5. Is the standard protocol approach within a 3-Tiered model the only appropriate way to implement RtI?

Answer: There are multiple ways to structure RTI programs and DPI encourages districts to develop a model that best fits the needs of their students and their staffing and fiscal limitations. Neither the Reauthorization of the 2004 IDEA law nor the Wisconsin RtI Vision, defines RtI as a 3-Tiered model.

Evidence:

The federal law states:
[[Page 118 STAT. 2706]]

      ``(B) Additional authority.--In determining whether
a child has a specific learning disability, a local
educational agency may use **a process** that determines if
the child responds to scientific, research-based
intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures
described in paragraphs (2) and (3). *(Emphasis added.)*

In Wisconsin's vision for RtI, the three essential elements of high quality instruction, balanced assessment, and collaboration systematically interact within a **multi-level system of support** to provide the structures to increase success for *all* students. **Culturally responsive practices** are central to an effective RtI system and are evident within each of the three essential elements. In a multi-level system of support, schools employ the three essential elements of RtI at varying levels of intensity based upon student responsiveness to instruction and intervention. These elements do not work in isolation. Rather, all components of the visual model inform and are impacted by the others; this relationship forms Wisconsin's vision for RtI. (Pg. 4)

A Note on the RtI Triangle

      RtI is often represented visually by a triangle separated into three tiers that depict levels of intensity based on student need. Due to the widespread prevalence of this model, many have asked, "Why no triangle in Wisconsin?"

      While many districts may choose to use a three-tiered system to organize their RtI system, the way a district chooses to structure their RtI system is a local control decision left to individual districts. Districts have varying resources, programs, and practices that will likely influence the building of their unique RtI system. Districts may use tiers or find that other multi-level systems or processes work well in their district. The Wisconsin visual model outlines the parameters of a high quality RtI system while maintaining the flexibility that districts require to build systems to meet local needs.

      In Wisconsin, culturally responsive practices are central to the state's RtI vision and infused throughout the three essential elements. The central role of culturally responsive practices in RtI is graphically depicted in the state visual. Additionally, the circular model is a RtI systems level view of the process, while the triangle depicts a student level view. Districts may

find that a triangle or other visual representation best fits their vision for meeting the needs of their distinct populations and that many RtI models fit within the state's visual model and definition. (Pg. 6)
Wisconsin Response to Intervention: A Guiding Document. © November, 2010 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. ***http://rti.dpi.wi.gov/files/rti/pdf/rti-guiding-doc.pdf***

"In fact, in the body of research that contributed to the development of RTI processes there are almost as many models of intervention as there are research groups investigating the utility of intervention. All that is known for sure is that many children who struggle at the early stages of learning to read will show accelerated learning when provided with more intensive and/or higher quality instruction. there is very little research demonstrating positive impacts of interventions for older struggling readers (Vaughn et al., 2008; Torgeson, Rashotte, Alexander, Alexander, & MacPhee, 2003) and, in what exists, positive impacts have been identified only in the context of fairly intensive intervention (Lovett et al., 2008; Torgeson et al., 2001) provided beyond the classroom (Tiers 2 or 3). There is no evidence that a period of classroom instruction only (Tier 1) would help older struggling readers to accelerate their progress--the basic goal of providing intervention." Scanlon, D. Pg. 140
McGill-Franzen, A. & Allington, R. 2011. ***Handbook of Reading Disability Research***. New York, NY: Routledge.

"There are many RtI models and the regulations are written to accommodate the many different models that are currently in use. Rather, the regulations provide the State with the best flexibility to adopt criteria that best meet local needs. Language that is more specific or prescriptive would not be appropriate. For example, while we recognize that rate of learning is often a key variable in assessing a child's response to intervention, it would not be appropriate for the regulations to set a standard for responsiveness or improvement in the rate of learning."
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education. Federal Register 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301. ***Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities***. Pg. 46653

"There is nothing in the Act that would require a State to use one model of identification to identify a child with an SLD. We do not believe the regulations should include such a requirement because section 614 (b)(96) of the Act indicates that some flexibility in the selection of models of identification by LEAs can be appropriate if permitted by the State."
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education. Federal Register 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301. ***Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities***. Pg. 46640