CHAPTER 1

Components of Curriculum Implementation

Overview

KNOWLEDGE OF KEY CURRICULAR factors is essential to meet the curriculum implementation demands of multi-tiered response to intervention (RTI). This includes an understanding of five key curricular components of teaching and learning found in every classroom, three key types of curriculum operating simultaneously in every classroom, and the significance of these topics in the implementation of multi-tiered RTI.

Key Topics

- Curriculum defined
- Explicit, hidden, and absent curricula
- Curricular components of instructional content, interventions, arrangement, management, and monitoring
- Interrelationship among curricular types, curricular components, and multi-tiered instruction
- RTI and the implementation of five curricular components

Learner Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should:

1. Be knowledgeable about an integrated definition of curriculum implementation
2. Be able to assess the extent to which explicit, hidden, and absent curricula function in everyday classrooms
3. Be able to describe the interrelationship among the five curricular components of effective teaching and learning
4. Understand how a variety of curriculum factors, in addition to content, contribute significantly to the implementation of multi-tiered RTI
5. Be familiar with the historical progression of curriculum implementation for struggling learners, including those with disabilities, over the past five decades

SIGNIFICANCE TO CONTEMPORARY CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

A fundamental aspect of RTI is the effective and proper implementation of curriculum to meet the needs of all learners. Educators in today's classrooms must ensure that the curriculum has been implemented with integrity for all students prior to making general assumptions about suspected learning or behavior problems as intrinsic to the student. As a result, we are faced with the challenge of implementing the curriculum in the manner in which it is intended to be implemented, as well as providing corroboration that effective implementation has actually occurred. This is significant in the process of multi-tiered RTI due to the increased emphasis on providing sufficient opportunities to learn within a curriculum that has been implemented with integrity. To best meet this challenge, we must understand the critical factors that provide the basis for making effective curriculum implementation decisions if we are to meet the needs of all learners. A complex issue for teachers is to understand the curriculum they are required to implement, along with the outcomes reflecting student learning. Many educators

view the curriculum primarily as the content they must teach, with little or no consideration of other critical curricular elements that are essential to effective teaching. This chapter begins by presenting an integrated and practical discussion of curriculum and its implementation that serves as a foundation for implementing RTI. First, however, several key terms used throughout the book are defined. These terms are categorized within several broad headings to simplify their use.

Response to Intervention

Multi-tiered instruction—Levels or layers of instruction that increase in duration and intensity based on the learner's response to that instruction

Response to intervention (RTI)—Process within multi-tiered instruction that determines the extent to which a learner responds to instruction (i.e., what is taught) and uses the RTI results as a basis for subsequent multi-tiered curricular decisions

Fidelity—Implementation of the curriculum and assessment in the manner in which they were designed and researched to be used (i.e., consistently and accurately)

Universal screening—Process by which all students are screened (usually three times per year) for progress toward curriculum benchmarks

Progress monitoring—More frequent monitoring (e.g., monthly, biweekly) of students' progress toward benchmarks or objectives

Diagnostic assessment—Process by which specific learners' needs are pinpointed, which may include evaluation for a possible disability

Cut score—Assessment proficiency level or score (e.g., the 25th percentile) that learners are expected to achieve to be considered as making adequate progress toward benchmarks

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum implementation—The integration of instructional content, arrangement, interventions, management, and monitoring in the classroom

Curriculum differentiation—Modifications or adaptations of curriculum implementation to meet a variety of students' needs

Curricular types—Three types of curriculum found in every classroom (explicit, hidden, absent)

Differentiated classroom—A classroom that contains structures and procedures designed to deal simultaneously with the variety of factors that students bring to the learning environment (e.g., varied preferences for learning, varied experiential backgrounds, cultural/linguistic diversity, range of reading levels, self-management abilities, time-on-task levels)

Differentiated instruction—Use of evidence-based interventions in the implementation of research-based curricula to meet the varied educational needs/preferences of students in differentiated classrooms

Collaboration in curriculum—The process of cooperatively implementing the curriculum and performing assessment to meet the needs of all students

Culturally responsive curriculum—A curriculum that is contextually relevant to all students, including culturally and linguistically diverse learners

Evidence-based curricular interventions—Specific teaching and learning techniques with demonstrated effectiveness for their intended purposes in research and validation studies

Research-based curriculum—Comprehensive curricular programs that have been developed, researched, and validated to be effective in teaching and learning (e.g., a reading curriculum)

Interventionist—An educator with specialized skills who provides targeted curricular supports to struggling learners using either push-in or pull-out methods

Benchmarks—Grade- or age-level academic and behavioral standards

Learner and the Curriculum

Struggling learner—A student who fails to exhibit adequate proficiency or rate of progress toward academic and/or behavioral benchmarks

Study skills—Educational tools used by students to promote more efficient and effective task completion (e.g., various reading rates, time management skills, library usage abilities)

Learning strategies—Strategies used by students to increase access to and retention of curricular content and skills (e.g., active processing, rehearsal abilities, coping skills)

Essential Curriculum Factors

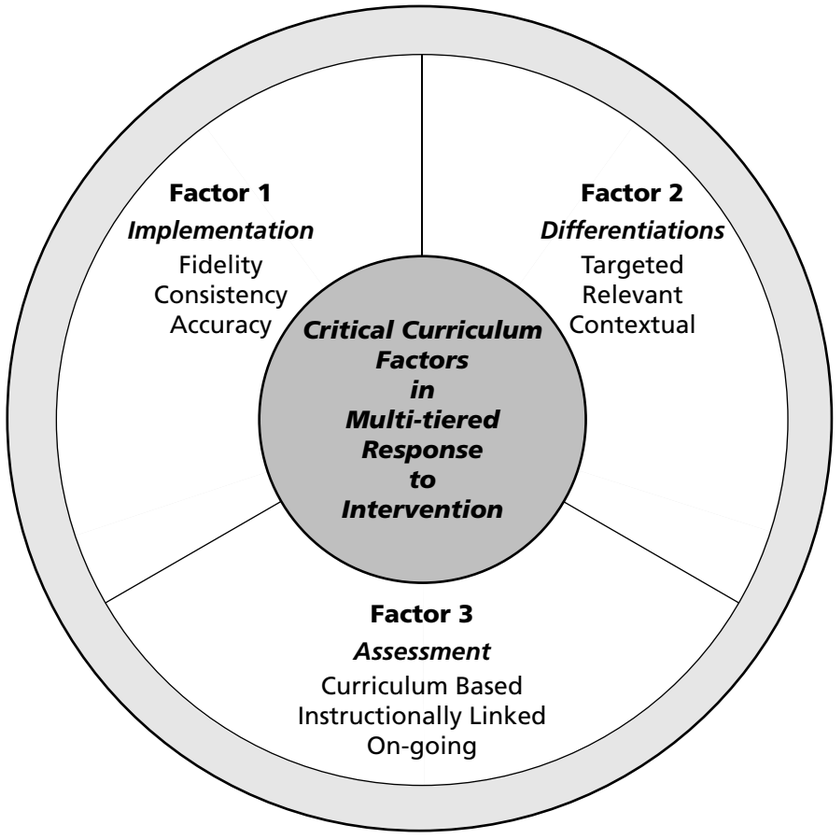
Viewing curriculum and its essential components in an integrated manner provides educators with a comprehensive perspective that allows them to understand more clearly what they teach, as well as allowing them to make more informed curricular decisions for all learners. In addition, the demands of multi-tiered RTI require today's teachers to have greater knowledge about curriculum, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

As Figure 1.1 shows, three critical factors must be addressed in implementing the curriculum for all learners in multi-tiered RTI:

Factor 1: Curriculum *implementation* must be done the way it was designed to be done (i.e., with fidelity); in a consistent manner; and with challenges to students to facilitate the development and use of higher level thinking abilities.

Factor 2: Opportunities to learn must include curricular *differentiations* designed to achieve desired needs or outcomes; relevant to the learner; and implemented during classroom instruction.

FIGURE 1.1 Three Critical Curricular Factors



Factor 3: Effectiveness of the curriculum and its implementation requires *assessment* that is based on the curriculum taught in the classroom; is linked directly to what has been taught; and is conducted on a regular basis to closely monitor students' progress toward curricular benchmarks.

Curriculum implementation, differentiation, and assessment are discussed in detail throughout this book, beginning with an exploration of important factors that educators should be aware of to meet the needs of all learners in multi-tiered RTI (i.e., those who achieve above, at, and below benchmark levels). This includes the definition of curriculum, five curricular components, and three types of curriculum, each discussed relative to multi-tiered RTI. We begin with the definition of curriculum referred to throughout this book.

How Is Curriculum Defined?

How one defines curriculum depends on how one implements, differentiates, and assesses curriculum. For some educators, curriculum is simply all planned occurrences in the classroom (Wiles & Bondi, 2007). For others, curriculum is

narrowly defined as the content they teach every day. Still others view curriculum in a manner that is more refined than all classroom occurrences and broader than content. However curriculum is defined, it has three important components: (1) the intended outcomes, (2) what is taught, and (3) the manner of implementation. Eisner (2002) suggested that curriculum pertains to instruction that is planned with associated intended outcomes, recognizing that much more may occur in the classroom that is meaningful and relevant, even though it may be unintended. Hosp, Hosp, and Howell (2007) viewed curriculum as the course or path embarked on, reflecting what is taught in the classroom. Hoover and Patton (2005) stated that curriculum must also consider the setting, strategies, and management in the context of the content and skills being taught.

Reflecting on various definitions of curriculum put forth over the past several decades, McKernan (2008) wrote, "we have on [the] one hand a limited, and on the other a more expansive, notion of what is to count as a curriculum" (p. 11). Blending these important aspects of various definitions, *curriculum* as used throughout this book is defined as:

> *Planned learning experiences with intended outcomes while recognizing the importance of possible unintended outcomes.*

Working from this definition, elements related to both the "what" and the "how" of curriculum implementation and assessment are emphasized; these elements become important when RTI results are discussed. These interrelated aspects are important; Hoover and Patton (2005) wrote that "how one defines this term (curriculum) relates directly to how one approaches it (curriculum implementation)" (p. 7). Educators must be aware of how they define or view curriculum because their perspectives are directly connected to how they implement, differentiate, and assess curriculum effectiveness.

Significance to Multi-tiered RTI

The curriculum must be implemented with fidelity, contain reasonable and needed differentiations, and include ongoing monitoring of student progress. In implementing any curriculum, teachers must make daily decisions about implementation based on students' needs (e.g., the need to restate instructions, provide additional practice to learn content, or reinforce a concept in a culturally relevant way). The way curriculum is defined or viewed will directly affect the instructional decisions necessary to implement curriculum in multi-tiered RTI models.

Three Types of Curriculum

Researchers and curriculum specialists have explored the fact that different *types* of curriculum operate simultaneously in the classroom (Eisner, 2002; Hoover, 1987; Joseph, Bravmann, Windschitl, Mikel, & Green, 2000; Schubert,

TABLE 1.1 Types of Curriculum

Type	Description	Example(s)
Explicit	Formal/stated mandated curricula that contain explicit steps and procedures to follow for proper implementation; stated and intended outcomes	Any grade-level curriculum, such as Basal Reading series, Investigations (Mathematics), and Wilson Reading
Hidden	Practices and procedures resulting from decisions made when implementing the explicit curriculum; unintended outcomes that occur as the explicit curriculum is implemented	Use of cooperative learning groups; deviations from the explicit curriculum to take advantage of a teachable moment; actual learning that occurs as the explicit curriculum is implemented
Absent	Curricular aspects excluded (either intentionally or unintentionally) from classroom instruction that are appropriate to the explicit curriculum	Evidence-based interventions not used in the classroom; groups or peer work not used in teaching and learning; supplemental materials not used to support explicit curriculum learning

1993). In his classic and innovative textbook on curriculum (*The Educational Imagination*), Eisner (2002) identified three types of curriculum: (1) explicit (stated curriculum), (2) hidden (unofficial curriculum), and (3) null (excluded curriculum). Because the null represents that which does not exist, the term *absent curriculum* is used to clarify the intent of the null curriculum. The three types of curriculum are summarized in Table 1.1.

As Table 1.1 shows, the *explicit curriculum* includes everything in the curriculum that is stated, such as:

- Steps for implementation
- Suggested supplemental activities or tasks
- A proper sequence for presenting material
- The amount of time to spend on particular topics
- Procedures for evaluation
- Suggested groupings (e.g., pairs, cooperative groups)

These and similar types of instruction and guidance give teachers important and necessary scope and sequence parameters for implementing the explicit curriculum in a manner consistent with its research base and associated recommendations for its use. However, each teacher brings a unique background and perspective to the teaching and learning situations, and every learner has a unique experiential background. As a result, implementation of the explicit curriculum will vary as teachers (1) make important on-the-spot decisions reflecting their perceptions of the curriculum (i.e., curriculum defined), (2) draw on their prior experiences in implementing the curriculum, or (3) accommodate the unique and diverse characteristics that students bring to the learning situation.

The concept of a *hidden curriculum* is fundamental to understanding the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. If the influences of the hidden curriculum on learners' outcomes, achievement progress, or social-emotional

development are not recognized, the teacher's ability to understand learners' progress is greatly limited. Often the hidden curriculum provides a more realistic context for interpreting screening, monitoring, or diagnostic curriculum assessment results. It is essential to consider factors such as management procedures, tone of voice, proximity, class groupings, time of day, and other similar classroom conditions that complement the explicit curriculum, based on the teacher's decisions, rather than only explicitly stated instructions or steps in the curriculum materials or teacher guides.

The need to pay attention to what is not included in curriculum implementation is especially important for students who require increased opportunities to learn. The *absent curriculum* may explain the lack of adequate progress toward benchmarks or objectives more accurately than the explicit and/or hidden curriculum alone. As Eisner (2002) points out, what we exclude from daily teaching and learning may be just as important as what we include. Examples of absent curriculum include:

- Evidence-based interventions excluded from teaching and learning (e.g., direct instruction techniques)
- Extra time to complete assigned tasks or activities (e.g., increased wait time for a response)
- Additional time to prepare for a task before completing it
- Cultural examples (that are excluded) that, if used, may put mandated content into a relevant context for diverse learners (e.g., exclusion of research on cultural events)
- Self-management procedures that learners are not allowed to employ (e.g., self-monitoring)

It should be obvious that what we elect to teach as well as what we choose to exclude impact student progress, as well as academic and behavioral growth.

Significance to Multi-tiered RTI

All three types of curriculum—explicit, hidden, and absent—must be considered to make informed decisions in multi-tiered RTI models. Multi-tiered instructional decisions begin by implementing the explicit curriculum with fidelity. However, as different student needs emerge based on universal screening and progress monitoring, other curricular factors must be considered to make informed decisions. Multi-tiered RTI teams that interpret curriculum-based assessment results should consider both hidden and absent curricula to ensure a complete understanding of the documented progress. Chapter 6 provides detailed coverage of the topic of determining curricular needs, which includes considering the interrelationship of the three types of curriculum operating in all classrooms. Form 1.1 provides a guide to help educators

identify and determine the extent to which each type of curriculum is implemented in classroom instruction. This form should be completed periodically by classroom teachers to determine the influences of explicit, hidden, and absent curricula on learners' progress toward benchmarks.

Essential Curricular Components

In addition to clarifying the teacher's perception of how curriculum is defined and the ways in which the different types of curriculum operate in the classroom, the key elements of comprehensive curriculum implementation must be understood. Researchers and educators view the composition of curriculum in various ways. For example, as discussed, some see the curriculum as the content taught (Hosp et al., 2007); others view it as content, process, and products (Bender, 2008); and still others, such as Eisner (2002), see curriculum as a broader set of occurrences in the classroom. When considering the broader set of occurrences as well as others' views of curriculum, Hoover and Patton (2005) identified and discussed selected elements that reflect most aspects of curriculum and its effective implementation.

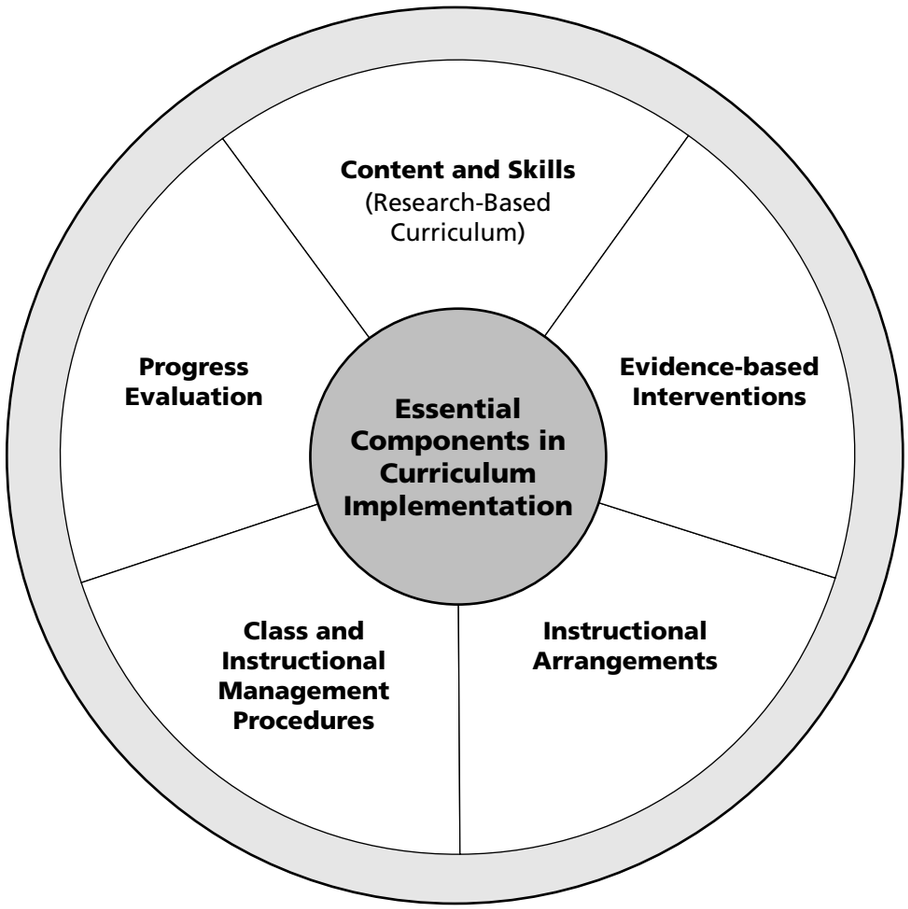
Drawing on the discussions in these and other related sources, five essential components have been identified for effective curriculum implementation in multi-tiered RTI models. These are illustrated in Figure 1.2. The five components include:

- Content and skills to be taught and assessed through research-based curricula
- Evidence-based interventions used to teach content/skills, manage behavior, and support differentiated instructional needs
- Instructional arrangements or settings in the classroom used to implement the research-based curriculum and evidence-based interventions in order to teach and assess content/skills
- Overall classroom and instructional management, which includes addressing both academic and behavioral aspects of teaching and learning
- Evaluation of progress to assess learners' growth toward achieving benchmarks and/or meeting supplemental needs

As typical classroom occurrences, events, practices, mandates, and procedures are studied, nearly all of the major instructional aspects of curriculum are found to fall within one or more of these curricular components. The premise emphasized throughout this book is that:

Effective curriculum implementation can only occur in the context of all five components, viewed and implemented in integrated ways in the classroom.

FIGURE 1.2 Five Essential Curricular Components



Understanding and applying these five components is necessary given the dynamic nature of classroom instruction, assessment, and management, as shown in Table 1.2.

Significance to Multi-tiered RTI

As multi-tiered RTI models continue to grow in stature and importance, concern for the five components of curriculum implementation will also increase. These components are important because teachers need to understand and interpret more comprehensively students' response or lack of response to instruction. Being knowledgeable about and attending to only some of these components leads to an incomplete picture of the multi-tiered instruction used in today's schools. Therefore, as we employ multi-tiered RTI models, educator teams must be aware of the content/skills, evidence-based interventions,

TABLE 1.2 Components within Effective Implementation of Curriculum

Component	Description	Examples
Content/Skills (Research-Based Curriculum)	Subject area knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, and outcomes connected with the mandated state or district curriculum, which is research based	District reading curriculum outcomes National Reading Panel Report (2000) Math reasoning skills
Evidence-Based Interventions	Research-tested and validated teaching interventions	Direct instruction Classwide peer tutoring Scaffolding Teacher-scripted lessons
Instructional Arrangements	Use of various groupings, pairs, or independent work to facilitate acquisition of content and skills	Cooperative learning groups Paired learning Independent practice
Class/Instructional Management Procedures	Classroom structures established to manage learning, manage behavior, and facilitate opportunities to learn	Self-monitoring Positive behavior supports Proximity control Shaping
Progress Evaluation	Regular assessment of learners' progress toward curricular benchmarks/objectives (may occur through universal screening or ongoing progress monitoring)	Curriculum-based measurement Performance-based assessment Running records

instructional arrangements, management procedures, and progress evaluation applied to all learners in order to provide the proper tier of instruction and duration of interventions. Chapter 2 provides more detailed coverage of these curriculum issues relative to multi-tiered instruction. Form 1.2 is a guide for documenting aspects of instruction associated with the five curricular components that must be considered to ensure effective teaching for all learners in a multi-tiered RTI model. The form should be completed by classroom teachers periodically to clarify the delivery of each component within the curriculum implementation process.

As Form 1.2 shows, although each of the five curricular components is distinct, collectively they represent much of what goes into effective curriculum implementation. In addition, although educators must be familiar with the specifics of these components, their integration in instruction is most important when educating students using multi-tiered RTI models.

Integrating Curricular Components in Classroom Instruction

The above discussions illustrate the many complexities of curriculum implementation to meet all learners' needs. Focusing on only one or two curricular components greatly limits educators in several ways. The following *RTI*

Curriculum in Practice illustrates a typical classroom situation reflecting the needs of a struggling learner and RTI curriculum implementation.

RTI CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE

Addressing the Interrelationship Among Curricular Elements

Description

A learner is struggling to make adequate progress in a content or skill area (e.g., reading fluency, math computation, higher level thinking). The learner is taught using a research-based curriculum and an evidence-based intervention. Each of these is considered appropriate for the content/skill area being taught. The learner is taught in a large-group setting and is given some independent work time to practice the skills. The teaching intervention used requires the learner to respond quickly to the teacher's instructions and to complete tasks rapidly. The learner prefers to work with others rather than independently. The procedure used to evaluate the learner's progress is appropriate for assessing the targeted content. The learner does not have a learning disability or a behavior problem. However, after several weeks of instruction, the learner is not making adequate progress toward the targeted benchmarks. The multi-tiered RTI problem-solving team meets to evaluate the learner's progress and decides how best to proceed with the learner's education. Based on the progress monitoring results, the team decides to recommend a change in the evidence-based intervention and break the content down into smaller, more manageable steps to deal with what they believe to be the learner's underlying issues.

Analysis of the Response to Intervention Team's Decision

In many situations similar to this one, the education team might initially conclude that there is some problem in using the evidence-based intervention and the curriculum content as it is currently structured. However, further examination of the situation shows that the student is perfectly capable of learning the content with no changes, using the original evidence-based intervention, *provided that these are implemented within a different instructional arrangement or setting*. Rather than doing large-group work, this learner succeeds well in small-group settings in the general classroom and accomplishes assigned tasks more easily when working in pairs rather than independently. In this situation, the instructional arrangement (i.e., the instructional setting) directly affected the acquisition (or lack of it) of content. Failure to consider the instructional arrangement caused the education team to make two incorrect recommendations:, (1) that the evidence-based intervention should be changed when that was not the issue and (2) that the content should be broken down into smaller steps when the learner was capable of learning it as currently structured. In this situation, the instructional arrangement should be adjusted as a first attempt to help the learner succeed while leaving the content and evidence-based intervention the same. If the intervention and/or the content structure is altered while the instructional arrangement remains as is, the progress monitoring results will likely be the same because the suspected problem has little or nothing to do with the intervention or the content.

Significance to Multi-tiered Response to Intervention

The interrelatedness of the five components is critical in multi-tiered RTI to help educator teams make informed, accurate decisions once universal screening or progress monitoring suggests that a learner may be struggling. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, progress-monitoring results indicate the level and rate of progress; however, educators must interpret these results to provide effective tiered instruction. All five curricular components must be considered before deciding how to adjust instruction if necessary.