

Getting Started With 'Response to Intervention': A Guide for Schools





What is 'Response to Intervention' (RTI)?

'Response to Intervention' is an emerging approach to the diagnosis of Learning Disabilities that holds considerable promise. In the RTI model:

- A student with academic delays is given one or more research-validated interventions.
- The student's academic progress is monitored frequently to see if those interventions are sufficient to help the student to catch up with his or her peers.
- If the student fails to show significantly improved academic skills despite several well-designed and implemented interventions, this failure to 'respond to intervention' can be viewed as evidence of an underlying Learning Disability.



What are advantages of RTI?

- One advantage of RTI in the diagnosis of educational disabilities is that it allows schools to intervene early to meet the needs of struggling learners.
- Another advantage is that RTI maps those specific instructional strategies found to benefit a particular student. This information can be very helpful to both teachers and parents.



Why is RTI now being adopted by schools?

Congress passed the revised Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004.

- This Federal legislation provides the guidelines that schools must follow when identifying children for special education services.
- Based on the changes in IDEIA 2004, the US Department of Education (USDE) updated its regulations to state education departments. The new USDE regulations:
 - Explicitly ALLOW states to use RTI to identify LD
 - FORBID states from forcing schools to use a ‘discrepancy model’ to identify LD



IDEIA 2004-05 Federal (US Dept of Education) Regulations: What do they say about LD diagnosis?

300.307 Specific learning disabilities.

(a) *General.* A State must adopt criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.... the criteria adopted by the State—

(2) May not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in 300.8; [‘Discrepancy’ Model]

(3) Must permit the use of a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention...[‘RTI’ Model]

NOTE: [bracketed comments added]

Source: IDEA (2004, 2005). *Proposed Regulations from US Department of Education (300.307)*



What does RTI look like when applied to an individual student?

A widely accepted method for determining whether a student has a Learning Disability under RTI is the ‘dual discrepancy model’ (Fuchs, 2003).

- Discrepancy 1: The student is found to be performing academically at a level significantly below that of his or her typical peers (discrepancy in initial skills or performance).
- Discrepancy 2: Despite the implementation of one or more well-designed, well-implemented interventions tailored specifically for the student, he or she fails to ‘close the gap’ with classmates (discrepancy in rate of learning relative to peers).



The steps of RTI for an individual case...

Under RTI, if a student is found to be performing well below peers, the school will:

1. Estimate the academic skill gap between the student and typically-performing peers
2. Determine the likely reason(s) for the student's depressed academic performance
3. Select a scientifically-based intervention likely to improve the student's academic functioning
4. Monitor academic progress frequently to evaluate the impact of the intervention
5. If the student fails to respond to several well-implemented interventions, consider a referral to Special Education



3. *Select a scientifically-based intervention likely to improve the student's academic functioning:*

Any intervention idea chosen for the student should be backed by scientific research (e.g., research articles in peer-reviewed professional journals) demonstrating that the intervention is effective in addressing the student's underlying reason(s) for academic failure.



4. *Monitor academic progress frequently to evaluate the impact of the intervention:*

Under RTI, interventions are monitored frequently (e.g., weekly) using valid and reliable measures that are sensitive to short-term gains in student performance:

- **Measures for Basic Academic Skills:** Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) probes are short, timed assessments that have been developed to measure phonemic awareness, oral reading fluency, math computation, writing, and spelling skills (Shinn, 1989).
- **Measures for Classroom Academic and General Behaviors:**
 - Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRCs): These customized teacher rating forms allow the instructor to evaluate the student's behaviors each day (Chafouleas et al. 2005).
 - Direct Observation: An external observer visits the classroom to observe the student's rates of on-task and academically engaged behaviors. (Shapiro, 1996)



5. *If the student fails to respond to a series of several well-implemented interventions, consider a referral to Special Education.*

In the RTI model, the student would be referred for a special education evaluation if:

- A series of research-based interventions have been attempted
- There is documentation that the interventions were carried out as designed (treatment/intervention integrity)
- Progress-monitoring data shows that the student failed to meet the goal set for his or her improvement (that is, the student shows a 'discrepancy in rate of learning' relative to grade-peers).



How can a school restructure to support RTI?

The school can organize its intervention efforts into 3 levels, or Tiers, that represent a continuum of increasing intensity of support. (Kovaleski, 2003; Vaughn, 2003). Tier I is the lowest level of intervention and Tier III is the most intensive intervention level.

Tier I

Universal intervention: Available to all students
Example: Additional classroom literacy instruction

Tier II

Individualized Intervention: Students who need additional support than peers are given individual intervention plans.
Example: Supplemental peer tutoring in reading to increase reading fluency; gen. ed. teacher interventions

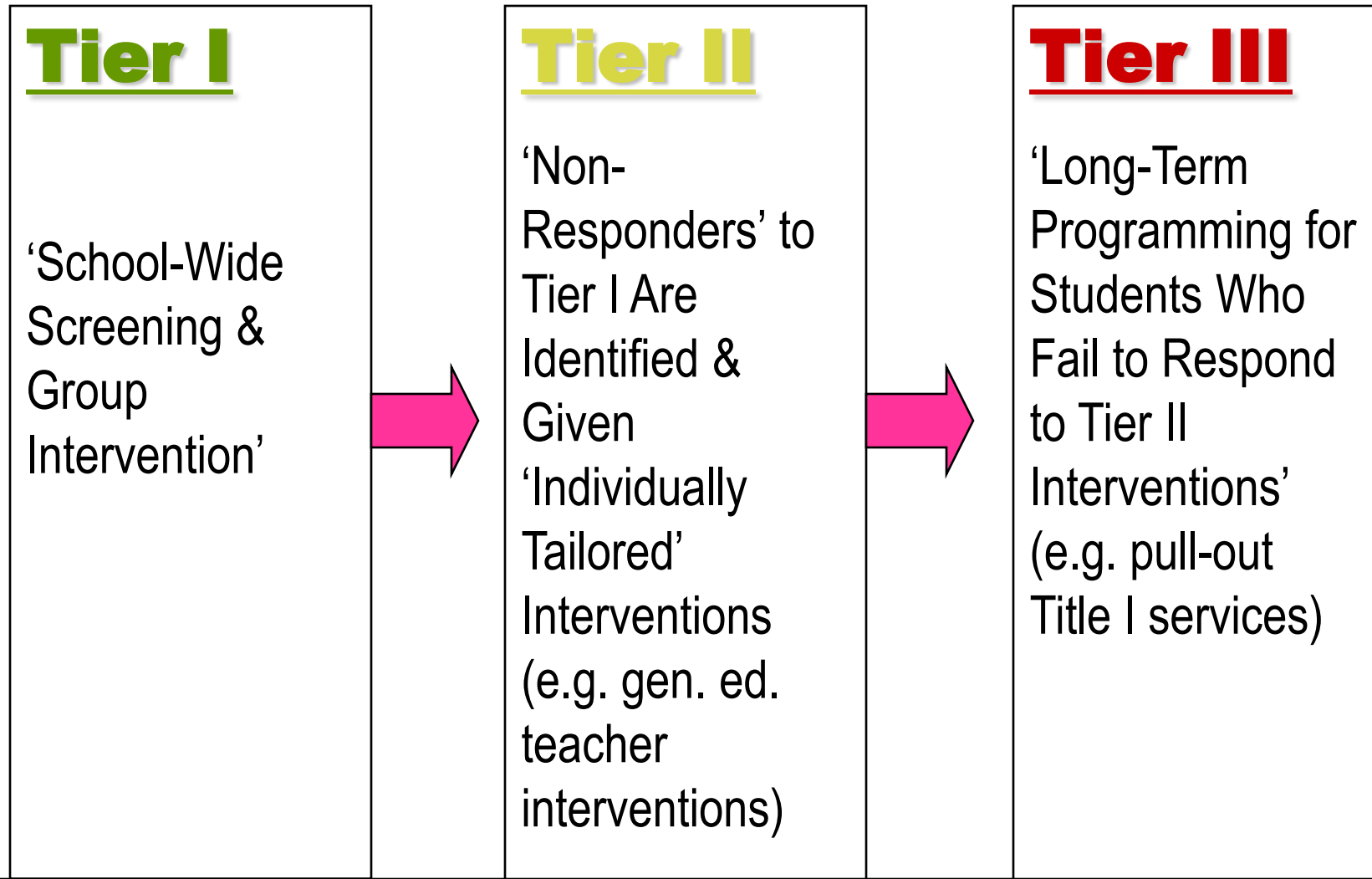
Tier III

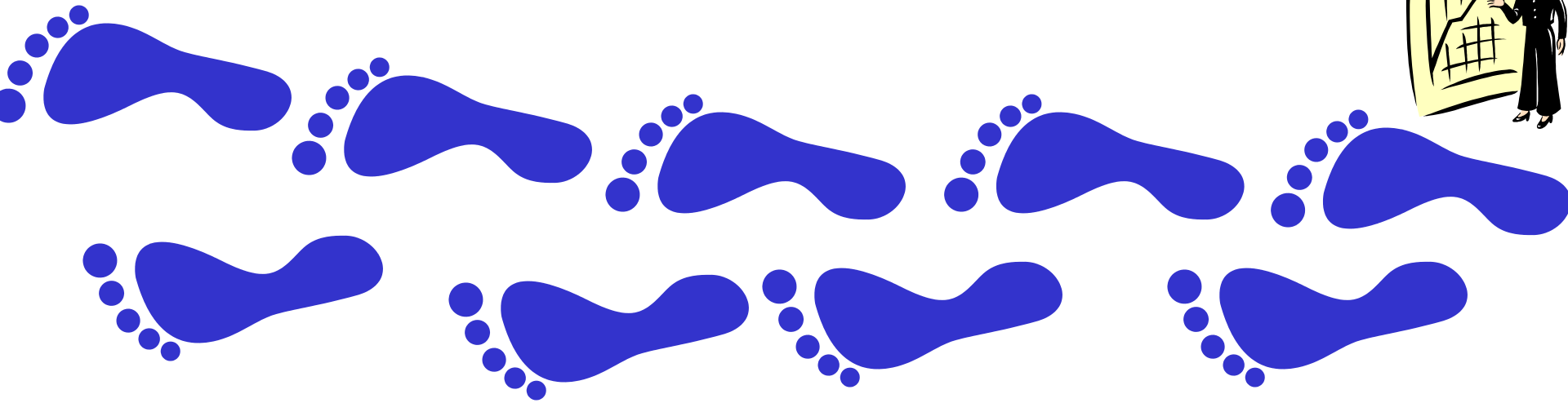
Intensive Intervention: Students whose intervention needs are greater than general education can meet may be referred for more intensive services.
Example: Pull-out Title I services



RTI: School-Wide Three-Tier Framework

(Kovaleski, 2003; Vaughn, 2003)





Putting The RTI Model into Practice: 5 Recommended 'Next Steps' for Schools



What do schools have to do differently under the RTI model?

To implement RTI effectively, schools must develop a specialized set of tools and competencies, including:

- A structured format for problem-solving.
- Knowledge of a range of scientifically based interventions that address common reasons for school failure.
- The ability to use various methods of assessment to monitor student progress in academic and behavioral areas (Tier I – universal screenings; Tier II & III – AIMSweb or other program).



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

- 1. *Adopt evidence-based intervention strategies.*** Academic interventions will have a higher chance of success if they are based on sound empirical research.



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

Web resources for evidence-based intervention strategies

- *Big Ideas in Beginning Reading* (U of Oregon): ***reading.uoregon.edu***
- *What Works Clearinghouse* (US Dept of Education): **www.w-w-c.org**
- Intervention Central: **www.interventioncentral.org**



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

- 2. Train staff to collect frequent progress-monitoring data.** Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) can be used to assess a student's accuracy and speed in basic-skill areas such as reading fluency, math computation, writing, spelling, and pre-literacy skills.

Teachers also can measure the behavior of struggling learners on a daily basis by using *classroom Daily Behavior Report Cards*: simple, convenient rating forms to track a child's work completion, attention to task, compliance with teacher directions, and other behaviors that influence learning.



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

Web resources for progress-monitoring

- *CBM Warehouse:*
www.interventioncentral.org/htmldocs/interventions/cbmwarehouse.shtml
- *The Behavior Reporter (Behavior Report Card Generator):*
<http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/tbrc/tbrc.php>



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

- 3. *Develop building-level intervention programs to address common academic concerns.*** When faced with large numbers of students with shared academic concerns (e.g., reading fluency), schools can create a building-level intervention program to meet this need. For example, older children could tutor younger students by using simple, research-based techniques to boost their tutees' reading fluency (Wright & Cleary, 2006).



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

- 4. *Establish a building intervention team.*** Made up of teachers and support staff, the intervention team can help referring teachers design feasible strategies for struggling students.

Intervention teams also foster a sense of collegiality and mutual support among educators, promote the use of evidence-based interventions, and assist busy teachers in carrying out intervention plans.



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

Web resources on building intervention teams

- *School-Based Intervention Teams* (Syracuse City Schools):
<http://www.interventioncentral.org/htmldocs/interventions/sbit.shtml>
- *Screening to Enhance Educational Performance: STEEP* (Joe Witt, Ph.D.):
<http://www.joewitt.org/steep.htm>
- *Instructional Consultation Teams* (Sylvia Rosenfield, Ph.D.)
<http://www.icteams.umd.edu/>



Implementing RTI: Next Steps

- 5. *Align Current Intervention & Assessment Efforts With 3-Tier Model.*** Many schools already have intervention & assessment initiatives in place. Mapping out those initiatives, standardizing their content, and tying them to the appropriate level of the 3-tier intervention framework can help schools to better coordinate intervention programming while avoiding duplication of services.



Tier I

Inventory all universal programs in the school intended to prevent student academic or behavioral failure

Tier II

Inventory programs or supports (e.g., Intervention Team, cross-age peer tutoring, gen. ed. interventions) that can be individualized and matched to students with emerging academic or behavioral difficulties

Tier III

Inventory the most intensive programs (e.g., pull-out Title I services, Wrap-Around Teams, Individual Counseling) reserved for students with severe and chronic academic or behavioral problems that have not responded to Tier I or Tier II supports



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