

Considerations when Using RTI in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Schools

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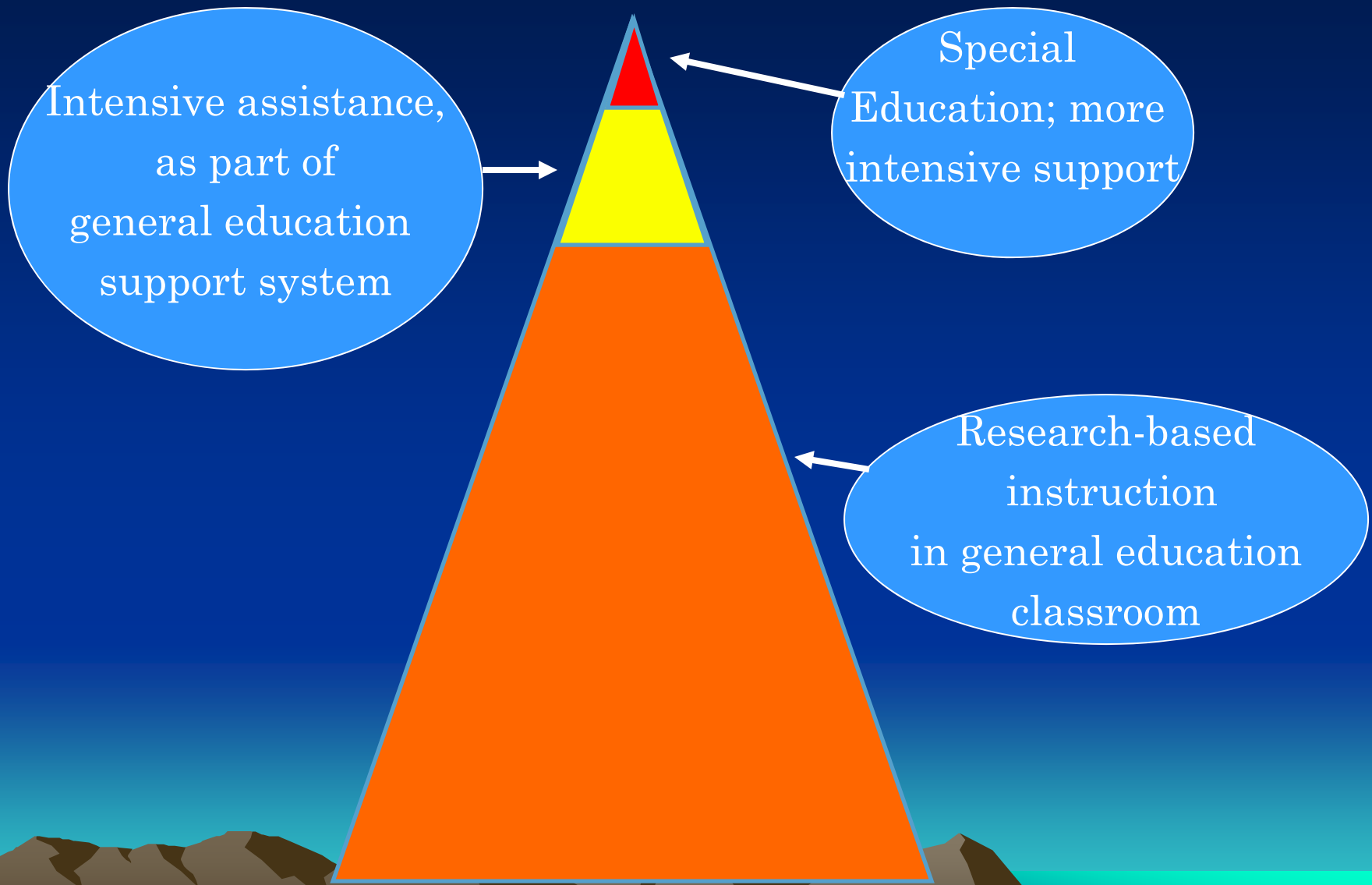
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National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems

Presented at the 2008 ELA Academy



Response to Intervention: A Three-tiered Model



*Assumptions Underlying RTI that
May Be Problematic with Culturally
and Linguistically Diverse Students*



Assumption 1: “*Evidence-based instruction*” is good instruction for everyone. English language learners who have been taught with generic evidence-based interventions have been provided with sufficient opportunities to learn.



What Do We Mean by “Evidence-based”?

- The RTI model is based on the principle that instructional practices or interventions at each level should be based on scientific research evidence about “what works.”
- However, it is essential to find out ***what works with whom, by whom, and in what contexts—***



One size does not fit all

- Many practices have *not* been validated with ELLS or in school contexts similar to those in which many ELLs are educated.
 - The National Reading Panel report “**did not address issues relevant to second language learning**” (2000, p. 3).
- Research can only help us make an educated guess about which practice is most likely to be effective with the majority of students, *not* which practice will work with everyone.



Assumption 2: *Learning to read in one's second language (L2) is similar to learning to read in one's first language (L1); therefore, instructional approaches that have been found to be effective with mainstream English-speaking students are appropriate for serving ELLs.*





- There are important differences between learning to read in one's L1 and L2.
- Most teachers are not adequately prepared to teach ELLs.

Assumption 3: *Students who fail to respond to research-based instruction have some sort of learning problem or internal deficit, and perhaps even a learning disability.*



- Many factors affect a child's response to instruction:
 - Instructional method
 - Level of instruction
 - Learning environment
 - Student-teacher relationship



*Challenges when Using RTI with
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Students*



RTI at Marble Mountain Elementary



- Marble Mountain Elementary School
 - Student population is 92% Latino; 53% are ELLs
 - 31% of ELLs receive special education services
 - Low performance on the CSAP
- Mountain View School District
 - Based their RTI model on a careful review of research
 - Provided 3 days of professional development on how to implement RTI (e.g., do progress monitoring).

Challenge 1: *According to progress-monitoring data, more than half of the ELLs in each first-grade class are not reaching benchmarks. It is not feasible to provide Tier 2 instruction to all of these students.*



- When many students are not progressing, **change instruction:**
 - Has the instructional program been validated with students like those in the class?
 - Is instruction at an appropriate level for students?
 - Is the program well-implemented?
 - Are teachers sufficiently differentiating instruction to meet diverse student needs?
 - Is the environment conducive to learning?



- Determining whether a program is well-implemented necessitates **observing in classrooms.**



Challenge 2: *School personnel are unclear how the RTI process is similar to and different from the Pre-Referral Process used in previous years. RTI meetings look much like the CST meetings of old, centered on possible reasons for a child's struggles from a deficit perspective, with a push to place students in special education.*



- Shift from figuring out what is wrong with a student to looking more broadly at the instructional context and at how to provide support for all students who need help, regardless of label.
 - Focus on improving Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and interventions to be more appropriate for ELLs, and for all students.
 - Develop and capitalize on local expertise.
- Make sure someone on the team has expertise in ELLs and how to distinguish between language acquisition and learning disabilities.

Challenge 3: *School personnel are confused about Tier 2 interventions.*

They wonder: (a) whether ELL services "count" as a secondary intervention, and (b) whether a special education teacher can provide Tier 2 interventions.



- Tier 2 interventions:
 - **Supplement the core curriculum**
 - Based on students' needs as assessed by progress monitoring and other data
 - Domain of general education
- English language development should be part of Tier 1 for all ELLs.
- Special educators may help with Tier 2 interventions, but this should not be their primary role and they should not be the school's main Tier 2 intervention providers.



What does it look like when teachers who lack preparation in teaching ELLs apply generic “evidence-based” practices?

- *Note:* Examples are from actual classrooms with ELLs, most at beginning levels of English proficiency.



Tier 1 Example

- 1st grade classroom



The whole class is sitting in a circle on the A-B-C rug, with the teacher seated at the head. Teacher says, “Yesterday, how many of you knew your sight words? One student speaks out, “One?” Another, “Three?” Teacher replies, “You are right. Three students were able to tell me their sight words. We need to practice these words; we are really behind. Every one of you should know these sight words by now. You need to practice these at home. Don’t you practice these at home?” Teacher says this with frustration in her face and voice. Teacher states, “Only those 3 students will be able to pull from the treasure chest.” ... Teacher begins sight words practice, holding up index cards with-*Big, My, See, Like, I, At, This, And, Up, Have, Too*. Students repeat the words as Teacher says them. She holds up the word “Big” without saying anything. One student says, “Big.” She holds up “See.” The same student says the word. She holds up “See” again and tells the student who knows the word not to say anything. Pause. Another says, “See.” ... She says, “Okay guys, you need to practice these at home. You are not paying attention. You should have known these words by now.” (Orosco, 2007)

Tier 2 Example

- The literacy teacher provides Tier 2 interventions. In the following excerpt, the literacy teacher reinforcing a previous literacy lesson that the homeroom teacher had started on Zebras.



Literacy teacher: “This book is called Zebra Play.”

She starts singing, “*One little Zebra went out to play, on the savanna one fine day. (He) had such enormous fun. He asked another zebra to come.*”

Literacy teacher prompts one student to take off running like a Zebra. One student runs around the classroom (acting like a zebra). Literacy specialist picks another student to do the same. She then picks another and so forth. Literacy teacher is doing choral singing of “Zebra Play” as students run around the classroom. “...*They grew tired as they ran around. Therefore, they all lay down...*”

Students are running around; however, they are not singing or chanting the Zebra Play; they are just playing and running into each other. (Orosco, 2007)

Tier 3 Example

- The teacher has a master's degree in special education and has been teaching for 20 years. She noted, "I teach LD by the book."
- She is teaching 4 second-grade English language learners, all determined to have learning disabilities.



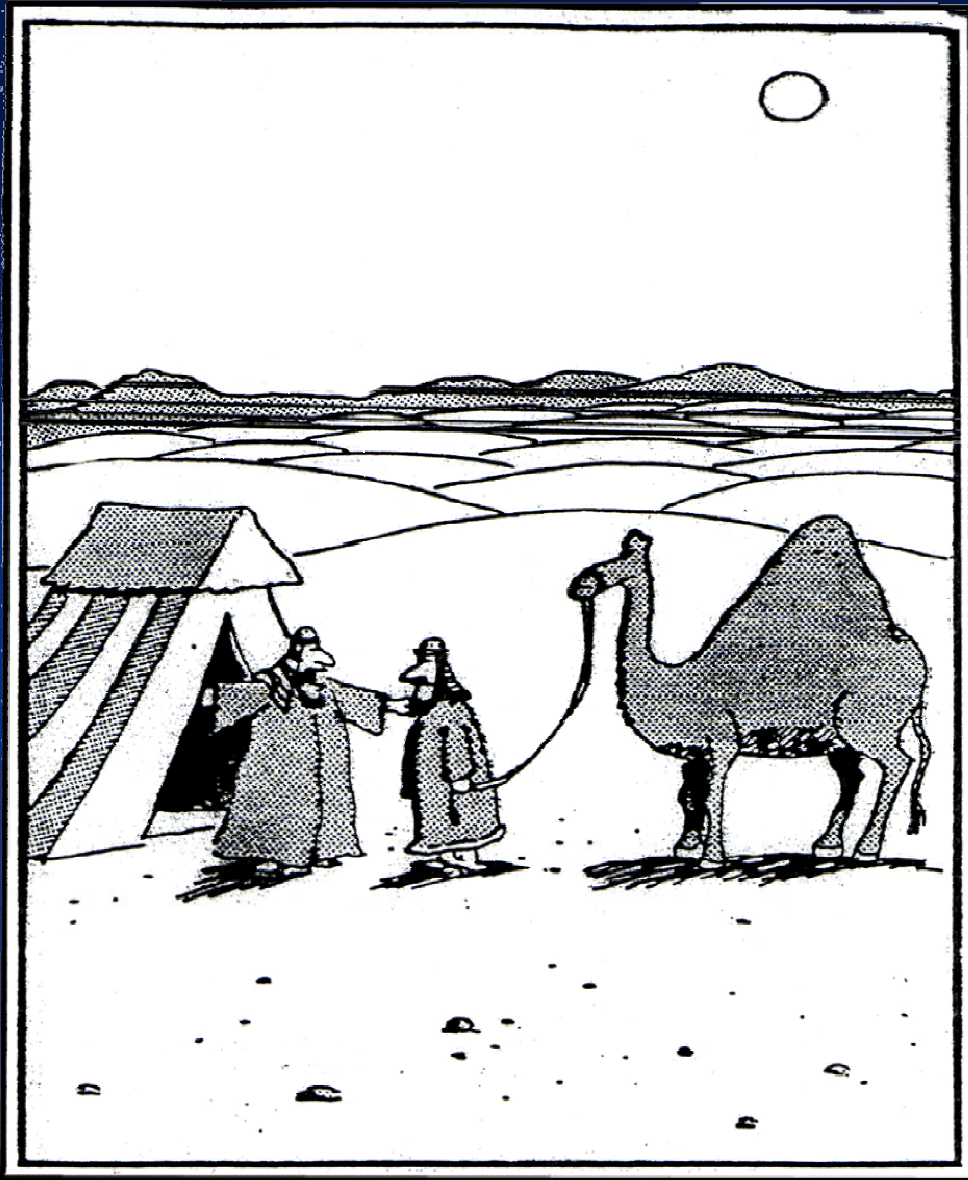
Teacher: “Boys and girls, we need to read our story, ‘Polar Bears’. We need to listen to see what color they are, where they live or what they eat.”

Teacher directs students to look at the title page, asks what they think the book is about. No response. Teacher asks, “Are polar bears nice?” No response. Teacher begins to read: “Polar Bears live in the Arctic at the North Pole. The polar bear is a marine mammal... Polar bears are carnivores...” [OC: I wonder how many students know what a marine mammal is, or a carnivore.] ...

As she is reading students are beginning to check out; one student is playing with the drawstring in his hooded sweater. Another two are whispering to each other. The teacher continues: “The white fur is important camouflage for the bears as they hunt their prey on the ice...”

[OC: What is camouflage? This story uses tough words for ESL students at this level. I wonder if the teacher knows whether these kids really understand this.] Teacher: “Okay let’s talk about the story now. So what do they smell?” No reply. Teacher, “Anyone?” One student, “People.” Teacher, “Good.” [This was not in the story.] Teacher, “Do polar bears live here in Colorado?” Students, “Yes.” Teacher, “Good. They could if they lived at the zoo.” [Colorado was not in the story.] ... Only one student is responding, with one word answers. [OC: I wonder if this book is too difficult for them. However, it would work for these kids if the language was modeled and sheltered for them...] (Orosco, 2007)

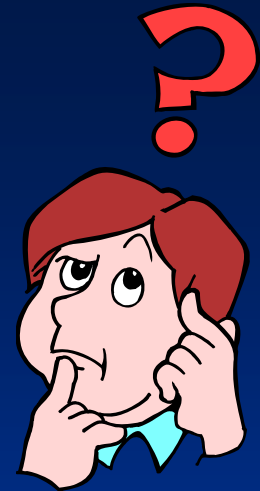




"Stop asking me if we're almost there; we're Nomads, for crying out loud."

Reflection

- How will we know when we are “there” (i.e., we have succeeded)?



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