

# Reflecting on the Research

**Instructions:** Read the article titled “*How to Implement Response to Intervention at the Secondary Level*” and discuss the following with your PLC Team.

1) **Definition:** What is Response to Intervention (RtI) according to this article?

2) **Self Assessment:** How does our practice at Athena compare with the “*How to Implement*” sections under each part of the article? Use specific phrases from the article as evidence to fill in this chart.

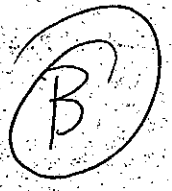
RtI Principles	Areas of Strength for Athena	Areas of Weakness for Athena
Fix Core Curriculum		
Embrace the Team Concept		
Catch Students Before They Fall		
Forget the Triangle		
Social-Emotional Awareness		

3) **Blog Posting:** Have one member of your team post the following on the blog (on the RtI section).

- What was the Most Valuable Point (MVP) from the article?
- What was one point you disagreed with from the article?
- What is a possible next step for Athena on our RtI journey?



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## How to Implement Response to Intervention at the Secondary Level

BY PJ CAPOSEY  
9/8/11

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PJ Caposey is the principal at Oregon High School in Oregon, IL. You can follow him on Twitter at @principalpc.

In the past five years, Response to Intervention (RtI) has become one of the most discussed, researched, and implemented educational improvement programs. The process -- which was originally designed to improve core curriculum and the interventions given to students whose needs were not being met by the core curriculum -- has been transformed into a cookie-cutter three-tier system. Furthermore, this over-simplified approach is now almost universally accepted, as evidenced by the model being displayed on the Pearson Assessment: Welcome to RtI Web page.

While the canned RtI model may correlate to school improvement at the primary and middle levels, it does not do so at the secondary level. Simply implementing RtI, or having designated RtI time, does very little to lead to positive school improvement at the secondary level when it's not implemented appropriately. It is the responsibility of secondary school leaders to make RtI apply to the personality, climate, and the needs of their school. While my sincere belief is that there is no boxed plan, curriculum, or intervention that can (on its own) improve schools, I do believe that identifying and applying principles of successful programs can make a significant impact on students throughout the country.

### 1. Fix Core Curriculum

In Robert Marzano's *What Works in Schools (2000)*, his research indicates a guaranteed and viable curriculum has the most significant impact on student achievement. Intervention (in terms of RtI) is the specific change in instruction to help meet the needs of a student. Conceptually, this makes this little sense. If the original product was not meeting the needs of the students because it was a poor product, then changing instruction to hope the student returns to receiving the poor instruction does not better the situation. While this sounds ridiculous, it is happening in many schools across America. Textbooks are frequently used as the driving force behind instruction and promote the rote memorization, drill and kill, and lower order thinking skills that dominate high school classrooms throughout the nation. The attempt to implement a new idea or program without fixing the backbone of the school (core curriculum) occurs far too frequently.



How to Implement: <sup>1</sup> Fix the curriculum. <sup>2</sup> Align the curriculum to standards, maintain high expectations, and <sup>3</sup> monitor it frequently. High school curriculum is far too often driven by content and not skills. The adoption of the core curriculum standards addresses this issue directly,

### Blogs

- Recent Blog Posts
- About Blogs and the Contributors
- Contributors:

- Elena Aguilar  
Transformational leadership coach in Oakland, CA
- Rebecca Alber  
Edutopia consulting online editor and teaches online education at Stanford
- Suzie Boss  
Writer about sustainability and project learning
- Eric Brunsell  
STEM educator
- Lisa Dabbs  
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- Maurice Elias  
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- Todd Finley  
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- Mary Beth Hertz  
Elementary school computer teacher

promoting fewer, higher, and clearer standards that call for schools to either adopt new curricula or significantly adapt their current curricula. Educational leaders need to ensure that the curricula taught in their schools are aligned to standards without gaps and redundancies.

### 2. Embrace the Team Concept

The teaming and collaborative concepts driving PLC's, and the newest trend, PLN's is dead-on. Educators are increasingly embracing the concept of team, however, in most secondary schools teams are driven by common subject matter and not common students. This is a positive trend, but it's not the answer. The academy or middle school model for ninth grade students is essential to providing them the best opportunity at high school success.

*How to Implement:* Department and subject level teams are not enough. Schools teach students, not subjects. Common teachers need to share common students, especially at the ninth grade level. Educational leaders must use creative scheduling to give a ninth grade team common planning time. Even in small high schools a leader has enough flexibility in scheduling to implement something that will truly impact student learning. Team meetings can be effective in a variety of ways, as long as the focus remains on students and learning. For instance, one team meeting can focus on a particular student's social-emotional status, and the next might be a longitudinal data analysis of student achievement. Meetings will always have impact as long as the focus remains on students and not on teachers.

### 3. Catch Students Before They Fail

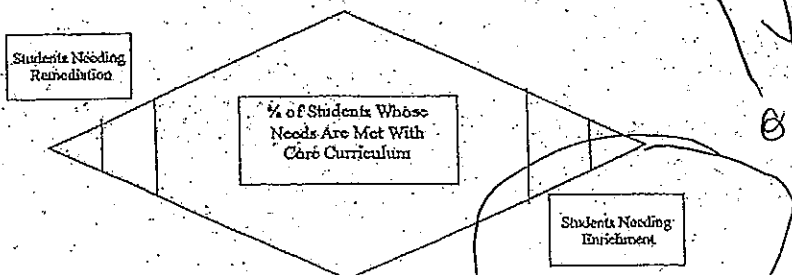
As educators, we know (or more importantly, have the ability to know) which students may struggle in high school well before the doors open each fall. It is too late to make the decision to provide intervention or support anytime later than the second semester of a student's 8th grade year. Identified students should receive mentoring and intervention to ease the transition process. Academic interventions should be built into their schedule from Day One on campus. This not only ensures the intervention starts immediately, but potentially saves the student from embarrassment of being moved from an existing course.

*How to Implement:* As educational leaders, it is our responsibility to build relationships with our feeder schools and identify kids that may not now, but will need our help. This includes leaders providing release time for teachers to meet and the creation of a rubric to guide the selection process. As with all components of a successful secondary RtI process, the rubric needs to address local needs. The rubric we use includes teacher and counselor recommendations focusing on social-emotional issues in conjunction with student achievement and attendance data. Using this simple formula has allowed us to identify the 10 percent of the population that most needs attention. Observing students once they arrive at our site has allowed us to tweak the selection process from year-to-year to best fit our local needs.












### 4. Forget the Triangle

*Enrich + Intervene*

The RtI model will not maximize its impact for any school that has classified RtI as a triangle-shaped program with pre-determined numbers in each tier (commonly 80/15/5). An effective RtI process can be described as a diamond with locally determined (and frequently changing) numbers in each section. This RtI model allows for schools to provide a change in instruction for all kids whose needs are not met by the core curriculum. RtI should also be viewed as a continuum of services with the goal (using the model below) for all students to be continually moving along the continuum to the right.



*How to Implement:* Forget the triangle and find ways to support all learners whose needs are

-  Ben Johnson  
An education consultant, master teacher, and trainer
-  Bob Lenz  
Founder of Envision Schools and four urban charter high schools
-  Andrew Marcinek  
High school technology integration specialist
-  Andrew Miller  
Ed consultant and online educator
-  Danielle Moss Lee  
President, CEO of Harlem Educational Activities Fund
-  Anne O'Brien  
Deputy director of the Learning First Alliance
-  Mark Phillips  
Columnist and professor emeritus of secondary ed at San Francisco State
-  Nicholas Provenzano  
English teacher and tech curriculum specialist
-  Betty Ray  
Edutopia community manager
-  Judy Willis  
Neurologist, former teacher, author, and lecturer
-  Heather Wolpert-Gawron  
Teacher at a middle school in San Gabriel, CA

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not met by the core curriculum. Focus time and energy on providing enrichment activities to support learners that needs are not satisfied by the core curriculum. Create opportunities that extend the curriculum through local creativity and innovation. Take advantage of local partnerships. Our high school has dual credit agreements with three different institutions and has created independent study courses for approximately 15+ percent of the twelfth grade population. These courses are designed to mutually benefit the student and the school by optimizing their talents in a manner that benefits the school while developing skills that will help them in the future.

5. **Social-Emotional Awareness and Support**

*2 slides to Academic*  
*single session*

Is secondary RTI all about the ninth grade? No, but a quality program should divert the majority of their resources to that end.

A typical eleventh grade student with a 2.7 GPA that suddenly begins failing three classes has some outside of school issue impacting his or her performance. It may be divorce, substance abuse, mental health issues, or any other number of factors, but it generally is in the realm of social and emotional health.

Intervention can only be provided, in these cases, if local data is monitored regularly, adequate staffing exists to provide the intervention, and staff communication is outstanding.

**How to implement:** We must know, value, and support all learners in our building. We must study our local data, and intervene with as much fervor for a student with a social-emotional issue as we do for a student with an achievement issue.

How have you implemented RTI at the secondary level? Do you have any tips you can share?

If you like this, you might also like

- Intervention for Failing Students: What Matters Most? by Rebecca Alber
- RTI and Special Ed Edutopia Group Discussion