

# TEACHER'S RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION GUIDE



Curated by



# What is RTI?

Everything seems normal. Great, even. Among others, you have a student who finishes all her homework and actively participates in class. But she fails the unit test. Badly. How can you fix this situation? Could you have prevented it? Knowing when to start the response to intervention (RTI) process, and how to effectively do so, is a sensitive and challenging issue. Although you should work to prevent the need to intervene, it can still arise. If that time comes, this RTI guide will help you prepare by exploring the:

- Definition of RTI
- Three RTI tiers
- Strategies you can use for each tier

Depending on your school's support resources, some strategies may be more relevant than others. But all will help you deliver productive, constructive intervention.

Although the term is widely used across North America, other regions have similar approaches and standards under different names. Regardless, the intervention process should be ingrained in each classroom management plan. That's because it starts with you delivering high-quality instruction and monitoring how each student processes it. Those who perform poorly or display concerning classroom habits are candidates for small-group or individual interventions.

These are typically aimed at addressing trouble spots and building underdeveloped prerequisite skills to accelerate learning. Depending on the intensity of intervention, and your school's resources, special educators and dedicated interventionists may involve themselves. You may also have to inform a student's parents in extreme cases, offering updates about progress and the methods you're using. There isn't a universal RTI process, but most schools and districts divide it into three stages. You can learn about these stages below, or skip to tier-based strategies.

## The three RTI tiers

## **Tier 1: High-Quality instruction and proactive assessment**

Think of the first RTI tier as everyday teaching. It's consistently delivering differentiated and scientifically-based instruction. This helps ensure that student struggles aren't a result of improper teaching methods. If you don't already use them, some popular practices include:

- Incorporating diverse technologies
- Inquiry-based learning
- Game-based learning
- Cooperative learning
- Experiential learning
- Problem-based learning
- Active learning

In the context of RTI, high-quality instruction also involves providing supplemental learning opportunities based on assessment results. Let's say you finish marking a math quiz, and notice several students struggle to multiply decimals. In class, give a task related to decimals and multiplication, discussing and modelling key steps and concepts with those students beforehand. This is just one approach you can take. Regardless, you shouldn't spend more than two months providing extra instruction to help a student enhance the same skillset. If he or she doesn't show measurable improvement, it may be time for the second RTI tier.

## **Tier 2: Targeted intervention**

Maintaining the first tier's style of classroom instruction, the next stage uses rigorous supplementary exercises and lessons targeted to a student's specific needs. Normally, you would deliver these exercises and lessons in small-group settings outside of core class time. This allows students with common issues to work together, contextualising and reinforcing concepts while building prerequisite skills. You can objectively identify candidates for targeted intervention through:

- **Mid-unit evaluations:** At the middle of each unit, deliver a surprise quiz or in-class task that covers all core skills and concepts you've covered thus far.

- **Formal evaluations:** After marking tests and assignments, it'll be clear who's struggling. Your school may have specific criteria, but targeted intervention candidates are typically students who receive failing grades or come close.

After class or during recess, work with students who need help. Focused on clarifying lingering issues or building underdeveloped skills, provide exercises that require they work together and individually. For example, students could work as a team to solve interactive challenges on a math website. Then, they could each complete a worksheet that reinforces the skills they practised on the website. You would support students by offering clarification and filling knowledge gaps. Nuances aside, you should match the targeted intervention to student needs by adjusting the:

- Length
- Frequency
- Group size
- Nature of the exercises

The second stage of intervention should take longer than the first. But if you can't see clear progress after a month or two, you may need to move the student into the third RTI tier.

### **Tier 3: Intensive intervention and evaluation**

Working one-on-one with you or a dedicated interventionist, students in the final tier receive intensive lessons that target their unique trouble spots and knowledge gaps. In the a recent study it was found that about, 5% of children need this kind of help, according to the national center for learning disabilities. Based on the student's learning style and needs, as well as underdeveloped skills, third-tier intervention sessions can include:

- Talking with the child about his or her specific issues, discussing strategies to overcome them.
- Sharing positive and corrective feedback whenever possible.
- Providing diverse media to help process content.

- Revisiting lessons from past units or years.
- Setting achievement plans and goals.
- Modelling problem-solving steps.

The educator who runs these sessions must record as much data as possible about the student's improvement or lack thereof. Are prerequisite skills starting to meet standards? Are there jumps in in-class performance? If the student doesn't make marked progress, you, depending on the school or district policy may have to recommend him or her for a special education evaluation.

### **Teaching strategies for each RTI tier**

RTI probably seems like a daunting process. It can be. But there are many ways you can help and empower students to succeed in each stage. Consider using some of these 15 intervention strategies, many of which are interchangeable between tiers:

#### **Strategies for tier 1**

##### **1. Watch for impostor syndrome.**

It's easy for a student to nod his or her head, and then bury it in a book without asking questions to create an illusion of comprehension. That's why you have to watch for impostor syndrome. Proactively looking for students who feign understanding, filling their knowledge gaps, can prevent disappointing surprises when marking tests or assignments. You can spot imposter syndrome by regularly:

- Asking students for their own words. Instead of repeating concepts verbatim, ask students to explain specific ideas using their own words. This will not only help them process content but reveal how well they understand it.
- Using exit tickets. Save 10 minutes at the end of class, allowing students to write about what they learned. They'll prepare for tomorrow's lesson, whereas you'll see who's grasping the content.

Adopting a proactive approach can set an example to follow, too. Students may pose more questions and not hesitate to ask for help, since they know you'll likely approach or call on them anyway.

## **2. Give only two marks for informal assessments.**

Recall a time you saw a big F in red ink on your work. You were likely upset and too demoralised to review mistakes and feedback. So, on informal assessments throughout a unit, just state if a student did or did not meet expectations. Then, provide struggling students with a clear path to improve. For example, pair classmates who didn't meet expectations with those who did, giving them a review and practice activity. When strugglers are confident they understand key concepts, encourage them to tell you. Provide a new assessment, allowing them to prove their competency. This should partially prevent students from being unprepared for tests and assignments.

## **3. Have private mid-unit conversations**

Like the last strategy, use this one to identify if and how students are struggling before formal evaluations. At the middle of each unit, run a fun classwide activity that doesn't introduce key skills or concepts. This gives you a chance to pull each student away for a few minutes to:

- Review results
- Note trouble spots
- Receive input about questions and problems

In doing so, each student can gauge his or her own understanding. Plus, it helps you determine if certain issues are isolated or widespread, informing how you'll deal with them.

## **4. Switch between solo, small and large group learning**

Differentiated instruction is a hallmark of RTI's first tier. And an easy, yet effective, way to differentiate is by alternating between individual and group activities. This is because diverse settings provide distinct learning scenarios. For example, running literature circles in small groups encourages students to shape and inform each other's understandings of readings, helping auditory and participatory learners retain more information. On the other hand, solo reflection exercises may appeal to those who don't

gain as much from the discussion as independent thinking. Plus, varying your lessons this way helps keep engagement levels high.

### **5. Assign open-ended projects**

Giving choices for projects is another differentiation strategy that fits into the first intervention tier. Instead of assigning an inflexible project, provide a list of ideas. This allows students to choose one that lets them best demonstrate their knowledge. Be sure to include a rubric for each project, setting clear expectations. By enticing and challenging students, this approach encourages them to:

- Work and learn at their own paces
- Process content in ways that appeal to them
- Showcase their knowledge and skill mastery as effectively as possible

This strategy not only benefits students but helps you see their unique work and learning styles.

### **Strategies for tier 2**

#### **6. Set Measurable goals**

Setting clearly defined objectives that will define an explicit route to graduate from intervention. Addressing a given student's challenges and trouble spots, objectives should take the form of learning and behaviour goals. Learning goals focus on the student understanding concepts and developing skills. For example, "I, student's name, will complete 10 additional questions about fractions, as provided by my math teacher, each weeknight for the next two weeks." Behaviour goals require the student to concentrate and work efficiently. For example, "I, student's name, will not interrupt any of my teachers while they're speaking. Instead, I will raise my hand to ask questions." Notice how the goals are measurable? If the student interrupts a teacher even once or only completes nine questions each night, he or she doesn't meet them. To reinforce the importance of these goals, review progress at each targeted intervention session.

## **7. Add a twist to mixed-ability groups**

Grouping high performers with struggling classmates for in-class activities is common, but needs a twist as a second-tier intervention strategy. That's because underperforming students sometimes don't actively participate in these groups. Instead, they rely on group members. Here's the twist: Run activities that require students to write down their thoughts or findings, but give each student a different colour pen. You'll likely notice the struggling students don't write down as much. If this is the case, tell them they'll present their groups' thoughts or findings to the class. This way, they must process the content to prepare. Improved understanding of content, better presentation skills.

## **8. Use EdTech that adjusts to each student**

Some educational technologies use adaptive learning principles, detecting student trouble spots and helping them build skills to overcome them. For example, Prodigy is a fun and engaging math game that adjusts content to help students address skill deficits and knowledge gaps. It also offers feedback to help them solve specific mistakes, as they answer questions that use words, charts, pictures and numbers. Currently used by over two million teachers, the game is aligned with curricula across Canada, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and India. Create and sign into your free teacher account now!

## **9. Model everything and use role-plays**

To supplement explanations, demonstrating proper practices will give struggling students clear examples and reference points. Let's say you're running a think-pair-share activity. To clarify, this involves students individually thinking about a problem, pairing together to discuss their answers and presenting their ideas to the class. After giving instructions, you could act out a:

- Partner conversation, reaching conclusions by asking each other questions
- A brief presentation about answers, modelling what students should say about their ideas and problem-solving processes

This strategy helps intervention students participate to the best of their abilities, enjoying the activity itself.

## **10. Preach four step problem solving**

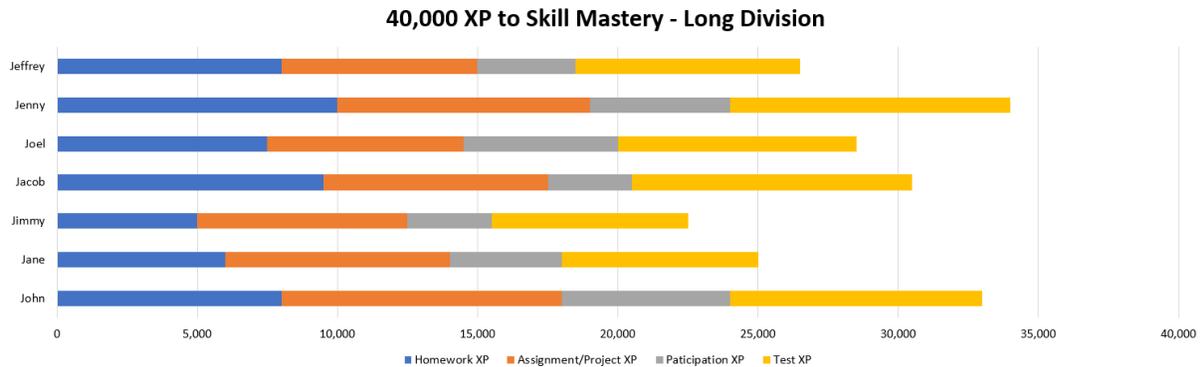
Teaching problem-solving skills in targeted interventions can give students the confidence to answer challenging problems, reaching comprehensive answers. This is especially important for those who understand a topic's underlying concepts, but struggle to apply or articulate them. One of the most popular resources is a problem solving approach to mathematics for elementary school teachers. The authors describe four steps you should encourage students to follow, which work for most subjects. The steps are:

- **Understanding the problem.** Students should rewrite it in their own words, noting helpful information it reveals and indicates a need for.
- **Devising a plan.** Students should use the information they gleaned to make notes, tables, diagrams, equations and anything else that creates a path to solving the problem.
- **Carrying out the plan.** Students should follow this path, reviewing each step along the way and making changes as needed.
- **Looking Back.** Students should double-check each step after reaching their answers. Then, it's best to look at the "big picture." Does the solution make sense when applied to the original problem? Is there a different, logical way of reaching the same solution? If not, they should re-visit their approaches.

Armed with these steps, tough questions shouldn't look as daunting

## Strategies for tier 3

### 11. Gamify a personal learning plan



Motivating students in the final RTI tier is typically a challenge in of itself. Gamifying learning plans can engage and incentivize them, empowering them to move back in the middle tier. Whether you're in charge of this intervention stage or not, you can still apply video game elements in your classroom for these and other students. Consider gamification strategies such as:

- **Adjusting your scoring system.** Give traditional scores and experience points (XP) on tests and assignments, setting a goal for the student to reach a certain amount of XP per unit. For example, if a student scores 60% on a quiz, give him or her 6,000 XP. You can also award XP for completing extra assignments, participating in class or anything else that shows effort to learn.
- **Using stages.** Call topics and units stages. These terms have clear connotations for you, but students may not see how they fit together. If they're gamers, they'll understand that reaching the next stage requires overcoming precursory challenges. Emphasize this by framing certain tasks as prerequisites to reach that next learning stage.

If these tips work especially well, you should see similar results by using them in the first two tiers.

## **12. Gather data to spot trends.**

Use data at your disposal to pinpoint where and when a student's issues arose. In doing so, you can tailor intensive instruction that addresses specific needs. Let's say you determine that a student's performance didn't start to sink when he or she entered your classroom. Rather, it went downhill in the middle of last year's math class. It's now clear you must revisit that content, helping the student build skills taught in that class. You can then move on to this year's topics. Depending on the school or district resources, you may not be tasked with delving into this information. But if you are, look at resources that contain student performance across:

- Past years
- Previous units
- Current classes
- Different subjects

Invariably, an effective RTI approach is rooted in such data.

## **13. Consider peer teaching**

Pairing struggling students with top-performers can yield benefits, according to peer teaching studies. For example, "students generally identify more easily with peer helpers than with adult authority figures," according to an influential study. This means they may be more willing to ask questions and for feedback. What's more, a study determined that students who read and discuss story passages with peers recall more content and score higher on assessments. Peer tutoring is a nuanced pedagogy in its own right, but easy-to-run activities include:

- Think-pair-share exercises, which were discussed in the section about second-tier strategies.
- Peer editing exercises, rely on tutors giving targeted feedback about a tutee's written work.
- Jigsaw exercises, involve dividing an ambitious task into subtopics and having tutor-tutee pair research the same subtopic together.

If you use this strategy, just be sure to teach tutors about giving help and feedback.

#### **14. Reverse the standard peer teaching model.**

Peer teaching strategies typically see high-performing students tutor struggling classmates, but occasionally reversing the roles can have advantages. When at-risk students help others in a controlled environment, research from the national association of secondary school principals shows their confidence and communication abilities improve. This, in turn, can help them through the RTI process. You and your students can reap these benefits through reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT). This involves partners taking turns as the tutor, and:

- Guiding the tutee through the problem-solving process
- Giving the tutee praise and feedback while working through exercises
- Reviewing content together, asking each other questions and finding answers.

If struggling students don't rise to their new responsibilities, just revert to traditional peer teaching.

#### **15. Seek help**

Two female teachers meet to discuss student performance. You're not alone. Each school and district has a different makeup, but you shouldn't have to handle the intervention process yourself. To ease the rigours of intensive instruction and evaluation, communicate with:

- Fellow teachers for insight about the students you're helping.
- Consider how to incorporate student assessments into report card comments.
- Learning support specialists for tips and to share responsibilities.
- Administrators and your principal to provide updates and access data, especially if it seems a student needs special education services and parent involvement is required.

The adage that takes a village to raise a child can easily apply to RTI. So, welcome help.

## **RTI infographic**

Created by Educational Technology and Mobile Learning an online resource for teaching tools and ideas below is an infographic based on this article:

# The Teacher's Response to Intervention (RTI) Guide: Tiers and Strategies

www.educatorstechnology.com

Response to Intervention (RTI) focuses on early and continuous identification, assessment and assistance of students who have learning and behaviour needs.

## The Three RTI Tiers

### 1- High-Quality Instruction and Proactive Assessment

Think of the first RTI tier as everyday teaching. It's consistently delivering differentiated and scientifically-based instruction. This helps ensure that student struggles aren't a result of improper teaching methods.

### 2- Targeted Intervention

Maintaining the first tier's style of classroom instruction, the next stage uses rigorous supplementary exercises and lessons targeted to a student's specific needs. You can objectively identify candidates for targeted intervention through:

- 1- Mid-Unit Evaluations
- 2- Formal Evaluations

### 3- High-Quality Instruction and Proactive Assessment

Working one-on-one with you or a dedicated interventionist, students in the final tier receive intensive lessons that target their unique trouble spots and knowledge gaps. Third tier intervention sessions can include: sharing positive and corrective feedback whenever possible, talking with the child about his or her specific issues, discussing strategies to overcome them, providing diverse media to help process content.

## Teaching Strategies for Each RTI Tier

### 1- Tier 1 Strategies



- ✓ Watch for Impostor Syndrome
- ✓ Give Only Two Marks for Informal Assessments
- ✓ Switch Between Solo, Small- and Large-Group Learning
- ✓ Assign Open-Ended Projects

### 2- Tier 2 Strategies

- ✓ Set Measurable Goals
- ✓ Add a Twist to Mixed-Ability Groups
- ✓ Use EdTech that Adjusts to Each Student
- ✓ Model Everything and Use Role-Plays
- ✓ Preach Four-Step Problem Solving



### 3- Tier 3 Strategies

- ✓ Gamify a Personal Learning Plan
- ✓ Gather Data to Spot Trends
- ✓ Consider Peer Teaching
- ✓ Reverse the Standard Peer Teaching Model
- ✓ Seek Help



## SOURCE

Based, with permission, on Marcus Guido's post:  
<https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/rti-response-to-intervention/>

## Final thoughts about RTI

These strategies support specific RTI stages, but you can also use many to reduce the need for intervention. Remember, the first tier is rooted in consistently delivering differentiated and scientifically-based instruction. By using the aforementioned first-tier tactics as well as researching and incorporating similar ones you should prevent many intervention cases. And serious issues may come to light faster, as you identify students who aren't receptive to diverse, credible instruction practices. So, continue to be proactive. That's a core RTI strategy across tiers.

Source:



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