The Importance of a Response to Intervention Program in the Elementary Curriculum

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Article published on December 6th 2011 | Education

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered approach toward academic intervention. There are three tiers that increase in the level of intensity, with the first tier being the largest and most basic, while the third tier offers the most intense level of intervention. Generally speaking, this tiered model is illustrated as a triangle, with the first tier being on the bottom. Each tier is used to represent specific actions and intervention methods and not used to classify students.

The Three Tiers of RTI

Tier 1 is the largest tier and one that the majority of students take part in. Itâ€™s also referred to as the core of the program and is monitored effectively to determine where the students fall in terms of learning style and comprehension. Students that require minimal intervention will pass through this tier with no problem, while a small percentage will move on to the next tier, where they receive more intense intervention.Â

Within Tier 1, differentiated instruction is used by the educators, which reaches out to a variety of learning styles so that all students can grasp the material. For the students that are still struggling to understand the material, they will move on to Tier 2. Itâ€™s important to think of the tiers as fluid instead of separate. Tier 2 will include more intense intervention and learning aids, in addition to the core material from Tier 1.Â

The final tier is Tier 3 and represents the smallest group of students, but also the most intense intervention. These lessons are individualized for each student and complement their various learning styles. These students are the ones that are at risk for failure and have demonstrated consistently low scores on proficiency tests.Â

The Benefits of RTIÂ

When using a Response to Intervention approach, students are targeted directly, and interventions are built around the studentâ€™s individual learning style. These interventions take the place of traditional study sessions that cater to the classroom as a whole instead of looking at the needs of each student. Perhaps the most important benefit is that because students receive the right level of support, theyâ€™re able to master the concepts without falling behind.Â

When using the three tiers of RTI, educators are able to offer the right level of intervention at the right time. Even students who are at minimal risk for failure can benefit from Tier 1 by further developing their understanding of the curriculum before falling behind. Students also build confidence, embrace their individual learning style and achieve a sense of accomplishment as they succeed at their intervention programs.

RTI in a Math Curriculum

Although a response to intervention can be used in any subject, it is commonly seen in math. This is because math is a subject that continues to build on new concepts, and students can easily become lost in the material if they donâ€™t understand the core concepts. For teachers interested in using a tiered approach in the classroom, virtual manipulatives are the most effective tools. These learning aids cater to all students and allow educators to be active mentors.

Virtual manipulatives are online games and puzzles that can be part of a larger adaptive learning program that is tailored toward the needs of each student. These games are colorful, fun and stimulating and allow students to master various math concepts before moving on to a new level. Teachers can track their studentsâ€™ progress and offer intervention when necessary. With no software to download, detailed progress reports and a tailored approach, virtual manipulatives are becoming a core essential in response to intervention programs.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/education-articles/the-importance-of-a-response-to-intervention-program-in-the-elementary-curriculum.htm - Article Side

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Jim Wheelin writes about many different educational topics for parents and teachers. He is always keeping an eye out for the latest teaching techniques and tools, including how to use a response to intervention methods in the classroom. Jim also likes to test out interactive educational resources such as http://www.dreambox.com/math-intervention

Article Keywords:
Education, elementary education, math

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