

Thinking Points

Gifted Student Education

in a

Response to Interventions Framework



*Gifted student learning and
growth ensured by needed
provisions and advocacy.*

**Gifted Education Unit
Colorado Department of Education**

Preface

Advanced by Design: All Student Moving Forward

Colorado's 2007 legislative session declared that every administrative unit shall submit a Program Plan to the Colorado Department of Education for the identification and programming of gifted students. This landmark change in the Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA) began a new era whereby the dedicated educators in gifted education will formally declare how quality programming is provided to gifted student in their particular administrative unit. Across the State, consistency in purpose, definition and practice will aim to benefit gifted student achievement and partnerships with families and community resources.

Fortuitously, the timing of the change coincides with a statewide initiative for school wide success for all students, called Colorado: Response to Intervention (RtI). RtI is a systems approach for quality instruction that embraces components of school climate, leadership, assessment, data and problem solving, evidence-based practice, tiered interventions and professional development. The philosophy supporting the framework reaches out to all students, especially students who are above benchmarks and students who are at-risk of underachievement.

RtI components are common factors in the gifted education field; and, similar to tiered instructional models in the field's history. Major differences, however, exist between former models and RtI: 1) the tiered levels are fluid, not fixed; 2) a problem solving approach involves stakeholders; 3) student data drives instruction; and 4) students are monitored more deliberately to determine if the instructional strategy or intervention is improving student learning. These differences have the potential to significantly impact the learning of gifted students.

RtI embeds gifted education in the daily priorities of quality instruction. Academic, behavioral, and affective outcomes and growth, not solely enrichment, are the focus. Strength of RtI lies in the upfront planning and problem solving that uses data, strengths and interests of students to plan appropriate, rigorous and relevant instruction. Ongoing assessment continually contributes new data so that learning is dynamic and adjustments made according to an individual student's need.

Hats off to educators who are implementing quality curriculum, instruction and assessment for gifted students! The expectations set in the ECEA statute and rules are basic guidelines that have unlimited possibilities for the efforts in an individual administrative unit and its Program Plan. RtI is one approach with a promising future for supporting such efforts and gifted students. Advanced by Design comes alive through RtI. Gifted students will be learning and growing – MOVING FORWARD!

Gifted student learning and growth ensured by needed provisions and advocacy

Purpose

Advanced by Design: All Student Moving Forward

The purpose of this document, *Thinking Points*, is to provide gifted education personnel and parents with a reference or a tool for thinking about the relevance and use of the response to intervention framework for gifted students. RtI has the potential to strengthen existing structures in place supporting student instruction and achievement. The document serves as a supplement to the Colorado RtI manual developed for statewide distribution. The RtI manual contains detailed information about definition and RtI implementation practices.

A basic premise for the work of the various committees is that gifted education is integral to basic quality instruction in each administrative unit. That means instruction is implemented with all students using the same level of fidelity and high expectations for student success, learning and growth. The RtI approach to instruction applies to all sub-populations, content areas and educators' areas of expertise.

This supplement is like workbook where RtI components and questions are presented in terms of implementation for gifted students; or, in terms of gifted education concepts. Thinking points and links between RtI and gifted education will, hopefully, generate dialogue and discussion that will lead to the enhancement of the ideas uplifted in the document. The ongoing dialogue will place important focus on rigorous and relevant instruction and assessment for gifted learners within the total school day and through community resources.

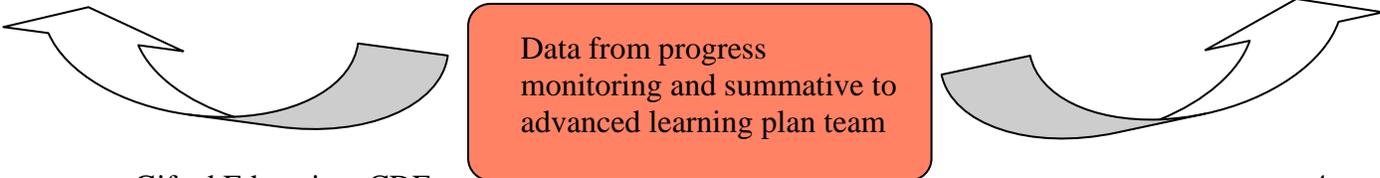
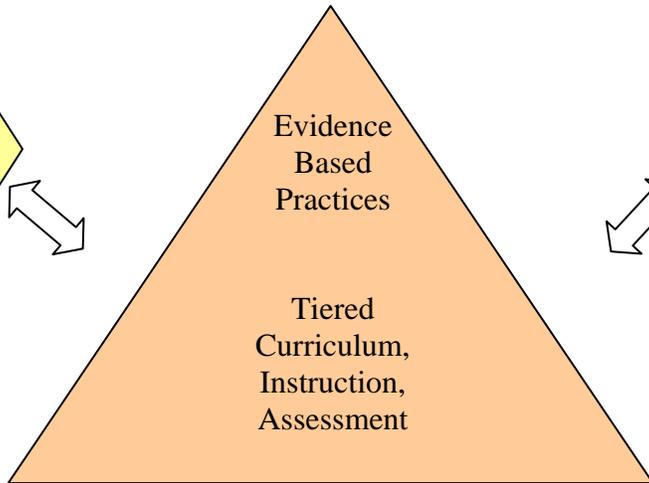
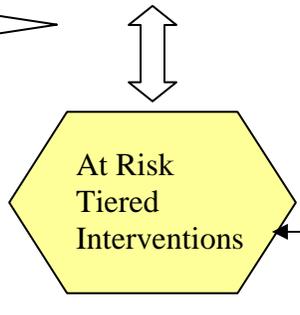
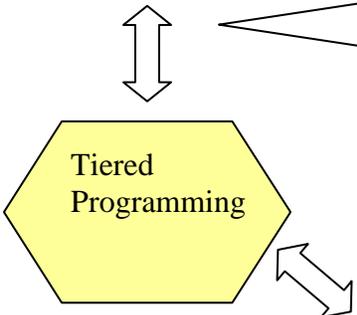
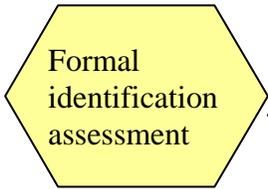
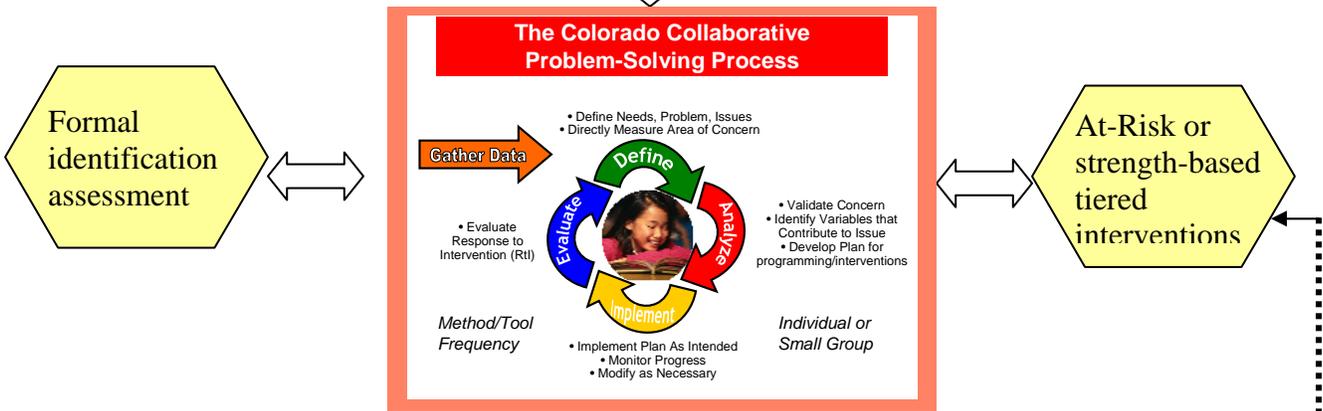
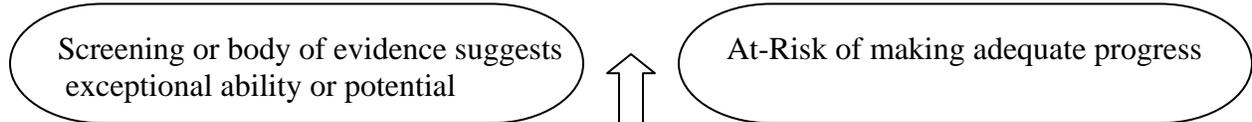
The purpose is not to educate readers on response to intervention philosophy or framework. There are many books, CDs and web sites readily available for that purpose, including the Colorado Department of Education's web site, www.cde.state.co.us.

Thinking Points will

- bridge gifted education concepts with the RtI framework
- support quality instruction and “forward” growth for all students
- advocate that the principles of RtI apply to gifted students at-risk of underachievement and gifted students requiring Tiered programming options
- advocate for knowledge of and use of evidence-based practices in gifted education along a continuum of possible delivery structures
- provide examples from the field about initial use of RtI strategies
- create dialogue about “shifts” in gifted instruction that will have positive impact on gifted student achievement and affective growth.

Gifted Education Integrated in RtI Systems

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| RtI System | Effective Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment | Infrastructure: Integrated Data, Evidence-Based Resources | Data Driven Instructional Decisions |
|-------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|



Colorado RtI emphasizes key component areas for supporting a well-integrated system that connects general, compensatory, gifted and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction.

School Climate
Leadership
Problem Solving
Assessment/Progress Monitoring
Curriculum and Instruction
Family and Community Engagement

The following sections list thinking points about the RtI component that have direct implication or application to the instruction of gifted students based upon gifted education research and studies. Gifted Education directors may use the chart to drive questions, dialogue or discussions with educators when a response to intervention or other student achievement initiative is being implemented in an administrative unit (district or BOCES). Note: Additional detailed information is available in the Colorado RtI Manual.

Positive School Climate

This area is of particular concern to gifted educators and parents because affective growth of the gifted student is integral to the development of exceptional ability. Affective growth is an essential component in gifted programming.

The definition of school climate includes environment, culture, behavior and the affective or social-emotional well-being. Social emotional needs are important for all students. However, research suggests gifted students are at high-risk of underachievement, perfectionism, low self-esteem, misunderstanding of self, anger, depression and other issues.

20-25% of gifted children have social-emotional difficulties observed through negative behaviors (Robinson, 2006)

Early intervention, social connection to school, appropriate instructional challenge, engagement and adjustable pacing will build self-esteem and self-efficacy - as in all students. Be aware that gifted students might have barriers in their environment that may affect them, such as: grade level curriculum and pacing, lack of understanding of giftedness and asynchronous development, unrealistic expectations, or misunderstanding about gifted students with potential or from low socio-economic background.

Important factors in a positive school that have specific application to needs of students, especially gifted students:

- * The culture of school fosters engagement of students in respectful, appropriate learning.
- * The instructional atmosphere supports inquiry and advanced questioning.

- * The quality of the student’s relationship with a teacher has the most direct and significant effect on the student’s involvement in learning.
- * Resiliency is nurtured, especially in low SES populations; and is understood as an important skill to develop in gifted students.
- * Educators question gifted behaviors that appear as “non-compliant” and inappropriate in the classroom and explore the possible manifestation of giftedness.
- * Classroom routines and structures are implemented that respect individual student interests and learning styles.
- * Teachers provide feedback that focuses on the task and criteria for success. Probing for complexity through advanced questioning is ongoing.
- * Parent support is in partnership with teachers to address the range of learner needs.
- * Consistent communication supports relationships among stakeholders.
- * Administrative leadership supports instructional flexibility. Climate is open and fluid, risk-taking of educators and schools is encouraged.
- * Culture of the school fosters inquiry and the engagement of gifted kids in their learning.
- * The school’s improvement plan validates a school culture that supports the educational and social/emotional needs of the whole child.
- * Educators develop the students’ self efficacy and self-advocacy.
- * Support is available for issues of perfectionism, learning how to make friends, being comfortable with age level peers, finding a like peer group, and connecting with school.
- * Educators investigate how students perceive themselves as learners (Do they perceive themselves as competent learners?) Teachers begin building confidence in learning in early grades. Engagement is high with success recognized.
- * Educators set clear high expectations for behavior. Students see their teachers as supportive people.

Discussion questions

In what ways do support systems in your administrative unit contribute to the positive school climate necessary for gifted students?

In what ways do educators/parents learn about social-emotional needs of gifted students?

Which factor might be an improvement target in relation to outcomes for gifted students?

Leadership

Leadership is an essential component in the school system to ensure systemic and supportive implementation of resources and instructional practices. Leadership of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, state, and district) jointly impact gifted student learning.

- * Creates a school climate that vigorously supports both equity and excellence.
- * Facilitates a data-driven instructional system to make appropriate decisions for all students; to identify each student who is less than proficient and who is highly proficient or above grade benchmarks.
- * Embeds the needs of the gifted student in instructional, budgetary and professional development plans or initiatives.
- * Ensures that teachers have meaningful knowledge and understanding about gifted students (e.g., training in differentiated instruction)
- * Supports and/or facilitates an appropriate and flexible system for identifying high-ability learners from diverse populations
- * Encourages consistent collaboration among teachers and support personnel in the school to ensure appropriate services for high-ability learners
- * Applies a continuum of services, including such options as, differentiation, advanced classes, acceleration, seminars, independent studies, mentorships and other learning opportunities matched to the varied needs of high potential and high-ability learners
- * Provides counseling-related services for students with advanced academic performance or potential; and methods for early college planning
- * Supports and implements the district’s program plan in gifted education
- * Regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum, instruction, resources and other services in supporting the development of high ability learners.
- * Gifted students over time take leadership in the ALP process and advocate for his/her strengths, interests and needs.

Discussion Questions

What does leadership currently provide for supporting gifted learners?

What leadership traits are most influential on gifted students’ success? Why?

What might change to foster leadership among stakeholders?

Which leadership behavior might be an improvement target for impacting student outcomes?

Problem Solving and Analysis

Similar to a standard in gifted education that identification and programming decisions be team based, RtI provides a structure for problem analysis and ongoing monitoring. It is a team approach committed to data collection, data-based instructional decisions, tiered interventions/programming and monitoring the success of differentiated curriculum and instruction. The principles of this process apply to gifted identification, ALP development and analyzing results.

Problem solving meetings are efficient. Team members come prepared to the meeting with data, a report on interventions already implemented and evidence of performance. The achievement gap is analyzed in the area of strength. The team discusses alternative solutions and availability of possible resources. Evidence-based strategies and curriculum in the field of gifted education guide the decisions along with individual data.

The team makes recommendations for the level of intensity of the programming option, how long it will be implemented and how often progress monitoring is needed. For gifted learners the duration might be longer and the progress monitoring not as often, compared to struggling learners. Standard protocol supplemental curriculum might meet the needs of small groups of gifted learners while other programming options are individualized.

Decisions about progress monitoring includes: what tool/s will measure success; how often the programming option/intervention will be assessed; and how results will be recorded.

Problem solving teams make recommendations for adjusting instruction and assessment until student progress is assured. There is open-mindedness in regards to gifted learners. No assumptions exist like, “he is so gifted that he is being non-compliant about finishing his work”, or “she is gifted so doesn’t need programming attention; she’ll do just fine”.

RtI ensures that gifted students with at-risk behaviors or academic difficulties will have an opportunity for a team approach to collectively decide alternative methods to learning. For this reason, it is important that problem solving teams include a person knowledgeable about gifted education when gifted students are referred.

Important factors in a problem solving approach that have application to needs of students, especially gifted students:

- * Students are referred to a problem solving team (PST) if assistance is required to provide interventions for at-risk academic or behavioral challenges; make identification decisions; or, to develop the advanced learning plan.
- * The local district or school provides guidelines as to which students or when students are referred to a problem solving team.

Examples:

District #1: This district requires that all students be referred who require special provisions because of highly proficient or less than proficient performance. In this case, the PST collaborates for identification assessment and the advanced learning plan. Thereafter the PST is consulted for transition or a major change in need.

District #2: Most students are referred due to at-risk behaviors or less than proficient performance. Gifted students at-risk of underachievement are referred to the PST; and gifted students in need of radical acceleration. A separate gifted education team makes decisions about identification assessment and advanced learning plans.

- * For gifted students at risk of underachievement, *it is critical that the area of strength continues development.*
- * Assessment data is analyzed for decisions about movement from one Tier to another.
- * Standard treatment protocol is an intervention involving more than one student – a small group of students (e.g., cluster grouping in math or reading, magnet classroom, vocabulary development)
- * Personnel on RtI teams need to have an understanding of gifted student characteristics and the diversity of giftedness that may be manifested (e.g., asynchronous development, perfectionism). Teams Include parents, teachers, student, specialists as needed

Discussion Questions

What currently exists to facilitate problem solving?

What data and questions would be helpful when a gifted student is referred to a team?

In what ways will parental involvement facilitate problem solving and analysis?

If a problem solving team makes general Tiered programming decisions for an ALP how often should the differentiated strategies be monitored? By whom?

What issues might a problem solving team encounter when a gifted student with behavioral or learning difficulties is referred?

Assessment

Assessment provides feedback about academic, behavioral and affective progress. Feedback will be qualitative or quantitative in nature. Several types of assessments are used in RtI systems for monitoring achievement: 1) screening or benchmarking, 2) diagnostic or pre-assessment, 3) progress monitoring, and 4) summative assessment. In gifted education, commitment to pre-assessment and progress monitoring will greatly enhance current screening and summative practices so that the effect of gifted programming and instruction strategies are monitored on a regular basis.

Important factors in assessment that have application to needs of gifted students:

- * Gifted learners require ongoing formative assessment practices, progress monitoring, to gauge understanding and pace. Some will require progress monitoring with the intensity and duration elements necessary to improve at-risk academic or behavioral challenges.
- * Data (school wide/classroom/district) will help to determine which students are below proficiency and those who are highly proficient or beyond grade level benchmarks.
- * Data analysis and use of the information for instructional decisions is a necessary step; one for which professional development may be required.
- * Assessment is an ongoing procedure used by qualified personnel throughout school career to identify: unique strengths, instructional level and needs and the appropriate programming options matched to the strengths.
- * Assessment is an ongoing procedure used by qualified personnel to identify: the resources, priorities and concerns of the family/gifted student and supports and programming necessary to foster self-esteem and efficacy, critical and creative thinking, acceleration and continuous learning on a continuum of learning benchmarks.
- * Evaluation or identification assessment determines if and how a student demonstrates exceptional ability in one or more areas of giftedness. Evaluation checkpoints are conducted before changes in a school level to determine interests, strengths and instructional and/or course recommendations
- * Out of level assessment (above grade level) may be required to determine learning, especially if the student's instruction is above age/grade level.
- * For gifted students, highly proficient and above, formative assessments are conducted frequently enough to determine: 1) What is the progress compared to past performance? 2) How does the progress compared to expected performance? 3) Is the student responding to curriculum and instruction? 4) Does the student show proficiency in the stated goals? [Taken from Washington State's model of RtI]

Main Types of Assessments

Screening, Diagnostics, Formative (progress monitoring)

Comparison of Assessments: Screening, Diagnostic, and Formative Assessment

| Element/ Criteria | Screening | Diagnostic | Formative |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Purpose | Identifies high and low performing students whose needs are not being met | Helps to determine why the academic and/or behavioral needs are occurring Identifies what the student needs to learn | Identifies if students are making progress Identifies if instruction needs adjustment |
| Questions Answered | Which students are in need of additional assessment? How are students responding to core cycle instruction? | Why is the need occurring? What does the student need to learn? | Are the students making progress compared to self, peers, and standard? Is an instructional change needed? |
| Data Use | Teachers obtain the data Teachers use the data to determine students who need differentiated instruction District has expectation that all teachers use data to align instructional resources | Teachers obtain the data Teachers use the data to differentiate instruction. District has expectation that all teachers use data to align instructional resources | Teachers obtain the data Teachers use the data to differentiate instruction District has expectation that all teachers use data to align instructional resources |
| Student Participation | An entire classroom/grade/school/district, using either individual or group format | Students who are less than proficient or highly proficient on the learning expectations/standards | All students in the cycles of core, supplemental and intensive |
| Professional/ Ethical Standards | Has reliability of .80 The test scores distinguish the proficiency levels of students. The test identifies which and how many students differ from the standard Items are sufficient to accurately reflect changes in student performance Sources of bias have been eliminated People are adequately trained to administer, score, and interpret the test results | Teacher observations, interviews, review of permanent products, or other already existing information are included The results provide sufficient information to understand what skills need to be taught, as well as to identify alternative curricular materials or instructional strategies There is evidence that an item analysis could be appropriately used with a given diagnostic measure People are adequately trained to administer, score, and interpret the test results | Items are sufficient to accurately reflect changes in student performance There is evidence that parallel forms measure the same construct Sources of bias have been eliminated People are adequately trained to administer, score, and interpret the test results |

From Iowa Department of Education, 2007

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction is the heart of developing exceptional abilities. Thus, it is critical that the advanced learning plan provides evidence of matching the strengths and interests of the student with challenging materials on an appropriate instructional level. Motivation, learning and high self-esteem will be fostered, rather than, boredom or other non-compliant behaviors.

Important factors in curriculum and instruction that have application to needs of students, especially gifted students:

- ✦ Gifted students require special curriculum and instructional provisions.
- ✦ The depth, complexity and pacing of curriculum is different for gifted learners.
- ✦ For the highly proficient learner, instruction and curriculum may extend beyond the grade level core curriculum into an accelerated program or advanced core appropriate to the student's needs.
- ✦ Differentiated instruction is a key approach: complex curriculum, variety in problem solving methods, more resources, and additional instruction, adapted pace and advanced instruction need to be considered.
- ✦ Instruction is proactive and does not wait for summative assessment. Rather frequent collection of performance data informs instructional decisions continuously. Thus, instruction supports all students – no waiting for failure for struggling learners or barriers for highly proficient students.
- ✦ Key understanding: Students respond differently to instruction. The data gathered will drive instruction.
- ✦ Evidence-based practices in gifted education will have the most positive impact on student achievement (e.g., pre-assessment, curriculum compacting, acceleration, differentiated instruction, career/college planning)
- ✦ Evidence based practices must be embedded in day-to-day instruction.
- ✦ It is imperative that differentiated instruction for gifted students uses advanced level content, creativity, novelty, metacognition and critical thinking skills.
- ✦ Proven curriculum such as The College of William and Mary's Literature units, Junior Great Books and Core Plus Curriculum, are excellent sources of enriched curriculum.
Center for Gifted Education Language Arts Curriculum
http://cfge.wm.edu/curr_language.htm
- ✦ Curriculum and instruction must remain rigorous and challenge throughout the grades, especially in middle schools where pre-advanced placement initiatives can enhance cognitive and academic development.

- * Culturally relevant teaching where teacher style and curricular changed according to the immediate population removed negative attitudes and ‘deficit’ thinking; and increased the recognition of exceptional potential.
 - * Gifted students tend to be more mature than age-mate; closer in mental age to older children; accelerative options provide a better personal maturity match than non-accelerated program; and provide a better cognitive match (Robinson)
- ⇒ See Resources for specific reference to the work of Carol Ann Tomlinson, Barbara Clark, Bertie Kingore, June Maker and Karen Rogers

Discussion Questions

In what ways are educators using evidence-based curriculum and instruction strategies for facilitating gifted student learning? Is the extent of this adequate? Why or why not?
 What are the pathways for acceleration in your school and district? How is acceleration determined, articulated and managed?
 If critical and creative thinking skills are important skills across content areas, in what ways are we ensuring the application of these skills, especially for non-traditional gifted students?
 Are programming options matched to the categories of giftedness adequate? Do resources need to be enhanced and shared further with community resources?

Professional Development

Increasing the capacity of teachers to facilitate the learning and growth of gifted students’ achievement is in Colorado ECEA rules. Teacher induction programs are a starting point for professional development of new teachers. When training is provided to cluster teachers, they become responsible for learning groups of gifted students; thus, monitoring curriculum and instruction in a focused manner.

Basic professional development in gifted education includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

- ☞ Understanding the nature, needs and characteristics of gifted behaviors
 - ☞ Evidence based practices in gifted differentiated instruction
 - ☞ Management of time, materials and grouping practices
 - ☞ Goal setting and advanced learning plan development
 - ☞ RtI tiered curriculum, instruction and assessments; use of RtI for gifted students at-risk of underachievement and gifted students above benchmarks.
- * Teachers trained in gifted educational instructional strategies have a significant impact on gifted student’s achievement
 - * Sander’s longitudinal study - Teacher effectiveness was an important factor in the academic growth of students; ; smallest academic gains were made by the high achievement group – found a pattern in each data analysis that showed the best students making the lowest gains; differences in teacher effectiveness were the dominant factor affecting student academic gain
 - * Teachers’ beliefs and personal history impact their success in making changes in their teaching to benefit gifted students

- * Classroom teachers who receive training in the nature and needs of gifted children as well as instruction and coaching in appropriate strategies to uses with able learners are better qualified to identify and meet their students needs

Discussion Questions

- What are the learning needs of teachers working with gifted learners?
- In what ways does staff learn about evidence-based strategies in gifted education?
- How is ongoing professional development in gifted education facilitated?
- In what ways are the results of training impacting gifted student learning?
- When and how are parents engaged with teachers in gifted education learning?

Family and Community Engagement

Effective home-school collaboration includes open communication and involvement of parents in the learning process and school environment. Being informed about the RtI framework is a starting place to build ongoing rapport for planning, problem solving and monitoring student progress.

- ☼ Parents provide insight into the characteristics and interests of the gifted learners.
- ☼ Parental input is critical information for advanced learning plan development.
- ☼ Parents support homework and extended learning opportunities.
- ☼ Parents are partners in monitoring progress and social emotional needs.
- ☼ Community resources supplement and extend the opportunities available to gifted learners in the school setting.
- ☼ Community resources include mentors, visual and performing arts, leadership, authentic problem solving and creative endeavors.

Questions for Discussion

- What currently exists in the system to ensure open communication and accessibility to information?
- In what ways do parents participate in learning decisions and school decisions?
- Is parental involvement broad-based like Joyce Epstein’s model?
- How are community resources known and accessed by staff and families?
- In what ways are the non-academic areas of giftedness enhanced by parental and community support?



COLORADO SCHOOL-WIDE SYSTEM FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Level of Support

Level of Support Examples Gifted Education

Intensive/Individualized Level

- Interventions based on comprehensive evaluation are provided to students with intensive needs

Intensive/Individualized Level

- Radical acceleration in one or more subjects
- Dual enrollment
- Early Entrance
- Specialized counseling
- Long-term internship;
- International Baccalaureate Program

Targeted Level

- Provided to students identified at-risk or who require specific support to make adequate progress in general education.

Targeted Level

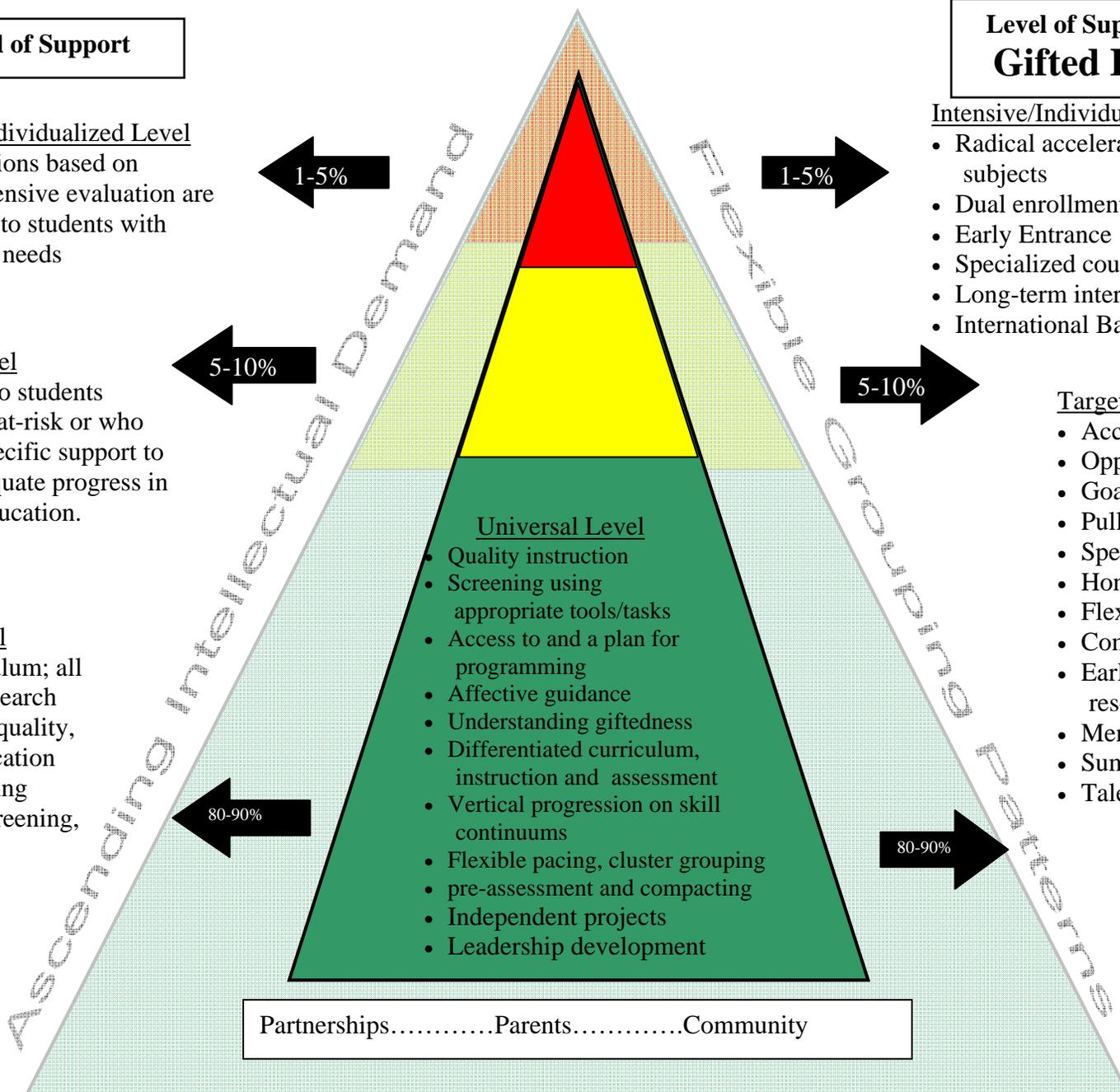
- Accelerated/extended academic
- Opportunities in the arts
- Goal setting for early college plan
- Pull-in programs
- Specialized curriculum programs
- Honors, AP courses, online courses
- Flexible counseling groups
- Competitions or advanced clubs
- Early instruction in presentation, research, study and organization
- Mentorship
- Summer/Saturday school
- Talent Searches, University programs

Universal Level

- Core curriculum; all students; research based, high quality, general education using on-going universal screening,

Universal Level

- Quality instruction
- Screening using appropriate tools/tasks
- Access to and a plan for programming
- Affective guidance
- Understanding giftedness
- Differentiated curriculum, instruction and assessment
- Vertical progression on skill continuums
- Flexible pacing, cluster grouping
- pre-assessment and compacting
- Independent projects
- Leadership development



Partnerships.....Parents.....Community

Universal Level

Core Principles of RTI

Principle 1: We believe that we can effectively teach ALL children.

All RTI practices are founded on the assumption and belief that all children can learn. It is the responsibility of the leadership at the building, district and state level to identify the curricular, instructional and environmental conditions that enable continuous growth in learning. We must provide the leadership and financial means to ensure the existence of these conditions.

Principle 2: We will intervene early.

It is important to intervene at the earliest sign of academic or behavioral need to increase the likelihood of success. Effective prevention and/or intervention practices are important at all levels (P-12) to address needs before they become more intense or severe. Student support should be modified according to ongoing monitoring of progress to ensure optimum growth.

Principle 3: We will use a tiered system of resources and practices.

A continuum of instructional interventions and resources that are matched to students' academic, emotional and behavioral needs must be provided. These interventions and resources must be effective, efficient, and linguistically/culturally responsive, differentiated in both nature and intensity, and must be delivered in a coordinated manner with fidelity.

Principle 4: We will use an effective decision-making process within a multi-tiered instruction/intervention model.

Research has supported the effectiveness of using a clearly defined method to determine student need and to develop and evaluate interventions. At its core, the decision-making process should address four interrelated steps: (1) Describing the need for an individual student or a group of students based on data (e.g. universal screening). (2) Formulating a hypothesis as to why this need exists. (3) Developing and implementing intervention(s) that would best address the need. (4) Analyzing ongoing data to assess student response to the intervention(s). This decision-making process can be applied to all students in a system, to small groups of students and to individual students.

Principle 5: We will use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction to the extent available.

Both NCLB and IDEA 2004 affirm the need to employ scientifically-based instruction (to the highest research standard available) whether in reference to the content and delivery of core curriculum/instruction or supplemental interventions. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that students are exposed to instruction, interventions and standards-based curriculum that have demonstrated effectiveness for the particular types of students and the settings involved.

Principle 6: We will use student data to inform instruction.

Data-based decisions regarding student response to instruction/intervention are central to RTI practices. This principle requires that data collection systems are in place and that resulting student performance data are used to make collaborative, informed instructional decisions. Specific academic/behavioral strategies are implemented accordingly. Student progress must be monitored with ongoing, targeted assessments that are sensitive to incremental changes in order to determine the effectiveness of instruction/intervention and to make timely adjustments or changes to maximize the impact on learning.

Principle 7: We will use various types of assessment according to the purpose.

In RTI, there are three main purposes for assessing students: (1) **screening** of all children to identify those who are not making academic/behavioral progress at expected rates or who are excelling beyond the norm; (2) **prescriptive** assessments to determine what children can and cannot do in important academic and behavioral domains to inform needed instruction/intervention; and (3) **progress monitoring** to determine if academic or behavioral interventions are producing desired effects.

Assessments will include those that are: informal or formal; individually or group administered; and norm or criterion-referenced. Assessments need to be culturally-responsive and may need to be differentiated to obtain accurate student performance data.

How does identification assessment unfold in a response to intervention system?

This is a foundational question that merits validation through discussion and sustenance through consistency in practice.

At any age level, the student's response to purposeful instruction becomes an observation, a data point, of student learning – skill, understanding or knowledge. These observations, whether quantitative or qualitative, are clues about strengths and challenges in learning and progress in standards-based benchmarks. Clues about exceptional ability will also be obvious to educators aware of gifted characteristics and behaviors.

In fact, RtI has the potential to uplift the importance of monitoring student performance so that gifted students are recognized at an earlier age. Pre-K – 2 instructional systems, if responding to the academic, behavioral and affective needs and performance of students, will drive instruction based upon the student's motivation and demonstrated thinking and learning. Differentiated instruction and early intervention will be understood in these systems.

Simply stated:

Step 1: Provide quality core and/or supplementary instruction

Use assessment that will appropriately place students in learning groups and monitor progress over time.

Step 2: Observe and collect student data

Step 3: Plan instruction, groupings, and content extensions based upon student data, evidence-based practices in differentiated instruction and tiered interventions or programming options

Step 4: Coach educators and parents to ask the question: *Who are the students that exhibit learning characteristics or thinking and behavioral traits common to gifted students?*

Steps 1-4 provide a body of evidence that may be used in the formal identification process. Formal identification assessment might occur in grades 2, 5, and 8 – points in time to prepare for the next transition in school; although, identification assessment may occur at any time as recommended by teacher or parent.

Note: Formal identification is a requirement. RtI procedures, alone, will not discover exceptional ability that may be hidden due to factors of social-emotional concerns, personality, poverty, and language, ethnic or cultural differences. Broad-based screening and assessment with multiple indicators will uncover potential and recognize exceptionalities so that advanced learning plans guide instruction through a tiered intervention/programming and assessment model.

Step 5: Implement formal identification assessment according to evidence-based practices in gifted education and the time line established in the district.

⇒ See the CDE Identification Guidelines for detailed identification assessment information: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/resources.htm>

Examples – Snapshots in Action

Stories from educators who work with gifted students

A middle school student in a small district

This student is two years ahead of age-peers in math content standards. Tier III programming and interventions are needed for social-emotional guidance and issues of asynchronous development. Tier III options will be monitored closely by the teacher and support staff. For planning instruction, the following are assessment pathways:

Screening:

Curriculum based measures, district and/or state data will be used to determine level of instruction. The student will also provide information about interests and preferences for exploratory blocks and electives. The ALP team will review notes on student observations, products, and former assessments.

Problem Solving Team:

This student was referred to the problem solving team who helped to make decisions about radical acceleration and long-term planning goals.

Diagnostic:

Pre-assessment using curriculum assessment, unit or end-of-year assessments will provide information about knowledge and skill level for placement in an instructional group. Student interviews and learning preferences inventories (Renzulli) will provide data for creating learning tasks and assignments. Parental input will be gathered to enhance programming decisions and support at home.

Progress Monitoring:

The students will be placed in advanced geometry; an individualized program in a small school where the teacher will meet with the student every day for instruction and every two weeks for assessment. If in a larger district, it would be recommended that the student take geometry at the high school or from a qualified teacher at the middle school. Progress monitoring would be a shared responsibility of the sending and receiving school teachers.

Progress monitoring includes the “checking-in” of Tier III interventions and programming on a regular, frequent basis. Student reflections/journaling, student performance, counselor reports, parent feedback and student observations contribute to the data collected.

Summative:

Course curriculum assessments will be used to validate progress. Performance rubrics will be designed to rate performance on math tasks, creativity in responses, career awareness, and critical thinking in mathematical reasoning.

Examples – Snapshots in Action

Stories from educators who work with gifted students

Timmy Smith is 5 years old with a February birth date. The teacher notices that he picks up books and actually reads the words. He often misbehaves during lessons that involve learning letter sounds. He has a large storehouse of knowledge in a variety of topic with most interest in dinosaurs. Although verbally precocious his fine motor skills are typical and his writing is average. The teacher reports some informal testing has been done and the child appears to be reading about a second-grade level.

The teacher refers this child to SIT. She has defined the problem as the child has advanced skills beyond his grade level in reading although his fine motor skills are average and his behavior suggests disinterest in any activities associated with learning to read.

The teacher realizes the student does not need the skills she is teaching but is unsure of what to do when teaching other students. The SIT team understands and validates the problem. The team decides it needs more information. Diagnostic testing will be done.

The team agrees to administer a reading diagnostic test with no grade-level ceilings and because of the child's precociousness, the CogAT will also be administered. The results of the diagnostic screening show the child is decoding and comprehending at a second-grade level. He scored 140 (highly gifted) on the verbal subtests, 132 (gifted) on the quantitative and 134 (gifted) on the nonverbal.

Possible interventions

- These scores warrant tiered interventions/programming for this child and show the child as in the gifted range for potential.
- The team decides to look at the process of acceleration. In the mean time to positively influence behavior and provide appropriate rigor the team considers the following interventions:
 - Look for possible peers in Kindergarten
 - Look at possibility of going to reading with the second grade
 - Could reading resource teacher teach the child
 - Reading program individualized by the teacher in the regular classroom
 - The reading program becomes differentiated
 - Continue to collect a body of evidence for programming and identification

The pluses and minuses of each option are considered. The team and teacher decide to try some cluster grouping within the Kindergarten classroom. The resource teacher will come to the classroom to work with a cluster of students who are most advanced in reading. The cluster will allow for more individualization. The resource teacher will keep a daily anecdotal record of Timmy's behavior to be shared with SIT in three weeks.

In the mean time discussions with parents will begin on possible acceleration options.

Examples – Snapshots in Action

Stories from educators who work with gifted students

A second grade student

A gifted student in second grades was extremely bright in mathematical reasoning and performance, yet was struggling in reading. The student was referred to the RtI team based upon end of year benchmark data in reading and above grade level observations in math.

For reading difficulties: The RtI team concluded that word fluency was a primary issue. Small group instruction, two and a half hours a week provided targeted instruction and assessment. Later, the RtI team guided further targeted instruction in oral reading, sight word practice and vowel specific skills.

For math exceptionality: The RtI team concluded that further screening and diagnostic assessment would provide data for placement in the curriculum and the appropriate instructional group. After assessment, it was recommended to start with tier II programming strategies to provide in-depth problem solving opportunities using extensions from the curriculum text. After monitoring the student's progress for six weeks, the RtI team recommended that assessment and data be collected to determine if grade level acceleration was needed in math. A plan was ultimately designed that projected a two year acceleration map so that the student would be ready for advanced math/accelerated coursework by middle school. The plan included articulation with secondary teachers by fifth grade.

Examples – Snapshots in Action

Stories from educators who work with gifted students

A seventh grade student

The student was identified as gifted in 2nd grade with areas of strength in reading and writing. By the end of sixth grade, the student was not performing, not turning in assignments. The little work seen did not show advanced skills in reading and writing; little interest was expressed about school. The student became defiant. A small group of friends and an outside of school interest became focal points for interactions. Self-advocacy skills were not developed.

Assessment data

CSAP reading scores throughout elementary were at the advanced level. 3rd – 5th grade district reading scores were consistently 99%’ile. The student continually demonstrated above grade level benchmarks in those years.

Parent’s initial involvement

Parents understood the child’s frustration with lack of reading resources, and the requirement that would not the child to read beyond her grade level novel list. Parents offered to purchase higher level test for school. Initially, they tried to partner with the school to problem-solve. Parents finally quit trying and accepted the failure of the child. Parent refused District Reading Test to be taken in 6th grade. Reason: 3rd thru 5th grade scores were all 99%’ile and “showed no reading growth”.

Problem solving team

The student was referred to the problem-solving team. A gifted education teacher, 7th grade teacher team, counselor, assistant principal, parent, student participated in the discussions. The team looked at student profile; reviewed assessment data; examined the advanced learning plan; and asked questions about behavior, performance and affective needs.

- Why is the student not turning in assignments?
 - What behaviors are exhibited in the classroom?
 - Is this a pattern in all content areas? ... in former grade levels?
 - Are outside factors influencing this situation?
 - What curriculum and instructional methods are being used in reading?
 - What advocacy skills will help the student guide his/her instruction in collaboration with teachers?
- ◆ Team identifies the issue/problem as:
- Reading is the only subject where difficulties are noted.
 - Curriculum is inappropriate and too rigid for the advanced reader
 - The student has already read the materials that are being used in class and sees no relevance or motivation to comply.

Interventions

Adjust the curriculum to be of appropriate challenge. Tier II interventions will provide William and Mary curriculum, Junior Great Books, and literature circles. Opportunities will be provided for the student to work with intellectual peers; flexible groups for direct instruction and choice activities. After the first two weeks, a report to the RtI team was made for confirmation of the plan and needed adjustments.

Progress Monitoring:

Every two weeks, the student, parent, and classroom teacher conferred on any changes to the student’s commitment to learning; made any adjustments needed, or continue interventions. At the end of quarter, reported back to full RtI team regarding progress.

Simply stated from a small district...

After receiving the questions pertaining to problem solving for the RtI model, especially as it relates to integrating education for gifted students, I attended a professional development session hosted by our Instructional team (coordinators for special education, English language acquisition, gifted education, literacy and International Baccalaureate). With their information and also after questioning the research behind the tiered model, I found the answers to our questions exhibited in the visual model, a helpful discussion tool.

Our RtI plan incorporates ideas from: The Heartland Model, Dufour's work, Karen Rogers, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Marzano, Tim Westerberg, Jay McTighe, Bertie Kingore, Howard Gardner, and Susan Winebrenner with the intent of encompassing gifted learners in the response to intervention delivery of instruction. Jim Delisle, Maureen Neihart and Sylvia Rimm's expertise was used for the social/emotional/affective concerns.

The visual embraces advocacy for all students. At our Universal level teachers are trained to look at every student to decide whether that child is "green or not green". Forms and question starters are guides for each teacher to use. Each student's profile and data are reviewed every six weeks. If the child is determined by the Universal screen to be "not green", then we take a deeper look (e.g., diagnostic assessment, pre-assessment, off-level testing)

Next, we move to the Targeted planning level. This group is called the TIE team (Targeted, Interventions and Extensions). Some of the TIE members are constant such as the administrator, counselor, a specialist representative, classroom teacher, and other members rotate depending on the concern.

We have trained our teachers and specialists to look for areas of needs in our gifted population. The TIE team works through the Learner Assets and concerns sheet that has been completed by a variety of staff who works with the "not green" students. (Our gifted, special education and English language acquisition staff are involved.) The TIE team uses these forms to develop a profile that helps them begin to plan for this student's unique assets and needs. A SMART goal will be created and a summary of next steps and progress monitoring will occur and a time will be set for the TIE team to go back together to review progress on the SMART goal. The parents and students are always in the communication loop and may be specifically involved in the development of the SMART goal, level of intensity program and progress monitoring. This same process is used at all levels, include high school.

Currently, a pilot of this process I being piloted at the high school, middle school and one elementary school. Next fall, all schools will embark on this approach to RtI. Gifted education is an equal partner with English language acquisition, literacy, regular education and special education.

All voices are invited to and heard at the table.

An excerpt from an elementary principal

Definitions

Accommodations

Accommodations are changes in how a student accesses information and demonstrates learning. Accommodations are used in classroom instruction & assessment. Gifted learners may require accommodations dependent upon individual learning style, disability or identified over-excitability.

Affective

The term affective refers to the social and emotional and behavioral needs of students.

Body of Evidence

A collection of data from multiple sources and a variety of assessment tools used to make data-based decisions about identification, programming, and/or interventions.

Community Engagement

A two-way pathway where the school, families, and the community actively work together, creating networks and shared responsibility for student success. It is a tool that promotes civic well-being and that strengthens the capacity of schools, families, and communities to support young peoples' full development.

Keys to community engagement include: 1) Know where you are going – create an vision representing the diversity of the community; 2) Share leadership with district, staff and community resources; 3) Reach-out – listen and learn about the interests and needs of students and families; respond to identified needs; 4) Face the hard issues – acknowledge and address issues of gender, ethnicity, culture, and socio-economics; provide opportunities for conversation and problem solving; 5) tell stories along the way to improvement; and 6) stay on course – focus on specific goals; align activities and partnerships with goals; assess and celebrate progress, sustain long-term benefits. (Berg and Bland, 2006)

Data-Driven Decisions Making

The process of planning tiered curriculum and instruction for student success (academic, affective and behavioral) through the use of ongoing progress monitoring, analysis of data, and advanced learning plan.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is an approach to respond to a learner needs through programming or modifications of content, process, product, as well as, learning environment. Differentiated instructional strategies are proven to significantly impact gifted student learning.

Duration

For the purpose of responding to gifted learner needs, duration is the length of time for which a programming options or strategy is implemented. Individual gifted learners may require specific number of minutes per session multiplied by the number sessions per year; or the programming might be a standard protocol curriculum that is implemented 9-15 weeks or all year.

Evidence-Based Research

Evidence-based research applies rigorous and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge through systematic empirical methods. It also draws upon observation or experimentation and involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test hypotheses. Acceptance by a peer-reviewed journal or approval by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous objective scientific review determines evidence-based research.

Modification

Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn and/or demonstrate

Positive School Climate

A positive school climate refers to the “environmental factor” critical when viewing student needs. This factor emphasizes such variables as school rules, policies, behavior management, learning structures, affective needs and relationships that may impact student success.

“Positive school climate when children are provided appropriate instruction for their needs, not just academic needs.” Jim Delisle

Problem Solving

A collaborative data-based decision making process that identifies interventions for students at risk of underachievement and above benchmarks. Decisions are made by a team with qualified personnel to make educational decisions.

Process for problem solving and analysis:

Define the problem using data

Analyze the data and discuss alternatives

Plan an intervention or programming option

Implement programming and instructional intervention

Progress monitor the effect of the intervention on learning and growth

Evaluate the student’s progress

Professional Development

Training, workshops delivered to increase the capacity of teachers to implement selected instructional and curricular strategies and materials. Data interpretation, fidelity of implementing interventions, problem solving and assessment methods are topics in RtI training.

Rigor

Rigor is...helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally or emotionally challenging. (Strong, Silver, Perini, 2001)

Tiered Programming

Tier I: Core curriculum for all students.

Differentiated instruction meets the needs of many students.

Gifted students require Tier II and/or III in strength areas.

Tier II: Targeted interventions – targeted instruction

Frequency and duration of interventions are specific. Gifted students require supplementary materials for depth, complexity, acceleration, individual or group

intervention. Rule of thumb: 1 year above or below grade level
Tier III: Intensive interventions – intensive instruction
Instruction for students with greatest difficulties, behavioral or acceleration needs
More frequent assessment to determine effectiveness of strategies, pacing and student progress (e.g., radical acceleration, IB programming, specialized counseling)
A Rule of thumb: 2 years above or below grade level

Gifted students require Tier II and/or Tier III programming in their area of strength.

For gifted students at-risk of underachievement, Tiered programming in the area/s of strength must continue as the learning issue is being addressed; or, the instructional targets and pace gradually increased to a level matched to cognitive abilities (e.g., the gifted student who has potential but lacks learning experiences and expected academic performance)

Team

The problem solving team or student intervention team that collaborates on the needs and tiered interventions for individual students based upon student data and evidence-based practices.

Tools for Summative Learning

Assessments that measure overall learning of benchmarks at a grade level or a unit of learning Examples: CSAP, MAPS, NWEA, Scantron; curriculum based assessments, district assessments

Resources

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**Gifted Programming Matched to RtI Elements
Supporting the C's for Developing Student Motivation to Learn**

| Transfer and Transformation into One System | | Student Challenge, Control, Commitment and Compassion |
|---|---|--|
| Gifted Programming Concepts | RtI Concepts | C's |
| <p>Foundations – systemic support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Values and policy for learning and growth of gifted students ⊗ Continuum of learning benchmarks ⊗ Goals and achievement targets ⊗ ALP management system ⊗ Articulation and transition ⊗ Personnel and professional development ⊗ Budget | <p>Foundations - systemic support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Value and policy for learning and growth of all students ⊗ Strong core curriculum ⊗ Standards and assessment alignment ⊗ Data collection systems ⊗ Record keeping system ⊗ Personnel and professional development ⊗ Budget | <p><i>Depending upon the activity, this column may also be used for recording a variety of responses, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ <i>Thoughts of how the concepts are working together or not working in the local school/district</i> ⊗ <i>Ways in which the concept area is being demonstrated in the local district</i> ⊗ <i>What would need to change for the concepts to be understood and practiced</i> ⊗ <i>In what ways, does the concept support the C's?</i> |
| <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Leadership for administering gifted identification and programming ⊗ Teachers trained in gifted education influence a greater academic effect in learning and growth of gifted students. ⊗ Professional development to increase capacity of educators to facilitate learning in all administrative units. ⊗ Parental and family involvement | <p>Leadership</p> | |

| Gifted Programming Concepts | RtI Concepts | C's |
|---|---|-----|
| <p>Affective and School Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ The learning environment supports development of self-esteem, self-efficacy and potential. ✿ Schooling fosters social-emotional development. ✿ The gifted learner understands himself/herself in relation to content. ✿ The gifted learner knows how he/she learns best. ✿ The student and family begin college planning and career guidance early in the school years. ✿ | <p>School Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Behavioral, Social/Emotional support systems | |
| <p>The Learner Profile and Identification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Quality curriculum and instruction for recognizing exceptionality ✿ Observation and recognition of strengths, interests and needs of the learner ✿ Assessment that drives challenge ✿ Screening for strengths ✿ Collection of data for a body of evidence supporting identification ✿ A learner profile describing exceptional potential, ability and/or performance in any one or more areas of giftedness | <p>The Learner and Tier I Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Quality curriculum and instruction ✿ Screen all students ✿ Observation of strengths and at-risk indicators of students ✿ Collect data, evidence of strengths, challenges or problems ✿ Initiation of problem solving ✿ Initiation of formal identification | |

| Gifted Programming Concepts | RtI Concepts | C's |
|---|---|-----|
| <p>Problem Solving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Identification assessment includes problem solving and collaborative decision making regarding determination of gifted potential. ⊗ Planning for programming and interventions is an ongoing problem solving process with parents and family. Every gifted student has an advanced learning plan (ALP). | <p>Problem Solving</p> <p>Parental Engagement</p> | |
| <p>Assessment and Progress Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Data informs exceptionality and instruction; provides information about pacing instruction – when to move-on, slow-down or make ALP adjustments. ⊗ Pre-assessment determines instructional level and data for determining an appropriate instructional group. ⊗ Progress monitoring provides data for ongoing decisions about response to the differentiated instruction, pace, depth and complexity. Known also as formative assessment, the duration and intensity of progress monitoring for gifted learners is usually different than required for the struggling learner. | <p>Assessment</p> <p>Progress Monitoring</p> | |

| Gifted Programming Concepts | RtI Concepts | C's |
|---|---|-----|
| <p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Gifted programming requires decisions about where the students will be taught and the support needed. ✿ A continuum of delivery patterns allows for diverse learner needs. Local decisions decide the extent of the continuum. ✿ Structure includes: cluster groups, flexible groups, resource pull-ins or pull-outs, vertical (grade-groups, small groups for standard protocols, sheltered classes for language or skill development, one-on-one groups, magnet classrooms, and schools for gifted learners. ✿ Clusters are a researched method. | <p>Structure of the system</p> <p>Individual and student groupings</p> <p>Individual or standard protocols</p> | |
| <p>Content and curricular extensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Development of an advanced learning plan ✿ Parental and student involvement delineates the programming curriculum, specialized program, or other tiered options for instruction and/or affective needs ✿ Adjustments in depth and complexity of content | <p>Tiered curriculum</p> <p>Parental Engagement</p> | |

| Gifted Programming Concepts | RtI Concepts | C's |
|--|---|-----|
| <p>Differentiated instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Evidence based strategies that change content, process, product and assessment for instruction matched to the learner's ability and performance level. ⊗ DI includes: acceleration, higher order thinking skills, curriculum compacting, learning centers, problem-based learning, tiered lessons, independent or group standards-related projects. | <p>Tiered instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Evidence-based strategies | |
| <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Are program goals being met? ⊗ Is identification assessment identifying exceptional potential in learners? ⊗ Is there representational diversity in the AU's gifted population? ⊗ What are the results of implementing differentiated instructional practices? ⊗ What is evidence of teacher capacity to facilitate gifted education? ⊗ Are student data providing evidence of learning and growth? ⊗ What evidence describes parental engagement? ⊗ Are support systems adequate? | <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Accountability of instructional program ⊗ Summative student data ⊗ Achievement ⊗ Adequacy of personnel training ⊗ Infrastructure, systemic support systems | |

Feedback Form

| School: | Date completed: | |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| Professional Development Area | Strengths | Next Steps |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Leadership</p> | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Curriculum & Instruction</p> | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Problem-Solving Process</p> | | |

| Professional Development Area | Strengths | Next Steps |
|---|-----------|------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Assessment</p> | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">School Climate & Culture</p> | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Parent & Community Engagement</p> | | |