

RTI: RESPONSE-TO-INTERVENTION

This reference guide is designed to increase educators' understanding of Response-To-Intervention (RTI), as well as to provide valuable information on its implementation. Although reading has been the primary focus for RTI in most schools, RTI is also applicable to the other academic areas, as well as student behavior.

What is RTI?

Response-To-Intervention is a process which includes the provision of systematic, research-based instruction and interventions to struggling learners. It assumes that the instruction/interventions are matched to student needs and that the monitoring of progress is continuous. Furthermore, RTI is designed as an early intervention to prevent long-term academic failure. As such, RTI can replace and/or augment the I.Q. discrepancy model in the identification of learning disabilities.

RTI is considered a general education service, but can also be implemented in special education settings.

Key Features

The following is a listing of the key features of an RTI process:

- RTI is primarily a general education initiative designed to address the needs of struggling learners early in their educational experience.
- RTI is based on a problem-solving model that uses data to inform decision-making.
- RTI interventions are systematically applied and derived from research-based practices.
- RTI is highly dependent on progress monitoring and data collection.
- RTI intervention plans are designed, implemented, and monitored by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals.
- RTI can replace the I.Q. discrepancy model for determining the presence of a learning disability.

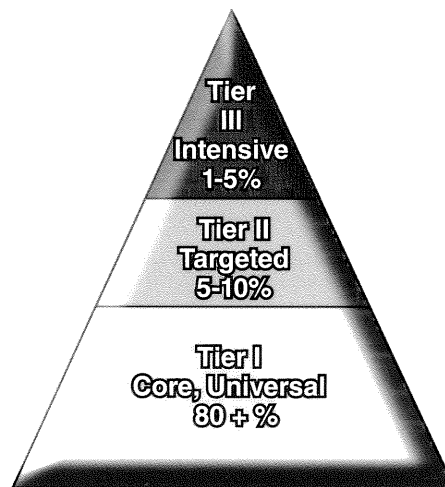
The 3 Tier Model

Although there may be different applications of the RTI process, it is generally depicted as a three (3) Tier model which includes:

Tier I—the provision of general screening and group interventions that usually represent the core instructional program. If this instruction is adequately differentiated, 80-90% of the students will respond and achieve established benchmarks. Assessments occur three to four times per year.

Tier II—if students do not make adequate progress in Tier I, more targeted services and interventions, usually in small group settings, are provided in addition to the instruction in the general curriculum. Progress is monitored more closely, at least bi-weekly, and the research-based interventions could last approximately six to ten weeks.

Tier III—for students who do not adequately respond to the targeted services and interventions in Tier II, intensive interventions would be provided, in small groups or individually, to address their deficits. Additional testing may also be warranted. Only after Tier III interventions prove ineffective or inadequate would eligibility for specialized services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) be considered.



As a guide, Tier I instruction should be successful with 80-90% of the student population, Tier II represents 5-10%, and Tier III should only represent 1-5%.

RTI and the Law

NCLB

The components of RTI underscored in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) focus on accountability for results and include:

High Quality Instruction—the underlying assumption is that all children are receiving at least 90 minutes per day of reading instruction, as well as math and science instruction, provided by a highly qualified teacher, and that the instruction is differentiated within the classroom to meet a broad range of student needs.

Research-Based Instruction—the reading instruction reflects the accumulation of research on how children learn to read and how teachers assist struggling readers.

Universal Screening—tools such as Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) probes or direct assessment are used to identify levels of proficiency for each student in essential academics. The results allow for review of both group and individual performance on specific skills.

Continuous Progress Monitoring—snapshots of student progress usually occur at least three times a year, or more often if additional data is needed. This information is used to make decisions relative to student progress/achievement as a result of instruction.

Early Intervention—decisions are made in the early grades for the provision of targeted interventions that are carefully structured and designed, and are in addition to the core reading program.

Progress Monitoring during Interventions—monitoring of student progress is frequent, and fine-tuning of instruction is based on student response to the intervention. Data that indicates substantial lack of progress after implementation of classroom interventions signals the need for additional intensive instruction in more substantial blocks of time, using interventions that match the specific skill deficit.

RTI and the Law (con't)

IDEA

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes language allowing states to use an RTI process rather than an I.Q. discrepancy model for identifying students with learning disabilities.

U.S. Department of Education Regulations permit the use of the RTI process to "ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction:" (34 C.F.R. 300 & 301, 2006).

The regulations require that "appropriate" instruction in general education settings has been delivered by highly qualified personnel and that data-based documentation of repeated assessments at reasonable intervals has been collected.

Reading Skills

In 2000, the National Reading Panel issued a report identifying five key skills central to reading achievement:

Phonemic Awareness—the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words.

Phonics—an understanding of the relationship between letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

Fluency—the ability to read text accurately and quickly with proper expression.

Vocabulary—the words we must know to communicate effectively.

Text Comprehension—understanding the meaning of what is read. Comprehension is the reason for reading.

Definition of Terms

Universal Screening: a means to assess students who are "at risk" for falling below state or grade level standards. The screening can be accomplished through formal and/or informal methods.

Intervention: a designed change in the manner and/or degree in which a student is being instructed. An intervention can address academic and/or behavioral needs.

Baseline: data, collected prior to the initiation of an intervention, that are utilized for comparison with data collected during and/or after an intervention has been implemented.

Definition of Terms (con't)

Research-Based Instruction: instruction and intervention validated as "effective" through scientific studies.

Progress Monitoring: a scientifically-based practice to assess ongoing student progress, as well as the effectiveness of the instruction/intervention plan.

Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM): a standardized method of tracking and recording student progress in specific learning areas.

Differentiated Instruction

RTI requires that teachers more fully understand the teaching-learning process. Simultaneously, they must recognize the impact of increased student diversity, including variability in ethnicity, race, creed, language, social-economic level, experience, interests, achievement levels and learning styles. The process for incorporating these realities into instruction is through the practice of differentiated instruction (DI). The components of DI must be seen as a foundation of RTI. They include:

What Will We Teach?

Planning & Preparation

- Work collaboratively to articulate and map curriculum and assessments by grade level and between grades, ensuring scaffolding.
- Work independently to design the curriculum.
- Instructional planning attends to the environment, activities, materials and resources, groupings and structure of the lesson and unit.

How Will We Teach?

Implementation of Instruction

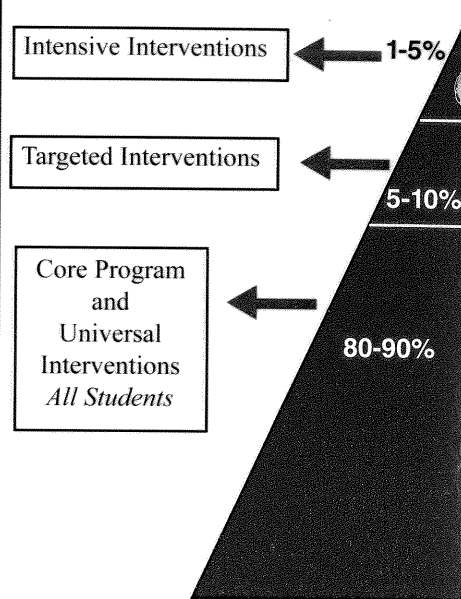
- Choose only specific learning activities and projects, which advance student understanding.
- Employ questioning and discussion techniques to maximize student interaction.
- Employ active learning to maximize engagement.
- Modify instruction to accommodate diverse needs.

How Will We Measure Progress?

Assessing Evidence of Learning

- Products and assessments to measure student understanding are determined during the planning process.
- Evidence of learning takes many different forms (i.e., reports, projects, exhibitions, and demonstrations).

Academic RTI*



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

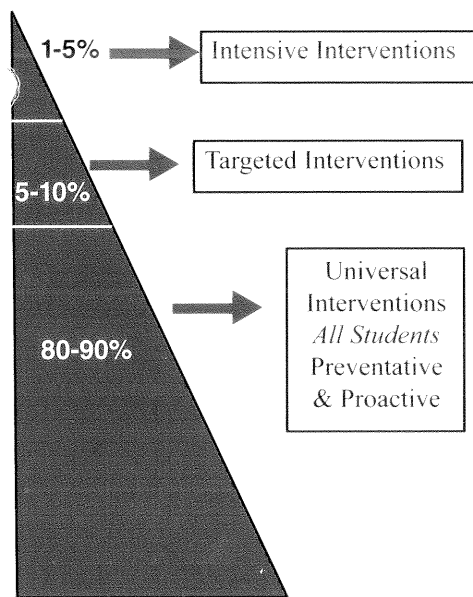
In response to legislative mandates that all students have access to the general education curriculum, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a framework for accessibility which supports the development of adjustable materials, varied instructional approaches, and relevant assessment methods. It requires recognition of potential barriers to learning, and subsequent identification of possible solutions, including assistive technology.

It means providing curriculum and instruction in general education classrooms that is based on equal access for all learners through:

- **Multiple means of representation** to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge, such as demonstration, lecture, simulations,
- **Multiple means of expression** to provide learners with alternatives for demonstrating what they know, such as written, oral, graphic,
- **Multiple means of engagement** to tap into learner interests to challenge and motivate them to learn, such as individual student selection of topic, cooperative learning.

The importance of UDL to the application of RTI is that it underscores the need for "multiple pathways" to help all students succeed. Therefore, curriculum and instruction must be adequately differentiated to address the diverse needs of learners in the classroom.

Behavioral PBIS**



**Positive Behavior Intervention Supports

RTI Team

Often a multi-disciplinary team of school professionals meet on a regular basis to address teachers' concerns about struggling students and to help design intervention plans. Such a team may, for example, be called an Instructional Support Team (IST), a Child Study Team (CST), or a Literacy Team. Regardless of the title, the purpose of the team is to be an effective problem-solving group that:

- Assesses teachers' concerns about student academic and/or behavioral difficulties,
- Identifies student strengths, interests and talents,
- Reviews baseline data that has been collected,
- Sets projected outcomes and methods for measuring progress,
- Designs specific intervention plans,
- Reviews and monitors intervention plans,
- Develops a plan to communicate plan/results with students' parents.

Team Membership

Although the membership of an RTI Team can vary, the following disciplines are most often represented:

- Principal or Assistant Principal—administrative leadership and facilitation to ensure assignment and distribution of resources and services as needed.
- Reading Teacher—the expertise of a professional who understands the reading process.
- School Psychologist—a professional who can interpret test and behavioral data.
- Speech Therapist—an expert in understanding the elements of “speech” as well as language development.
- General Education Teacher (whenever possible)—a teacher who is knowledgeable about instruction and differentiation in general education and who can support the “referring” teacher.
- Special Education Teacher (whenever possible)—a teacher who brings knowledge of students with disabilities as well as services that can be provided through special education.

It is desirable for the RTI team to meet when it can maximize the full participation of all its members. Of course, the availability of those with classroom responsibilities will affect participation, so choosing mutually agreed upon meeting times is essential.

RTI: A Step-by-Step Approach

To effectively implement RTI, a sequential approach is needed. Components include:

- Staff need to learn about RTI and its benefits,
- An RTI Team needs to be established to assess students, design interventions and monitor progress,
- A wide range of assessment data need to be utilized, from standardized instruments to classroom observations,
- Interventions need to be research-based,
- Baseline data and continuous progress monitoring is needed in conjunction with the interventions implemented.

Team Decision-Making

The RTI team needs to address a number of critical questions during its deliberations:

- How large is the “gap” between the student's performance and his/her grade-level peers before the RTI interventions should be considered?
- Would additional exposure to the general education curriculum and instruction be sufficient to meet the struggling student's need?
- Who will design and implement the intervention?
- How (and how often) will the intervention progress be monitored?
- How long should an RTI intervention plan be in place before a decision on its success or failure is made?
- How does one effectively measure success or failure of an RTI intervention?
- Should most students be referred for an RTI intervention before a referral to special education is made?

RTI and Parents

It is essential that parents have a basic working knowledge of RTI and its benefits, especially parents whose children may be involved in Tier II and III interventions. This understanding can best be accomplished through:

- Dissemination of written materials explaining RTI to parents,
- Formal or informal presentation to the PTA and/or other parent groups,
- Brief overview at parent/teacher conferences where it can be explained how RTI works for a given child,
- Addressing RTI on report cards and/or other progress reports sent home to parents,
- Referral process to special education.

The more parents understand RTI's value, the greater their support of the school's efforts.

Types of Assessment

RTI Teams need to analyze a wide range of data in order to develop an effective intervention plan. Examples of the data include but are not limited to:

Report Cards—provide teacher ratings of student progress toward learning standards, as well as a measure of “effort.”

Standardized Test Results—provide valuable comparative data on either a state-wide or national level. Some tests measure achievement, while others are more diagnostic.

Informal Assessments—provide information that can have a diagnostic value. These assessments can be teacher-made or commercially produced.

Teacher/Parent/Student Rating Scales—assist in the measurements of areas that are not easy to assess through the use of tests, such as attitude, behavior, interests, etc.

Classroom Work Samples—are actual samples of students’ work such as writing assignments, projects, homework, etc. and can provide great insight.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)—is a standardized procedure for teachers to track and record student progress in a specific area, using brief and simple tests called “probes.”

Screening Data—provides general information on student skills and abilities. Its purpose is to identify potential “at-risk” students.

Classroom Observation—provides valuable information, not only on how the student responds to instruction, but also on the effectiveness of the “match” between the curriculum/instruction and student learning style.

Behavioral Logs—are data collected on specific targeted behaviors over time. These logs can be easily charted to show “trend lines.”

Disciplinary Referrals—are another important means of determining the extent to which classroom learning is being affected by disciplinary conduct

Attendance Data—is an important component of a comprehensive assessment. Data on both excused and unexcused absences as well as “tardiness” are critical.

RTI: A Value-Added Practice

The use of RTI improves services by:

- Increasing the success rate of students receiving instruction in the general education setting,
- Providing research-based instruction as an early intervention to students,
- Providing critical data needed to design, implement and monitor instructional interventions,
- Reducing the time that additional instructional supports are delivered to students,
- Reducing the number of referrals to special education.

Web Resources

National Professional Resources Inc.
www.NPRinc.com

Intervention Central
www.interventioncentral.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities
www.nclld.org

National Association of School Psychologists
www.naspp.org

National Center for Student Progress
www.studentprogress.org

Center for Applied Special Technology
www.cast.org

University of Oregon
<http://dibels.uoregon.edu>

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities
www.nrcld.org

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Progress Monitoring

When implementing RTI, there are at least three phases to progress monitoring where data is collected and analyzed:

The Baseline Phase—this is where data is collected prior to the initiation of an intervention. Assessments made at this level are often used as “pre-testing” data against which a later comparison is made to determine whether progress was significant.

The Intervention Phase—this is where the designed intervention has been implemented. The length of this phase, namely, how long the intervention will last, is determined by the RTI team using the ongoing data collected.

The Response to Intervention Phase—this is where student progress is monitored over a pre-determined amount of time, after the interventions have been fully implemented.

Print/Media Resources

ABCs of CBM: A Practical Guide to Curriculum Based Measurement by M. Hosp, J. Hosp, & K.W. Howell (2006)

Benchmark Education—Assorted literacy materials—www.benchmarkeducation.com

Data Literacy for Teachers by Nancy Love (Laminated Reference Guide) (2011)

RTI Tackles Reading featuring Karen A. Kemp (DVD) (2008)

RTI Tackles the LD Explosion: A Good IDEA Becomes Law featuring Karen Norlander, Esq. (DVD) (2006)

RTI: The Classroom Connection for Literacy by Karen A. Kemp & Mary Ann Eaton (2008)

RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools by Jim Wright (2007)

Power of RTI: Classroom Management Strategies K-6 featuring Jim Wright (DVD) (2008)

RTI Data Collection Forms & Organizer: Classroom Starter Kit by Jim Wright (2009)

RTI & Math: The Classroom Connection by Karen A. Kemp, Mary Ann Eaton, & Sharon Poole (2009)

RTI Lesson Plan Book by Mary Little (2011)

Success with Secondary RTI: A Toolkit for Middle and High Schools by Jim Wright (2011)

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