thinking and reasoning. As teachers shift toward a balance of conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and application, they should engage students in a variety of tasks and activities that address specific goals, always embedding the standards for mathematical practice and standards for mathematical literacy in all instruction. **Problem solving should be at the heart of the mathematics classroom.** Students should have the opportunity to make sense of mathematical concepts on their own and regularly discuss their ideas with peers. Teachers should be skilled in frequently assessing student understanding and pressing students toward the mathematical goals and essential understanding without telling students how to solve problems. Teachers should be skilled in orchestrating classroom discussions that promote students **making connections** between their ideas and multiple representations providing a lens for students to develop a deeper understanding of mathematics. Students should have regular practice and support in demonstrating fluency in algebraic manipulation. Students should have the opportunity to apply problem-solving skills in new and unfamiliar contexts and situations.

Small group time can also be set up for students to work individually or collectively on specific skills according to the needs of the students as determined by the teacher through frequent formative assessment data. It is recommended that the teacher have individual daily contact with as many students as possible either through explicit one-to-one instruction or as a part of small group instruction.

2.1 (h) 6-12 Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, and Career & Technical Education Instruction Overview

> "A student's ability to master ELA standards in middle and high school is in part dependent on their engagement with complex texts in non-ELA classes."

Instruction in grades 6-12 should be student focused with opportunities for students to read and engage with complex text, complete tasks authentic to the discipline, and interact with each other. Teachers should guide students to gain their own insights from reading and practicing skills through relevant experiences. In social studies, science, and technical courses, students should primarily **read to gain knowledge and build the necessary reading skills,** including comprehension and stamina, to read, understand, and write about increasingly complex and lengthy texts. A student's ability to master ELA standards in middle and high school is in part dependent on their engagement with complex texts in non-ELA classes. Engagement with texts that are both complex as well as interesting to students is key to developing specific content knowledge in a discipline (e.g., vocabulary and technical concepts)and the ability to comprehend complex text overall.

In 6-12 science, social studies, fine arts, and technical education classes, **the Tier I curriculum should address the needs of all students to develop academic and technical content knowledge in a particular discipline while also building literacy skills such as comprehension and stamina.** Teachers should work closely within the RTI² framework to address the needs of their students, using flexible small groups and teaching reading skills and strategies when needed.

Tier I	Grades 6-8 (traditional)	Grades 6-8 (block)	Grades 9-12 (traditional)	Grades 9-12 (block)
Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, & Technical Education Classes	55 minutes daily	90 minutes daily	55 minutes daily	90 minutes daily

Core instruction in the area of 6-12 science, social studies, fine arts, and career and technical education should consist of a 90-minute block or 55 minutes in a traditional schedule. The block should include study of complex texts or other appropriate grade-level material, as well as direct instruction, modeling, group work, and individual practice. Students should receive regular, systematic direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher should demonstrate problem-solving strategies, provide models for different representations of concepts, and develop students' subject-specific vocabulary.

Content Area	Important Tier I Instructional Strategies
Social Studies	Students should spend a majority of their time immersed in the primary sources documents included in the standards. Students should be consistently exposed to content and academic vocabulary specific to the social science disciplines. Students should be exposed to multiple perspectives on historical issues and use academic language to write accurately to describe and synthesize those perspectives, including their own.
Science	Students should have regular practice with complex text and academic language beyond the textbook, such as laboratory experiments, popular magazines, vetted internet sites, and scientific journals. Scientifically-literate students should be able to read and decode information presented in multiple formats, including tables, charts, diagrams, and infographics. Scientifically-literate students listen critically and engage in productive discussions surrounding a critique of scientific evidence and the validity of resulting conclusions. Students in early grades should begin to employ technical writing skills to strengthen sequencing skills, as done through the writing of procedures. Scientifically-literate students appropriately use academic vocabulary when communicating scientific phenomena. Teachers should allow ample and consistent opportunities for students to engage in the practices and applications of science.
Career & Technical Education	Students should spend a majority of their time either immersed in authentic text (such as technical manuals, media, academic journals, or artifacts from career setting) or practicing and demonstrating specific technical skills. Students should be required to read and produce representations of data using academic and discipline-specific vocabulary. Students should be able to write in a style that is appropriate for their audience, including data analysis and documenting sequences of events.
Fine Arts	The arts help to reinforce literacy through the careful study of discipline-specific vocabulary, the review of primary sources in the content, and a variety of engagement opportunities specifically in the artistic domains of “Respond” and “Connect.” Tennessee standards for arts education prioritize the principles of artistic literacy, such as visual thinking strategies, aural literacy (audiation), and notation literacy (e.g., decoding symbolic systems of music notation to create and interpret meaning).

Tier I instruction should address all students' strengths and instructional needs and prevent difficulties from developing. It should **focus on developing both skills-based and knowledge-based competencies and should align with grade-level standards for ELA, mathematics, and the content areas.** Effective instruction should include contextual problems paired with authentic and complex texts that support critical thinking, problem solving, and knowledge building.

Effective Instruction

Lessons are standards based, differentiate, and anchored in contextual problems and authentic complex texts to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills in addition to strong academic and technical content knowledge.

Tier I instruction should be differentiated and responsive to students' growth. Educators should proactively identify student needs through multiple sources of data and use this information to plan for differentiation. **Differentiation should be the primary response to supporting students during Tier I instruction.**

To support effective instruction, teachers should be provided with tools and training that include attention to:

- core reading and mathematics materials and instructional methods that are supported by evidence and research (ESSA, 2016) and are aligned to grade-level Tennessee Academic Standards;
- the universal screening process;
- formative assessment data to determine instructional needs; and
- ongoing, embedded support and professional learning.

Educators should also look to the TEAM rubric for descriptions of effective instructional practices that support student learning.

Section 2.2 seeks to highlight specific instructional practices that support high-quality Tier I instruction. In particular, 2.2 will discuss the following: planning, learning environment, questioning, feedback, thinking, problem solving, differentiation, small group instruction, and re-teaching. While not an exhaustive list, these nine practices stand out as being especially significant in ensuring all students receive rigorous Tier I instruction that promotes high-level thinking and achievement.

The first step in high-quality differentiated instruction is planning. The planning process includes defining a specific learning outcome and the development of lesson activities, materials, and assessments that align to Tennessee Academic Standards.

Educators should begin their planning with careful attention to the meaning and rigor of the standard(s) they are teaching while also clarifying what mastery of the standard or learning goal will look like. Starting with the end in mind allows educators to set a clear path for how they will support their students in reaching that end goal.

Planning decisions include:

- using multiple sources of data to identify students' strengths and needs;
- goal setting based on these multiple sources of data;
- sequencing questions and activities from basic to complex;
- building on prior student knowledge;
- creating or adjusting small groups;
- providing differentiated instruction based on students' strengths and needs;
- ensuring the plan is appropriate for students' age, knowledge, and interests;
- deciding on approaches for the instruction of new content, skills, and strategies and providing appropriate time and opportunities for student practice; and
- creating and updating instructional goals and planned instruction based on evidence from formative assessments.

Planning Toward Goals

Lesson activities, materials, assessments, and student work are planned explicitly to match rigor of state and district goals while accounting for students' individual needs.

2.2(b) Learning Environment

Culture, climate, behavioral expectations, and supports are needed for a school to be an effective learning environment for all students. Problem behaviors may be prevented with explicitly taught, clearly defined expectations, acknowledgement of positive behavior, and consistent consequences for problem behavior.

All educators should strive to create a strong and positive culture of high expectations. As described in the *Instructional Model for a Ready Student* below, **all adults should consistently model the belief that all students can succeed.** The creation of a warm, positive-yet-challenging learning environment focused on prevention is critical to modeling this belief.

Strong Positive Culture in a High Expectations Environment

All adults model the belief that all students can succeed in their chosen path in life. Students' learning environment is grounded in rigorous curriculum and high expectations for behavior and academic and career success and fosters the development of productive lifelong traits and habits, including setting and monitoring personal goals.

Educators and administrators should use the General Educator Rubric Environment Domain from TEAM (or another evaluation tool with similar indicators) to inform the structure of the learning environment within the classroom and throughout the school.

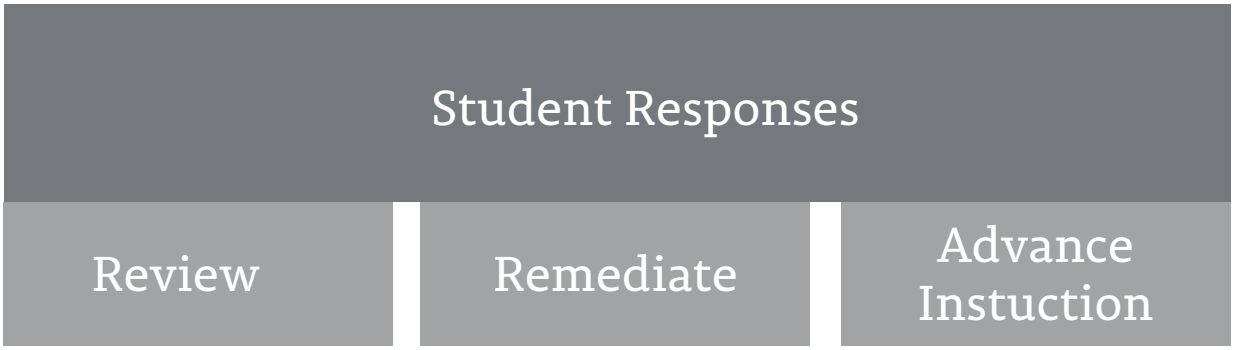
The environmental indicators are:

- expectations,
- managing student behavior,
- environment, and
- respectful culture.

More information about how to establish a strong and positive classroom can be found in the Implementation Guide.

2.2(c) Questioning

Effective questioning prompts student thinking, guides students' attention to key concepts, and supports engagement with content. When teachers effectively utilize questions that are purposeful and coherent, students' responses can be taken as a valid source of formative assessment that can inform instructional decision making. Student responses to quality questions let teachers know if they should review, remediate, or advance instruction and are useful in making decisions about differentiation.



Effective questioning involves the following procedures:

- asking a high frequency of questions;
- consistently providing wait time that allows students sufficient time to consider and develop their responses;
- calling on both volunteers and non-volunteers to answer questions and a balance of students based on ability and gender; and
- providing different ways for students to respond to questions, such as independent reflection, partner or small group discussion, or whole group dialog, as well as through different modes, including speaking, drawing, writing, and physical signals/gestures.

Additionally, the content of high-quality questions should be:

- varied (questions should represent a balanced mix of question types),
- purposeful,
- coherent, and
- sequenced with attention to the instructional goals of the lesson.

High-quality questions should require students to justify their answers with evidence and should support students in monitoring their own levels of understanding. Also, teachers shouldn't limit instruction to teacher-generated questions only but should guide students in generating their own questions as well.

For additional information and examples of questioning strategies, please reference the TEAM Teacher Evaluation Handbook, which can be found at: http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/TEAM-Teacher-Evaluation-System-Handbook_Sept20161.pdf.

2.2(d) Academic Feedback

Academic feedback is the way that teachers respond to students' comments, questions, and work. Effective academic feedback should focus on supporting and advancing student learning, not just telling students if their responses are accurate. Teachers should also respond to academic feedback from students and use that feedback to make adjustments in instruction.

High-quality academic feedback should:

- relate to the lesson objective,
- prompt students to think,
- be specific,
- be timely, and
- vary based on the unique needs of students and classes.

Teachers can provide both oral and written feedback to students. Additionally, it is also **important for teachers to model for students how to provide each other with high-quality academic feedback.**

For additional information and examples of high-quality academic feedback, please reference the TEAM Teacher Evaluation Handbook, which can be found at: http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/TEAM-Teacher-Evaluation-System-Handbook_Sept20161.pdf.

2.2(e) Thinking

Effective instruction pushes students to think about ideas and content in different types of ways and requires students to use different types of thinking to solve problems or draw conclusions.

The four types of thinking are as follows:

- Analytical – students analyze, compare and contrast, and evaluate and explain information
- Practical – students use, apply, and implement what they learn in real-world scenarios
- Creative – students create, design, imagine, and suppose
- Research-based – students explore and review a variety of ideas, models, and solutions to problems.

Teachers should create opportunities for students to think about problems from multiple perspective and viewpoints. Additionally, teachers should provide opportunities for students to monitor their own thinking and to help them become more aware of the strategies they're using. **Teachers should explicitly model their own thinking by "thinking out loud" and should actively talk about different thinking strategies, when to use them, and explain or demonstrate how students can begin to use them on their own.**

For additional information and examples of the four types of thinking, please reference the TEAM Teacher Evaluation Handbook, which can be found at: http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/TEAM-Teacher-Evaluation-System-Handbook_Sept20161.pdf.

2.2(f) Problem Solving

Developing diverse problem-solving skills enhances students' abilities to manage complex tasks and higher levels of learning. Teachers can support students in developing these valuable life skills by providing them with opportunities to practice different approaches to solving problems.

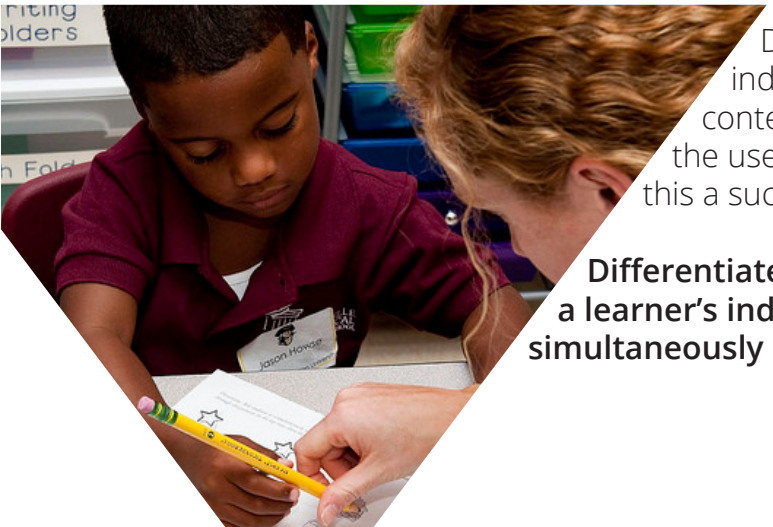
Teachers should teach and reinforce the following problem-solving types:

- *Abstraction* – Students isolate and analyze specific properties of an object or process; or, students take the key components or ideas from varied examples and use them to solve a new problem.
- *Categorization* – Students analyze, classify, and sort information into meaningful categories.
- *Draw Conclusions/Justify Solutions* – Students draw conclusions based on data from varied sources and viewpoints.
- *Predicting Outcomes* – Students make predictions and test the validity of their predictions.
- *Observing and Experimenting* – Students observe, record, code, and measure; they develop hypotheses, gather instruments, and collect and analyze data.
- *Improving Solutions* – Students critique solutions and outcomes and analyze how they could have been improved.
- *Identifying Relevant/Irrelevant Information* – Students are given mixed information about a problem and identify which information is most relevant and useful to solving the problem.
- *Generating Ideas* – Students are given ill-defined problems and are taught how to look for analogies, to brainstorm, to generate idea lists, to create representations, and to come up with viable solutions.
- *Creating and Designing* – Students are asked to create or design a product, an experiment, or a problem for another student to solve or evaluate.

For additional information and examples of the nine types of problem solving, please reference the TEAM Teacher Evaluation Handbook, which can be found at: http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/TEAM-Teacher-Evaluation-System-Handbook_Sept20161.pdf.

2.2(g) Differentiation of Instruction

Differentiated instruction is an instructional approach that encompasses several learning strategies, addresses individual student needs, and helps all students access core instruction. Differentiation takes place within the classroom environment, planning content, process, and product. The premise of differentiated instruction is having high expectations for all students, and through the practice of differentiation, all students can achieve those high expectations.



Differentiation means tailoring instruction to meet individual needs. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping make this a successful approach to instruction.

Differentiated instruction is a teacher's proactive response to a learner's individual needs; it is an instructional approach that simultaneously encompasses several learning strategies.

Differentiated instruction helps the student access core instruction (Tier I). Differentiated instruction is guided by principles of differentiation: environment, quality curriculum, assessment that informs teaching and learning, instruction that responds to student variance, and leading students and managing routines.

Differentiation is based on the following:

- *Learning Profile* – preferred approaches to learning
- *Readiness* – a student's proximity to specified learning goals
- *Interests* – passions, affinities, kinships that motivate learning

Successful differentiation is based on individual student strengths, needs, and areas of deficit. First, educators should determine what the student requires to access core instruction, and then effectively plan to meet their need(s). Educators should consult the *Differentiation Inventory for Classroom Observation* to help assess differentiation in the classroom (The *Differentiation Inventory for Classroom Observation* can be found in the *RTI² Implementation Guide.*)

Examples of deficits or areas of need a student may have are:

- reading,
- mathematics,
- writing,
- extent of background knowledge,
- English language proficiency, and
- learning disabilities or other disabilities impacting learning.

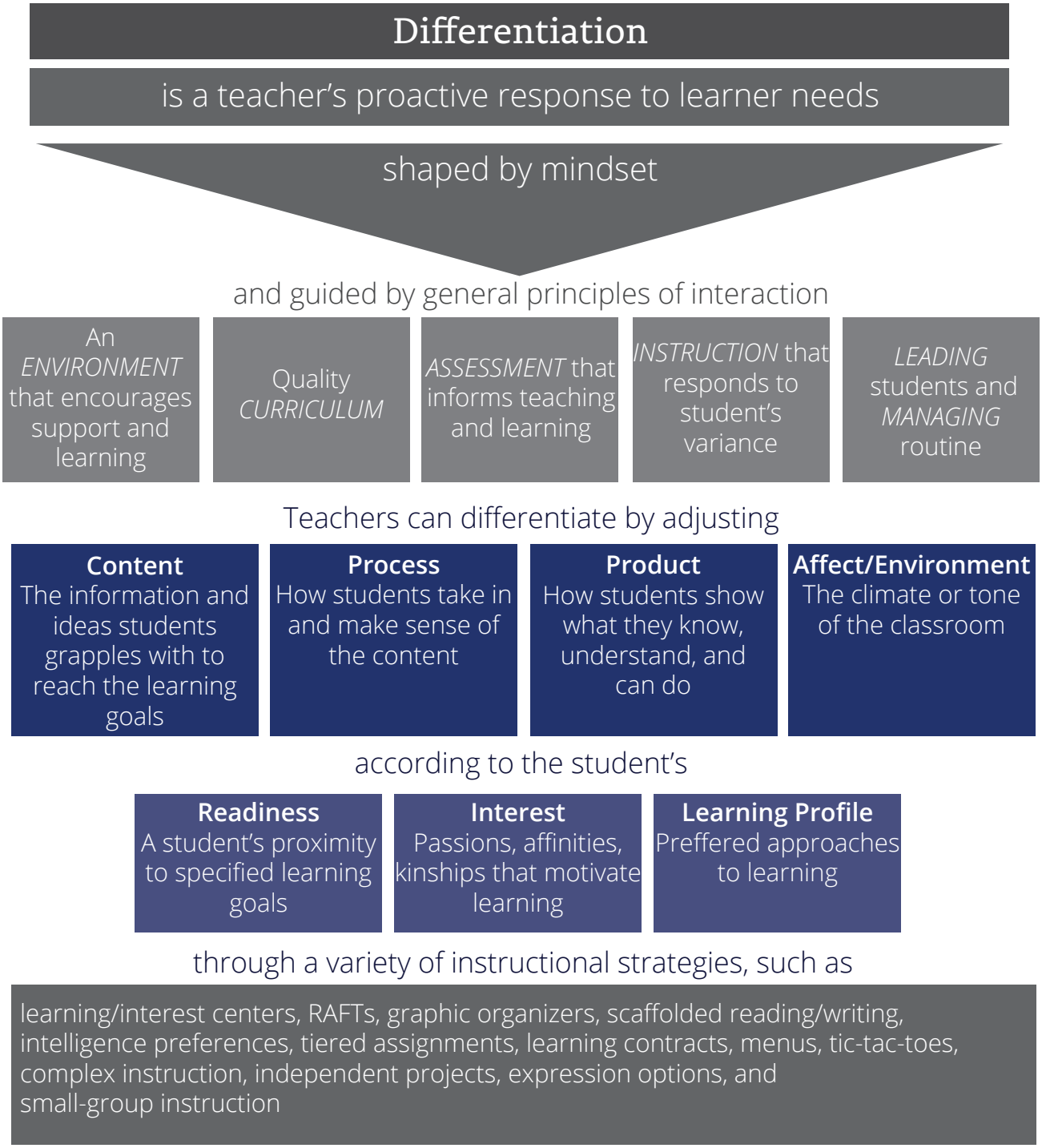
Determining a student's needs may also include:

- utilizing diagnostic instruments to assess skill level (e.g., inquire: "what do my students know?");
- universal screening and progress monitoring data;
- pre-tests and post-tests;
- surveying background knowledge (e.g., KWL charts, anticipation guides);
- student self-assessments/checklists;
- formal and/or informal assessments;
- being aware of student previous data/schooling background (e.g., student cumulative files, student data profiles, language levels, levels of intervention, school supports provided); and
- determining student interest, preferred way of learning, and environmental comfort (e.g., specific topic, small group setting, partner work, visual instruction, interactive learning boards).

Differentiated instruction may include any of the following:

- Tiered assignments, scaffold to students need/understanding
- Compacting material: big idea
- Collaborative learning centers
- Collaborative learning groups/student seating
- Flexible grouping
- Learning contracts/student goal setting
- Choice of academic boards/classroom print
- Themed units/word walls
- Sentence frames
- Explicit outlined steps to procedures

Tomlinson, 2014



Differentiation during Tier I uses assessment data (see component 2.3) to identify individual student needs. Instruction addresses individual needs and matches instructional materials to support the specific skills. The small groups that are formed based on this assessment data are flexible, meaning group membership changes based on student progress, interests, and needs.

Differentiated core instruction is not:

- using only whole-class instruction,
- using small groups that never change, or
- using the same independent seat work assignments for the entire class.

2.2(h) Differentiation of Environment

The learning environment is the "climate" of a classroom and includes the classroom's operation and tone. Class rules, furniture arrangement, lighting, procedures, and processes all affect the classroom's mood.

The environment includes the conditions and interactions in the classroom that set the tone and expectations for learning. Differentiating classroom environment ensures that all students are held to high expectations. Understanding the learning environment has an impact on students' needs and in turn plays a role in learning by creating conditions in which the student is able to demonstrate skills and feel comfortable asking questions.

> "All students need a teacher who is confident of students' capacity to learn what they need to learn and who support them vigorously as they do so."

An optimal environment is invitational or characterized by a transparent commitment to the learning of every student and a consideration of what each student brings to the lesson. Leaders and teachers in invitational environments demonstrate respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality.

Teachers and Students in the Differentiated Environment

Students should feel welcomed and valued at their level of readiness. All students need a teacher who is confident of students' capacity to learn what they need to learn and who supports them vigorously as they do so. The teacher and student should work together to enhance one another's growth. Success and failures are inevitable in the learning process, and the classroom is a safe place for both. Hard work results in observable growth that is then celebrated by the teacher and student. **Routines and processes in the classroom should be designed in a way that all students are able to have access and a level of success (i.e., Universal Design for Learning).** Classrooms with respectful environments exhibit more student engagement and fewer negative behaviors. There are clear expectations, and goal setting is taking place for all students.

Leaders and Teachers in the Differentiated Environment

Leaders create an environment in which each teacher feels valued, challenged, supported, and part of a team working together for success. The leader should be clear about what teachers should know, understand, and be able to do (KUDs) in order to differentiate instruction skillfully. Leaders must continually monitor teacher growth toward these KUDs, providing feedback and developing learning opportunities for teachers based on their varied readiness levels, interests, and approaches to teaching and learning. Structures should be designed to ensure that each teacher progresses in facility and comfort with addressing learner needs; this means they must sometimes work with faculty as a whole, sometimes work with the faculty in small groups, and sometimes work with individual members of the faculty.

2.2(i) Differentiation of Content

Differentiated content is what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the study, or how students will gain access to the knowledge. **Differentiation can be done by pre-assessing student skills and understandings, then matching learners with appropriate activities.** Allowing students to have choices and providing students with additional resources that match their levels of understanding adds depth to their learning. Differentiating content should not change what the student is expected to know, understand, or do; rather, it should change how a student acccesed that content

Examples of methods for differentiating:

- Multiple texts and supplementary print resources
- Modeling/demonstrations
- Interest-based materials
- Varied support mechanisms for reading
- Reduced number of high quality tasks/problems (if needed)

Standards-based, grade-level expectations should remain the same for all students. However, the delivery and/or expected student response may be differentiated depending on individual students' need.

> "Differentiating content should not change what the student is expectected to know, understand, or do; rather it should change how a student accesses that content."

Teachers should know their students and their students' strengths and needs when presenting content in a lesson. Guiding questions for the beginning of planning a lesson may include:

- What do my students know about this unit of study?
- How might students best learn the concepts and skills of this unit?
- How can I provide each learner with appropriately challenging opportunities?
- How can I incorporate students' interests and spark new ones?
- How might I provide students with meaningful choices of different ways to demonstrate mastery of the learning objectives?

Know, Understand, Do (KUD):

- High-quality learning involves goals stated in the form of a KUD.
- Statements that divide learning standards into things students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do or accomplish.

KNOW	UNDERSTAND	DO
Facts, places, people, dates, definitions	Big ideas, expanding ideas that frame details, generalizations	Skills, behavior objectives, outcomes, overall access

Examples of KUDs can be found in the RTI² Implementation Guide. Strategies and examples to differentiate content by readiness, interest, and learning profile can also be found in the implementation guide.

2.2(j) Differentiation of Process

These activities are designed to help students make sense of or "own" the content—changing the activity in which the student engages in order to make sense of or master the content.

Differentiating of process should not change what the student is expected to know, understand, or do; rather, it should change how a student engages in the process.

- Refers to how students make sense or understand the information, ideas, and skills being studied
- Reflects student learning styles and preferences
- Varies the learning process depending upon how students learn

Examples:

- Format presentations of material, if needed
- Learning centers
- Graphic organizers
- Varied models of exploration and expression (including movement/kinetics/multi-sensory)
- Models of student work at different degrees of complexity
- Break up long lessons into smaller meaningful sections

Setting clear learning targets/objectives that tell the student what they need to know, understand, and do are critical to a learner's success in the classroom. *(See the KUD example in the RTI² Implementation Guide. Strategies and examples to differentiate process by readiness, interest, and learning profile can also be found in the implementation guide.)*

2.2(k) Differentiation of End Product

This is how students may demonstrate and extend what they have come to know, understand, and are able to do. The end product is today's means of understanding how to modify tomorrow's instruction.

- Small group instruction supports differentiating the product
- Tends to be tangible: reports, tests, brochures, speeches, skits
- Reflects student understanding
- Differentiates by providing challenge, variety, and choice

Examples:

- Provide assessment options
- Community based projects
- Independent study
- Create a visual response with key details outlined around
- Orally produce responses
- Record their responses
- Use class responders to input understanding

Strategies and examples to differentiate product by readiness, interest, and learning profile can be found in the RTI² Implementation Guide.

2.2(l) Small Group Instruction

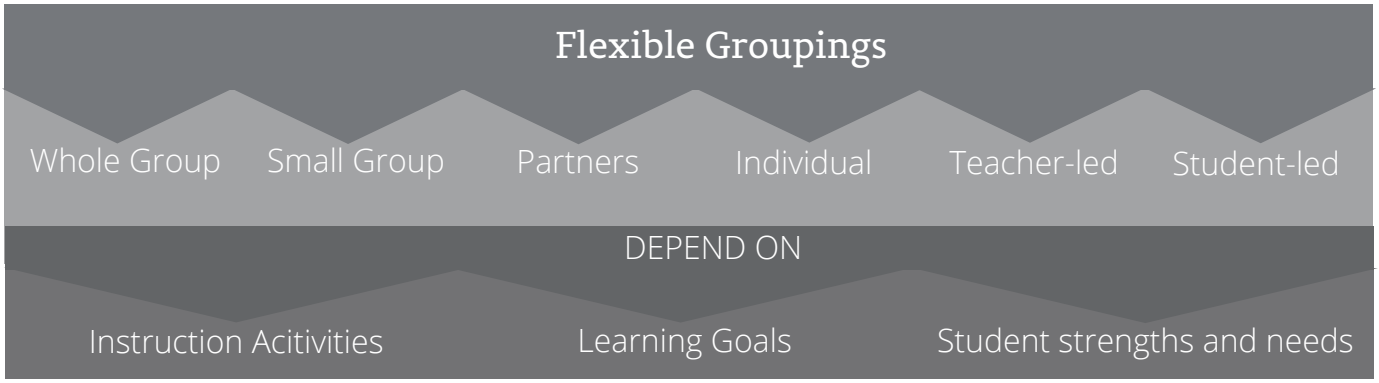
Small group instruction is a method of instructional grouping where students are purposefully placed in small groups and receive targeted instruction related to a specific area of strength or need. Small groups support students in meeting instructional goals by providing one or more of the following supports:

- Additional modeling or demonstration by the teacher
- Additional practice with a specific skill, strategy, or standard
- Additional time for reading, thinking, or problem solving
- An alternative setting for work or discussion
- Differentiated content or process
- Support for completing a differentiated product

> "Students should be placed in small groups strategically, based on information gathered from a range of sources, including formall assessments, anecdotal observation, and student work."

Small groups are most effective when they are limited to six students or fewer. While small groups can be used for review or remediation, they can also be used to extend learning for students who have already demonstrated strength in a particular area.

Flexible grouping is a strategy for differentiating instruction that allows students to work together in a variety of ways and in a number of arrangements. Groupings may be whole group, small group, partners, individual, teacher-led or student-led, and depend on instructional activities, learning goals, and student strengths and needs. Flexible grouping accounts for the changing needs of students, as shown in assessment data.



Students should be placed in small groups strategically, based on information gathered from a range of sources, including formal assessments, anecdotal observation, and student work. Groups may be homogenous, based on shared strengths or needs, or they may be heterogeneous, when a particular lesson objective is benefited by diverse abilities, ideas, or approaches to learning or problem solving.

During teacher-led small groups, other students should be engaged in purposeful practice activities. Purposeful practice may include:

- independent or partner reading,
- writing,
- learning centers,
- skill practice,
- reader response activities,
- book studies, and
- independent problem solving.

2.2 (m) Re-teaching for Mastery of the Standards

During Tier I instruction, students may need re-teaching and/or remediation of Tennessee Academic Standards. **Using assessments that are aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards, teachers should determine which standards need re-teaching and/or remediation.**

Re-teaching involves teaching content again to students who didn't master it initially. Re-teaching provides students with additional demonstrations, opportunities to practice, and time.
For re-teaching to be effective, teachers should use a different approach from the one they initially used. The new approach should build on previous activities, but should focus on the omissions or errors in student thinking that resulted from these activities.

Remediation is corrective and fills in gaps in understanding, skills, or knowledge. Students may need remediation of a pre-requisite skill before they are able to attempt a certain problem type or may need remediation of specific vocabulary or concepts in order to analyze a new topic or argument.

Remediation	Reteaching
• Corrective • Fills gaps in understanding, skills or knowledge • May be needed remediation of a pre-requisite skill	• Teaching content again • Additional demonstrations • Opportunities to practice • Extra time • Using different methods that initially used, it should be built on previous activities

Re-teaching and remediation can be done in a whole group setting if the majority of students need additional instruction, in a small group setting in which students are grouped according to like areas of need, or in an individual setting.

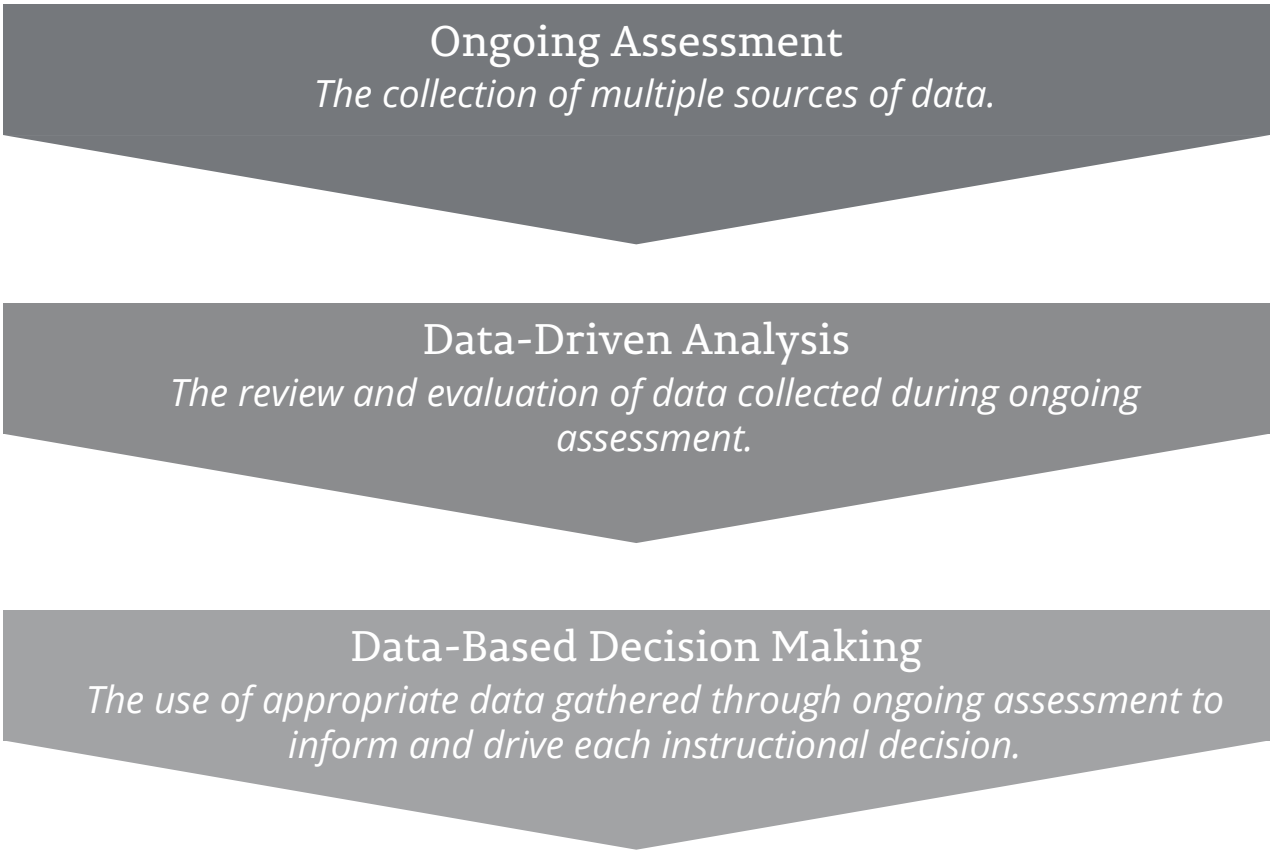
Re-teaching and remediation for mastery of the standards are different from intervention on skill deficits. Intervention on skill deficits is provided during Tier II, Tier III, or special education intervention and is provided in addition to Tier I instruction. The goal of intervention on skill deficits is to provide research-based intervention aligned to specific skill deficits as identified by multiple sources of data, including universal screening and progress monitoring.

What do students need? How do you know?		
Re-teaching		Intervention
Tier I - State Standards and Differentiated Instructional Practices Goal is to reteach standards to ANY and ALL students who are struggling with core concepts rather than specific skill deficits **Standards Based Assessment:** • Benchmark Assessment • Summative Assessment • Formative Assessment	VERSUS	**Tier II/III - Special Education Intervention** Goal is to provide research based interventions aligned to specific skill deficit(s) as identified by universal screener. **Standards Based Assessment:** • Skill based universal screener aligned to area(s) of deficit • Skill based Progress Monitoring specific to area(s) of deficit • Ongoing skills assessment

2.3 Ongoing Assessment in Tier I

Ongoing assessment of student learning in Tier I provides continuous, vital feedback on the effectiveness of instruction and informs important changes to teachers' instructional strategies. It is essential to providing engaging, tailored instruction that addresses students' individual needs while maintaining grade-level expectations in Tier I.

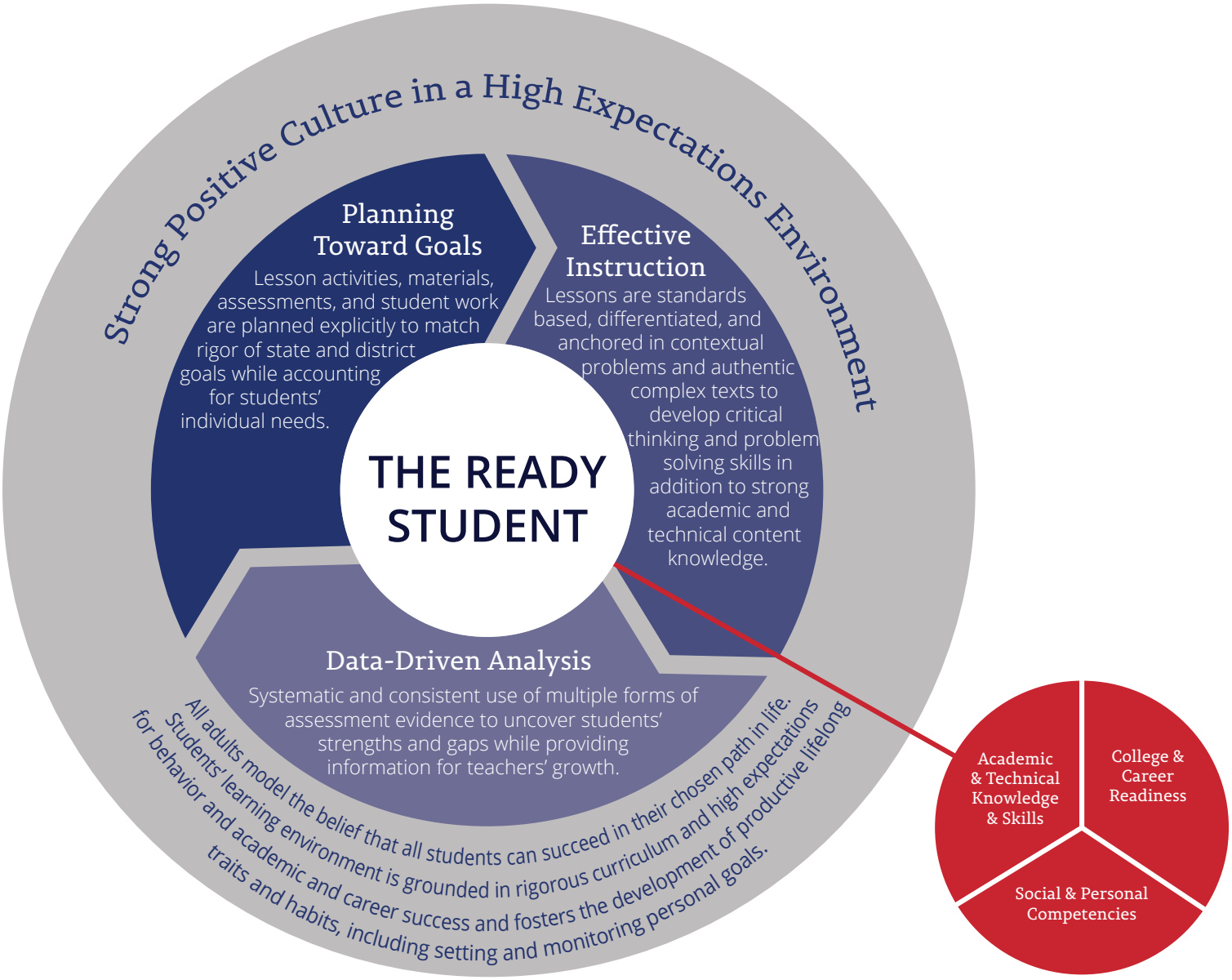
Ongoing assessment is the collection of data from multiple sources for use during data-based decision making (see Component 2.4). It can help track and compare individual and/or group performance and help support differentiated instruction in Tier I. Ongoing assessment is a necessary component of both data-driven analysis and data-based decision making (see figure below).



In Tier I, ongoing assessment is used for all students, aligned with grade-level instruction, and done continuously throughout the year. It is an important part of *Tennessee's Instructional Model for a Ready Student* (shown on the following page), which is our state's process for high quality instruction and strong positive cultures. The model states that data-driven analysis, including a systemic and consistent use of multiple forms of assessment evidence, is important to be able to plan toward goals and deliver differentiated lessons tailored to student need.

As stated in the guiding principles, **a culture of collaboration and communication is an essential part of ongoing assessment.** There should be collaboration and communication by all stakeholders around the data being collected through the data analysis process and throughout the data-based decision making process.

The Ready Student Model



> "How results are used is what determines whether the assessment is formative or summative."

The charts on the next page provide some guidance and examples on the types of assessments and data that can be used for ongoing assessment. **There should be a thorough understanding of what an assessment measures and how to interpret the data that assessment generates.** Even though the assessments below are labeled formative or summative, how results are used is what determines whether the assessment is formative or summative. Assessments are only formative if they are used to adjust instruction. The purpose of all formative assessments, regardless of type, is to use the results to improve learning.

Ongoing assessment, aligned to grade-level standards in Tier I *may* include:

Assessment Type	Description	Examples *may* incude
Formative Assessment	• Measure student learning throughout the year so educators can determine if students are making progress and how best to adjust instruction. • Typically, formative assessments complement the standards and highlight progress students are making toward annual goals as measured at various points during the school year. • Teachers and school leaders primarily use formative tests to help them develop supports for students who are not making progress or to plan for re-teaching or acceleration of particular standards with groups of students. Educators may also use formative assessment to expose students to samples of state-test questions and the state-test platform or environment.	• Interim and benchmark assessments, teacher-made tests, and school-made common assessments. • Informal formative assessments: These assessments are small-scale (i.e., a few seconds, a few minutes, certainly less than a class period) and short-cycle (i.e., they are often called "minute-by-minute" assessment). Examples may include: bell ringers, exit tickets, item analysis from benchmark tests, oral responses and student questioning, rubrics, performance assessments, anecdotal observations, portfolios showing growth over time, written assignments, journals, learning logs, etc.
Summative (annual) Assessment	• Measure student learning at the end of the semester/year. • Tennessee's annual assessments provide district and school leaders, teachers, parents, and students specific information about student learning in order to improve the education of all students. Results from annual tests assist teachers and parents in under standing if students have met the learning expectations for the year. Additionally, Tennessee's annual assessments provide feedback to all of the stakeholders who invest in our students to ensure that funds are being used well and that we are setting our students on a pathway to success.	• State-level assessments

Source: https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/tst_assessment_task_force_report.pdf

Additional data may also be used to inform important changes to teachers' instructional strategies for students who may need more support and/or differentiation of instruction in Tier I. These data *may* include:

Data Source	Description	Examples *may* incude
Universal Screeners	Brief, informative tools used to measure academic skills (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem solving, and written expression).	See chart in Component 1.3 for examples.
Survey Level Assessment	A process of determining the most basic skill area deficit and which skill/instructional level a student has mastered. It is effective in determining appropriate, realistic goals for a student and helps identify the specific deficit in order to determine accurate rate of improvement and growth.	Phonological Awareness Skills Screener (PASS), and Phonics and Word Reading Survey (PWRS) can be found here - http://www.tn.gov/education/article/tdoe3-rti-administrtors-intervention-resources
Progress Montioring	Progress monitoring is used to assess student's academic performance, to quantify a student's rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction/ intervention and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction/intervention.	See chart in Component 1.3 for examples.
Diagnostic Assessment	Often given at the beginning of the school year, this assessment allows teachers to know where each student is beginning in their understanding of the subject.	Placement tests, teacher-made tests, text book-based assessments, benchmark assessments, common assessments, running records, etc.
Teacher Observations	Teacher observations and notes can provide contextual information useful for making decisions about students. Informal observation ("kid watching") of students working alone, in groups, or during whole-group instruction can give valuable information about students' progress, understanding, strengths and challenges, cooperation, study habits, and attitude.	Anecdotal notes, interest surveys, learning styles, patterns in student responses, etc.
Student Records Review	These data can include grades, attendance, and behavioral patterns, and they can provide important supplementary information about student learning and individual needs.	Grades, attendance, behavioral patterns, etc.

2.4 Data-Based Decision Making Procedures

> "The school team should have plans in place, based on the results of data, for students who are making adequate progress and for students who are not making adequate progress."

Data-based decision making is the use of appropriate data gathered through ongoing assessment to inform and drive instructional decisions in Tier I. It also determines the need for skills-specific interventions, remediation, re-teaching, and enrichment.

Teachers should be knowledgeable about student performance and show evidence of setting goals for each child that are based on grade-level benchmarks or expectations, show how students are progressing toward these goals, and use the data from ongoing assessment to make instructional decisions in Tier I. The school team should have plans in place, based on the results of data, for students who are making adequate progress and for students who are not making adequate progress.

Instructional Implications for Tier I

All data, including data derived from the universal screening process, should be considered when making instructional decisions for students in Tier I core instruction. Each type of data serves a purpose and provides useful information regarding students' strengths and weaknesses. No one source of data should override or supersede another. When deciding which assessment to give, the teacher should first determine what it is he/she wants to know.

For example, if a teacher wants to know how students are progressing in the mastery of grade-level standards and how instruction may need to be adjusted, he/she could administer a formative assessment, aligned with the rigor of the standard, to determine which students have mastered which learning targets. This information also informs how instruction might need to be differentiated. Based on the results from formative assessments, teachers are able to tailor small group instruction to the needs of the students. Teacher observations and non-academic information about students (such as attendance, behavior, and learning style) may also be important for making instructional decisions on a daily basis.

At the end of a unit of study, if a teacher wants to know which standards or learning targets students have mastered, he/she would administer a summative assessment aligned to the rigor of the standards. This information is used to determine whether the instruction was effective, which students achieved mastery, and how successful instruction has been for a student. The results from ongoing assessment may also be used to inform the need for additional universal screening later in the year.

Educators should take the evidence collected from multiple forms of assessment and analyze the data for patterns, areas of need, and proof of mastery of content. From this analysis, educators will be able to create and adapt their daily lesson plans to ensure all students in their Tier I classroom are progressing toward mastery of the Tennessee Academic Standards and are supported individually along the way. Planning decisions may include:

- creating or updating small groups,
- providing differentiated instruction based on student need,
- deciding on approaches for the delivery of new content or student practice, or
- updating the instructional scope and sequence based on student mastery or the decision to reteach.

> “Skills should be taught in a balanced and integrated manner to promote the interconnectedness of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.”

Systems for data-based decisions pinpoint areas of strength and opportunities for growth for each learner within Tier I. In addition, a data-based assessment process allows educators to identify if a student is showing characteristics of learning difficulties that might require intensive supports in addition to Tier I instruction.

Developmentally-appropriate screening for all students through a skills-based screener provides an initial indication if certain deficit areas in phonological awareness, phonics, or other areas are present. This is especially important since these characteristics might be consistent with reading-related learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. Deeper diagnostic instruments can offer greater depth for proactively addressing and monitoring progress in identified areas during Tier I differentiation or during intervention in Tiers II or III.

As areas of need are confirmed, such as in the areas of phonological awareness and phonics, **it is critical for educators to match explicit instruction with the area of need.** This explicit instruction should accompany opportunities for application with connected text and not be done in isolation. For example, a teacher who is working on consonant digraphs with a group of student would not just show flash cards that prompt students to pronounce the sound. The teacher might start there and then add opportunities for the students to write and read words and sentences with those digraphs to demonstrate how readers and writers use them in authentic contexts. Skills should be taught in a balanced and integrated manner to promote the interconnectedness of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

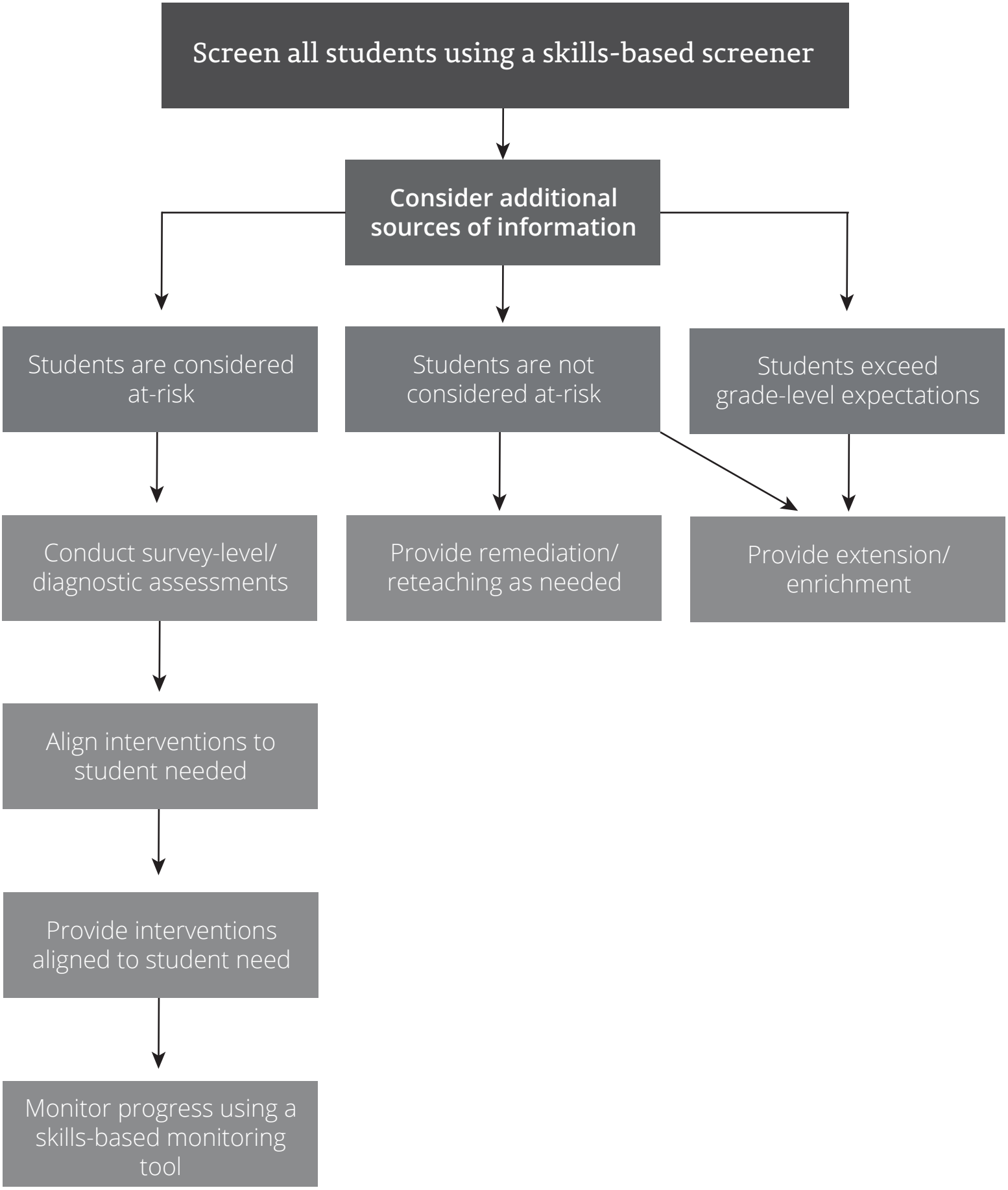
Informing the Need for Intervention in Tier II or Tier III

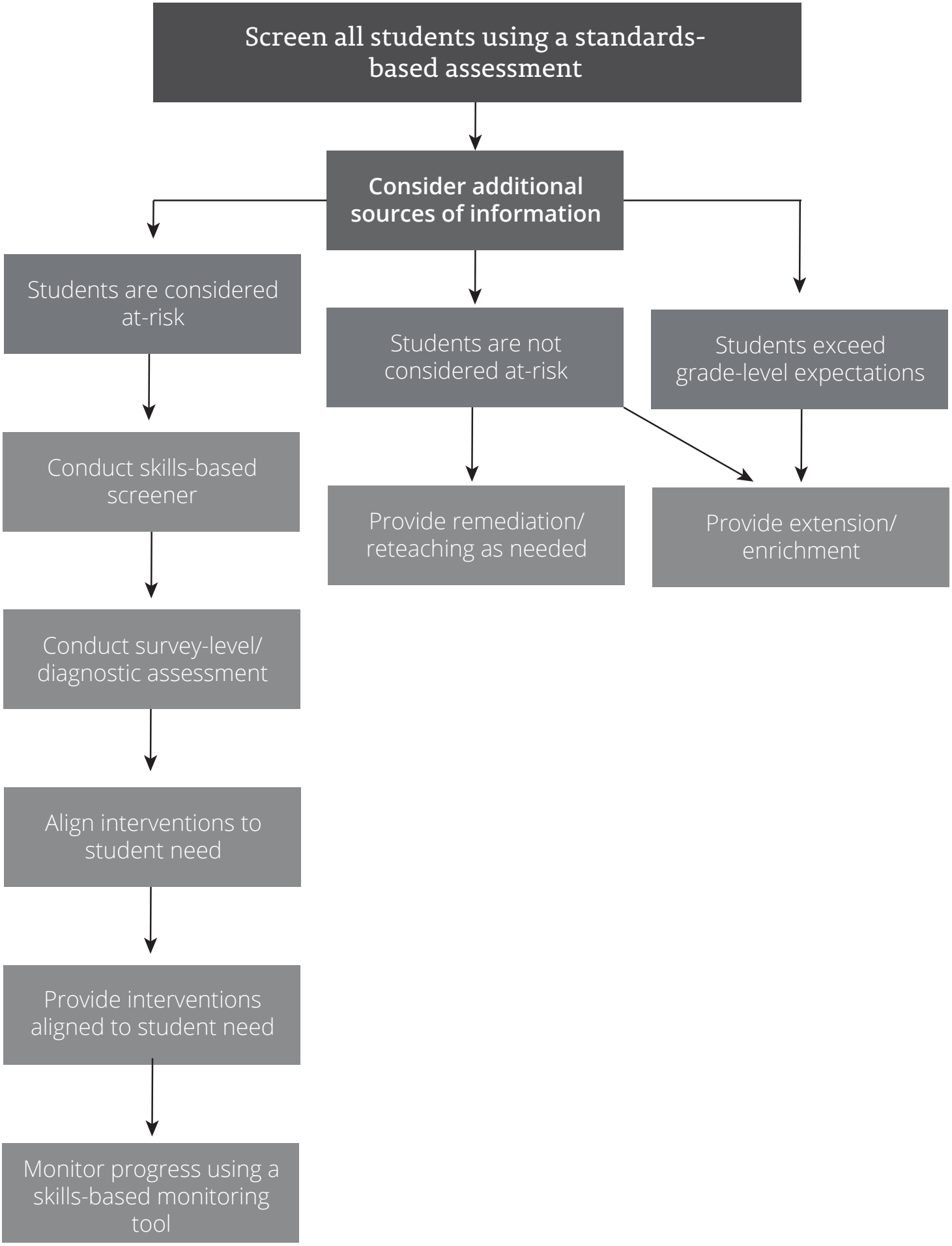
If a student is not making adequate progress in Tier I, another data-based decision could include administering additional assessments that could determine if further support through Tier II or Tier III intervention is necessary. In particular, the results from the universal screening process can be used to determine the need for intervention in Tier II or Tier III. **A skills-based screener is a measure that can be used as an indicator that a student may be struggling due to underlying skills deficits.** The skills-based screener serves as a "temperature check" to identify areas where students may be struggling. *The skills-based screener is not diagnostic and does not prescribe intervention.* School teams should use the results of the skills-based screener to identify students that might need to be looked at a bit closer. Additional information, such as formative and summative assessments, survey-level assessments, diagnostic assessments, teacher observations, and classroom performance are all sources of data that should be used when determining intervention needs.

The universal screening process (see Component 1.3) is used to identify students who may be considered "at risk." As a guideline, educators should look at students scoring below the 25th percentile compared to national norms on a skills-based screener, corroborating their performance with additional sources of information (e.g., standards-based assessments, grades, formative assessments, summative assessments, classroom performance, teacher observations, etc.), to determine those who are at risk. Students who are considered "at risk" should receive appropriately aligned skills-based interventions in addition to Tier I instruction. Students who exceed grade-level expectations may be considered "advanced." Students who are considered "advanced" should receive appropriate enrichment in addition to Tier I instruction.

If a school has a large number of students falling below national norms, a school team may use "relative norms" instead of national norms to guide the identification of at-risk students. (See Component 1.4 for more information on national and relative norms.)

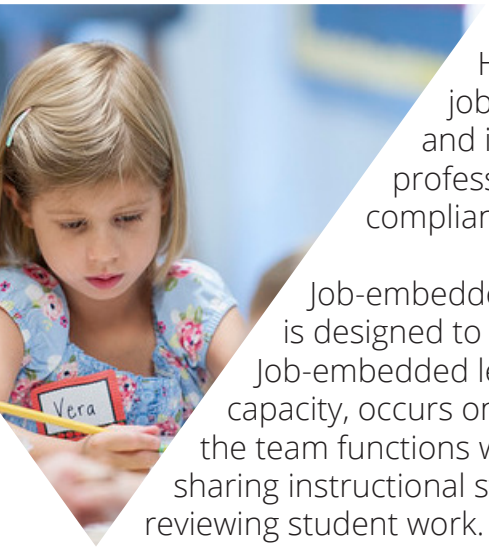
The data-based decision making process in Tier I is shown on the following page in a flow chart that illustrates how instruction and intervention decisions are made based on data.


Screen all students using a skills-based screener
Consider additional sources of information
Students are considered at-risk
Students are not considered at-risk
Students exceed grade-level expectations
Conduct survey-level/ diagnostic assessments
Provide remediation/ reteaching as needed
Provide extension/ enrichment
Align interventions to student needed
Provide interventions aligned to student need
Monitor progress using a skills-based monitoring tool


Screen all students using a standards-based assessment
Consider additional sources of information
Students are considered at-risk
Students are not considered at-risk
Students exceed grade-level expectations
Conduct skills-based screener
Provide remediation/ reteaching as needed
Provide extension/ enrichment
Conduct survey-level/ diagnostic assessment
Align interventions to student need
Provide interventions aligned to student need
Monitor progress using a skills-based monitoring tool

2.5 Professional Learning in Tier I

Professional learning generally refers to ongoing learning opportunities available to teachers and other education personnel through their schools and districts. RTI² professional learning opportunities that address specific content pertaining to Tier I instruction, universal screening process, ongoing assessment, and data-based decision making should be available for novice teachers, experienced teachers, and interventionists.



High-quality professional learning for RTI² at every level is content based, job embedded, student focused, differentiated to address teacher need, and includes an expectation for implementation and follow-up. Additionally, professional learning should be outcomes/competency based instead of compliance driven.

Job-embedded professional learning occurs during the workday in the workplace, is designed to support team learning, and has a clear focus on student achievement. Job-embedded learning is aligned with school and student learning goals, uses internal capacity, occurs on a regular schedule (weekly or bi-weekly), and is most successful when the team functions with a focused structure. Activities may include analyzing student data, sharing instructional strategies, developing lessons, designing common assessments, and reviewing student work. Peer observations and coaching are considered highly effective job-embedded practices.

Professional learning that is competency based focuses on demonstrating clearly defined levels of mastery of a topic including content knowledge, skills, and deep understanding. Teacher choice and need identify the area for learning which may be delivered through classes, workshops, peer observation, mentoring, online learning, and team work. Competency is refined and iterated in a continuous-improvement cycle and is evaluated through assessments, observations, and/or portfolios. Microcredentialing is a model of competency-based learning through which educators can earn subject- and skill-specific credentials indicating mastery.

Effective professional learning is not limited to a one-design model or a one-delivery method.

Essential questions to consider in design and delivery include:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- What is it that we want learners to know, understand, and be able to do as a result?
- How do we design the learning opportunity in order to engage learners and move them to the desired outcome?
- How will we know if professional learning is resulting in the desired outcome (e.g., strengthening instructional practice and improving student learning)?

Examples of learning activities may include:

- Professional book or article study
- Case study
- Data collection and analysis
- Examining student work
- Instructional/peer coaching
- Mentoring
- Demonstration lessons and modeling
- Peer observation
- Reflective journaling/blogging
- Site visits
- Workshops

The State Board of Education has adopted the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning as our state's standards. These are available for review at State Board Policy 5.2, https://tn.gov/assets/entities/sbe/attachments/5-200_ProfessionalLearning_7-27-12.pdf. For more information on the standards or the learning activities mentioned above, you can access a suite of valuable resources available at no cost at https://learningforward.org/standards/.

2.6 Fidelity of Instruction and Fidelity Monitoring

This component is divided into two sections: (a) fidelity of instruction and (b) fidelity monitoring. Both of these processes are part of everyday, high-quality instruction. These are things that teachers are doing every day and comprise practices that instructional leaders look for during instruction. It is the responsibility of all instructional leaders to ensure that instruction is taking place daily with fidelity.

2.6 (a) Fidelity of Instruction

Fidelity of instruction refers to providing instruction with integrity, aligning with instructional goals for student learning, and attending to the critical features of instructional best practices designed to meet those goals. To address the diverse range of students' strengths and needs, schools need a comprehensive approach to instruction that reflects the fidelity of:

- standards based instruction,
- data-driven goals,
- research-based best practices, and
- support for teachers as they make data-informed decisions for adjusting instructional goals, methods, and programs.

Fidelity in implementation of instructional practices or programs does not inhibit responsive instruction, ongoing decision making, or differentiation.

Ways to measure fidelity of instruction may include:

- walk through observations;
- review lesson plans, curriculum maps, and IEPs; and/or
- review student academic data, work, and outcomes for student proficiency.

Measurement of fidelity of implementation of instructional practices or programs may be done by any of the following:

- Instructional leader
- Data team members
- Instructional coaches

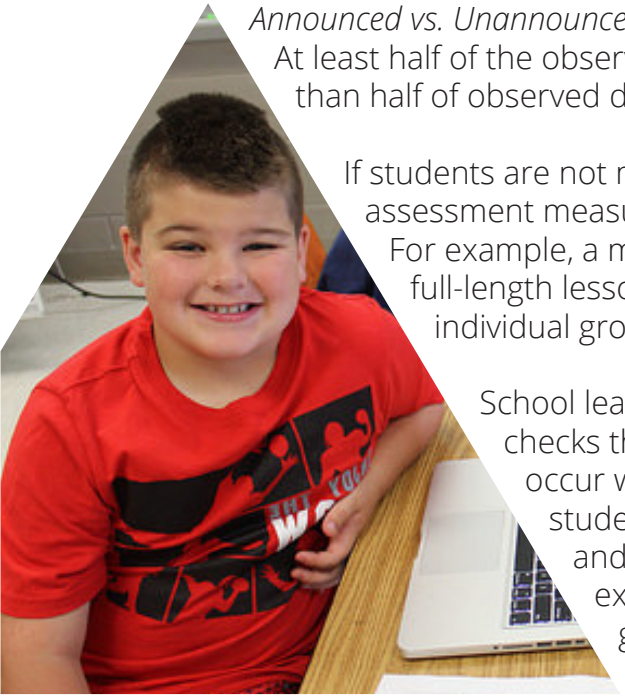
> "All students should receive high-quality, differentiated instruction from the general education teacher during Tier I."

Fidelity monitoring is the systematic monitoring by a responsible instructional leader (e.g., principal, assistant principal, district supervisor) to determine the extent to which the delivery of core instruction adheres to the expectations and goals set for student learning. In core instruction, fidelity is monitored using a state board-approved classroom observation instrument, along with a review of alignment between observation data and student growth data. The goal of fidelity monitoring is to ensure that the educator is implementing core instruction with integrity.

All students should receive high-quality, differentiated instruction from the general education teacher during Tier I. Effective Tier I instruction should meet the needs of 80-85% of the students as evidenced by multiple sources of data throughout the year. If at least 80% of the students are not meeting grade-level standards, the Tier I curriculum, as well as the delivery of instruction, should be evaluated and adjustments should be made.

The number of fidelity checks through classroom observation will be determined by a teacher's previous year's individual growth score and/or final evaluation score based on the license type held by the teacher.

Lincensure Status	Previous Individual Growth Score or Overall Evaluation	Minimum Required Observations*	Minimum Required Observations* per domain	Minimum Number of Minutes per School Year
Practitioner	Levels 1-4	Six (6) observations, with a minimum of three (3) domains observed in each semester.	3 Instruction2 Planning 2 Environment	90 minutes
	Levels 5	One (1) formal observation covering all domains first semester; two walk-throughs second semester.	1 Instruction1 Planning 1 Environment	60 minutes
Professional	Levels 2-4	Four (4) observations with a minimum of two (2) domains observed in each semester.	2 Instruction1 Planning 1 Environment	60 minutes
	Levels 5	One (1) formal observation covering all domains first semester; two (2) walk-throughs second semester.	1 Instruction1 Planning 1 Environment	60 minutes



Announced vs. Unannounced Visits

At least half of the observed domains must be unannounced, but whether to have more than half of observed domains be unannounced is at the district's discretion.

If students are not making progress (as determined by formal and informal assessment measures), then fidelity checks may need to be more thorough. For example, a more thorough fidelity check might be an additional full-length lesson observation, walk-through, or the development of an individual growth plan.

School leadership teams should ensure that a minimum of two fidelity checks through a review of observation/student achievement alignment occur within a school year. Alignment between observation data and student growth data simply means that teacher observation scores and student growth scores are aligned within two data points. For example, an observation score of 4 would be aligned with student growth of 2, 3, 4, or 5, but it would be misaligned with a student growth score of 1. An observation score of 4 would be closely aligned with a student growth score of 3, 4, or 5. Performance level discrepancies between student achievement data and observation scores of three or more will be considered outside the acceptable range of results.

Component 3: Tier II Procedures

3.1 Description of Tier II Interventions

Tier II in K-2 Reading and Mathematics:

Tier II addresses the needs of struggling and advanced students. Tier II is in addition to Tier I (see charts in section 3.2 for minutes). Those students who require additional assistance beyond the usual time allotted for the core instruction (Tier I) should receive additional skill-based group intervention daily in the specific area of need. Tier II intervention is explicit and systematic.
Tier II requires high-quality intervention matched to students' needs and provided by highly trained personnel. Advanced students should receive targeted reinforcement and enrichment. Enrichment activities expand on students' learning in ways that may differ from the strategies used during core instruction. They often are interactive and project focused. They enhance a student's education by bringing new concepts to light or by using old concepts in new ways to deepen students' understanding. These activities are designed to be interesting, challenging, and impart knowledge. They should allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned in Tier I to real-life experiences.

Tier II in 3-5 Reading and Mathematics:

Tier II addresses the needs of struggling and advanced students and occurs daily. Tier II is in addition to Tier I (see charts in section 3.2 for minutes). Those students who require additional assistance beyond the usual time allotted for core instruction should receive additional skill-based group intervention daily in the specific area of need. Tier II intervention is explicit and systematic. Instructional interventions are differentiated, scaffolded, and targeted based on the needs of individual students as determined by current assessment data. Advanced students should receive reinforcement and enrichment. Enrichment activities expand on students' learning in ways that may differ from the strategies used during Tier I instruction. They often are interactive and project focused. They enhance a student's education by bringing new concepts to light or by using old concepts in new ways to deepen students' understanding. These activities are designed to be interesting, challenging, and impart knowledge. They should allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned in Tier I to real-life experiences.

Tier II in 6-12 Reading:

Tier II addresses the needs of struggling and advanced students. Those students who require assistance beyond the usual time allotted for core instruction should receive additional skill-based group intervention daily in the specific area of need (see charts in section 3.2 for minutes).
Tier II intervention is explicit and systematic. Advanced students should receive reinforcement and enrichment. Note that the text complexity standards apply to all students. While leveled reading is useful in building confidence, stamina, fluency, and engagement, all students should be given the opportunity to encounter and productively struggle with on- or above-grade-level complex text. With struggling readers, teachers are encouraged to differentiate the level of scaffolding or support they provide students (e.g., different entry points to text, vocabulary support, modeling of comprehension strategies) rather than the level of text.

Intervention should include explicit instruction within the area of need for all struggling students. For example, if a student in sixth grade has phonics deficits, then this student requires intervention in the area of phonics. If computer programs are used, students should still have daily interaction with a teacher who can hold them accountable for what they have read and to ensure that they practice new skills.

Tier II in 6-12 Mathematics:

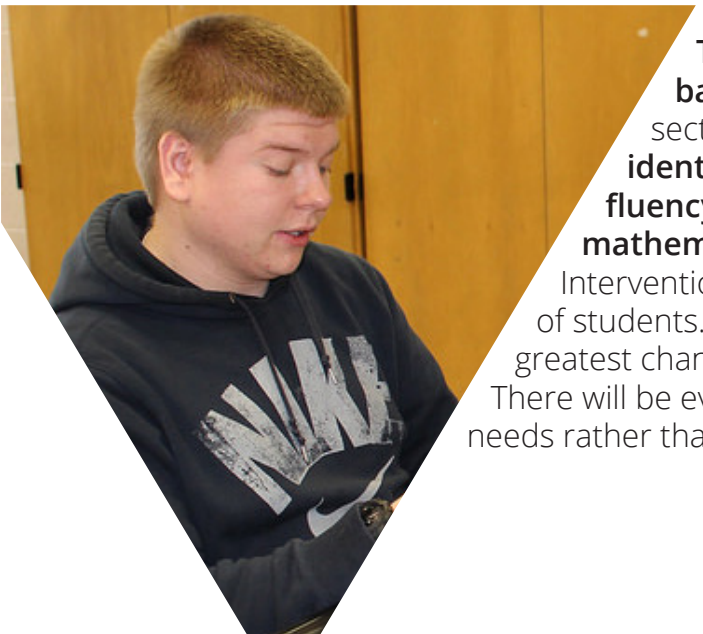
Tier II addresses the needs of struggling and advanced students. Advanced students should receive reinforcement and enrichment. Students who require assistance beyond the usual time allotted for Tier I instruction should receive additional intensive small group attention daily (see chart in section 3.2 for minutes). Teachers should use the vertical coherence of the Tennessee Academic Standards to identify standards from previous grades that might be prohibiting a student from accessing grade-level standards. Research indicates that students' struggles in mathematics are often attributed to a lack of conceptual understanding of number sense. It is important to diagnose specific student deficiencies through survey-level assessments in order for the proper support to be given. Students who struggle with fluency can oftentimes continue to learn grade-level concepts. In this case, Tier II intervention should target the necessary fluencies to support conceptual understanding.

Tier II Description:

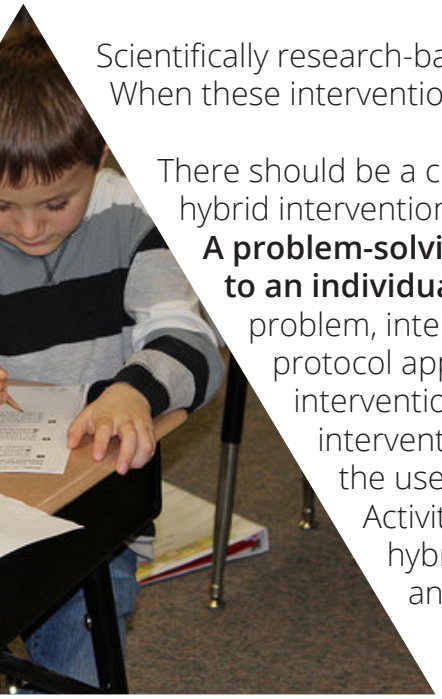
Tier II is in addition to the instruction provided in Tier I and should meet the needs of 10-15% of students. Students who score below the designated cut score on the universal screening will receive more intense intervention in Tier II. These cut scores should be based on national norms and identify students who are at risk. As a guideline, students below the 25th percentile would be considered "at-risk." Students who exceed grade level expectations may be considered "advanced."

If a school has a large number of students falling below national norms, a school team may use relative norms instead of national norms to guide the selection of intervention groups. Relative norms compare a student's performance to other students in his/her school. If a school has a high population of struggling students, relative norms allow a school staff to determine which students have the greatest need for intervention. A school uses relative norms to serve students that are most at risk when all at-risk students cannot be served. LEAs should continue to use national comparisons for overall program evaluation.

When teachers and school-level RTI² support teams are making placement decisions for Tier II interventions, it may be necessary to consider other assessments, data, and information on the student. Such examples may include past retention or performance on TCAP. (See Sections 1.3, 1.4 and 2.4 for more information on universal screening and data-based decision making.) When a student begins an intervention, a more precise assessment may be needed to identify the specific area(s) of deficit.



Tier II interventions should be systematic, research-based (see Scientifically-based researched interventions section below) **interventions that target the student's identified area of deficit (basic reading skill(s), reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving or written expression).** Interventions should be developed based on the unique needs of students. Interventions that have been researched to have the greatest chance of addressing the area of need should be selected. There will be evidence that interventions are focused on specific skill needs rather than the standards focus of Tier I.



Scientifically research-based interventions are interventions that produce reliable and valid results. When these interventions are used properly, adequate gains are expected.

There should be a clear description as to whether a problem-solving, standard protocol, or hybrid intervention is being used for each of the areas (i.e., reading, math, or writing). **A problem-solving approach within an RTI² model is used to tailor an intervention to an individual student.** It typically has four stages: problem identification, analysis of problem, intervention planning, and response to intervention evaluation. A standard protocol approach within an RTI² model relies on the same empirically-validated intervention for all students with similar academic needs. Standard protocol interventions facilitate quality control. For example, a standard protocol would be the use of the Florida Center for Reading Research's (www.fcrr.org) Student Center Activities as interventions for Tier II students depending on the area of deficit. A hybrid approach within an RTI² model combines methods of problem-solving and standard protocol approaches.

According to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements [No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 1411(e)(2)(C)(xi)], scientifically-based research involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs and includes research that:

- employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
- involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations and across studies by the same or different investigators;
- is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or other designs to the extend that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls;
- ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls; allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and
- has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

An effective intervention is:

- **implemented by highly-trained personnel,**
- **implemented with fidelity and confirmed with measurement, and**
- **progress monitored to ensure outcomes are being met.**

The school level RTI² support team will determine which students will be placed in Tier II. See section 3.4 on data-based decision making for more information.

3.2 Tier II Configuration

The following charts illustrate the strongly recommended minimum instructional times.

Tier II	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade
Reading	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes
Mathematics	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes

Tier II	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade
Reading	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes
Mathematics	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes

Tier II	Grades 6-8 (traditional)	Grades 6-8 (block)	Grades 9-12 (traditional)	Grades 9-12 (block)
Reading	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes
Mathematics	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes	30 minutes

In K-2, 3-5, and 6-12, the interventions in Tier II should be provided daily. If students need interventions in more than one area (e.g, reading and mathematics), then the five days of interventions a week can be split in a two-day/three-day manner based on the area of greater need. For example, if a student needs intervention in reading and mathematics but is weaker in math, he/she should receive three days of mathematics interventions and two days of reading interventions each week.

The decision to provide a two-day/three-day split in an RTI² team decision and may be appropriate for some students, who need reading and math intervention. If a team chooses to do a split intervention, the team must watch the student's progress closely and make intervention adjustments if the student is not progressing in this model. The team may also choose to provide intervention five days/week in the area of greatest need or provide intervention five days/week in both areas of deficit. Student data should guide this decision.

A student who is receiving special education services should not be excluded from tiered interventions if their data indicates a need. For example, a student with Other Health Impairment (OHI) may receive special education services for his/her disability; however, he/she may also receive tiered interventions in reading, math, or written expression. In this case, both special education services and tiered interventions would be provided.

Intervention groups should be small. Research supports small groups for interventions. The following are suggested ratios of highly-trained personnel to students during Tier II interventions:

Grade	Ratio
K-5	1:5
6-8	1:6
9-12	1:12*

**Smaller groups are suggested for more individualized interventions.*

The interventions need to be delivered by highly trained personnel. Highly trained personnel are people who are adequately trained to deliver the selected intervention as intended with fidelity to design. When possible, Tier II interventions should be taught by qualified, certified teachers. Research supports the most trained personnel working with the most at-risk students.

3.3 Progress Monitoring Procedures in Tier II

Progress monitoring is used to assess student's academic performance, to quantify a student rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class. When additional intervention is being provided in Tier II, the effectiveness of the intervention should be progress monitored to ensure that it is helping the student reach a goal. This is accomplished through at least every other week administration of probes that are parallel forms of the ones used in universal screening. Progress monitoring will be done in the area of deficit using an instrument that is sensitive to change.

> "The effectiveness of the intervention should be progress monitored to ensure that it is helping the student reach a goal."

While the universal screening tool measures student performance on grade level, progress monitoring must be conducted with measures that are at a student's skill/instructional level. The skill/instructional level at which a student will be progress monitored can be determined through a survey-level assessment. A survey-level assessment is a process of determining the most basic skill area deficit and which skill/instructional level a student has mastered. It is effective in determining appropriate, realistic goals for a student and helps identify the specific deficit in order to determine accurate rate of improvement and growth. Survey-level assessment provides vital information for students suspected of being 1.5 to 2 years behind or who fall below the 10th percentile.

Progress monitoring in Tier II may include:

- *Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) probes*
- *Assessments from intervention materials/kits:* When analyzing these tools, teams should ensure that the assessments include national percentiles, allow for repeated measures, are sensitive to change, and specify areas of deficit, including basic reading skill(s), reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving and written expression. In addition, the tools should report results so that rate of improvement (ROI) can be calculated and transferred to graph form.

OR

- *Computer-based assessments:* When analyzing these tools, teams should ensure that the assessments include national percentiles, allow for repeated measures, sensitive to change, and specific to an area of deficit including basic reading skill(s), reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving and written expression. In addition, the tools should report results so that rate of improvement (ROI) can be calculated and transferred to graph form.

Progress monitoring in Tier II will take place at a frequency of at least every other week. Highly trained personnel should administer the progress monitoring in Tier II, and classroom teachers should continuously analyze the progress monitoring data.

Teachers should show knowledge and evidence of setting goals for each child. Expected growth can be determined by using measures provided by or created through the progress-monitoring instrument. It should be related to each specific area of need.

> "Teachers must use the data from progress monitoring to make instructional decisions."

For example, if the student has high error rates in reading fluency, a survey-level assessment may be completed. If the student has phonics skills deficits, the teacher would intervene first in phonics before addressing fluency. If the student is in third grade, he/she may need measures on first grade fluency probes or phonics probes to determine an accurate rate of improvement (ROI). Survey-level assessments can provide this additional level of specific skill areas of need (see section 3.3).

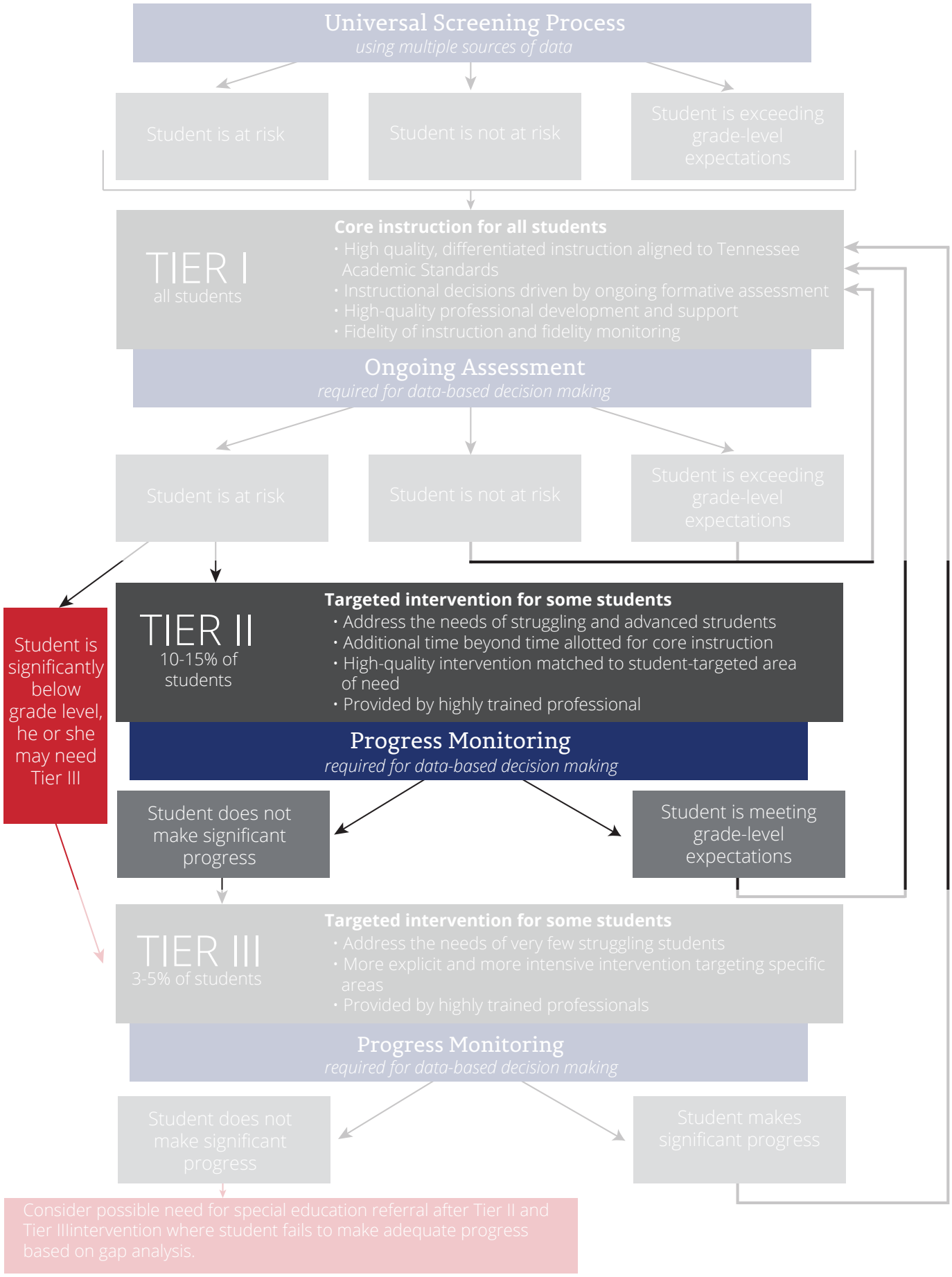
Teachers must show how students are progressing toward these goals using a ROI to determine adequate progress. Teachers must use the data from progress monitoring to make instructional decisions.

A student's ROI on progress monitoring is the number of units of measure (e.g., words read correctly, correct responses, correct digits) a child has made per week since the beginning of the intervention. To discover this rate, teachers should divide the total number of units gained by the number of weeks that have elapsed. The ROI is compared to the ROIof a typical peer and is one of the factors considered in determining whether a student has made adequate progress. **The at-risk student's rate of improvement must be greater than the rate of improvement of a typical student in order to "close the gap" and return to grade level functioning.** Many intervention materials and/or progress monitoring materials/assessments calculate the rate of improvement.

School RTI² teams will meet to analyze data, measure the effectiveness of interventions, and check student progress toward goals. A plan will be in place for when students are and are not making adequate progress within Tier II. If students are not making adequate progress in Tier II, the intervention may need to be changed. Students should have at least four data points during Tier II interventions before a change is considered. Only one or two variables should be changed at a time to measure effectiveness of the change. A change in intervention will be considered within each tier before moving to the next tier of intervention. Changes may include:

- increasing frequency of intervention sessions,
- changing interventions,
- changing intervention provider, and
- changing time of day intervention is delivered.

In order to make a data-based decision to change to Tier III, a minimum of 8-10 data points if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly are required. School RTI² teams will decide the best placement for students in Tier III. Tier III interventions must be more intense than Tier II interventions. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation.


Universal Screening Process
using multiple sources of data
Student is at risk
Student is not at risk
Student is exceeding grade-level expectations
TIER I
all students
Core instruction for all students
• High quality, differentiated instruction aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards
• Instructional decisions driven by ongoing formative assessment
• High-quality professional development and support
• Fidelity of instruction and fidelity monitoring
Ongoing Assessment
required for data-based decision making
Student is at risk
Student is not at risk
Student is exceeding grade-level expectations
Student is significantly below grade level, he or she may need Tier III
TIER II
10-15% of students
Targeted intervention for some students
• Address the needs of struggling and advanced strudents
• Additional time beyond time allotted for core instruction
• High-quality intervention matched to student-targeted area of need
• Provided by highly trained professional
Progress Monitoring
required for data-based decision making
Student does not make significant progress
Student is meeting grade-level expectations
TIER III
3-5% of students
Targeted intervention for some students
• Address the needs of very few struggling students
• More explicit and more intensive intervention targeting specific areas
• Provided by highly trained professionals
Progress Monitoring
required for data-based decision making
Student does not make significant progress
Student makes significant progress
Consider possible need for special education referral after Tier II and Tier IIIintervention where student fails to make adequate progress based on gap analysis.

3.5 Professional Learning for Tier II

Professional learning will cover specific content pertaining to Tier II interventions, Tier II progress monitoring, Tier II data-based decision making, and Tier II fidelity monitoring. All personnel involved in Tier II interventions, including administrators, should receive professional learning.

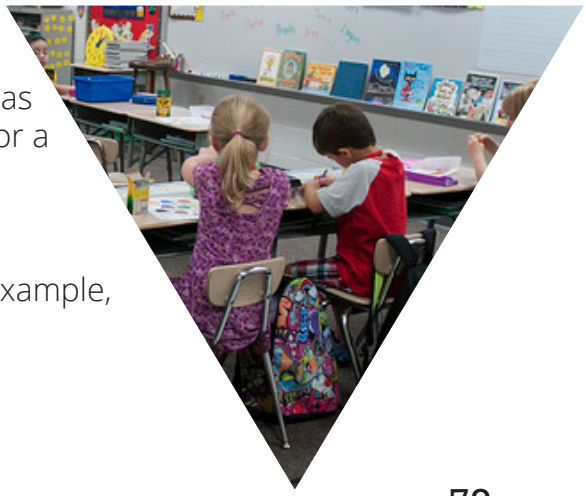
3.6 Fidelity Monitoring

> "The goal of fidelity monitoring is to ensure that the intervention is being implemented with integrity."

Fidelity is the accuracy or extent to which Tier II materials and other curricula are used as intended by the author/publisher. Fidelity monitoring is the systematic monitoring by a responsible instructional leader (e.g. principal or instructional coach) to determine the extent to which the delivery of an intervention adheres to the protocols or program models as originally developed. The goal of fidelity monitoring is to ensure that the intervention is being implemented with integrity. LEAs must have a process for monitoring fidelity. This process must include a description of who is responsible for fidelity monitoring and how often fidelity in Tier II intervention will be monitored. In Tier II, fidelity will be monitored at least three times before making a data-based decision to increase the intensity of the intervention (i.e. Tier III).

Students may remain in Tier II for varying amounts of time. The purpose of monitoring fidelity is to provide ongoing information about the effectiveness of the intervention being provided. Many students will receive Tier II interventions for an extended period of time. These students will receive more than the minimum required fidelity checks. Student attendance should be collected and documented reasons for absence should be taken as a data point to determine the student access to Tier II intervention.

Instead of determining fidelity checks by marking period, a data team should ensure that three fidelity checks occur within the period of time that 8-10 data points are collected if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly. Therefore, when reviewing the effectiveness of an intervention, a data team should review three fidelity checks and 8-10 data points if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly.



If the intervention is effective and students are making progress (as determined by their ROI), the fidelity checks do not need to be as intensive. For example, the fidelity check might be a walk through or a short observation.

If the students are not making progress (as determined by their ROI), then fidelity checks need to be more thorough. For example, a thorough fidelity check might be a 30-minute direct observation.

Tier II: Three fidelity checks (at minimum)	
Direct Fidelity Check	Indirect Fidelity Check
2 Direct	1 Indirect
Options for Direct Checks: • Walk through observation • Short observations (partial intervention session) • Full observation Direct observations may vary in length depending on the intensity of the observation needed.	**Options for Indirect Checks:** • Review of intervention lesson plan • Review of progress monitoring data • Review of schedule • Review of attendance (including reasons for absense)
Documentation: Fidelity checks can be done for an entire group at the same time; however, the information they provide should be looked at from the student level because the team will be making decisions about each student's needs.	**Documentation:** The data team should conduct reviews of student data. When analyzing one student's progress, the team should consider the group and/or student rate of improvement.
Example personnel to include: • Principals, administrators, or other appointed designees; • Instructional coaches: literacy/numeracy coaches; • School psychologists; and • Special education teachers.	**Example personnel to include:** • Data team (as a regular component of data team meetings)

Interventions must be implemented with integrity. If the intervention is not implemented with integrity of at least 80% or greater, the interventionist should be supported with training until integrity reaches 80%.

Component 4: Tier III Procedures

4.1 Description of Tier III Interventions

Tier III in K-2 ELA & Mathematics:

Tier III addresses 3-5% of students who have received Tier I instruction and Tier II interventions and continue to show marked difficulty in acquiring necessary reading, mathematics, and writing skill(s). It could also include students who are 1.5 to 2 years behind or are below the 10th percentile and require the most intensive interventions immediately. Students at this level should receive daily, intensive, small group, or individual intervention targeting specific area(s) of deficit, which are more intense than interventions received in Tier II. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

Tier III in 3-5 ELA & Mathematics:

Tier III addresses 3-5% of students who have received Tier I instruction and Tier II intervention and continue to show marked difficulty in acquiring necessary reading, mathematics, and writing skill(s). It could also include students who are 1.5 to 2 years behind or are below the 10th percentile and require the most intensive interventions immediately. Students at this level should receive daily, intensive, small group, or individual intervention targeting specific area(s) of deficit, which are more intense than interventions received in Tier II. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

Tier III in 6-12 ELA:

Tier III addresses 3-5 percent of students who have received Tier I instruction and Tier II intervention and continue to show marked difficulty in acquiring necessary reading and writing skill(s). It could also include students who are 1.5 to 2 years behind or are below the 10th percentile and require the most intensive interventions immediately. Students at this level should receive daily, intensive, small group, or individual intervention targeting specific area(s) of deficit, which are more intense than interventions received in Tier II. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

Tier III in 6-12 Mathematics:

Tier III addresses 3-5 percent of students who have received Tier I instruction and Tier II intervention and continue to show marked difficulty in acquiring necessary mathematics skill(s). It could also include students who are 1.5 to 2 years behind or are below the 10th percentile and require the most intensive interventions immediately. Students at this level should receive daily, intensive, small group, or individual interventions targeting specific area(s) of deficit, which are more intense than interventions received in Tier II. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

Tier III Description:

Tier III is in addition to the instruction provided in Tier I. Tier III interventions should meet the needs of 3-5 percent of students. School RTI² teams will decide the best placement for students in Tier III. Tier III interventions must be more intense than Tier II interventions. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation. **Students who have not made adequate progress with Tier II interventions or who score below the designated cut score on the universal screening will receive more intense intervention in Tier III.** These cut scores should be based on national norms that identify students who are at-risk.

> "Tier III is in addition to the instruction provided in Tier I."

As a guideline, students below 10th percentile would be considered the most "at-risk" and in possible need of Tier III intervention. When teachers and school level RTI² support teams are making placement decisions for Tier III interventions, it may be necessary to consider other assessments, data and information on the student. Such examples may include attendance records, past retention, or performance on TCAP. (See Sections 1.3, 1.4, and 3.4 for more information on universal screening and data- based decision making.)

If a school has a large number of students falling below national norms, a school team may use relative norms instead of national norms to guide the selection of intervention groups. Relative norms compare a student's performance to other students in his/her school. If a school has a high population of struggling students, relative norms allow a school staff to determine which students have the greatest need for intervention. A school uses relative norms to serve students that are most at-risk when all at-risk students cannot be served. LEAs should continue to use national comparisons for overall program evaluation.

Tier III interventions will be systematic, research-based interventions that target the student's identified area of deficit (basic reading skill(s), reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving, or written expression). Interventions will be developed based on the unique needs of students. Interventions that have been researched to have the greatest chance of addressing the area of need should be selected. There will be evidence that interventions are more intense than Tier II.

There will be a clear description of the problem-solving approach to intervention being used for each of the areas (reading, math, or writing). **A problem-solving approach within an RTI² model is highly recommended so that the data team can tailor an intervention to an individual student.** It typically has four stages: problem identification, analysis of problem, intervention planning, and response to intervention evaluation. A hybrid or standard protocol approach can also be used. For more information, see section 3.1.

Scientifically research-based interventions are interventions that produce reliable and valid results. When these interventions are used properly, adequate gains should be expected. To be considered research-based, they must have a clear record of success.

According to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements [No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 § 1411(e)(2)(C)(xi)], scientifically-based research involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs and includes research that:

- employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
- involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations and across studies by the same or different investigators;
- is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest with a preference for random assignment experiments or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or other designs to the extend that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls;
- ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and
- has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

An effective intervention is:

- **Implemented by highly-trained personnel;**
- **Implemented with fidelity and confirmed by measurement; and**
- **Progress monitored to ensure outcomes are being met.**

The school level RTI² support team will determine which students will be placed in Tier III. See section 4.5 on data-based decision making for more information.

4.2 Tier III Configuration

In grades K-8, the interventions in Tier III should be provided daily. The following charts illustrate the strongly recommended intervention times for Tier III in grades K-8:

Tier III	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade
Reading	40-45 minutes	40-60 minutes	40-60 minutes
Mathematics	40-45 minutes	40-45 minutes	40-60 minutes

Tier III	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade
Reading	45-60 minutes	45-60 minutes	45-60 minutes
Mathematics	45-60 minutes	45-60 minutes	45-60 minutes

Tier III	Grades 6-8 (traditional)	Grades 6-8 (block)	Grades 9-12 (traditional)	Grades 9-12 (block)
Reading	45-55 minutes	45-60 minutes	45-55 minutes	45-60 minutes
Mathematics	45-55 minutes	45-60 minutes	45-55 minutes	45-60 minutes

While it is recommended that students in grades 9-12 receive Tier III interventions for 45-60 minutes daily, in some instances this may not be possible. However, students in need of Tier III interventions should receive a minimum of 225 minutes each week. The following charts illustrate the *weekly* minimum intervention times for Tier III in grades 9- 12:

Tier III	9-12 (traditional)	9-12 (block)
Reading Weekly Minimums	225-275 minutes	225-300 minutes

Tier III	9-12 (traditional)	9-12 (block)
Mathematics Weekly Minimums	225-275 minutes	225-300 minutes

A student who is receiving special education services should not be excluded from tiered interventions if their data indicates a need. For example, a student with Other Health Impairment (OHI) may receive special education services for his/her disability; however, he/she may also receive tiered interventions in reading, math or written expression. In this case, both special education services and tiered interventions would be provided.

Intervention groups should be small. Research supports small groups for interventions. The following are suggested ratios of highly trained personnel to students during Tier III interventions:

Grade	Ratio
K-5	1:3
6-8	1:6
9-12	1:12*

*See Component 4.8 regarding High School Tier III Intervention Courses

The interventions need to be delivered by highly trained personnel. Highly trained personnel are people who are adequately trained to deliver the selected intervention as intended with fidelity to design. When possible, Tier III interventions should be taught by qualified, certified teachers. Research supports the most trained personnel working with the most at-risk students.

Progress monitoring is used to assess student's academic performance, to quantify a student rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. When additional intervention is being provided in Tier III, the effectiveness of the instructional intervention should be monitored to ensure that it is helping the student reach a goal. This is accomplished through administration of probes that are parallel forms of the ones used in universal screening. Students in Tier III should be progress monitored at least every other week in grades K-12. Progress monitoring will be done in the area of deficit using an instrument that is sensitive to change.

> "Progress monitoring will be done in the area of deficit using an instrument that is senstive to change."

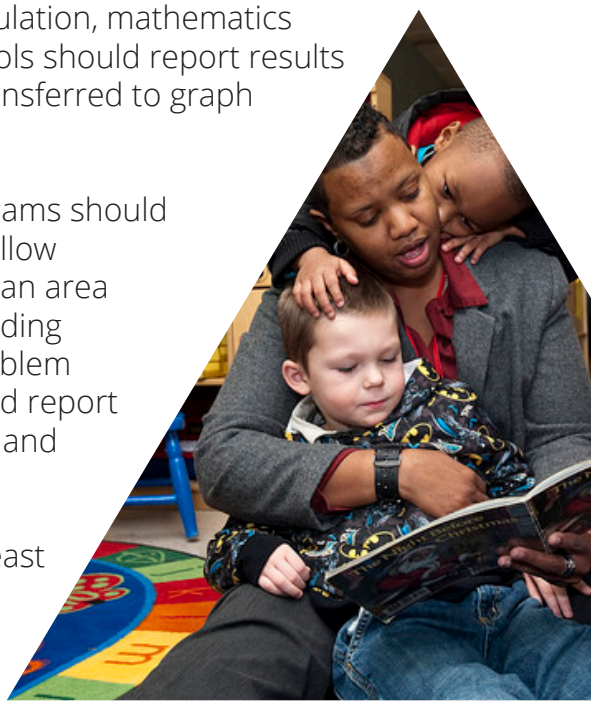
While the universal screening tools measure student performance on grade level, progress monitoring must be conducted with measures that are at the students' skill/instructional level. The skill/instructional level at which a student will be progress monitored can be determined through a survey-level assessment. A survey-level assessment is a process of determining the most basic skill area deficit and which skill/instructional level a student has mastered. It is effective in determining appropriate, realistic goals for a student and helps identify the specific deficit in order to determine accurate rate of improvement and growth. Survey-level assessment is also necessary for students suspected of being 1.5 to 2 years behind or who fall below the 10th percentile.

Progress monitoring in Tier III may include:

- *Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) probes*
- *Assessments from intervention materials/kits:* When analyzing these tools, teams should ensure that the assessments include national percentiles, allow for repeated measures, are sensitive to change, and specify areas of deficit including basic reading skill(s), reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving, and written expression. In addition, the tools should report results so that rate of improvement (ROI) can be calculated and transferred to graph form.

OR

- *Computer-based assessments*: When analyzing these tools, teams should ensure that the assessments include national percentiles, allow for repeated measures, sensitive to change, and specific to an area of deficit including basic reading skill(s), reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving, and written expression). In addition, the tools should report results so that rate of improvement (ROI) can be calculated and transferred to graph form.

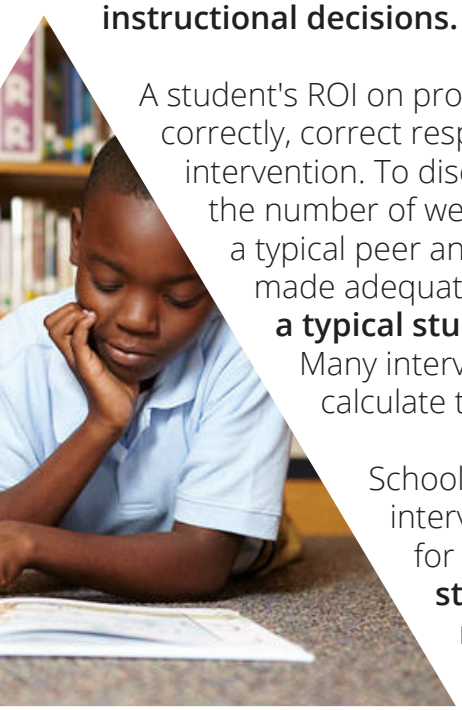


Progress monitoring in Tier III will take place at a frequency of at least every other week. Highly trained personnel should administer the progress monitoring in Tier III and classroom teachers should continuously analyze the progress monitoring data.

Teachers should show knowledge and evidence of setting goals for each child. Expected growth can be determined by using measures provided by or created through the progress monitoring instrument. It should be related to each area of need.

For example, if the student has high error rates in reading fluency, additional assessment is completed that includes phonics assessments. If the student has phonics skills deficits, the teacher would intervene first in phonics before addressing fluency. If the student is in third grade, he/she may need measures on first grade fluency probes or phonics probes to determine an accurate ROI. This would be determined through survey-level assessments (see section 4.3).

Teachers must show how students are progressing toward these goals using a ROI to determine adequate progress. **Teachers must use the data from progress monitoring to make instructional decisions.**

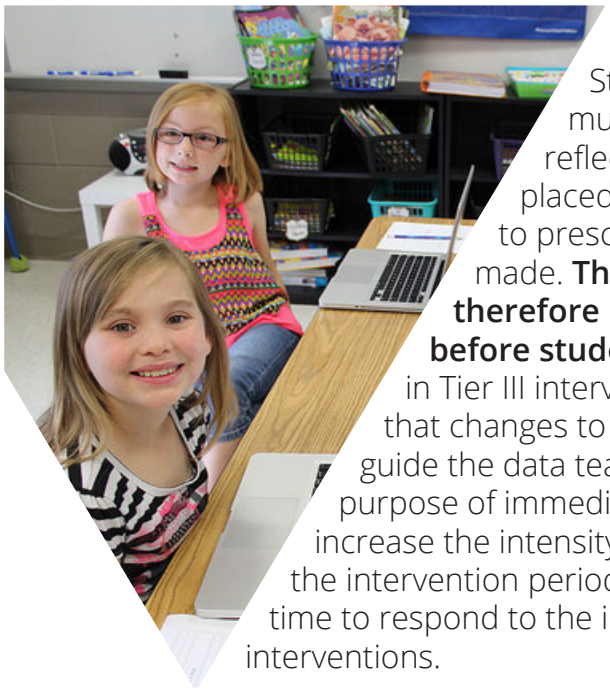


A student's ROI on progress monitoring is the number of units of measure (e.g., words read correctly, correct responses, correct digits) a child has made per week since the beginning of the intervention. To discover this rate, teachers should divide the total number of units gained by the number of weeks that have elapsed. The ROI is compared to the rate of improvement of a typical peer and is one of the factors considered in determining whether a students has made adequate progress. **The at-risk student's ROI must be greater than the ROI of a typical student in order to "close the gap" and return to grade level functioning.** Many intervention materials and/or progress monitoring materials/assessments calculate the ROI.

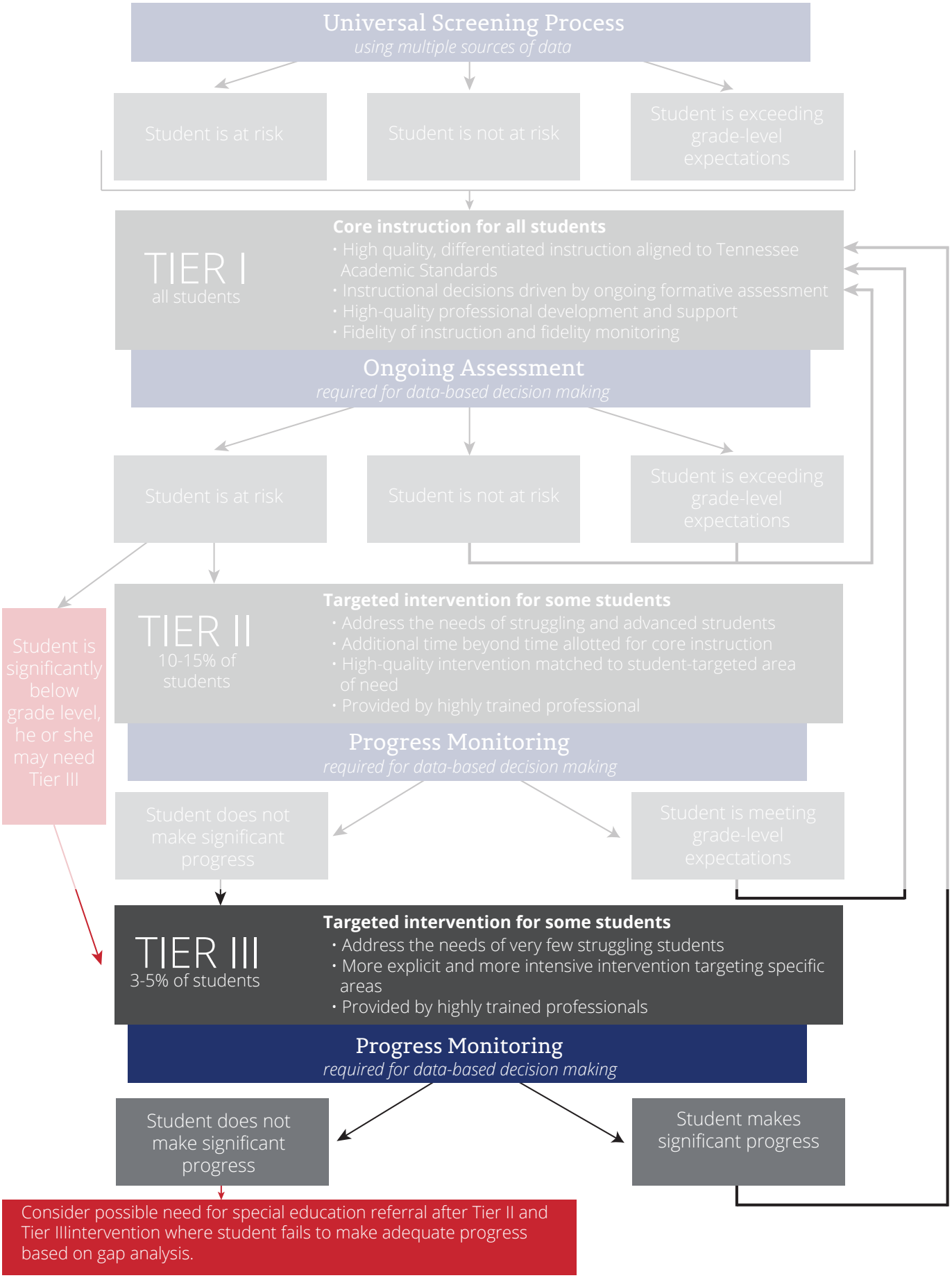
School RTI² teams will meet to analyze data, measure the effectiveness of interventions and check student progress toward goals. A plan will be in place for when students are and are not making adequate progress within Tier III. **If students are not making adequate progress in Tier III, the intervention may need to be changed. Students should have at least four data points during Tier III interventions before a change is considered. Only one or two variables should be changed at a time to measure effectiveness of the change.** A change in intervention will be considered within each tier before moving to the next tier of intervention. Changes may include:

- increasing frequency of intervention sessions,
- changing interventions,
- changing intervention provider, and
- changing time of day intervention is delivered.

In order to make a data-based decision to refer for special education consideration, a minimum of 8-10 data points if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly are required.



Students who were immediately placed in Tier III interventions must receive the total number of minutes for intervention as reflected in section 4.2. Furthermore, students who are immediately placed in Tier III interventions will be given adequate time to respond to prescribed intervention before a referral to special education is made. **These students typically demonstrate a higher need and therefore may require Tier III intervention for a longer period of time before student growth meets expectations.** During this extended support in Tier III intervention, a student's progress should be monitored closely so that changes to the intervention can be made. The student's progress should guide the data team in making these changes to the intervention. The purpose of immediately placing a student in Tier III intervention is to increase the intensity of the intervention, not to shorten the duration of the intervention period. The student will be given the same amount of time to respond to the intervention as a student who first received Tier II interventions.


Universal Screening Process
using multiple sources of data
Student is at risk
Student is not at risk
Student is exceeding grade-level expectations
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10-15% of students
Targeted intervention for some students
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3-5% of students
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• Address the needs of very few struggling students
• More explicit and more intensive intervention targeting specific areas
• Provided by highly trained professionals
Progress Monitoring
required for data-based decision making
Student does not make significant progress
Student makes significant progress
Consider possible need for special education referral after Tier II and Tier Illintervention where student fails to make adequate progress based on gap analysis.

4.5 Professional Learning for Tier III

Professional learning will cover specific content pertaining to Tier III interventions, Tier III progress monitoring, Tier III data-based decision making, and Tier III fidelity monitoring. All personnel involved in Tier III interventions, including administrators, should receive professional learning.

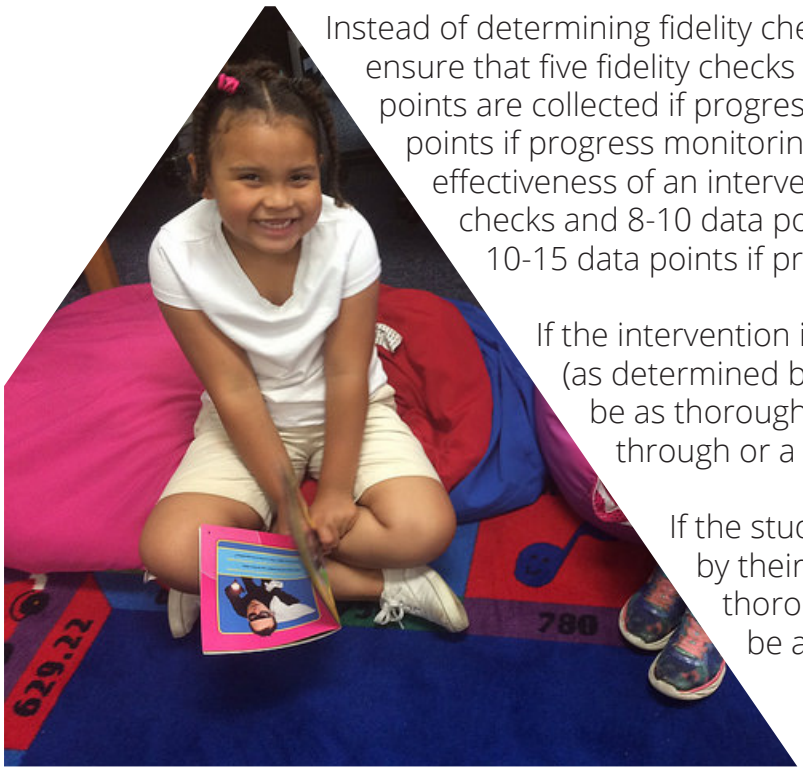
4.6 Fidelity Monitoring

Fidelity is the accuracy or extent to which Tier III materials and other curricula are used as intended by the author/publisher. Fidelity monitoring is the systematic monitoring by a responsible instructional leader (e.g. principal or instructional coach) to determine the extent to which the delivery of an intervention adheres to the protocols or program models as originally developed. **In Tier III, fidelity monitoring will focus on the intervention specific to each student and will use reliable and valid measures. The goal of fidelity monitoring is to ensure that the intervention is being implemented with integrity.**

LEAs must have a process for monitoring fidelity. This process must include a description of who is responsible for fidelity monitoring and how often fidelity in Tier III intervention will be monitored. Student attendance should be collected and documented reasons for absence should be taken as a data point to determine the student access to Tier II intervention. (See chart on p. 56 for additional details).

In Tier III, fidelity will be monitored at least five times before making a data-based decision to increase the intensity of the intervention. For students receiving Tier III intervention, an increase in intensity would be a referral to special education.

Students may remain in Tier III for varying amounts of time. This variability is determined by the student's progress in Tier III. A data team will review ROI data and fidelity monitoring data to determine the student's ongoing intervention needs.



Instead of determining fidelity checks by marking period, a data team should ensure that five fidelity checks occur within the period of time that 8-10 data points are collected if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly. Therefore, when reviewing the effectiveness of an intervention, a data team should review three fidelity checks and 8-10 data points if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly.

If the intervention is effective and students are making progress (as determined by their ROI), the fidelity checks do not need to be as thorough. For example, the fidelity check might be a walk through or a short observation.

If the students are not making progress (as determined by their ROI), then fidelity checks need to be more thorough. For example, a thorough fidelity check might be a 30-minute direct observation.

Tier III: Three fidelity checks (at minimum)	
Direct Fidelity Check	**Indirect Fidelity Check**
3 Direct	**2 Indirect**
Options for Direct Checks: • Walk through observation • Short observations (partial intervention session) • Full observation Direct observations may vary in length depending on the intensity of the observation needed.	**Options for Indirect Checks:** • Review of intervention lesson plan • Review of progress monitoring data • Review of schedule • Review of attendance (including reasons for absense)
Documentation: Fidelity checks can be done for an entire group at the same time; however, the information they provide should be looked at from the student level because the team will be making decisions about each student's needs.	**Documentation:** The data team should conduct reviews of student data. When analyzing one student's progress, the team should consider the group and/or student rate of improvement.
Example personnel to include: • Principals, administrators, or other appointed designees; • Instructional coaches: literacy/numeracy coaches; • RTI Coordinators, fidelity monitors • School psychologists; and • Special education teachers.	**Example personnel to include:** • Data team (as a regular component of data team meetings)

If the intervention is not implemented with integrity of at least 80% or greater, the interventionist should be supported with training until integrity reaches 80%.

4.8 Consideration for Special Education

A referral for special education for a specific learning disability (SLD) in basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving, or written expression will be determined **when the data indicate that Tier III is ineffective.** Information obtained from any screenings completed during the intervention process may be used as part of the eligibility determination following informed written parental consent. Consent for an evaluation may be requested or received during Tier III interventions, but evidence from Tier III must be a part of determination, and a lack of response to Tier III interventions may not be pre-determined. An evaluation for SLD may be in conjunction with the second half of Tier III but may not be concluded before Tier III interventions are proven ineffective at the end of Tier III.

The fidelity of implementation per intervention will be assessed throughout the process; however, the minimum requirement is a combined total of eight checks:

- Three checks in Tier II where two must be a direct observation
- Five checks in Tier III where three must be direct observations and two must be a review of implementation data (i.e., student attendance, lesson plans, progress monitoring results).

Team members involved in making a decision to refer for special education may include:

- School psychologist
- Principal or other designee
- Intervention/Support team members

Parents must be invited to a meeting to discuss a referral for special education evaluation. See Component 5 for more information.

Tennessee SLD Definition Made Easy

Condition 1		Condition 2		Condition 1
Underacheivement in: • Basic Reading Skills • Reading Fluency • Reading Comprehension • Written Expression • Mathematics Calculation • Mathematics Reasoning	+	**RTI:** Insufficient responses to scientific, research-based intervention.	+	**Exclusionary Factors:** *Conditions 1 and 2 are not primarily due to:* • Visual, Hearing, or Motor Disability; • Intellectual Disability; • Emotional Disturbance; • Cultural Factors; • Enviornmental or Economic Diosadvantage; •Limited English Proficiency; or • Excessive Absenteeism

4.9 High School Tier III Intervention Courses

The Tennessee Department of Education offers high school course codes for Tier III intervention. **There are two courses offered for credit: Tier III ELA Intervention and Tier III Mathematics Intervention.** Using progress monitoring data to make data-based decisions, students may repeat the intervention courses as needed and move in and out of the intervention courses as needed. These data-based decisions should be made by the school RTI² support team. These are elective courses beyond the required ELA and mathematics classes needed for graduation; however, these can be used to count toward an elective focus. These courses will be offered daily (or as described in Component 4.2) and will be taught by a certified teacher. These courses will use research-based interventions and follow the guidelines within Component 4.1 for Tier III intervention. The majority of the course should be direct intervention provided by any certified teacher; however, computer-based and/or technology assisted interventions can be used a portion of the time. The intervention program should match the area of deficit and be delivered with high fidelity. It is recommended that class size should not exceed a 1:12 ratio.

Component 5: Special Education Eligibility Procedures

5.1 Special Education Referral Procedures

A special education referral for a student suspected of a specific learning disability may only be deemed necessary after the student has received tiered interventions, and the intervention(s) provided were not successful in closing the achievement gap. A student may be referred during Tier III, but eligibility will not be determined until interventions have been implemented with fidelity at all levels. Data-based decisions will be made at each tier using a minimum of 8-10 data points if progress monitoring every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points if progress monitoring weekly. Furthermore, a change in intervention will be considered within each tier before moving to the next tier of intervention (as referenced in sections 3.4 and 4.4). Number of data points reflects empirical research required to make an informed data based decision. The intervention must have empirical evidence supporting its use in remediating the area of suspected disability (i.e., Basic Reading Skills), and the progress monitoring tool selected must be able to provide evidence that the student did not make a sufficient amount of progress in the area of suspected disability. **It is the LEA's responsibility to document that the student received intervention and was progress monitored as outlined by the Tier II and Tier III guidelines.**

Student screening: Students may be screened by a specialist (e.g., school psychologist or reading specialist) at any time within the tiers to provide instructional and/or program planning information. For example, the student's phonological processing or academic skills may be screened to provide additional information to inform instruction and/or intervention. All screenings will be conducted in accordance with the examiner's manual with regard to standardization and examiner qualifications. Prior to a special education referral, this screening information may only be used to help identify the needs of the student and to assist with instructional program planning. Furthermore, this information will not be used to predetermine the student's ability or lack thereof to make progress.

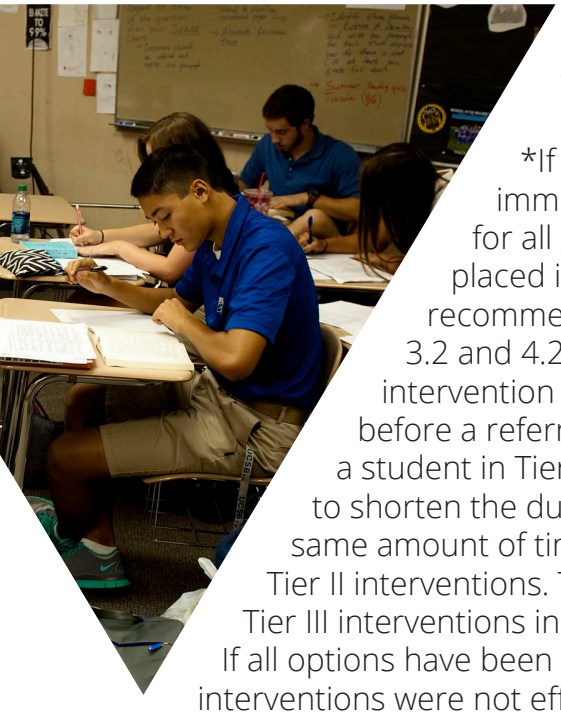
If a student fails to make adequate progress after receiving intervention at all levels, the information obtained from any screenings completed during the intervention process may be used *as part of* the eligibility determination following informed written parental consent. Screenings conducted for instructional programming may be necessary but are not sufficient to document underachievement in the event a special education referral is made (See section 5.2).

If, within the RTI² process, the team suspects that a student may be evidencing a disability other than a Specific Learning Disability, then the referral process for that disability must be followed. It is important to note that the RTI² process is not required or appropriate for all areas of suspected disability. For example, a kindergarten-age student who enters school with developmental delays as indicated by multiple sources of information would not necessarily need to go through all tiers of intervention before being evaluated for a developmental delay. Similarly, a student who is suspected of having an intellectual disability may also be referred prior to the completion of the RTI² process. Any information collected through the screening/progress monitoring process will be vitally important when making these decisions. None of these procedures will conflict with the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs Memorandum 11-07.

Progress Monitoring Requirements:

A lack of sufficient progress to meet age or state-approved grade-level standards in one or more areas (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, written expression, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving) based on the student's responsiveness to scientific, research-based intervention shall be documented using the following criteria:

Tier of Instruction and Intervention	Guidelines of Tier	Screening Provided	Frequency	Duration
Tier I	TIER I-as defined per Tier I guidelines.	Skills Based universal screening	K-8: 3x per year (fall, winter, and spring) 9-12:recommended 3x per year (fall, winter, and spring)	Ongoing measurement
Tier II	TIER II: In addition to Tier I. As defined by Tier II guidelines.	Progress monitoring in specific area of deficit that is sensitive to change and provides a ROI.**	Every other week	Minimum of 8-10 data points to make a data based decision to change to Tier III*
			Weekly	Minimum of 10-15 data points to make a data based decision to change to Tier III*
Tier III	TIER III: In addition to Tier I and more intense than Tier II. Per Tier III guidelines.	Progress monitoring in specific area of deficit that is sensitive to change and provides a ROI.**	Every other week	Minimum of 8-10 data points with Tier III interventions to make a data based decision to refer for special education consideration*
			Weekly	Minimum of 10-15 data points with Tier III interventions to make a data based decision to refer for special education consideration*



***Rate of Improvement (ROI)*

*If a student is 1.5 grade levels or more behind then the student may immediately require Tier III intensive intervention. Refer to the guidelines for all grade levels in Components 3 or 4. Students who are immediately placed in Tier III level intervention must receive the minimum number of recommended minutes of intervention as reflected in the tables in Sections 3.2 and 4.2. Furthermore, students who are immediately placed in Tier III intervention will be given adequate time to respond to prescribed intervention before a referral to special education is made. The purpose of immediately placing a student in Tier III intervention is to increase the intensity of the intervention, not to shorten the duration of the intervention period. The student will be given the same amount of time to respond to the intervention as a student who first received Tier II interventions. This allows schools teams time to make the necessary changes to Tier III interventions in order to establish that all possible options have been considered. If all options have been exhausted at Tier III and the team has data to indicate that the interventions were not effective, a referral to special education may be considered.

If Tier III interventions have been provided and a gap analysis indicates that a student's progress is not sufficient for making adequate growth with the current interventions, then the team may obtain *Notice and Consent for Initial Evaluation.* The team must complete all evaluations and establish the student's eligibility for service within the initial evaluation timeline. The student will remain in intervention and will continue to be monitored while the requested evaluations are being completed. All information collected including the student's responsiveness to intervention will be a part of the student's eligibility determination.

Special Education Referral Information:

A referral to special education will include (at a minimum):

- **Parent input** to include any pertinent familial information, family/student medical history, etc.
- **Teacher input** to include an indirect observation, work samples, documentation of differentiated instruction, etc.
- **Documentation of the problem** to include classroom-based performance assessments, standardized testing results, and other relevant assessment data
- **A detailed description of the intervention process** to include interventions used, attendance, frequency of implementation, duration of implementation, and fidelity monitoring
- **Progress monitoring data** indicating a lack of responsiveness to intervention
- **Components of a special education evaluation/re-evaluation.**

The following outlines the eligibility criteria and eligibility determination when establishing the eligibility of a student for special education services based on a Specific Learning Disability.

5.2 Specific Learning Disabilities Eligibility Criteria

The term Specific Learning Disability (SLD) means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Such term includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities (e.g., visual processing), brain injury that is not caused by an external physical force, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific Learning Disability does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, limited English proficiency, or environmental or cultural disadvantage.

The characteristics as identified in the Specific Learning Disabilities definition are to include the following.

A. Evaluation for Specific Learning Disabilities shall meet the following standards:

1. To ensure that underachievement in a student suspected of having a Specific Learning Disability is not due to a lack of appropriate instruction (i.e., empirically research-based instruction that is rigorous, systematic, and peer-reviewed) in the student's state-approved, grade-level standards. The following must be obtained:
    a. Data that demonstrate that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the student was provided appropriate instruction (i.e., empirically research-based instruction that is rigorous and systematic throughout all tiers of instruction/intervention) in regular education settings, delivered by qualified and appropriately trained personnel
    b. Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement, reflecting formative assessment of student progress during intervention, which was provided to the student's parents of once every four and one- half (4.5) weeks.
2. The student does not achieve adequately for the student's age or to meet state-approved, grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or state-approved, grade-level standards:
    a. Basic reading skills
    b. Reading fluency skills
    c. Reading comprehension
    d. Written expression
    e. Mathematics calculation
    f. Mathematics problem solving

An evaluation of oral expression and listening comprehension shall be completed pursuant to the speech or language impairment eligibility standards if an SLD is suspected in either area. If a student has been evaluated by a speech language pathologist and does not qualify as language impaired, then the IEP team may consider a SLD in either oral expression or listening comprehension if either continues to be a suspected area of disability; however, the rigorous intervention and progress monitoring standards must be met.

In order to substantiate inadequate achievement, an individual, standardized, and norm-referenced measure of academic achievement must be administered after initial consent is obtained in the area of suspected disability (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, written expression, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving). Intensive intervention must occur within the tiers before inadequate classroom achievement can be assessed. The score from a standardized achievement test administered prior to receiving intensive intervention may not be used to determine inadequate classroom achievement. The team will select assessment instruments that are sensitive to floor effects and developmental levels, especially for students in the primary grades.

3. The student does not make sufficient progress to meet age or state-approved grade-level standards in one or more areas (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, written expression, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving) when using a process based on the student's responsiveness to scientific, research-based intervention in each area of suspected delay.

A lack of sufficient progress will be established by examining the student's rate of improvement (ROI) including a gap analysis and will be based on the following criteria:

- The ROI is less than that of his/her same-age peers

OR

- The ROI is the same as or greater than that of his/her same age peers but will not result in reaching the average range of achievement within a reasonable period of time.

4.The LEA must ensure that the child is observed in the student's learning environment (including the general education classroom setting) to document the student's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty.

A pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance shall be documented by two systematic observations in the area of suspected disability. One may be conducted by a special education teacher and one must be conducted by the school psychologist or certifying specialist:

a. systematic observation of routine classroom instruction; and
b. systematic observation during intensive, scientific research-based or evidence-based intervention.

In the case of a student who is in a placement outside of the local educational agency (LEA), a team member must observe the student in an environment appropriate for a student of that age.

5. The team must determine that underachievement is not primarily the result of visual, motor, or hearing disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, cultural factors, environmental or economic factors, limited English proficiency, or excessive absenteeism.

A measure of cognition is *not required* for all students referred to special education based on a suspected specific learning disability. Only when the team suspects the student may be evidencing another disability (e.g. intellectual disability or functional delay) will a comprehensive measure of the student's intelligence be administered.

B. A student whose characteristics meet the definition of a student having a specific learning disability may be identified as a student eligible for special education services if:

1. all of the aforementioned eligibility criteria are met; and
2. there is evidence, including observation and/or assessment, indicating how the specific learning disabilities adversely impact the student's performance in or access to the general education curriculum.

C. Evaluation participants must include the following:

1. The parent or guardian
2. The student's general education classroom teacher
3. A licensed special education teacher
4. At least one person qualified to conduct an individual diagnostic evaluation (i.e., school psychologist and/or speech-language pathologist)
5. Other professional personnel as indicated (i.e., occupational therapist)

In the case of a private evaluation and/or diagnosis (e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or visual processing), the team should consider information presented to help inform instruction and intervention. The student must be provided academic interventions congruent with the RTI² guidelines if the team suspects the presence of a specific learning disability as either a primary or secondary disability.

Exclusionary/Rule-out Factors:

Within the special education evaluation process, these factors must be ruled-out as the **primary** reason for the student's underachievement.

Exclusionary Factor	Source of Evidence
Visual, Motor or Hearing Disability	Sensory screening, medical records, observation
Intellectual Disability	Classroom performance, academic skills, language development, adaptive functioning (if necessary), IQ (if necessary)
Emotional Disturbance	Classroom observation, student records, family history, medical information, emotional/behavioral screenings (if necessary)
Cultural Factors	Level of performance and rate of progress compared to students from same ethnicity with similar backgrounds
Enviornmental or Economic Factors	Level of performance and rate of progress compared to students from similar economic backgrounds, situational factors that are student specific
Limited English Proficiency	Measures of language acquisition and proficiency (i.e., BICs and CALPs), level of performance and rate of progress compared to other EL students with similar exposure to language and instruction
Excessive Absenteeism	Attendance records, number of schools attended within a 3 year period, tardies, absent for 23% of instruction and/or intervention

Eligibility Determination:

In order for a student's eligibility for special education services to be established, the team must complete and sign the *Specific Learning Disabilities Assessment Documentation Form.* This form will replace the typical comprehensive Psychoeducational Evaluation as it relates to a Specific Learning Disability **only**. An *Eligibility Report* and a *Prior Written Notice* indicating the student's eligibility determination must also be completed.

Re-evaluations:

All re-evaluations for students with a Specific Learning Disability will be grounded in progress monitoring data. For students who qualified for services using the discrepancy model, it is assumed that the initial eligibility process was valid. Existing student-centered data including ongoing assessments of progress and focused/diagnostic evaluations will be reviewed through the *Re-evaluation Summary Report* to determine if additional information is needed. Again, a gap analysis will be completed and the student's ROI will be calculated in order to determine the amount of services/intervention required to close his or her achievement gap. The level of service required (special education versus general education) will be used to negate or substantiate continued eligibility.

Transfers:

When a student with a SLD transfers from one Tennessee LEA to another, the school psychologist will conduct a records review to ensure that all eligibility components were met; however, there is no need to complete the *Re-evaluation Summary Report* unless components of the student's eligibility for services are missing. There is also no need to create a new *Eligibility Report* when all eligibility criteria have been clearly met.

When a referred student transfers from one Tennessee LEA to another **before** an eligibility determination is made, the new LEA must facilitate the timely completion of the requested evaluation. The previous LEA **must** send all relevant assessment information to the inheriting LEA as soon as possible so that the evaluation and eligibility determination processes are not delayed. If additional time is needed to establish the student's eligibility for services, then the inheriting LEA may submit a request to extend the evaluation timeline. This may be accomplished using the formal extension process, which requires any extension of the timeframe be amended by mutual written agreement between the student's parents and a group of qualified professionals.

Consistent with previous guidance, all out-of-state transfers will be treated as re- evaluations. Furthermore, the team will use the *Re-evaluation Summary Report* to document all relevant information and make a determination. If the previous eligibility process is sufficient to establish the student's eligibility for services based on Tennessee SLD criteria, then the team may choose to adopt those results. A new *Eligibility Report* will be completed reflecting this decision.

For students with an SLD who were made eligible using a model other than RTI², whose pre-referral intervention and/or progress monitoring data is missing, or whose previous evaluation does not meet Tennessee SLD criteria, it is assumed that the student did not respond to general education intervention; however, a comprehensive re-evaluation (i.e., progress monitoring and achievement data collection) will be completed for eligibility purposes. The student's responsiveness to intervention as indicated by progress monitoring data will be collected, based on services (intervention) provided through the IEP. Again, a gap analysis will be completed and the student's

ROI calculated in order to determine the amount of services/intervention required to close his or her achievement gap. The level of service required (special education versus general education) will be used to negate or substantiate continued eligibility. All information will be collected and an eligibility determination will be made within the initial evaluation timeframe unless the team agrees to request an extension of the timeline.

Private/Home School:

IDEA requires that districts use a proportionate amount of funding to provide services to students in private and home school settings. In order to establish a student's need for these services, districts must engage in child find activities and respond to parental requests for evaluation. There are two possible scenarios.

1) If the student is referred but consent for evaluation has not been received:

In order to rule-out lack of appropriate instruction, the district should engage in meaningful consultation with the private or home school regarding both the intervention and progress monitoring process. If universal screening and/or academic achievement information is not available, the LEA is encouraged to initiate the referral/problem-solving process by gathering this information.

2) If the parent provides written request for evaluation:

During the evaluation timeline that begins with the receipt of a written request for evaluation, the LEA will collect data on the appropriateness of the student's current curriculum, the fidelity of instruction, and any interventions implemented prior to the request. If interventions are put into place and the student begins making significant progress, the LEA will meet with the parent and decide whether or not to request an extension of the evaluation timeline. This may be done using the formal extension process, which requires any extension of the timeframe be amended by mutual written agreement between the student's parents and a group of qualified professionals. If the student makes minimal to no progress, the evaluation and eligibility determination must be completed within the evaluation timeframe.

If a district accepts the referral but then later chooses not to qualify the student because lack of appropriate instruction cannot be ruled out, parents may exercise their right to an independent evaluation or initiate due process.

5.3 Data-Based Decision Making Procedures

When determining eligibility for special education, the team should consider data collected with tiered interventions. Data should have been used to determine movement within and out of tiered interventions. Students should have had researched-based, peer-reviewed interventions within the specific area of deficit. They should have been progress monitored over time and a rate of improvement will have been determined. Students that are making sufficient progress should remain at the level of support required to be successful. After tiered interventions have been exhausted and the student has demonstrated insufficient progress, then the student's eligibility for special education service may be determined. The team may initiate the referral process using the following criteria:

- A student does not appear to making sufficient progress after tiered interventions have been implemented with fidelity and data based decisions have been made using 8-10 data points every other week ***or*** 10-15 data points weekly at each tier.
- ROI and a gap analysis must be completed for students being referred for special education to determine if needs are beyond general education Tier III interventions.

The Tennessee SLD criteria identifies two decision rules to inform the IEP team analysis of progress monitoring data from intensive, scientific research-based or evidence-based intervention. A student's rate of progress during intensive intervention is insufficient if either of the following apply:

- the ROI is less than that of his/her same-age peers, or
- the ROI is greater than his/her same-age peers but will not result in reaching the average range of achievement in a reasonable period of time.

5.4 Parent Request for Evaluation

If a parent or legal guardian requests an evaluation within the RTI² process, the team must complete the agreed upon components of the evaluation within the initial evaluation timeline as indicated by the LEA's receipt of informed parental consent. The student may be eligible for services as a student with a Specific Learning Disability based only on the aforementioned eligibility standards. There is no option to use either a discrepancy model or a pattern of strengths and weaknesses model to identify a Specific Learning Disability.

If a parent requests an evaluation, the LEA will include for consideration all intervention and progress monitoring data available at the time of referral. The student will continue to receive intervention in the specific area of deficit and will continue to be progress monitored. If the initial evaluation timeline will expire before adequate data has been collected, then all information and testing completed to that point will be used to establish the student's eligibility for special education. If the team lacks sufficient evidence to establish the student's eligibility for services, the team may agree to request an extension of the evaluation timeline or the student will be made ineligible until sufficient data can be collected.

5.5 Fidelity Monitoring (per Guidelines in Tier II and Tier III)

The fidelity of implementation per intervention should be assessed by qualified personnel throughout the process; however, the minimum requirement is a combined total of eight checks: three checks in Tier II where two must be a direct observation, and five checks in Tier III where thre must be direct observations and two must be a review of implementation data (i.e., attendance, lesson plans, progress monitoring results). Ongoing fidelity documentation of intervention should include: interventions used, evidence of implementation at 80% or greater, student attendance, progress monitoring results, and any other anecdotal information that might account for the student's progress or a lack thereof. If the intervention is not implemented with integrity, the interventionist should be supported with training until integrity reaches 80%. Fidelity monitoring should continue within special education interventions and follow the same fidelity monitoring schedule as Tier III interventions.

5.6 Progress Monitoring and Intervention Procedures in Special Education

Students who qualify for special education with a specific learning disability will be assigned services by their Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Special education services will be the most intensive level of intervention. The student will remain in the core instruction (Tier I) and will have access to tiered intervention within the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. The same problem-solving approach used in the general education RTI² process will be used in special education. Furthermore, interventions will be tailored to the student in the area of identified disability, and progress toward their IEP goals will be monitored weekly or every other week. When students fail to respond to intervention as a result of the provision of special education services, an IEP team meeting will be reconvened.

5.7 Dismissal from Special Education

Students may move from special education interventions to general education interventions if there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the student no longer needs special education services. Movement from special education to general education will be supported by multiple sources of data including ROI, gap analysis, evidence of meeting IEP goals, and student need. The goal is for all students to be served at their level of need within the least restrictive environment. The team will use the *Re-evaluation Summary Report* process to gather all sources of information and make an eligibility determination.

5.8 Program Evaluation

The RTI² process within a district will be continually monitored and adjusted to better meet the needs of all students. All students should benefit from the data-based decision making process and all decisions should be made for the best interest of an individual student. District data, school data and student data will continually be monitored and changes will be adjusted based on the data collected (e.g. strengthening Tier I or more research based interventions in Tier III).

Academic vocabulary: Words that are traditionally used in academic texts or discussions, and typically not encountered in informal conversation.

Affect: The emotional or psychological effect an environment has on a student; affect includes the tone or mood of the classroom and can be influenced by the physical setup of the classroom, classroom rules, routines and procedures, and interactions between teachers and peers.

Appropriately-complex texts: Texts that possess quantitative and qualitative complexities that align with grade level expectations and/or student readiness levels.

Basic reading skills: Basic reading skills include the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in language; to identify printed letters and their associated sounds; to decode written language.

Benchmark: Short term or long-term assessment goal used to indicate grade level expectations during a specific grade level and at a specific time period (e.g., fall, winter, spring).

Certifying Specialist: An assessment professional that is involved in the evaluation of a student for the purpose of determining eligibility for special education services. Certifying specialists may include school psychologists, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.

Child find: Per IDEA regulation, states must have in effect policies and procedures to ensure that (1) all children with disabilities residing in the state, including children with disabilities who are homeless children or are wards of the state, and children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated; and (2) a practical method is developed and implemented to determine which children are currently receiving needed special education and related services.

Close reading: Careful and methodical attention to text, often including repeated readings, to uncover various layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension.

Competency-based professional learning: Focuses on demonstrating clearly defined levels of mastery of a topic including content knowledge, skills and deep understanding. Teacher choice and need identify the area for learning which may be delivered through classes, workshops, peer observation, mentoring, online learning and team work. Competency is refined and iterated in a continuous-improvement cycle and is evaluated through assessments, observations and/or portfolios. Micro-credentialing is a model of competency-based learning through which educators can earn subject / skill specific credentials indicating mastery.

Comprehension (reading): The ability to understand and make meaning of text.

Comprehension strategies: Comprehension strategies are tools that are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced in support of a student's ability to understand and make meaning of text. Since comprehension is multi-faceted, strategies such as predicting, questioning, retelling, summarizing, inferring, reflecting, visualizing, and making connections are taught and applied with text.

Comprehensive Evaluation: Assessments that are completed for the purpose of determining eligibility for special education services. Components of the evaluation are chosen based on the referral and are specific to the Tennessee State eligibility standards for the suspected disability or disabilities.

Conceptual understanding: Understanding of mathematical ideas and the ability to transfer knowledge into new situations and apply it to new contexts.

Conferencing: Allows opportunities for the teacher to individually meet with a student for the purpose of sharing and reflecting upon a reading or writing experience in order for the teacher to provide feedback that will promote progress.

Connected texts: Words that are linked (as opposed to words in a list) as in sentences, phrases, and paragraphs

Core Curriculum/Instruction (Tier I Instruction): Grade level instruction provided to all students in the regular education classroom. Core instruction often includes various instructional orientations to include whole class, small-differentiated groups, collaborative, and individual opportunities for learning. Core instruction is targeted to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Materials and lesson used are based on current data and are designed to meet the needs of all students. The **Tennessee Academic Standards** for **English Language Arts** (ELA) and Mathematics will be used for Tier I instruction.

Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM): A system for on-going monitoring of student progress through a specific curriculum. Through the use of CBM assessments, teachers assess students' academic performance on a regular basis with very brief tests. Results are used to determine whether students are progressing appropriately from the core (Tier I) instructional program, and to build more effective programs for the students who do not benefit adequately from core (Tier I) instruction.

Curriculum compacting: A technique for differentiating instruction that allows teachers to make adjustments to curriculum for students who have already mastered the material to be learned, replacing content students know with new content, enrichment options, or other activities. Researchers recommend that teachers first determine the expected goals of the unit or lesson in terms of the content, skills, or standards students must learn before assessing students to determine which ones have already mastered most or all of the specified learning outcomes.

Data-based decision making: The process of using appropriate data to inform and drive instruction, movement within tiers, and disability identification.

Developmental trajectories: Cognitive behaviors and skills typically follow a developmental progression through various phases or trajectories. These developmental steps are neither exclusive of or isolated from one another. Children move at different paces through these trajectories and at times may move back and forth between phases. Developmental trajectories can include reading trajectories, oral language trajectories, writing trajectories, etc.

Diagnostic Evaluation/Assessment: Standardized assessments designed to assess the extent to which students are on track to master grade level standards and to determine individual strengths and concerns of skills. Diagnostic assessments may also provide evidence of curricular strengths and needs in particular skill areas.

Differentiated Instruction (Differentiation): Targeted instruction provided to meet the needs of students. Instruction includes diverse avenues to learn the skills and content to process, construct, extend, generalize, or make sense of ideas. Furthermore, differentiation will develop learning opportunities so all students within a classroom will learn effectively, regardless of differences in student progress, interests, and needs.

Direct Instruction: Direct instruction is an instructional approach that utilizes explicit and structured teaching routines. A teacher using direct instruction models, explains, and guides the students through extended practice of a skill or concept until mastery is achieved. The lessons are fast paced, students are academically engaged, and teachers are enthusiastically delivering instruction. Direct instruction is appropriate instruction for all learners, all five components of reading, and in all settings (whole group, small group, and one-on-one).

Duration: The length of time intervention is provided a student as indicated by benchmark and progress monitoring assessment results.

Early Intervention: Specialized instruction specifically designed to target skill deficits and provide appropriate instruction to meet the needs of students. Intervention is provided early in order to prevent future learning disabilities or present academic performance deficits with the goal of maintaining grade-level or above grade-level performance.

Early warning system (EWS): A tool that allows school level teams to manage the wide variety of data that may indicate an impact on academics and/or other risk factors for high school students. An EWS may include data from universal screeners, achievement tests (from both high school and grades K-8), end of course (EOC) exams, student records (e.g., grades, behavioral incidents, attendance, retention, past RTI² interventions), the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), and the ACT/SAT exam or other **nationally normed** assessments. (A template can be found on the TDOE RTI² webpage under "Instructional Resources").

English language arts (ELA): Tennessee Academic Standards in English Language Arts that includes teaching, learning, and mastery of skills to appropriately build and possess the strong foundational skills of reading; read various types of texts to include literature, fictional, informational and technical texts and media technology; write and speak for different purposes and to various audiences; and to have full command and use of appropriate language.

English language learner (EL): A student who through testing and other means is found to have some difficulty speaking, reading, and/or writing in English.

Enrichment: Enrichment activities expand on students' learning in ways that may differ from the strategies used during Tier I instruction. They often are interactive and project- focused. They enhance a student's education by bringing new concepts to light or by using old concepts in new ways to deepen students' understanding. These activities are designed to be interesting, challenging, and impart knowledge. They should allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned in Tier I to real-life experiences.

Evidence Based Intervention: Interventions that have been tested and have demonstrated success with a particular group of students. This means that the research results are reliable and valid. As a result, the research shows there is reasonable evidence to indicate the program or strategies will result in academic gains when used appropriately.

Explicit Instruction: Instruction that involves direct, face-to-face teaching that is highly structured, focused on specific learning outcomes, and based on a high level of student and teacher interaction. It involves explanation, demonstration, and practice with topics being taught in a logical order. Another characteristic of explicit teaching is modeling skills, thinking, and behaviors. This also involves the teacher thinking out loud when working through problems and demonstrating processes for students.

Fidelity: The extent to which the prescribed instruction or intervention plan is executed. Fidelity includes addressing the deficit area, using the type of intervention prescribed, maintaining an appropriate group size, length of session, etc.

Fidelity of Instruction: Providing instruction with integrity, aligned with instructional goals for student learning and attending to the critical features of instructional best practices designed to meet those goals.

Fidelity Monitoring: The systematic monitoring by a responsible instructional leader (i.e. principal, instructional coach) to determine the extent to which the delivery of instruction or an intervention adheres to the protocols or program models originally developed. Fidelity monitoring has increasing significance for evaluation and treatment effectiveness. The fidelity of implementation per intervention and instruction should be assessed throughout the process as per the guidelines in the manual.

Flexible grouping/small groups: A basic strategy for grouping students for the purpose of providing targeted instruction to meet the needs of student groups. Grouping provides the opportunity for students to work together in a variety of ways, and in a number of arrangements. Groupings may be whole class, small groups, individual, and partners, teacher-led or student-led and are commensurate to instructional activities, learning goals, and student needs. Flexible grouping provides the opportunity for student groups to change based on the changing needs of students, as indicated in benchmark and progressing monitoring assessments.

Reading (fluency): Reading fluency refers to the ability to read words accurately, quickly, and effortlessly. Moreover, fluency skills include the ability to read with appropriate expression and intonation (prosody). Reading fluency is the ability to read with sufficient accuracy and rate to support comprehension. Reading fluency applies to accurately reading on-level fiction, prose, and poetry with expression through repeated reading. Non-fiction and technical reading passages generally requires a slower more thoughtful level of reading rate to support comprehension. Reading fluency can also be the rate at which young students demonstrate and name their conceptual understanding of letter-sound correspondence, alphabetic knowledge, and reading nonsense words, sight words, sentences, and texts.

Math (fluency): Mathematical fluency is the ability to make sense of problems and/or patterns and structure and to proficiently calculate and accurately find appropriate solution paths to identify, solve, and find reasonable explanations. Mathematical fluency can also be the rate at which young students demonstrate and name their conceptual understanding of numerals, counting, naming numerals, and addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts.

Fluency strategies: Fluency strategies are tools that are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced in support of a student's ability to read text with an appropriate rate, phrasing, expression, and prosody.

Focused Assessment: A focused assessment is a prescribed measure used to evaluate a particular skill area to determine levels of performance.

Formative Assessment: Quality instruction includes assessments during instruction to provide the information needed to effectively direct and target teaching and learning as it occurs. Formative assessments enable the teacher to push instruction toward the targeted goals to ensure mastery of intended outcomes.

Frequency: The number, proportion, or percentage of items in a particular set of data.

General Education: The program of education that students receive based on state standards that are evaluated by the annual state educational standards tests.

Grade Level Content Expectations: The Grade Level Content Expectations build from the Tennessee Academic Standards. Reflecting best practices and current research, they provide a set of clear and rigorous expectations for all students and provide teachers with clearly defined statements of what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school.

Guided reading: During guided reading, the teacher provides small group differentiated instruction that supports students' reading of appropriate instructional level text while building student proficiency and capacity to read carefully and independently using word analysis, fluency, and comprehension strategies.

Highly-trained personnel: Teachers adequately trained to deliver the selected instruction as intended, that is, with fidelity to design.

Hybrid intervention: A hybrid approach within an RTI model combines methods of a problem-solving and a standard protocol approach.

Implementation Integrity: The extent to which core instruction and intervention materials are used as intended by the author/publisher. Implementation integrity also includes the prescribed amount of time and the frequency required for the treatment to yield its best results.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): As reauthorized in 2004 ensure services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. (Reference: Ed.gov, United States Department of Education)

Intense (intensity): The measure of strength by which instruction or intervention is delivered. Intensive academic and/or behavioral interventions are characterized by their increased focus for students who fail to respond to less intensive forms of instruction.
Intensity can be increased through many dimensions including length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

Interactive read aloud: Provides a teacher-led opportunity to extend students' knowledge and comprehension of a variety of complex texts while also providing a demonstration of meaning-making strategies.

Intervention: Support at the school level for students performing below grade-level expectations. Educational professionals determine academic intervention needs of students (determined by ongoing data), determine methods for dealing with academic issues, and - most important - monitor on an ongoing basis whether these methods are resulting in increased student learning and achievement.

Interventionist: An educator trained to deliver a prescribed intervention with fidelity. This may include a **general education teacher,** special education teacher, trained teaching assistant, or intervention specialist.
Intervention kit/materials: A research-based curriculum designed to target specific instructional needs with varying intensity.

Job-embedded professional learning: Occurs during the workday in the workplace, is designed to support team learning, and has a clear focus on student achievement. **Job-embedded** learning is aligned with school and student learning goals, uses internal capacity, occurs on a regularly scheduled (weekly or bi-weekly), and is most successful when the team functions with a focused structure. Activities may include analyzing student data, sharing instructional strategies, developing lessons, designing common assessments and reviewing student work. Peer observations and coaching are considered highly effective **job-embedded** practices.

Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI): Tennessee's Kindergarten Entry Inventory (TN-KEI or KEI) is the name for a new assessment to be administered statewide in fall 2017 to all kindergarten students attending a public school in the state of Tennessee. The primary purpose for the TN-KEI is to inform kindergarten instruction by offering a comprehensive developmental profile for kindergarten students, demonstrating where they are along critical benchmarks at the beginning of their kindergarten year.

Know, Understand, Do (KUD): A specific learning goal that includes statements that divide the learning goal into what students should know, understand, and be able to do by the end of the lesson.

Knowledge-based competencies: Literacy competencies related to comprehension and meaning making, including concepts about the word, the ability to understand and express complex ideas, and vocabulary. These competencies are constantly developing and require sustained instruction throughout grade levels.

Local Educational Agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

Learning stations: Specific areas in a classroom designed for independent or small group interactive learning. Each station is equipped with learning materials and activities that teach or reinforce a specific skill or concept.

Leveled text: Often used during guided reading, provides a range of text with increasingly complex text gradients and more sophisticated book characteristics as the levels progress.

Literature circles: Similar to a book club, a literature circle is a structured experience where students engage in thoughtful questioning and discussion of a text. Teachers can give specific discussion prompts to students in a literature circle, or discussion can be student-generated.

Manipulatives: Any object that allows students to explore an idea in an active, hands-on approach. Manipulatives include anything that can be manipulated to include counters, blocks, shapes, toys, letter tiles, etc.

Math (Mathematics/Mathematical) Calculation: The knowledge and retrieval of facts and the application of procedural knowledge in calculation.

Math (Mathematics/Mathematical) Problem Solving: Involves using mathematical computation skills, language, reasoning, reading, and visual-spatial skills in solving problems; applying mathematical knowledge at the conceptual level.

Mini-lessons: A short lesson with a narrow focus that provides instruction in a skill or concept. Mini lessons may connect to larger lessons or units, or can serve as an introduction to an upcoming lesson or unit. Mini-lessons are often followed by students applying the skill or concept taught in the mini-lesson.

Modes of reading: Different ways through which students read and interact with a text, including read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.

Multi-Sensory: Multi-sensory teaching and learning is simultaneously visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile to enhance memory and learning. Links are consistently made between the visual (what we see) auditory (what we hear), and kinesthetic-tactile (what we feel) pathways in learning to read, spell, reason, count, and compute.

Nationally normed: The comparison of student performance to the performance of other students that took the same assessment in a national sample.

Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF): A standardized assessment of consonant-vowel- consonant and vowel-consonant nonsense words that are individually administered to assess letter/sound relationships and blending (and/or segmenting) of phonetic sounds (e.g., fim, nen, sig).

On-demand writing: Impromptu writing; typically shorter writing pieces designed to support students in responding to a text or idea.

Oral Reading Fluency (ORF): A standardized reading measure of accuracy and fluency with connected text or passages, usually measured beginning mid-first grade through sixth grade.

Other Health Impairment (OHI): Other Health Impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia; and Tourette's Syndrome that adversely affects a child's educational performance. A child is "Other Health Impaired" who has chronic or acute health problems that require specially designed

instruction due to: 1) impaired organizational or work skills; 2) inability to manage or complete tasks; 3) excessive health related absenteeism; or 4) medications that affect cognitive functioning.

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF): A standardized measure of a student's ability to segment three and four phoneme words into individual phonemes fluently, for example the examiner says "bat" and the student says /b/ /a/ /t/. PSF is usually measured mid- kindergarten through the spring of first grade.

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear, think about, identify and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.
Phonics: Phonics refers to a systematic approach of teaching letters (and combinations of letters) and their corresponding speech sounds. Phonics begins with the alphabetic principle: language is comprised of words made up of letters that represent sounds.

Phonological Awareness: Phonological awareness is a broad skill that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language - parts such as words, syllables, and onsets and rimes. Children who have phonological awareness are able to identify and make oral rhymes, can clap out the number of syllables in a word, and can recognize words with the same initial sounds like "money" and "mother." (Reference: Reading Rockets)

Prescriptive Intervention: An intervention specifically targeted to meet the instructional needs of the student.

Prevention: The practice of providing additional assistance in any academic area to prevent students from falling behind.

Probe: When using Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), the instructor administers a brief, timed assessment or "probes" made up of academic material taken from grade- level curriculum.

Problem-Solving Approach within RTI: Within RTI, a problem-solving approach is used to tailor an intervention to an individual student. It typically has four stages: problem identification, analysis of problem, intervention planning, and response to intervention evaluated (PAIR).

Procedural fluency: The ability to apply procedures accurately, efficiently, and flexibly; to transfer procedures to different problems and contexts; to build or modify procedures from other procedures; and to recognize when one strategy or procedure is more appropriate to apply than another.

Professional Learning (PL): Continuous targeted research-based instruction for school professionals and staff to improve learning outcomes for students and meet goals of the adult learner, class, school and/or district. The purpose of PL should be to provide educators with current research concerning best practices for teaching and learning.

Progress Monitoring: Progress monitoring is used to assess students' academic performance, to quantify a student rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

Purposeful practice: Activities that enable students to apply learning in authentic, real-world scenarios. Purposeful practice can also include the strategic and targeted development of skills, either to strengthen an area of need or build on an area of expertise.

Rate of Improvement (ROI): The expected rate of improvement on progress monitoring assessments is the number of units of measure (e.g., words read correctly [wrc], correct responses, correct digits) a child has made per week since the beginning of the intervention. To discover this rate, teachers should divide the total number of units gained by the number of weeks that have elapsed. The ROI is compared to the improvement of a typical peer to determine adequate progress.

Reliable: Reliability refers to the consistency with which a tool classifies students from one administration to the next. A tool is considered reliable if it produces the same results when administering the test under different conditions, at different times, or using different forms of the test.

Remediation: Corrective instruction that fills in gaps in understanding, skills, or knowledge.

Research-Based Instruction/Intervention: A research-based instructional practice or intervention is one found to be reliable, trustworthy, and valid based on evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of students, the student can be expected to make adequate gains in achievement. Ongoing documentation and analysis of student outcomes helps to define effective practice.

Re-teaching: Teaching content again to students who did not master it initially.

Scaffold: Scaffolding is an instructional technique in which the teacher breaks a complex task into smaller tasks, models the desired learning strategy or task, provides support as students learn the task, and then gradually shifts responsibility to the students. In this manner, a teacher enables students to accomplish as much of a task as possible without assistance.

School Psychologist: School psychologists help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. They collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community for all students. School psychologists are highly-trained in both psychology and education, completing a minimum of a specialist-level degree program. This training emphasizes preparation in mental health and educational interventions, child development, learning, behavior, motivation, curriculum and instruction, assessment, consultation, collaboration, school law, and systems. School psychologists must be certified and/or licensed by the state in which they work. For more information, go to nasponline.org.

Scientifically-Based Research: Scientifically-based research involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs and includes research that:

- employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
- involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators;
- is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or

across-condition controls;
- ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and
- has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

Screening: A quick checklist, survey or probe used to provide an initial general indicator of levels of performance. Screenings may also include diagnostic assessments to gain more information about a student's academic strengths and/or areas of concern.

Shared reading: Shared reading provides an interactive experience where the teacher models and guides word analysis, fluency, and comprehension strategies as students actively read using supported reading structures (i.e., choral reading, echo reading, etc.). During shared reading, all students access grade level text through a variety of formats including big books, individual student copies, or projectable text.

Skill-based competencies: Literacy skills related to accurate reading, including concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, word reading, and spelling. These competencies tend to be discrete and for most students can be mastered within a few years of formal schooling.

Skills-based universal screener: A brief, informative tool used to measure academic skills in six general areas (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, **math calculation,** math problem solving, and written expression).

Special Education: The most intensive interventions and specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students identified with an educational disability. This term may include related services such as speech/language or occupational therapy depending on student needs.

Specific Learning Disability: The term **Specific Learning Disability** means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Such term includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities (e.g., visual processing), brain injury that is not caused by an external physical force, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific Learning Disability does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of Visual Impairment; Hearing Impairment; Orthopedic Impairment; Intellectual Disability; Emotional Disturbance; Limited English Proficiency; or, Environmental or Cultural Disadvantage. Specific Learning Disabilities may be identified in the following areas: Basic Reading, Reading Fluency, Reading Comprehension, **Math Calculation, Math Problem Solving,** Written Expression, Oral Expression, and/or Listening Comprehension.

Specific Measurable Outcome: The statement of a single, specific desired result from an intervention. To be measureable, the outcome should be expressed in observable and quantifiable terms (i.e., Johnny will demonstrate mastery of grade-level basic **math calculation** skills as measured by a score of 85% or better on the end-of-the unit test on numerical operations).

Standard protocol intervention: Standard protocol intervention relies on the same, empirically validated intervention for all students with similar academic or behavioral needs. Standard protocol interventions facilitate quality control.

Standardized Assessment: An assessment test that is developed using standard procedures and is then administered and scored in a consistent manner for all test takers.

Standards-based assessment: An assessment, often adaptive in nature, which provides information regarding students' mastery of grade level standards.

Summative Assessment: Summative assessment is a form of evaluation used to describe the effectiveness of an instructional program or intervention, that is, whether the intervention had the desired effect. With summative assessment, student learning is typically assessed at the end of a course of study or annually (at the end of a grade).

Survey-level assessment: A process for determining foundational skill deficits and instructional level(s). It is effective in establishing where to begin an intervention and determining appropriate, realistic goals for a student.

Systematic: Systematic instruction refers to a carefully planned sequence for instruction, similar to a builder's blueprint for a house. A blueprint is carefully thought out and designed before building materials are gathered and construction begins. The plan for systematic instruction is carefully thought out, strategic, and designed before activities and lessons are developed. Systematic instruction is clearly linked within, as well as across the five major areas of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). For systematic instruction, lessons build on previously taught information, from simple to complex, with clear, concise student objectives that are driven by ongoing assessment. Students are provided appropriate practice opportunities, which directly reflect instruction.

Tennessee Academic Standards (Mathematics and English Language Arts): Curricular standards developed to strengthen the knowledge and skills in English Language Arts and Mathematics to prepare students to become college and career ready. These standards define the knowledge and skills students are required to possess in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses, technical institutes, and in workforce training programs. They are based on the most current national and international standards, with the intention of providing students a competitive advantage in the global economy.

Text-dependent questions: Questions that can only be answered by referring to a text; text-dependent questions cannot be answered through background knowledge or guessing.

Trend line or trajectory: A straight line that connects a series of results from assessments on a graph used to help determine progress toward intended target.

Universal Design for Learning: A scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that: provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and, reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.

Universal Screening Process: A schoolwide screening process that uses multiple sources of data to identify individual student strengths and areas of need and provides districts/schools with accurate information for making informed decisions about skills-specific interventions, reteaching/remediation, and **enrichment** for each child.

Universal Screening/Screener: An LEA must administer a nationally normed, skills-based universal screener. A universal screener is a brief screening assessment of academic skills (i.e. basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, **math calculation, math problem solving,** written expression) administered to **ALL** students to determine whether students demonstrate the skills necessary to achieve grade level standards. Universal screening reveals which students are performing at or above the level considered necessary for achieving long-term success (general outcome measures). This data can also serve as a benchmark for measuring the improvement of a group, class, grade, school or district. Furthermore, universal screening can be used to identify students in need of further intervention due to identified skill deficits. A more precise assessment may be needed to determine a student's specific area(s) of deficit before beginning an intervention.

Valid: Validity refers to the extent to which a tool accurately measures the underlying construct that it is intended to measure.

Word analysis strategies: Word analysis strategies are tools that are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced in support of a student's ability to pronounce and decode words in text. Some examples of word analysis strategies are:

- segmenting and blending the sounds of a word;
- using 'chunks' or consolidated letter combinations (e.g., consonant digraphs, long vowel digraphs or diphthongs, prefixes/suffixes, etc.)
- using prior knowledge of a familiar word connecting to an unfamiliar word
- considering known elements of a word and thinking about a word that makes sense in the context
- cross-checking picture or context clues with a word that makes sense
- re-reading and self-correcting

Written Expression: Involves basic writing skills (transcription) and generational skills (composition). **Transcription:** difficulty producing letters, words, spelling; **Composition:** difficulty with word and text fluency, sentence construction, genre-specific discourse structures, planning processes, and reviewing and revising processes.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
January 21, 2011

MEMORANDUM
TO: State Directors of Special Education
FROM: Melody Musgrove, Ed.D. Director, Office of Special Education Programs
SUBJECT:A Response to Intervention (RTI) Process Cannot Be Used to Delay-Deny an Evaluation for Eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The provisions related to child find in section 612(a)(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), require that a State have in effect policies and procedures to ensure that the State identifies, locates and evaluates all children with disabilities residing in the State, including children with disabilities who are homeless or are wards of the State, and children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services. It is critical that this identification occur in a timely manner and that no procedures or practices result in delaying or denying this identification. It has come to the attention of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) that, in some instances, local educational agencies (LEAs) may be using Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies to delay or deny a timely initial evaluation for children suspected of having a disability. States and LEAs have an obligation to ensure that evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not delayed or denied because of implementation of an RTI strategy.

A multi-tiered instructional framework, often referred to as RTI, is a schoolwide approach that addresses the needs of all students, including struggling learners and students with disabilities, and integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level instructional and behavioral system to maximize student achievement and reduce problem behaviors. With a multi-tiered instructional framework, schools identify students at-risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness.

While the Department of Education does not subscribe to a particular RTI framework, the core characteristics that underpin all RTI models are: (1) students receive high quality research- based instruction in their general education setting; (2) continuous monitoring of student performance; (3) all students are screened for academic and behavioral problems; and (4) multiple levels (tiers) of instruction that are progressively more intense, based on the student's

response to instruction. OSEP supports State and local implementation of RTI strategies to ensure that children who are struggling academically and behaviorally are identified early and provided needed interventions in a timely and effective manner. Many LEAs have implemented successful RTI strategies, thus ensuring that children who do not respond to interventions and are potentially eligible for special education and related services are referred for evaluation; and those children who simply need intense short-term interventions are provided those interventions.
The regulations implementing the 2004 Amendments to the IDEA include a provision mandating that States allow, as part of their criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability (SLD), the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention1. See 34 CFR §300.307(a)(2). OSEP continues to receive questions regarding the relationship of RTI to

the evaluation provisions of the regulations. In particular, OSEP has heard that some LEAs may be using RTI to delay or deny a timely initial evaluation to determine if a child is a child with a disability and, therefore, eligible for special education and related services pursuant to an individualized education program.
Under 34 CFR §300.307, a State must adopt, consistent with 34 CFR §300.309, criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in 34 CFR §300.8(c)(10). In addition, the criteria adopted by the State: (1) must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has an SLD; (2) must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention; and (3) may permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has an SLD. Although the regulations specifically address using the process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions (i.e., RTI) for determining if a child has an SLD, information obtained through RTI strategies may also be used as a component of evaluations for children suspected of having other disabilities, if appropriate.

The regulations at 34 CFR §300.301(b) allow a parent to request an initial evaluation at any time to determine if a child is a child with a disability. The use of RTI strategies cannot be used to delay or deny the provision of a full and individual evaluation, pursuant to 34 CFR §§300.304- 300.311, to a child suspected of having a disability under 34 CFR §300.8. If the LEA agrees with a parent who refers their child for evaluation that the child may be a child who is eligible for special education and related services, the LEA must evaluate the child. The LEA must provide the parent with notice under 34 CFR §§300.503 and 300.504 and obtain informed parental consent, consistent with 34 CFR §300.9, before conducting the evaluation. Although the IDEA and its implementing regulations do not prescribe a specific timeframe from referral for evaluation to parental consent, it has been the Department's longstanding policy that the LEA must seek parental consent within a reasonable period of time after the referral for evaluation, if the LEA agrees that an initial evaluation is needed. See Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities, Final Rule, 71 Fed. Reg., 46540, 46637 (August 14, 2006). An LEA must conduct the initial evaluation within 60 days of receiving parental consent for the evaluation or, if the State establishes a timeframe within which the evaluation must be conducted, within that timeframe. 34 CFR §300.301(c).

1 The Department has provided guidance regarding the use of RTI in the identification of specific learning disabilities in its letters to: Zirkel - 3-6-07, 8-15-07, 4-8-08, and 12-11-08; Clarke - 5-28-08; and Copenhaver - 10-19-07.
Guidance related to the use of RTI for children ages 3 through 5 was provided in the letter to Brekken - 6-2-10. These letters can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/index.html.

If, however, the LEA does not suspect that the child has a disability, and denies the request for an initial evaluation, the LEA must provide written notice to parents explaining why the public agency refuses to conduct an initial evaluation and the information that was used as the basis for this decision. 34 CFR §300.503(a) and (b). The parent can challenge this decision by requesting a due process hearing under 34 CFR §300.507 or filing a State complaint under 34 CFR §300.153 to resolve the dispute regarding the child's need for an evaluation. It would be inconsistent with the evaluation provisions at 34 CFR §§300.301 through 300.111 for an LEA to reject a referral and delay provision of an initial evaluation on the basis that a child has not participated in an RTI framework.

We hope this information is helpful in clarifying the relationship between RTI and evaluations pursuant to the IDEA. Please examine the procedures and practices in your State to ensure that any LEA implementing RTI strategies is appropriately using RTI, and that the use of RTI is not delaying or denying timely initial evaluations to children suspected of having a disability. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Ruth Ryder at 202-245-7513.

References:

Questions and Answers on RTI and Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS), January 2007
Letter to Brekken, 6-2-2010
Letter to Clarke, 4-28-08
Letter to Copenhaver, 10-19-07
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cc: Chief State School Officers Regional Resource Centers Parent Training Centers
Protection and Advocacy Agencies Section 619 Coordinators

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