

Parent's Guide to RTI (Response to Intervention)

What is Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI)?

Basically, the Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) process is an approach to providing services and interventions to struggling learners. The school will use the information gained from this process to help make decisions about general education strategies, and if necessary special education recommendations. RTI is a process that involves early identification of the learning and behavioral needs of a student, close discussion among teachers and special education personnel and parents, if necessary, and a commitment to locating and employing the necessary resources to ensure that students make progress in the general education curriculum. It is a procedure that is normally involved in working with students who are having serious learning and/or behavioral issues in school and takes place in the general education environment.

RTI is the practice of:

- (a) providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to all students needs
- (b) using learning rate over time and level of performance
- (c) make important educational decisions to guide instruction (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). RTI practices are proactive, incorporating both prevention and intervention and is effective at all levels from early childhood through high school.

What is the Purpose of RTI?

RTI is intended to reduce the incidence of “instructional casualties” by ensuring that students are provided high quality instruction.. By using RTI, districts can provide interventions to students as soon as a need arises, rather than waiting until a student has a history of failure.

A key element of an RTI approach is the provision of early intervention services when students first experience academic difficulties, with the goal of improving the achievement of all students, including those who may have LD. In addition to the preventive and remedial services this approach may provide to at-risk students, it shows promise for contributing data useful for identifying LD. Thus, a student exhibiting (1) significantly low achievement and (2) a lack of response to intervention strategies attempted by the school, may be regarded as being at risk for LD and, in turn, as possibly in need of special education and related services.

Why is RTI Important?

According to current early reading research, all except a very few children can become competent readers by the end of the third grade. RTI is a process that provides immediate intervention to struggling students at the first indication of failure to learn. Through a process of screening of all students in the early grades, classroom teachers identify those who are not mastering critical reading skills and provide differentiated intervention to small groups of students. Continuous progress monitoring of students' responses to those interventions allows teachers to identify students in need of additional intervention and to adjust instruction accordingly.

Response to Intervention is about building better readers in the early grades and consists of reading instruction at many levels in the general education classroom. In an RTI model, ALL students receive high quality reading instruction and struggling readers receive additional and increasingly more intense intervention. Early intervention and prevention of reading difficulties are fundamental to the process

What Are Other Benefits of RTI?

An RTI approach, with its focus on how a student performs, may increase accountability for all learners within general education whether or not they are eventually referred for special education and related services. An RTI approach promotes continuous discussion and shared responsibility among general educators, special educators, teachers of English language learners, related service personnel, administrators, and parents.

In addition to these general education benefits, proponents of an RTI approach cite several other potential benefits:

1. Reduction in the number of students referred for special education and related services. One goal of an RTI approach is to distinguish students whose achievement problems are due to LD or other disabilities that require special education and related services from the larger group of students with achievement problems due to other causes. By providing appropriate instruction for students at risk as well as for those with LD, an RTI approach has the potential to reduce the number of students referred for special education and related services (see Deno, Grimes, Reschly, & Schrag, 2001; Ikeda & Gustafson, 2002; Tilly, Grimes, & Reschly, 1993).
2. Reduction in the over identification of minority students. The RTI approach shows promise for reducing the bias in the assessment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and for providing a positive impact on the disproportionate placement of African-American students in special education.
3. Provision of more instructionally relevant data than traditional methods of identification. An RTI approach emphasizes progress monitoring through the use of curriculum-based or classroom-based assessment i.e. how well a child may do on classroom tasks, student portfolios (a collected series of student's work over the school year), teacher observations, and other measures. Thus, if a child is eventually identified as having LD, instructionally relevant

information, whether it indicates what did not work or what has not yet been tried, will be available to guide the team in developing the student's individualized education program (IEP).

Is RTI a “New Approach”?

RTI is not a new approach. It is recognizable under other names such as dynamic assessment, diagnostic teaching, and precision teaching. Those terms, however, have been applied to approaches used to maximize student progress through sensitive measurement of the effects of instruction. RTI applies similar methods to draw conclusions and make LD classification decisions about students. The underlying assumption is that using RTI will identify children whose intrinsic difficulties make them the most difficult to teach. Engaging a student in a dynamic process like RTI provides an opportunity to assess various hypotheses about the causes of a child's difficulties, such as motivation or constitutional factors like attention.

In conclusion, there is much more technical information about this procedure that is employed by schools. Do not hesitate to ask if you are unclear or if you think this may be suitable for your child.