

Response to Intervention Glossary of Terms

February 2025, Version 2

The following terms have been selected and definitions of the terms have been considered and chosen based on their relationship to Response to Intervention (RtI). In some cases, definitions have been modified to make them useful for the field.

Accommodations

Activities involving adapting instructional strategies and/or the classroom environment for students with disabilities. Accommodations can be made across educational settings, such as the general education classroom, resource or special class.

At-risk

An *at-risk learner* is generally defined as a student who is in danger of failing to complete school with a basic level of academic proficiency. The construct is defined in terms of characteristics situated within the individual, family, and community.

Best First Instruction

Best, First Instruction (BFI) aims to give all students the best opportunity to learn standards based, grade-level content and skills the first time they receive instruction. BFI can be understood as a framework combining culturally responsive teaching, practice-based teacher learning, and the implementation of high-quality academic standards and curriculum (see: Tier 1: Universal).

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (COMTSS)

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (COMTSS) is a prevention-based framework using team-driven leadership and data-based problem solving to improve the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnerships, comprehensive assessment, and a layered continuum of supports. Implementation science and universal design for learning are employed to create one integrated system that focuses on increasing academic and behavioral outcomes to equitably support the varying needs of all students.

Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System

A Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System is the coordinated effort of gathering information across multiple measures to make decisions at the system and student level for the whole child. A comprehensive assessment system contributes to an outcomes-driven approach 2 that includes structured monitoring and evaluation with a commitment to continuous improvement (see: COMTSS).



Contextual Fit

The match between the strategies, procedures, or elements of an intervention and the values, needs, skills, and resources of those who implement and experience the intervention.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse is a term used to describe students of differing cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds.

Curriculum-Based Measurement

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is an approach to measuring students' academic growth along with evaluating the effectiveness of instruction in the classroom (Deno, 1985). Curriculum based measurement is a simple set of standardized procedures that are a way to obtain reliable and valid measurement of a student's achievement in all content areas.

Data Based Individualization (DBI)

Data-based individualization (DBI) is a research-based process for individualizing and intensifying interventions through the systematic use of assessment data, validated interventions, and research-based adaptation strategies.

Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making

A continuous improvement process used by stakeholder teams to collect, analyze, and evaluate information to inform decision making at the system and student level. Data-based problem solving and decision making ensures evidence guides effective and efficient decision making at the system and student levels (See: COMTSS).

Decision Rules

The rules determined by the Local Education Agency to ensure efficiency and consistency of decision-making processes that may be based on performance and/or implementation data. For example, having a protocol for intensifying or fading interventions.

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic tools provide data to assist educators in designing individualized instruction and intensifying intervention for students who do not respond to validated intervention programs. Diagnostic tools can be either informal, which are easy-to-use tools that can be administered with little training, or standardized, which must be delivered in a standard way by trained staff.

Differentiation/Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction and assessment is a framework for effective teaching that involves providing diverse students with different avenues to learning (often in the same classroom) in terms of acquiring content, processing and constructing ideas, and developing teaching materials and assessment measures so that all students can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability.



Disaggregated Data

The presentation of data broken into segments, for example test scores for students from various ethnic groups instead of in the aggregate, for the entire student population. Often test data is broken into groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency, thereby allowing parents and teachers to see how each student group is performing in a school.

Discipline

School discipline refers to the rules and strategies applied in school to manage student behavior and practices used to encourage self-discipline.

Engagement

In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education.

Evidence Outcomes

The Evidence Outcomes describe the evidence that demonstrates that a student is meeting the Grade Level Expectation at a mastery level.

Evidence-based Practices

Teaching and learning approaches proven to be effective through scientifically based research studies which are used to guide educational decisions to ensure improved outcomes for students. When teachers use evidence-based practices with fidelity, they can be confident their teaching is likely to support student learning and achievement.

Explicit Instruction/Systematic Instruction

Explicit, systematic instruction, sometimes simply referred to as explicit instruction, involves teaching a specific concept or procedure in a highly structured and carefully sequenced manner.

Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP)

Families, early-childhood programs, schools, and communities actively partnering to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve educational outcomes for children and youth. Family, school, and community partnerships (FSCP) positively impact academic and behavioral student outcomes (earn higher grades or test scores, graduate from high school and attend post-secondary education, develop self-confidence and motivation in the classroom, have better social skills and classroom behavior) (see: COMTSS).

Fidelity (Including Implementation Fidelity or Fidelity Assessments)

Fidelity refers to how closely prescribed procedures are followed and, in the context of schools, the degree to which educators implement instruction, interventions, assessments, and implementation plans the way they were intended.



Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become self-directed learners.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a process for gathering information about behaviors of concern, whether the behaviors are academic, social or emotional. FBAs are rooted in the theory that behavior is functional (meaning it has a purpose), predictable and changeable. Understanding the function or purpose underlying a student's behavior can help a school team develop a plan to teach the child more appropriate replacement behaviors for a setting or provide support for the development of more desirable behaviors.

Goal line or Goal

A line on the student's progress monitoring graph that connects the data point representing the student's baseline performance to their goal. Within RTI, this can help to determine rate of improvement of adequate growth.

Growth Percentiles

A student growth percentile defines how much relative growth a student made. The Colorado Growth Model serves as a way for educators to understand how much growth a student makes relative to a student's "academic peers." More specifically, the Colorado Growth Model essentially compares each student's current achievement to students in the same grade throughout the state who had similar assessment scores in past years.

Inclusive Education/Inclusion

Inclusive education is a systemic approach to uniquely address student learning and social engagement within the same educational setting as their non-disabled peers, whenever appropriate. All students are full and accepted members of their school community.

Layered Continuum of Supports (LCS) – Evidence-Based Practices, Instruction, and Interventions

Ensuring that every student receives equitable whole child supports that are evidence based, culturally responsive, matched to need, and developmentally appropriate through layered supports. The framework of a multi-tiered approach provides for efficient, effective, and equitable allocation of resources within the education system. When appropriately used, the tiers support each learner in experiencing success by meeting their unique needs. (see: COMTSS).



Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general educational classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Modifications

Modifications reflect a change of content, complexity and rigor. They change what the student is expected to learn. They should enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities, and to be educated and be able to participate with other children with and without disabilities. Modifications change what the student is expected to learn and the academic achievement standard by which the student is evaluated.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a prevention-based framework for organizing evidence-based behavioral supports into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social outcomes for all students.

Problem Solving Process

A process used by stakeholder teams from multiple settings to analyze and evaluate information related to planning and implementing effective instructional strategies matched to student need. It involves identifying problems, analyzing relevant data to understand why the problem is occurring, designing and implementing probable solutions, and evaluating the effectiveness of the solutions that were implemented.

Progress Monitoring

The ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data from formal measures to determine student progress toward specific skills or general outcomes. Progress-monitoring is a general and special education process and a form of assessment. Data are used to plan instructional interventions, to determine if the intervention should continue or if the student has met the performance goal and an intervention can be discontinued.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative research methods collect and analyze qualitative data, which are often expressed in words rather than numbers (Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine).

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data are used when a researcher is trying to quantify a problem or address the "what" or "how many" aspects of a research question. It is data that can either be counted or compared on a numeric scale (Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine).



Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency in measurement and to the lack of error (Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine).

Root Cause Analysis

Root causes are statements that describe the deepest underlying cause or causes of performance challenges and they become the focus of major improvement strategies. In general, the process for determining root causes can be thought of as a funnel, starting with the broadest thinking possible about causes related to each prioritized performance challenge and systematically narrowing and deepening the collective understanding until the team arrives at a root cause.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

In Colorado, Response to Intervention (RtI) targets implementation at the school- level creating systems and structures that focus on giving all students high-quality instruction and individualized tiered support based on their academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs.

Screening/Screeners

Screening is used to determine the child's present level of performance and early intervention or educational needs. Screening (including developmental and health screening) may also include activities to identify children who may need further evaluation to determine the existence of a delay in development or a particular disability.

Specially Designed Instruction

Specially designed instruction is the instruction provided to a student with a disability who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in order to help him/her master IEP goals/objectives.

Summative Assessment

A process that establishes what students have and have not accomplished at the culmination of a specific unit of instruction, such as a curriculum unit, grading period, or school year. Summative assessment is intended to evaluate the knowledge and skills of the test taker at a given point in time. Assessments used for summative purposes—often called summative assessments and used for grading—may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs, 8 school improvement goals, or curriculum.



Team-Driven Shared Leadership

Teaming processes and structures that focus on distributing responsibility and shared decision making across and within regions, districts, and schools to effectively design and use systems of training, coaching, resources, implementation, and evaluation. Team-driven shared leadership creates authentic opportunities for shared responsibility, buy-in, and inclusivity that contribute to the alignment and cohesion across the educational system to support effective and sustainable implementation of MTSS and positive learner outcomes (see: COMTSS).

Tier 1 Supports: Universal Supports

Core programming at Tier 1 includes academic, social, emotional, and behavioral curriculum, instruction, and supports aligned to grade-level standards and student needs. At Tier 1, educators use instructional strategies and practices shown to be effective for the student population and educational context. In effective Tier 1 systems, most students benefit from Tier 1 programming alone and teachers use differentiation to ensure all students can access and benefit from core programming. Consistency in the use of evidence-based practices and supports is essential for collective efficacy at Tier 1. Effective Tier 1 ensures positive school climate and conditions for learning.

Tier 2 Supports: Targeted Supports

At Tier 2, schools provide small group, standardized academic interventions or targeted behavioral or mental health supports using validated intervention programs. Teams select or design interventions and supports that have demonstrated positive effects for desired outcomes and are aligned with student needs. Tier 2 interventions and supports are delivered with fidelity at an appropriate duration and frequency to ensure students have increased opportunities for practice and corrective feedback.

Tier 3 Supports: Intensive Supports

Intensive interventions that offer students highly individualized, systematic instruction in one or more areas of assessed needs. These interventions may be similar to Tier 2 interventions but are provided with a longer duration and/or increased intensity in order to accelerate student learning and meet the unique needs of students at the highest risk for failure.

Typical Growth

As defined by Colorado State Board of Education rule, a student growth percentile for a single child that falls within the 35th-65th percentile range reflects typical growth. When referring to median Growth Percentiles, such as for a school or demographic group, the Colorado 9 Department of Education (CDE) considers a median of 50 to be typical growth for school or group. The statewide median growth percentile in each subject and grade is the 50th percentile.



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning is an inclusive educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences. CAST.org Universal Screening Universal Screening uses a systematic process for identifying students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes, including academic, behavioral, social-emotional, school completion, and college and career readiness outcomes.

Validity

Validity is the overarching concept that defines quality in educational measurement. It is the extent to which an assessment provides accurate information for making decisions about student learning and the adequacy and appropriateness of the use of assessment results for specific purposes. No single test is valid for all purposes.

