

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²)

A Pre -K - 12 General Education System of Support



BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Response to Instruction & Intervention (RTI²)
Advisory Committee
2011-12

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Response to Instruction and Intervention:

An Overview of Theory and Practice

Berkeley Unified School District's Mission, Vision, Values

Berkeley Unified School District Mission:

The Mission of the Berkeley Unified School District is to enable and inspire our diverse student body to achieve academic excellence and make positive contributions to our world.

Values and Beliefs of Berkeley Unified School District:

Educators in Berkeley believe that improving educational outcomes for underperforming students improves outcomes for all students. Equity and academic excellence work in tandem and both are a priority in our schools.

- Students are our priority.
- We take pride in our diversity.
- We hold high expectations for ourselves and our students.
- We treat each other with respect and act with integrity.

Berkeley Unified School District Vision:

Our Students are curious and creative learners who succeed through personal initiative and sustained effort to reach high academic goals. They are critical thinkers who seek knowledge and possess technological competence and collaborative skills. Our students embrace diversity, act responsibly, and contribute to our community.

Our Educators believe that all students can meet or exceed rigorous academic standards.

Teachers, staff, and administrators together form a rich professional learning community where all are supported to hone our professional craft and improve our effectiveness. Through the examination of our instructional practices and data, we adjust our teaching and operational systems in order to continuously improve. We are responsible in the stewardship of our fiscal resources and fair and equitable in their distribution.

Our Families and Community are integral to the success of our students and schools. Families are active, engaged and welcomed partners in their child's education, who give valued input and participate in making important decisions about our academic and enrichment programs. Our diverse community is passionate about equitable educational outcomes for all students. Our civic and community organizations partner with us to promote family engagement and the well-being and success of our students.

Our Schools are vital centers of community life enriched by the diversity of our city and welcoming to all families. Each classroom offers engaging and culturally relevant curriculum that builds on students' interests and abilities. Student needs, as identified by regular assessment, inform our teaching and guide appropriate and effective intervention services. We offer an enriched learning environment and a comprehensive system of supports to address the needs of the whole child.

BUSD and RTI²

The Berkeley Unified School District believes that the implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) aligns with our aspirations to accomplish our District's Mission and Vision, helping us create equitable access for all BUSD students. Through the use of data, high-quality aligned core curriculum, a tiered approach to intervention and ongoing professional development for all staff, we believe all students will be provided an academically

appropriate education in a positive and productive environment with supports for students who are not yet reaching their potential.

Why RTI²?

According to Buffum, Mattos and Weber, “Once a school makes student learning its fundamental mission, it manifests a sense of professional and moral urgency to do whatever it takes to ensure that all students succeed. This sense of urgency should be the driving force behind response to intervention.¹” RTI² allows for teams of educators to gather data on specific student needs and provide them with support at the first signs of concern. RTI² is a process derived from the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004. Prior to this, students were typically only able to receive targeted interventions through special education after failing to meet grade-level expectations for a significant period of time.

In BUSD one of the most compelling reasons to adopt the RTI² model is to address the disproportionate number of students of color in our district who are eligible for special education services. Nationwide, and in BUSD, about half of all students who qualify for special education are found eligible under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD). According to current BUSD data 12% of our total student population, in grades pre-K through 12, is identified as needing special education under one of the 13 disability categories. African American students are 22% of the total BUSD student population but compose 41% of our

¹ Buffum, A., Mattos, M., Weber, C. *Pyramid Response to Intervention: RTI, professional learning communities, and how to respond when kids don't learn.* 2009

students eligible for special education services. This means we have a significantly higher percentage of African American students who qualify for special education services in relation to other student subgroups. BUSD data also indicate that the number of African American students found eligible for special education under the category of Emotionally Disturbed (ED) is significantly disproportionate. Nationally, only about 1% of all the students who qualify for special education are found to no longer need the specific services. This suggests that special education services are indeed needed and appropriate in some cases but are not the most effective intervention for all students. Looking forward, RTI² gives us a broader range of options to help students within the general education framework.

WHAT IS RTI²?

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) is a data-driven, multi-tiered approach to the early identification and support of all students, including those who demonstrate learning and behavioral challenges. RTI² begins with high-quality, culturally responsive differentiated instruction, positive behavior systems, universal screening and data analysis of all children's learning in the general education classroom. When students are not yet proficient despite high-quality core instruction and positive behavior support, a team of educators comes together in a problem solving setting to identify the academic and behavioral needs of those students. ***RTI² is not a particular program, but rather a process. RTI² works with the Universal Learning Support System (ULSS) model adopted by Berkeley Unified School District: it offers a way to systematically use data to identify who is not yet proficient and provide support to get students to meet grade level expectations.***

Students who are not yet proficient academically are provided with targeted instruction and interventions at increasing levels of intensity and specificity in addition to quality core instruction to accelerate the rate of learning. Similarly, students who do not respond consistently to whole class and school-wide positive behavior systems are provided with additional supports and behavior interventions until he/she shows adequate progress. Therefore RTI² is a fluid multi-layered approach.

In order to truly grasp the Response to Instruction and Intervention process, a few significant cultural shifts are necessary:

- First, the school must function as a community where ideas, resources and expertise are shared for the benefit of all students. Highly structured professional learning communities or collaborative team meetings are the organizational frameworks necessary to conduct the sharing of information, resources and expertise. Interventions or enrichments can be provided by a variety of personnel, including teachers, educational coaches, specialists, after school program staff, and other outreach or support staff. Regular communication with parents about student progress is also a key part of the RTI² process.
- Second, decisions about student learning must be made based on strategically collected data that help determine not only if a student is learning but how we will respond to that student's learning and behavioral needs. This information comes from diagnostic assessments and behavioral data that tell us the specific point where a student is not responding to instruction or behavior systems.
- Third, general education and special education can no longer be completely separate entities; we must work together to support all students. As a unified school district we are embracing a process of data-driven, community-oriented practice that brings teachers and students out of isolation and employs the entire school community to identify the specific needs and appropriate supports for all students, in all areas, at all times.

The BUSD Framework for the RTI² Pyramid

The most common conceptual model of Response to Instruction and Intervention is represented by a pyramid structure. Within this section you will find a version of the RTI² pyramid created by the Berkeley Unified School District RTI² Advisory Committee. The pyramid used by our district has three Tiers or levels of intensity. As you move from bottom to top, the needs of the student increase as well as the intensity of intervention. Note that the RTI² model

applies to academic as well as behavioral instruction and intervention. Within the RTI² framework, it is also important that district leadership, including site administrators, are providing ample support and training to ensure all teachers have the resources and knowledge necessary to provide the highest quality instruction possible.

Tier 1

In the RTI² model, Tier 1 is the practice of providing high quality instruction, behavior supports and interventions to all students. At any given time at least 80% of students are able to master the core grade level curriculum and behavior expectations within the general education instructional block. Quality core instruction includes the use of Berkeley Unified School District adopted curriculum, Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) and the application of the BUSD Instructional Practices (see appendix). If less than 80% of students are responding to core instruction, the teacher will need to adjust instruction to meet the learning needs of all students. Teachers should reteach content to ensure that all students are mastering standards and meeting behavioral expectations. Instruction must include classroom and school-wide positive behavior structures that ensure all students are actively engaged in the learning process and explicitly teach and reinforce behavior expectations in all school settings.

Differentiated instruction in Tier 1 must include specific interventions or accelerations based on student needs. Interventions within Tier 1 are designed to ensure the greatest number of students learn the intended standard or demonstrate behavior expectations. All Tier

1 academic interventions and many Tier 1 behavior interventions happen within the classroom during the regular instructional block.

RTI² in Tier 1 begins with data analysis. Based on data from universal screening, benchmark data, diagnostic assessment and/or specific classroom observations, schools should implement Tier 1 interventions. When students are not mastering a specific standard or their behavior is interfering with educational performance, schools use the data to identify which skill students are missing in order to master grade level standards. Once a school has analyzed data and identified skills students need to master, schools plan ways to build the skills students need and differentiate core instruction. Furthermore, the school PBIS team should review data from suspensions, office discipline referrals, and data on minor behavior incidents frequently to inform decisions about school-wide behavioral instruction and interventions.

Tier 2

After consistent Tier 1 instruction and/ or behavioral support, about 20% of students may continue to exhibit learning or behavioral difficulties, and they will need even more intensive, individualized and targeted interventions. In addition to the supports within Tier 1 and the general classroom, a student may require more intensive intervention: more intensive could mean more time, more specific feedback and a smaller group with prescriptive instruction. It is critical to maintain Tier 1 instruction and interventions while providing the additional Tier 2 interventions. Tier 2 academic interventions provide students with an additional 20-30 minutes of small group, skill-building instruction 3-4 days each week outside of the core instructional block. Based on data from assessments, it can also include one on one

instruction that develops necessary skills to achieve student mastery. Behavioral interventions at Tier 2 are also more targeted, individualized and intensive. Tier 2 behavior interventions could include but are not limited to: developing individual positive behavior plans, providing additional social skills instruction, small group or individual counseling or the assignment of an adult mentor.

In developing and implementing Tier 2 interventions, it is important that students are matched to appropriate interventions based on the data available. We must use the data to help determine where an individual student is in their skill development. The teacher, along with support from other school staff and collaborative teams, must identify target skills, academic or behavioral, to determine the exact point at which the student has not responded to Tier 1 instruction and behavior supports. While universal screening measures and benchmark tests are the data used within Tier 1, Tier 2 interventions require additional diagnostic assessments. Diagnostic assessments give a more detailed picture of the student's skills so we can be more specific about the intervention. Classroom observations and an analysis of office referrals and incident reports for an individual student are examples of tools used to determine appropriate behavioral interventions at this level.

Interventions must be research-proven to address the specific skill need. At this level, student progress is carefully watched through progress monitoring: every one - two weeks the student is given a quick assessment or behavioral data is collected and reviewed to determine his/her progress on a specific skill. If the intervention is effective, the student's academic scores and behavior should improve. Diagnostic assessments and additional data can help

determine the best intervention match for the student, as well as determine how interventions will change over time as the student makes progress. Students may go through any number of Tier 2 interventions if their needs are multi-layered.

For example, at the elementary school level, Tier 2 interventions may look like regrouping or push-in by the specialized intervention teachers or the use of a supplemental program such as Read Naturally, Quick Reads, Fountas and Pinnell reading program, Pinpoint Math or Compass Learning. At the secondary school level, students also may receive mandatory homework support or mandatory tutoring after school as well as push in or supplemental specialist instruction in addition to the core curriculum. (See Appendix). Tier 2 interventions could also include collaborative goal-setting and targeted rewards to increase student engagement and relationship building as well students who need support in mastering skills.

Tier 3

After consistent Tier 1 and 2 instruction and/ or behavioral support, about 5% of students may continue to exhibit learning or behavioral difficulties, and they will need even more intensive, individualized and targeted interventions. If a student does not make progress after a reasonable amount of time of receiving Tier 2 interventions, Tier 3 interventions may be considered. Tier 3 support and instruction is targeted for students who may or may not currently receive special education services, but who do require more intensive academic or behavioral interventions. The frequent progress monitoring at Tier 3 is used to establish whether a student's lack of responsiveness to interventions is caused by lack of systematic

intervention or is caused by the presence of a learning disability or a disabling condition. Just as with Tier 2, progress monitoring tools and behavioral data show us if the student is making progress in the targeted skill or behavior.

Tier 3 interventions may be provided in a variety of ways. These interventions are highly individualized, more intensive in terms of time and focus, and are provided by highly-trained staff. RTI² literature suggests that “the main difference between Tiers 2 and 3 are not necessarily the interventions themselves, but the frequency, duration, and progress monitoring requirements”². Interventions at this level may be provided for up to 90 minutes a day, typically last 12-18 weeks, are mandatory, and are provided during and/ or outside school hours with fidelity. They may be provided in a one to one format, in a small group format, or as a whole class intervention program. For example, at the elementary school level, Tier 3 interventions may look like pull out or push in by the specialized intervention teachers or the use of a supplemental program such as Reading Recovery, Read Naturally, or Pinpoint Math. At the secondary school level, students also may receive push in or pull out specialist instruction and schools may opt to replace core curriculum classes with intervention programs such as Read 180, System 44, and Fast Math. (See Appendix). Tier 3 behavioral interventions may be based on the results of a Functional Analysis Assessment (FAA) or a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), assessments that look at the underlying motivation for a student’s behavior (to escape, avoid, or get something). Interventions might focus on teaching the child more appropriate

²Buffum, A., Mattos, M., Weber, C. *Pyramid Response to Intervention: RTI, professional learning communities, and how to respond when kids don’t learn.* 2009

ways to get their underlying needs met and could include a more intensive behavior support plan, individualized positive reinforcement schedules, individualized social skill instruction, or individualized mental health support. At the middle and high school levels, Tier 3 behavioral interventions may also include participation in the Lifelines Academy or in Restorative Justice Community Conferences.

Progress monitoring also happens more frequently at this level to ensure a student is showing growth in the specific area of academic or behavioral need. For Tier 3 interventions, teams evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention at least once a week (and for some interventions, daily or biweekly) to inform decision making about teaching and intervention strategies.

To best prevent the ongoing development of academic and behavioral difficulties, and to best utilize our limited resources and staff, it is important to put most of our energy into developing strong systems of Tier 1 and 2 interventions and practices, especially in the first years of developing the BUSD RTI² model.