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Simplifying Response to Intervention: Four Essential Guiding Principles

By Austin Buffum, Mike Mattos and Chris Weber

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Simplifying Response to Intervention: Four Essential Guiding Principles* by Austin Buffum, Mike Mattos, and Chris Weber. In this sequel to the bestselling *Pyramid Response to Intervention*, authors Buffum, Mattos, and Weber advocate that an effective RTI model begins by asking the right questions. RTI offers rather a way of thinking about how educators can ensure that each child receives the time and support needed to succeed in school and in life. When educators base their thinking about RTI on four essential guiding principles, they will find the most effective answers to implementation questions.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or by an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

A New Way of Thinking

1. In the RTI process, when do schools provide support for students in need?
2. According to Buffum, Mattos and Weber, what are the old questions teachers and administrators should stop asking when creating a plan for learning-focused schools?
3. Who are the “bubble kids?” How does only providing them with help not promote the goal of educating all students?
4. Does the special education testing currently used in most school systems assess the effectiveness and quality of the teaching that the child has received? Explain.
5. Explain the difference between response to intervention philosophy and that of traditional special education.
6. What is the core mission of any school system?
7. Define *targeted instruction*. How can it be incorporated in your school/district?
8. According to the authors, how do schools create a culture of commitment, empowerment, and site ownership?
9. List and briefly explain the four Cs of RTI.

Chapter 2

Collective Responsibility: Why Are We Here?

1. Why is focusing more on cultural change rather than technical changes necessary to improving schools and student learning?
2. What two assumptions are embedded within a culture of collective responsibility? In light of cultural differences, how does a school create a sense of staff ownership of the RTI process?
3. In a learning community, how do members arrive at consensus on vital questions?
4. Why is giving staff a *doable plan* essential to the RTI process?
5. How should effective school leaders address “at-risk” staff members?
6. When do most staff members become committed to the process?
7. To establish mutual professional accountability, what two points should district leadership promote?

Chapter 3

Building Structures for Collaboration

1. According to the authors, what does it mean to create a team?
2. Identify the two types of teams necessary for a school to create collaborative structures that support collective responsibility and drive RTI implementation. Briefly explain how each functions.
3. What are the responsibilities in each teacher team in the RTI process?
4. What are the reasons students in need of Tier 3 intensive support struggle?
5. List the primary responsibilities of the site prevention team?
6. What are the three key criteria for embedded collaborative time within the staff's contracted work time?
7. What are some attributes of effective norms?

Chapter 4

Concentrated Instruction: Where Do We Need to Go?

1. What is concentrated instruction?
2. When facing an overwhelming amount of content to cover, how do many teachers decide what to teach?
3. Ask and answer the four questions listed on page 48 for your collaborative team.
4. What are the criteria Douglas Reeves lists that teachers might use to distinguish between what is nice and what is essential for students to know?
5. How should collaborative teams of grade-level or course-alike teachers determine what content is essential to cover? In order to understand the standards at a deep level, what must the dialogue include?
6. According to the authors, why should students go through a screening process at the beginning of the school year or unit of study?

Chapter 5

Convergent Assessment: Where Are We Now?

1. What is convergent assessment?
2. What is the best form of intervention for helping students address learning problems?
How does universal screening play a role in it?
3. How should the responsibilities for universal screening be divided between collaborative teacher teams and schoolwide intervention teams?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of district-created benchmarked assessments?
5. After a school has identified students in need of extra help and determined the correct intervention to meet the students' need(s), what are two ways schools can monitor each student's progress?
6. Identify and briefly explain the five types of engagement.
7. What questions should the RTI team ask when monitoring a student's academic misbehaviors? What questions should be asked when monitoring social misbehaviors?
8. What responsibilities do districts have for convergent assessment?

Chapter 6

Creating a System of Interventions

1. What is an intervention? What three issues must a school address when creating an effective system of interventions?
2. Based on their work with schools across North America, what are the two primary causes the authors' have identified as reasons that schools struggle with identifying effective interventions?
3. What are the essential characteristics of effective interventions? Briefly explain each.
4. How does a school create a toolbox of essential interventions?
5. What five characteristics can define interventions as most intensive?
6. How long does a student remain in Tier 2?
7. How do schools create flexible intervention times in elementary school? How is flexible intervention time created at the secondary level?
8. According to the authors, what is the most critical thing to understand about interventions for behavior?
9. What are districts' responsibilities to intervention?

Chapter 7

Certain Access: How Do We Get Every Child There?

1. What is certain access?
2. According to the authors, certain access can only be realized when schools create a tiered, systematic intervention program. What steps must schools take to create systematic responses?
3. Of the five steps that comprise certain access, what step must schools get right every time? Why?
4. In regard to student learning at Tier 2 in a smaller school, why is it beneficial for all the staff members who work with a particular grade level or group of students to be present at monthly “identification” meetings? How is the Tier 2 identification process different for larger schools?
5. What are the consequences when students miss essential core instruction for interventions? How can they be avoided?
6. How do special education resources fit into the RTI pyramid?
7. What are districts’ responsibilities for certain access?

Epilogue

A New Vision of Special Education

1. In what ways has the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 been insufficient?
2. What is the focus of traditional special education practices?
3. According to the authors, where do most schools house their special needs classrooms and itinerant staff, like school psychologists and counselors? How does it affect that schools' special education effectiveness?
4. What criteria should be considered to determine special education eligibility?
5. Who are itinerant special education staff members? What role do they play in supporting general education?
6. If general and special education staff work collaboratively through the RTI process to meet the needs of all students, why is special education needed?
7. Does your school have a process for identifying students who would benefit from special education?