



**A+[®] Family of Products
and Response to Intervention**

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A+® Family of Products and Response to Intervention

Educators have been using information to guide instruction since the beginning of recorded history. Socrates gives his name to a method of teaching driven entirely by asking questions, and the student's response to the question guides the next question that will be asked. The teacher is responding to student, and the student responds to instruction.

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been given to students with learning disabilities. In the 1980's and 1990's rigid rules about what identifies a student as learning disabled became ingrained in the way schools operated. These rules were based on test scores on achievement and intelligence. At the same time, a growing movement said these rules did account for differences among children and that there is a better way to identify children with learning disabilities. That movement had a very practical method for identification - provide the interventions that usually work with most children when they have problem learning, and if the intervention does not work, the child likely has a learning disability. As a result, the measurement and means to identify children as learning disabled became the examination of how the child responds to intervention.

All of the procedural safeguards of special education would still apply with its timelines, committees, and record keeping requirements. The difference was that the rigid rules of discrepancy formulas began to break down. Then, in the reauthorization of the federal special education law in 2004, this method of identifying children with learning disabilities became law, and the rules for the implementation of the law were published in August of 2005 to take effect in October of 2006 (34 CFR Parts 300 and 301). Here is what the rules said:

§ 300.307(a) *General A* State must adopt, consistent with § 300.39, criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in §300.8(c)(10). In addition, the criteria adopted by the State -

- (1) Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in §300.8(c)(10);
- (2) Must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention; and
- (3) May permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined in §300.8(c)(10).

So, while there have been advocates who supported education interventions that take into account student response throughout history, the reauthorization of the special education law in 2004 brought about rules that States must implement. With those rules came funds that created a reason for the implementation of the law to become widespread. Soon, a descriptive phrase in

federal regulation became common language. We now know that phrase as Response to Intervention or RTI.

As each of the 50 States implements the requirements of the federal regulations, each takes on a slightly different emphasis. The purpose of this paper is to explain response to intervention in general terms and to discuss how the A+® family of products can be an integral part of a school, district, or state's implementation of a response to intervention model. With that in mind, this paper will have four sections:

- Components of a Response to Intervention (RTI) Program
- A Model of RTI
- Why Use RTI
- Response to Intervention and the *A+ family of products*

Components of an RTI Program

To begin, let us start with a definition of response to intervention from a respected source.

Response to Intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities.

National Center on Response to Intervention, www.rti4success.org

It is clear from this definition that there are several components to an RTI program. Each will be described, and a discussion of the use A+ products within the model will follow.

Multi-Level

The essential concept of the multi-level approach of RTI is that the intensity of instruction will vary with the intensity of the need of the student. Not all students need the same level of instruction to be successful. This principle of RTI is that each student should receive instruction at the level of his or her need.

Identify Students at Risk

Next is the principle of actively seeking out students who are at-risk for poor learning outcomes. This concept demands an active program to seek out at-risk students. Schools must not wait for students to have problems; rather a systematic effort must occur to seek out students who may need more differentiated instruction to be successful. For many, this principle is known as universal screening.

Monitor Progress

Identifying students at risk is just the first step. Those who are not at-risk and those who are at-risk may not always remain so. Rather, students should be monitored to ensure that they continue to make progress such that each student will be proficient on state standards. Is the student making adequate progress? Does the progress the student is making indicate that a change should be made to the instruction received?

Adjust the nature and intensity based on responsiveness

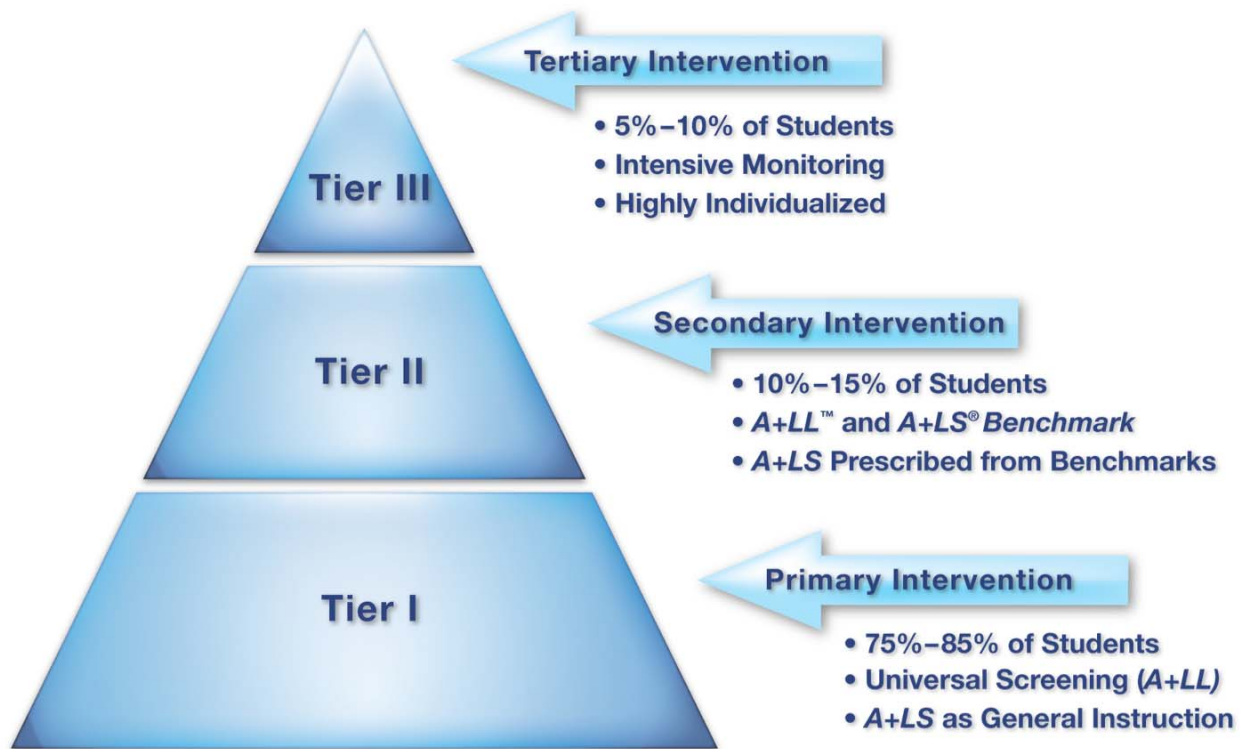
As noted above, students must be monitored for the progress being made. It is essential that monitoring is not done with the information going into a folder or file for storage. Rather, the information should be immediately available to adjust instructional services based on student progress. This is the key principle of formative assessment. Get the information into the hands of teachers so that instruction can be adjusted/modified based on how the student has responded to instruction. Does the method need to be modified? Does the intensity of instruction need to be modified? How should it be modified? This is an essential component of an RTI program.

Evidence-based intervention

Use interventions that are based on scientific-based evidence. Instruction should not be based on tradition or practices that have "always been done that way." Rather, the intervention should be one that can be shown through scientific-based evidence as having a high degree of probability of success with the students for whom the instruction is being provided.

A Model for Response to Intervention

Those are the components of an RTI model. Listed alone, it can feel complex and diffuse, but a model for Response to Intervention can bring some order. A Google search for "Response to Intervention" will bring up three, four, and five tier models for RTI. A three-tier model is the most common and will be described here. Who the first person to describe a three-tier model was is unclear. What is described here is a synthesis from of a variety of models of RTI.



Tier I

All students begin with Tier I. Tier I is where most students are successful with scientific-based instruction intended for basic instruction. In Tier I, all students receive universal screening to be certain everyone is making progress at the expected rate. At a minimum, students would be screened for progress in reading, writing, and mathematics. In general, 75 to 85% of all students will be successful at Tier I.

Tier II

Students identified as "at-risk" for unsuccessful learning outcomes are moved to Tier II. Notice, it is not for students who fail. Rather, it is for students "at-risk" for failure. The tiers are not governed by rigid rules. Rather, the tiers are levels of intervention where students can be moved fluidly among them. In Tier II, students are provided more intensive, more differentiated instruction for a short-term boost. The expectation is that with more frequent progress monitoring and modification of instruction based on responsiveness to the intervention, Tier II students will be able to return to Tier I and be successful. Generally, 10 to 15% of students will require Tier II interventions.

Tier III

Tier III represents 5 to 10% of all students. Students in Tier III need long-term intensive interventions to be successful learners. Instruction as provided in Tier I will not be successful for Tier III students because of the need for more intensity or higher differentiation. However, frequent progress monitoring may show that when a Tier III student receives the appropriate instruction, learning increases, and the student can fluidly move from Tier III to Tier II and even to Tier I.

It may sound complicated, because it requires a more fluid approach to student services than a system that relies on placing a student in a categorical program, but the benefits are many.

Why Use RTI?

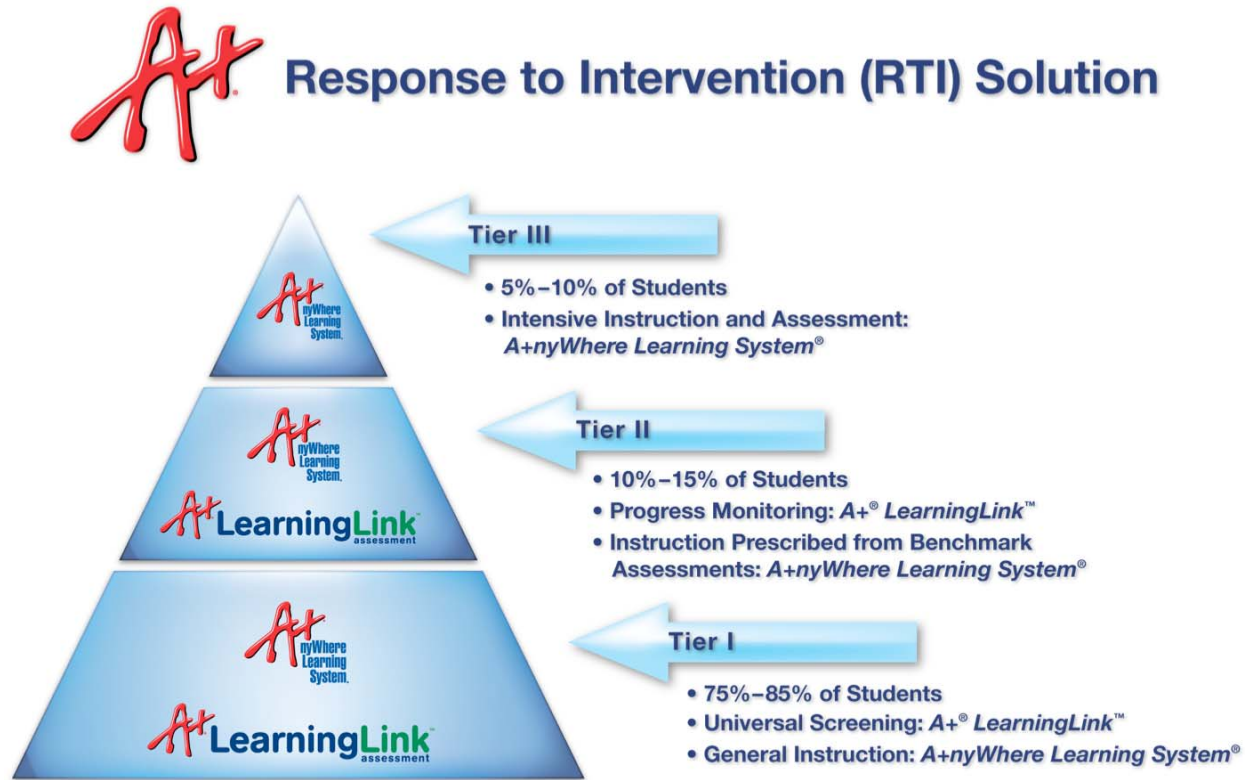
Yes, RTI is written into federal special education law, and some states are adopting models of RTI as a mandatory program in schools. What are the reasons the Response to Intervention model was developed even before the legislation? The following are adapted from a presentation by Elizabeth Hanselman and Marica Cullen at the Special Education Directors' Conference for the State of Illinois in August of 2008:

- RTI enables educators to target instructional interventions in response to children's specific areas of need *as soon as* those needs become apparent.
- Before, the education system waited for a student to fail before attempting more intensive instructional interventions.
- Current research demonstrates that early intervention is crucial to a student's success.

Another reason is practical. The federal special education law and regulation cited above allows schools to use a certain percentage of federal special education funds for early intervention services that includes paying for universal screening. Schools do not have to use their technology, Title I, or instructional dollars to pay for universal screening or Tier II services. It is an alternate source for funds to provide services before children become the responsibility of special education.

RTI and A+ Family of Products

The next question, then, is how can the A+ family of products help with Response to Intervention? To start, let's look again at the illustration of the Three Tier Model presented above. This time A+ products are added.



Tier I – Primary Intervention

All students begin with Tier I where 75 to 85% will be successful. Nevertheless, this is where RTI begins, and *A+ LearningLink*™ (*A+LL*™) is ideal as a universal screener. For students who remain in Tier I, the *A+nyWhere Learning System*® (*A+LS*™) can be used as general instruction. As required in a Tier I intervention, there is scientific evidence that *A+LS* can be an effective component of Tier I developmental instruction.¹

As noted previously, *A+ LearningLink* can be used as a universal screener, and it is also very helpful for instructional planning. *A+ LearningLink* has gone through formal studies to calibrate its results to The Lexile Framework® for Reading and The Quantile Framework® for Mathematics. Because of this, there is a direct link to proficiency levels in many states. Then, lessons at the level which the student is ready to learn can be prescribed in the *A+nyWhere Learning System*. Lessons can also be prescribed manually from the students' current grade placement.

The question then becomes how to decide whether a student needs more differentiated instruction and should move to Tier II?

Tier I - Intervention (Math)

Students whose Quantile measures fall at or above basic levels according to state standards remain with Tier I instruction. In states that do not use The Quantile Framework[®] for Mathematics, students whose Quantile measures fall within the range for each grade level shown in the table below remain with Tier I instruction. Those with Quantile measures below the range for the grade in which they are enrolled, or who score below basic according to state standards, should be considered for Tier II. The ranges of scores presented in the table are based on the range typically found for average students in classes across the country.

Grade	Student Measure
K-1	Emerging Mathematician (EM)
2	100Q to 480Q
3	340Q to 660Q
4	495Q to 815Q
5	635Q to 955Q
6	700Q to 1020Q
7	750Q to 1070Q
8	820Q to 1140Q
Algebra I (9)	870Q to 1190Q
Geometry (10)	940Q to 1260Q
Algebra II (11)	1000Q to 1320Q

Tier I - Intervention (Reading)

Students whose Lexile measures fall at or above basic levels according to state standards remain with Tier I instruction. In states that do not use The Lexile Framework® for Reading, students whose Lexile measures fall within the range for each grade level shown in the table below remain with Tier I instruction. Those with Lexile measure below the range for the grade in which they are enrolled, or are below basic according to state standards, should be considered for Tier II. The ranges of scores presented in the table are based on the range typically found for average students in classes across the country.

Grade	Student Measure
1	Up to 300L
2	140L to 500L
3	330L to 700L
4	445L to 810L
5	565L to 910L
6	665L to 1000L
7	735L to 1065L
8	805L to 1100L
9	855L to 1165L
10	905L to 1195L
11 and 12	940L to 1210L

Tier II – Secondary Intervention

For Tier II students, it is suggested that the intervention begin with lessons prescribed from *A+ LearningLink* to *A+LS*. The lessons in *A+LS* will be carefully sequenced by difficulty and prerequisite skills. The number of lessons prescribed is designed to be taken over the three months to a semester, depending on the intensity of the intervention.

In Tier II, formative assessments should be more frequent and targeted. Therefore, it is recommended that the assessment technology in *A+LS* be used for this purpose. There are two methods that may be appropriate for Tier II. First, the technology permits the teacher to create review tests to monitor progress and retention of what is being taught. The second is the *A+daptive Assessment Technology*. With this capability, teachers can easily create a benchmark assessment every few weeks to assess student progress with only those standards for which the student has been receiving instruction. If the student is making progress, wonderful, continue the intervention and re-assess with *A+LL* at the end of the semester. If the student is not mastering the standards on which they are receiving instruction, consider a method to make the intervention more robust. This may be accomplished with *A+LS* by adding supportive lessons to re-teach and provide alternative instruction. It may be accomplished by adding additional supplementary materials. Once again, there is considerable scientific evidence to support the use of *A+LS* as a Tier II intervention.ⁱⁱ Therefore, *A+LS* is an intervention that would be allowable under the federal guidelines. Tier II is summarized in the following bullet points:

- Step 1 – Begin intervention with lessons prescribed from *A+LL*.
- Step 2 - *A+LS Assessment* tools should be used for benchmark assessments at 3- to 6-week intervals to differentiate instruction according to individualized prescription.
 - Build individual benchmark assessment based on *A+LL* performance & prescriptions
 - Create review tests every two weeks to monitor student mastery in short increments
 - Use embedded assessment at the grade level of each title prescribed by *A+LL*
- Step 3 – Re-administer *A+LL* after 3 to 4 months, and prescribe as in Tier I.
 - Re-evaluate student performance
 - Within performance level for grade – return to Tier I
 - Making progress toward grade level – continue Tier II
 - Making little or no progress – Tier III

Tier III – Tertiary Intervention

This is a highly individualized intervention based on student needs. Bi-weekly monitoring is recommended, with direct teacher observation of success or lack thereof on a daily basis. Once again, there is evidence that supports the use of *A+LS* as an effective intervention for Tier III studentsⁱⁱⁱ. This intervention is for the 5 to 10% of students requiring long term intensive support to be successful in school.

- Include a review test after every fourth lesson.
- Create an adaptive assessment for three key skills from each subject area every other week.
- Monitor for progress as in Tier II every six weeks.
- Monitor for progress as in Tier I twice each year.

Summary

Response to Intervention is a process to assure that students receive the instruction needed to be successful in a flexible and timely manner. It is supported by federal special education legislation and funding. It is mandated by many states. The *A+* family of products, including the *A+nyWhere Learning System* and *A+ LearningLink*, are ideal to support any school's RTI plan.

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