

**NYS/NYC Network of  
BETACs  
RtI Institute**

**Implementing RtI with English Language  
Learners:**

*Distinguishing Language Acquisition from  
Learning Disabilities*

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February 9, 2010

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**Response to Intervention (RtI)**

It is a proposed comprehensive  
model of instruction that includes  
both regular and special education

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**Socio-Political Contexts Driving RtI**

- IDEA Re-Authorization
  - Focus on academic outcomes
  - General education as baseline metric
  - Labeling as a “last resort”
  - Increasing general education options
  - Pooling building-based resources
  - Flexible funding patterns
  - RtI Introduced as option for LD eligibility
- ESEA Legislation-No Child Left Behind
- National Emphasis on Reading
- Evidence-based Interventions: What Works

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### Why is Close Attention Being Paid to RtI?...THE BIG PICTURE

- AYP and Disaggregated Data (NCLB) move focus of attention to student progress, not student labels
- Building principals and superintendents want to know if students are achieving benchmarks, regardless of the students "type"
- Accurate "placements" do not guarantee that students will be exposed to interventions that maximize their rate of progress
- Effective interventions result from good problem-solving, rather than good "testing"
- Progress monitoring is done best with "authentic" assessment that is sensitive to small changes in student academic and social behavior

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### Big Picture (cont.)

- Interventions must be "evidence based" (IDEA/NCLB)
- Response to Intervention (RTI) is the best measure of problem "severity"
- Program eligibility (initial and continued) decisions are best made based on RTI
- Staff training and support (e.g., coaching) improve intervention skills
- "Tiered" implementation improves service *efficiency*

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### Instructional Implications

- Poor/lack of Instruction must be ruled out
- Curricular access challenged by any of the following must be addressed
  - Attendance
  - Health
  - Mobility
  - Cultural and Linguistic Variables
- Sufficient exposure to and focus on the curriculum must occur
- Frequent, repeated assessment must be conducted

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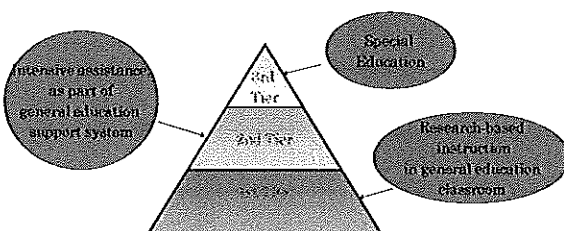
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### RtI-Three-Tiered Instruction




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#### 3 Tier Level Interventions

##### Reading Model

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Time	90	120	180
Curricular Focus	5 areas	Less than 5	2 or less
Curricular Breadth	Core	Core + Supplemental	Core + Supplemental + Intensive
Frequency of Progress Monitoring	Quarterly	Monthly or greater	Weekly

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#### Reflection and Discussion



- At what stage is your school and/or district in implementing RtI?
- What are the greatest challenges your schools are facing as they implement RtI with ELLs?
- If you are not implementing RtI, what kind of instruction are you providing to your ELL students? What are the challenges you are facing?

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**Tier I Instruction:**

- should be research based
- should be effective with 85% of all students


**Strategies for teaching ELLs  
within an RTI context**


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**Effective instruction for  
ELLs**

- Incorporates native language in strategic ways
- Builds on student's home culture
- Helps students access prior knowledge, make connections & build new knowledge
- Helps students apply concepts to the tasks at hand as well as in their own lives

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**Effective instruction for  
ELLs**

- Provides students with frequent opportunities to use language for both conversational and academic purposes
- Promotes vocabulary as a "curricular anchor"
- Preteaches and reinforces key vocabulary
- Uses visuals, realia, and graphic organizers to support concepts and teach vocabulary

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### Effective instruction for ELLs

- Focuses on higher order thinking and active problem solving
- Incorporates collaborative learning activities
- Provides multiple and varied opportunities to review and apply previously learned concepts
- Includes formal and informal opportunities to practice throughout the day

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### Effective instruction for ELLs

- Promotes active engagement
- Includes explicit phonics instruction with an emphasis on applications during real reading with connected text
- Provides explicit feedback that is appropriate for the learner's level
- Includes opportunities for indep reading
- Provides balance between skills & holistic instruction

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### The most effective environments for ELLs

- Are warm & supportive, with much positive reinforcement
- Are well managed
- Are safe
- Are cooperative & collaborative
- Include parental involvement
- Ensure high levels of student engagement (e.g., lots of time spent reading & writing)

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### The most effective teachers for ELLs

- Enact sophisticated knowledge of reading instruction as well as of bilingual and/or second language instruction
- Make sure students are involved in tasks matched to their competency level
- Know how to make learning relevant and meaningful
- Know how to accelerate demands on students as their competencies improve
- Have high expectations for students and know how to help students meet expectations

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### The most effective teachers for ELLs

- Monitor the cognitive and language demands on CLDE students
- Carefully watch students progress and provide scaffolded support as needed
- Encourage students to self-regulate
- Understand that second language acquisition takes time and that ELLs can follow different learning trajectories than their mainstream peers

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### The most effective teachers for ELLs

- Know how to distinguish between language acquisition and learning disabilities
- Develop positive relationships with students
- View families as valued partners
- Learn about and connect with their students cultures and communities

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### The most effective teachers for ELLs

- Bridge borders between home and school cultures
- Demonstrate care, respect, and commitment to each students learning abilities, desires, and potentialities
- Feel a strong sense of responsibility for all of their students, including those in special education

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### Guiding principles for teaching writing to ELLs

- Create a community of learners
- Engage in writing as a process, which includes reading comprehension development
- Allocate adequate instructional and practice time
- Implement strategy instruction when needed

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### Create a community of learners by:

- Providing activities that promote success in reading and writing
- Focus on writing activities that are meaningful to students
- Create roles in the classroom for family and community members
- Hold high expectations for all learners
- Be responsive to cultural and personal diversity

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Teach writing as a process using the following steps

- 1 Prewriting
- 2 Writing
- 3 Sharing
- 4 Rewriting
- 5 Editing
- 6 Evaluating
- 7 Publishing

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Elementary writing strategies

- Generate a Topic (T)
- Record Reasons (R)
- Add Examples (E)
- Finish with an Ending (E)

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Secondary Writing strategy  
Plan & Write

- **P**ay attention to the prompt
- **L**ist main ideas
- **A**dd supporting ideas
- **N**umber your ideas
- **W**ork from your plan & develop thesis
- **R**emember your goals
- **I**nclude transitions for each paragraph
- **T**ry to use different kinds of sentences
- **E**xciting, interesting, \$100,000 words

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### Steps for Teaching a strategy

- 1 Examine strategy for necessary preskills
- 2 Model strategy & demonstrate each step
- 3 Practice strategy many times
- 4 Provide abundant practice & apply strategy in many different situations

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### Reflection and Discussion



- What challenges are you facing with tier I instruction in your classroom?
- What strategies or approaches have you had success with?

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### RtI Decisions

RtI facilitates two types of decisions:

#### *Instructional*

Progress towards Curricular Objectives/Goals

#### *Diagnostic*

Eligibility for Special Education (LD)




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## The RtI Models

- The Problem Solving Model
- Standard Treatment Protocol
- The Combined Model

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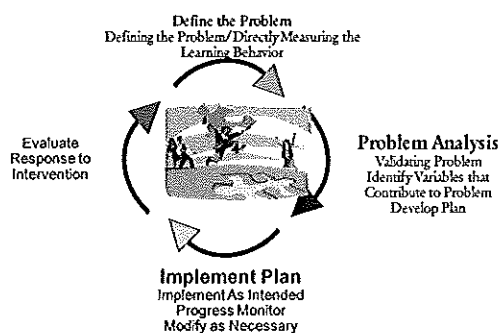
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## The Problem Solving Method




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## Standard Treatment Protocol

- 1<sup>st</sup> Tier is the same as the PSM...
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier: In the STP approach a school/district has selected one validated intervention to improve the academic skills of its struggling students...
- Same as PSM approach except it follows the STP approach at Tier 2...
- Difference: STP allows for more accuracy and implementation...

(Fuchs et al., 2003)

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### RtI Model Effectiveness

- At this point it is difficult to decide whether the PSM or STP is the best RtI method. We should be asking the question "What's the most appropriate model for the given student(s) learning needs?"

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### How does RtI differ from the pre-referral model?

- With RtI all students get appropriate instruction from the beginning
- With the pre-referral model we wait until the child fails.

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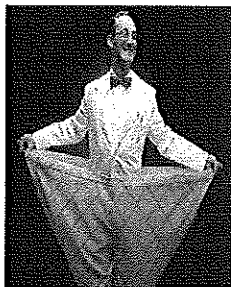
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### One size does not fit all.

- RtI for ELLs includes a variety of interrelated tasks:

- Differentiation
- Accommodations
- Collaboration
- Progress Monitoring




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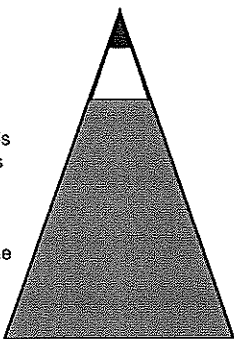

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**Reflection and Discussion**

- Which model or approach is being implemented in your school?
- What are the main differences between this model and the previous pre-referral process in your school?
- Do you perceive new challenges based on the differences discussed?


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For RtI to work with ELLs it must be

**Culturally Responsive**

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*Conceptualizing Culturally Competent RtI*

"Cultural competence refers to a set of attitudes, practices, policies and structures that come together that enables professionals to work more effectively with members of culturally and linguistically diverse groups"

Hoover, Klingner, Baca & Patton (in Press)

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### *Culturally Competent RtI Qualities*

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCREST) (2005) identified several important qualities of RTI for ELLs:

- RtI Practices must be culturally responsive
- Cultural diversity must be considered when selecting evidence-based strategies
- Evidence-based interventions must include sufficient research with ELLs

Source: NCCREST (2005) ([www.nccrest.org](http://www.nccrest.org))

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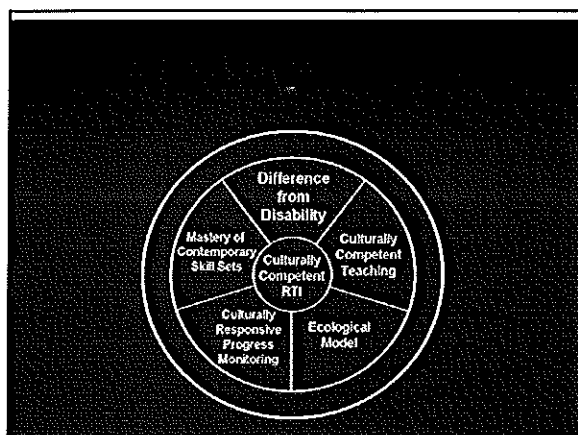
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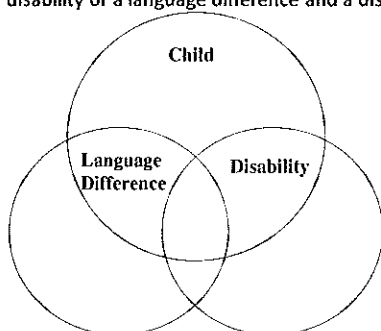
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A child can have a language difference, a language disability or a language difference and a disability




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### Difference vs. Disability

One very basic question:

How can you tell the difference  
between a learning disability and a  
language difference?

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### Difference vs. Disability

- The learning and behavior problems of some students may be due to a different sociolinguistic and cultural background, their adjustment to a new sociocultural milieu, the presence of a disability, or a combination of these factors.

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### Difference vs. Disability

- The learning and behavior problems exhibited by ELL students are often similar to the problems which elicit referrals for a student for possible special education:
  - a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and potential;
  - social and classroom behavior which is disruptive to instruction;
  - and/or other problems which are difficult for the teacher to handle in the general classroom setting.

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### Difference vs. Disability

- Learning and behavior problems that seem to be indicative of a disability may actually be the manifestation of cultural, experiential, and/or sociolinguistic differences, rather than a disability.
- An ELL student may have learning and behavior problems due to language and cultural differences, a possible disability, or a combination of these factors.

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### Characteristics of Students with Language & Communication Difficulties

- Phonological disorders, these are usually articulation problems that have no known or obvious organic, neurological, or physical correlates.
- Child with speech-motor difficulties may say gup for cup and doo for too.
- Child with lack of phonological organization may say tee for see and tack for sack

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Phonological deficits occur in children who are having reading and learning problems.

These children have:

- Delayed acquisition of phonological system
- Inferior perception and or production of phonemic configurations

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Phonological deficits occur in children who are having reading and learning problems. (cont'd)

- Inefficient use of phonological codes in short term memory
- Impaired phonological sensitivity which may interfere with establishing phoneme-grapheme correspondence for reading

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### Morphological Difficulties

- Children with morphological difficulties have trouble with plurality, i.e. adding s to dog.
- They also have trouble with verb tense and possession.
- Children with Autism and Mental Retardation have trouble with morphological errors.

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### Semantic Difficulties

- Students with language disorders, learning disabilities, dyslexia and aphasia often have trouble with semantics (finding the right word).

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### Students with semantic difficulties demonstrate:

- Restrictions in word meanings
- Difficulties with multiple word meaning
- Excessive use of non specific terms such as thing and stuff
- Difficulties with conjunctions like but, or, of, either, neither, etc.

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### Syntactic Difficulties

- This occurs when children have difficulty learning the rules that govern word order and other aspects of grammar such as subject-verb agreement.
- These children (autistic, MR) produce shorter and less elaborate sentences and make errors of omission/substitution

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### Pragmatic Difficulties

1. Turn taking
2. Adapting to context
3. Poor interpersonal communication
4. Trouble with eye contact
5. Trouble with establishing proper distance when communicating

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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

- **Differences**

Language performance is similar to other students who have had comparable cultural and linguistic experiences.

- **Disorders**

Language patterns are unique to the student and unlike others in the student's cultural community.

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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

- **Differences**

Limited vocabulary in the native language is due to lack of opportunity to use and hear the native language.

- **Disorders**

Student demonstrates limited vocabulary even when there are rich language opportunities in the native language.

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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

- **Differences**

Students shifts from one language to another within an utterance.

- **Disorders**

Word finding problems are evident and student substitutes with another language.

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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

- |                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Communication may be impeded by an accent or dialect</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Student exhibits deficits in expressive and receptive language, which impede communication</li> </ul> |
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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Pragmatic skills such as interpreting facial expressions, appropriate physical proximity, and use and interpretation of gestures are age appropriate.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Student demonstrates difficulty using and interpreting nonverbal language, often leading to social problems.</li> </ul> |
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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Possesses accent and/or dialect which may impede communication intent</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Exhibits deficits in receptive and/or expressive language</li> </ul> |
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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Uses nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures and posture to convey their communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Has limited ability to use and interpret nonverbal language</li> </ul> |
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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

- |                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Uses spoken language efficiently within own cultural group</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Has difficulty using language within own cultural group</li> </ul> |
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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Has same cognitive ability to learn Standard American English as other children</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Has difficulty understanding and formulating language structures and components</li> </ul> |
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### Comparing Language Differences & Disorders

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences</b><br/>Use of home language skills may oppose school language expectations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disorders</b><br/>Presents an inability to meet school language expectations</li> </ul> |
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In the final analysis, the acid test for determining difference/disorder is:

To ask: Is the language difficulty apparent in both languages?

No = language difference

Yes = Possible disability

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### Reflection and Discussion



- What are the similarities in a language difference and a language disability?
- What are the differences between a language difference and a language disability?

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### RtI Represents New Opportunities for ELLs

1. Tier 1 should provide culturally responsive instruction
2. Reduce Bias in Instructional and Diagnostic decision-making
3. Assist in clarifying *Difference from Disability*
4. Reduce disproportionate representation in special education of ELLs

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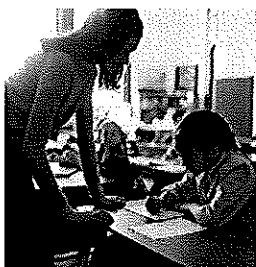
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### Potential Strengths of RtI . . .



1. Provides Early Intervention (*Instruction*)
2. Facilitates use of more valid procedures for identifying students with learning disabilities (*Diagnostic*)

Source: Gersten & Dimino (2006)

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### Ecological RtI Model

- *Component 1:*
  - Student Factors
- *Component 2:*
  - Classroom/School Factors
- *Component 3:*
  - Home/Community Factors




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## Student Factors

- Language
- Acculturation
- Experiential Background
- Cultural Values/Norms
- Higher Order Thinking Abilities
- Student Learning Styles

Source: Hoover, Klingner, Boca & Patton, In Press

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## Student Factor

### *Language*

Rtl . . .

### Information to Gather

- \* Interventions occur in most proficient language

English and Native Language Proficiency determined?

- \* ESL is implemented

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## Student Factor

### *Acculturation*

Rtl . . .

### Information to Gather

- \* Intervention must accommodate possible stress experienced by learner in the overall process of adapting to new environment

Behavioral and emotional adjustment to new school or community identified?

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**Student Factor***Experiential Background*

Rtl . . .

\* Interventions are compatible with learner's prior experiences to meet academic/behavioral classroom demands

**Information to Gather**

\* Previous experiences with formal schooling?

Prerequisite Academic Skills?

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**Student Factor***Cultural Values/Norms*

Rtl . . .

\* Interventions are compatible with learner's cultural values and norms and do not conflict with expectations to meet academic/behavioral classroom demands.

**Information to Gather**

Compatibility of selected interventions with student's cultural values and norms?

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**Student Factor***Higher Order Thinking Abilities*

Rtl . . .

\* Interventions challenge the learner to use higher order thinking abilities

**Information to Gather**

Student abilities to compare, evaluate, synthesize, comprehend identified?

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## Student Factor

### *Learning Styles*

Rtl . . .

- \* Interventions reflect compatibility between styles of teaching and student's preferred style of learning

### Information to Gather

Student's preferred learning styles are identified?

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## Classroom Factors

- *Linguistic Competence*
- *Contextualized Learning*
- *Joint Productivity*
- *Instructional Conversation*
- *Challenging Curriculum*



Source: CREDE, Thorp, 1997.

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## Classroom Factor

### *Linguistic Competence*

Rtl . . .

- \* Interventions reflect functional language usage and connect student's current and prior experiences

### *Opportunities to Learn . . .*

Instruction is consistent with learner's language level, emphasizing functional language uses?

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### Classroom Factor

*Contextualized Learning*

Rtl . . .

\* Interventions reflect home and community culture and connect student's current and prior experiences

*Opportunities to Learn . . .*

Interventions consistent with learner's acculturation level and cultural experiences?

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### Classroom Factor

*Joint Productivity*

Rtl . . .

\* Interventions reflect shared interactions among students and teacher

*Opportunities to Learn . . .*

Learning tasks are cooperatively implemented by students and teacher encouraging shared interactions?

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### Classroom Factor

*Instructional Conversation*

Rtl . . .

\* Interventions reflect on-going dialogue between students and teacher

*Opportunities to Learn . . .*

Ideas are expressed interactively as learning tasks are jointly implemented by students and teacher?

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### Classroom Factor *Challenging Curriculum*

*RtI . . .*

- \* Interventions challenge students cognitively within appropriate curriculum, based on cultural and linguistic needs

*Opportunities to Learn . . .*

Interventions are effective in challenging students by emphasizing higher order thinking skills?

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### Home-Community Factors

- Home Language Identified?
- Adjustment to New Community Determined?
- Availability of Community Resources Used?



Source: BUENO Center Parents CD ROM (2003)

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### *RtI Decision-Making*

*Overarching Question . . .*

To what extent do the classroom interventions implemented within an RtI Model reflect these *Student, Classroom and Home-Community* Factors?

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### *Culturally Responsive Progress Monitoring*

- Fundamental to RTI is on-going and documented progress monitoring
- Instructional Decisions are based on data-driven monitoring of progress
- Similar to the implementation of culturally responsive interventions is the need for culturally responsive progress monitoring

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### **Progress Monitoring**

- To be effective with ELLs, RTI must assist to reduce:
  - inappropriate referrals
  - biased placement into special education
- Progress must be assessed in culturally competent ways using appropriate evaluation strategies




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### *Culturally Responsive Progress Monitoring Continued . . .*

Given the 'Bias' issues we previously discussed, the need for a variety of monitoring strategies is necessary to evaluate response to intervention for at-risk ELLs

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## Data-Driven Decision Making

Student responses to instructional interventions (RtI) should be documented to monitor progress to make informed educational decisions

*(Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003)*

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## Reflection and Discussion



- What are the three factors in the RtI ecological model?
- How often should there be progress monitoring in each of the 3 tiers?

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Best Practice for ELLs should be based on scientific research findings

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**A recent study Vaughn et. al.  
(2004)found:**

•RtI for ELLs at risk for reading difficulties  
worked well for most students

•Students in the study received  
either English or Spanish Intervention in  
reading:

1. 50 minutes per day/7 months
2. Intensive intervention in reading

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**The Spanish Intervention Group  
performed better in:**

- Letter sound identification
- Phonological awareness
- Listening comprehension
- Word attack
- Passage comprehension
- Oral reading fluency

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**The English Intervention  
Group performed better in:**

- Rapid letter naming
- Letter sound identification
- Verbal analogies,
- Word attack
- Dictation passage comprehension

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**This Research supports  
Response to Intervention (RtI)  
Instruction**

1. When conducted in Spanish
2. When conducted in English

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**According to Slavin(2003), a  
best evidence research  
synthesis shows that:**

- Bilingual approaches are favored
- Systematic phonics is needed
- Small group tutoring helps
- Cooperative learning helps
- Extensive reading programs

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**Guidelines for Best Practices**

The following six guidelines provide a framework for enhancing the teaching of all CLD students:

1. CLD students are held to the same high expectations of learning established for all students.
2. CLD students develop full receptive and productive proficiencies in English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
3. CLD students are taught challenging content that enables them to meet performance standards in all content areas, consistent with those for mainstream students.
4. CLD students receive instruction that builds on their previous education and that reflects both their cognitive abilities and language proficiency levels.
5. CLD students are evaluated with appropriate and valid assessments that are aligned with state and local standards, and that take into account the language acquisition states and cultural backgrounds of the students.
6. The academic success of CLD students is a responsibility shared by all educators, the family, and the community.

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### Summary Recommended Practices

Of primary concern is that RTI practices be culturally and linguistically relevant for English language learners.

To achieve this follow these recommended practices:

1. Implement an ecological model in which *student, classroom* and *home/community* factors are considered and addressed.
2. Interventions must be culturally responsive and implemented with *cultural competence*.
3. Evaluate effectiveness of instructional methods relative to the cultural context within which they are used (e.g., acculturation levels, prior experiences, cultural values) (*Progress Monitoring*).
4. Instructional methods used in RTI for ELLs should be validated for use with this population of learners.
5. Adhere to components of culturally/linguistically valid RTI.
6. Adhere to bias-reducing practices and strategies.
7. Apply a variety of culturally responsive progress monitoring techniques.

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### Reflection and Discussion



- What supports are already in place that can help us address our challenges?
- What should our next steps be?
- How will we know when we have succeeded?

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### Conclusion

- Questions?
- Thank You!




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