



Tennessee Behavior Supports Project

at Vanderbilt University

Supporting RTI²-B in Middle Tennessee Schools

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This guide was produced by the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at Vanderbilt University – one of three projects across the state funded by the Tennessee Department of Education to provide training and technical assistance to schools as they address the behavioral needs of students. This brief was authored by Melissa C. Hine, Brooke C. Shuster, Marilynn Porritt, Becky H. Shafer, Abbie Jenkins, Blair P. Lloyd, and Erik W. Carter.



Two years ago, Bramble Middle School decided something needed to change. An overwhelming number of students received office discipline referrals every day, and there was often a line of students in the office waiting to talk to an administrator. The hallways were loud and chaotic during passing periods, and there was no structure in the cafeteria. Bramble Middle School was not a place where students and staff wanted to be. The principal learned about RTI²-B at a local conference and realized that attending training could help her school create a plan to improve their problem areas and the school culture.

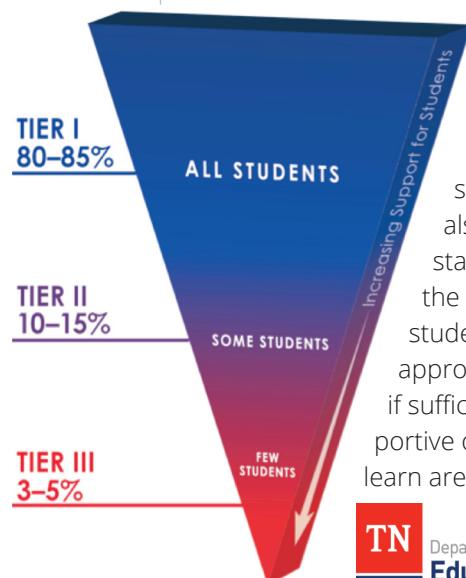
RTI²-B Overview

Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI²-B) is an organized framework to help districts, schools, staff, parents, and students

efficiently align social and behavioral supports into one multi-tiered, problem-solving framework. This customizable framework can help schools create a positive culture for students and staff with the goal of improving academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for all students. RTI²-B is beneficial for all schools, even schools without significant discipline concerns. The Tennessee Department of Education has already implemented a multi-tiered system of supports, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²), which promotes student academic success. RTI²-B is a framework that promotes social and behavioral success. Establishing a positive school climate can be achieved through this Multi-Tiered System of Supports.¹

The purpose of RTI²-B is to teach all students pro-social behavior skills and prevent problem behavior while enhancing positive relationships within the school. Pro-social behavior skills are the “people skills” students need to successfully interact with others and build positive relationships. Implementing RTI²-B requires a shared commitment

school-wide to teach and reinforce positive student and staff behavior. It also stresses that staff should adopt the view that all students can learn appropriate behavior if sufficient and supportive opportunities to learn are provided.





The Purpose of RTI²-B

Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI²-B) is a systems approach to help districts, schools, staff, parents, and students align social and behavioral supports into one sustainable and effective multi-tiered, problem-solving framework.

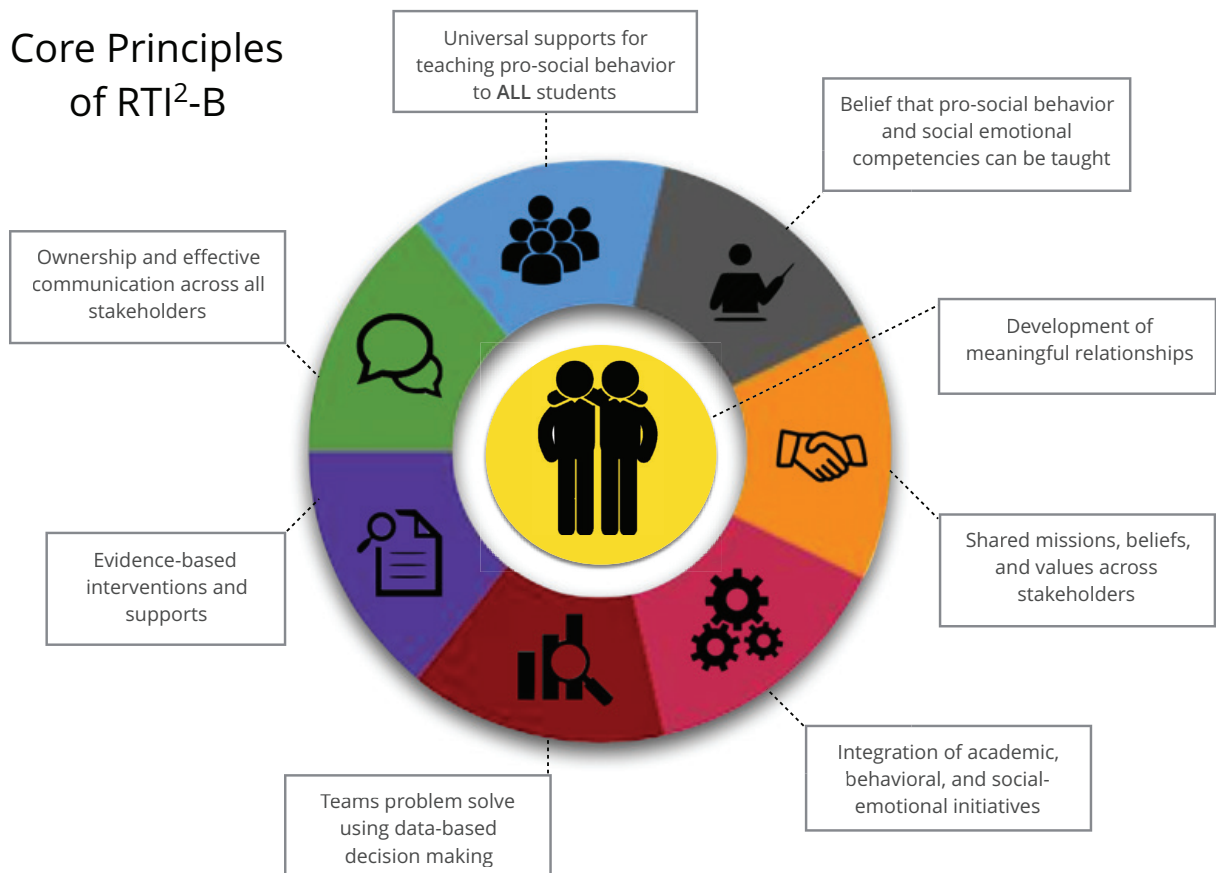
Core Principles of RTI²-B

School stakeholders—including families, students, educators, and other school staff—should have a shared mission and understanding of RTI²-B, as well as shared beliefs and values regarding the plan to implement RTI²-B at their school. A fundamental belief behind RTI²-B is that pro-social behavior and social emotional skills can be taught. Without this shared belief and commitment to teaching these skills, RTI²-B will not be successful. RTI²-B provides universal supports for teaching pro-social behavior to all students. Stakeholders also need to share ownership of the plan and communicate effectively regarding the plan. RTI²-B affects everyone in the

school, so all stakeholders should have the opportunity to learn about the plan and contribute their feedback.

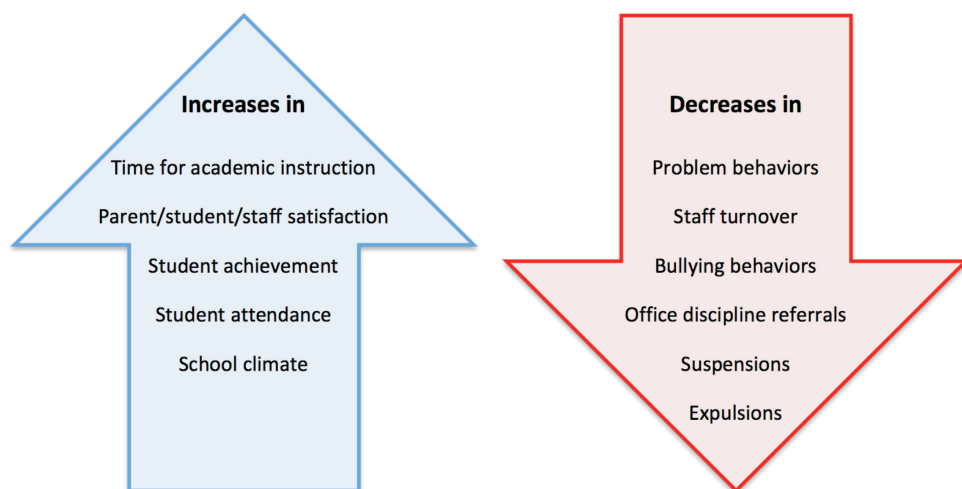
Along with universal supports for teaching pro-social behavior, RTI²-B is a framework for implementing a range of evidence-based interventions and supports. Students who need additional support are systematically identified using school data, and appropriate interventions are provided. RTI²-B school teams use data-based decision making to solve problems and monitor the effectiveness of the plan. Refer to the figure below to see how the core principles of RTI²-B work together.

Core Principles of RTI²-B





Benefits of RTI²-B in Schools²



RTI²-B can be customized to meet the specific needs of each school. Implementing RTI²-B at your school does not mean other initiatives must be abandoned. Instead, it can be integrated with other academic, behavioral, and social-emotional initiatives. RTI²-B is meant to build on what your school is already doing to help students and staff be successful.

RTI²-B and School Climate

School climate refers to aspects of the school environment that make students feel safe, valued, supported, connected to their school, meaningfully engaged, and academically challenged.³ Building a positive school climate is the responsibility of everyone in the school. School climate can be transformed through policies and practices that promote academic achievement and school success. Relationships are the foundation of school climate, and RTI²-B can help schools achieve a positive school climate. School climate is

improved when building relationships are a priority and the academic, behavioral, and social needs of all students are addressed.

RTI²-B Continuum of Supports

RTI²-B consists of three tiers of interventions and supports that differ in intensity. Different levels of supports are provided to students based on their response to intervention. RTI²-B school teams regularly use data to determine which students will benefit from additional supports or interventions. When using positive behavior supports in all three tiers, schools create a culture where all students and staff feel respected and valued.

Tier I

Tier I promotes a positive school climate by focusing on the social and behavioral needs of all students. When establishing Tier I, RTI²-B school teams work together to develop a plan for a positive and supportive school environment through

teaching and encouraging school-wide behavioral expectations. Tier I includes teaching all students the pro-social behaviors needed to meet expectations in an effort to prevent problem behaviors. Instruction incorporates both school-wide and class-wide strategies that are applied to address the needs of all students. Instructional practices within Tier I focus on defining, teaching, modeling, and encouraging expectations throughout the school for all students and staff.

RTI²-B school teams create a system for acknowledging students' appropriate behavior. Developing a school-wide acknowledgement system helps to foster a more positive school climate because staff members focus on students' pro-social behaviors rather than the problem behaviors. The RTI²-B school teams also develop a system for acknowledging faculty and staff participation in the plan.

Consistent and appropriate response to problem behavior is a critical feature of Tier I. RTI²-B school teams must work



together to determine what student behaviors are considered inappropriate at their school. School teams can then ensure their system for responding to problem behavior is used appropriately and consistently by all staff.

The RTI²-B school teams meet monthly throughout the year to monitor the plan and make data-based decisions regarding the effectiveness of the plan. Teams also use data from sources such as office discipline referrals, universal behavior screeners, and attendance to identify students who may need additional support beyond Tier I.

Critical Features of Tier I

- RTI²-B School Team
- Shared School Vision, Mission, and Purpose
- School-wide Behavioral Expectations
- Instruction on School-wide Behavioral Expectations
- Acknowledgement of Students' Appropriate Behavior
- Consistent and Appropriate Response to Problem Behavior
- Professional Development for Faculty and Staff
- Acknowledgement of Faculty and Staff Participation
- Involvement of Family and Community
- Data-based Decision Making
- Continuum of Supports

Tier II

Tier II addresses the needs of students who need additional support beyond Tier I. Tier II is a preventative approach to supporting groups of students at one time. Group-based Tier II interventions do not replace Tier I supports but are provided *in addition to* all Tier I supports

and practices. Students needing additional supports are identified using data such as universal behavior screeners, office discipline referrals, attendance, and teacher and/or parent nominations. Students are then grouped together based on similar skill deficits. These interventions should be efficient, easily accessible for students, and provided soon after students are identified. A goal of Tier II is to teach socially successful behaviors before problem behaviors create major concerns and require individualized intervention. In turn, this promotes a positive school climate where students are identified as needing additional support earlier, have rapid access to interventions, and are taught self-monitoring and other pro-social behaviors necessary to succeed in school.

Tier II interventions should be evidence-based interventions that target students' identified behavioral or social-emotional areas of deficit (e.g., self-management, coping, organization). Examples of Tier II interventions include Breaks are Better⁴, Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)⁵, social skills clubs⁶, and mentoring. RTI²-B school teams use progress monitoring data to determine the effectiveness of the interventions and decisions are made using the team-based problem solving process.

Tier III

Tier III addresses the needs of students with behavioral or social difficulties who continue to engage in levels of challenging behavior that interfere with their academic and social progress. Students can be identified for Tier III interventions through universal behavior screeners, office discipline referral data, attendance data, teacher and/or parent nomination forms, and progress monitoring intervention data. Tier III supports are provided *in addition to* Tier I and Tier II supports.

Critical Features of Tier II

- Built on Tier I Supports and Practices
- Continuum of Supports
- Targeted, Group-based Interventions and Supports
- Evidence-based Interventions
- Preventative Approach
- Data-based Identification of Students Needing Additional Supports
- Rapid Access to Interventions
- Team-based Problem Solving Process
- Progress Monitoring of Interventions

Tier III interventions are evidence-based, individualized, and function-based. Examples of Tier III interventions include functional behavior assessments, function-based interventions, and individual counseling. RTI²-B school teams use progress monitoring data at the individual student level, and all team members, including families, should provide input on each student's individual plan.

Tier III interventions promote a positive school climate by ensuring the students with the greatest needs receive a level of support that allows them to thrive in school. Tier III interventions maximize the extent to which these students participate and engage academically and socially in school. These interventions should focus not only on decreasing challenging behaviors in the short term, but on teaching and strengthening pro-social behaviors that will benefit the student in the long term.



Critical Features of Tier III

- **Built on Tier I and Tier II Supports and Interventions**
- **Continuum of Supports**
- **Individualized Interventions and Supports**
- **Evidence-based Interventions**
- **Function-based Interventions**
- **Data-based Identification of Students**
- **Input from All Team Members**
- **Progress Monitoring of Interventions**

Implementation Case Study

Bramble Middle School began implementing RTI²-B last year. They started by creating the RTI²-B School Team to plan for implementation. During their initial training, the team learned about the critical features of Tier I and created their plan to meet the specific needs of their school. The components of their plan included behavioral expectations, a way to teach all students the expectations across school settings, a system to acknowledge expected pro-social behavior, clear definitions for problem behaviors, and a discipline process that could be used consistently by all staff. The team chose “Be Prepared, Be Respectful, and Be Safe” as their behavioral expectations and decided to use behavior-specific praise paired with tickets called “Bramble Bucks” as their acknowledgement system. Bramble Bucks are given to students who exhibit the Bramble Behaviors, and they can later be used to earn school-wide celebrations, class-wide rewards, and individual treats and certificates.

The team attended training in the summer, so they were able to take as much time as they needed to plan before implementation. Bramble Middle was ready to start implementing RTI²-B when the new school year started, even though other schools in their district decided to take more time for planning.

During staff development before the first day of school, the RTI²-B School Team introduced the plan to all faculty and staff, including teachers, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, custodial staff, parent volunteers, and paraprofessionals. This included a raffle for staff members who arrived on time, and the team explained how providing Bramble Bucks to students demonstrating expected pro-social behaviors would also allow staff to be entered into monthly drawings at faculty meetings throughout the year. The team also administered a survey to gain input on the plan and made changes as necessary.

On the first day of school, the RTI²-B School Team organized a kick-off presentation for students at the school-wide assembly. They described the three school-wide behavioral expectations, explained Bramble Bucks and the acknowledgement system, pointed out the expectation posters displayed throughout the school, shared the schedule for explicitly teaching and re-teaching the expectations in all settings throughout the school, and discussed how to respond to problem behavior in the school. During the first week of school, the lesson plans were taught to all students by a variety of staff members in every setting,

and students rotated throughout the different settings with their classes during advisement. Bramble Middle re-taught the expectations at quarterly assemblies, in class after each break, and through reminders during daily announcements.

The RTI²-B School Team met monthly throughout the school year. Data were discussed at every meeting, and included office discipline referral data, fidelity data, progress monitoring data, universal behavior screener data, survey data, and social validity data. Monitoring these data allowed the team to make informed decisions about which interventions should be modified or implemented to improve the overall quality, safety, and supportiveness of the learning environment. The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) is a tool the team used to monitor implementation fidelity and identify areas that were going well

and areas that needed further attention. Monitoring the RTI²-B plan allowed the team to revise and improve the plan to ensure

their school's needs were being met. The team also shared information at monthly faculty meetings, so everyone in the school could be updated on the plan throughout the year.

When Bramble Middle School is ready, they will attend Tier II Training and begin planning for the next phase of RTI²-B. All aspects of the framework can be customized to meet the needs of each school, including when they decide to implement Tier II and Tier III.

Bramble Buck
Bramble Middle School



Name: _____
Teacher: _____
Expectation Met:

- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Respectful
- ☐ Prepared



Bramble Behaviors

**Be Prepared
Be Respectful
Be Safe**

Bramble Middle School



Positive Note Home

Earned by: _____ Date: _____

This certificate entitles you to a positive note, email, or phone call home from the teacher of your choice!

For excellence in demonstrating the Bramble Behaviors

For Further Reading (Resource List)

Algozzine, B., Daunic, A. P., & Smith, S. W. (2010). *Preventing problem behaviors: Schoolwide programs and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., & Leaf, P. J. (2012). Effects of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports on child behavior problems. *Pediatrics, 130*, 1136-1145.

Lewis, T., Jones, S., Horner, R. H., & Sugai, G. (2010). School-wide positive behavior support and students with emotional/behavioral disorders: Implications for prevention, identification and intervention. *Exceptionality, 18*, 82-93.

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.pbis.org

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Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2010). School-wide positive behavior support: Establishing a continuum of evidence-based practices. *Journal of Evidence-Based Practices in Schools, 11*, 62-83.

Endnotes

¹Bradshaw, C., Koth, C., Thornton, L., & Leaf, P. (2009). Altering school climate through school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Findings from a group-randomized effectiveness trial. *Prevention Science, 10*, 100-115.

²Horner, R. H., Kincaid, D., Sugai, G., Lewis, T., Eber, L., Barrett, S., Rossetto Dickey, C., Richter, M., Sullivan, E., Boezio, C., Algozzine, B., Reynolds, H., & Johnson, N. (2014). Scaling up school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Experiences of seven states with documented success. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions, 16*, 197-208.

³Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. (2014). *Tennessee safe & supportive schools (S3): School climate and conditions for learning in Tennessee high schools*. Retrieved from www.tn.gov/education/topic/school-climate

⁴Boyd, R. J., & Anderson, C. M. (2013). Breaks are better: A tier II social behavior intervention. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 22*, 348-365.

⁵Crone, D. A., Hawken, L. S., & Horner, R. H. (2010). *Responding to problem behavior in schools: The behavior education program* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

⁶Lane, K. L., Wehby, J., Menzies, H. M., Doukas, G. L., Munton, S. M., & Gregg, R. M. (2003). Social skills instruction for students at risk for antisocial behavior: The effects of small group instruction. *Behavioral Disorders, 28*, 229-248.

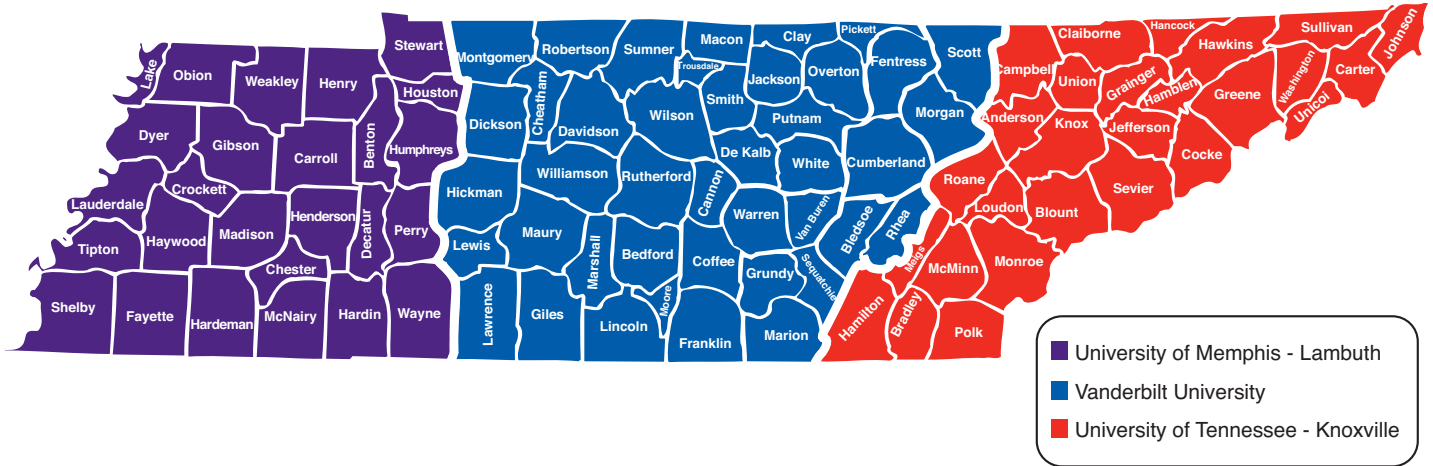


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Tennessee Behavior Supports Project by Region: 2016-2020



The Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (TBSP) is funded by the Tennessee Department of Education and consists of three regional support contracts: University of Memphis – Lambuth Campus, Vanderbilt University, and University of Tennessee – Knoxville. TBSP is responsible for providing training and technical assistance to schools as they address the behavioral needs of students through Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI²-B). To locate the project assigned to your region, see below.



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