



All Kinds of Minds®

A NON-PROFIT INSTITUTE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING

Using Schools Attuned® to Support Early Intervening Services and Response to Intervention

Educators are constantly seeking effective ways to meet the needs of all learners so every student can experience success. When students struggle to learn, interventions are necessary for academic achievement. In order to identify the most effective services, educators must understand the demands of their curriculum, their instructional practices, and their students as learners.

Understanding students as learners begins in the general education classroom where teachers are in the best position to observe, analyze and respond to the learning needs of students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) brings this point to the forefront by focusing attention on Response to Intervention (RtI), a collaborative approach to improving the academic achievement and performance of children. Within an Early Intervening Services framework, RtI supports educators in identifying the academic needs of struggling students, monitoring student progress, and making data-based decisions about instruction. Through initiatives such as RtI, general and special educators have the opportunity to work closely together to best understand and meet the learning needs of students (Council of Administrators of Special Education and National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2006).

When striving to meet the learning needs of students in a classroom or school, Schools Attuned provides the knowledge, skills, processes and tools to effectively provide early intervening services and the high-quality instruction that is a key component of a Response to Intervention model. Working hand-in-hand, these initiatives provide educators with critical understandings of learning and learners, as well as core philosophies that result in a supportive, collaborative learning environment for students.

Among the promising benefits of RtI is that students receive effective instruction and intervention early, avoiding the “wait to fail” scenario so common among struggling learners (Council for Exceptional Children, 2006). At a foundational level, Schools Attuned parallels this intention, providing an approach for understanding learning and learners and how students learn best. It is this understanding that informs effective selection of interventions.

A Closer Look at the Relationship between Schools Attuned

Core Principles of RtI

We can effectively teach all children

Intervene early

Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction

The Schools Attuned® Program Connection

- The program is built upon the All Kinds of Minds philosophy and a foundation of hope, optimism, and a celebration of strengths.
- The goal of Schools Attuned (SA) is to assist educators in refining their professional judgment and making sound instructional decisions about students and student learning.
- The ultimate impact of SA is that students who once struggled due to learning differences are understood and supported, and able to experience success in school.
- By gaining an understanding of the learning needs of students, we can more effectively address those needs.

- As educators embed the principles and framework of SA into their professional judgment, they begin to observe students with greater specificity, increased focus on strengths, and with consideration of the match between the student’s learning profile and the demands of the task.
- This lens, combined with the problem-solving model of Management by Profile, enables a SA educator to more quickly and effectively intervene with targeted strategies.

- SA educators select and implement research-based strategies selected from the SA Management Resources based on the demands of the curriculum and instruction and on the learning needs of the student(s).

*Core Principles of RtI based on work of National Association of State Directors of Special Education

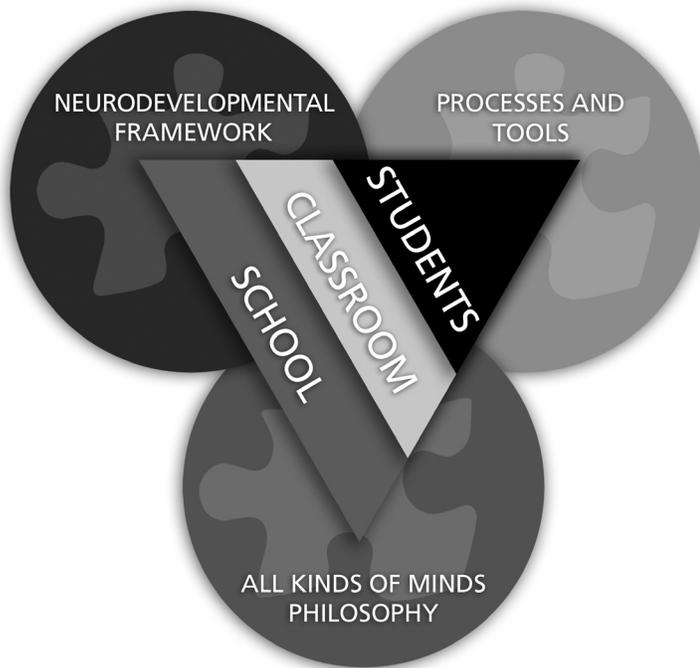
® and the Core Principles of RtI/Early Intervening Services

<p>Use assessments for three different purposes: (1) screening; (2) diagnostics; and (3) progress monitoring</p>	<p>Use data to make decisions</p>	<p>Use a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tier model What is the problem? Why is it happening? What should be done about it? Did it work? Monitor student progress to inform instruction</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SA educator has the knowledge and skills to use information gained from various assessments to make decisions about student learning. For example, a teacher can analyze the results of an assessment such as a Curriculum-Based Measurement to determine the breakdown based on the types of mistakes the student is making. This information is then used to inform new or refined instructional decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA provides the structure needed for making both quantitative and qualitative evidence part of the problem-solving process when working with struggling learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA educators learn to scaffold their thinking through a problem-solving process called Management by Profile and use this protocol to guide their observations and thinking. Management by Profile includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation Neurodevelopmental Analysis Management Measurement of Impact <i>(Management by Profile is described in greater detail on page 6.)</i> SA and Management by Profile begin with a dual focus – what’s not a problem/what’s going right AND what is a problem. A signature piece of the SA Program is beginning the Management by Profile process by recognizing strengths and assets. This step is typically overlooked in other problem solving models. SA educators select appropriate times to engage students in Student Learning Partnerships and Attuning a Student, two processes based on Management by Profile. SA educators use this problem-solving approach to make observations and analyses of their curriculum and instructional decisions and determine the effect of those decisions on student learning.
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The Schools Attuned® Conceptual Model

The core components of Schools Attuned – the AKOM philosophy, a Neurodevelopmental Framework, and Processes and Tools – provide a foundation for supporting learners at the school, classroom, and student levels.



Multi-tier Model of Service Delivery

TIER 1: Core Instructional Interventions

- All students
- Preventive and proactive

The Schools Attuned® Program Connection

SCHOOL LEVEL:

- When made a part of the mission and culture of a school, the principles of SA create an atmosphere of support for students and place significant value on a differentiated approach to teaching and learning.
- SA supports the leveraging of resources across the school, including parents, teachers, specialists, and school leadership, particularly when these individuals share a common language for understanding and talking about learning.

CLASSROOM LEVEL:

- As an element of providing quality instruction for all students, SA educators have the knowledge and skills to analyze the neurodevelopmental demands of the curriculum and instructional practices used in any lesson or to teach any subject. (e.g., *A fractions lesson taught through modeling places demands on Higher Order Cognition, Receptive Language, Memory and Attention.*)
- Based on their knowledge of the demands of the curriculum combined with an understanding of students' learning strengths and weaknesses, SA educators can anticipate potential breakdown points and adapt/differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of a broad range of learners. (e.g., *The fractions lesson could be taught using manipulatives with students working in pairs to demonstrate fraction concepts.*)
- Based on their knowledge of the demands of various assessment techniques, SA educators are able to identify strategies to best prepare students for assessments (e.g., *strategies for managing time, mental energy level, and saliency determination.*)
- In order to empower students to become advocates for and managers of their learning needs, SA educators teach students about learning in general and about themselves as learners in particular.

TIER 2: Targeted Group Interventions

- Grouping based on skill deficits
- Intervention in addition to whole-class instruction
- All group members may not receive same intervention, but get more intensive, targeted intervention

TIER 3: Intensive, Individual Interventions

- Student continues to struggle despite supplemental support, failing to respond to the interventions implemented
- Student receives intervention in a group with a reduced student-teacher ratio

STUDENT LEVEL

- By understanding the neurodevelopmental demands of a given skill, a SA educator can more efficiently and effectively select interventions to supplement instruction for a targeted skill. Further refinement of the selection of interventions can occur when the educator understands the learning profile of the student.
- While a targeted group of students may all struggle with the same concept or skill, the underlying causes of their struggles may differ. (e.g., *Struggles with reading decoding can be related to weaknesses in Active Working Memory, Phonological Processing, or Sequencing.*)
- When students in targeted groups struggle with a particular concept or skill, the SA educator is prepared to identify the potential breakdown point for each student – the point at which the student’s profile is misaligned with the demands of the task (e.g., *a student with weak Active Working Memory struggles with the demands of decoding multi-syllabic words, often forgetting the first syllable in the process of sounding out the last syllable.*)
- The identification of the breakdown point is the result of applying the thinking of Management by Profile, the Student Learning Partnership process, or, in some cases, the Attuning a Student process. Based on this understanding of why the student may be struggling, the SA educator is able to use the most effective strategies to support the mastery of targeted skills.
- In this smaller group setting, the teacher is able to teaching students about the neurodevelopmental demands of particular skills and tasks, as well as strategies for managing those demands.

STUDENT LEVEL – INDIVIDUAL:

- When working with individual students to understand their learning profiles and identify individualized strategies, the SA educator has the ability to select from a toolbox of protocols and processes, including Management by Profile, the Student Learning Partnership process, or the Attuning a Student process. Each tool provides (1) a different level of specificity and depth of understanding, (2) a range of individuals participating in the process, and (3) varying degrees of documentation.
- The **Student Learning Partnership** supports teachers in using their knowledge of the neurodevelopmental Constructs, the demands of their curriculum and their observations of a student in their classroom to conduct a series of conversations with a struggling student about his or her learning. Teacher and student work together in an age-appropriate way to develop an idea about the neurodevelopmental issues that might be causing the difficulty.
- When needing a more comprehensive understanding of the learning strengths and weaknesses of a struggling student, the SA educator can implement **Attuning a Student**, a data-driven process for deeply understanding a student as a learner. Based on this deep understanding of the individual student, the SA educator is able to develop a management plan to address specific skill areas that aligns with the student’s neurodevelopmental profile.

Management by Profile as a Problem-Solving Model

Management by Profile involves thinking through the four elements of Observation, Neurodevelopmental Analysis, Management, and Measurement of Impact. Throughout each of these elements, information is gathered and integrated into one's thinking and decisions.

1. Observation

Observation enables an educator to identify students' patterns of strengths, weaknesses, and affinities. A signature piece of the Schools Attuned program is beginning Management by Profile by **searching for strengths and assets**. This step is typically overlooked in other problem-solving models. Over time, patterns of observable phenomena and data emerge, providing information about the curriculum being taught, the instructional strategies used to teach the curriculum, and students' responses to those instructional decisions.

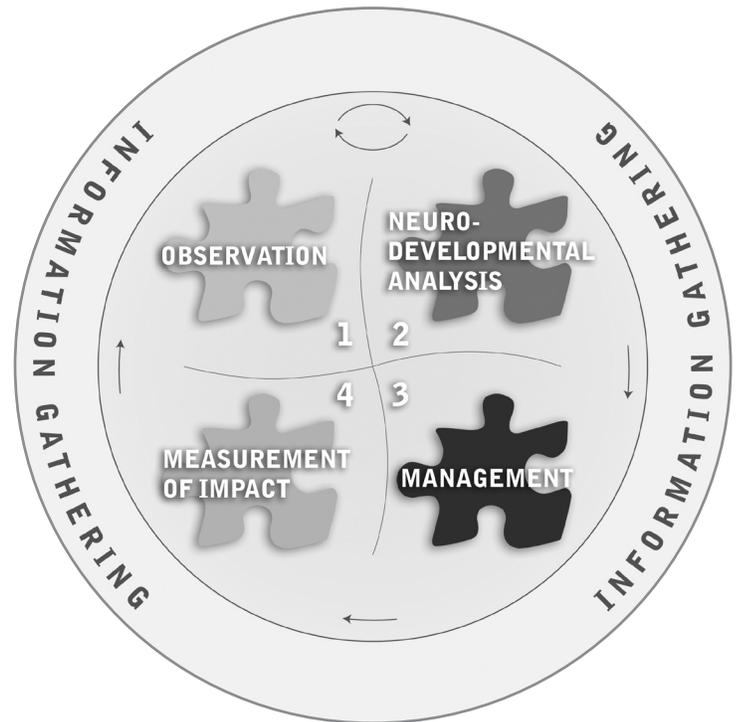
2. Neurodevelopmental Analysis

Neurodevelopmental Analysis helps clarify the demands placed on students. This analysis also supports the teacher in understanding the neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses of students that impact how students engage in academic tasks and social situations. As recurring themes emerge from this analysis, an educator determines the breakdown point and forms a hypothesis about the underlying neurodevelopmental functions that cause students to struggle.

3. Management

Information gathered from the Neurodevelopmental Analysis element helps create plans for Management. The implementation of management strategies can include the following:

- > modifying academic expectations
- > adjusting instructional methods
- > identifying strategies to build on strengths and affinities
- > providing interventions to help students improve their weaknesses
- > teaching students about the demands of school



Talking with students about their learning strengths and weaknesses and partnering with them about the most effective strategies to use is essential for students to gain ownership of and manage their profile. Integral parts of management include choosing management strategies, forming relationships with students around their learning profiles, creating a shared understanding of success, and anticipating the outcomes of implementing a strategy.

4. Measurement of Impact

Measurement of Impact is reflecting back on the outcomes of management efforts, comparing available qualitative and/or quantitative evidence to anticipated outcomes and using that evidence to determine the best next steps. Was success achieved by adjusting the instructional strategies used in a lesson? Did the student achieve greater success because of strategies tried? Where do we go now? Through this process, more information is gathered about the student as a learner and hypotheses are refined.

Key Considerations Regarding RtI and Schools Attuned

- > Schools Attuned adds an assets-based component that is often overlooked in RtI implementation.
- > A key component of Schools Attuned is the research-based neuroscience of learning that forms the framework for analyzing curriculum and instruction and for making instructional decisions that impact student learning. RtI places emphasis on high-quality intervention demonstrated through scientific research and practice to produce high learning rates for most students that is matched to student need.
- > Individual response is assessed in RtI and modifications to instruction/intervention or goals are made depending on results with individual students. The Management Resources provided as part of Schools Attuned support educators in making these decisions about modifications.
- > While Schools Attuned and Response to Intervention are focused on quality instruction and supporting students in the general education classroom, both initiatives value collaboration among educational professionals. The alliances formed among general education teachers and special education teachers, as well as with parents and students, serve as a key element in helping the student achieve success.

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