

TOPIC: RATIONALE FOR USING RTI

WHAT IS IT?

RTI is a preventive approach that is aimed at improving the skills of all students, those with and those without disabilities. The RTI approach is an alternative to the traditional IQ-achievement discrepancy model for identifying students with learning disabilities.

KEY IDEAS



Response to Intervention (RTI) is an instructional approach that incorporates:

- Universal screening
- High-quality instruction
- Multiple tiers of increasingly intensive instructional interventions
- Frequent progress monitoring
- Data-based decision making



One major benefit of RTI is the provision of early intervening services (EIS), which:

- Are preventive in nature
- Provide immediate support to students who are beginning to struggle
- Are implemented before students are identified as having learning disabilities
- Depend on the provision of high-quality instruction in the general education classroom setting
- Reduce inappropriate referrals and placements in special education



A second benefit of RTI is its use in the identification of students with learning disabilities, as it

- Ensures that students receive high-quality instruction, so that a lack of adequate instruction is not the cause for poor learning
- Uses data-based decision making, rather than subjective observations, to determine whether students require more intensive supports or should be referred for special education evaluations
- Allows for the early identification of students' learning disabilities, and does not require significant academic lags to develop in order for students to qualify for special education services



Many educators posit that the IQ-achievement discrepancy model does not identify students with learning disabilities in the early grades. The following table highlights additional concerns about the

IQ-achievement discrepancy model, and it also details potential RTI alternatives that address those concerns.

Concerns About the IQ-Discrepancy Model	RTI's Solutions
Assessments do not always discriminate between disabilities and the results of inadequate instructional strategies.	The likelihood that inadequate instruction is a cause of learning difficulties decreases.
Bias can result in the misidentification of students.	Bias inherent in the referral and assessment process decreases. Identification is based on actual classroom performance (i.e., progress monitoring data).
Students first must fail in order to qualify for special education services.	Fewer students struggle before receiving help. The amount of time that students struggle is significantly decreased.
Results from assessments do not inform the instructional process.	The progress monitoring data aid in placement decisions and may be used to inform and evaluate the instructional process.
Many students do not meet the discrepancy criteria but would still benefit from early identification and support to remediate their skills.	Students who are struggling academically receive immediate support and intervention.



The RTI approach requires a substantial change in the roles and responsibilities held by school personnel. Therefore, implementation of the RTI approach should include:

- An evaluation of the quality of instruction in the general education setting, including culturally responsive practices for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Extensive training and support for all school personnel responsible for implementing instructional methods and interventions
- Frequent monitoring of both instruction and interventions, to evaluate efficacy
- Clear guidelines for student assessment and placement

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Articles

- Fletcher, J.M., Coulter, W.A., Reschly, D.J., & Vaughn, S. (2004). Alternative approaches to the definition and identification of learning disabilities: Some questions and answers. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 54(2), 304-331.
- Speece, D.L., Case, L.P., & Molloy, D.E. (2003). Responsiveness to general education instruction as the first gate to learning disabilities identification. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 18(3), 147-156.
- Vaughn, S.R., & Fuchs, L.S. (2003). Redefining learning disabilities as inadequate response to treatment: Rationale and assumptions. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 18(3), 137-146.

Books

- Bradley, R., Danielson, L., & Hallahan, D.P. (Eds.). (2002). *Identification of learning disabilities: Research to practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- This book provides in-depth and detailed information on the identification of learning disabilities, including historical perspectives and the use of IQ-achievement discrepancy models, and has several chapters devoted to Response to Intervention.*

Online Resources

- National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, The. (2005). *Responsiveness to intervention in the SLD determination process*. U.S. Department of Education [Online]. Retrieved May 19, 2006, from http://osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/ta_responsiveness_intervention.asp
- The article provides an overview of the concepts involved with Response to Intervention (RTI). In addition to introductory explanations, the article provides models and hypothetical examples of how RTI could be implemented in schools. Also important, the article covers the topic of identifying students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) and the role of RTI in that process.*

Please visit the IRIS Center's module RTI (Part 1): An Overview (http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/rti01_overview/chalcycle.htm) for further information.