



Methods of SLD Identification, including NC RTI / Problem-solving

Jim Deni, Appalachian State University,
School Psychology Trainer

Beth Kolb, Cabarrus County Schools, MTSS
Coordinator

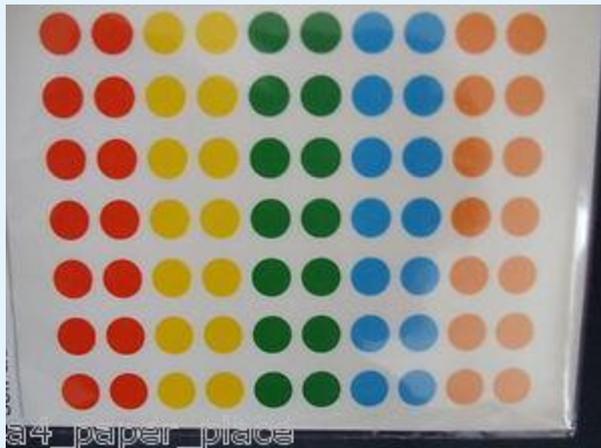


Objectives

- Provide a brief overview of SLD as a construct
- Review SLD as it applies to Federal and NC educational policy regarding its identification.
- Review current methods of SLD identification in NC
- Provide an overview of the current transition from a 4 Tier to a 3 Tier Model in NC

Sticky Dot Voting

- As you arrive, use the sticky dots on your table to respond to the questions on the chart paper around the room.





A History of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)



History

- Late 1990s- criticisms were sufficiently established by research; broader professional community took notice and professional associations began to consider alternatives.
- Very difficult for poor readers to meet the discrepancy criterion until grades 3 or 4, even though reading difficulties are apparent in late kindergarten and 1st grade.



History- LD Summit 2001

- Rejected the use of the ability-achievement discrepancy as part of SLD classification criteria in their recommendations for the 2003 reauthorization of IDEA.



History- LD Summit 2001

- L.D. Summit follow-up (Aug. 2001)- bring together the research community regarding the state of knowledge on identification, including definitions and classification criteria, and recommendations for improved practices.



History- LD Summit 2001

- Reaffirmed LD as a lifelong disorder.
- However, it did not recommend the continual use of the discrepancy method.
- Recommended an alternative known today as RtI, with a focus on quality instruction.
- Thus, with RtI we see a shift from a deficit model to a problem-solving model.



What Does It All Mean?

- The construct of SLD has always created controversy in the profession.
- The definition hasn't changed from Kirk's 1963 definition.
- The Office of Special Education was always concerned about the potential increasing numbers of students identified as SLD, thus a cap.
- The discrepancy method was simply an easy way for states to operationalize the disorder.



What is a Specific Learning Disability?



Then

- “A learning disability refers to a retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbance and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural or instructional factors.” (Kirk, 1963)

Now

- A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in impaired ability to listen, think, speak read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, MBD, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. It does not include learning problems that are the primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of ID, SED, or of environmental, culture, or economic disadvantage. (NC Policy 2010)



SLD

- A neurological disorder
- Doesn't have anything to do with how "smart" the individual is
- Most people identified as having a learning disability have difficulty with language-impacts their ability to receive, process, store and respond to and communicate information
- There is a heredity component

SLD

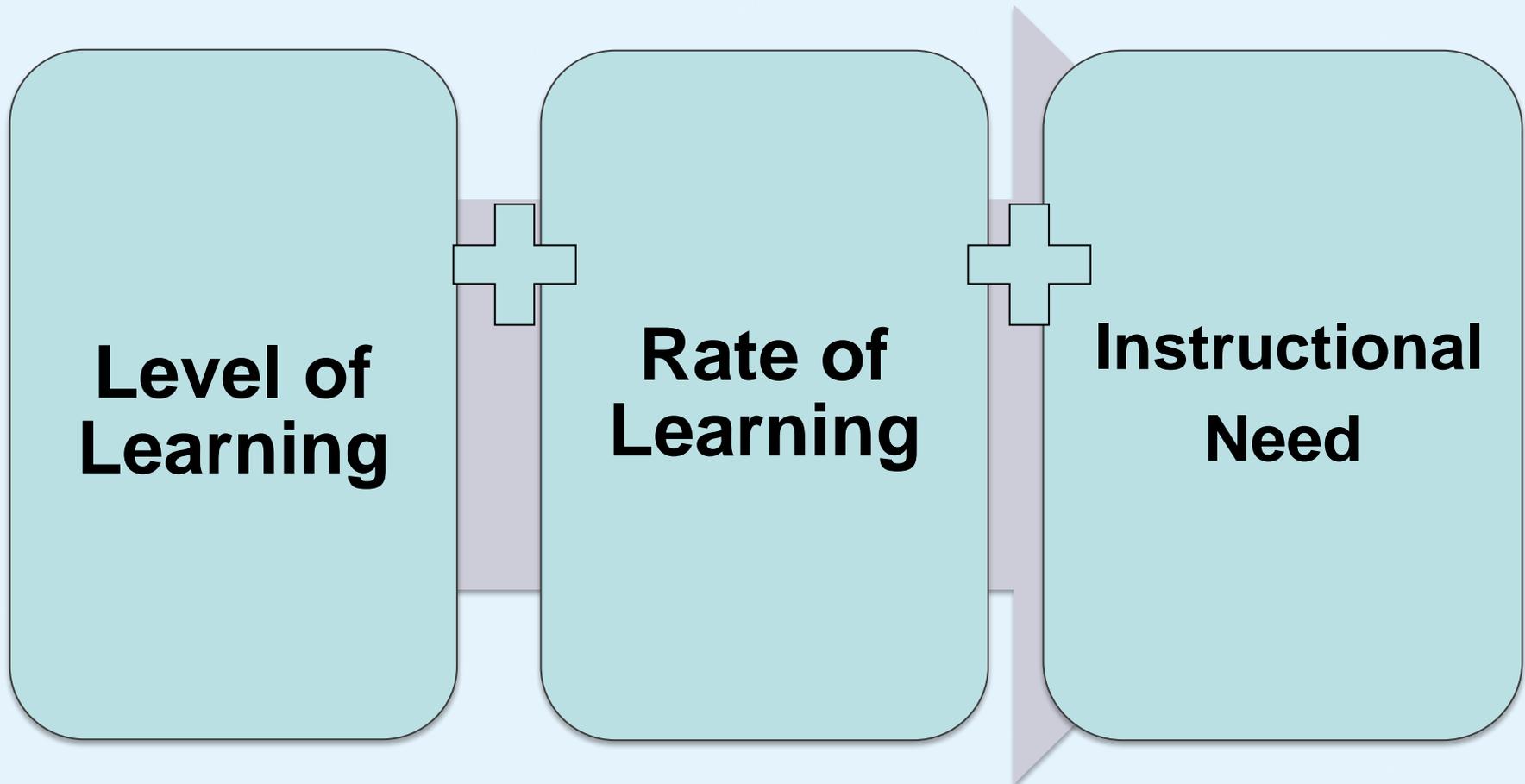
- Estimates range from 1 in 7 to 1 in 10 individuals have a learning disability
- Multiple possible causes and many unknown causes
- When identified early and targeted, appropriate intervention occurs, prognosis is good
- Not all learning disabilities are the same, nor is the “treatment”
- Affect every person differently and they differ at various stages of development



North Carolina

- Currently follows IDEA- allows discrepancy or Rtl
- SLD is only category in NC that allows use of Rtl for eligibility
- “Intent to Implement” submitted to NCDPI prior to use of Rtl for SLD eligibility
- Once school submits Intent to Implement, all students identified as SLD should be identified through Rtl (initial evaluations and reevaluations)

SLD Criteria Inclusionary Factors



SLD Criteria

Exclusionary Factors

**Lack of
appropriate
instruction.**

**Exclusionary
factors have
been ruled out.**



Discrepancy

- Assumption is that when children with average or above average intelligence fail to learn, it is unexpected, unexplained.
- Identifies too many high IQ children and too few low IQ children
- Regression model (still discrepancy) takes into account imperfect correlation between IQ and achievement by adjusting for the tendency of scores to regress to the mean



Discrepancy (cont'd)

- Not supported by research (Aaron, 1997; Stanovich, 1991; Macmann & Barnett, 1985; Francis et al, 2005)
- Instability over time
- Comparison of students with discrepancies to students without discrepancies show similar struggles, similar responses to intervention
- IQ is not an important factor in response to reading instruction



Discrepancy (cont'd)

- The IQ/achievement discrepancy method assumes there is a perfect correlation between ability and achievement, which of course there is not (Flanagan, D., et al, 2007).



Alternate to the Discrepancy





Alternate to Discrepancy

- Can't use this "method" without a *preponderance* of data for justification
- All other data, not the discrepancy (or lack thereof) are the drivers for determining eligibility
- Appropriate use would be when the team looks at the difference between IQ & Achievement **last** to determine its use





Rtl- Transition to a 3 Tier Model



North Carolina Problem-Solving Model History

- 2000 Study began
- 2004 Five pilot sites
- 2006 Statewide training
- 2008 Regional training & trainers
- 2010 General education partnership
- 2012 Transition to RtI three tier model
- 2013 RtI/MTSS Statewide Consultant in Curriculum and Instruction



Current State Work

- Development of Rtl Guidance Document including SLD Eligibility
- Scaling Up Work Group
 - Focused work with State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP)
 - Collaboration across DPI Agency and Institutions of Higher Education, and LEA representation
 - Establishment of Transformation Zones including Rtl and PBIS
 - Developing one Multi-tiered System of Support
- Secondary Rtl Pilots- Oak Foundation Grant
- Collaboration with Reading 3D to align work



NC DPI Definition of Rtl

NC Responsiveness to Instruction (NCRtl) is a **multi-tiered** framework which promotes **school improvement** through engaging, high quality **instruction**. NCRtl employs a **team** approach to guide educational practices, using a **problem-solving** model based on **data**, to address student needs and maximize **growth** for *all*.



What is RtI?

Framework that focuses on:

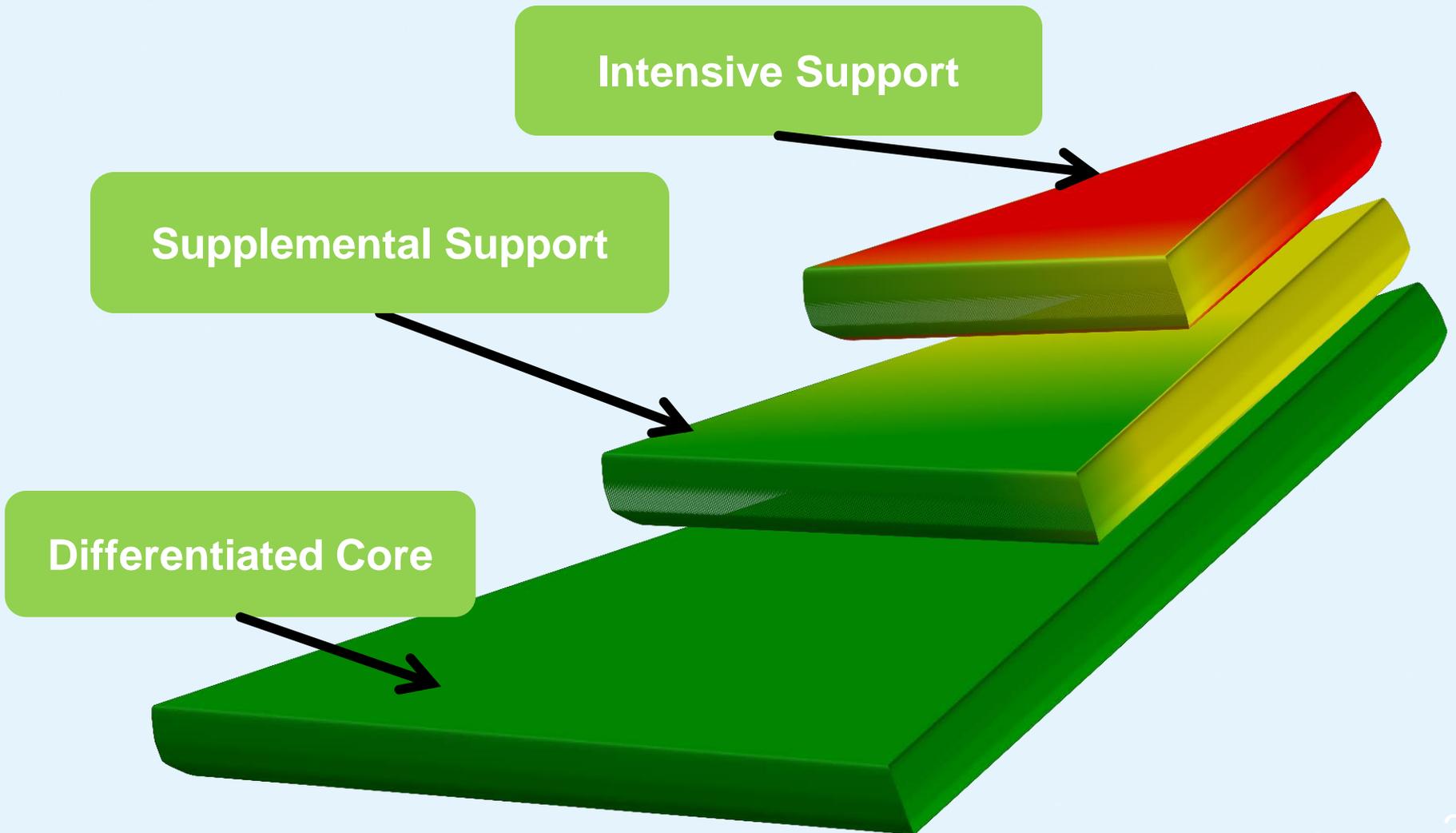
- Appropriate, targeted instruction
- Evidence-based teaching strategies
- Early intervention
- Accurate assessment with valid, reliable data
- Frequent progress monitoring
- Informed instructional decisions



Total School Improvement Model

- Problem-solving for all students
- Setting goals for groups of students and individual students
- Maximizing curriculum to meet needs of all students

Layering of Support



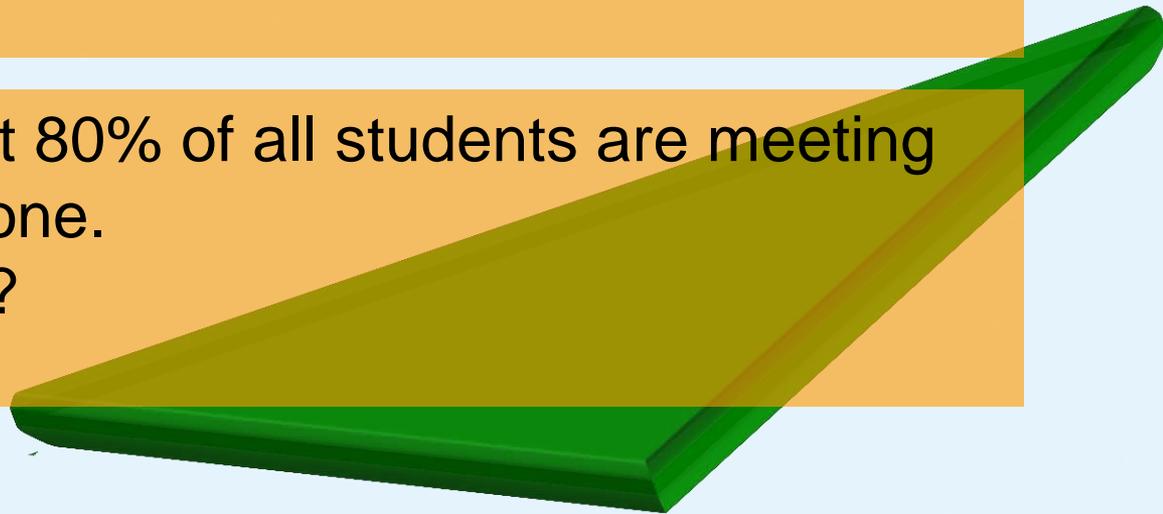
Core: Tier 1

Who: All students are in Tier 1 (Core)

What: Evidence-based programs and practices demonstrated to produce good outcomes for the majority of students

Effectiveness: If at least 80% of all students are meeting benchmarks in Core alone.

What about subgroups?



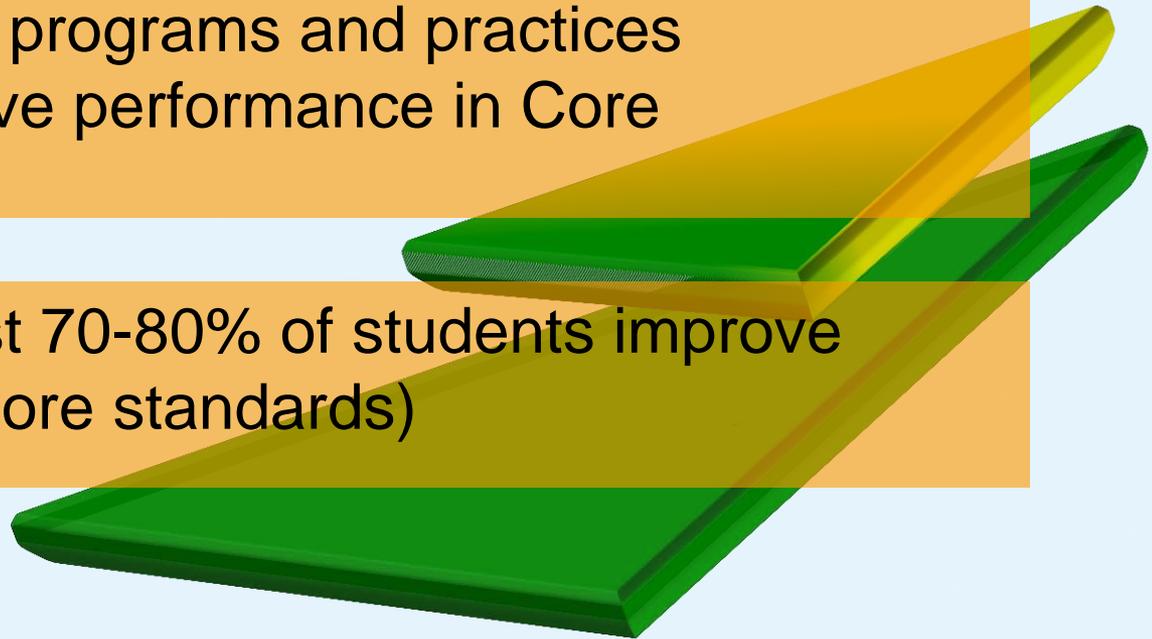


Supplemental Instruction: Tier II

Who: Students needing supplemental support in addition to Core instruction
(approx. 20% of students)

What: Evidence-based programs and practices demonstrated to improve performance in Core

Effectiveness: If at least 70-80% of students improve performance (toward Core standards)

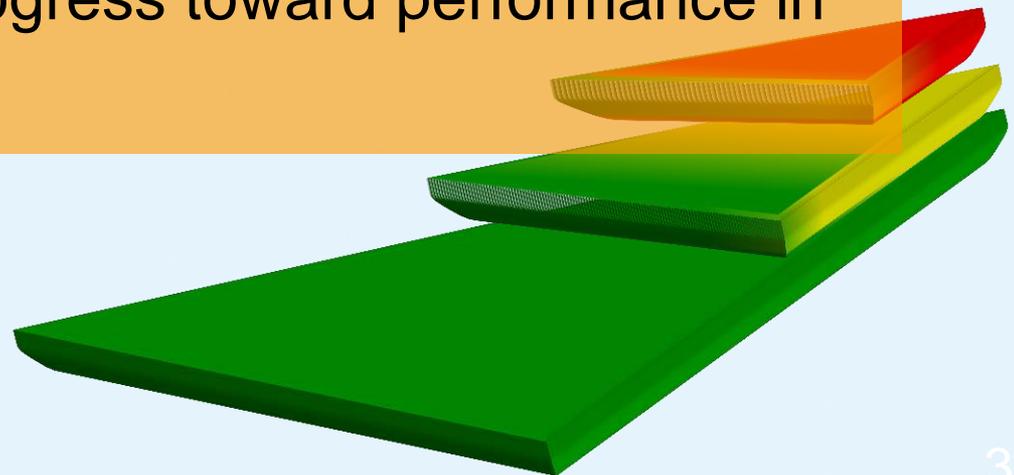


Intensive Instruction: Tier III

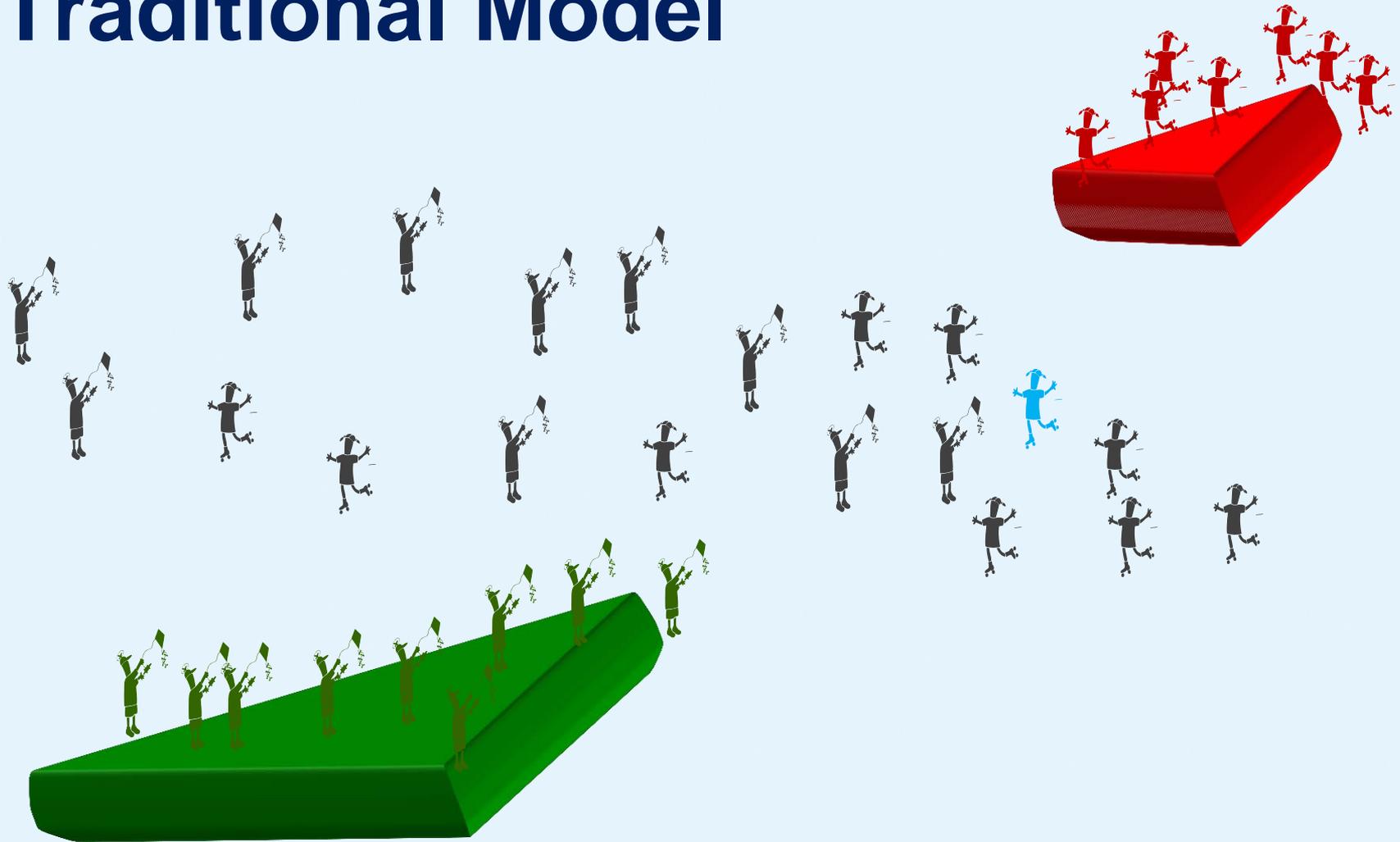
Who: Students needing Intensive support in addition to Supplemental and Core instruction
(approx. 5% of students)

What: Evidence-based programs and practices demonstrated to improve performance

Effectiveness: If there is progress toward performance in Core standards

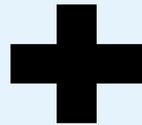
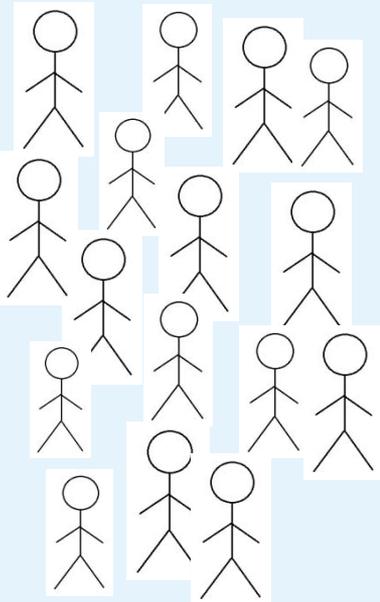


Traditional Model

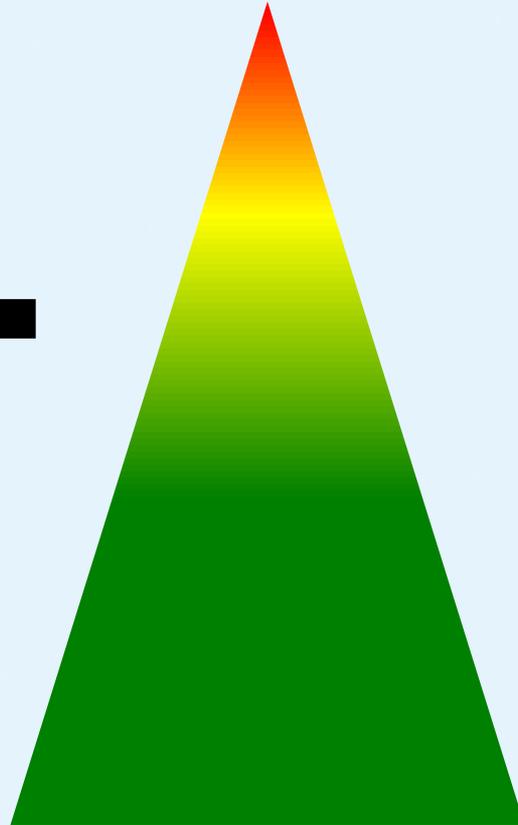


GOAL is student success, not labeling students

These students



Develop these instructional tiers



In order to meet benchmarks

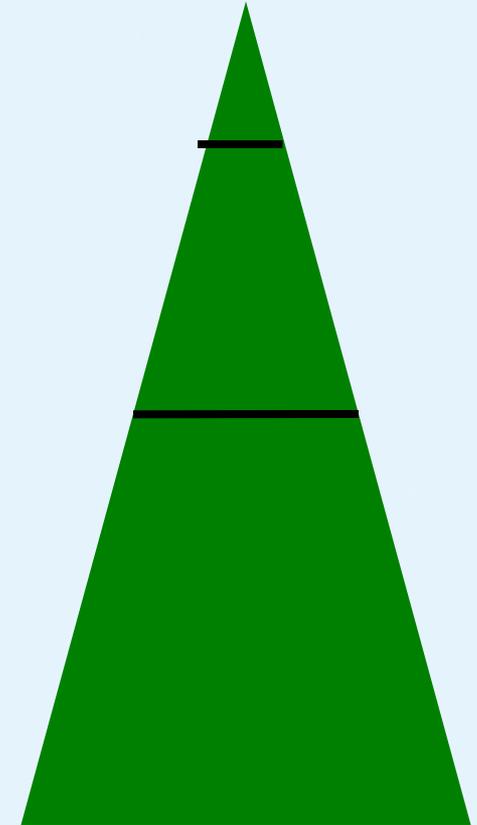




Table Talk





Challenges and Supports

- Discuss the two questions below. Answer each question on the two sheets of chart paper provided. Choose a reporter who will summarize your group's thoughts.

What is preventing your LEA from implementing Rtl for SLD eligibility determination?

What supports does your LEA have that promotes or allows you to use Rtl for SLD eligibility determination?

Using Rtl to Define SLD in Terms of Severe Low Achievement

- Eliminates poor instructional quality as a possible explanation for learning difficulty.
- SLD designation is used only for those with inadequate response to validated instruction.
- The assumption: *If a learner does not respond to instruction that is effective for the vast majority of like peers, then something is unique about the learner.*



Good Decisions

**A strong Rtl
framework**

**Sufficient data
collection and
documentation**

**Clearly
articulated
decision-
making
processes**



Comprehensive Evaluation

- IDEA requires a comprehensive evaluation.
- No support for cognitive processing in the preamble, OSEP does not believe that an assessment of cognitive processing should be used in determining whether or not someone has a learning disability.

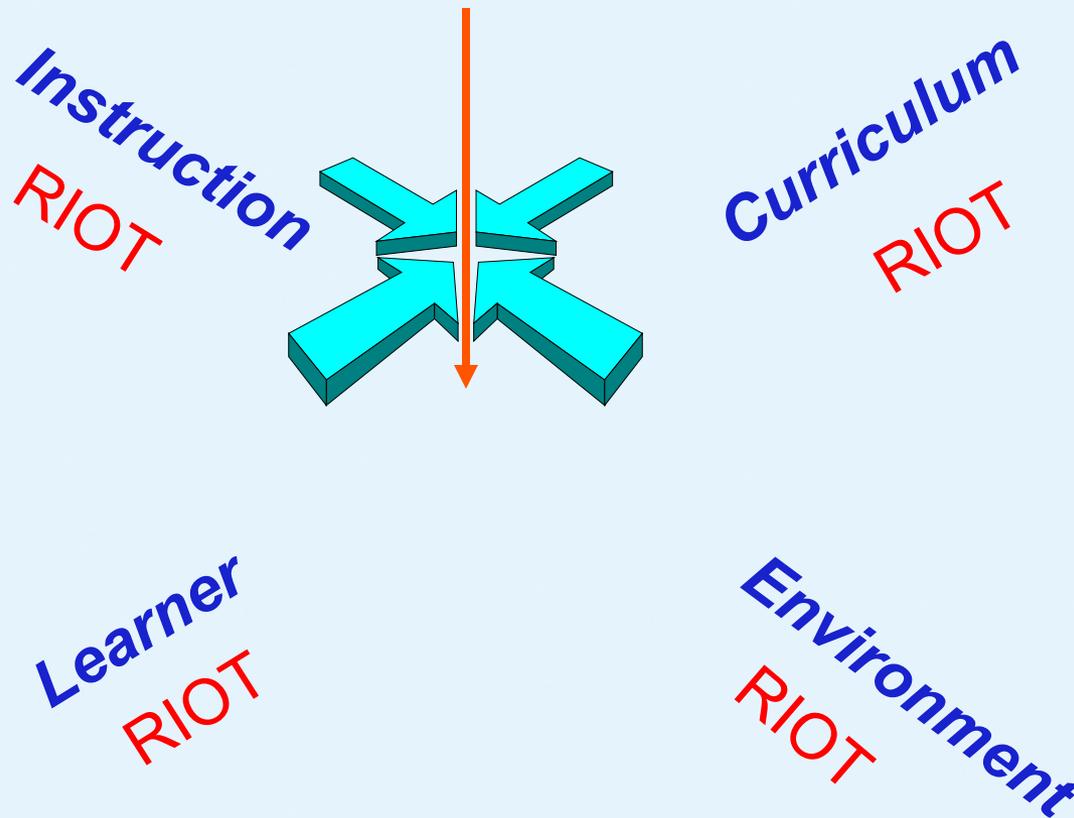


Comprehensive Evaluation

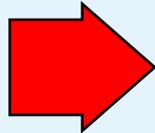
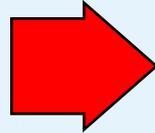
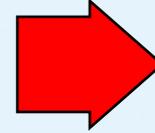
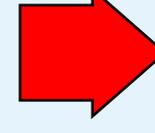
- Student is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability
- Must be sufficiently comprehensive to identify all the special education needs (whether or not commonly linked to the primary disability)

Why is the Problem Happening?

Convergent Data from Multiple Sources



Domains of Influence in Problem Solving

- **I**nstruction  How we teach what is being taught
- **C**urriculum  What is being taught
- **E**nvironment  Context where learning is to occur
- **L**earner  Characteristics intrinsic to the individual in relation to the concern



CONTENT OF ASSESSMENT DOMAINS

INSTRUCTION

This domain includes:

- instructional decision-making regarding selection and use of materials,
- instructional decision-making regarding placement of students in materials,
- progress monitoring,
- clarity of instructions,
- communication of expectations & criteria for success,
- direct instruction with explanations and cues,
- sequencing of lesson designs to promote success,
- variety of practice activities, and
- pace of presentation of new content.

CURRICULUM

This domain includes:

- long range direction for instruction,
- instructional philosophy/approaches,
- instructional materials,
- intent,
- stated outcomes for the course of study,
- arrangement of the content/ instruction,
- pace of the steps leading to the outcomes, and
- general learner criteria as identified in the school improvement plan, LEA curriculum and benchmarks.

ENVIRONMENT

This domain includes:

- physical arrangement of the room,
- furniture/equipment,
- rules,
- management plans,
- routines,
- expectations,
- peer context,
- peer and family influence, and
- task pressure.

LEARNER

This is the last domain to consider. Addressed when:

- *the curriculum and instruction are appropriate, and*
- *the environment is positive.*

This domain includes student performance data:

- academic, and
- social/behavioral.



RIOT Procedures

Review

Records
Cumulative Folders
Work Samples
Health Records

Interview

Teacher
Parents
Bus Drivers
Child
Significant Others

Observation

Student-peer
Student-teacher
Parent-child

Test

Curriculum-based
Behavior rating scales
Norm-referenced
Criterion-referenced



Relevant/known

- What are the results of your reviewing, interviewing, observing, and assessment results so far and what does it tell you?
 - Oral reading fluency is low
 - Accuracy of reading is high
 - Does not answer comprehension questions on grade level text in class
 - Does not complete seatwork worksheets based on reading content
 - Avoids reading aloud at all costs
 - Moved in from a whole language oriented school



Relevant/unknown

- Learner
 - Types of reading errors?
 - Phonemic awareness skills?
 - Monitors meaning while reading?
 - Able to telescope sounds?
 - Self corrects errors?
 - Adjusts reading to difficulty of material?
 - Reads strategically?
 - Uses prior knowledge?
 - Uses context clues?



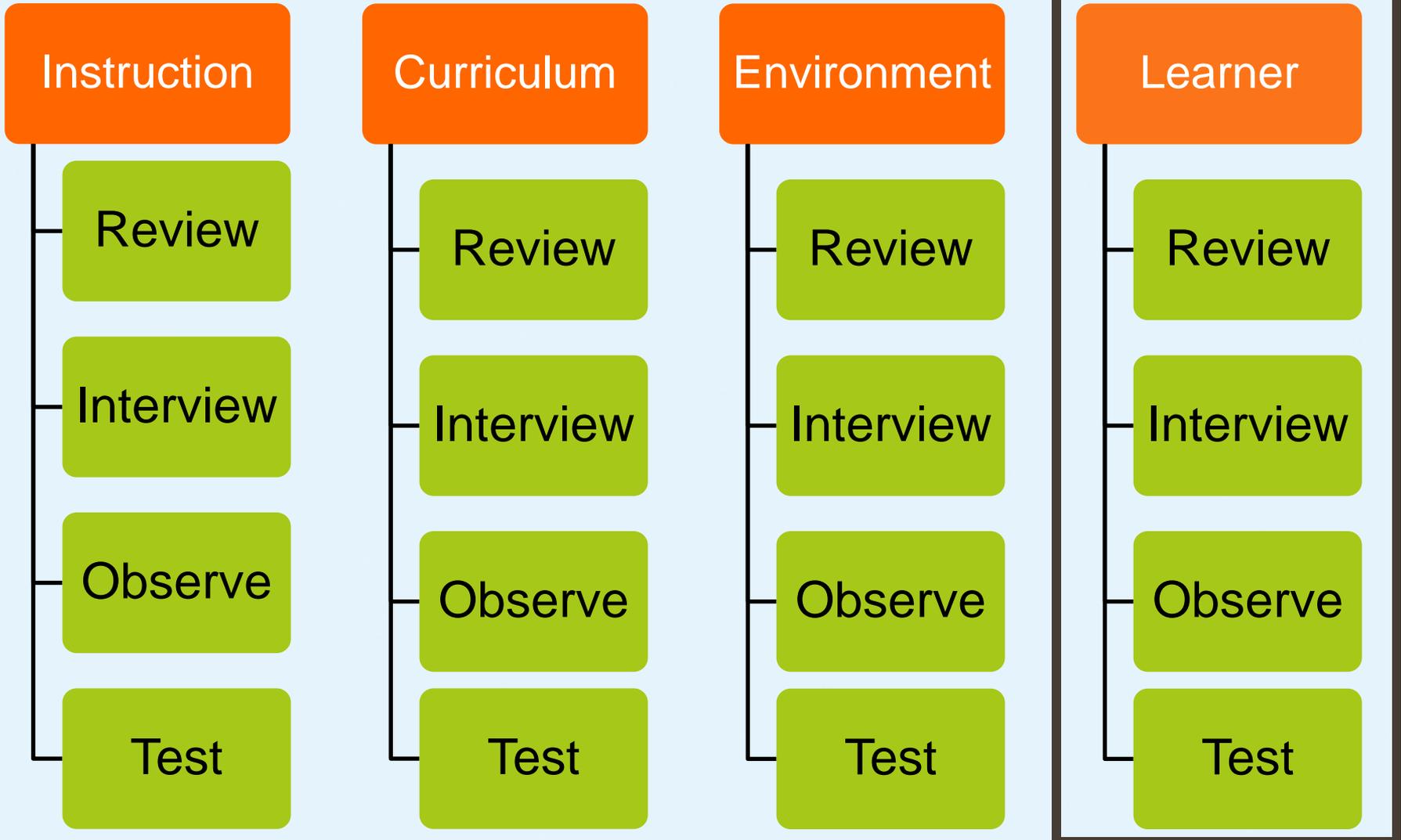
Questions?





Develop and Test Hypothesis

Include in Tier II, III





Food for Thought: Using Rtl Data for Making Eligibility Decisions

- Have we had Rtl/MTSS training?
- Are schools using the PS model with integrity? Do they understand the model?
- Do you have convergency/triangulation of data?
- Has the child had appropriate instruction in reading and math?



300.306 (b)

A child must not be determined to be a child with a disability under this part—

(1) If the determinant factor for that determination is—

(i) Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the ESEA);

(ii) Lack of appropriate instruction in math; or

(iii) Limited English proficiency;



Section 1208(3) of the ESEA

...essential components of reading instruction means explicit and systematic instruction in

- (A) phonemic awareness;
 - (B) phonics;
 - (C) vocabulary development;
 - (D) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and
 - (E) reading comprehension strategies.
- Are they meeting State-approved grade-level standards?
Look at ROI, Gap analysis!



National Research Council (2001)

Does the math program include the essential components of math instruction?

- conceptual understanding,
- procedural fluency,
- strategic competence,
- adaptive reasoning, and
- productive response.



Progress Monitoring

- A scientifically-based method by which data is regularly and frequently collected in order to determine effectiveness of instruction and identify needed changes.
- Data is regularly charted and analyzed to inform instruction.
- Provides documentation of student response/non-response to high quality instruction/intervention

Sensitive to
small increments
of growth

Quick and easy
to use

Valid and
Reliable

Monitor a
student's

Multiple forms

Standardized in

Characteristics of Progress Monitoring Tools

Easily
summarized

Can make
comparisons
across students

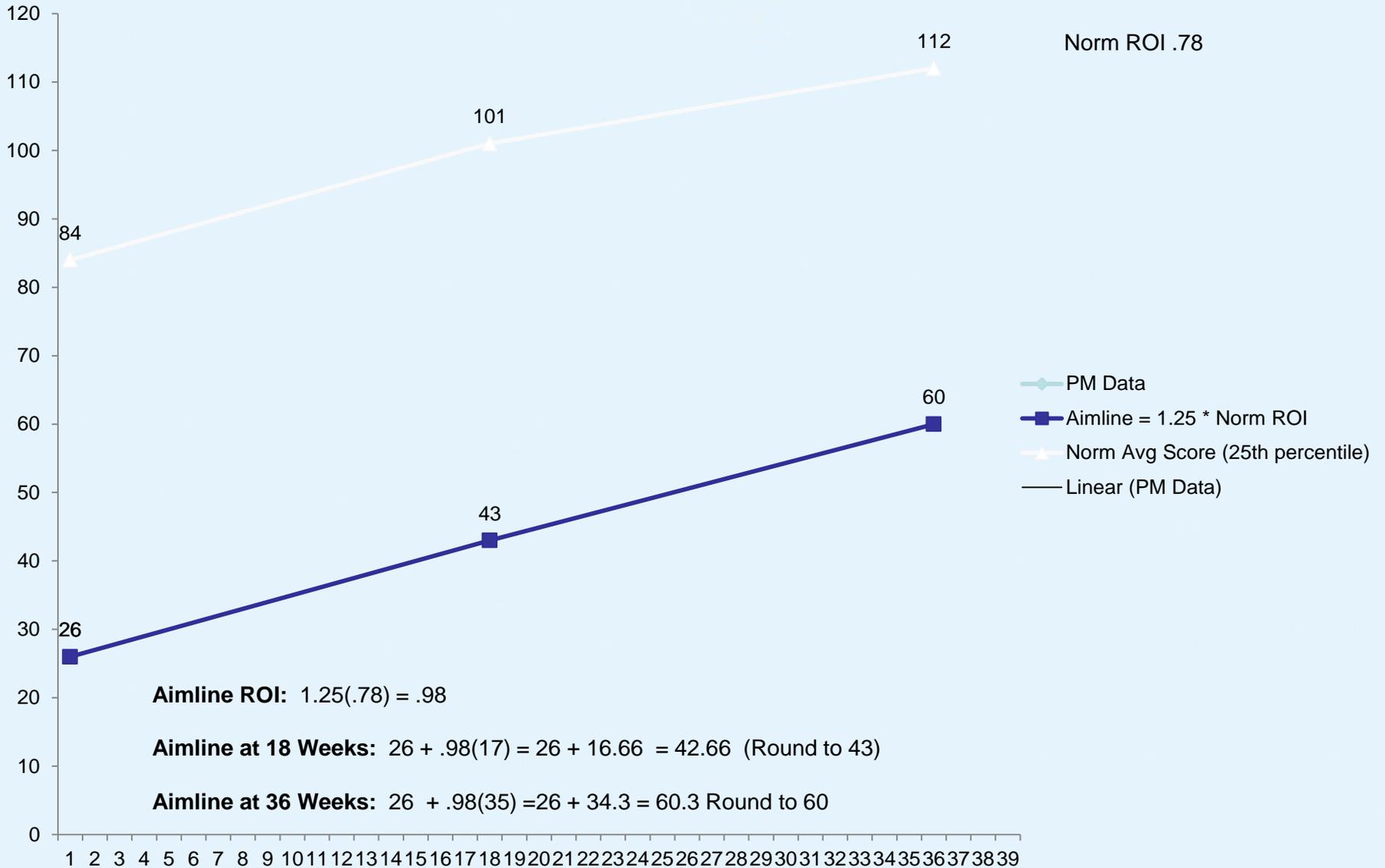
Direct relevance
to development
of needed
strategies

Norm or
criterion-
referenced

Assess foundational skills that lead to
acquisition of state standards

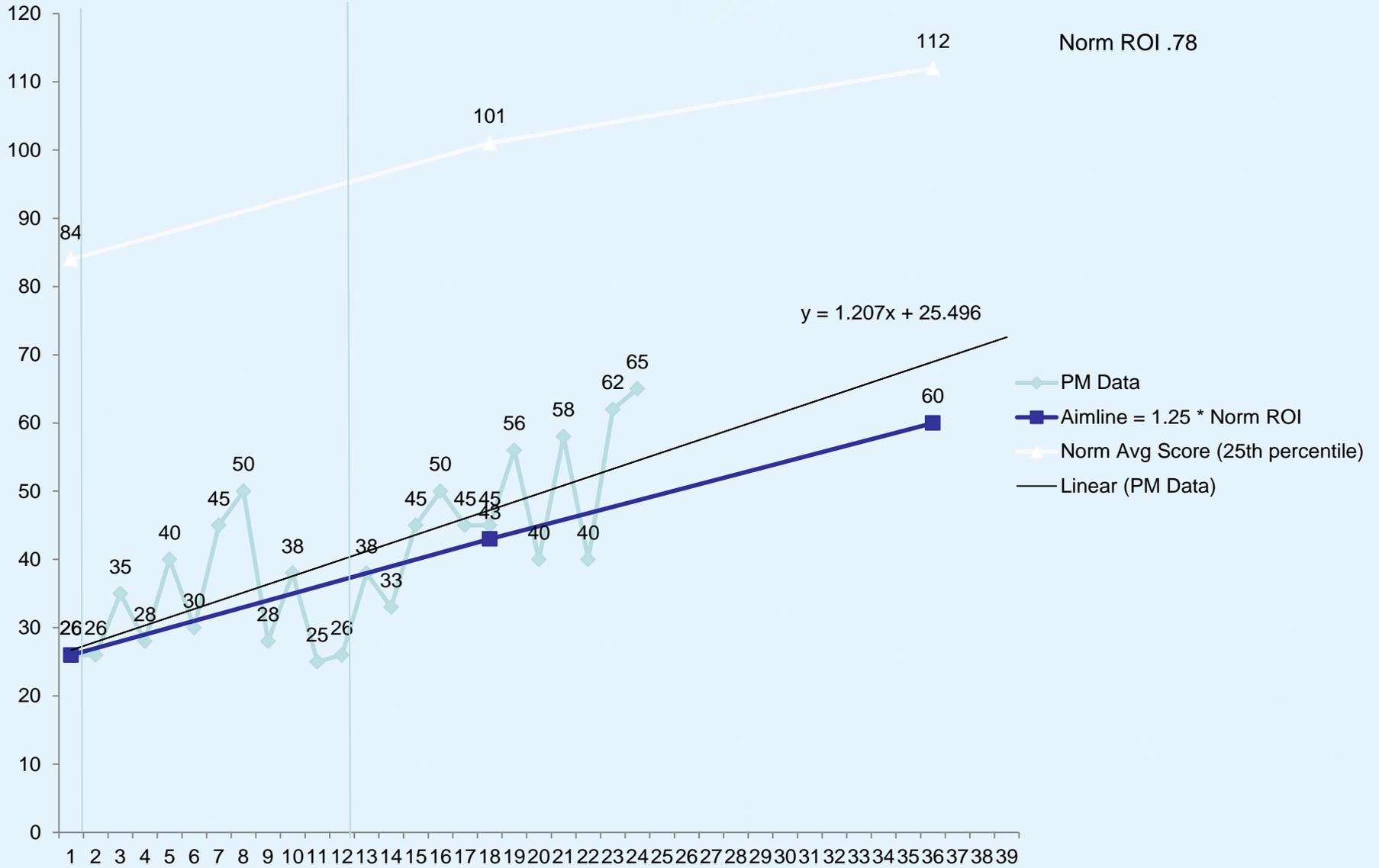


Oral Reading Fluency Grade 4 Example





Oral Reading Fluency Grade 4 Example





Progress Monitoring Resources

National Center for Progress
Monitoring

www.studentprogress.org

National Center for RtI

<http://www.rti4success.org/progressMonitoringTools>



- Dual Discrepancy (DD) – exists where the student's level of academic performance and rate of growth is significantly discrepant from grade-level expectations.
- Is the EBI implemented with fidelity? How? Documentation exists that EBI's are delivered with integrity 80% or greater.



Decision Rules

- Psychometrically sound progress-monitoring measures are used and decision-making rules established?
- Psychometrically and sensitive enough to measure student growth.
- Decision Making Rules. Christ, 2006 demonstrated measurement error associated with decisions made with fewer than 8 to 10 data points.

Response	Indicators	Response Guidelines
<p>Positive Response</p>	<p>Gap is closing Can extrapolate point at which student will “come in range” of target, even if this is long range</p>	<p>Continue intervention until student reaches benchmark Fade intervention to determine if student has acquired functional independence</p>
<p>Questionable Response</p>	<p>Rate at which gap is widening slows considerably, but gap is still widening Gap stops widening, but closure does not occur</p>	<p>Check for fidelity of implementation Increase intensity of current intervention for a short period of time and assess impact. If rate does not improve, return to problem solving.</p>
<p>Poor Response</p>	<p>Gap continues to widen, with little or no change in rate</p>	<p>Check for fidelity of implementation, Return to problem solving for new intervention.</p>



Instructional Need

- Does the suspected disability have an adverse effect on educational performance, and require specially designed instruction?
- Other data – grades, test scores, work samples
- Do you have convergence/triangulation of data?



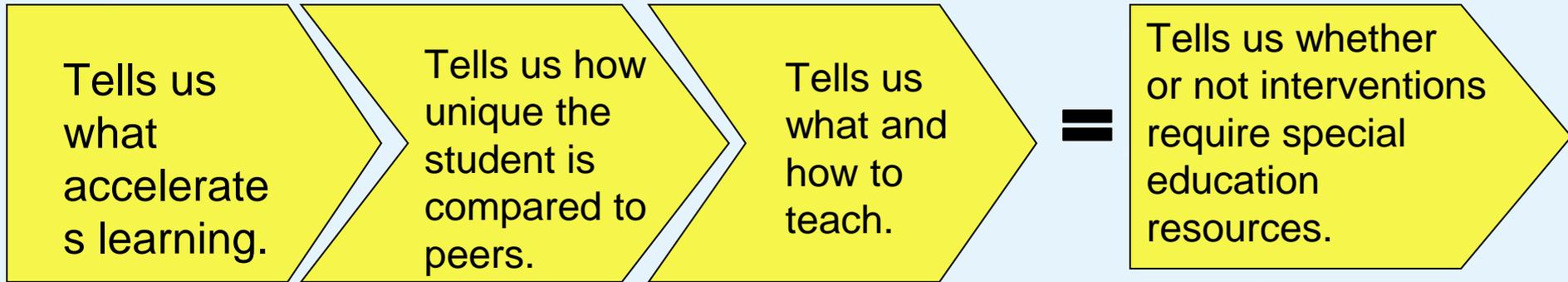
To receive reasonable educational benefit from general education

- The student continues to need substantial interventions and supports in order to progress.
- The intensity and duration of interventions needed cannot be maintained in general education alone.



Eligibility Decision

Educational Progress + Discrepancy + Educational Needs = Eligibility Decision





Big Ideas for Eligibility Decisions

- Entitlement decision is a **continuation** of the problem solving process not the goal of it
- Entitlement decisions are considered when additional resources are needed **to sustain or improve the intervention(s)** being provided in order to assure FAPE



Big Ideas for Eligibility Decisions

- Entitlement decisions require **evaluating the effects of current and past interventions** to determine whether an appropriate instructional plan has been identified and whether the student remains significantly discrepant from peers or educational expectations



Big Ideas for Eligibility Decisions

- Entitlement process focuses on knowing **how to make a student more successful** rather than on validating that the student is sufficiently unsuccessful to warrant additional resources...
- What enables learning?



When We Think About Eligibility...It

- Is a high stakes, high consequence, decision
- Has potentially lifelong consequences
- Needs to be based on established standards
- Requires qualification by virtue of following the established process as defined
- Should not be done “just to help” kids



Questions

