

Response to Intervention Tier Wheels

Mentoring Minds' Product Development Team attended RtI sessions, studied the literature and available research, and held numerous work sessions prior to developing the RtI wheels for Tier-1, Tier-2, and Tier-3. The purposes of the three tier wheels are to support a campus in the implementation of RtI or to complement any existing RtI process initiated. The RtI Tier-3 Wheel is a resource that provides information and strategies to implement instruction at each of the tiers. One side of the wheel presents an academic focus and the other side a behavioral focus.

The *RtI wheels* are teacher tools that address the need for concise information about the RtI process and strategies that can be used at each of the tiers. Each wheel assists teachers in implementing RtI in the classroom and provides them with evidence-based instructional practices that meet the needs of all learners. These products present a common language for RtI that every teacher on a campus can use when discussing RtI. Suggestions for improving student performance, providing high-quality instruction, and implementing academic and/or behavioral strategies at each of the tiers are among the many ideas included.

As reported in a paper by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2005), the focus of Response to Intervention (RtI) is on the accountability of the teaching and learning process in general education. A key component of RtI is early intervention at the first sign of academic and/or behavioral difficulties with the end result being the improvement in achievement of all students, including any students who may have a specific learning disability (SLD). The Council of Exceptional Children (CEC, 2006) recognizes RtI as a special education initiative. CEC further notes that general education must lead the way in providing evidence-based instruction to all students and utilize research-based interventions with all struggling learners. The tier wheels will help teachers plan effective instruction and increase success in student learning.

The intent of RtI is to provide a database for making instructional decisions for particular students. These identified students respond to evidence-based interventions in the RtI process using a multi-tiered model. The responsiveness of students to such interventions provides a basis for determining the intensity and duration of additional instructional needs. RtI focuses on which interventions are most beneficial in delivering needed instruction to close learning gaps in a timely manner. The RtI approach encourages schools to ensure that students receive a high level of instruction in the general education classroom followed by close monitoring of students' academic progress in that setting (IDEIA, 2004).

Research substantiates a number of reasons that lead to questioning or perhaps abandoning the use of the discrepancy model. "The IQ-discrepancy criterion is potentially harmful to students as it results in delaying intervention until the student's achievement is sufficiently low that the discrepancy is achieved. For most students, identification of having a specific learning disability (SLD) occurs at an age when the academic problems are difficult to remediate with the most intense remediation efforts" (Torgesen, et. al., 2001). Donovan and Cross (2002) state "... the *wait to fail* model does not lead to closing the achievement gap for most students placed in special education. Many students placed in special education as SLD show minimal gains in achievement and few actually leave special education."

Due to the increased focus on accountability and assessment in the legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act, researchers Ernst, Miller, Robinson and Tilly (2005) note how critical it is that appropriate evaluative measures and intervention practices be in place for students who are not performing at the expected standard. Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter (2003) report a positive finding on the use of RtI in Minneapolis Public Schools. The field research data shows a reduction in the number of African-American students referred for special education and a decrease in the number placed in special education over a four-year period.

There are several reasons that justify a campus implementing the RtI approach and using the RtI wheels as developed by the Mentoring Minds team. RtI is regarded by researchers Gresham (2002) and Marston (2001) as an alternative approach for identifying learning disabilities (LD) due to the concerns raised about the discrepancy model. Another reason RtI looks promising is it is seen as a means to serve struggling learners earlier and provides a way to reduce referrals to special education by offering high-quality instruction and intensified intervention in general education. Researchers and practitioners agree there is evidence to support RtI as a means of monitoring the progress of students with or without disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005, 2006; Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). Still another reason for the support of an RtI approach centers on the research of reading. Numerous research studies by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2000) and Lyon, et al. (2001) advocate that early-identified students served by prevention programs can lead to a reduction in the number of students with reading problems by 70% and above.

All students need to develop the skill of reading. It is imperative that educators collaborate early on how to best teach all students to read. Lyon (2004) found that the application of high quality, effective instruction and interventions, proven by research to work, help achieve this goal. Research conducted through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at universities throughout the country and reviewed by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) eliminated some long-held beliefs about reading and disabilities.

NICHD has found evidence to substantiate there are characteristics of early language that predict future reading and writing skills. Adams (1990) and Catts (1997) report that studies which show 80 percent of preschool age children with language disorders later display some degree of reading difficulty. These researchers also report that children who overcome early language difficulties before the age of five are not at risk. When children enter kindergarten, research purports about 20 percent of them have significant difficulty learning to read.

The *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* promote screening of all students followed by early identification and immediate intervention of students who are not achieving due to specific academic and/or behavior concerns. The instruction that is offered in grades K-3 has an effect on whether they continue to experience difficulties in reading or not. Children enter school with a variety of experiences, which affect the differences in skill level upon entry into kindergarten. Studies show approximately 5 percent of students have absolutely no difficulties learning to read whereas about 60 percent find learning to read somewhat of a challenge. Approximately half of that 60 percent find learning to read extremely difficult (Lyon et al., 2001 as cited in Finn, Rotherham & Hokanson).

In the past, educators waited until second and sometimes third grade to provide intervention to students who exhibited reading difficulties. According to Fletcher, et al., (1994 as cited in Grossen, 1997), this practice results in about 74 percent of these students continuing to experience reading problems in ninth grade. Shaywitz et. al., (1990) found that boys and girls are equally likely to have reading problems. More boys are usually identified to have reading problems because it appears teacher evaluations are sometimes influenced by gender. The *Response to Intervention Tier-1, Tier-2, and Tier-3 Wheels* provide the teacher implementation support so students do not wait until failure to receive appropriate instruction and intervention.

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) advocate the use of interventions and instruction based on defensible research. Both require effective reading and behavior programs that result in improved student performance and fewer students needing special education services. Provisions of IDEA 2004 allow school districts to use scientific, research-based interventions as an alternative method for identifying students with SLD.

IDEIA also identified math calculation, math reasoning, and written expression as areas to address when identifying students. NCLB, influenced by the 2000 National Reading Panel Report, states that scientifically-based reading instruction includes the essential components of reading that have been identified through research: phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension. This legislation serves as a stimulus for the content areas that must be addressed.

Utilization of data based and scientific, researched-based interventions as part of the process to determine eligibility for learning disabilities was stressed in IDEIA 2004. IDEIA 2004 gave local education agencies the option to use an alternative approach, which could be the RtI approach. The use of the discrepancy model is not removed or excluded when identifying students with specific learning disabilities. The use of RtI data is allowed as part of the special education referral or evaluation process. This law indicates that the use of other researched-based procedures is also permitted. Data collection should include functional academic and behavioral assessment measures, such as curriculum-based assessments and curriculum-based measures as part of student evaluations. These findings were recognized and incorporated into the development of the *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels*. One side of the wheel focuses on the academic domain and the other on the behavioral domain.

The option is available for local education agencies to use up to 15% of IDEIA funds for students who need early interventions for academic and/or behavioral support to succeed in the general education setting but who have not been identified as needing special education support. Viable activities include professional development to deliver scientifically based interventions and services and supports, including scientifically based literacy instruction. These kinds of experiences relate to RtI and help to reduce the number of students who might be placed in special education programs due to their frustration and lack of academic and/or behavioral success.

Both the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) focus on the quality of instruction received by students in the general education setting. IDEIA 2004 and NCLB require

the use of research-based instruction and interventions. The intent of the Response-to-Intervention (RtI) model, suggested by IDEIA, is to change and place the identification process into the general education setting where a student receives evidence-based instruction. A tiered system of interventions increasing in intensity and duration is needed to address the diverse needs of students. Effective reading and behavior programs that result in improved student performance have become an essential focus.

The literature indicates a tiered system of interventions is necessary to adjust the type and intensity of instruction in order to address the diversity of student needs (Kovaleski, 2003; Vaughn, 2003). Although no universal RtI model exists, it is generally understood that multiple tiers provide services that are needed to support academic and/or behavioral difficulties. Vaughn found that a tiered system demonstrates the flexibility to layer instruction over time and provides essential instruction early before a student lags too far behind. Kovaleski noted that several researchers suggest a three-tier model yet models do exist that vary from three tiers or more.

In determining the effectiveness of RtI, it appears that all students can benefit when the instruction matches their current level of needs. Research based upon several studies by Mellard, Byrd, Johnson, Tollefson, & Boesche (2004) indicated that the RtI approach does benefit students who experience academic difficulties if the interventions are individualized and used in a timely manner. Gresham (1989) states that it is imperative that interventions be implemented with integrity, which means they must be closely monitored. However, evaluation of integrity can prove challenging due to time constraints in schools and teacher resistance (Gresham, 2001). Emerging research seems to show success implementing the RtI approach at Tiers 1 and 2 in the area of reading in elementary grades with some research on RtI and early mathematics and behavior.

Researchers (Butler, Miller, Crehan, Babbitt & Pierce, 2003; Cass, Cates, Smith & Jackson, 2003; Mercer, Jordan & Miller, 1996) noted positive findings for students who received interventions in mathematics. The intervention used concrete–pictorial–abstract instruction until all lessons were taught or until each student achieved mastery. In the areas of computation, concepts and applications, and word problems, these studies indicated that students receiving targeted instruction outperformed those who were not identified for such. Fuchs et al. (2006) also found that RtI approach had a favorable impact on mathematics instruction for third graders. This study looked at the effects of a specific mathematics curriculum and how students were provided interventions at different tiers to improve their skills in problem solving.

At this time, little seems to be known about the effectiveness of RtI for other subject areas or for students in the upper grades, notes Mellard (2004). It appears that few studies focus on strategies for individualized interventions or the number of students who are identified for special education services (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003). Researchers do not seem to agree on certain elements of the RtI process such as, length of time for an intervention or length of time an intervention plan is in use prior to evaluation (Gresham, 2001; Kovaleski, 2003), or the intensity of the intervention (Barnett, Daly, Jones & Lentz, 2004; Gresham, 2001).

Two RtI models are recognized from the studies: a standard protocol model and the problem-solving model. The standard protocol approach provides interventions to students who are grouped for shared needs because they experience common academic problems. This model calls for curriculum based assessments to be administered often so adjustments in instruction can be made by a campus team. Based on a student's response, instruction is continued, discontinued, or intensified (Kukic, Tilly & Michelson, 2006). A longitudinal study, using the standard protocol model and conducted by Vellutino et al. (2006), revealed early intervention resulted in significant reading improvement for at-risk students. In the latter model, a campus problem-solving team studies individual student data to make an informed decision about the need for interventions, identifies the interventions to use, and the amount of time for each (McCook, 2006). The Heartland Area Educational Agency in Iowa Public Schools implemented the problem-solving model. Tilly (2003) noted the importance of the scientific method in the decision-making process used at each tier. Grimes & Kurns (2003) indicated that teacher training is a part of Heartland's model and has shown to be essential in an RtI approach. The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (2005) notes that both approaches utilize research-based interventions, progress monitoring, and fidelity and integrity control measures. No matter which model is chosen, the review of literature points to RtI as a favorable approach for instruction and interventions.

Mellard, from the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities at the University of Kansas, found that most schools used RtI as a prevention model. Mellard further explained that students received intense instruction in the academic or behavioral areas as soon as data showed the student lagging behind peers. If after a predetermined period of time, the student continued to underachieve, a more intense instructional intervention was offered. Thus, RtI is designed to address under-achievement early and to individualize the problem and instruction to fit the student. Using RtI as a model for the identification of SLD does not appear to have broad application data at this time. Those who support the RtI approach attest that RtI assessments are sufficient for SLD determination. Researchers advocate that any well-designed model that requires assessment over time is an improvement over a single snapshot approach.

Marston (2001) reported a 40% decrease in special education placements for LD programs in Minneapolis public schools. This drop is likely due to the use of RtI to determine eligibility. Students appear to get the help needed in skill development with a three-tier model of prevention and intervention.

Blackmore (1996) noted teachers must recognize there are different ways to learn, they must know their learners, and they must capitalize on the diversity of students to promote high standards in classroom performance. Educators have recognized for a long time that some students prefer a particular way to learn. Knowing this information helps teachers plan for small group and individualized instruction. Students who have knowledge of their own learning styles can better understand themselves in regards to strengths and weaknesses. Sadler-Smith (2001) reported this understanding helps students to monitor and choose strategies that support their learning. This knowledge might improve self-confidence when students acknowledge their lack of learning might not be due to an inadequacy. Adey, Fairbrother, and William (1999) note that self-knowledge of how one learns is an advantage.

Students are apt to get more from a learning experience when they understand and use their styles of learning. Sarasin (1998) suggests using the lesser-preferred styles of learning to help strengthen the scope of students' learning and to keep them in touch with how the real world functions. Pallapu (2007) found significant differences in a study of visual and verbal learners. The results appear to indicate that learning styles do affect learning and that improvement and learning increase if instruction accommodates the needs of learners. Dunn and Dunn (1998; 1992) stress how important it is for teachers to work differently with different learners if learners are to perform their best. They emphasize that instruction is what increases achievement. Dunn and Dunn also note the importance of educators receiving professional development on learning styles and its application. Strategies delineated in the *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* guide teachers in planning instruction and interventions relative to learning preferences of identified students.

Literature on learning styles substantiates the reason to provide interventions or strategies for addressing individual needs. In order to provide high-quality instruction, educators must understand how students learn. Knowledge of student preferences for learning helps solidify the appropriate manner for successful implementation. Instruction and interventions that match students' strengths to targeted deficit areas appear to show favorable results in student performance. The *RtI Wheels* address learning styles as a tool to deliver instruction and interventions.

Research indicates that teaching and learning improve with sound instructional practices. The wheels showcase evidence-based strategies essential to any classroom environment that places student success as the driving force for teaching and learning. These practices are identified as feedback, cooperative grouping, hands-on learning, repeated practice, questions, and organizers. Literature indicates that when teachers incorporate these strategies into instruction, teaching and learning improve.

Several findings surfaced regarding homework and student practice of skills. Homework should match the appropriate instructional level of the student and provide practice on previously introduced skills (Rademacher, Deshler, Schumacher, & Lenz, 1998; Rosenberg, 1989). Newell and Rosenbloom (1981) and Anderson (1995) advocate that students must receive focused practice to achieve mastery of skills. Healy (1990) notes it is recommended that students practice only a few skills at a time at a deeper level. Complicated tasks should be broken into smaller segments with built-in practice time states Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001).

Cooperative learning is regarded as a sound instructional practice. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) found a significant effect on learning resulted when teachers grouped students in heterogeneous learning groups a minimum of once a week. Other research validated the use of cooperative learning for achievement, time on task, motivation to learn, and transfer of learning (Cohen, 1994; Johnson and Johnson, 1999).

Hands-on experiences, like games and simulations, promote high levels of engagement with immediate feedback and are beneficial to all students. Hood (1997) concluded these experiences could motivate students intrinsically. Edelson (1998) shared that games can stimulate students to learn and assist them to discover concepts through exploration and enable students to discover knowledge through exploration. Cooperation, teamwork, and conflict resolution are benefits of activities such as games and simulations noted Neubecker (2003). Not only do such activities

present opportunities for exploration and practice but Dempsey, Casey, Haynes, and Lucassen (1994) found changes in attitude also surfaced. Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) shared comprehension increases when students are given the opportunity to visualize and model concepts. Gordin and Pea (1995) stressed that classrooms that set up simulations and utilize modeling lay a strong foundation for the enrichment and extension of learning. Communication, problem solving, and collaboration are other skills students can accrue as a direct result of simulations noted Gredler (1990;1994).

Studies show that the art of asking questions with an emphasis on higher-level thinking can advance student achievement. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) reported how teachers can increase their effectiveness in teaching and learning by using research findings on questioning strategies. An important conclusion showed learning increased in classrooms where teachers asked questions related to essential content rather than questions teachers gleaned would interest students (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Schulze, 1994; Risner, Nicholson, & Webb, 1994). Redfield and Rousseau (1981) reported that knowledge level questions resulted in less learning than higher-level questions that encouraged students to use their analytical thought processes. Fillippone (1998) found that teachers ask lower-level questions more times than not.

Wait-time should be acknowledged before and after asking a question. Usually teachers give less than one second for students to respond to a question and the results are short responses or no response at all. Student-to-student interaction and quality of responses increase when wait-time is addressed noted Fowler (1975). Rowe (1974) studied the effect of questions used by teachers on elementary students. Results showed three to five seconds of wait-time led to increases in student responses, student confidence, evidence supporting the response, and student conversation. This finding is consistent at the middle and high school levels when wait-time is allowed after asking a question. A recommendation is to allow five seconds of wait-time. Students must be informed that this time is their think-time and time should also be adjusted to the cognitive level of the questions.

Organizers prepare students for learning, develop and reinforce the concept, and help clarify misunderstandings. Many researchers support the use of organizers for reading skills and vocabulary development (Brookbank Grover, Kullberg, & Strawser, 1999; Moore & Readence, 1984). Graphic organizers allow students to use graphics, symbols, and words to present a visual display to structure learning before and during a lesson. Paivio (1986) stated students can understand information and learn more when a variety of modes are used to present content.

Another effective instructional practice noted in the wheels is feedback. When feedback denotes where and why students have made errors, it seems significant increases in student learning result (Lysakowski & Walberg, 1982; Walberg, 1999; Tennenbaum & Goldring, 1989). One of the most important practices used to improve student achievement is student feedback, according to Hattie (1992). Walberg (1999) also reported that the level of achievement varies depending on the type of teacher feedback a student receives. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) promote that students remain involved on a task until the standard is reached if achievement is to be enhanced. An emphasis on timely feedback appears to affect the degree of value for learning noted Bangert-Downs, Kulik, Kulik, and Morgan (1991).

The need for higher quality assessments is well established. Studies show teachers spend as much as one-third to one-half of their time involved in assessment-related activities (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992). For instruction to be effective, classroom assessments must reflect quality. Assessment strategies provide measures to make an evaluative judgment of students' levels of competencies in given areas. This judgment determines the educational needs of students and offers direction to the teacher in planning effective instruction. Assessments should be both informal and formal. These varied assessments should be utilized before, during, and after instruction.

The information derived from assessments is a powerful tool to monitor the development of student understanding, to revise instruction, and to provide reflection for learners. It is noted that effective teachers utilize assessment tasks as quality learning experiences (NRC, 1996). Assessment feedback supplies the learner with self-assessment information, but it also enhances motivation, which is crucial to achievement. Learning improves with consistent feedback (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Heath & Glen, 2005).

Rubrics provide students with established informative criteria for success by clarifying desired learning outcomes for students. Crooks (1988) shared criterion-referenced feedback provides the guidance for improving student understanding. Self-assessment and reflection are important due to the feedback students can ascertain for themselves. Effective learning appears to result from students who provide their own feedback by monitoring their work against preset criteria presented to them in advance of the work task or assignment (Wiggins, 1993; Trammel, Schloss, & Alper, 1994).

Differentiation is a classroom practice that engages all learners by addressing their interests, their learning profiles, and their readiness levels. Differentiated instruction occurs in the curriculum, in lessons, and in assessments. Tomlinson (2001) and Roberts and Inman (2007) share that differentiation addresses variance in content, process, and product. Tomlinson states that this approach is "responsive" teaching rather than planning instruction that reflects "one-size-fits-all" students. Differentiation is delivered to help all students, no matter what age, learn efficiently as possible (Tomlinson, 2003a). Improved achievement is promoted when teachers are attentive to students' preferences of learning. Tomlinson (2003) reports that student motivation and student attention to tasks increase when the topics of study reflect personal interests of students.

Roberts and Inman (2007) reveal that planning is meaningful and purposeful. Instructional options are not offered merely to provide students with choices in learning modalities or studies of interests. Teachers must intentionally offer choices in content, activities, assessments, products, and group formats that match the learning experience directly to the learner. As a result, student motivation increases. Student behavior can often improve when choices are allowed. Strategies for differentiating instruction are noted. Implementation of differentiation is not easy and teacher support through training opportunities and coaching is recommended. This practice is valuable in helping campuses reach and sustain high standards within all classrooms.

Research reveals that the teacher is likely the most important factor affecting student achievement (Wright, Horn, and Sanders, 1997). This finding, as a result of

a study involving approximately 60,000 students, clearly implies that education can be improved by improving the effectiveness of teachers. Haycock (1998) studied this research, and that of others, leading her to share that differences in student achievement existed between students placed with a highly effective teacher and those placed with a highly ineffective teacher. The *RtI Wheels* can serve as tools to assist teachers as they strive to improve their knowledge and skills.

Effective teachers must model, teach, demonstrate, and allow students to practice the precise behaviors they expect. Using an approach that includes a variety of communication techniques facilitates the success of all types of learners, as they comprehend the “how” of what is expected. Numerous studies were conducted to determine the value of teaching students using their preferred learning styles (Dunn, Griggs, Olson, Beasley, Gorman, 1995). The finding revealed educational interventions matched to the learning styles of the students would favorably influence student achievement.

Emmer, Sanford, Clements, and Martin (1983), using an analysis of several studies, indicated that teachers should involve students actively in instructional activities. Furthermore, these researchers noted that teachers, who display poor management, mismanage class time and prevent valuable time on task for students. Thus, the *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* include classroom management, transitions, environment, and time management as areas to address.

One study noted that teachers who effectively manage their classrooms use different strategies with various types of students whereas the same strategies appeared to be used for various situations by ineffective classroom managers. A recommendation from this study by Brophy (1996) was to develop strategies for teachers to use with students in specific situations called “helping skills”. These skills target misbehaviors and provide guidance on how to handle students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors.

For the first 16 years of its 22 years existence, discipline was identified as the top problem in the Annual Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools findings. The Phi Delta Kappa 38th Annual Gallup Poll (Rose and Gallup, 2006) reported discipline as a continued problem cited by respondents but financial support and overcrowded schools rank above discipline as problems in the nation’s educational system. The 29th Annual Gallup Poll of Teachers’ Attitudes (Rose and Gallup, 1997) noted a lack of discipline was one of two problems most frequently pointed out by the survey respondents.

A study by Tulley and Chiu (1995) identified 91% of discipline problems experienced by student teachers involved defiance, inattention, and disruption. The most effective strategies used were positive reinforcement, explanation, and change of strategy (e.g. , pausing, moving closer, changing the volume of voice). In findings shared by researchers (Braithwaite, 2001; Walker Colvin, and Ramsey, 1995; Fisher, et al.; Walker & Walker, 1991), general education teachers need interventions they can implement effectively in the regular classroom and in small groups to help students manage their social interactions. Such findings are reflected on the *RtI Wheels*.

Brophy (1988), in his review of research on the implication of teaching for low-achieving students, concluded that the key to achievement gain was maximizing the time teachers actively engaged the students no matter if they were in a regular or

special education classroom. Thus, time-management strategies are offered in the behavioral domains.

In studying well-disciplined schools, Short (1988) indicated a student-centered environment which incorporates students and teachers problem solving together. In addition, the incorporation of activities to promote self-esteem of students and activities that lead a student to feel a sense of belonging are more effective in decreasing behavior problems as opposed to punishment consequences. The philosophy adhered to in the wheels demonstrates collaborative and supportive efforts leading to students becoming self-disciplined to manage their own behaviors. The *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* provide direction for educators, new and experienced, to establish a solid foundation for school success, to use strategies to reduce disciplinary interruptions, and to follow through with effectively used interventions.

Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) reviewed over 100 studies on classroom management to determine the effects on student achievement. The analysis revealed many findings. One major finding revealed individual teachers do impact student achievement. The *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* can become the focus of an ongoing school-wide campus discussion where teachers and RtI teams seek to create an environment where teaching can flourish. Well-managed classrooms do not appear magically as it takes effort and commitment from every teacher to create effective classrooms on a school-wide level. Studies indicate teachers can learn how to change student behaviors and focus them in a more positive direction.

The *RtI Tier Wheels* are a rich source in assisting all staff as they differentiate the needed strategies to accommodate student learning. An understanding of and use of specific strategies for effective classroom management can adjust the potential level of teachers and students. Research shows that training can change teacher behavior and lead to improved student behavior that affects student achievement favorably. A campus should work collaboratively to increase school performance. "A sustained effort to improve teaching and instruction will likely also result in reducing problem student behaviors," the Educational Testing Service notes in its 1998 policy report, *Order in the Classroom*. "Better teaching, better behavior, and higher achievement are intertwined."

Federal laws, NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004), direct schools to focus on helping all students learn by addressing academic and/or behavioral concerns earlier. Both laws declare the importance of high quality, scientifically based instruction interventions. Both hold schools accountable for the progress of all students in meeting grade level standards. The Mentoring Minds Product Development Team considered the directives from both laws, the literature on effective strategies, and findings from studies on the areas cited in the *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* to determine the included strategies.

Mentoring Minds developed the *Response to Intervention Tier Wheels* to provide educators with tools to address intervention implementation. The wheels serve as guides for implementing RtI strategies, both academic and behavioral, at all three tier levels. The wheels contain pertinent RtI information, a concise overview of each of the three tiers, suggestions for differentiating instruction, grouping for instruction, assessing student learning, promoting a high-quality, positive learning climate, and implementing effective practices in content and behavioral areas. The wheels contain

numerous suggestions for developing, reinforcing, or extending general classroom instruction. At the discretion of the campus, some strategies can be selected for use at more than one tier. A visual representation of an RtI model, guidelines for teaching skills, a framework for implementing behavioral interventions, and other visual representations are offered on the two faces of each wheel. This information is provided to promote an understanding of multi-tiered instruction in the academic and/or behavioral domains and for ensuring student success. The use of these RtI resources helps campuses reach favorable academic results for their students.

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