

Response to Intervention (RTI)

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Council for Exceptional Children

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Presentation Outline

1. Changes in Federal Law
2. Experimental Studies in Reading and Math

1. Changes in Federal Law

“Signature” Characteristic of LD

Unexpected and Specific Learning Failure

The child with unexpected learning failure (or underachievement) is perceived by parents and teachers as generally competent. The learning difficulty is surprising and puzzling.

Specific learning failure suggests neurological dysfunction and processing deficits, which are presumed to cause severe problems in reading, writing, or math.

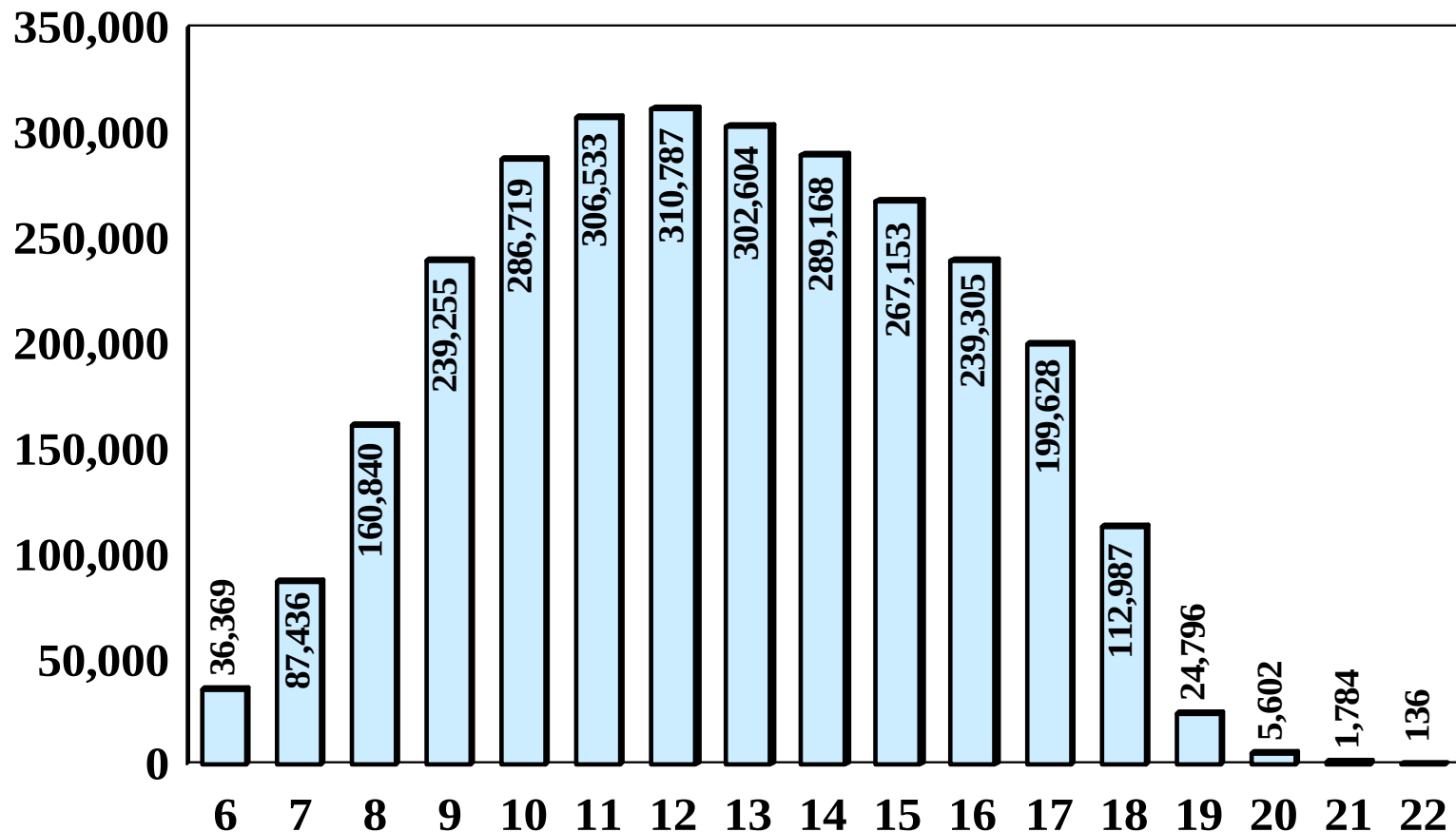
IQ-Achievement Discrepancy

- In regulations accompanying Education of All Handicapped Children Act (1975), “underachievement” has been operationalized as IQ-achievement discrepancy.

Criticisms of IQ-Achievement Discrepancy

- IQ tests do not necessarily measure intelligence.
- IQ and academic achievement are not independent; so, difference scores are unreliable.
- In the case of word reading skill deficits, few meaningful differences between IQ-achievement discrepant poor readers and IQ-achievement consistent poor readers.
- Children must fail before they can be identified as LD.

Number of Students Served with Learning Disabilities Under IDEA by Age 1999-2000 School Year



The Prominent Alternative: Defining LD in Terms of Severe Low Achievement

RTI

LD as nonresponders to validated instruction
(unexpected underachievement).

Assumption: If a child does not respond to instruction that is effective for the vast majority of children, then there is something different about the child causing the nonresponse.

RTI eliminates poor instructional quality as a viable explanation for learning difficulty.

Two Purposes of RTI

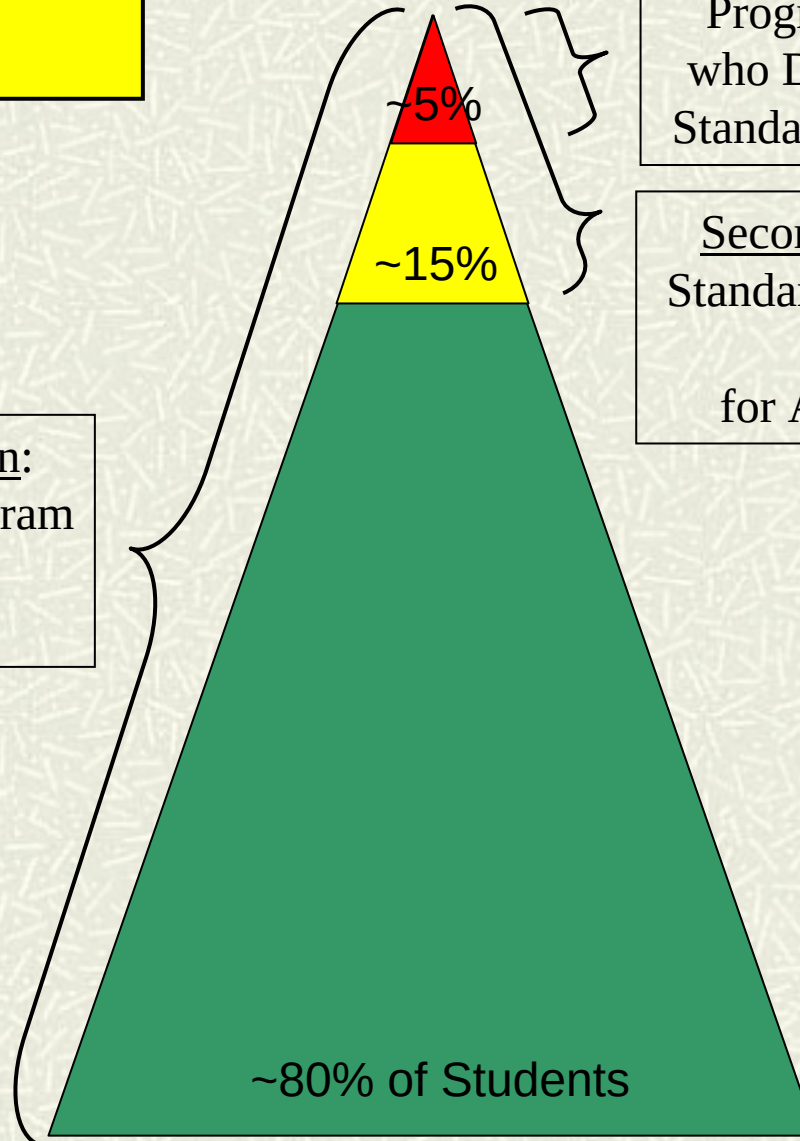
- To reorient service delivery to provide early intervention
- To provide an alternative method of LD identification

Typical RTI Procedure

- Tier 1 (Primary Prevention)
 - All children receive the universal, core instructional program.
 - All children are tested once in the fall.
 - At-risk students are identified for Tier 2 intervention on the basis of low performance.
- Tier 2 (Secondary Prevention)
 - For at-risk students, a second tier of prevention is implemented using standard research-validated tutoring protocols.
 - Student progress is monitored throughout intervention, and students are re-tested following intervention.
 - Growth/performance is dichotomized as responsive or unresponsive.
- Tier 3 (Tertiary Prevention)
 - Those who do not respond receive a multidisciplinary team evaluation and are identified for individualized programming in special education (LD, BD, MR).

CONTINUUM OF
SCHOOL-WIDE
SUPPORT

Primary Prevention:
Universal Core Program
for
All Students



Tertiary Prevention:
Individualized
Programs for Students
who Do Not Respond to
Standardized Intervention

Secondary Prevention:
Standard, Research-Based
Tutoring
for At-Risk Students

Advantages of RTI Approach

- Provides assistance to needy children in timely fashion. It is NOT a wait-to-fail model.
- Helps ensure that the student's poor academic performance is not due to poor instruction.
- Assessment data are collected to inform the teacher and improve instruction. Assessments and interventions are closely linked.

Important Issues/Questions: Background

- I support RTI because, if done well, it will make general education stronger and a strong special education depends on a strong general education.
- For RTI to be successfully implemented, everyone needs to know what we collectively know and don't know.

Important Issues

- The challenge of “intervention as test.”
- “Problem solving” vs. standard treatment protocol
- Standard treatment protocols for reading comprehension? Math? Social studies?
- How to define “responsiveness”? Methods, measures, cut-points.

Important Issues

- Does RTI = prevention or identification or both?
- How many instructional tiers?
- What role for the comprehensive evaluation of students with LD?
- What role for special education and special educators?
- RTI at preschool and high school?

Take Home Suggestion

- Move forward with RTI...
- But with knowledge and caution

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