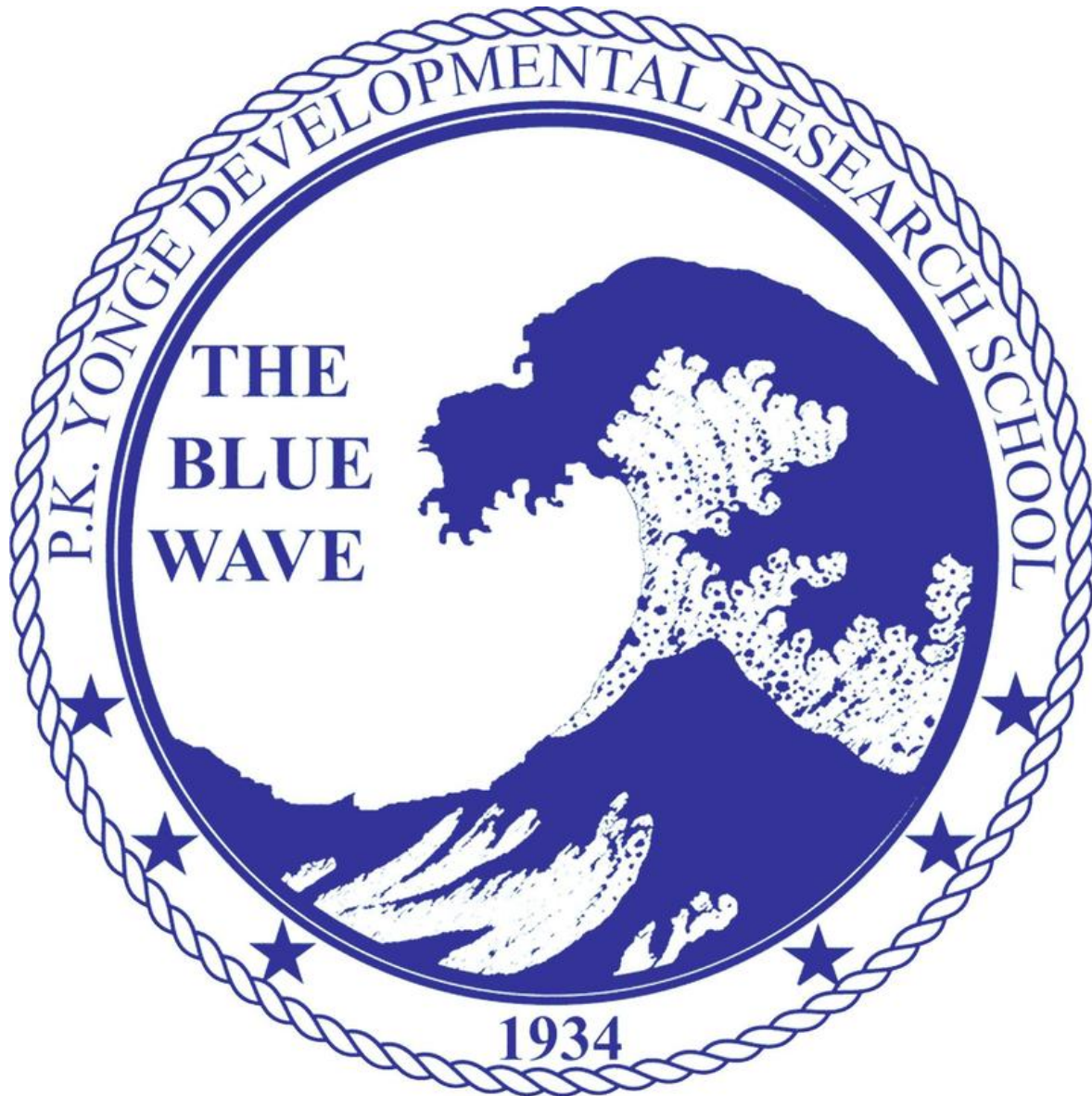


Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Handbook

2013-2014



P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School



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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to assist P.K. Yonge’s implementation of data-based decision making in a systematic problem-solving process at all levels of operation: district level, school level, learning community level, grade level, classroom level, student subgroup level, and individual student level. This manual aligns directly with Florida’s implementation of problem solving and response to instruction/intervention (PS-RtI). This manual sets the stage for P.K. Yonge to approach instructional decisions from a broader context of quality assessment, instruction, and intervention to address the learning and behavioral needs of all students.

Additionally, this manual addresses ways to assess whether core curricula, instruction, and interventions are effective and, in turn, use such data in various decision-making processes for students. Decisions about the effectiveness of core instruction and interventions must be made for all students. Therefore, it is important that district and school leadership teams take an active role in examining curricular materials, instructional methodologies, the learning environment, and other practices across school settings to determine their effectiveness and assess their impact on academic and behavioral student learning.

The mission of the State Board of Education, as stated in section 1008.31, Florida Statutes (F.S.), is to increase the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system by providing them with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through learning opportunities and research valued by students, parents, and communities to maintain an accountability system that measures student progress toward the following goals:

- Highest student achievement
- Seamless articulation and maximum access
- Skilled workforce and economic development
- Quality, efficient services

Ultimately, the role of the education system is to prepare every student for life beyond formal schooling. To this end, it is the position of the Department that the problem-solving and response to instruction/intervention (PS-RtI) framework represents a logic and set of core beliefs, including the systematic use of a problem-solving process that must be integrated seamlessly into educational initiatives throughout Florida. Ideally, this integration should be evident within school improvement efforts, student progression plans, and the development and implementation of K–12 Comprehensive Reading Plans to provide the legal structure for the implementation of PS-RtI in districts across the state. Florida’s Statewide PS-RtI Plan was disseminated in 2008 and is accessible at Florida’s RtI website (<http://www.florida-rti.org/flMod/fits.htm>). The plan outlines a framework for statewide implementation of PS-RtI through the establishment of an infrastructure that includes district-based leadership teams (DBLT) implementing district-based plans to support school-based leadership teams (SBLT) implementing school-based plans.

As stated in Florida’s Statewide PS-RtI Plan (2008) “...all schools in Florida should ensure evidence-based practices, instructionally relevant assessments, systematic problem-solving to meet all students’ needs, data-based decision making, effective professional development, supportive leadership, and meaningful student and parent involvement. These are the foundational principles of an RtI system, which provides us the



framework to elevate the efficacy of our statewide improvement efforts.” The plan defines RtI as the practice of providing (1) high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions. PS-RtI is an ongoing process of using student performance and related data to guide instructional decisions and intervention decisions for ALL students. It is a multi-tiered, problem-solving model of prevention, early intervention, and use of educational resources to address student needs. PS-RtI matches instructional strategies and supports to student need in an informed, ongoing approach for planning, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum, the instruction, and related supports.

It is imperative to consider specific types of decisions for students, such as eligibility for special education services, in the larger context of the system-wide PS-RtI implementation. More important than its role in making eligibility decisions, PS-RtI is about creating and sustaining learning environments that are effective and lead to desired outcomes for all students. Consequently, the PS-RtI framework outlined in this manual has a significant impact on instruction and assessment practices in P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School.

Federal funding sources are used to supplement P.K. Yonge’s FEFP operating budget to enhance our multi-tiered systems of support. P.K. Yonge’s Title I, Part A targeted assistance program supports Tier 2 and Tier 3 instructional support in reading at kindergarten through third grades. Additional Title I, Part A funding is used to support our summer reading intervention program for kindergarten through second grade students (SAIL: Summer Adventures in Literacy). P.K. Yonge’s IDEA funding supports instructional intervention teachers who provide targeted Tier 3 instruction for students with disabilities in 4th through 12th grades. In addition, IDEA funds support P.K. Yonge’s school psychologists, speech and language services, and occupational therapy.

Ultimately, this manual provides P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School and districts with detailed information on the process for the collection of student performance data through the system wide implementation of the PS-RtI framework and delineates how those data can be used to assist with making important educational decisions for all students.



Section 1 - RtI

Guiding Principles: Meeting the Needs of All Students

An MTSS and all related components (data-based problem solving) increase the quality of the educational experience for ALL students. The framework includes effective core (tier 1) academic and behavioral supports and additional help for children who need it. Therefore, the effectiveness of instruction for all students is the constant priority within an MTSS.

MTSS is a more accurate term to refer to the framework of educational services than the term RtI (which has historically been used to refer to the framework). An MTSS reflects a seamless system wherein multiple levels of academic and behavior supports are provided to students based on student need. RtI is a central step of the problem-solving process. Problem solving is a key practice within an MTSS.

Purpose of Response to Intervention (RtI)

In June of 2008, the FDOE published a *Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI) Implementation Plan* that provided the initial, formal, state-level framework to assist districts with critical components, definitions, and applications to support the development of school wide PS-RtI implementation. The plan is accessible at Florida's Response to Instruction/Intervention website at <http://www.floridarti.org/flMod/fits.htm>. The publication of the statewide implementation plan marks a significant point in our state's development, reflecting our state-level, collective intent to engage in large-scale systems change. Since 2004, Florida has engaged in continuous efforts to determine how systematic problem solving and the RtI framework integrate the various elements of Florida's education system and how the PS-RtI logic affects resource allocation and access through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As elements of our system grow and change, it is important that we continue to examine how PS-RtI logic affects Florida's system as a whole, rather than applying procedures in isolation. This manual illustrates the comprehensive way in which PS-RtI is universally applied to decision making in Florida, including, *but not limited to*, decisions related to eligibility for



special education services and supports. The purpose is to:

- Guide the application of district- and school wide problem solving within the RtI framework as a system wide school improvement model
- Provide districts and schools with the practical decision-making tools that maintain the integrity of the problem-solving process within the RtI framework
- Reinforce the purpose of effective instructional decision making to improve the effects of instruction for all students while acknowledging its role in evaluation and eligibility decisions related to special education

Foundational Beliefs

Florida's educators who are involved in the systematic PS-RtI implementation share the following beliefs about the ideal educational conditions for promoting student achievement. Using the following beliefs to guide our efforts is one way to ensure consistent movement toward maximizing student achievement:

1. Highly effective personnel deliver scientific, research-based instruction and evidence-based practices.
2. Curriculum and instructional approaches have a high probability of success for most students.
3. Instruction is differentiated to meet individual learning needs.
4. Reliable, valid, and instructionally relevant assessments include the following:
 - **Screening Measures:** Assessment tools designed to collect data for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of core instruction and identifying students needing more intensive interventions and support
 - **Diagnostic Measures:** Formal or informal assessment tools that measure skill strengths and weaknesses, identify skills in need of improvement, and assist in determining why a problem is occurring
 - **Progress Monitoring Measures:** Ongoing assessment conducted for the purposes of guiding instruction, monitoring student progress, and evaluating instruction/intervention effectiveness
 - **Formative Measures:** Ongoing assessment embedded within effective teaching to guide instructional decisions
 - **Summative (Outcome) Measures:** Typically administered near the end of the school year to give an overall perspective of the effectiveness of the instructional program
5. Ongoing, systematic problem solving is consistently used, from enrollment to graduation for all students, to make decisions across a continuum of student needs.
6. Student data are used to guide meaningful decision-making.
7. Professional development and follow-up coaching with modeling are provided to ensure effective instruction at all levels.
8. Actively engaged administrative leadership for data-based decision making is inherent to the school culture.
9. All students and their parent(s) are part of one proactive and seamless educational system.



Problem Solving and Response to Instruction/Intervention Framework

PS-RtI is consistently defined in Florida as the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student needs using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important instructional decisions. PS-RtI involves the systematic use of assessment data to most efficiently allocate resources in order to improve learning for all students. To ensure efficient use of resources, schools begin with the identification of trends and patterns using school-wide and grade-level data. Students who need instructional intervention beyond what is provided universally for positive behavior or academic content areas are provided with targeted, supplemental interventions delivered individually or in small groups at increasing levels of intensity.

The RtI framework is characterized by a continuum of academic and behavior supports reflecting the need for students to have fluid access to instruction of varying intensity levels. Three tiers describe the level and intensity of the instruction/interventions provided across the continuum. The three tiers are not, conversely, used to describe categories of students or specific instructional programs. **All tiered instruction is provided within the general education classroom.** The three tiers are characterized as follows:

Tier 1: Core Universal Instruction and Supports – General academic and behavior instruction and support designed and differentiated for all students in all settings

Tier 2: Targeted Supplemental Interventions and Supports – More focused, targeted instruction/intervention and supplemental support *in addition to and aligned with the core academic and behavior curriculum and instruction*

Tier 3: Intensive Individualized Interventions and Supports – The most intense (increased time, narrowed focus, reduced group size) instruction and intervention based upon individual student need *provided in addition to and aligned with core and supplemental academic and behavior, curriculum, instruction, and supports*

The problem-solving process is critical to making the instructional adjustments needed for continual improvement in both student level of performance and rate of progress and is critical for assessing (through students' response) the effectiveness of the instruction/interventions provided. Throughout the continuum of instruction and intervention, problem solving is used to match instructional resources to educational need. *Teams continue to engage in problem solving to ensure that student success is achieved and maintained.* The four critical parts of the on-going problem-solving cycle as a consistent way of work for teams are as follows:

I. **Define the need** by determining the difference between what is expected and what is occurring. Ask, "What specifically do we want students to know and be able to do when compared to what they do know and are able to do?" When engaged in problem solving at the individual student level, the team should strive for accuracy by asking, "What exactly is the need?"

II. **Analyze the need** using data to determine how to respond. Gather assessment data to determine valid/non valid hypotheses. Link validated hypotheses to responses/intervention so that hypotheses will lead to evidence-based decisions. Ask, "Why is/are the desired goal(s) not being met? What are the barriers to the student(s) doing and knowing what is expected?" Design or select a response to directly address those barriers.

III. **Develop and implement a plan** driven by the results of the team's analysis by establishing a



performance goal for the group of students or the individual student and developing an intervention plan to achieve the goal. Then delineate how the student's or group of students' progress will be monitored and implementation integrity will be supported. Ask, "What are we going to do?"

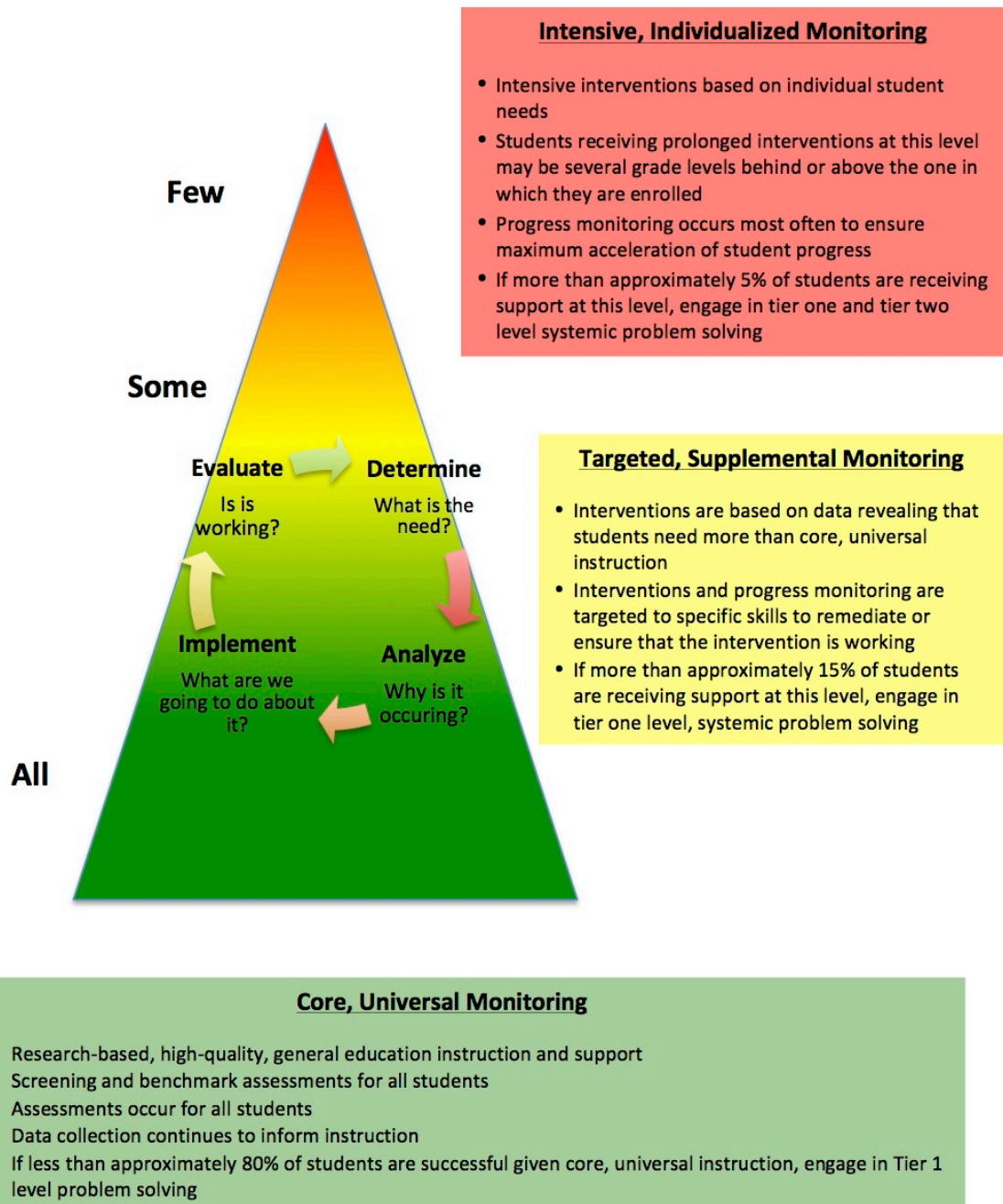
IV. **Measure response to instruction/interventions** by using data gathered from progress monitoring at agreed upon intervals to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention plan based on the student's or group of students' response to the intervention. Progress-monitoring data should directly reflect the targeted skill(s). Ask, "Is it working? If not, how will the instruction/intervention plan be adjusted to better support the student's or group of students' progress?" Team discussion centers on how to maintain or better enable learning for the student(s).

For an illustration of the multi-tiered framework, the problem-solving cycle, and considerations for progress monitoring at each tier, see Figure 1 – Progress Monitoring within Florida's Problem-Solving and Response to Instruction/Intervention Framework.



Figure 1

Progress Monitoring within PKY's Problem-Solving and Response to Instruction/Intervention Framework



The application of the problem-solving cycle across the three tiers is an essential component of a functional PS-RtI system. The underpinning idea is that the level of support a student needs to be successful exists on a continuum. The continuum includes students needing no support beyond the differentiated core curriculum and instruction to those needing extraordinary support. Tiered resources are arranged along that continuum such that students have access to instruction/intervention at a level of intensity commensurate with their needs. For this tiered arrangement of resources to result in maximum student outcomes, instruction within each tier must be effective for large numbers of students.

When this is not the case, the four steps of the problem-solving process are applied to facilitate decision making to improve the effectiveness of the instruction/intervention delivered. For example, if the third grade core package of services delivered in math results in only 50 percent of the students meeting grade-level benchmarks, the four problem-solving steps are implemented with a focus on Tier 1 so that the team may (1) identify the discrepancy between what the students are able to do and what we want them to do, (2) generate hypotheses as to why that discrepancy exists, (3) link data-verified instructional changes to those hypotheses, and (4) measure student(s) response to the adjusted instruction. The same process is applied at subsequent tiers if the measured level of effectiveness of the services provided at that tier does not meet expectation. See Table 1 – Imperative Questions, which includes important questions for teams to address in order to guide discussions about the effectiveness of instruction at each tier.

The effectiveness of each tier of instruction must be monitored to ensure the strength of the entire system. The problem-solving process is a recursive, self-correcting, ongoing methodology used for effective decision making at all levels within the system. This logic and theme of data-based decision making is embedded in a variety of existing structures such as school improvement, student progression, reading plans, positive behavior support, the continuous improvement model, and district policies and procedures.



Table 1
Imperative Questions

Imperative questions to ask while engaging in problem solving at the core, supplemental, and intensive levels include:

<p>Tier 1: Core Instruction and Universal Supports</p>	<p>Are students provided with well-delivered, scientific, research-based core instruction? How is this verified?</p>
	<p>What assessment tools or processes are used to identify instructional needs and the students' response to instruction?</p>
	<p>Is the core instruction/support effective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percent of students are achieving standards/benchmarks/behavioral expectations (approximately 80 percent or more)? • What percent of students in subgroups are achieving standards/benchmarks/behavioral expectations (approximately 80 percent or more)? • If addressing an individual student's needs what percent of students in his/her subgroup are achieving benchmarks/standards/behavioral expectations (approximately 80 percent)?
	<p>If core instruction is not effective,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the curriculum appropriately matched to the needs of the students? • Is support provided for implementation fidelity?
	<p>To what extent is the school-based leadership team engaged in Tier 1-level problem solving in order to increase the effectiveness of core instruction/behavioral supports?</p>
	<p>How are parents and students involved or engaged in supporting effective core instruction/behavioral supports?</p>



	What is the decision rule to determine if student(s) will require supplemental and more intensive, individualized intervention/support?
--	---

Table 1
Imperative Questions (continued)

<p>Tier 2: Supplemental Interventions and Supports</p>	<p>What specific supplemental intervention/support is planned to improve the performance of students who need additional instruction and support (more academic-engaged time, more focused intervention, smaller group, type of delivery, methodology, in addition to and aligned with core instruction, etc.)? Consider at least six pieces of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of additional time • Focus of the intervention and support • Specific instructional strategies/behavioral support • Method and frequency of progress-monitoring assessments • Evidence of fidelity • Sufficiency of intervention/support
	<p>How is the supplemental intervention implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic-Engaged Time – How much more time is provided? • Curriculum – What is used? • Personnel – Who, when, and where is it provided? Are the highest levels of instructional expertise and skill matched to the students with the most significant needs? How is support provided to ensure fidelity of implementation? • Parents – How are the student’s parents involved or engaged in supporting the interventions?
	<p>How effective is the supplemental instruction for groups of students who need additional instruction and support?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assessments are used for ongoing data collection aligned with core instruction? • How frequently are assessments conducted? How frequently are they analyzed by the team? • How are the student’s parents engaged in the



progress monitoring and analysis of level of performance and rate of progress?

- How does the team determine whether the instruction/intervention is effective?
- If the intervention is ineffective (poor or questionable student response), how does the team monitor and support implementation fidelity?
- What is the decision rule to determine if student(s) will require more intensive, individualized intervention/support?



Table 1
Imperative Questions (continued)

<p>Tier 3: Intensive Individualized Intervention and Support</p>	<p>What specific intensive, individualized intervention is planned to improve the level of performance and the rate of progress of the individual student (e.g., more academic-engaged time, more focused intervention, smaller group, type of delivery, methodology, in addition to and aligned with core/supplemental instruction)? Consider at least six pieces of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of additional time • Focus of the instruction/intervention • Specific instructional/behavioral strategies • Evidence of fidelity • Sufficiency of instruction/support • Method and frequency of progress-monitoring assessments
	<p>How is the intensive, individualized intervention delivered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic-Engaged Time – How much more time is needed? • Curriculum – What does the student need? • Personnel – Who, when, and where is it provided? Are the highest levels of instructional expertise and skill being matched to the students with the most significant needs? How is support provided to ensure fidelity of implementation? • Parents – How are the student’s parents involved or engaged in supporting interventions to increase the students’ level of performance and rate of progress?
	<p>How effective is the intensive, individualized intervention for the student?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assessments are used for ongoing data collection? • How frequently are assessments conducted? How frequently are they analyzed by the



team?

- How, and to what degree, are the student's parents involved or engaged in the progress monitoring and analysis of the student's level of performance and rate of progress?
- How unique is the student's response in comparison to peers?
- How do teams determine whether the intervention is effective?
- What is the decision rule to determine any necessary adjustments to the instruction/interventions?
- If the intervention is ineffective (poor or questionable student response), how does the team monitor and support implementation fidelity?



Section 2 - RtI

Making Connections: Aligning Practices, Efforts, Commitments, and Initiatives

“Begin with the idea that the purpose of the system is student achievement, acknowledge that student needs exist on a continuum rather than in typological groupings, and organize resources to make educational resources available in direct proportion to student need.”

David Tilly, Director, Innovation and Accountability,
Heartland Area Education Agency

The FDOE and districts throughout the state share the goal and responsibility of increasing the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system (section 1008.31, F.S.). An efficient and effective public education system is fundamental to Florida’s ability to make significant social and economic contributions in our national and global marketplace. Evidence of a national emphasis on reforming public education to prepare students to be competitive in the 21st century global economy is found in federal legislation such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 2002 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004.

Data-based decision making, the use of evidence-based practices, and accountability for student performance are also embedded in important federal legislation that impacts education. Congress authorized the ESEA of 2002 to hold schools accountable for the educational outcomes of students. ESEA requires states to ensure that all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve predetermined levels of academic proficiency as determined through statewide assessments. Implementation of evidence-based instructional practices is mandated to increase the percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency on statewide assessments. Similar to ESEA, the IDEA focuses on the use of data and research-based practices in the selection of curriculum and pedagogy. Schools must make decisions regarding how to respond to these mandates using all of the available educational expertise by blending resources and unifying efforts within PS-RtI implementation.

The RtI framework is the practice of providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and using data over time (learning rate over time and level of performance) to make important educational decisions. It is the position of the FDOE that this practice represents a logic and set of core beliefs,



including the systematic use of a problem-solving process that must be integrated seamlessly into school improvement plans, student progression plans, K-12 comprehensive reading plans, differentiated accountability plans, etc. This problem-solving process must be applied to all learners, which includes general education students from pre-k through graduation, students with disabilities, and advanced and gifted learners, in order to elevate the efficacy of statewide improvement efforts and processes.

The PS-Rtl framework supports the implementation of FDOE requirements and can be a catalyst for student learning by supporting the implementation of services to improve the academic and behavior performance of all students, including students at risk for educational failure. The framework also becomes a catalyst for adult learning through embedded professional development.

Important education practices, such as Lesson Study, which is an ongoing professional development process used within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to allow teachers the opportunity to create a model for high quality instructional practices, contribute to this framework by matching the method of quality instruction to students' needs. Information about the Lesson Study approach can be found at http://www.flbsi.org/pdf/Lesson%20Study%20TAG_Final.pdf. Other examples of how various initiatives are connected to PS-Rtl, such as Florida's reading initiatives, the Next Generation PreK-20 Education Strategic Plan, and the State Performance Plan, are as follows.

The PS-Rtl framework supports Florida's reading initiatives by:

1. Collaborating with Just Read, Florida! (JRF) and the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) to increase the number of schools using problem-solving, data-based decision making at early grades to prevent reading failure
1. Including PS-Rtl components in district K–12 Comprehensive Reading Plans
2. Increasing the number of early grade interventions to facilitate early identification and intervention for students at risk for reading failure
3. Decreasing the percent of students in need of special education services through the use of systematic problem solving as a prevention and early intervention process rather than one that requires the student to fall behind prior to receiving assistance

The PS-Rtl framework supports the Next Generation PreK-20 Education Strategic Plan areas by:

1. **Improving Quality of Teaching in the Education System:** PS-Rtl provides teachers with the skills to identify at-risk students, to improve performance in the use of student-based data, and to improve performance in the delivery of evidence-based interventions.
2. **Professional Development** – Increasing the number of leadership training opportunities throughout the state.
3. **Strengthening Foundation Skills:** PS-Rtl is an evidence-based system to significantly improve the academic and behavioral skills of low performing students.
4. **Closing the Gap:** PS-Rtl is an evidence-based method to significantly reduce disproportionality and improve performance for minority populations, students from low socio-economic environments, and English language learners (ELLs).
5. **High School Graduation:** PS-Rtl results in the improvement in performance of students and early intervention will improve graduation rates in the future.
6. **Aligning Resources to Strategic Goals:** PS-Rtl has proven to be a more efficient way of delivering services and deploying personnel, resources, and time allocation.



Florida's IDEA, Part B, State Performance Plan (SPP), consists of 20 Performance Indicators that include specific targets to ensure that Florida's students with disabilities are receiving a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The FDOE has a responsibility to support districts in achieving the performance targets for each indicator and for reporting progress annually to the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Access Florida's SPP and Annual Performance Report on the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, website at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>.

The PS/RtI framework assists districts in addressing applicable SPP indicators in primarily two ways:

1. **Problem Solving:** The focus of this framework is to provide districts and schools with a blueprint for problem solving that addresses district, school, and student-level problems. The entire focus is on systems change and the process of implementing reform efforts that improve student performance, school climate, and family participation.
2. **Program Evaluation:** Schools and districts are able to use data resulting from PS-RtI implementation to identify areas that require targeted assistance and to document the effects of interventions implemented to address those areas. In particular, this framework is able to provide assistance to districts and schools in addressing disproportionality in the identification of students with disabilities, their educational placements, and discipline.

The quality implementation of PS-RtI directly impacts the SPP indicators. Specific details of each indicator are located in the SPP and can be accessed directly at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/RevisedSPP.pdf>.

Over the past three years, important lessons learned from Florida's Statewide Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project reveal a need to make connections and blend resources throughout this process of systems change. As schools and districts confront the challenges involved in building consensus, making connections, aligning efforts, developing an infrastructure, and responding to legislative initiatives, it is essential not to reduce the focus of PSRtI to its special education relevance. We must remember that the need for RtI based reforms emerged because of ineffective practices within our previous system, as well as the availability of improved practices based on research. More importantly, the crucial point to understand is that successful implementation of PS-RtI principles encompasses general education initiatives that impact all students. Special education application for the purposes of determining eligibility for specific education programs becomes secondary to the broader implementation.

Therefore, leaders must help all educators acknowledge the need for change and embrace a shared purpose of ensuring all students learn at high levels and take collective responsibility for achieving this shared purpose. This represents a shift from operating within territorial silos to depending on blended expertise and resources. See Table 2 – Matrix for Making Connections, which district- and school-based leadership teams can use to blend expertise and resources across state-, district-, and school-level initiatives.



Section 3 - Rtl

Continuous Improvement: The Problem Solving Process

Making Systemwide Changes

The most significant factor driving educational reform is the focus on outcomes for all students and not just those being considered for services through IDEA. Within this framework, the core question becomes **“What do we want students to know and be able to do?”** Responding to this question requires educators to know what is expected of students academically in all core subject and special areas throughout the course of the academic year. In addition, districts should have well-defined behavioral expectations that serve as the nonnegotiable benchmarks for behavior. To illustrate the broad range of students who benefit from existing within a school culture of PS-Rtl, consider the application of systematic problem solving to gifted and high-ability learners. Gifted and high ability learners may also have needs beyond core instruction (Tier 1), and therefore require supplemental interventions for acceleration and enrichment purposes. For related information, access resources on the Working on Gifted Issues (WOGI) website at <http://www.unfwogi.com/rtl>.

In Florida, the expectation that schools provide effective instruction and support to foster success for all students is embedded in Rule 6A-6.0331, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), *General Education Intervention Procedures, Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation and the Initial Provision of Exceptional Education Services*, which states that “it is the local school district’s responsibility to develop and implement coordinated general education intervention procedures for all students who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in the general education environment.”

This rule includes educational and behavioral evaluations, services, and supports, including scientifically based literacy instruction. This leads to a need for reconsidering professional development for teachers and other school staff and instruction in the use of adaptive and instructional software as



interventions that may be appropriate.

When educators and stakeholders consider the question “What do we want students to know and be able to do?,” improved academic and behavioral outcomes result. This question is also central when examining response to Tier 1 instruction/intervention (i.e., when considering response to class or grade-level academic and/or behavioral expectations). To effectively implement PS-RtI, Tier 1 questions (see Table 1 – *Imperative Questions*) regarding the efficiency of core instruction must be addressed as a *priority* to examining individual student concerns within the PS-RtI framework.

Steps of the Problem-Solving Process

Regardless of whether examining the effects of core instruction (Tier 1) or determining the need for more intensive supports for groups or individual students (Tier 2 and Tier 3), teams should engage in and follow a systematic problem-solving process. At P.K. Yonge, Student Success Team (SST) meetings are held every six weeks. SST meetings are where learning community teachers, guidance counselors, the school psychologist, the K-12 MTSS coordinator, and administrator(s) collaboratively engage in the problem-solving process. At these SST meetings, student data is discussed and decisions about tiered instruction are made. Florida’s PS-RtI model includes a four-step problem solving process, which is introduced in Section 1 of this manual. The four steps of the problem-solving process are as follows:

Step I: Problem Identification – What exactly is the problem?

Step II: Problem Analysis – Why is the problem occurring?

Step III: Intervention Design and Implementation – What exactly are we going to do about it?

Step IV: Response to Instruction/Intervention – Is the plan working?

Within this cyclical process, the problem to be systematically addressed is defined as the discrepancy between what is expected of a student in a given age or grade level and the current, observed level of performance. Hence the existence of a deficiency is defined, in part, by the discrepancy between expected and observed performance as opposed to any former discrepancies, such as the discrepancy between ability and achievement. Central to problem solving is an analysis of factors that impede performance beyond those that may (or may not) reside within the learner. As a result, all factors that impact learning (i.e., instruction, curriculum, environment, and learner variables) are considered through the analysis of student performance data when assessing effectiveness of instruction/intervention and determining students’ instructional needs.

Problem Identification (Step I): During problem identification, teams are asked to consider curricular and behavioral expectations as well as data to determine peer performance. Consideration must be given to the percentage of peers demonstrating performance similar to that of the targeted student as the response may lead to the hypothesis that the issue is related to instructional, curricular, or environmental variables. As demonstrated in Figure 2 – Decision- Making Rubric for Use with Schoolwide Screening, when 20 percent or more students show similar problems, the likelihood increases that intervening at a group or systemic level may result in the greatest improvement for the most students through efficient use of available resources.

Conducting a gap analysis can help teams determine at which Tier they should intervene (regardless of whether or not the student receives special education services). Essentially teams must ask, “Is it a large group problem, a small group problem, or an individual student problem?” More importantly, by identifying the percentage of students with similar problems, educators can determine if classwide instruction should be the focus or if individual/small groups of students would benefit from targeted,



supplemental intervention. Figure 2 – Decision Making Rubric for Use with Schoolwide Screening, can assist teams in determining how to focus the problem-solving effort. If the discrepancy between the benchmark and peer group performance is large and the discrepancy between peer group performance and the student’s performance is minimal, it would not be appropriate to automatically determine that the student would benefit from special education. Nor would it be appropriate, in this example, to assume that we would only be focusing on an individual student.

Figure 2
Decision Making Rubric for use with Schoolwide Screening



Is this an individual student problem or a larger systemic problem?

Are over 20% of students not meeting expectations?

Examine instruction, curriculum, and environment for needed adaptations and develop group intervention

Are between 5% and 20% of students not meeting expectations?

Develop small group intervention

Are 5% or fewer students not meeting expectations?

Go to problem definition

Go to intervention evaluation

Problem Analysis (Step II): During problem analysis, the team seeks the response to “Why is the problem occurring?” Teams develop hypotheses to explain why the problem is occurring and predict what might prevent the problem from occurring in the future. As the *Problem-Solving/RtI Worksheets*



found in Appendix B illustrate, hypothesis statements are framed as “The problem is occurring because _____.” Subsequently, prediction statements are written as “If _____ would occur, then the problem would be reduced.” Data are collected to confirm or reject the hypotheses that were developed. During this phase, it is important to determine if the problem reflects a skill deficit (i.e., “can’t do”) or motivation deficit (i.e., “won’t do”). For information on problem analysis and, more specifically, on hypotheses development, see the *Problem-Solving/Rtl Worksheets*, found in Appendix B.

Intervention Planning and Implementation (Step III): During intervention planning and implementation, the team focuses on “What are we going to do about it?” Specifically, the *Problem-Solving/Rtl Worksheets* found in Appendix B guide teams through the process of identifying who is responsible for intervention plan implementation, what will be done, when will it occur, and where will it occur. Components of the comprehensive intervention plan found in Appendix B, also include a support plan, intervention documentation, and monitoring the plan for determining student rate of progress.

Response to Instruction/Intervention (Step IV): Evaluating the students’ actual response to the instruction/intervention is a critical component of this model. Review and analysis of data are used to determine if the plan is working. The worksheet for Step IV, included in Appendix B, guides the team through thoughtful consideration of graphed data to determine if there has been a positive, questionable, or poor response to intervention.

Decision Rules

Response to instruction/intervention is considered positive when the gap between expected performance and observed performance is closing. Ideally, the point at which the target student will “come in range” of grade-level expectations—even if it is the long range—can be extrapolated. Questionable response to instruction/intervention exists when the rate at which the gap is widening slows considerably but is still widening, or when the gap stops widening but closure does not occur. The student(s) response to instruction/intervention is considered poor when the gap continues to widen with no change in rate of progress after the instruction/intervention is implemented. The conditions of positive, questionable, or poor response to instruction/intervention result in different sets of decisions to be made, as is described and illustrated as follows:

Positive—Under positive conditions, the current instruction/intervention may be continued with the same or increased goal. Or the current level of instruction/intervention may be faded gradually to determine whether the same level of intensity of instruction is necessary for student success.

Questionable—When the response is questionable, the first question to be asked is one of intervention implementation fidelity—“Was the intervention implemented as intended?” If not, then supports to increase implementation fidelity are put in place. If implementation fidelity is demonstrated, then the intensity of the current instruction/intervention may be increased for a short period of time. If rate of progress improves, then instruction is continued at the more intense level. If the rate does not improve then a return to Steps 1 and 2 of problem solving is necessary.

Poor—When the response is poor, the same question of implementation fidelity is asked. Again, if



implementation fidelity is problematic, supportive strategies to increase implementation fidelity are employed. If implementation integrity is good, then the steps of problem solving are retraced, asking: “Is the instruction/intervention aligned with the verified hypothesis, or are there other aligned interventions to consider?” (Intervention Design); “Are there other hypotheses to consider?” (Problem Analysis); and “Is the problem identified correctly?” (Problem Identification).

It is important that the first question to ask if the response is questionable or poor is whether the instruction/intervention was implemented with fidelity. The purpose of monitoring implementation fidelity is *not* to evaluate the teacher’s performance. Rather, it is to ensure that the team is making decisions based on what was actually provided to the student. Ultimately, the purpose for each component of PS-Rtl is to increase student outcomes. Planning supports for the person delivering the instruction/intervention, such as training, coaching, documentation methods, and materials, helps the team monitor implementation fidelity.

For each level of response, teams either increase supports that will allow for implementation fidelity, continue with current instructional supports, adjust goals, increase intervention intensity, or reconsider hypotheses, depending on the student data.

Figure 3 is The K-12 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Learners Not Meeting Benchmarks and Figure 4 is The K-12 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Learners Exceeding Benchmarks. These figures can be used as support documents in order to make decisions at SST meetings.

