

# RtI Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is at the heart of RTI?**

The purpose of RTI is to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, identify students with learning or behavioral problems, and ensure that they receive appropriate instruction and related supports. The goals of RTI are to (a) integrate all the resources to minimize risk for the long-term negative consequences associated with poor learning or behavioral outcomes, and (b) strengthen the process of appropriate disability identification.

## **What impact does RTI have on students who are not struggling?**

An important component of an effective RTI framework is the quality of the primary prevention level (i.e., the core curriculum), where **all** students receive high-quality instruction that is culturally and linguistically responsive and aligned to a state's achievement standards. This allows teachers and parents to be confident that a student's need for more intensive intervention or referral for special education evaluation is not due to ineffective classroom instruction. In a well designed RTI system, primary prevention should be effective and sufficient for about 80 percent of the student population.

## **What are culturally and linguistically responsive practices?**

The use of culturally and linguistically responsive practices by teachers and other school staff involves purposeful consideration of the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors that may have an impact on students' success or failure in the classroom. Attention to these factors, along with the inclusion of cultural elements in the delivery of instruction, will help make the strongest possible connection between the culture and expectations of the school and the culture(s) that students bring to the school. Instruction should be differentiated according to how students learn, build on existing student knowledge and experience, and be language appropriate. In addition, decisions about secondary and tertiary interventions should be informed by an awareness of students' cultural and linguistic strengths and challenges in relation to their responsiveness to instruction.

## **What are differentiated learning activities?**

Teachers use student assessment data and knowledge of student readiness, learning preferences, language and culture to offer students in the same class different teaching and learning strategies to address their needs. Differentiation can involve mixed instructional groupings, team teaching, peer tutoring, learning centers, and accommodations to ensure that all students have access to the instructional program. Differentiated instruction is NOT the same as providing more intensive interventions to students with learning problems.

## **What does RTI have to do with identifying students for Special Education?**

IDEA 2004 allows states to use a process based on a student's response to scientific, research-based interventions to determine if the child has a specific learning disability (SLD). In an RTI framework, a student's response to or success with instruction and interventions received across the levels of RTI would be considered as part of the comprehensive evaluation for SLD eligibility.

**Is RTI a Special Education program?**

No. RTI is not synonymous with special education. Rather, special education is an important component of a comprehensive RTI framework that incorporates primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention. All school staff (e.g., principal, general educators, special educators, content specialists, psychologists) should work together to implement their RTI framework and make decisions regarding appropriate intensity of interventions for students. Movement to less intensive levels of the prevention framework should be a high priority, as appropriate.

**How does an RTI framework work in conjunction with inclusive school models and least restrictive environment? Aren't students requiring more intensive levels of instruction removed from the General Education classroom to receive those services?**

Within an RTI framework, the levels refer only to the intensity of the services, not where the services are delivered. Students may receive different levels of intervention within the general education classroom or in a separate location with a general education teacher or other service providers. This is an important decision for educators to consider carefully.

**Can students move back and forth between levels of the prevention system?**

Yes, students should move back and forth across the levels of the prevention system based on their success (response) or difficulty (minimal response) at the level where they are receiving intervention, (i.e., according to their documented progress based on the data). Also, students can receive intervention in one academic area at the secondary or tertiary level of the prevention system while receiving instruction in another academic area in primary prevention.

**What is the difference between RTI and PBIS?**

RTI and PBIS are related innovations that rely on a three-level prevention framework, with increasing intensity of support for students with learning or behavioral problems. Schools should design their RTI and PBIS frameworks in an integrated way to support students' academic and behavioral development. For more information on PBIS, see [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).

**If a parent requests an immediate evaluation for Special Education during or prior to the RtI process, is the school obligated to provide an evaluation?**

If a parent or legal guardian makes a written request to the Special Education Director or an administrator for an initial full individual evaluation (FIE), the district must, not later than the 15th school day after the receipt of the request: (1) provide the parent/ guardian an opportunity to give written, informed consent for the evaluation; or (2) refuse to provide the evaluation and provide the parent/ guardian with notice of procedural safeguards. (SB 816)

**What is the criterion for a successful intervention?**

An academic intervention is successful if there is a sustained narrowing of the achievement gap for the struggling learner as demonstrated by data collected through ongoing progress monitoring. A behavioral intervention is successful if there is a reduction in the problem behavior and/or an increase in desired replacement behaviors.

### **How long should interventions be implemented in RtI?**

The amount of time required to identify and verify effective intervention(s) will vary by academic/behavioral skill, the age, and the grade level of the student. Interventions should be continued as long as the student exhibits a positive response. The interventions will be modified as appropriate when a student's progress is less than expected (questionable or poor response to the interventions).

### **How does RtI work from one school year to the next?**

A student will begin a school year on whatever tier of instruction/intervention he or she was on at the end of the previous school year. However, it will almost always be necessary to extend the time on the tier to allow for an adjustment period to the student's new teacher, new peer group, different curriculum, etc., in an effort to "tease out" factors that may be impacting a student's academic performance. In general, a student should remain on the current tier for at least six weeks into the new school year to ensure that "adjustment" factors have been ruled out or dealt with satisfactorily. During that time, the school's problem-solving team will review students' intervention plans and performance data, and determine if changes need to be made to the plans.

NOTE: Students who have been previously discussed at a Campus RtI Team meeting, and who are at the Tier 2 or Tier 3 level of instruction/intervention, should have a current "RtI 2 – Academic/Behavior Intervention Plan" form in Eduphoria Aware.

### **What if a student's academic performance is below expectations, but the cause appears to be a lack of motivation, rather than a skill deficit?**

In those cases where the student appears to have the ability to perform grade level work, the focus should be primarily on behavioral interventions to address the lack of effort or motivation. However, it is often difficult to exclude academic deficits with certainty. Therefore, best practice would dictate that academic interventions be attempted in tandem with behavioral interventions.

### **When implementing an intervention for a student who is below grade level, should the student's progress be graphed on the instructional level or the grade level expectations?**

The student's progress should be monitored (tracked and graphed) on BOTH instructional level and grade level instruments. While RtI required a student to be compared to grade level peers, information as to how rapidly a student is progressing in a below grade level intervention will help the problem-solving team determine a reasonable and realistic period of time before the student may be expected to achieve grade-level proficiency. Therefore, even if progress on grade level progress monitoring instruments is not occurring at a desirable rate of improvement, rapid improvement on below grade level instruments would suggest that the student is moving toward proficiency and may only need more time in the intervention(s) to achieve it.

### **What constitutes an "appropriate" targeted intervention within the Response to Intervention Process?**

Interventions in the Response to Intervention Process are determined by three guiding questions:

- 1. Is the intervention linked to the presenting problem?*

For example, if the identified deficit is in phonological awareness for a first grade student, appropriate intervention would include phonemic awareness activities. Moving the child's seat or shortening assignments are considered instructional modifications, not interventions, and do not result in improved phonological awareness.

2. *Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the intervention?*

School leaders, the school psychologist, and district-level contacts for subject areas or behavior concerns can help to determine if the intervention is research based and effective.

3. *Can the intervention be delivered with fidelity?*

It is important to provide the interventions in the way they are intended by following specific directions and protocol and to administer the interventions over the recommended length of time.

**How is a student's response to intervention measured?**

Response to intervention is measured by ongoing, continuous progress monitoring. It is important to determine the student's baseline performance prior to intervention and to monitor the student's progress throughout the intervention process. A student's response to intervention should reflect the student's actual level of performance on the monitoring measures through data (numerical values).

**What role do classroom grades play in Response to Intervention?**

Classroom grades are one valuable piece of data that can be used in the RtI process, but because grades may involve some degree of subjectivity, they should not be used as the sole measure of a student's progress toward an academic goal. It is always preferable to use ongoing progress monitoring instruments, whenever possible.

**Why are we asked to monitor a specific skill (e.g., phonics) rather than a collection of skills (e.g., reading)? If a student is struggling in any specific skill, wouldn't that be evident in a broad assessment of an academic domain (assessment including many skills within a domain)?**

Broad academic assessments typically include a variety of skills, and cannot be used to monitor a student's mastery of a particular skill over time. Also, they fail to provide information about a student's development of prerequisite skills needed for overall skill mastery. Additionally, a student's potential eligibility for ESE support services within the Specific Learning Disabilities category is determined by their rate of progress in mastering specific academic skills.

**How many interventions need to be implemented at each tier of instruction? Is one intervention enough, or should several interventions be implemented prior to intensifying the intervention plan (progressing to the next tier of instruction)?**

If an intervention is determined to be appropriate in focus and intensity, and implemented with fidelity, the student's progress monitoring data will guide the decision by the Campus RtI Team to adjust or change the intervention. If a student's progress monitoring data indicates a poor response to the intervention, the team will re-enter the problem-solving process to ensure appropriate identification and analysis of the problem. If the team members determine that the problem was accurately identified and analyzed, but the intervention was not successful, they may choose to develop a different intervention to be implemented. If the student's progress monitoring data indicates a questionable response to the intervention, the team members may determine that other intervention(s) need to be developed at that level of intensity, or the original intervention may need to be intensified.