

# Response to Intervention and Twice-Exceptional Learners: A Promising Fit



by Daphne A. Pereles,  
Stuart Omdal,  
and Lois Baldwin

Many books and articles have been written about a Response to Intervention (RtI) model of service delivery for students who are struggling learners. However, little has been written about this model's usefulness as a means of addressing the needs of advanced learners or twice-exceptional learners whose needs may be both remedial and advanced. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) define Response to Intervention as the "practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions" (NASDSE, 2005, p. 3). It further states that this practice should be used in "general, remedial, and special education" (NASDSE, 2005, p. 3). The NASDE document does not address gifted children, nor does it define "high-quality instruction" as opportunities for acceleration or enrichment.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has a definition broader in nature and inclusive of all students. It defines RtI as "a framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs" (CDE, 2008, p. 3). This definition allows for broader application of the foundational principles of an RtI model that truly includes all students and can be an effective means of addressing the complex needs of twice-exceptional learners. In its Position Paper on Response to Intervention, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC; 2002) stated that RtI

shall consider the educational needs of children with gifts and talents and their families, particularly related to the identification of children considered to be twice exceptional because they have gifts and talents as well as a disability. These advanced learners shall be provided access to a challenging and accelerated curriculum, while also addressing the unique needs of their disability. (p. 2)

In this article, we will discuss why we feel that the RtI model that includes a problem-solving/consultation process is a promising fit for the twice-exceptional student. We will describe the theoretical and practical implications for these special students and then take the reader through each element of the problem-solving/consultation process by discussing a case study of a gifted student who has both learning and behavioral challenges.

### Implication of Educational Labels

The school population mirrors the population at large with respect to diversity in language, ethnicity, culture, and ability/disability. It has become increasingly difficult to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners (Cole, 2008). In our effort to categorize and make meaning of these challenges, identification systems were created and the practice of assigning labels to students with special needs has become a vehicle for providing services. These identification systems were created for all of the right reasons—opening doors for funding, raising awareness and understanding, improving communication between professionals and families, and providing a social identity (Lauchlan & Boyle,

2007). However, this also resulted in a disconnected group of isolated programs or “silos” created around student labels. Students began to be assigned to a set “program” based on the label and not always based on an identified educational need (NASDSE, 2005). Because of their unique learning needs, twice-exceptional students never have fit neatly into any of the usual programs in a school system. Their needs have always challenged personnel in this disconnected system of silos and contributed to their difficulty of achieving success.

With the advent of RtI, the need to assign labels to students changes. A label is not required for students to receive interventions and support. The responsibility for student success becomes a shared responsibility within a supportive professional environment. Because RtI is structured around the assessed educational needs of students and not the attainment of a label, it is difficult to discuss the framework in regard to a specific, labeled group of students. Applying an older way of systemic thinking onto the RtI model is in a way “force-fitting” the merger of two paradigms that actually need to be considered in different ways. This step, however, is necessary to create a bridge for practitioners to comprehend the application of RtI philosophy and to understand how it differs from current practice. Resolving this dilemma provided a unique challenge for the authors of this article. Because of this, for the purposes of this article, the term *twice-exceptional student* is being used to denote students displaying behaviors and characteristics associated with giftedness and the spectrum of disabilities.

In 1981, Renzulli, Reis, and Smith recommended labeling student behaviors rather than labeling students as “gifted.” Labeling behaviors helps decision makers develop appropriate

educational plans that match individual student strengths, interests, and abilities. The gifted label itself did not help teachers select appropriate educational programming options for these students. Given the dozens of characteristics and traits associated with giftedness and the personality and environmental factors that affect the development of these characteristics and traits, it is safe to say that those who are identified for gifted education services compose a heterogeneous group. Labeling a group infers homogeneity of the group. Definitions of giftedness and talent and identification processes vary greatly between states and often between districts within a state. Generalized, stereotypical characteristics assigned to a label cannot reflect the range of characteristics, nor can the levels or degrees of those characteristics be adequately captured. These stereotypes combined with generalized, prescribed instructional strategies result in an illusion that appropriate instruction is occurring and ignores the range of diversity in each labeled “group.”

We believe that the move away from labeling is part of the inevitable evolution of the field. All areas of education evolve and reform over time. Healey (2005) provided a historical context for changes in special education. He identified the early 1970s as a time when different groups (parents, educators, legislators) moved with determination to reform special education. These combined efforts resulted in the historic Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Through periodic reauthorizations, the law changed to reflect current theory, practice, and research. Truscott, Catanese, and Abrams (2005) reported concerns and research that led to current calls for “radical special education

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Principle One	All children can learn and achieve high standards if given access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum and research-based instruction.
Principle Two	Intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary to ensure student success.
Principle Three	A comprehensive system of tiered interventions is essential for addressing the full range of student needs.
Principle Four	Student results improve when ongoing academic and behavioral performance data inform instructional decisions.
Principle Five	Collaboration among educators, families, and community members is the foundation for effective problem solving and instructional decision-making.
Principle Six	Ongoing and meaningful family engagement increases the successful outcomes for students.

Figure 1. Core Principles of a Response to Intervention Model.  
 Colorado Department of Education, 2009.

reform” (p. 164). It is the nature of the development of a field to experience change. Radical changes in the education of students with special needs began in the 1970s, affecting both special and general education and, indirectly, the field of gifted education as well. With the most current reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004, we are experiencing a change that has the potential to impact education to the same degree that Public Law 94-142 did. This is due to the significant shift in the identification of specific learning disabilities (SLD) within the law.

Consensus reports and empirical syntheses indicate a need for major changes in the approach to identifying children with SLD. Models that incorporate RtI represent a shift in special education toward goals of better achievement and improved behavioral outcomes for children with SLD. (Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, 2006, p. 46647)

### Core Principles of RtI

Because of the complexity and needs-based nature of RtI, there are a number of different models in practice. Regardless of the model, there is an underlying set of common core principles or beliefs that guide successful practice (see Figure 1). These principles, listed below, were adapted from a list developed by the Colorado Department of Education and were based on a review of the literature on RtI, as well as practical application of these principles. The intent of this section is to address these principles and discuss how RtI is an excellent way to address the needs of all students and, within that context, the needs of twice-exceptional students.

#### Principle One: All Students Can Learn

The first principle is the belief that if given access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum and research-based instruction, all students, including twice-exceptional ones, can learn and

achieve. Effective instructional strategies are the hallmark of gifted education. Researchers at Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) have identified nine instructional strategies through a theory-based meta-analysis. These strategies have a “high probability of enhancing student achievement for all students in all subject areas at all grade levels” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 7) and provide some guidance and direction for improving instructional practices in classrooms. These strategies are listed in order of highest to lowest effect:

1. identifying similarities and differences;
2. summarizing and note taking;
3. reinforcing effort and providing recognition;
4. homework and practice;
5. nonlinguistic representations;
6. cooperative learning;
7. setting objectives and providing feedback;
8. generating and testing hypotheses; and
9. questions, cues, and advance organizers (Marzano et al., 2001, p. 7).

These research-based instructional strategies are ones that benefit all students when used consistently in the general classroom. This type of instructional consistency benefits twice-exceptional students in particular because they are more successful in an environment with clear expectations, guidance, and opportunities to problem solve. These instructional strategies, used in conjunction with the Gifted Program Standards developed and released by the National Association for Gifted Children (Landrum & Shaklee, 1988), provide a consistent framework to address the needs of gifted students in all educational settings. These standards support an examination of the quality of

programming for gifted learners and include both minimum standards and exemplary standards in seven key areas. They serve as a way for districts to set benchmarks and evaluate their programs for gifted learners. A combination of research-based instructional strategies and the Gifted Program Standards can contribute to the development of a solid universal tier of instruction for school systems utilizing an RtI framework.

### Principle Two: Early Intervention

A second guiding principle is the idea that intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary to ensure student success (CDE, 2008). In the case of twice-exceptional students, a significant educational need, whether for acceleration, enrichment, and/or remediation, may not be apparent in the early years of school. Many twice-exceptional students are able to mask their diverse needs until much later in their school experience (McCoach, Kehle, Bray, & Siegle, 2001). For twice-exceptional students, it often is the case that the acceleration or enrichment needs may remain undetected until later in their school experience because they have not been put into learning environments that allow for success or that foster interest and motivation for learning. Literature suggests that it is crucial to access the talent and ability of twice-exceptional students as early as possible (Baldwin, 1995; Baum, Cooper, & Neu, 2001; Neu, 2003; Nielsen, 2002; Reis, McGuire, & Neu, 2000; Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1995; Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz, 2002). A consistent theme has emerged from the literature: "Programmatic interventions suggest the importance of providing these students with a curriculum that accommodates their unique gifts and talents while simultaneously

allowing the students to compensate for problematic weaknesses" (Neu, 2003, p. 152). It is fundamental to the success of twice-exceptional students to identify and nurture their gifts and talents (Baum & Owen, 2004).

This principle addresses the need to intervene at the earliest sign of a problem. A problem is defined here as an educational need for acceleration, enrichment, and/or remediation. If caught early enough, remediation for a disability can make a significant difference for a twice-exceptional child and change the school experience to a more positive one. When provided with remediation strategies early on, twice-exceptional students can alleviate some of the challenges quickly and never need long-term intensive support.

### Principle Three: Tiered Interventions

Another crucial principle of an effective RtI model is the inclusion of a comprehensive system of tiered interventions. This is a consistent component regardless of the model and essential for addressing the full range of student needs. The three-tiered service delivery model is the most common and was originally adapted from the public health and disease prevention model.

RtI begins in the universal tier with high-quality instruction and curriculum that will address the needs of approximately 80% of the students within that system. Students identified as having an educational need are provided with interventions at increasing levels of duration and intensity. Targeted interventions are used for these students and tend to address the needs of approximately 10–15% of students within the system at the targeted tier. These interventions are provided by a variety of educational

personnel including general educators, special educators, gifted educators, and specialists. When there continues to be an educational need, as measured by ongoing progress monitoring with curriculum-based measures (CBM), the intervention is modified or adapted to increase progress or to further enhance the learning of the student. The most intensive tier of intervention is meant to address the needs of about 5–7% of the students within a system.

As RtI has been implemented, many systems began the process by simply adding more targeted and intensive interventions. This can challenge a system both in terms of resources and time. These systems ultimately have had to revisit their universal tier and revise what they do for all students. This has resulted in more differentiated instruction and consistent core instruction and curriculum. Because this multitiered model is contingent on the needs of students, the universal tier will look different from system to system.

The benefits of a multitiered system for twice-exceptional students are significant. The intent of these tiers is to address the varied educational needs of students. Each twice-exceptional student has not only traits and characteristics in the realm of giftedness, but also traits and characteristics in one or more areas of disability/exceptionality. This combination of strengths and challenges has made it difficult to address the multiple and varied educational needs. The RtI/Problem-Solving Process is more fluid than the typical school system of separate programs because all student needs, remedial and advanced, can be addressed. The process allows for a discussion of the whole child, starting with strengths. This multitiered system allows for an ongoing discussion about the student's needs without a push to get the child tested

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for special education. Interventions can occur without a label.

### Principle Four: Use of Data

Another core principle of RtI that is directly related to the multitiered model is that student results are improved when ongoing academic and behavioral performance data are used to inform instructional decisions (CDE, 2008). The effective use of data in an RtI model is crucial in assisting instructional decisions across the tiers. This begins with screening at the universal tier for all students. This practice has great promise for twice-exceptional students. These students “. . . often use their high levels of intelligence to compensate for problematic weaknesses . . .” (Baum & Owen, 2004, p. 160). This compensation acts as a mask over their areas of struggle. With the use of valid, reliable screening instruments, many issues can be detected early and appropriate interventions assigned. Because they are so bright, twice-exceptional students can benefit immensely with early intervention. With the appropriate intervention provided through an RtI/Problem-Solving Process, the need for a label and special education may never be necessary.

### Principle Five: Collaboration

Another foundational principle of an effective RtI model involves the belief that collaboration among educators, families, and community members is the foundation to effective problem solving and instructional decision making (CDE, 2008). The problem-solving process acts as a way of systematizing the decision-making process to lead to the development of instructional and intervention strategies that will have the highest probability of success. The purpose of having this process in place is to use the data

to guide decisions about appropriate interventions and to monitor student progress through those interventions to determine the effectiveness.

To have such a system in place to address the ongoing and changing needs of twice-exceptional students is extremely helpful. Too often in typical educational systems, interventions are developed but not monitored or modified for effectiveness on a frequent basis. Because of this, weeks and sometimes months of instruc-

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tional opportunities are lost. With the problem-solving process, there are built-in checkpoints to review data and the effectiveness of the interventions, whether they are remedial or advanced learning opportunities.

Collaboration in this process is crucial. This requires a team of professionals and parents to work together as partners to identify a measurable outcome for the student. It is an opportunity to utilize data from a variety of sources to inform the instructional decisions made for a student and to adapt the intervention along the way at appropriate intervals. This type of collaboration has been identified as crucial when addressing the needs of twice-exceptional students. Various studies have pointed toward the impor-

tance of the balance between remediation and attention to the child's strength (Baldwin, 1995; Baum et al., 2001; Nielsen, 2002; Reis et al., 1995; Weinfeld et al., 2006). Collaboration allows for a shared ownership for student success. General, special, and gifted educators work together to support the needs of students, especially twice-exceptional students.

The effectiveness of the problem-solving process is increased when collaborative consultation is added. The role of the collaborative consultant in this process becomes one of “monitor and evaluator” (Kampwirth, 2006). This role can be filled by anyone on the team but requires training and a specific skill set. It is recommended that all members of the problem-solving team be trained as collaborative consultants to better divide the responsibilities. The case study shared in this article is reflective of the problem-solving process with the collaborative consultant and should further illustrate the usefulness of such a model for twice-exceptional students.

### Principle Six: Family Engagement

A final core principle that is a guiding force in an effective RtI model is the belief that ongoing and meaningful family engagement increases the successful outcomes for students. There is much research that supports the principle that families engaged in a positive relationship with schools can have a direct impact on the achievement of students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). What is true about twice-exceptional students is that they are even more at risk for failure and underachievement without family involvement. Many times the child whom families see at home is a very different child within a school environment, where he or she may be feeling less support and success. For this reason, it is the job

of parents to advocate for their child and represent their view of his or her strengths and challenges.

The problem-solving format is a perfect venue for such advocacy. In addition, the parent must be prepared to provide support at home for academics. Within the RtI/Problem-Solving Process, the parents are at the table and involved in determining the necessary intervention for their child. They will leave the problem-solving meeting with some guidance for home support that is directly related to the chosen intervention. By empowering the family to be part of the solution, the outcomes for the child are more successful.

### Case Study

This case study was written utilizing the steps of the RtI/problem-solving/consultation model. There are several steps to this problem-solving process that are important for the fidelity and implementation of a successful plan (see Figure 2):

1. initial consultation,
2. initial problem-solving team meeting,
3. intervention and progress monitoring,
4. follow-up consultation, and
5. follow-up problem-solving team meeting (CDE, 2009, p. 6).

To help illustrate how this plan might work for any child, but particularly a twice-exceptional student, we will use Brad as a case study.

### Background Information

Brad is a likeable, high-energy boy who enjoys conversations with adults. He loves to watch the History Channel on television. His precocious and highly developed vocabulary, as well as his maturity, caused his preschool teacher

and staff to recommend that he skip kindergarten and begin first grade in the fall. His parents were amazed and pleased by this recommendation and they enrolled him in a private religious school. From the very beginning of first grade, he struggled with academic skills, particularly reading and writing, and was unable to keep up with his classmates. At the end of first grade it was decided that he was still not ready to move on to second grade and that it would be better for his self-esteem and academic progress if he remained in first grade another year. By the end of September of his second year as a first grader, Brad was so frustrated that he tossed over his chair and desk and ran out of school, determined never to come back. The private school agreed with this sentiment and asked the parents to find a new school. By October, Brad was transferred into the local public school. This suburban school had been implementing an RtI/Problem-Solving Process approach to meeting the needs of all students for more than 2 years. Brad's new teacher recognized very quickly that he was struggling with reading and writing. He appeared to be very unhappy, as demonstrated by negative comments such as "I'm so stupid" or "This work is dumb." He was known to rip up and throw away some of his writing assignments. Other times he would just put his head down on the desk and refuse to complete the assigned task. Because of these behaviors, the classroom teacher set up a meeting with Brad's parents as part of the data-gathering process of RtI to discuss her concerns and to determine their thoughts and ideas about their son's behaviors and progress.

*Parent Information.* The parents reported seeing some very angry behaviors when he would return home after school. These behaviors included his running around in circles screaming until he would wear him-

self out and collapse on the floor in tears. In addition, he also was refusing to do any homework even with support from either parent. They agreed with the teacher that a referral requesting an initial consultation would be helpful. Because of the nature of his learning and behavioral issues, the teacher requested an initial consultation and began the referral to the problem-solving team. Due to the concerns about learning and behavior, the special education teacher was assigned to be the consultant.

### Initial Consultation

The purpose of the initial consultation is to discuss gathered information in order to support the referring teacher and/or parent and to begin the process of identifying the student's strengths, challenges, and needs. The classroom teacher, parent, or school professionals can make a referral requesting assistance. A consultant is assigned to meet with the teacher to discuss the child's specific behaviors and to review the academic data that is available. If it is decided that more information is needed to further determine the student's needs, then the consultant, teacher, and parent will gather more data. They may need to spend more time observing the student in a variety of settings, evaluating his abilities utilizing a variety of testing and/or screening materials or gathering more of his classroom work samples. The consultant and the teacher will list all of the strengths and needs and then prioritize them. Once the priority needs are identified, they will begin to define the problem and to generate a plan. The plan must be observable and measurable.

*Initial Consultation for Brad.* The classroom teacher and the consultant met to discuss Brad. The classroom teacher noted that Brad was very animated and participatory during social

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**1. Initial Consultation**

Together, the consultant, referring teacher, and/or parent:

- Discuss gathered information from teacher/parent (if a teacher referral, teacher has already been in contact with parent)
- Begin the process of identifying the student's strengths, challenges, and needs
- List abilities and/or problems the student is demonstrating
- Prioritize issues and define the "problem" (remedial and/or advanced) based on data analysis

**2. Initial Problem-Solving Team Meeting**

Members of the problem-solving team:

- Generate interventions for the problem or ability
- Determine who is going to provide intervention, when it will take place, how often, and in what group
- Determine who will progress monitor and what tool will be used
- Determine, through parent/family input and guidance, what will support or supplement intervention at home
- Schedule the follow-up meeting

**3. Intervention Implementation and Progress Monitoring**

Consultant, teacher, and parent:

- Continue to communicate regularly about the intervention
- Ensure that the intervention protocol is followed
- Continue to emphasize the shared responsibility for the student's success

**4. Follow-Up Consultation**

Consultant guides discussion with teacher and interventionist (if different person) to:

- Discuss progress monitoring data, observational data, and report from parent/family
- Adjust aimline when goals are met early
- Prepare for follow-up meeting to ensure a smooth efficient flow

**5. Follow-Up Problem-Solving Team Meeting**

Members of the problem-solving team:

- Set tone by using data to discuss effectiveness of intervention
- Value teacher and parent input
- Review effectiveness of the intervention plan
- Make decisions about next steps

Figure 2. Problem-solving/consultation process.

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studies and science. He made many contributions during these classes, often demonstrating knowledge that was very advanced and sophisticated. In fact, he would try to engage her in more in-depth discussions but she rarely could accommodate him because the rest of the class was not at that level. He also liked the conversations and book discussions during literature class/book circle but he refused to read out loud during any of these classes. In fact, it was very hard to determine his reading issues and level because he refused to take the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the reading comprehension screening. In addition, his pencil grip was awkward and his handwriting was large, disjointed, and very difficult to read. He refused to participate in any creative writing activities.

During their meeting, the classroom teacher and the consultant determined that more data were needed. The consultant decided that she would observe him in all of his classes, including social studies and science. She also would attempt to evaluate his reading ability and level individually in a separate location where he would not have to read in front of other students. They also would begin compiling his classwork, including his worksheets in social studies and science, to establish a portfolio of his writing. The classroom teacher would ask Brad's mother for any data and work samples that she had from his preschool and first-grade classes. They agreed to collect the data and to meet again in 2 weeks.

At the next meeting, they reviewed the data that they had gathered. The observations were very valuable. The consultant was able to observe his motivation in social studies and his attempts to dominate the discussion. He seemed to enjoy the science class also but was busy talking to several

other students, and it appeared that he was trying to teach them about the scientific concept that the teacher was discussing. The students, on the other hand, were not interested in his comments and appeared to be aggravated by his interruptions.

Brad's mother provided valuable information about the lack of reading help that occurred at the private school. The expectation was that he would participate in reading group with the other students and that his reading difficulties were a demonstration of willful and inappropriate behavior on his part rather than a reading problem. A review of his report cards indicated comments about his ability to follow and contribute to reading discussions but a refusal to read aloud and that he needed to put more effort into the task. Other than his parents reading to him every night before going to bed, his mother noted that he had not been given any special help with his reading.

The consultant completed the reading assessment and was able to identify that he had major issues with decoding: He knew some of the initial consonant sounds but could not identify the vowel sounds. His reading comprehension was very poor because of his attempts to sound out each word, but his oral comprehension when the story was read to him was three grade levels above his current placement.

The teacher and the consultant listed all of the existing needs and the accompanying data. When they prioritized the problems and abilities, they determined that they needed to focus on his decoding skills and needed to address his interest and passion in social studies or science by involving him in an advanced study activity. The consultant agreed to set up the initial problem-solving team meeting and the teacher stated that she would call the parents to invite them to participate in the meeting.

### Initial Problem-Solving Team Meeting

The purpose of the initial problem-solving team meeting is to generate interventions that are measurable and observable and that address the identified problem or ability. Because the problem identification has occurred at the initial consultation, this meeting can focus on determining the specific interventions; establishing the intensity and duration of the interventions; assigning the person(s) responsible for the interventions; identifying the materials, accommodations, and modifications; and determining the progress monitoring schedule. The parent is considered to be a valued member of this team and often is given tasks to accomplish at home that reinforce and support the efforts of the school personnel. At the secondary level, the student often is asked to participate in the meeting. Minutes of the meeting are taken by the assigned note taker and distributed to all participants. If the initial consultation has been effective, the initial problem-solving team meeting should not take more than an hour.

*Brad's Initial Problem-Solving Team Meeting.* There were a number of participants—the classroom teacher, the consultant, the gifted and talented coordinator, the occupational therapist, the reading teacher, the principal, and Brad's parents. Because Brad demonstrated many of the behavioral characteristics of a twice-exceptional student, it was determined that an intervention focusing on his strength, as well as an intervention to address at least one of his academic challenges, was necessary. After discussing the reasons for Brad's referral and reviewing the data, the problem-solving team determined that the following plans would be put in place.

In order to capitalize on Brad's interest in social studies, it was determined

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that he would develop an independent study. He would be given options to explore a topic of interest related to the social studies curriculum in more depth. Prior to the independent study, he would be given an oral preassessment to ascertain his knowledge of the basic curriculum in this area. He also would be given the opportunity to choose the method of presenting his independent project. He would join a small group of first, second, and third graders who were working on independent projects with the gifted and talented teacher twice a week for 45 minutes each. He also would be given time to work on his project during social studies class when the other students were working on their assignments. The classroom teacher, with the assistance of the gifted and talented teacher, would design a rubric for grading and monitoring his project. Brad would accompany his class on field trips to the police station, fire station, and the mayor's office during the 4-week social studies unit on community. His parents agreed to participate by taking Brad to visit the community library in addition to historical buildings and sites in the area.

The problem-solving committee determined from the data and from comments that they had heard Brad say that he is very frustrated with his inability to read quickly and well. Although the classroom teacher was already teaching phonics as part of the reading/literacy block every day, it was decided that Brad would benefit more from a research-based targeted intervention designed to teach decoding skills in a sequential and multisensory manner. The reading teacher was already working with two other students on this intervention during that block and she felt that he would fit nicely with the other students. He would participate in this group 5 days a week for 30 minutes per day. He

already had been given the pretest so that the reading teacher knew exactly what skills he needed to learn. The reading teacher also worked with the classroom teacher to alert her to what phonetic skills were being addressed weekly so that she could reinforce them during classroom activities.

In addition to the two plans that focused on his strengths and concerns, the committee decided that they needed more information about his difficulties with writing. The parents granted permission to allow the occupational therapist to do an assessment.

It was agreed that the problem-solving committee would meet in 3 weeks to determine if progress was being made.

### Intervention and Progress Monitoring

Once the problem-solving meeting takes place, it is time to begin the intervention and progress monitoring phase. It is important during this phase that the plan that is developed during the meeting is implemented with fidelity. The consultant will continue to be involved as a support to the classroom teacher.

*Brad's Intervention and Progress Monitoring.* The classroom teacher and the reading teacher met that afternoon to discuss the reading curriculum and decided that he would start with the new phonics group on Monday. The teacher was given the lesson plans for the week so that she could support both Brad and the other two students in class. The two teachers agreed to meet every Friday to review the curriculum and progress monitoring data.

The day after the problem-solving meeting, the classroom teacher gave Brad his social studies oral pretest. It was determined that he indeed knew the information needed to pass the assessment at the end of the Pilgrim

unit. The day after the classroom teacher alerted his parents, she and the gifted and talented teacher met with Brad to discuss the plan. Brad was delighted that he was going to be able to work on a special project. Because the current topic of the social studies curriculum was community services, Brad chose to compare and contrast the community services provided during the colonial period versus those in his current New England town. After he was given options of how he would present his independent study, he chose to create a slideshow presentation and he already had some ideas that he wanted to incorporate into the presentation. He would have time over the weekend to go to the library with his parents and would start work on his project on Tuesday during his session with the gifted and talented teacher.

### Follow-Up Consultation

The follow-up consultation is important in order to determine whether all of the plans are being implemented and to determine if adjustments need to be made. The assigned consultant can meet with the parents, classroom teacher, and/or the teachers who are providing intervention services. The consultant also will look at the data being collected because they will be the input necessary for making any adjustments during the next problem-solving meeting.

*Brad's Follow-Up Consultation.* The special education teacher had been assigned as the consultant for Brad's case. Two weeks into the intervention, she arranged a meeting with the classroom teacher, the reading teacher, and the gifted and talented teacher to determine Brad's progress with the new plans. The classroom teacher reported that Brad was responding well to the social studies plan. He looked forward to going to the gifted and tal-

ented resource room twice a week and he proudly showed her the progress he was making on his slideshow presentation. The gifted and talented teacher concurred that he was taking responsibility for his project and was following the outline that they had developed. Instead of participating in the social studies activities in the classroom (except for the field trips), he was working independently at the library or on the classroom computer. Both teachers felt that he would have his project completed by the 3-week deadline. They also noted that his parents had been very helpful with getting him resource books and books on CD at the local library.

The reading teacher stated that Brad was actively participating in the reading program and that it appeared from his progress that he was responding positively to the sequential and multi-sensory approach to phonics. He had learned several consonant sounds but was still having difficulty with the short vowel sounds. The classroom teacher noted that even though he was making progress, he was very unhappy in her reading group. Because his comprehension was far better than he was able to read, as noted in the testing prior to the initial problem-solving meeting, she wanted to explore ways to allow him to be in a more sophisticated reading group because of his need to discuss and analyze the reading passages.

The classroom teacher also stated that she was still very concerned about his difficulty with writing and his refusal to do any workbook pages or written assignments. He was no longer ripping up his papers or becoming as angry but was still putting his head down and refusing to work. The occupational therapist was scheduled to assess Brad the following week, and all of his teachers were looking forward to learning the results in order to assist Brad better with his written

skills. The consultant assisted the classroom teacher in compiling a portfolio of the limited number of writing samples that Brad had completed to date during the year.

The consultant asked about Brad's parents and whether they had noted any changes. The classroom teacher noted that she had been talking to Brad's mother every Friday informally via e-mail. She reported that his behavior was still very unpredictable at home: Sometimes he would become upset and irritable, which led to crying and tantrums, and other

problem-solving team except for the occupational therapist, who had been out for a week with the flu. They determined that they would wait until the next meeting to review her results and decide what intervention was necessary.

They began by discussing Brad's social studies independent project in which he was going to develop a slideshow presentation. It was determined that this had been a very successful plan based on the results of his final project in which he produced 10 relevant slides. He worked very effectively

**He worked very effectively with the gifted and talented teacher, was able to follow the outline and work independently in the classroom during social studies, and was able to demonstrate an increased understanding and knowledge about the subject.**

times he was sweet, agreeable, and willing to work on his special social studies project. He was still refusing to do any other type of homework.

#### **Follow-Up Problem-Solving Team Meeting**

At this meeting, there should be enough data to determine whether progress is being made, to review the student's response to intervention, and to discuss the next steps. The teacher, consultant, and parents have an opportunity to review the data together and to make decisions about continuing the current plan or to change plans based on information collected.

*Brad's Follow-Up Problem-Solving Team Meeting.* The follow-up problem-solving team consisted of the same members that met during the initial

with the gifted and talented teacher, was able to follow the outline and work independently in the classroom during social studies, and was able to demonstrate an increased understanding and knowledge about the subject. He earned an A on his project as per the rubric developed by the classroom teacher and the gifted and talented teacher at the beginning of the unit. Because the data demonstrated success, it was decided that another project with the gifted and talented teacher was appropriate.

The reading teacher reviewed the data from Brad's daily work in the phonics group. In 3 weeks, he had learned four initial consonant sounds and was practicing four more. Although he was able to identify the initial consonant sounds, he was still having difficulty with consonant-vowel-consonant (c-v-

## Response to Intervention and Twice-Exceptional Learners

c) words because of the short vowel sounds. It was decided that the reading teacher and the classroom teacher would continue to work on the specific skills related to c-v-c and short vowel sounds. They also discussed that he may need the reading program with a different approach in the future in order to acquire the vowel sounds if the data demonstrate that need. However, they felt that it was too soon to make that decision because they still did not have enough data. They decided to monitor his progress closely.

The classroom and reading teachers also noted that even though Brad was struggling with decoding, his reading assessment information indicated that he was able to comprehend at least two grade levels above his actual grade placement. Brad was complaining during reading group that the stories were boring and was either dominating the group, making fun of the stories, or refusing to participate. Because this issue had been discussed during consultation, the special education teacher had done some checking prior to the meeting. She had talked to the high school principal about utilizing one of the honors students who needed to earn community service credit. The student agreed to record his reading of the textbook stories and the questions into a tape recorder. This way, Brad could listen to the stories when everyone else was reading silently and he would be prepared to participate in the highest level reading group with four other students on a daily basis for 30 minutes. The classroom teacher would document each day whether or not he was prepared by answering the lower level questions correctly and whether or not he contributed to the higher level cognitive questioning, such as analysis and evaluation, that were typical in that reading group. Because the end of the first semester was in 3 weeks, the problem-solving

team decided that it would be helpful to meet at that time.

### Future Steps

The RtI process will continue during the year as the problem-solving team and Brad's assigned consultant assess the data, review his progress, and determine whether intervention is still needed or should be modified. The important element for a twice-exceptional student is that both his strengths and his challenges are addressed. During that process, Brad may receive interventions that are at any one of the tiers but the decisions will be based on his needs and the data gathered through the interventions. Ultimately, if these interventions are not sufficient to meet Brad's needs as currently established, and he demonstrates the need for ongoing intensive support to be successful, then he may be identified as a student with a disability and an Individualized Educational Program will be developed through this same process. He also may be identified as a student who needs gifted and talented ongoing services.

### Conclusion

Brad's case study illustrates why RtI is a promising fit for the child who has gifts and learning and emotional issues. Instead of thinking about putting a label on Brad and sending him to special education, the classroom teacher focused on his needs first. She was aware that she needed to identify the problem and, with the help of the consultant and the problem-solving team, found a way to assist him with the evidence-based curriculum and activities that were available to her and the team. The core principles of RtI are the driving force behind this process and evident throughout. With

a twice-exceptional child like Brad, the goal is always to focus on both the gift and the academic or behavioral need. The research identified in this paper have stated that it is important that educators and parents find ways to emphasize the student's strengths. These students, like all students, need to have high-level instruction and academic challenges. At the same time, twice-exceptional students must receive appropriate remediation and help for the areas that interfere with their progress. As a result of the problem-solving/consultation process, Brad was able to receive early intervention in reading and could still participate in higher level thinking activities, such as the social studies independent project. The problem-solving team was still in the process of evaluating the data to determine whether he needed modifications or intensive support in writing. Because the RtI process is ongoing and focuses on student needs, the problem-solving team will continue to review Brad's progress and the interventionist, along with the consultant, will adjust the intensity and type of services and materials along the way. They might determine that he needs more support within the most intensive tier of interventions for his reading and writing, but that he is able to function with his classmates in an activity at the universal tier in science and math. These decisions will be based on his needs, not his label. Because interventions are based on the needs of students within individual systems, determination of the level of the intervention will be dependent on the system. At some point in the process, there may be a time when a disability is suspected and it may be evident that Brad will need ongoing targeted and/or intensive support to be successful. At this point, a recommendation for consideration for a full and individual evaluation would be made.

Because Response to Intervention is a multifaceted approach, it addresses the comprehensive academic and behavioral needs of all students. Inherent in its design is the focus on both student strengths and challenges in a variety of ways. Because of the complex needs of twice-exceptional students, the RtI/ Problem-Solving Process is a very promising system that will meet their needs for high-level instruction and appropriate remediation. The old system of "wait to fail" identification and service delivery is not an adequate model for any student, but is particularly ineffective with the twice-exceptional student because of his or her unique needs. As demonstrated by the research, there is an urgency to intervene early with twice-exceptional students and to focus on their strengths. The core principles of a Response to Intervention model allow the needs of twice-exceptional students to be directly addressed. These principles direct the focus of an entire system to success for all students. As the principles indicate, this includes an intentional emphasis on early intervention through a multitiered approach based on student needs. This requires a move away from the silos of education into a more collaborative effort and a need to create an "every-ed" approach. With an increased emphasis on student outcomes and data-driven instructional decisions in an RtI model, this will lead to a much more successful school experience for twice-exceptional students. **GCT**

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