


# Chapter 6

## Reconceptualizing Response to Intervention (RtI): Integrating Strengths in Student Support Services

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### ABSTRACT

*New Brunswick's full inclusion model aims to ensure that all students receive the necessary supports to access their learning and participate fully in school life. While inclusive education is praised for its espoused principles, challenges persist that hinder its implementation. The prevailing support-oriented approach often focuses on students' challenges rather than their strengths. Recent perspectives have emphasized the need to move beyond a primarily support-oriented model to incorporate a more strengths-focused view of students' learning. Positive education, linking academic achievement to wellbeing, leverages such approaches. This chapter explores a dual-dimensional model for inclusive student learning through investigating existing support-oriented and strengths-based approaches within New Brunswick's school using an Appreciative Inquiry research design. It concludes by introducing the Strength and Support Response Model (SSRM), which reimagines the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework by integrating and leveraging students' strengths into support structures.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Despite the many wonderful things that are happening internationally in relation to inclusion within the education system, there is no denying that there are various challenges which prevent, or at the very least inhibit, the complete and successful implementation of inclusion. While a narrative has settled into much of the public discourse that “inclusion does not work”, perhaps it is possible that we are simply not doing it right (Mooney & Lashewicz, 2015). Inclusive education models, much like education systems themselves, have traditionally operated from a support-oriented and, thus, deficit-based approach. Rather than seeking to know the student and understand what they need to thrive in their “schooling”, planning and problem-solving meetings tend to focus on the challenges being experienced, the areas where the students are lacking, and the services that can serve to “fix them”. Various support frameworks, such as Response to Intervention (RtI), are commonly applied to provide proactive, tiered, and targeted support to learners who are experiencing challenges in an attempt to remediate their struggles. Recent perspectives on inclusive approaches, however, have emphasized the need to move beyond a problem-focused and support-oriented model of student learning to incorporate a more positive education and strengths-focused view of students’ learning, drawing on their strengths, interests, preferences, and motivations (Abawl, 2015; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprabhan, 2016; Gardner & Toope, 2016; Morrison & Peterson, 2013; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Williamson & Gilhan, 2017). This chapter aims to illuminate the realities of inclusive education within the context of New Brunswick public schools while also highlighting the need to move towards a more strengths-based approach of viewing and supporting students to enhance the educational experience of all learners. Sections of this chapter have been modified from an unpublished doctoral dissertation.

## **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)**

Response to Intervention (RtI), often referred to as the pyramid of interventions, is a framework that is integral to defining and implementing learning supports. The RtI framework underscores the importance of proactive, evidence-based instruction, and continuous monitoring to ensure that interventions are responsive to student needs (Fox et al., 2010; Howery et al., 2013). RtI models operate under the premise that students the right interventions, at the right time, at the right intensity will progress academically, socially, and personally. Initially intended to centre on academic learning, RtI has evolved, producing emerging frameworks such as multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to address behavioral and social-emotional needs

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