



RTI Roundtable - Issue # 10

Parent Involvement in the RTI Model

Parent involvement in a tiered service-delivery model, or any service-delivery system, should be characterized by consistent, organized, and meaningful two-way communication between school staff and parents with regard to student progress and related school activities. Through this communication, parents are enabled to play an important role in their child’s education by assisting in the learning and by being involved in decision making as it affects tier-level instruction to increase their child’s achievement.

What Does IDEA State About Parental Involvement?

Parents should receive information that discusses provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, noting that IDEA 2004 does not specify that their state or local school must implement an RTI model. What the law does say is that districts “may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation process...” (IDEA 2004; Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2006).

Within IDEA 2004 (Public Law 108-446), we find the following information related to parent involvement:

procedural safeguards

- “... either a parent of a child, or a State education agency, other State agency, or local education agency may initiate a request for an initial evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability.”
Sec. 614 (a) (1) (B)

evaluations, eligibility determinations, individualized education program and educational placements

- “Establishment of Procedures - Any State educational agency, State agency, or local educational agency that receives assistance under [Part B] shall establish and maintain procedures in accordance with this section to ensure that children with disabilities and their parents are guaranteed procedural safeguards with respect to the provision of a free appropriate public education by such agencies.”

- “... procedural safeguard notices shall include a full explanation of the procedural safeguards ... relating to independent educational evaluation; prior written notice; parental consent; access to educational records; the opportunity to present and resolve complaints; ... the child’s placement during pendency of due process proceedings; procedures for students who are subject to placement in an interim alternative educational setting; requirements for unilateral placement ...; due process hearings ...; civil actions ...; attorney fees.”
Sec. 615(d) (2) (A-K)

What Should Parents Know About the RTI Program in Their School?

In a school setting that is implementing a tiered RTI model, parents should expect to receive information about their children’s needs, the interventions that are being used, who is delivering the instruction, and the academic progress expected for their child. Frequent communication with the school, receipt of regular progress (or lack of progress) information, and participation in decision making should provide parents the information needed to determine whether their child should be referred for a special education evaluation (LDA, 2006).

A concern often expressed by parents of students with LD about an RTI process is whether ongoing, meaningful involvement in their child’s education will depend more on their own knowledge and initiative than on school efforts. Certainly, positive home–school partnerships will depend on commitment by both parents and school personnel.

What Questions Should Parents Ask About RTI in Their Schools?

In schools that are preparing to implement a tiered RTI model, parents may find it useful to pose the following questions to administrators and teachers:

- What are the provisions for including parents in the school planning process?
- What are the provisions for ensuring that parents are involved in all phases of planning the RTI interventions for their child?
- How much time must be spent in each tier to determine whether the intervention is working?
- What kinds of written materials will parents receive informing them they have the right to ask for a special education evaluation at any time?

Are There Standards for Judging Parent Involvement?

The following provides a list of standards for judging parent involvement in a tiered service-delivery model (Mellard & McKnight, 2006):

- Standards for parent involvement are aligned with IDEA 2004 statutes (and regulations when available) (e.g., due process, hearing, and placement decisions).
- Parental notification includes a description of the problem; clear, unambiguous documentation that shows the specific difficulties the child is experiencing; a written description of the specific intervention and who is delivering instruction; a clearly stated intervention goal; and a long-range timeline for the plan and its implementation.

- Parents and staff reach mutual agreement on the implementation, plan, and timeline.
- Parents frequently receive progress data.
- Parents are actively supported to participate at school and at home.
- Parent questionnaires and surveys assure parents that the school values their opinions.
- Parent questionnaires and surveys assure school staff that parents find school staff and school programs (e.g., interventions and instruction) to be of high quality.
- Parents view the implementation of due process procedures and protections as timely, adequate, and fair.
- School staff members strive to help parents feel welcome, important, and comfortable in the school setting.

Are There Measures Used to Judge Parent Involvement?

The following measures can be used to judge parent involvement (Mellard & McKnight, 2006):

- Track the amount of parent-staff communication to ensure it is consistent and frequent.
- Track problem notification to ensure that it includes a clear and specific description of the problem and a written description of the intervention, the intervention goal, and the timeline.
- Note practices that encourage parents to participate in their child's learning at school and at home and give them support in this effort.
- Track the opportunities given to parents to complete questionnaires and surveys about the quality of school staff and education programs.
- Note practices that make parents feel comfortable about expressing their ideas and concerns and ensure parents that their opinions are valued by school staff.
- Check that practices to keep parents well informed about due process procedures are in place and that parents find the procedures fair, timely, and adequate.