CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Right to Education Act (RTE) has revolutionized the existing concepts and established India firmly in the inclusive education community. It is now the fundamental right of all children to learn in the general classroom. Therefore the guiding principle of school curriculum should be based on the theme of RTE Act 2009 to include and retain all children in school. The RTE 2009 has mandated entry of diverse learners in existing classrooms. Learners with and without special needs now have the right to access the inclusive learning environment. Therefore the goal of student assessment is to identify learning needs and intervention and not labeling the disability.

With RTE 2009 focusing on the quality of teaching and learning to a diverse student population the focal point becomes effective instruction that is to be delivered in the general classroom for the entire population. According to the guidelines set by the RTE, the unique characteristics, background and learning styles of children demand differential teaching method to be used by regular teachers in the regular classroom.

It is essential to promote an environment that meets the needs of all students. The educational system must use its collective resources to intervene early and provide appropriate interventions and supports to prevent learning and behavioral problems from becoming larger issues. Effective interventions shall bring about effective teachers who are skilled and capable of dealing with the difficult academic and behavioral concerns presented in their classrooms (Nunn, 2007).

1.1 Response to Intervention

The Response to Intervention (RtI) is one of the most significant recent developments in education, requiring a renewed focus on collaboration among general and special educators for the purpose of promoting achievement among struggling learners (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; Harry & Klinger, 2007; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). Assessments, in order to be non-discriminatory, must be linked to instruction if they are to be justified (Reschly Kinglighter and McKee (1988)). Non-discriminatory assessments should be multifaceted and guided by a comprehensive framework that integrates efforts to reduce bias in a cohesive and systematic manner Ortiz (2002). Such a system contains many best practice features, which includes authentic and alternative assessment procedures, evaluating and interpreting all data.
within the context of the learning ecology and linking assessment to intervention. The response to intervention model is consistent with many of these features.

RtI is a "comprehensive assessment and intervention process utilizing a problem-solving framework to identify and address student academic difficulties using effective, efficient researched-based instruction" (Cortiella, 2006,). Response to Intervention (RtI) is a “process that includes students’ behaviour problems and academic difficulties, systematic analysis of students’ problems and implementation of a planned systematic set of interventions” (Grimes & Kurns, 2003). Response to Intervention models are student-centred assessment and intervention models that identify and address student difficulties and use effective instruction, leading to improved achievement (National Research Centre on Disabilities, 2003). It is a new and highly-effective approach to help identify students at risk for learning difficulties and work with all students to ensure their educational success. RTI as a prevention model does not indicate that students have a learning difficulty but that they need additional instruction to develop skills (Francis et al., 2006; Gersten et al., 2006). The focus shifts from eligibility to concerns about providing effective instruction" (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004,).

The principles of RtI include, a proactive and preventative approach to education, an instructional match between student skills, curriculum, and instruction, a problem-solving orientation and data-based decision making and use of effective practices. The core features of RtI are high quality classroom instruction, research based instruction, classroom performance, and universal screening of academics and behaviour. Characteristics of RtI include-the integration of the instructional system with an assessment system where the system screens all students to determine who may be at risk for poor academic outcomes. Since school teaching staff consisting of regular teachers, resource persons, technical and non technical assistants have a role in contributing to the social behaviour of children, they need to understand and believe in the principles of Rti.

RtI models are structured such to monitor student progress at all tiers, integrate a diagnostic procedure for students who are at risk to determine the nature and extent of their learning problems and to determine appropriate courses of action. The response to intervention model
includes non-discriminatory authentic and alternative assessment procedures, evaluating and interpreting all data within the context of the learning ecology and linking assessment to intervention. They have built in provision for collecting school-level data that may serve as the basis for making decisions about continuous school improvement efforts.

Thus the general education aspect of RtI cannot be ignored as it emphasizes improving general education for all learners. RtI has the potential to positively impact students across educational settings by utilizing scientifically-based interventions and ongoing systematic progress monitoring to demonstrate improvements in outcomes. The recent legislative mandates in India encourage greater accountability for results of efforts in general education supporting the learning needs of all children. This paves way for establishment of RtI models in our country.

RtI is thus the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction of goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions. This process begins with an introduction of an inclusive curriculum that would enable all children to learn and participate equally in the class. The process can gain momentum by introducing creative strategies by bringing about systemic changes in teacher preparation. The teacher must be made ready to deliver need based teaching strategy, make effective curricular modifications, use appropriate teaching resources and implement alternative modes of evaluation wherever necessary.

An important point to be made about the Response to Intervention approach is that it is not specifically a special education eligibility tool; rather it is a data-based decision-making system that can be used for all students within the school.

RtI is a “process that includes students’ behaviour problems and academic difficulties, systematic analysis of students’ problems and implementation of a planned systematic set of interventions” (Grimes & Kurns, 2003). RtI is not simply a number of components implemented in a disjointed fashion. If a school has all of the required components but lacks the integrated system that makes the components work, RtI will not be successful. ( Johnson,
Smith, Harris, 2009) particularly in its expected role of denting children’s quality of learning and social behaviour.

RtI thus plays a preventive role in not only providing intervention to children identified at risk for learning difficulties but at the same time brings about specific prevention of challenging behaviors through instructional and antecedent environmental interventions. These challenging behaviors imply any type of inappropriate, disturbing, or harmful behaviors that might be pervasive social excesses or deficits, situational disturbances, low activity engagement, and episodic crises. Similar to the process of learning, in RtI for social behaviours also the principle remains the same—research based intervention sequenced at increasing intensity for all then some and finally for few, the last being preceded by standardized assessment procedures to identify children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

RtI targets the general class first and gradually tapers towards the end by intensifying intervention bringing in changes in the very structure of the teaching learning process contributing to the holistic growth of the children. RtI as an educational process demands greater interaction between the tutor and the tutee which has a positive impact on both learning and social behavior of children. Many of the misappropriate behaviors exhibited by the children especially in the middle level disappears when this process induces the joy of learning in them. Also since the role of the teacher changes from a demonstrator to a participator behaviors conducive to classroom learning can be observed.

Conceptual Framework

RtI is a "comprehensive assessment and intervention process utilizing a problem-solving framework to identify and address student academic difficulties using effective, efficient researched-based instruction" (Cortiella, 2006,). An important point to be made about the Response to Intervention approach is that it is not specifically a special education eligibility tool; rather it is a data-based decision-making system that can be used for all students within the school. "RTI is partly a reflection of a greater commitment to the philosophical ideal that all children can learn" (Cruey 2006).
The three tiered model adopted in this study is predicated on a set of assumptions that includes the following: a). administration of universal screenings b). use of scientifically based curricula in the general education setting, c). teacher training for understanding and practising the principles of RtI., d). use of a tiered system of intervention and support in the form of special educators e). ongoing progress monitoring for identified students at each tier of intervention (f). making data based decisions, all of which reflect the characteristics of RtI.

**THE THREE COMPONENTS OF RTI:**

The components of RtI are as follows:

A. Rti As Multiple Tiers Of Intervention

**RTI represents a tiered model for linking assessment with instructional decision making**. At each tier instructional approaches are organized from least to most intensive to reflect how directive and involved a teacher must be to help children learn. Tiered models include firstly a Recognition & Response system that links assessment, instruction, and targeted interventions to support learning and development in language, concept based subjects and math. Instructional strategies which are planned to support participation, engagement, and learning of all children are incorporated next. The purpose is thus twofold-to facilitate academic learning and to foster children’s social-emotional development so as to reduce children’s challenging behaviors.

RTI is most commonly depicted as a three-tiered model of service delivery in which Tier 1 represents the general instructional program where regular teachers use research based teaching strategies and alternate evaluation. Tier 2 represents the next level of intervention by regular teachers as well as special educators in the form of additional support for students identified as at risk for poor learning outcomes using curriculum modifications and adaptations. Tier 3 is for children who go through standardized assessment procedures to determine the exact nature of their difficulties and may require special education.
B. Rti As A Standard Or Problem Solving Protocol

Protocol in RtI refers to the approach schools use when determining what resources and level of intervention a student needs. In a standard protocol the same intervention is implemented with all students. Adopting the standard protocol approach where all students receive high quality instruction “poor quality teaching” is ruled out. Problem solving is based on an individualized approach where difficulties of the individual are identified and the intervention is tailor-made to improve the outcome. It appears that the problem-solving model is the more widely used of the two (Fuchs et al., 2003).

C. Progress Monitoring In Rti

One of the most important components of the Response to Intervention model is the collection of data that allows teachers to monitor progress of concerned students. Progress Monitoring is frequent and ongoing measurement of student knowledge and skills and the examination of student data to evaluate instruction (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007). Progress Monitoring leads to usage of more efficient and appropriately targeted instructional techniques. Frequent Progress monitoring also helps the teachers to identify the techniques that have yielded results and modify if necessary their own teaching techniques.

RtI uses the Curriculum-Based Measurement model (CBM) to measure student progress. And groth. CBMs are valid, reliable and useful in evaluating student performances and in making the necessary changes in instructions.
Teacher Training In RTI

The regular teachers are the initial torchbearers of change as they create an innovative teaching learning environment in the general education class that shapes the base of the RtI pyramid. Though a firm conviction of the Management in the effective functioning of RtI as a system plays a pivotal role, teacher acceptability of RtI becomes significant in steering the change.

Teacher acceptability becomes even more difficult at the middle school level as the general education curriculum here is often not geared to serve the entire population due to its complexity of content and vastness of text. The number of subjects in the middle school increase along with demands on teachers to complete the syllabus within a specified time. Different subjects are taught by different teachers in a single class. Subject specialization forces teachers to teach a specific subject in a number of classes. Thus collaboration between teachers for monitoring progress of children of tier 1 of a single class becomes a farfetched proposal. There is a change in the teacher expectations as well where evaluation implies knowledge transmission in a more complicated manner requiring greater processing of information and more organized expression, mostly in written form.

Since RtI involves a complete systemic change, teacher training assumes a predominant role prior to implementing RtI in any school. Teachers need to be aware of the methodologies used in teaching, evaluating children and the process of progress monitoring and identifying children for the subsequent tiers. More so, teachers must experience, that teaching, in an RtI model is a series of intertwined activities. These activities involve a positive motivational context, a high degree of learner activity, both task-related and reflective interaction with others, both at the peer level that is with other students and with the teacher. These aspects contribute largely in creating a positive environment where students don’t have to be taught socially appropriate behaviour but automatically imbibe behaviours that facilitate learning. The process is not a haphazard array of student activity but a structured hierarchical “scaffolding” provided by an expert tutor to bring in conceptual development as well as conceptual enrichment. Here the teaching act progresses naturally towards teaching achievement as per the potential of each learner ultimately leading to the learner’s confidence in his / her ability and a healthy attitude towards learning.
Teacher Training in RtI aims at creating teachers who are far more conscious of the necessity for (a) stating outcomes for their teaching, (b) selecting content, strategies and resources which bear on the stated outcomes, (c) creating all situations to maximize pupil experiences of learning and (d) scientifically monitoring performances yet being humanistic in subtly demonstrating real change in the learner and in his behavior. The aimless covering of the text and the practice of accepting repetition of material as proof of learning are ideologies that hold no water during RtI implementation by the teachers.

Teacher training in RtI focuses on making teachers who are ready to teach and evaluate differently from the traditional modes, who are ready to learn themselves through the process of teaching and who can develop a collaborative attitude to understand their children better in order to serve them better. The teachers of RtI are in a continuous state of professional development and collaboration to achieve capacity building for the sustainability and development of the dynamic process that thrive in continuous teacher student interaction.

RtI At Middle School Level

It must be understood that the implementation of RtI at the elementary and at the secondary level cannot be the same. While RtI at elementary level focuses more on early identification and prevention the primary purpose of RtI at the secondary level is to build the capacity of the schools to meet the increasing demands for a diverse student population. A secondary purpose is to ensure appropriate instruction and intervention to prevent the occurrences of disruptive behaviors that hinders learning. A final purpose is to provide a system that will continuously support the continuous flow within the levels of RtI pyramid through systematic assessment, intervention and progress monitoring.

Implementing reform and system changes, especially in secondary schools, is a significant undertaking that requires strong leadership, a commitment from involved stake-holders and participants, and the acknowledgement that implementing change is a multiyear process (Fullan, 2004).

One has to keep in mind the infrastructural changes required to be made to implement RtI in the middle school level. Firstly there must be direct involvement of the principal right from the initiation of the process. Secondly there must be a delegation of responsibility since RtI demands multitasking from the teaching staff. The system of a senior teacher being assigned
the responsibility of seeing the day to day functioning of the process, a technically expert teacher being given the responsibility of supervising the monitoring process, another expert taking up the responsibility of heading the resource management etc. not only increases teacher accountability but helps in creating new leaders in the middle school level. Thus RtI acts indirectly in honing leadership skills amongst the teaching staff. Thirdly there must be a change in the scheduling where time should be reserved for the following: a. collaborative meetings of regular teachers for planning on heterogeneous or mixed ability grouping of children for collaborative learning, b. strategies for reinforcement, c. class management techniques for managing classroom behavior and d. ways of conveying data based decisions to the children who would receive more intensive intervention without lowering their self esteem.

RtI at the middle school level also involves tremendous collaborative efforts from the entire teaching staff right from the planning stage. There has to be sharing of resources, ideas and data based decision making to make the process effective. The Response to Intervention (RtI) also requires a renewed focus on collaboration among general and special educators in determining the extent, level and time of support to be given by the special educators and the role they play in monitoring progress of such students. There is a need to directly establish the link between general and special education in today's world where inclusion has become the key word and understand each one's specific roles and the extent of collaboration required for the optimum utilization of human resources.

Strategies In Rti

RtI in the middle school level is aimed at meeting the demands of a diverse population with varying learning styles. It is also aimed at improving social behavior of all children. Since it is not possible to individually address the needs, styles and difficulties especially at the level 1 and level 2 of RtI it becomes an absolute necessity to teach content in a manner so that all children can participate, understand and express appropriately during evaluation. With improved understanding, greater class involvement a social adjustment takes place with improved learning. Thus adopting various teaching strategies becomes essential.

a. Experiential Learning
Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. All learning is, in effect, learning from experience. 'Learning from experience' is 'taking place in the life world of everyday contexts'. But 'Experiential learning’ is a method where the teacher consciously constructs experience so that the learner can derive knowledge and apply knowledge in similar situations.

Experiential learning in the educational context can thus be summarized as everything ranging from kinaesthetic-directed instructional activities in the classroom to special workplace projects interspersed with critical dialogue led by a facilitator, to learning generated through social action movements, and even to team-building adventures in the wilderness.

b. VAK

The VAK learning style is based on modalities—channels by which human expression can take place, is composed of a combination of perception and memory and is sometimes also known as VAKT (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, & Tactile).

- **Visual.** Visual learners find it easier to take in new information through pictures, diagrams, charts, films, and so on.
- **Auditory.** Aural learners find it easier to take in new information through the spoken word.
- **Kinaesthetic.** Kinaesthetic learners find it easier to take in new information through copying demonstrations and physically manipulating things.

Teaching concepts through VAKT thus signifies the learner absorbing knowledge through all the modalities (seeing, hearing, working and touching) thereby strengthening the assimilation process by interweaving illustration, explanation and direct experience.

c. Instructional Match

Most adaptive instructional designs employ one of three types of matches: remediation of learner deficiencies, compensation for deficiencies by modeling cognitive behavior, and capitalizing on learner strengths (Salomon, 1972) specific methods or skills that the learners lack.

In the level 1 of RtI activity based learning is incorporated along with the instruction so that learners acquire more educational experiences as they are required to adapt to a variety of instructional methods and styles. At this stage it may not be appropriate to always accommodate learners' preferences or weaknesses, but rather to challenge the learner to learn
using a variety of methods. This enables them to acquire the ability to grasp new concepts, organize them by utilizing strategies not used traditionally.

As one progresses to the next levels of RtI where learner’s strengths and deficits are mostly identified it is useful to apply the next most common type of instructional match that is the remediation match. Instructional strategies are planned to strengthen the skills that the learner is deficient and compensate for deficiencies by modeling cognitive behaviour.

As one move higher up the pyramid, offering special education services becomes the only option. The most common approach to adaptive instruction now could be the preferential match. Here learners are taught using instructional methods that call on traits or processing skills which the learners already possess. Preferential matching teaches to the learners' strengths.

d. Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the process where the teacher at every level of mastery assists the student and motivates him/her to attain the next level. This helps students in the difficult initial stages till they establish and develop their own mental frameworks to integrate their learning and master the concepts to retrieve as and when necessary. This process intricately aids in building up learner’s confidence, cements the teacher student relationship and motivates the student to learn thereby taking care of disruptive behaviours in the classroom which is often an outcome of child’s inability to comprehend what is expected of him/her. Such support structures help to increase students' task-related confidence and ultimately leads to independence where the child learns to manage his/her own learning needs and compensate for the deficiencies, showing responsibility towards oneself.

e. Step-by-Step Strategies

For complex, conceptually difficult, or multi-step academic operation, it is necessary to break these operations down into simple steps. An advanced organizer may assist children in performing activity based learning in a systematic manner minimizing confusion directly leading to a well disciplined class environment where each ones roles are defined, thus bridging the gap between student's prior knowledge and new learning
f. Modeling & Demonstration

Modelling and demonstration are explicit strategies to students for learning academic material or completing assignments. In RtI before the teacher engages the student in activity based learning, often the activity itself is demonstrated by the teacher. Since a diverse population of learners are present in the general class this often helps the struggling learners to comprehend expected outcome.

g. Teacher coaching

Teacher coaching involves choosing a skill essential for the students to develop, reviewing and discussing the process how the skills would be applied, observing and analyzing and providing feedback that would benefit the student group. This helps the student to understand why the teacher has chosen a particular activity. It increases the communication between the teacher and the students. It allows feedback and suggestions from the student thereby helping in class management by formulating rules, developing strategies of effective instruction and managing classroom behavior.

h. Drill & Practice

Improving reading, is often a common objective of teachers of RtI. Repeatedly reading the same words or passage provides predictability and allows the students to have increasing success with their reading attempts. Drill and practice method is preferred by the teachers as it is relatively easy to implement, however, it should not be used for mastering a skill but for maintaining it.

i. Periodic Review

It is essential for students to walk back in the paths of learning from time to time to recall the concepts already learnt. A periodic review helps students to organize and store information effectively before acquiring new information. But instead of oral repetition use of guided notes and organizers enhance the process of learning.
k. Graphic organizers

Graphic Organizers combine the linguistic and non-linguistic modes of information storage and helps to form imagery by Descriptive Patterns, Time-Sequence Patterns, Process/Cause-Effect Patterns, Episode Patterns, Generalization/Principle Patterns, and Concept Patterns. Graphic organizers simplify the display of concepts and the relationships between those concepts as a means of communicating, comprehending, and analyzing relationships of a physical system or body of knowledge. Graphic organizers aid in linking concepts, understand causal relationships by the present of key words, lead to more organized storage of information and thus lead to better retrieval.

l. Guided Notes

Guided notes are an effective way to improve outcomes for children and adolescents, including those with disabilities. Here the student records information by listening to the teacher. The guided notes can be made learner friendly by making it a reflection of student activities performed in the class incorporating visuals, organizers from where the student is expected to construct the responses him or herself.

1.2 CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Concept development is the development of an understanding of a single, group or class of data taught in the school, which is systematically represented whenever required. Concept development in RtI can be viewed as a process where learning becomes an activity that students do for themselves in a proactive way by showing personal initiative, perseverance, and adaptive skill in pursuing it. They are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 1986). This form of learning is induced in the learner in a planned manner by the teacher using a variety of teaching strategies discussed earlier. Thus learning is not a capsule of information fed diligently by the teacher, but is an array of information that the learner himself or herself progressively builds up within himself or herself through a sequence of guided experiences.

The concept of guidance used in this study has been largely influenced by the theories of Vygotsky, for whom, authentic educational activities were those opportunities in which a
learner would be engaged with a task beyond his or her immediate capability (the "zone of proximal development") with a facilitator. The Zone of Proximal Development is a sort of gap or the difference between what a learner cannot do alone yet can do with help from a teacher or more capable peer. The basic tenet of this construct is that tasks that learners can initially do only with assistance, they come to do independently as they incorporate the structure or the scaffolding of the assistance. (Schunk, 2001) It is within close personal relationships marked by support of student autonomy, intersubjectivity, and intelligent sympathy that effectively scaffolded interactions between teachers and students can occur. (Yowell and Smylie, 1999).

Guided tasks are planned keeping in mind the children’s general interest level and their present realm of knowledge to create a “dynamic system of meaning in which the affective and the intellectual unite” (Vygotsky, 1962). Cognitive activities are all planned within the realm of meaningful context gradually taking the child from known to unknown. The tasks chosen are of moderate difficulty to arouse curiosity and create novelty within the zone of familiarity and are neither too easy nor too difficult. The child is given the opportunity to perform activities with peers, to understand the concepts involved in them without feeling the burden of learning. The scaffolded guidance takes the child to the next stage of storing the concepts sequentially, meaningfully and finally the third stage allows the child to learn to retrieve the concepts in the manner asked. That is how learning and social behaviour gets intertwined in this study with the integration of the intellect and the affective, the mind and the emotions leading to task oriented goal directed behaviour. Children are so busy learning from the environment comprising of teachers, peers and the plethora of experiences that they do not have the time to exhibit socially inappropriate behaviour.

Students prepare for class, participate in discussions, ask questions, and provide ideas to perform activities and in the process develop an understanding of the concepts of the academic content included in the curriculum thereby progressing from motivation to cognition. Thus the environment in which learning is enhanced includes engagement in learning activities with reflection and use of strategies with emphasis on increasing student motivation.

The process of concept development can be divided into three substages-1) exploration, (2) concept invention, and (3) application. The purpose of the exploration phase is to get students ready to learn new concepts through activities designed to raise student interest and identify
levels of prior knowledge. (Gillis, MacDougall, 2007) Exploration phase is especially important for students in the concrete operational developmental stage (Abraham and Renner 1986) that is at the beginning of middle school level with the introduction of a number of new subjects.

The concept invention phase builds on the exploration phase and involves information input, usually from the teacher or a text. Scaffolding of students learning’s is done by the teachers using a variety of instructional strategies and providing additional structure during the phases of learning a new concept or skill, like advanced organizer, written or oral guides, mnemonic devices, charts, visual organizers, picture clues, and lists of key ideas to help students remember new ideas, facts, and information and highlighting facilitates the student to retrieve information from long term memory.

In the application phase, the teacher uses strategies that require students to apply the newly constructed concepts to novel problems and situations. In the application phase, the teacher uses strategies that require students to apply the newly constructed concepts to novel problems and situations. Students take ownership of the new knowledge as they organize, use, and understand the knowledge from a variety of personal and social perspectives. (Gillis & MacDougall, 2007).

1.3: Knowledge development:
Meaningful development of language and acquiring of concepts through a variety of planned experiences builds up a body of knowledge in the child. Pupils have learnt “not through being told but through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with adult peers” (Vygotsky, 1978:86, cited in Daniels 2001) It is important to sieve information from this body of knowledge as and when the situation shall so demand. The sea of knowledge that is created and organized through concept and language development need to be systematically retrieved during assessments to understand to what extent knowledge development has taken place. Since RtI focuses both on the intellect and the affective, learning outcomes are also planned by building assignments around the interests of the child, active participation of children in a group set up. Guided experiences or scaffolding is offered even during
assignments where the child is made to tread through familiar territory to completely non familiar ones.

Assessment practices and principles followed in RtI can be subdivided into three categories. The first category incorporates active engagement of the students in contextualized activities and meaningful tasks which provide opportunities to demonstrate strengths rather than weaknesses. Assessment procedures thus are in accordance to the intellectual characteristics of middle school students reflecting intense curiosity with a wide range of intellectual pursuit and high achievement when challenged and engaged. No where are the assessment procedures based on “ram, remember and regurgitate (Renzulli, 2000) model. All the contextualized assessment procedures in RtI plan maximum student involvement by providing opportunities to use multiple intelligence, feel extended and reflect critically when engaged in learning tasks. These assessments are based on collaborative learning which requires students to come together with the specific goal of constructing a group response to a task. They share, justify expand ideas and representations, and attempt to understand others ideas and representations and build on each other’s ideas and representations. Grouping students can help to build motivation, social skills and independence; and most importantly can raise standards because people are better engaged in their own learning (DIES:2005).

In the second category assignments are well structured and planned within the range of their ability level with the first part of the assignment being easy or familiar enough to provide that initial success experiences.

The third category of assessments in RtI at the middle school level prepares them for exams at the secondary level where they are required to categorically retrieve information by either organizing information from the memory storehouse or apply previous experiences, thought, knowledge and present responses adequately. It is thus essential for children at the middle school level should be evaluated on individual written assignments. Questions range from lower order thinking of mere retrieval or recognition of required data to higher order thinking involving application and problem solving. This type of cognitive assessment aims not only to find out children's initial learning level, but also pays attention to the level of improvement as a result of consistent interactional procession.
It is thus necessary to understand whether the gradual development of ability beginning from recognizing accurate data from the content or retrieving single concept from memory accurately as per the question, to retrieving or recognizing multiple concepts and linking them appropriately and finally applying previous knowledge to give reasons have taken place. Thus the learning outcomes that are sequentially measured can be assessed using Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), through collecting of information, categorizing and analyzing information, drawing conclusions from the information, setting of different levels of questions for the written evaluation can be done comprising of two levels -- Level I (the lower level) - knowledge, comprehension and application; Level II (the higher level) - application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation can be used.

1.4: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Language has been called the symbolization of thought. It is a learned code, or system of rules that enables us to communicate ideas and express wants and needs. Reading, writing, gesturing and speaking are all forms of language. Thus language becomes a main tool for understanding how effective the intervention has been. So language development though not directly related becomes an important component of Response to Intervention, especially in a country like India, where proficiency in English language is acquired for most of us in the school.

Children receive, organize and apply their previous knowledge to develop information into a new form. Language is used in two ways-firstly to acquire that proficiency to comprehend the information received and secondly the ability to use language as a tool to express their thoughts. Language thus acquires two distinct functions: communication with others and self-direction (Zivin, 1979).

Engels' (1890) theory of human evolution proposed that language developed as a result of human activity and the need for cooperative labor. The same idea can be utilized in the classroom to develop language through a course of activities performed by the students with guidance from the teacher. Developing language through interactions comprising of a variety of experiences given through various modalities is one of the aims of teaching in RtI. The classroom experiences are culture specific and reflect the social values and language develops with the support of semantics. Thus language development does not remain a disjointed
exercise of acquiring phonetic skill, or learning the syntax where despite having adequate phonological decoding skills, many students experience difficulty in reading words without the support from semantics. Vygotsky (1962), On the other hand, believed that the meaningful association of words with experiences builds up the semantic knowledge, which he called "storehouse" of language-based information.

Language development in RtI works towards building up an enriched environment at all levels from where the child can acquire and transmit thought in meaningful language leading to emergent interaction, the process of internalization that integrates the multiple social instructional environments in the child's experience with the child's natural developmental processes and understandings (Wretch and Stone 1985).

Deficits in semantics often delays acquisition and use of written language. Children are unable to differentiate between subtle differences in meanings, use expressive vocabulary, and retrieve the word and its meaning and logically sequencing the words. It thus becomes important to make semantic feature analysis which is a formal comparison of the aspects of meaning that define an entity or concept. Semantics covers the entire range of building vocabulary to being able to meaningfully use them in relevant contexts.

India being a country with multiple languages and dialects, proficiency in English language is a major concern. Some children become non responders owing to lack of skill in the basic components of language which are expected to be mastered in the elementary level. Language development at the higher levels comprise of mastery on phonology, morphology, syntax and word recognition each of which are being explained briefly below:

Phonology

It is the study of the speech-sound system, including the rules and patterns by which the phonemes (speech sounds) are combined into words and phrases (Moats, 2000). Phonemic awareness is the awareness of children in perceiving, distinguishing, and manipulating the separate sounds that exist within words. Children become aware of words, syllables, rhyme and eventually, to individual phonemes. A child who has phonemic awareness can identify the sounds he/she hears, segment words and blend sounds into words. With appropriate instructional inputs on oral motor, visual and auditory feedback systems children with learning difficulty can perform better in oral and written tasks.
Morphology
Morphology is the study of word structure and describes how words are formed from morphemes. A morpheme is a unit of meaning. It does not necessarily relate to the "word count" or "syllable count" of an utterance. Morphological knowledge is a major contributor to vocabulary growth, spelling, comprehension, and the richness of the student's written language (Soifer, 1999).

Syntax
Syntax is the rule system that governs how words are combined into larger meaningful units of phrases, clauses, and sentences. The rules of syntax talk about order of words, organization and constituent of sentences. As students become more proficient in syntactic abilities, they are able to change the forms and patterns of sentences. Written expression is then enhanced by the individual’s ability to manipulate, expand, connect, and alter word/sentence pattern. Syntactic activities like developing grammar, sentence structure, sentence and paragraph organization, capitalization, and punctuation also improve writing skills.

Word Recognition
Word recognition are important for independent reading as it enables use of context clues, increases fluency and ease of reading where children can read greater amounts and for longer periods and focus can be more on comprehension than on decoding. High frequency words are phonetic and can be decoded, but occur with such frequency that they often need to be learned before their specific phonics pattern is taught. Instant recognition of words, especially high-frequency words develops best when students read large amounts of text, particularly text that is relatively easy for the reader (Cunningham, 1995).

1.5: Social Behaviour:
In physiology and sociology, social behavior is behavior directed towards society, or taking place between, members of the same species. Social behavior is followed by social actions, which is directed at other people and is designed to induce a response. These social actions when affects interactions negatively calls for intervention. Schools typically rely on disciplinary action as the primary means of managing student misbehavior. Numerous studies indicate that teaching expectations across settings and providing incentives for appropriate behavior (within the SW-PBS framework) can effectively reduce student problem behavior.
A social behavior model of RTI promises to be an extension and new application of the already substantial research base regarding positive behavioral interventions, functional behavior assessment (FBA), and early intervention (Sugai et al., 2000; Vaughn et al., 2003). Despite the lack of specific empirical support for RTI in the social behavior domain, similar models of behavior support have been implemented in schools.

![Integration of Academic and Social Behavior Three-Tiered Continuum of Behavior Support](image)

Delivering school-wide, universal behavioral interventions to all students is proving to be an efficient and effective method of providing a base level of support for students and reducing overall problem behavior in schools (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague, 2001; Scott, 2001; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997. This can be seen in the standard protocol approach which when implemented for all students in the general classroom might
require schools to train teachers first to identify the behavior, the strategies to integrate the positive behavior within the learning system and then explicitly teach the students expectation-compliant behavior. Evidence-based classroom management strategies like, consistently implementing an acknowledgment system to recognize appropriate behavior in class, providing multiple and varied opportunities for students to respond during instruction, serve as a universal level preventative intervention.

Increasing intensity designs that serve as a general RTI model for academic characterized by a familiar cone describing three tiers and heuristic strategies and targets for children served at each tier (Sugai et al., 2002) are used for behavioral interventions as well. Such models have been based on principles of wraparound behavior support (Eber et al., 2002) and/or the inclusion and integration of graduated systems of behavior support (Sugai et al., 2000). Although intensifying levels of behavior support can be defined, the dependent measures and decision rules schools use to identify "low responders" to social behavior interventions are not as well established. (Muyskens, Marston, Reschly, 2007)

There are no two separate prescriptions for Learning(Academics) and social behavior in RtI as the link between student behavior and academic performance is known. Classwide interventions which forms the basis of RtI, are based on effective instruction and applied behavior analysis (Wolery, 2005) that enhance both learning and social behaviour. Level 1 includes strategies for classwide interventions to manage PBS(Positive behavior support) programs. Level 2 might involve a social curriculum for groups of children (Joseph & Strain, 2003). In addition, embedded interventions might provide additional practice opportunities for specific skills (e.g., Daugherty et al., 2001; VanDerHeyden, Snyder, Smith, Sevin, & Longwell, 2005). In level 3 an expanded team of professionals and parents might develop more intensified plans for a child, and teacher supports are added as needed (Wolery, Brashers, & Neitzel, 2002). By addressing challenging behaviors with components interwoven in the teaching learning process itself at all levels, timely behavior change can occur and can increase the success potential of the intervention process as a whole.

Strategies such as modeling, play-activity analyses, role play used for instructions can serve the dual purpose of teaching concepts as well as social behavior. A “class charter of values” (Brown, 2001) would also create the appropriate working environments and set the standards for expected behaviours.
LaGreca and Stone (1990) reported lower self-perceptions of social acceptance and global self-worth for low achievers which is often a cause behind malappropriate behaviour. Assessments in RtI can also be planned to be contextualized, meaningful and involving the child which would involve the child in meaningful tasks and promote appropriate classroom behavior. Planning varied assessment practices which would give children many opportunities to respond would enhance academic performance of the child and increase his/her self worth and increase self esteem weeding out undesirable behavior in the process.

1.6: Statement Of problem
Response To Intervention (RTI) and its effect on the learning and social Behaviour of Children In mainstreamed Schools: A Study

1.7: Rationale:

The RTE has made it mandatory for schools to accept children with diverse needs and learning styles. Mostly, the schools are not equipped enough to handle such children or design a programme that is tailor made for them often owing to the class size and lack of trained teaching staff. There is a definite need for teachers to receive better training so that they can understand the difficulties and within the present environment increase the learning pace of all children. An effective teacher training programme can be developed at the end of the process to sensitize them to the needs of such children who are going to increasingly participate in the inclusive environment.

The present system is not geared completely to assess the progress of children keeping in mind the varied learning styles. Neither does it have instructional methods to involve all types nor does it follow evaluation procedures to assess all types. Little knowledge of special education has led to labelling of low achievers as "slow learners". Labelling of the child impairs the child socio psychological growth as well as academic progress thereby mainstreaming becomes difficult. These children also exhibit inappropriate behavior. It is thus necessary to establish a progress monitoring system through a variety of systematic assessment procedures and understand the strengths as well as deficits of children.
It is time to take an impersonal view of the system to realize whether the difficulty lies with the children or the fault lies with us. With the problems of school dropouts, increased failure rates, non compliant behavior and stress related issues in the teaching staff themselves it is time to determine why children are not learning and envisage the remedies. An intervention model based on the principles of RtI could be implemented in regular schools with or without an inclusive set up to decrease the number of low achievers. A multitier intervention programme based on the decisions of progress monitoring, built around the strengths of interactive teaching and thorough use of research based teaching strategies at the subsequent levels would definitely bring down the number of low achievers subsequently decreasing the frequency of occurrence of socially inappropriate behavior. The intervention aspect of RtI need to be emphasized and keeping in mind the large class strength it is better to strike a balance between standard protocol and problem solving approach, using the former for levels 1 and 2 and the latter for level 3 where difficulties and interventions are more personalized.

Though the purpose of RtI is "to identify a subset of children at risk for poor outcomes due to their unresponsiveness" (Vaughn & L. Fuchs, 2003,) there is no need to establish RtI as a new system of identifying children with disability. To avoid a situation of unnecessary labeling through RtI, it is better to include psychometric testing and psychoeducational assessments at the end of level 2 .Before planning for intervention at level 3, a collaboration with such diagnostic centres are required so that the exact nature of difficulty is scientifically identified.

To evaluate the effects of RtI and the multitier model, it is first important to understand the effect of intervention on the broad base of the pyramid at Tier 1. (Kovaleski – 2007). While operating in the middle school level or secondary model of RtI should focus on ways and means of attaining desired performance level in all important academic subjects like Science, English, History, Geography and Mathematics. It is at these middle school level behaviours like inattention, non compliance, use of abusive language and disorganized behaviors are noted the most. All this could be directly linked to increased burden of subjects, inability to understand the language as well as concepts present in the content leading to poor performance in the exam. Thus a new method of teaching with an interactive base would ensure increased participation of children which will positively impact their classroom behavior.
This will definitely involve modifying the curriculum to suit the needs of all. Worldwide there has been a shift from assessment based approach to curriculum based approach that is modifying the curriculum according to the needs of the child after understanding the disadvantages of the former. Thus this study focuses on presenting the general curriculum in different way, using supplementary materials to strengthen the existing curriculum, emphasizing teacher-student interactive participation along with cooperative learning in the whole process to enhance both academic as well as social behavior.

Children behave inappropriately primarily when they do not understand and are not involved. The traditional classroom instructions demand a passive role of the students with minimum interactions in the class, and fewer opportunities for responses. This study is aimed at teaching concepts through a variety of modalities that would enhance student understanding and giving multifarious opportunities for students to stay on task behavior that would leave the child a minimum scope to exhibit inappropriate behavior.

The foundation of intervention at level 1 in the general classroom are to be strengthened with research based teaching strategies using curricular materials to facilitate better understanding, learning and storage and making the process suitable for the Indian learning environment without causing a complete disequilibrium in the existing education system.

RtI can be a link between general and special education in today's world where inclusion has become the key word. But it is also essential to know where the role of the regular teacher ends and where the role of special educator begins. The extent of coordination required between the two is needed to understand the role of a resource room in the learning environment of the child. With the tiered interventions this study would define the roles of each stakeholder and the extent of participation required.

Establishing RtI as a system redefines the roles of the heads of the institutions. It would automatically prepare teachers to adopt a diverse teaching style to promote an effective learning for all learners. This would also pave way to systematic way of setting and measuring learning outcomes leading to the holistic development of the child. This study would perhaps throw light into an enriched learning environment built within our strengths and limitations and yet where every child would be able to maximise one’s own potential. With the key words being, teaching differently, evaluating differently and working together this study
would contribute in looking at schools as a place for nurturing humans rather than an arena for selecting competence. Specifically this study addresses itself to find out whether or not RtI affects learning and social behavior of children in mainstreamed schools. In this study academic learning and social behavior are not two isolated components rather it works on the presumption that improved social behavior can be considered as a direct outcome of better learning that only comes from a learner friendly environment.

1.8 Research Objectives

1. To study the effect of three tiered response to intervention model in the general education system in progressive identification of children with learning difficulties for level 1, level 2 and level 3.
2. To study the effectiveness of training in teaching strategies received by regular teachers to provide intervention to children at level 1 within the general classroom.
3. To study the effect of intervention at level 1 and level 2 respectively in the areas of: Language, Concept and knowledge development.
4. To study the efficacy of an alternative mode of evaluation to enhance performance of low achievers in the general classroom.
5. To study the effectiveness of RtI model in middle school in identifying children ‘at risk for learning difficulties and remediating the deficit areas.
6. To study the change in the social behavior of children in the general class during teaching and evaluation with the implementation of the response to intervention model.

1.9: Research questions

1. Would the three level model of Response to Intervention identify children with learning difficulties?
2. Would intervention enhance the performance of children “at risk for learning difficulties” in language, concept and knowledge Development?
3. Would alternative system of evaluation improve the performance of low achievers?
4. Would training the mainstream classroom teachers in teaching strategies increase the effectiveness in general classrooms?
5. Would the performance of non responder children after level 1 significantly increase in concept, knowledge and language development after intervention at level 2?
6. Would the three tiered response to intervention model be effective in identifying children ‘at risk for learning difficulties and remediating the deficit areas?

7. Would there be a change in the social behavior of children in the general class during teaching as well as evaluation with the implementation of response to intervention model?

1.10: Hypotheses:

1. Hypothesis 1: Three tiered model will enable in identifying children with learning difficulties by providing increasing degree of intervention.

2. Hypothesis 2: Level 1 Intervention will enhance the performance of children in:
   a. Language Development
   b. Concept development
   c. Knowledge development

Hypothesis 3: Alternative forms of evaluation will identify strengths and deficits of children for further intervention

Hypothesis 4: Teacher training in teaching strategy intervention for level 1 will significantly improve the performance of children across subjects in paper pencil exam.

Hypothesis 5: Level 2 Intervention will significantly improve the performance of children in:
   (a). Language Development (b). Concept development (c). Knowledge development

3. Hypothesis 6: RtI can be established in middle school in identifying children ‘at risk for learning difficulties and remediating the deficit areas.

4. Hypothesis 7: The implementation of RtI model will have a positive impact on social behavior of children in the general class during teaching as well as evaluation.

1.11 Operational Definitions

RtI: A three tiered model to identify children at risk for learning difficulties studying in the Vth Standard of mainstream schools for receiving level 1 intervention, level 2 intervention and identification of children for level 3

Non responders: Children who do not respond to interventions and have their benchmark scores during progress monitoring below the expected level.
**Teacher Training**: Teaching teachers strategies like activity based teaching, graphic organizers, notebook modification and alternative evaluation.

**Language Development**: The ability to express oneself in grammatically correct sentences, using words with correct usage of spellings, using appropriate words, using expressive vocabulary and presenting thoughts in a logical and sequential manner.

**Concept development**: Development of an understanding of a single or a group or a class of data taught in the school as reflected in the total number of correct responses given in the written evaluation by systematically categorizing data from beginning to end.

**Knowledge Development**: The ability to link response with the questions of increasing levels of intellectual skill, recognizing accurate data from the content or retrieving single concept from memory accurately, retrieving or recognizing multiple concepts and linking them appropriately and finally applying previous knowledge to give reasons.

**Social Behavior**: Social behavior refers to the behavior of children in the general class during teaching as well as evaluation with reference to following instructions, being attentive, showing sit in behavior. It also means exhibiting organizational behavior by managing material of self. Social behavior also represents appropriate conflict resolution in the form of not using abusive language, aggressive behavior, communicating with peers, approaching the teacher only when it is necessary and accepting correction with respect. Finally social behavior represents a general willingness to perform without stress.