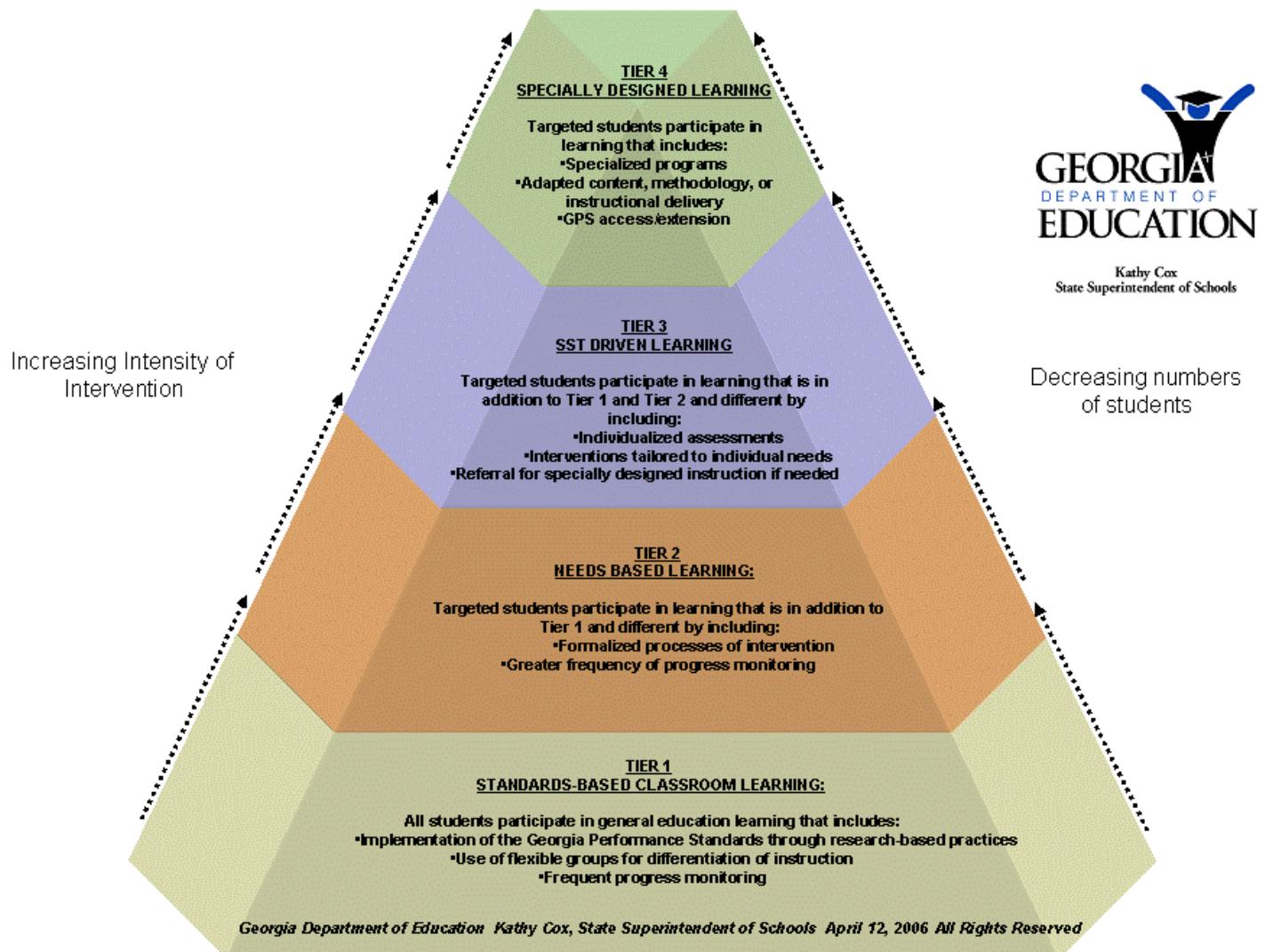




GEORGIA STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PYRAMID OF INTERVENTIONS



Kathy Cox
State Superintendent of Schools

Collaboratively Developed by the Georgia Department of Education
Departments of Curriculum & Instruction and Teacher & Student Support



Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions

Wanda Creel, Sally Krisel, John O'Connor, Lynne Williams

The Georgia Department of Education is unveiling a conceptual framework that will enable all students in Georgia to continue to make great gains in school. The Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions is the result of teamwork and collaboration throughout the Georgia Department of Education. The catalyst for the development and implementation of Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions was the need for Georgia's educators to have a common focus and a common language regarding instructional practices and interventions. The Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions is a graphic organizer that illustrates layers of instructional efforts that can be provided to students according to their individual needs. Additionally, the Student Achievement Pyramid of Intervention can serve as a framework for discussion among collaborative professional learning communities that are willing to explore and engage in all avenues available to assist students in their learning process.

While the Student Achievement Pyramid of Intervention may sound like "educational jargon," it provides a framework to align practices with the mission of learning for everyone. Richard DuFour says that pyramids of intervention prod us to ask the following questions: "Are our kids learning? How do we know that they are learning? And, most importantly, what are we prepared to do when they do not learn?" DuFour asserts that the final question is the distinguishing characteristic of a professional learning community.

In a professional learning community, DuFour states, there is a commitment to help students learn, but the commitment goes much deeper than in schools without professional learning communities. "In the professional learning community, we say that learning is so important that we are going to do whatever it takes to help you learn, and we are not going to let up on you until you do learn."

Research consistently points out that student growth is enhanced when evaluation results are used to guide continued instruction. This concept of monitoring students' progress, or "progress monitoring," enables educators to determine if students are increasing their skills as expected, or if they need additional instructional interventions to enable them to maximize academic success. The Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions represents the process of continually implementing "progress monitoring" and then providing layers of more and more intensive interventions so that students can be successful and progress in their learning. This proactive approach does not wait until students have large gaps in their learning that are almost too great to overcome. Neither does it allow high-achieving students to languish in a curriculum that is not challenging to them. This approach focuses on determining when students are struggling and providing strategic interventions to help them shore up their areas of need; it also documents students' strength and provides additional challenge in a variety of ways. Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions begins with standards-based classrooms serving as the foundation for teaching and learning.

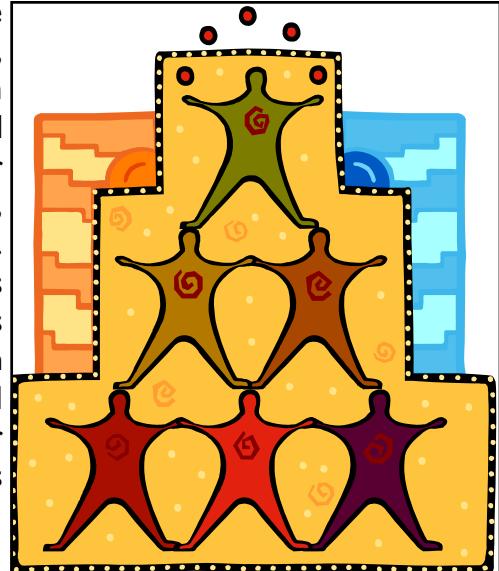
**Pages 3-4 explain the tiered levels of
Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid of Intervention**



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PYRAMID OF INTERVENTIONS

Tier 1: Standards Based Classroom Learning describes effective instruction that should be happening in all classrooms for all students. As Georgia moves towards phasing in the implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) it is recognized that the curriculum standards are the foundation for the learning that occurs in each classroom. This type of instruction/learning focuses on the GPS and includes evidenced based instruction that is differentiated according to students' various needs. Teachers utilize progress monitoring results to guide and adjust instruction. Tier 1 is not limited to instruction in the academic content areas, but also includes all developmental domains such as behavioral and social development. This tier represents effective, strategic, and expert instruction that is ideally available in all classrooms. Through standards-based learning and on-going formative assessments we can answer DuFour's questions of "are kids learning; and how are they learning?"

Tier 2: Needs Based Instruction/Learning: Standard Intervention Protocols: Tier Two becomes the answer to the question "what are we prepared to do when they do not learn?" Tier 2 describes pre-planned interventions that should be in place for students who are not being sufficiently successful or adequately challenged with Tier 1 interventions alone. In many schools in Georgia, students who need additional interventions in the general classroom have been referred to the Student Support Team and possibly evaluated for special education services. The new conceptual framework illustrates the potential for having interventions for students before their gap becomes so large that specialized instruction is needed. Tier 2 interventions are not a substitution for Tier 1 interventions, but are layered in addition to the Tier 1 instruction that is provided. Tier 2 interventions are not solely reliant on the expertise and diligence of individual teachers across the school. They should include pre-planned interventions developed and supported at the school level, thereby becoming "standard intervention protocols" that are proactively in place for students who need them. Working collaboratively, teachers and instructional leaders should determine concepts and content areas that have traditionally proven difficult for students in their school. Then, they should develop interventions that are available when specific students show weaknesses in those areas. For 1st and 2nd -grade students who struggle with learning to read, for example, Tier 2 interventions may include structured, diligent, pre-planned tutoring interventions for those specified students. Similarly, schools should determine concepts and content areas that are likely to have been mastered by highly able students and, through strategies such as pretesting and curriculum compacting, be prepared to provide modified curriculum. All students who need a Tier 2 intervention (in addition to their Tier 1 instruction) should be identified through the progress monitoring evaluation data.



Tier 2 interventions can be used at all school levels. Virtually every high school has students who become disenfranchised and unsuccessful and therefore become high risk for dropping out of school. High schools, possibly in collaboration with local middle schools, can anticipate this and identify those students very early in their high school careers who are high risk for this type of difficulty. They can then build systematic mentoring programs that encourage students to become active and engaged in high school activities. In addition, specific academic interventions can be established for students who are missing core academic skills (e.g. strong reading skills) that will increase the probability that high risk students will have the necessary skills to be successful. To maintain motivation and improve academic achievement, high schools should use a variety of strategies to encourage more students to engage in rigorous coursework, e.g., vertical teaming that leads to AP courses.

Tier 2 interventions should not be endless for individual students who are struggling. Schools must ensure that specific students are not labeled as being “Tier 2 students” and thereby create lower expectations or tracking for those students. Tier 2 interventions are proactive and maintain high expectations for all students.

Tier 3: Student Support Team Driven Instruction/Learning provides an additional layer of analysis and interventions. The Student Support Team (-and other small group teams such as the Gifted Eligibility Team) meet to discuss students who are still not provided the instructional experiences to meet their needs. During this process, the diagnostic team analyzes the specific needs of the individual student. In Tier 2, schools establish standard intervention protocols that are available across the school. Tier 3 becomes much more individualized as the student’s teachers, other personnel, and parents systematically determine the issues that need to be addressed for the student. Instructional interventions are then strategically put in place for the student and progress monitoring processes, including sensitive instruments that may be formal or informal in nature, are implemented frequently to determine if the student is responding to the interventions. Effective Tier 3 activities are exemplified by systematic activities to determine a student’s needs, implementation of scientifically-based interventions that are strategically incorporated with fidelity to meet the student’s individual needs, and frequent progress monitoring to inform continued instruction.

Tier 4: Specially Designed Instruction/Learning is developed specifically for students who meet the respective eligibility criteria for special program placement. With three effective tiers in place prior to specialized services, more struggling students will be successful and will not require this degree of interventions. Tier 4 will provide instruction that is targeted and specialized to meet students’ needs. Tier 4 instruction would include formal Gifted Education services for students who qualify, but it may also include interventions suggested by the Gifted Eligibility Team for regular classroom curriculum modification for any student with advanced learning needs. It may include special education and related services for eligible students, provided in the general education classroom, or in some cases, in a resource room. Tier 4 does not represent a location for services, but indicates a layer of interventions that may be provided in the general education class or in a separate setting. Tier 4 is not a substitute for Tier 2, but is layered upon Tier 2 interventions.