

## **Response to Intervention (RTI) for Students Presenting with Behavioral Difficulties: Culturally Responsive Guiding Questions**

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**ABSTRACT:** Response to Intervention (RTI) is a tiered intervention that assists school personnel in determining eligibility for special education services. Studies support the use of RTI as an early intervention for addressing significant learning disabilities (SLD) and social emotional behaviors, as well as for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and not making progress through general interventions. However, recommendations for implementation are not explicitly provided, especially for culturally responsive implementation. While proposed as a model for students with challenging behaviors, there is an absence of culturally responsive methods to support CLD students. This article will discuss the use of culturally responsive guiding questions in an RTI framework.

**KEYWORDS:** response to intervention, behavior, emotionally disturbed, culturally responsive, guiding questions

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Schools are faced with identifying the strengths and needs of learners from increasingly diverse cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) tracks K-12 student demographics through categorical analysis including White, Black, Hispanic, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander. NCES (2016) predicts that students who are non-White will represent 53.1% of the school age population by 2020. Despite emphasis by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 on using scientifically based research to inform instruction in the classroom so that all students can make effective progress, the gap in achievement between students of color and White students has not shown any

significant change (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). During the 2014-2015 school year, 13% of students enrolled in public schools between the ages 3 to 21 received services under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act. Of these students, 63% were non-White (NCES, 2017).

Reported on over a decade ago by Artiles & Ortiz (2002), biased assessment practices underlie disproportional representation of English language learners in special education. While substantial variations exist in identification, placement, and outcome data of English language learners (Sullivan, 2011), available data continue to show disproportional representation of ELL students in special education. The implementation of language restrictive policies in Massachusetts, for example, coincides with a 115.4% increase in the number of English language learners identified as having a disability from 2001-2002 to 2010-2011 (Serpa, 2011). Since culturally normed tests are not currently available, the performance of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) is compared to mainstream norms. Furthermore, the use of the discrepancy model contributes significantly to this misidentification.

### **Response to Intervention (RTI)**

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provided local education agencies (LEA) an alternative from the “severe discrepancy” model for determining eligibility for special education services. When considering the reauthorization, Congress listened to the concerns about the increasing number of students in special education who may not have qualified had there been proper supports and interventions in place at an earlier period in their learning (Martin, n.d.). Congress heard from various educators that many opportunities for supporting students at earlier stages did not occur as there was not a severe enough discrepancy between ability and performance to qualify for services. The method of determining eligibility had not changed in 30 years, and Congress decided that there was a high need for alternative methods. In Section 614.b.6 of the reauthorization, Congress enabled LEAs to use a “process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention” (IDEA, 2004) in lieu of a discrepancy between achievement and ability. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines scientifically based research as “research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge” (NCLB, 2002). The process is part of an extensive evaluation and not the sole criterion but can be used to determine eligibility without a discrepancy assessment. From this new law, a wealth of “scientifically based interventions” has appeared, but response to intervention (RTI) is among the few interventions that are research-based and have shown results to support student achievement.

The Response to Intervention model was created to support early intervention in the general education setting. This model is used for all students, regardless of their abilities. RTI signifies a change (or absence) of academic performance or conduct due to targeted instruction (Artiles, Bal, & King Thorius, 2010; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2014; Xu & Drame, 2008). RTI is practiced as a multi-tiered intervention system to help all students be successful, not just those suspected of having a disability. Throughout RTI, a student receives quality general instruction within the whole class setting, known as Tier One intervention. If the student is not making progress through a general curriculum based on scientific research, the student is then placed into a smaller group with intensive intervention. In Tier Two intervention, the student receives intervention from a highly qualified teacher or highly trained support staff in small group settings several times a week. This level of support is in place for 6 to 8 weeks, depending on the system of RTI used, while the student continues to receive Tier One supports. If a student is not making sufficient progress within Tier Two, the student is then referred to Tier Three supports, which include a child study team. Within Tier Three, students receive smaller group support (as small as 1:2) most days of the week while continuing previous tiered supports. If a child is still not making progress, it is at this level that students are referred for special education services.

For a successful RTI program, Jan Hasbrouck (as cited by Hallahan et al., 2014) recommends the use of four core principles: (a) effective instruction, (b) frequent assessments, (c) immediate response, and (d) collaboration with home. RTI is typically used to support academic difficulties, but it can be also be used to support social emotional behaviors (Gresham, 2005; Gresham, Hunter, Corwin, & Fisher, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2014) and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Hernández Finch, 2012; Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Xu & Drame, 2008).

### **RTI and Challenging Behavior**

Studies pertaining to RTI mainly focus on significant learning disabilities. The following two studies exemplify RTI's use for students with challenging behavior. Barnett et al. (2006) and Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, and Lathrop (2007) have conducted studies that show promising results for use with RTI and students with challenging behaviors. Barnett et al. reported on a case study of one female in preschool, age 4, named Robin. While the class showed disruptive behavior such as climbing, running, or aggression, Robin engaged in "jumping off furniture, elopement, peer aggression, and noncompliance" at home and school (p. 573). Tier 1 classroom expectations and positive behavioral interventions were put into place. The teacher created positive rules about expected behavior, and the class reviewed them daily prior to the start of small group work. The teacher also rotated through the room every three minutes providing general positive praise. There was

marked improvement for Robin and her peers, but they all continued to display some aggression. The team worked through Tier 2 with Robin, using positive praise every three minutes during center time. For Tier 3 interventions, social stories were used to address Robin's behaviors, and daily communication logs were sent home for Robin and her mother to discuss. The added Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports extinguished Robin's disruptive behaviors. She displayed positive interactions with her peers and adults and displayed no aggressive behavior, running from class, or noncompliance during center time for six weeks after interventions. From the start, norms for classroom behavior defined what was functionally and socially appropriate.

While Barnett et al. focused on one student in depth, Fairbanks et al. (2007) studied two groups of students (total of 10 in the second grade) who all received Tier 1 support within the classroom. Because they were not responding, the 10 students were placed on a check-in/check-out (CICO) sheet and data were gathered for 14 days. CICO sheets provide "additional structure, prompts, instruction, feedback, and acknowledgment for students," using hourly, daily, or weekly reports to document student progress (Fairbanks et al., 2007, p. 290). Group 1 (four students) saw a reduction in behaviors and continued use of the CICO. Two students did not respond to the CICO but remained using it without Tier 3 interventions as the control group. Four of the students who did not respond became Group 2, and received Tier 3 supports. The researchers completed functional behavioral analyses (FBA) on Group 2 students that included student strengths, behaviors of interest, setting events and antecedents, perceived maintaining consequences, alternative behaviors, and desired behaviors (p. 296). The researchers created behavior support plans that used the data from the FBA to create intervention plans with instructional strategies, including the teaching and reinforcing of consequences for the alternative desired behavior (p. 297). Group 2 saw an overall decrease in office referrals and in externalizing behaviors within the classroom. RTI is a promising model to support the subjective lens of challenging behavior.

Despite RTI's promise to support students with significant learning disabilities, rarely do the studies utilizing RTI pertain to the other disability categories or culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Several articles have been written with guidelines and suggestions for how to use RTI for challenging behaviors (Gresham, 2005; Gresham et al., 2013; Harris-Murri, King, & Rostenberg, 2006; Maag & Katsiyannis, 2008). Although these articles provide many supports through RTI, reflective steps to guide school-based data teams through each tier are missing in the literature. Since identification and assessment processes depend on the subjective professional values, beliefs, and interests of educators (Dyson & Kozleski, 2008), guiding questions can serve as guideposts for teams to engage in unbiased and honest reflection about students whose culture and language differ from their own.

## RTI and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Students who do not originate in the mainstream culture may have a difficult time acculturating to societal and classroom norms. Students may display a personal cultural identity within the class that may not conform to the teacher's expectations or values. Teachers can experience cultural bias towards students who they feel do not belong with the group. Students who are adapting to new mannerisms may appear to be acting out or displaying challenging behavior but may actually be resolving differences between cultures. A study conducted by Thijs and Eilbracht (2012) found that Dutch teachers reported higher conflict with Moroccan-Dutch students; the researchers speculate that the cause is varying or conflicting belief systems. The Moroccan-Dutch are described as a collectivist culture (strong sense of loyalty to the group) and power distant, "implying respect and obedience for authority figures" similar to Western belief systems (p. 797). Parents of Moroccan-Dutch students are described as less involved in their children's education, causing dissent between teachers and families. The families also typically underreport challenging behaviors compared to their teachers or other community members. This disconnect between teacher and student cultures may contribute to challenging behaviors within the classroom.

Collier (2005) recommends creating a culturally relevant curriculum in Tier 1 to help CLD students overcome challenging behaviors. Ladson-Billings (1992) created the term *culturally relevant teaching* to describe the use of students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge when teaching and creating lessons. A culturally relevant curriculum represents the cultural background and knowledge of students in the classroom through materials and pedagogy. "Many diverse learners who experience problems within the classroom are having difficulty in more than one element of the curriculum" (Collier, 2005, p. 88). Students who are acculturating to society may display behavior that is not acceptable to mainstream ideals but is acceptable within their culture. As the student grows and learns within the classroom, these behaviors tend to disappear with time. RTI can help the student through the acculturation process and facilitate early interventions that support the student in the general education classroom. Furthermore, it can help the school team make recommendations for special education or keep the students in Tiers 2 or 3 as they acculturate. CLD students who present with challenging behaviors can be supported with RTI.

### Culturally Relevant Questioning in RTI

A culturally responsive approach to classroom management is a *frame of mind* that can be developed through honest reflection about one's interactions with

students (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). A culturally responsive approach recognizes the cultural references students bring to the classroom that shape their interpretation and response to interventions. We propose that a culturally responsive frame of mind can be developed by incorporating guiding questions within the RTI Tiers when designing interventions for students who are CLD and who are displaying behaviors that may be interpreted as inappropriate for the school setting.

The four-tier RTI model of Klingner and Edwards (2006) was used as the framework for organizing the guiding questions. The first tier considers the quality of instruction in the general education setting; the second tier executes intensive interventions; the third tier uses a child study or Teacher Assistant Team (TAT) to generate individualized interventions; and the fourth tier concerns itself with assessment of the student for a disability in the area of emotional disturbance (IDEA, 2004). Characteristics of an emotional disturbance include behaviors that are judged to be inappropriate under normal circumstances. For the CLD student, however, inappropriate behaviors may actually be highly valued behaviors in their cultural repertoire but ones that do not match classroom norms.

Unlike Vaughn and Fuchs' (2003) three-tier RTI model, which focuses on interventions and ongoing progress monitoring whereby the third tier may or may not include special education services, the fourth tier in the Klingner and Edwards (2006) model focuses solely on assessment for special education services. Because we were primarily interested in a culturally responsive approach that schools could use *before* the student reaches the evaluation stage, questions were developed for the first three tiers as they are directly related to traditional RTI practices in schools.

Within each tier, we used dimensions of a culturally responsive approach developed by Harris-Murri et al. (2006) to organize key questions found in the literature as well as our own question formulation. The dimensions are: (a) *home, school and community connections*; (b) *professional development*; (c) *curriculum and instruction*; and (d) *assessment*.

## Tier 1

Because classroom and teacher expectations in the school setting can be unknown or misinterpreted by students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it is important that instruction and classroom practices be culturally responsive. In other words, responses to and instruction for students must recognize the cultural referents that students bring to the classroom. The quality of instruction in the general education setting is considered in Tier 1 interventions (Klingner & Edwards, 2006).

Analyzing the classroom and school environment can help define the behavioral norms of the setting. It can pinpoint factors that contribute to student responses as well as teacher interpretations of those responses. Consider two classrooms: (a) the first is comprised of primarily teacher-directed activities as the norm of instruction, in which students would likely be expected to sit attentively with their eyes on the speaker and raise quiet hands when needing to speak; and (b) the second is comprised primarily of small, interactive groups as the norm of instruction, in which students would likely be expected to participate frequently with peers and share the workload by negotiating ideas and tasks. When verbal and physical responses by students do not match teacher and classroom expectations, they are considered a behavior problem. A student who sits quietly and does not speak may be viewed as compliant or obedient in the first scenario. The same student behaviors may be viewed as a problem in the second scenario. Contrast that with a student who talks a lot and enjoys socializing with peers. These behaviors may be viewed as an asset in the second scenario but a problem in a classroom where activities are led by a teacher.

Table 1

*Guiding Questions for Dimensions of Culturally Responsive RTI, Tier 1*

<b>Dimensions</b> (Harris-Murri, et al., 2006)	<b>Tier 1</b> <i>(Consider quality of instruction in general education setting)</i>
<i>Connections (Home, School &amp; Community)</i>	1) What are the school/classroom parameters that make the undesired behavior a problem? 2) What familial and/or cultural factors are impeding the development of the desired behavior and promoting the undesired behavior? 3) What school/classroom factors are impeding the development of the desired behavior and promoting the undesired behavior? 4) How have cultural/community practices been incorporated into the curriculum? 5) How has the school assisted the family with helping the student acquire new forms of behavioral capital? (Montgomery, 2001) 6) What are the relevant connections the student has made between him/herself, the subject matter, and the tasks he/she is asked to perform? (Harris-Murri et al., 2006)
<i>Professional Development</i>	1) For which aspects of the student's culture will the teacher need additional knowledge and support? 2) Which instructional practices are the teacher familiar with and which will she/he need support in modifying? 3) Which behavioral strategies are the teacher familiar with and which will she/he need support in modifying? (Klingner & Edwards, 2006) 4) Which progress monitoring procedures are the teacher familiar with and which will she/he need support in implementing?

	(Klingner & Edwards, 2006) 5) What materials or resources will the teacher need to implement instructional and/or behavioral interventions correctly?
<i>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What are the teacher's perceptions of the student's behavior as a problem?</li> <li>2) How do teacher expectations and contributions promote both desired (additive behavior) and undesired (subtractive) behavior? (Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006, Harry &amp; Anderson, 1994, as cited in Harris-Murri et al., 2006).</li> <li>3) Which culturally responsive attributes have been developed by teachers implementing the curricular &amp; behavioral interventions? (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Villegas &amp; Lucas, 2002, as cited in Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</li> <li>4) In what ways is the presence of culturally diverse students acknowledged within the classroom, the curriculum, and in evidence-based behavioral interventions? (Vaughn &amp; Fuchs, 2003, as cited in Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</li> <li>5) Is the teacher's reluctance, resistance or inability to explicitly teach the desired behavior, or to implement behavioral change practices, due to differences between his or her students and the students for whom the practice was originally developed, or perhaps to variations in the school context? (Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</li> </ol>
<i>Assessment</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Is the problem behavior part of the student's behavioral repertoire or background as indicated by an examination of student records?</li> <li>2) How severe, chronic and generalizable is the undesirable behavior and desirable behavior? (Gresham, 2005)</li> <li>3) How does the student demonstrate knowledge of the desired behavior, as well as express wants &amp; needs? Is this knowledge expressed in a school functional manner?</li> <li>4) How do the student and his/her family consider concepts of time, locus of control, cheating/stealing?</li> <li>5) Which Tier 1 observations and collection of student work/behavior (both positive and negative) have been and will be gathered over time?</li> <li>6) Who will be responsible for monitoring the Tier 1 behavior/intervention data?</li> </ol>

Meaningful *connections between home, school and community* are suggested in Harris-Murri et al.'s (2006) first dimension of a culturally responsive approach in order to interpret student behaviors more accurately. Guiding questions that identify factors and practices to facilitate these connections are found in Table 1. Looking at school and classroom structures can help to define which behaviors lie outside of the norms of the hidden curriculum (Langhout &

Mitchell, 2008). Those behaviors will likely be a problem for the general education teacher because they do not match the norms transmitted through the structure of school. Once identified, the value and norms of these behaviors can then be explored as part of a student's cultural or linguistic identity.

Classroom factors can also increase the potential for positive behaviors. For example, an activity that includes a topic relevant and interesting to a student will likely increase student engagement. When students are engaged, they display less negative behavior and develop a sense of positive belonging (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008; Noguera, 2003). Topics and curriculum that are culturally relevant to students are likely to increase their engagement and motivation in the classroom. Students who are CLD can then begin to participate actively and become competent in the behavioral norms of the classroom.

Familial and cultural factors shape student behaviors. When these attributes and values are understood, school personnel can begin to identify how some behaviors may actually serve as a function of cultural values instead of deviant responses to classroom values. Only then can schools assist families with helping students to gain new repertoires of behavior needed for academic success in the school setting (Montgomery, 2001).

*Professional development* can "broaden teacher perspectives beyond the individual student's behavior... to include teachers' or others' behaviors" (Harris-Murri et al., 2006, p. 790). Expanding perspectives to include cultural implications is a necessary component in understanding the true function of student behavior. Without this perspective, responses of students who are CLD may be misinterpreted as negative behaviors instead of manifestations of cultural values and norms. The guiding questions for this dimension, *professional development*, target student culture, instructional practices, teacher knowledge of behavioral strategies and progress monitoring, and resources needed for implementation (see Table 1).

The dimension of *curriculum and instruction* concentrates on curriculum design and instructional practices that are culturally responsive. This is achieved by examining the cultural background of students, its effect on behaviors and learning styles, and its recognition or role in the curriculum (Harris-Murri et al., 2006). Questioning teacher perceptions about problem behaviors brings to the surface potential teacher biases or assumptions being transmitted through the curriculum (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). Instead of focusing solely on reducing problem behaviors, the addition of new behaviors is included in the guiding questions in this dimension. This ensures that mainstream classroom behaviors are explicitly taught to the student who may be lacking these skills (Weinstein et al., 2003). Evidence of student representation in the curriculum is also questioned (see Table 1).

*Assessment*, the fourth dimension of a culturally responsive RTI model, investigates more deeply the problem behaviors of students who may be identified

as having an emotional disturbance (Harris-Murri et al., 2006). By examining student records, school-based teams can determine whether the problem behavior is part of the student's background or is newly developed. Questioning the degree of severity, chronicity, and generalizability of the targeted behavior(s) is included because these factors are most relevant for school-based interventions (Gresham, 2005). Behaviors indicative of an emotional disturbance can also be an expression of culture shock or difficulties adjusting to school (Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene, 2012). In addition, some disorganized or aggressive behaviors may actually be cultural differences in cognitive styles for concepts of time, locus of control, and tolerance (Collier, 2005). By questioning the function of student behavior, student and family views of behaviors, and by collecting student work/behavior data over time, school teams can better distinguish between behavior that is unlearned, behavior that is culturally appropriate, and behavior that is indicative of an underlying emotional disturbance (see Table 1).

## Tier 2

Tier 2 is designed to provide intensive interventions when students do not meet expected benchmarks or are not making adequate progress in the general education setting (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). In the dimension of *home, school, and community connections*, guiding questions for Tier 2 shift to more explicit identification of familial, cultural, and community factors. These practices can then be incorporated into the curriculum and capitalized on to promote the desired behavior. In addition, classroom practices, such as types of groupings or culturally relevant topics of inquiry, are targeted for change. The way in which the school will engage the student's family in behavioral development is also defined. The goal of all targeted changes is to reduce undesired behaviors for the classroom and promote desired behaviors by enhancing the connections the student is making across levels so that he or she becomes a more engaged, active learner (Harris-Murri et al., 2006; Langhout & Mitchell, 2008; Noguera, 2003).

Table 2

*Guiding Questions for Dimensions of Culturally Responsive RTI, Tier 2.*

<b>Dimensions</b> (Harris-Murri et al., 2006)	<b>Tier 2</b> <i>(Intensive interventions are provided)</i>
<i>Connections (Home, School &amp; Community)</i>	1) Which school/classroom parameters can be changed to promote the desired behavior and reduce the undesired behavior? 2) Which familial and/or cultural factors can promote the development of the desired behavior? 3) Which cultural/community practices can be incorporated into the curriculum? 4) How will the school assist the family with helping the student

	<p>acquire new forms of behavioral capital? (Montgomery, 2001, p. 4)</p> <p>5) How will the interventions help the student make relevant connections between him/herself, the subject matter and the tasks he/she is asked to perform? (Harris-Murri et al., 2006)</p>
<i>Professional Development</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What training or supports will the teacher need to implement the targeted intervention(s) with integrity and in a culturally responsive manner?</li> <li>2) What training or supports will the teacher need to modify classroom environmental factors for successful implementation (e.g., grouping strategies, increasing culturally relevant connections)?</li> <li>3) What training or supports will the teacher need to incorporate successful behavioral strategies (e.g., delivery of feedback, reinforcement)?</li> <li>4) What training or supports will the teacher need to implement progress-monitoring procedures?</li> <li>5) What additional materials or resources will the teacher need to implement instructional and/or behavioral interventions correctly?</li> </ol>
<i>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How will the intensive support(s) be increased to supplement the behavioral curriculum and to match the severity of the student's need? (Gresham, 2005, p. 340)</li> <li>2) How will the intensive support(s) increase academic engagement and prosocial behavior for the student?</li> <li>3) How will the intensive support(s) incorporate the student's prior knowledge, interests, motivation, and home language?</li> <li>4) How will we know the intervention is being implemented with integrity? (Gresham, 2005)</li> <li>5) What factors will signal the need for the intervention team to revisit strategies before the next scheduled data team?</li> </ol>
<i>Assessment</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How have the targeted additive and subtractive behavior(s) been clearly defined by the team?</li> <li>2) Which checklists, charts, instruments, and progress monitoring techniques will be used to monitor Tier 2 progress over time? (Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</li> <li>3) What will be considered an adequate or inadequate response to the Tier 2 intervention? (Gresham, 2005, p. 332)</li> <li>4) Which Tier 2 observations and collection of student work/behavior (both positive and negative) will be gathered over time?</li> <li>5) Who will be responsible for monitoring the Tier 2 behavior and intervention data?</li> </ol>

The dimension of *professional development* (Harris-Murri et al., 2006) at Tier 2 focuses on trainings and supports to increase the efficacy with which the targeted interventions will be implemented. Questions guide school-based teams

with identifying the training needed for modifications of the classroom environment, implementation of behavioral responses by staff, data-collection and progress-monitoring procedures, and additional resources (see Table 2).

Bergan and Kratochwill (1990) and Tilly (2002) note that the “goal of all interventions is to produce a discrepancy between baseline and post-intervention levels of performance. In fact, within a problem-solving model, a ‘problem’ is defined as a discrepancy between current and desired levels of performance” (as cited in Gresham, 2005, p. 331). With that in mind, guiding questions for the Tier 2 dimension of *curriculum and instruction* seek to increase additive behaviors (Harris-Murri et al., 2006). Matching the level of student need to increased supports is necessary to change behavior from baseline levels of performance. Maximum benefit and student engagement will also likely increase if school teams can scaffold interventions based on student interests, current levels of motivation, and prior knowledge. Finally, the intervention team needs to outline factors that indicate the need for immediate change in the action plan.

The *assessment* dimension provides the checks and balances that a school-based team needs to monitor the effectiveness of intensive supports at Tier 2 (Harris-Murri et al., 2006). The most important and frequently overlooked is a clearly defined behavior. If school staff and families are not clear on the behavior(s) they are trying to increase or decrease, the student will be unsure of the expectations and progress will be difficult to assess. Likewise, instruments that accurately measure behavioral changes are key to determining whether a change has taken place over time. Because the ultimate goal is achieving a discrepancy in behavioral performance, the school-based team needs to define what will constitute adequate progress over time. Horner and Billingsley (as cited in Gresham, 2005, p. 334) point out that “excellent initial behavioral change, particularly in terms of behavioral excesses” is often shown by students with emotional disabilities, yet they have difficulty generalizing and maintaining behavior changes. Clear parameters around what the team will consider to be progress will be a deciding factor in whether a student is recommended for testing and qualification of an emotional disability. Evidence of student work and behavioral data continues to be collected in Tier 2 even if those responsible for gathering the data change (see Table 2).

### Tier 3

Tier 3 is the final tier for students to demonstrate adequate progress before being referred for testing. It employs a Teacher Assisted Team (TAT) or Child Study Team to develop individualized interventions for students who require direct support (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). At the dimension of *connections with home, school and community*, it is especially important that school-based teams include members with expertise in culturally responsive

behavioral interventions and for the school to be certain that cultural or linguistic factors are not driving the undesired behavior(s) or impeding the development of the desired behavior(s). It is also a final chance to determine if there are any other strategies that the team has not implemented that would facilitate connections for the student. Analysis of student and family reactions to changes across tiers, interventions, and settings can also support or refute the development of connections (see Table 3).

Table 3  
*Guiding Questions for Dimensions of Culturally Responsive RTI, Tier 3.*

<b>Dimensions</b> (Harris-Murri et al., 2006)	<b>Tier 3</b> (A Child Study Team or TAT develops individualized interventions)
<i>Connections (Home, School &amp; Community)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Is the team diverse and does it include members with expertise in culturally responsive behavioral interventions?</li> <li>2) How did the student respond to changes in school and classroom parameters across settings?</li> <li>3) How did the family respond to changes in school and classroom parameters?</li> <li>4) Are there cultural or language factors that continue to serve as a function for the identified behavior or an obstacle to desired behavior?</li> <li>5) Are there other cross-cultural communication strategies that the team has not implemented that would help the student make relevant connections?</li> </ol>
<i>Professional Development</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Have culturally appropriate behavioral norms for the identified student been adequately matched, defined, and understood by all team members, or is further training required?</li> <li>2) What additional training or supports will the teacher need to modify classroom environmental factors for successful implementation of individualized interventions (e.g., grouping strategies, increasing culturally relevant connections)?</li> <li>3) What additional training or supports will the teacher need to successfully incorporate individualized instructional and behavioral strategies and interventions (e.g., delivery of feedback, reinforcement)?</li> <li>4) What additional training or supports will the teacher need to implement ongoing progress monitoring procedures?</li> <li>5) What additional materials or resources will the teacher need to implement individualized instructional and/or behavioral interventions correctly?</li> </ol>
<i>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How have the data informed the development of student</li> </ol>

	<p>behavioral objectives and interventions so that they are responsive to the child? (Harris-Murri et al., 2006; Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</p> <p>2) How will the individualized support(s) supplement the behavioral curriculum and match the severity of the student's need? (Gresham, 2005)</p> <p>3) How will the individualized support(s) increase academic engagement and prosocial behavior for the student?</p> <p>4) How will the individualized support(s) incorporate the student's prior knowledge, interests, motivation and home language?</p> <p>5) How will the team determine that the evidence-based interventions have been implemented with integrity? (Gresham, 2005)</p> <p>6) How will the team determine that the student has received an adequate opportunity and time to learn the desired behaviors across settings before recommending for evaluation? (Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</p>
Assessment	<p>1) Have the targeted additive and subtractive behavior(s) been clearly defined by the team?</p> <p>2) Which checklists, charts, instruments, and progress monitoring techniques will be used to monitor Tier 3 progress over time? (Klingner &amp; Edwards, 2006)</p> <p>3) What will be considered an adequate or inadequate response to the Tier 3 intervention? (Gresham, 2005, p. 332)</p> <p>4) Which Tier 3 observations and collection of student work/behavior (both positive and negative) will be gathered over time?</p> <p>5) Who will be responsible for monitoring the Tier 3 behavior and intervention data?</p> <p>6) How will data collected from all three tiers of interventions be used to determine whether an evaluation is needed?</p>

In the area of *professional development*, the school-based team continues to identify additional trainings or supports similar to Tier 2. However, revisiting behavioral norms is critical to be sure they have been and still are (a) culturally appropriate, (b) clearly defined, and (c) understood by all team members. Unless all three criteria are met, further staff training will be required to be certain that efforts to remediate behavior have been efficacious.

Although the guiding questions for Tier 2 carry over to the dimension of *curriculum and instruction* in Tier 3, the school-based team must now re-evaluate whether the data have supported the targeted interventions (Harris-Murri et al.,

2006; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). Behavioral objectives can be more clearly adjusted and defined based on the data. The team is also charged with determining whether or not the student has had sufficient time and opportunity to learn prosocial behaviors and to reduce nonfunctional behaviors. A student who is CLD should not receive a label for an emotional disability if he or she has not had an adequate opportunity to learn behaviors that are part of school norms (Klingner & Edwards, 2006).

An additional guiding question (see Table 3) is added to the dimension of *assessment* in Tier 3: How will data collected from all three tiers of intervention be used to determine whether an evaluation is needed? Essentially, Tier 3 makes the final determination about treatment effectiveness. "If a behavior pattern continues at an unacceptable level, then an eligibility determination of the student as emotionally disabled might be warranted" (Gresham, 2005, p. 335).

### Conclusion

The Response to Intervention model has potential for reducing the disproportionate representation in special education of students who are CLD and displaying behaviors that are judged to be indicative of an emotional disability. Research reports diminished rates of referrals with early interventions of RTI for students who are at risk for emotional behavioral disabilities. (García & Ortiz, 2008; Harris-Murri et al., 2006; Hernández Finch, 2012). With the overrepresentation of minorities, it is vital that early interventions are put into place to support challenging behaviors. Providing culturally relevant questioning techniques for each tier of RTI offers the guidance that school-based teams need to engage in productive discussions about CLD students. More importantly, guiding questions may lead teams towards more culturally responsive and effective interventions that allow students to be successful in the general education setting, instead of prematurely assessing and labeling their behaviors as indicators of an emotional disturbance.

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