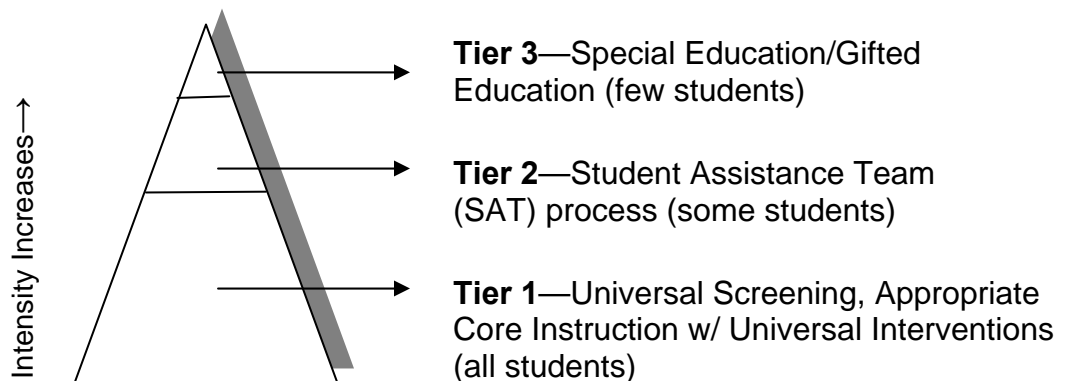


Understanding and Implementing the Response to Intervention (RtI) Framework in New Mexico

A Quick Guide

What is Response to Intervention, or RtI? It is a **framework** being used across the country and strongly encouraged by the federal government as school systems seek ways to ensure success for **all** students, and provide early assistance to students who are experiencing academic and/or behavioral challenges. Simply put, it is a continuum of school-wide support—a way for schools to organize instructional delivery, optimize resources, and use a systems approach to teaching, learning, and behavioral supports. RtI is **not** a student placement model, a location, a classroom, a class/course, or a teacher.

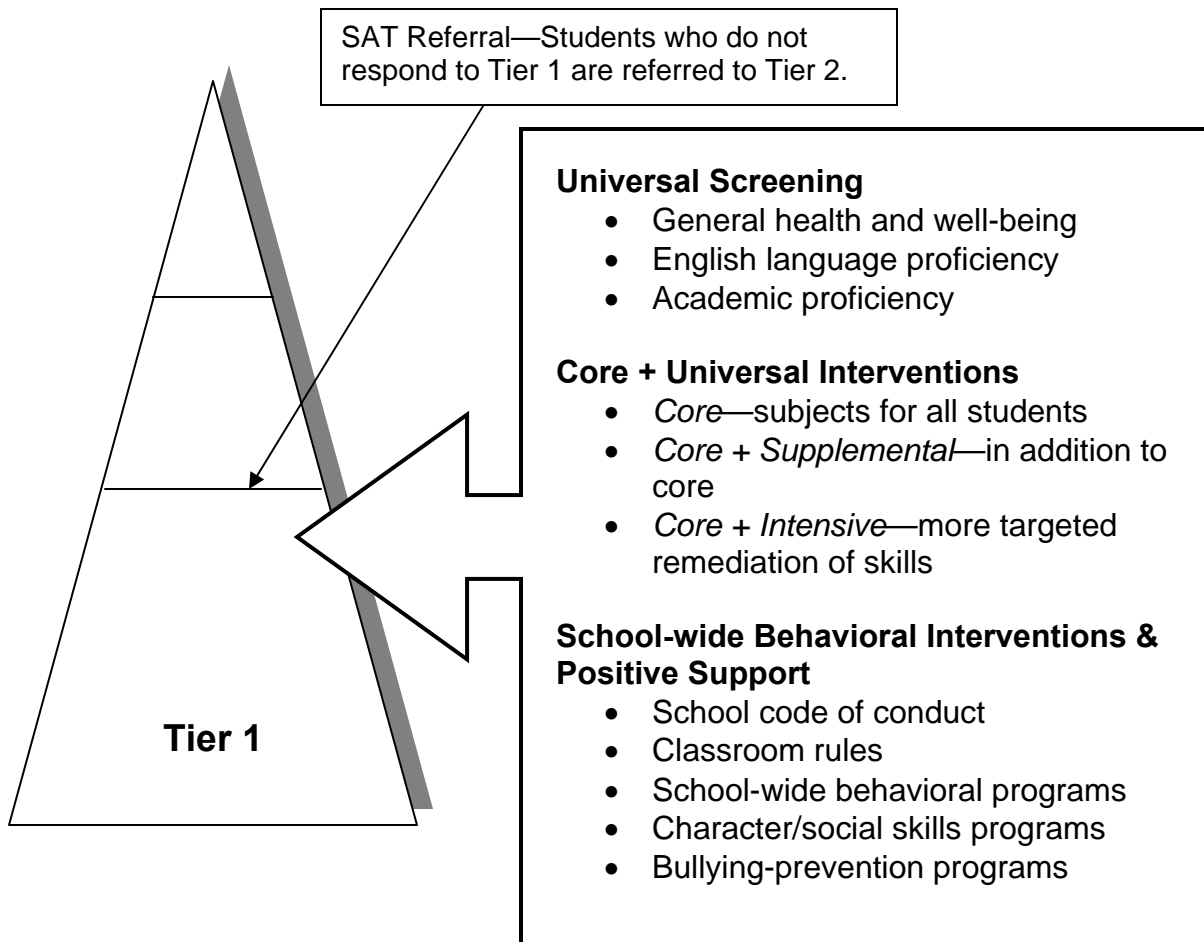
RtI frameworks feature at least three tiers where the academic or behavioral interventions change or become more intense as student needs are addressed in each tier. Currently, each state has defined its own RtI framework, as federal law does not mandate a particular one. In New Mexico, the RtI framework is set forth in state rule at § B–C of 6.31.2.10 NMAC and is known as *the three-tier model of student intervention* as shown below.



Students who struggle academically may also exhibit behavior problems and vice versa. For that reason, both academic and behavioral systems are addressed in a concerted effort in all three tiers.

The information on the pages that follow provides details and features of each tier of the state's RtI framework, as well as general implementation guidance. The state rule requiring that schools operate using the three-tier model of student intervention and this document provides the basic requirements and description for RtI in New Mexico. **From there, schools must develop a local implementation plan to set up internal policies and procedures *within* the tiers and organize their available resources around them.** Since student populations and needs vary, it is expected that no two school districts or even school buildings will have a local implementation plan within the tiers that looks precisely the same. Schools already do many things that support the RtI framework.

Questions about RtI in New Mexico may be directed to the Public Education Department's Quality Assurance Bureau Help Desk at 505-827-4296.



Tier 1—Universal Screening Appropriate Core Instruction with Universal Interventions

The focus of **Tier 1** is universal screening, delivery of the core curriculum, and school-wide behavioral supports. **All** students are screened for

- general health and well-being;
- English language proficiency; and,
- academic proficiency.

All students are bound by the standard code of conduct and receive the core curriculum and social skills training in the general education classroom using differentiated instruction, culturally responsive and research-based programs, and high-yield instructional strategies. When many students lack mastery of the core program, the key tenet is that the curriculum and/or instruction are adjusted. The school must examine data to see if the proficiency problem is school-wide, grade, or classroom specific. Therefore, struggling students receive *supplemental* and

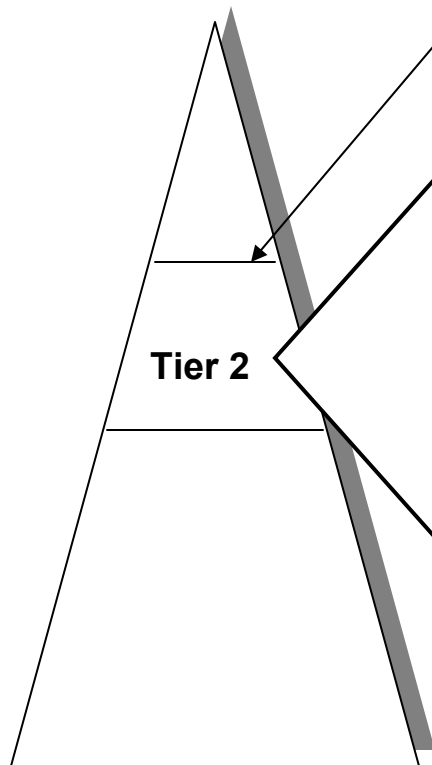
intensive assistance through universal interventions—remedial strategies, smaller group instruction, differentiated instruction or tiered assignments, and/or more instructional time when needed—as determined by the classroom teacher, grade-level teams, or school leadership. Parents are involved through awareness materials provided by the school, parent-teacher conferences, and progress reports.

A student who does not respond to core programs and interventions after a reasonable time is referred to Tier 2—the school’s Student Assistance Team (SAT)—for a more individualized study of what is causing him or her to struggle academically or behaviorally. Students who are exceeding grade-level expectations may also be referred to the SAT for consideration of an enrichment program.

Tier 1 Features and Implementation Considerations

Implementation and monitoring plan (Tier 1)	The school develops its Tier 1 screening schedule and implementation plan, and then embeds it into the school's EPSS—the overall school improvement plan. School-based teams evaluate the fidelity and effectiveness of the EPSS.
Instruction & universal interventions	Daily direct instruction of core for 60-90 minutes. Universal interventions (supplemental or intensive), as necessary. Explicit social skills and behavior instruction.
Provider(s)	Appropriately-licensed classroom teacher. Universal interventions may also be provided by a licensed, supervised support staff and/or specialist such as a bilingual, Title 1, or Indian education teacher, or others as determined by school.
Group size	Whole-group and small-group instruction. Small groups may vary from 3 to 12 students, or as determined by school or teacher.
Frequency of universal interventions	Determined by the school, grade level, or teacher. If providing extra time over core, recommend sessions 3-4 times a week, each lasting 30-60 minutes.
Duration of universal interventions	Core program is ongoing throughout the year. Interventions last 9-18 weeks, and can be repeated as determined by student response.
Progress monitoring tools	Universal screenings, periodic short-cycle assessments, yearly standards-based assessment, student work samples, curriculum-based measures, office discipline referral data.
Frequency of progress monitoring	3-4 times a year per short-cycle assessment schedule. Students receiving universal interventions may need more frequent monitoring as determined by school.
Decision rules—what determines movement up or down between tiers	The school determines what cut scores on assessments indicate mastery, satisfactory growth, or the need for more intense intervention/remediation, regrouping students, and parent involvement. Recommend considering SAT referral for students who consistently score in the lowest 20% of grade-level on short-cycle assessments only <i>after</i> universal interventions tried. Need for SAT referral for behavior based on discipline data for student.
Funding	Operational and school improvement funds, applicable grants, Title I/ Title III funds as allowed. For federal fund guidance see http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/08-0398rti.pdf .
Service target	National models suggest that 80% of a school's students should be able to be served through Tier 1. If not, the core program and practices and/or behavioral systems need to be evaluated. The 80% target may not be possible in all cases, so moving into the 50-70% range over time is considered to be a signal of progress.
Professional development	Core program delivery (ongoing), differentiated instruction, data analysis, data-based decision-making, student and classroom management, teaching and interventions for culturally-different learners

Referral for evaluation—Students who do not respond to Tier 2 may be referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation.



Individual Child Study Process

- Conducted by the SAT
- All available student data gathered and analyzed

SAT Intervention Plan

- Individualized, written plan
- More intense interventions
- More frequent progress monitoring

Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)

- Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) conducted
- Individualized written plan for behavioral support

Section 504 Accommodation Plan Academic Improvement Plan (AIP)

Tier 2—Student Assistance Team (SAT) process

The focus of **Tier 2** is to provide supplemental and individualized support for at-risk students for whom Tier 1 instruction and universal interventions prove insufficient. Using the child study process, the SAT (which includes the student's parents) gathers all available data about a student, hypothesizes a possible cause for the problem, and then designs an individualized SAT Intervention Plan or Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP), if necessary.

What can the SAT or Behavioral Intervention Plans do that Tier 1 programs cannot? They provide all that occurs in Tier 1, but they ramp up *intensity* for an individual student—that is, the frequency and duration of the interventions, reduced group size, and/or using specialists to deliver the instruction. Or, the SAT may design specialized interventions like replacing the core or social skills program, or reteaching it.

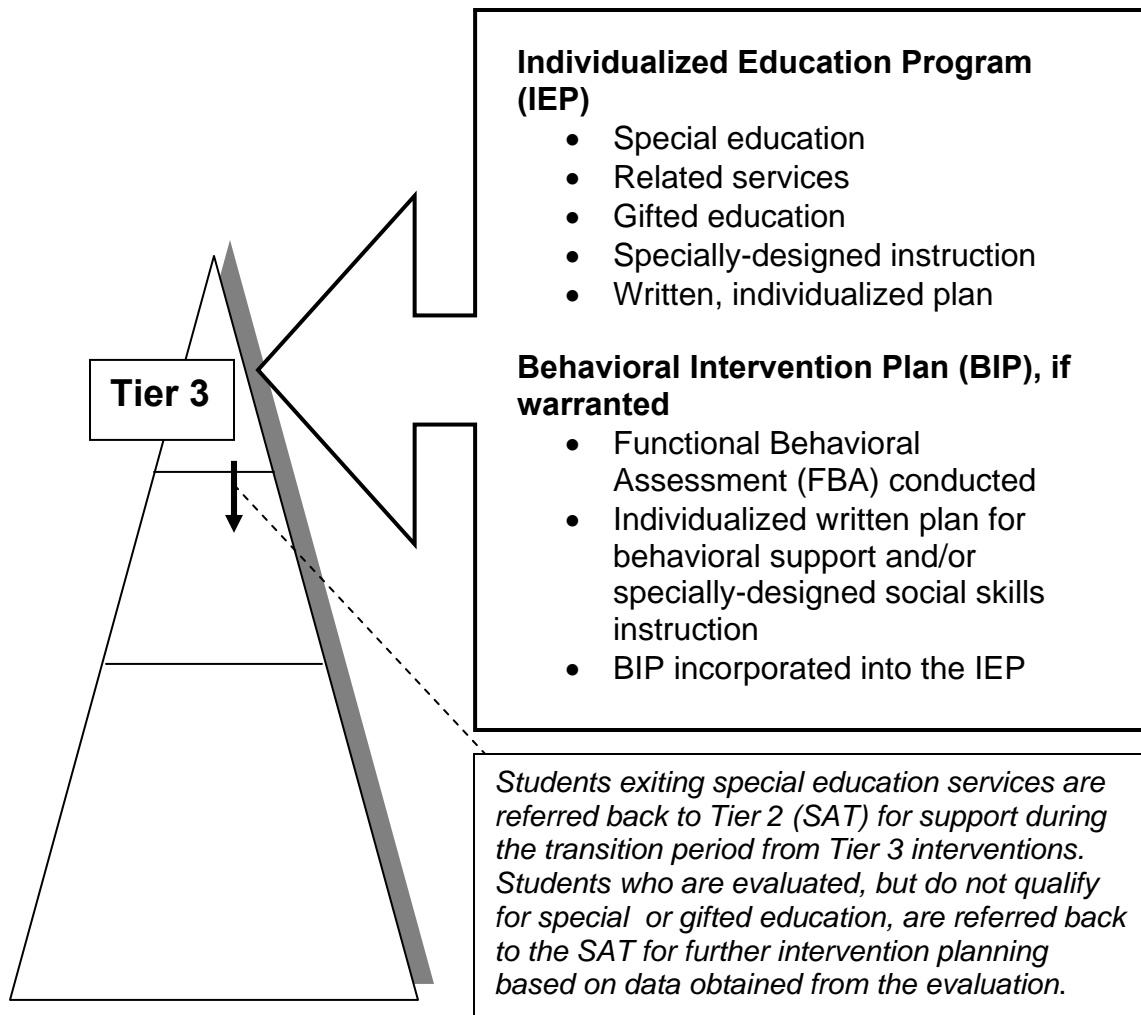
Tier 2 also provides for more frequent progress monitoring so the SAT can make faster adjustments for the at-risk student.

The SAT also serves as the Section 504 Team, as needed, and has responsibilities under state statutes for designing Academic Improvement Plans (AIPs) for students facing retention. Those procedures are outlined in the State's SAT and Section 504 technical assistance manuals at www.ped.state.nm.us.

A student who does not respond positively to the SAT Intervention Plan or BIP may warrant a referral for a multidisciplinary evaluation to consider the possible need for special education. Students who show need for specialized enrichment may also be referred for a gifted evaluation. Students who are obviously disabled or in a crisis need immediate referral for evaluation.

Tier 2 Features and Implementation Considerations

Implementation and monitoring plan (Tier 2)	The school establishes its own SAT. The team develops its own needs assessment and ongoing improvement plan which may be embedded into the school's EPSS. Building administrator assesses SAT implementation and fidelity.
Instruction & Interventions	Possible replacement or reteaching of core program/social skills. Targeted interventions through a written SAT Intervention Plan or a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).
Provider(s)	Appropriately-licensed classroom teacher and/or specialists as determined by the SAT and documented in written SAT plan
Group size	Individual or small-group instruction as determined by the SAT. Recommend that student receive instruction in groups of 2 to 3.
Frequency of interventions	Determined by the SAT. If providing extra time over core, recommend daily session lasting 60-90 minutes.
Duration of intervention	Recommend 9-18 weeks. Duration can be shortened or a round repeated as determined by the SAT and student's response.
Progress monitoring tools	Universal screenings, yearly standards-based assessment, periodic short-cycle assessments, student work samples, curriculum-based measures, and/or student behavior data
Frequency of progress monitoring	In addition to short-cycle assessment schedule, the SAT determines more frequent progress monitoring. Recommend weekly or bi-weekly.
Decision rules	The SAT determines what indicators of more frequent progress monitoring show satisfactory growth, the need for another round of interventions, or the need for more intense interventions.
Upon mastery	Student may continue with the SAT Intervention Plan or BIP, or be exited and returned to Tier 1 instruction/programs when performance can be maintained with universal interventions.
Lack of positive response	SAT may determine if student's lack of response to Tier 1 and 2 warrants a referral for a multidisciplinary evaluation for consideration of special education services or gifted education. <i>Note:</i> Under the IDEA, parents may ask the school to <i>consider</i> a request for an evaluation at any time and the request is not conditioned upon failure or having to advance through the tiers
Funding	Operational and school improvement funds, applicable grants, Title I /Title III / Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) funds as allowed by IDEA and state rule. For federal guidance see http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/08-0398rti.pdf
Service target	National models suggest that no more than 15-20% of a school's students can be effectively served by the SAT without compromising the school's delivery infrastructure. High rate of SAT referrals and/or retention recommendations suggest that the Tier 1 core program and practices need to be evaluated.
Professional development	Tier 1 topics, SAT procedures, functional behavioral assessment (FBA), and behavioral interventions.



Tier 3—Special Education/Gifted Education

In New Mexico, the definition of **Tier 3** is special education and related services for students with identified disabilities under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the state criteria of gifted. In making the eligibility determination for Tier 3, the educational diagnostician and the multidisciplinary team will take into account student response data from interventions tried and documented from Tiers 1 and 2.

Students being served through Tier 3 procedures are the most at-risk academically or behaviorally and they demonstrate a need for intensive help and specially -designed instruction. In Tier 3, the student’s IEP team is responsible for developing the

individualized programming, as well as determining the need for any related services and/or behavioral support. Parents are part of the IEP team.

Under the IDEA, students with disabilities must receive their education to the maximum extent possible in the general education classroom. So, although students being served at Tier 3 through a written IEP receive the most intense interventions, they do so alongside peers in the general education classroom as much as possible. Therefore, it is important to remember that Rtl is not a student *placement* model or location. Rather, Rtl is the organizational system by which schools design and deliver instruction.

Tier 3 Features and Implementation Considerations

Implementation and monitoring plan (Tier 3)	School's procedures must be conducted in compliance with the federal IDEA and state special education rules. Compliance and fidelity overseen by building or district administrator.
Instruction & Interventions	Specially-designed instruction through a written IEP, as well as a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP), if warranted
Provider(s)	Appropriately-licensed classroom teacher, special education teacher, and/or specialists and related service providers. Determined by the IEP team and documented in IEP service schedule.
Group size	Individual, small-, or whole-group instruction as specified in the IEP. Provided in the general education classroom to the extent possible as determined by the IEP team
Frequency of interventions	Determined by the IEP team depending on individual student need
Duration of intervention	IEP determines length of time before IEP is reviewed, but at least annually. Possible long-term interventions necessary.
Progress monitoring tools	Yearly standards-based assessment, periodic short-cycle assessments, student work samples, curriculum-based measures, diagnostic tests, behavior observation data collection
Frequency of progress monitoring	In addition to short-cycle assessment schedule, the IEP team determines the level of more frequent progress monitoring and documents it in the IEP. Recommend weekly. IEP team determines if student participates in standards-based or alternate assessment, as well as what testing accommodations are needed.
Decision rules	The IEP team determines what indicators from progress monitoring of the individual student show growth or the need for more intense intervention and/or remediation via the IEP.
Upon mastery	Student may be continued in special education or exited and returned to Tier 1 or 2 instruction/programs. IEP team determines mastery of IEP goals.
Funding	Operational funds, IDEA funds, applicable grants
Service target	National models suggest that no more than 1-5 % of the student population at a school need this level of support. However, given that New Mexico includes gifted education (4.3%) at Tier 3 and current national percentages for students with disabilities average 13.5%, the State has determined that 18% or less would be an acceptable service target for Tier 3.
Professional development	In addition to Tier 1 and 2 professional development topics, relevant IEP team members need to participate in ongoing trainings related to special education and IDEA procedures/topics.

Rtl Glossary—Featured Terms

Core curriculum is a course of study which is deemed critical and usually made mandatory for all students of a school or school system. Core curricula must be scientific and research-based.

Curriculum-Based Measures (CBMs) are direct assessments of student skills administered in standardized manner that are aligned to state content standards and benchmarks. They are typically brief, timed samples. Student-level results are typically graphed and compared to classroom peers.

Fidelity refers to the degree to which Rtl components are implemented as designed, intended, and planned. Fidelity is achieved through sufficient time allocation, adequate intervention intensity, qualified and trained staff, and sufficient materials and resources. Fidelity is vital in universal screening, instructional delivery, and progress monitoring

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a problem-solving process that relies on a variety of techniques and strategies to identify the “triggers” and purposes of specific behavior enabling school teams to better select interventions to directly address the problem behavior. An FBA lays the foundation for a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).

High-yield instructional strategies are research-based teaching strategies that increase student achievement. See *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research–Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (ASCD) by Dr. Robert J. Marzano, et. al.

Intervention is any change to increase the *intensity* of instruction. Changes can be made in the areas of program, time, grouping, or instructor skill level. Interventions are successful when data shows a narrowing of the achievement gap and/or a reduction in problem behavior and an increase in the desired replacement behavior.

Multidisciplinary evaluation is a battery of individual diagnostic tests conducted by an educational diagnostician used to assess a student’s possible need for special education services or gifted education.

Progress monitoring is the process used to assess the effectiveness of instruction and evaluate a student’s response to it. Progress monitoring happens in all tiers.

Tiered instruction is the level of instructional intensity *within* a tier. **Tiered assignments** are ones where students in a class work on different levels of activities depending on skill level toward a common objective. Tiered assignments or instruction can be interventions.

Tiered model is a common model of three or more tiers that comprise an overall Rtl framework and delineates how a school or system organizes to deliver instruction based on student need. New Mexico uses a three-tier model defined in state rule at § B–C of 6.31.2.10 NMAC.

Universal interventions are best instructional practices, part of effective instruction, and are the first line of intervention for all students. They are applied on a school-wide, grade-level, or classroom basis.

Web-based Resources for Rtl

- ★ Public Education Department’s Rtl website www.ped.state.nm.us/Rtl/index.html
- ★ Rtl Action Network www.rtinetwork.org
- ★ National Center on Response to Intervention www.rti4success.org
- ★ IRIS Center for Rtl Training Modules <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources.html>