

Introduction

The purpose of this book is twofold: (1) to examine response to intervention (RTI) in the context of culturally relevant instruction and (2) to discuss how educators might incorporate an RTI model that fits the cultural needs of most African American students.

RTI is a problem-solving model that emphasizes the importance of using scientifically based instruction and interventions to increase academic performance among all students (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). There is an array of research on culturally relevant instruction and RTI, but very few resources integrate culturally relevant pedagogy with the practice of RTI and other problem-solving models. To this end, my hope is that this book will encourage educators and researchers to collect data on culturally responsive activities in the classroom and to consider culturally relevant instruction and interventions prior to referring students for special education services.

The process of providing education is as sociocultural as it is psychological and emotional. Although sociocultural factors play a significant role in academic achievement, the education system in America has paid little attention to the social aspect of culture that teachers transmit into their classrooms (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). This is unfortunate, considering a vast amount of research points to cultural discontinuity as a key contributor to academic disengagement among students of color. In place of sociocultural factors, schools in America focus primarily on cognitive and emotional factors that shape learning.

An effective response-to-intervention model will not only ensure that educators and practitioners will research evidence-based instructions and interventions but will also identify cultural ethos within their classrooms; an effective RTI model will ensure that educators identify which students respond well to those cultural ethos and which students are unresponsive to those same cultural characteristics. Identifying cultural values within one's classroom and determining which students respond well to those values fit perfectly within an RTI model. In fact, this is an example of problem solving based on a culturally responsive approach.