

# Response to Intervention

## Parental Involvement

Experts and schools agree that parental involvement is a key factor to students' academic success. Families have a significant impact on student development, learning, and behavior.

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In order for RTI implementation to work well (RTI Action Network, 2008), the following essential components must be in place:

- **High quality, scientifically based classroom instruction.** All students receive high quality, research-based instruction in the general education classroom.
- **On-going student assessment.** Universal screening and progress monitoring provide information about a student's learning rate and level of achievement, both individually and in comparison with the peer group.
- **Tiered instruction.** A multi-tier approach is used to efficiently differentiate instruction for all students. The model incorporates increasing intensities of instruction, offering specific, research-based interventions matched to student needs.
- **Parent involvement.** Schools implementing RTI provide parents information about their child's progress, the instructions and interventions used, the staff who are delivering the instruction and the academic or behavioral goals for the child. (We also need to continuously inform parents about their progress in achieving goals and how we progress monitor.

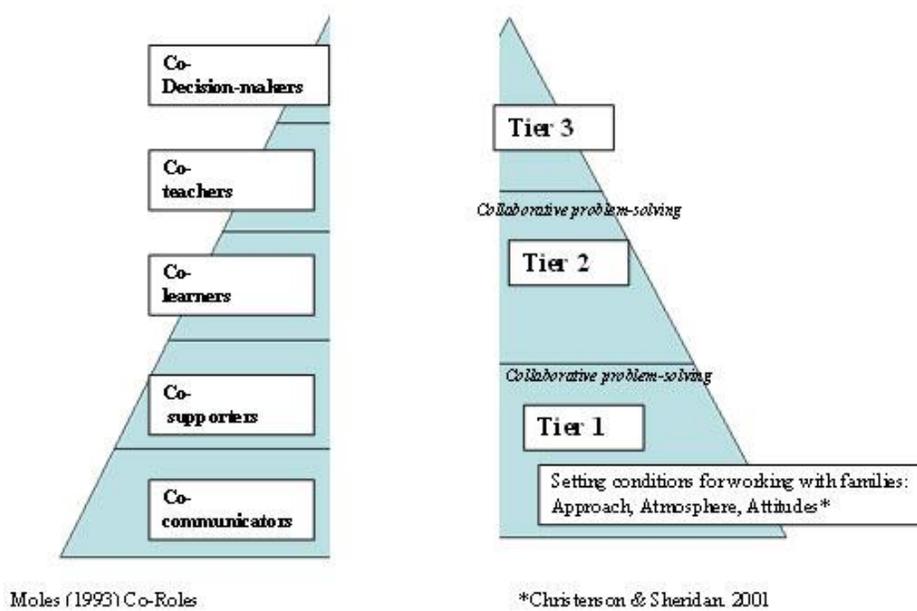
## Family-School Partnerships and RTI

RTI represents a significant change in educational practices. Several of these changes, such as the focus on prevention, screening, and early intervention; frequent, systematic data collection; and the change in focus from “where to teach students” to questions of “how,” “what,” and “is this working” to produce optimal student learning (Reschly et al., 2007), segue to the creation of engaged, positive relationships and problem-solving efforts across families and schools—**sharing information, goals, and responsibility.**

Each tier of the RTI model represents a greater intensity of services and problem solving and more frequent data collection. **When family-school partnerships are included as part of RTI, each subsequent tier also represents greater frequency of communication and joint problem solving among families and educators.** The idea of leveled or tiered family-school collaboration and partnerships is not new. Moles (1993) described a series of roles for families and educators that represented shared responsibility and participation. These “co-roles” were represented in the form of a pyramid, much like the tiers of RTI (see Figure 1). In addition, just as in RTI, each subsequent level “co” role for families and schools required greater amounts of time, commitment, and contribution on the part of families and educators.

In **Tier 1** of a family-school RTI model, conditions for engaged, positive relationships among families and educators should be in place. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) described these conditions in terms of 4 A's. Three of the A's, Approach, Attitudes, and Atmosphere, refer to setting conditions for engaged relationships and problem solving between families and educators.

Figure 1. Family-School Co-Roles and Partnerships in RtI



- Approach is the structure for family–school interactions and relationships. This condition revolves around shared goals, expectations for involvement, and valuing the diverse ways in which families support learning, and the recognition that relationships and congruence across families and schools enhance student competence.
- Attitudes are the values and perceptions held about relationships between families and educators (e.g., perspective taking, sharing of information, respect).
- Atmosphere is the climate in schools for families and educators.

The fourth A is collaborative Action or behavior across families and schools to promote student competence across academic, behavioral, and social domains (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). It is important for these conditions—or relationships—to be established prior to signs of student difficulty, as these relationships facilitate the intervention-oriented problem solving that is the basis of RTI.

In **Tiers 2 and 3**, the intensity of collaborative efforts and problem-solving activities between families and educators increases. What occurs with families in each stage of the model will vary depending on the family’s strengths and needs, school personnel, and local context; however, there are a variety of family and family–school interventions that may be considered in addition to those schools already use across the tiers. Conjoint behavioral consultation (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007) is one example of an intensive family–school problem-solving intervention.

Regardless of the role taken by family members, families and educators inform one another and share their expertise and knowledge about the student to support learning and promote competence. Enhancing student competence is the goal of family–school collaboration and relationships within and across the three tiers (Reschly & Christenson, in press).

## So how do we get parents to be involved in their child's education?

**Tip #1:** Start the parent-teacher relationship right by sharing positive phone call/note.

**Tip #2:** Teachers, open the door for parents.

**Tip #3:** At the start of the year, set expectations for parental involvement. Outline specific ways they can help in and out of the classroom- have sign-up sheets during orientation nights and parent/teacher conferences.

**Tip #4: Accommodate family needs:** Make them welcome and valued. The following were done at older son's school: meetings after work hours, multilingual invitations, translators at meetings, and child activities for the kids.

**Tip #5: The first step of involvement is communication:** Keep the parents informed of the children's progress: if they don't know what's going on with them, the parents can't help with the issues as they happen. That, in itself, will keep them involved!"

**Tip #6: Showcase what students are learning and accomplishing:** Parents (families) love seeing their child in action, learning, and sharing the product of their hard work...if your school/district permits it...use social media and technology to provide additional opportunities for participation. Share a picture of learning in action through a tweet, livestream project presentations for families to watch from afar or work, Skype a relative in to read a story. All these little things help make families feel like part of the learning experience.

**Tip #7: Create opportunities to connect:** Invite parents into the classroom to watch group presentations. Let them know it's during regularly scheduled classes only. Welcome them. Encourage students to start presentations by introducing themselves and thanking parents for coming in. Ask students to write thank-you notes within 2-3 days. Ask principals to come to presentations and say hello to parents too -- make sure parents are seen. Do it each semester. Short, succinct, successful.

**Tip #8: Assign homework that requires family participation:** Assign practical homework that requires conversation and action. Example: when doing procedural writing,...'cook with mom, and write the steps, too' ...; when learning about plants,...'do a plant walk with someone from your family, write and sketch what you see.' 'Interview someone in your family about...,' etc. In many cases, I believe it is the child's request that really gets the ball rolling.

### **Old School Methods of Parental Involvement**

*Agenda, Books Flyers, Test Folders, Parents in the Classroom and Phone Calls (Try to make more positive phone calls than negative ones. A parent who feels that every phone call is negative is going to be less involved. Try to make "Fabulous Phone Calls" at least once a week in order to increase positive interactions with my parents. Positive interactions tend to promote parent involvement!)*

### **New School Methods**

A [class website](#) is a fantastic way to provide parents with information. Post homework, an updated Google calendar, study sites, videos, projects, surveys, newsletters and photos -- anything that can be posted or embedded can be on your site!

[ClassDojo](#) is an excellent method to keep parents informed about their child's behavior, and it's [very simple to use](#). Once the parents are connected, the behavior reports are emailed to them automatically every week. If they don't have access to email, the report can be printed. What a great way to keep parents updated on their child's behavior!

**Remind101** lets you stay in touch with parents via texting. However, no phone numbers are exchanged -- they don't have yours, and you don't need theirs. You can let your parents know instantly about tests, events and early dismissals. You also have the option of scheduling your messages.

**Skype:** Skype for computer, smart phones and tablets lets parents join in classroom events like story time and special presentations without having to be physically present. [Skype](#) can also be helpful as a way for working parents to attend parent-teacher conferences.

**Twitter:** Whether it is class homework updates, project deadlines, school news or dinnertime conversation starters, teachers are taking advantage of Twitter's free tool and keeping parents up to date and involved in classroom happenings. In a day-in-age where most parents have cell phones, [Fast Follow by Twitter](#) becomes a simple and reliable alert system. To use it, all you need to do is setup a Twitter account and ask parents (and older students) to text Twitter's shortcode of 40404 with the message "follow [your Twitter username]." From there, parents will start receiving all of your updates via text message in real-time.

**VolunteerSpot:** Get more parents involved in the classroom by streamlining how you ask for help and making it easier for parents to sign up to help. VolunteerSpot replaces paper signup sheets, reply-all email chains and backpack Pony Express. Simple online signups from smartphones, tablets or computers make it easy for class parents to choose a spot that fits their schedule.

**Pinterest:** A virtual vision board for classroom inspiration, Pinterest offers a great way for teachers and parents to build community and share ideas. Invite class parents to create and share *pinboards* with links to age-appropriate themes and ideas including educational boards like fun math apps, favorite books, vocabulary games, and science fair ideas – student-centric boards like scholarships and boards geared towards parents such as healthy snack and dinner ideas.

**Edublogs:** A free, safe blogging platform for teachers, students and school communities, Edublogs lets you easily create and manage student and classroom blogs that keep parents up-to-date on class happenings and give students a safe portfolio for sharing their work with parents and extended family (via password-protected blogs). Post a few times a week adding videos, photos, links to volunteer signup sheets and educational resources – parents will enjoy your current content and feel more informed and connected to the classroom.

### **Resources:**

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/old-new-school-parent-involvement-lisa-mims>

<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/111323422012789644/> (video)

<http://www.edutopia.org/groups/classroom-management/783266>

<http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/family/schools-families-and-rti>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNDKzASWEJQ> (video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzvrDkzKyl8> (TED talk video)

<http://www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2013/05/30/5-apps-that-engage-parents-in-the-classroom>

<http://rtinetwork.org/learn/diversity/culturalcompetence>

<http://neatoday.org/2014/04/24/no-parental-involvement-is-not-overrated/>