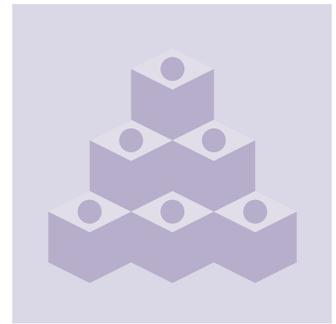


The ABCs of RTI in Middle School: A Guide for Parents



January 2013



National Center on Response to Intervention
<http://www.rti4success.org>



About the National Center on Response to Intervention

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, the American Institutes for Research and researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Kansas have established the National Center on Response to Intervention. The Center provides technical assistance to states and districts and builds the capacity of states to assist districts in implementing proven response to intervention frameworks.



National Center on Response to Intervention

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Introduction

The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) has developed this document to help families, educators, and other stakeholders understand the essential components of Response to Intervention (RTI), ask questions about RTI, and understand how the RTI framework is being (and can be) used to help students succeed in middle school. This document provides a definition of RTI and a brief description of each of the essential components of the RTI framework.

Throughout this document are sections about Lincoln Middle School. This is a fictitious school used to give examples of what RTI components might look like when implemented in a middle school. Each section also includes questions parents and families might ask teachers or other school staff members. Answers to these questions will provide you with more information about RTI and will help you understand how RTI is benefiting your child.

Parents and families should feel free to ask one of their child's teachers or a school staff member about their child's academic or behavior progress. Families should let the staff at their child's school know that they will work with the school by helping their child at home and sharing their concerns with them.

 For more information about RTI, see *Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention*, which can be found at <http://www.rti4success.org/resource/essential-components-rti-closer-look-response-intervention>.



Essential Components Of RTI: A Quick Reference Guide

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| The school screens all students—usually three times each year—so that teachers and staff will know which students need extra help with academic work or behavior. | |
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| School staff members frequently check the progress of each student to see what changes, if any, need to be made in the instruction or level of support provided. | |
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| Most RTI models use at least three levels of instruction to support students. The primary level is general education provided to all students: core classes such as math, language arts, social studies, and science. The secondary level provides extra support to children in small groups, usually three or four times per week. At the tertiary level, teachers individualize instruction for students with intensive learning needs. | |
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| Teachers and staff use the information that the school gathers from the screening and progress monitoring assessments to make decisions about instruction. They want to make sure each student is getting the right kind of help—the right instruction at the right level—to be successful. | |
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RTI (Response To Intervention)

What is RTI?

- RTI is a multi-level instructional framework aimed at improving outcomes for *all* students.
- RTI is preventative, and provides immediate support to students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes.
- RTI may be a *component* of a comprehensive evaluation for students with learning disabilities.

RTI is a framework that schools may choose to use for both academics and behavior. It is not a specific, class, test, or instructional program. Some states require that schools use RTI, whereas others do not. An increasing number of middle, high, and elementary schools are now using this framework for reading, math, and other subject areas. These schools are finding that it is helping students succeed because it provides a structure to help schools organize intervention supports and instruction to meet all students' needs. When a school implements RTI, it is for everyone in the school. The purpose of RTI is to make sure that every student in the school receives instruction that leads to success. School staff members make sure that resources are available to provide students with immediate instructional support when they need it.

In an RTI framework, assessment is closely linked to instruction. Teachers and staff use results from brief, valid assessments to help them choose the best materials and instruction for each student. Teachers also use assessments to find out how students are doing and to check on their progress throughout the year. They want to know whether a student is doing well, falling behind, or at risk for falling behind. To help struggling students or those who have been identified as being at risk for academic difficulty, teachers will use the frequently collected data to determine the most appropriate instruction for them that will provide the level of support needed to help them achieve.



When students receive this extra support, school staff check their progress frequently to make sure they are improving. Teachers will change the instruction in some way to facilitate future progress for students who are not succeeding. For example, there may be a change in instructional intensity, with a student receiving longer periods of support or more frequent support.

Most middle schools that use an RTI framework focus on students who need help with reading and/or math. Some schools are branching out, and many now focus on other academic areas such as language arts and writing. Because reading is the most common subject area where RTI is implemented, most examples in this document involve reading.

The application of the RTI framework for the prevention of behavior issues is known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS. You may hear about this program in your child's school. Like RTI, PBIS uses interventions, ongoing assessment, and data-based decision making to promote positive behavior at school and provide support to students who have persistent needs. When a school has implemented PBIS effectively, most students behave appropriately, but some will need help. By gathering information from results of ongoing assessment, school staff members can determine just how much support a student needs to be able to demonstrate appropriate behavior. For more information about PBIS, visit the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports website, at <http://www.pbis.org>.



● Essential Component #1

Screening: Finding Out How Students Are Doing

To find out whether a student is at risk for academic difficulty, schools conduct a “universal” or “school-wide” screening of all students. Typically, a screening assessment is brief and given to all students at the beginning of the school year. Schools often screen students again in the middle of the school year and again at the end. Some students who seem to be doing well at the first of the year may struggle later. Thus, screening periodically throughout the year can help school staff remain aware of, and responsive to, student needs.

It is not unusual for schools to find that many students need some sort of extra help. If staff are unsure if a student really needs extra help, they might administer a few more assessments just to make sure. By identifying students who need extra help early in the year, staff can begin providing supports in a timely fashion.

Students who need extra help can be identified in a number of ways. For example, schools often rely on the results of the state-level spring reading assessment to get an idea of which students might need help with reading the following fall. Some schools want to gather more information. To do this, they administer fall reading assessments in addition to using state assessment scores. One type of reading screening assessment for middle school students checks to see how well students understand what they read. If students have a good understanding of what they read, we say that they have *good reading comprehension*.

Another type of screening assessment measures how fluently students are able to read a paragraph or story that has been developed for this type of assessment. *Fluency* is the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with expression. The teacher checks to see how many correct words the student reads out loud in one minute. The number of correct words read in a minute is the student’s oral reading fluency rate. The ability to read with fluency generally indicates good overall reading skill and good reading comprehension.



In middle schools, teachers and staff typically begin with the assumption that their students know the basics of reading. Thus, reading comprehension is often checked first. If staff find that students do not adequately understand what they are reading, they will next assess the more basic reading skills such as fluency or word recognition.

Schools that screen in the area of math might use tests that include basic math facts for younger students, but will include more advanced math concepts such as problem solving for older students.

Screening At Lincoln Middle School

Gemma is in sixth grade. Her scores on the end-of-year fifth grade state assessment showed that she was not reading at grade level. Lincoln Middle School has seen these scores and knows that Gemma and the others not reading at grade level might be at risk for academic problems in middle school and for challenges in the future.

In September, staff at the middle school gave Gemma a screening assessment that provided an indicator of her reading comprehension level, or how well she was able to understand what she is reading. Gemma's teacher used the screening test manual to find out that incoming sixth graders are expected to have a score of at least 20. Gemma's score was only 14. Gemma's teachers were concerned about Gemma's difficulty with reading comprehension and concerned that she would be at a disadvantage in her middle school classes. Given her fifth grade state assessment and fall screening performance, her teachers agreed that Gemma would benefit from extra help with reading.

Questions to Ask About Screening

- How does the school find out whether students need extra help in reading or math? Or with behavior?
- What are my child's scores from the state assessment? Were these scores communicated to the middle school? (e.g., from the elementary school to the middle school?)
- What are my child's scores from other screening assessments?
- On the basis of these scores, is my child at risk for poor learning outcomes?

TIP: You may want to keep a record of your child's scores so that you can compare them with scores on future tests.



Essential Component #2

Progress Monitoring: Checking On Student Progress

If a student's scores on the screening measure(s) are low, school staff may monitor that student's progress closely for a short time to see whether he or she is truly at risk for poor learning outcomes. After checking this student's progress for several weeks and seeing that he or she is profiting from general education instruction, teachers might conclude that this student is not truly at risk. Monitoring students' progress ensures that students who need additional support receive it.

Consider a student who does poorly on the screening assessment and continues to do poorly when progress is checked. This student is likely experiencing academic difficulty in general education, even though the teachers are implementing quality instruction. In this case, a school staff member might give the child a diagnostic assessment to better understand what supplemental instruction will help address areas of difficulty. This extra instruction is often referred to as secondary and tertiary prevention. Secondary instruction provides the student with small group instruction that is in addition to instruction in the general education classroom. At this more intense secondary level, school staff members ideally help about 15 percent of the students in the school. Tertiary instruction is also in addition to general education instruction, but will likely involve a smaller group of students with longer and more frequent instructional sessions than the secondary prevention instruction. The tertiary level, which uses the most intense level of instruction, should serve about 5 percent of the school's students.

Before secondary instruction begins, teachers will set a goal for this student. They want this student not only to progress but to progress at a rate that will put the student back on track and in line with his or her peers at the end of the school year. To accomplish this, the student's rate of progress will need to be increased over the current rate. This is why it is so important to receive the right kind of support.

School staff members closely monitor the progress of students receiving instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels to find out whether the extra support and instruction are making a difference. School staff also want to make sure the child's rate of progress will make it possible for the student to reach his or her goal.



To get an idea of a child's rate of progress, the student may be given a brief assessment as often as once a week. The teacher records the score for that week as a data point on a graph. After several weeks, the teacher and student will be able to tell whether a line that represents the test scores is going up (indicating that progress is being made) or going straight or down (indicating that little or no progress is being made). Staff use progress monitoring data to determine whether the instruction is working, and to make decisions about instruction. Schools have found that students benefit from being closely involved in the monitoring, tracking, and graphing of their progress. You will see examples of student graphs in the next section.

Progress Monitoring At Lincoln Middle School

Alfonso and Violet are in sixth grade. The results of the fall screening assessments for reading showed they both are having difficulty with reading. Three times each week, their teacher provides additional instruction (secondary level instruction) to Alfonso and Violet and several others having similar reading problems. Their teacher uses methods and materials that have been shown by research to help students improve their reading skills. The teacher wants to be sure that this extra instruction is helping these students, so he spends several minutes at least once each week checking their progress.

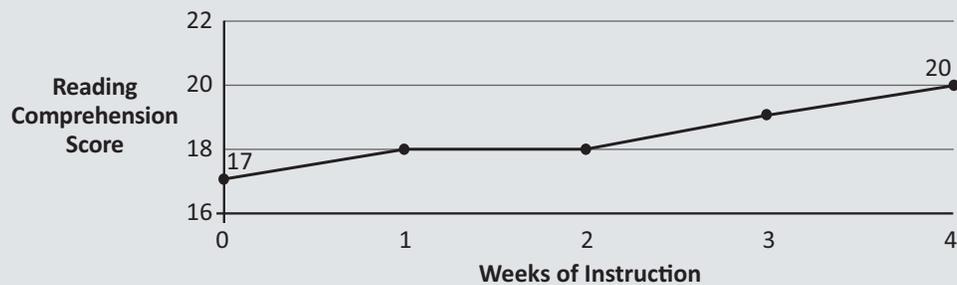
The teacher has Alfonso and Violet mark their own graphs to show their scores on reading comprehension assessments. At the beginning of the year, Alfonso's score was 17. The year-end goal or benchmark for this assessment is 30. After four weeks of extra instruction, his score was 20. This is considered good progress, and the teacher believes he is using the right kind of instruction for Alfonso and that Alfonso will reach the year-end goal of 30. Alfonso's graph shows his weekly increase in scores.

Violet's graph, however, shows that she has made very little progress. She also had a score of 17 at the beginning of the year. Her reading comprehension score only increased to 18 after four weeks of extra instruction. At this rate Violet is unlikely to reach the year-end goal of 30. Her teacher and other school staff members decide that another kind of instruction should be used to help Violet.

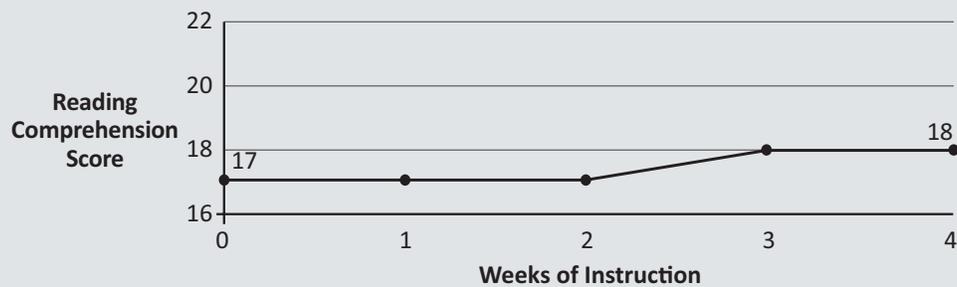


Alfonso and Violet enjoy working with their teacher and sharing in the responsibility of marking their graphs and checking their progress. Students who learn to enter data on their graphs and check their progress become more personally involved with the challenge of improving, and take pride in seeing their improvements. You can see their charts below.

ALFONSO'S CHART: READING COMPREHENSION
YEAR-END GOAL = 30



VIOLET'S CHART: READING COMPREHENSION
YEAR-END GOAL = 30



Questions to Ask About Progress Monitoring

- In what areas is my child's progress being monitored? Reading? Math? Behavior?
- What types of assessments does the school use to track progress monitoring data?
- Do students take part in the tracking process?
- Are students aware of their goals?
- How often does my child's teacher monitor my child's progress?
- Does the school have a graph that shows the results of the progress monitoring for my child?
- At what point will the teacher make a change if my child is not progressing?

TIP: You can ask for a copy of the progress monitoring information on a regular basis so that you can follow your child's progress.

Essential Component #3

Preventing Failure: Using A School-Wide Multi-Level System

If a student's screening scores indicate lower-than-expected achievement, he or she may need extra time with a teacher or skilled staff member in addition to instruction in the general education classroom. RTI uses a multi-level system of instruction that should help each student get the right level of instruction. The primary level is the general curriculum (for example, English, math, social studies) provided to all students. Ideally, about 80 percent of the students should be doing well and receiving primary instruction alone. Beyond the primary level of instruction are the secondary and tertiary levels, each with increasing levels of intensity.

In this document, we use the term *levels* to talk about the varying intensities of instruction. However, many schools, districts, and states use the term *tiers* instead of *levels* of instruction when they describe the stages of increasingly intense instruction.

School staff members typically increase intensity in one or more ways—by increasing the instructional time, duration, and/or frequency of the instructional sessions; changing the instructor or interventionist; or decreasing the size of the group.





Changing intensity and nature of instruction may mean changes to

- Instructional time: minutes per session
- Duration: number of weeks for intervention
- Frequency: number of sessions per day or week
- Intervention: degree of structure and detail of the lesson
- Interventionist: skill and experience of the instructor
- Group size: number of students

For example, with fewer students in a group, an individual student has more opportunities to respond, and the teacher has more opportunities to give immediate and appropriate feedback to that student and to assess what kind of specific help may be best. A change in the choice of intervention can also make a difference. Some interventions are intended to be more comprehensive and intensive than others.

Parents may frequently hear school staff members talk about research-based curricula and evidence-based interventions. Both are important parts of the RTI multi-level system. Within an RTI framework, classroom teachers always try to use research-based curricula and evidence-based interventions. *Research-based curricula* include components that have a research basis, but where specific materials have not been evaluated. An *evidence-based intervention* is an instructional tool or program that has been researched extensively using strict methods and has been shown to help students succeed. Students typically receive evidence-based interventions when they receive secondary and tertiary level instruction.

Primary Level Of Prevention

Ideally, all students receive primary level instruction in their core subject classrooms with their subject area teachers. General education classes (for example, math, language arts, and social studies) might last about 45–50 minutes each day. When a screening assessment shows that a student may have academic problems, the student often receives extra help from the classroom teacher. If after a brief period of time the student has made little or no progress, the teacher will consult with other staff members at the school. Together they might decide that the best way to help this student would be to give the student a more intense level of instruction, in addition to the core class.



Questions to Ask About the Primary Level of Prevention

- For how many minutes each day is my child participating in primary level reading instruction? In math instruction?
- What are my child's specific strengths and weaknesses in reading? In math? In behavior?
- How will I be involved in the decision making process if school staff consider providing my child with secondary level instruction?
- For how many minutes each day is my child receiving extra help at the primary level for reading or math?

Secondary Level Of Prevention

Instruction at the secondary level usually involves small-group instruction and is in addition to instruction at the primary level. In some middle schools, students remain in core classrooms and receive additional instruction from co-teachers or interventionists. In other middle schools, secondary level instruction is scheduled during a flexible period that all students are enrolled in (often called an *enrichment period*). In some other schools, secondary level instruction replaces an elective, such as art, music, or foreign language study. Regardless of the approach to scheduling, secondary interventions should occur in addition to core instruction in reading and math.

Secondary level interventions are provided with an increased level of intensity, and include careful monitoring and graphing of student progress. If good progress is being made at the secondary level, this more intense instruction may no longer be necessary. If secondary level instruction is discontinued, the core classroom teacher will need to continue paying close attention to the student's progress to make sure that the gains are maintained and progress remains steady.

When a student is not successful at the secondary level, the core classroom teacher may meet with the parents and other school staff to decide what is best for the student and plan for the next steps. Sometimes it is best for the student to continue with the secondary level of intervention but with a change in the session length, frequency, or group size (for example). At other times, it is best to have the student receive tertiary level instruction, or consider whether a disability is suspected.



Questions to Ask About the Secondary Level of Prevention

- How is instruction at the secondary level different from the primary level?
- Is the content at the secondary aligned with the content at the primary level?
- When does my child receive secondary level instruction?
- What, if any, class is my child missing when he/she receives secondary level instruction?
- How are decisions made? Will I be involved in those decisions?
- When would I get a progress report or be informed about decisions made?
- On what basis should my child be considered for a special education evaluation?

Tertiary Level Of Prevention

The intensity of services is again increased at the tertiary level. The teacher typically works with only one to three students at a time. Instruction is tailored specifically to the needs of each student. The length of each instructional session may also be increased at this level. In addition, instruction may occur more frequently—perhaps every day of the week. Services at the tertiary level vary in location and duration because instruction at this level is tailored to the individual student’s specific needs.

At this level, progress is again monitored frequently and graphed to ensure the student is making meaningful progress, and to help the teacher decide whether changes in instruction are needed. Progress monitoring tells us whether the student is meeting his or her established goal. Just as at the secondary level, school staff, parents, and the student all benefit from up-to-date progress data. When the student is successful at the tertiary level, school staff and the parents decide the best way to maintain success: whether to continue the intense instruction or have the child receive less intense instruction at either the secondary or primary level.



Information from the RTI process in general and a student's progress during tertiary instruction can be very helpful in determining whether the student has a learning disability and should be eligible for special education services. At all instructional levels, the RTI process provides high quality instruction that has been shown to benefit most students. When a student demonstrates low achievement and slow growth despite receiving high quality instruction at increasingly intense instructional levels, it may be due to a learning disability. Special education may be considered.

Although many schools use RTI to monitor students, or as part of the special education eligibility process, RTI may never be used to delay or deny a referral to special education. It is also helpful for parents to understand that they have a legal right to ask that the school evaluate their child to determine whether he or she is eligible for special education services. (See text boxes below.) If you suspect your child has a disability, you can write a letter to the school or school district at any time to request an evaluation.

You can request that the school or district conduct a special assessment at *any* time, regardless of where your child is in the RTI process. Teachers also can refer a child for special education assessment. All you need to do is to write a very simple letter. Give one copy to the school or district and keep one copy for your records. Here is an example:

[Date]

Dear _____ [name of principal or superintendent],

Please evaluate my child, [your child's name, his/her grade, and school name], to see whether [he/she] qualifies for special education and related services. Thank you.

[Your Name]

When you give this letter to the school or district, school officials are legally required to respond in writing to your request. As part of the response, school or district staff may want to meet with you and explain the procedures, goals, and timelines for the individual evaluations. They also will want to listen to your reasons for requesting the evaluation.

It is important to remember that although RTI is not a substitute for special education services, information gained from RTI practices can be used as part of a special education evaluation.



Important Note For Parents

States and local school districts must find and evaluate all children with disabilities living in a state who are or may be in need of special education and related services. This is called “child find.” As stated in a memorandum from OSEP, “It is critical that this identification occur in a timely manner and that no procedure or practices result in delaying or denying this identification.”¹

IDEA regulations² allow parents to request an initial evaluation to see if their child is eligible for special education and related services at any time. This request is usually made to the local school district. The district has two choices of response. It may agree that the child needs to be evaluated and seek the parent’s written permission to do so. Or, if the district does not suspect that the child has a disability, it may deny the request for the initial evaluation. When a district denies this request, it must do so in a written notice to the parents explaining why it is refusing the request and the reason for the decision. The written notice should explain how the parent can challenge the district’s decision not to evaluate the child. Participation or lack of participation in RTI may **not** be the reason for denying or delaying an initial evaluation.³

¹ OSEP memorandum, “A Response to Intervention (RTI) Process Cannot Be Used to Delay-Deny an Evaluation for Eligibility under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),” January 2011. This memorandum can be found at http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/RTI%20Memo_1-21-11r.pdf

² 34 CFR 300.301(b)

³ OSEP memorandum (above)



Questions to Ask About the Tertiary Level of Prevention

- What interventions is my child receiving? For what subjects? For behavior?
- When does my child receive tertiary level instruction?
- What, if any, class is my child missing when he/she receives tertiary level instruction?
- How will I be involved in decisions about the possibility of my child receiving tertiary level instruction?
- On what basis would my child be referred for a special education evaluation?

Finding Time For Secondary And Tertiary Level Instruction

Scheduling time for instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels is one of the most important and challenging tasks for a middle school. Schools frequently use built-in flexible time for secondary and tertiary level instruction. These flexible times include study halls, lunch breaks, electives, enrichment periods, and universal intervention periods. In some cases, a secondary or tertiary level reading (or math) class is considered an elective and may replace another class such as physical education, foreign language, or choir.

Some schools have added extra minutes to their school day to allow them to provide secondary and tertiary level interventions to students, while other schools schedule time outside regular hours—after school, before school, on Saturday, during an intersession, or during summer school.

The Multi-Level System At Lincoln Middle School

Liam is in sixth grade at Lincoln Middle School. Mr. Fenton is his math teacher. At the beginning of the school year, Mr. Fenton gave all the students in Liam's class an assessment to see how well they did with math. Liam's scores on this assessment and on his prior state assessment showed that he would need extra help in math. Mr. Fenton then gave Liam a diagnostic assessment to determine where Liam was struggling. After this assessment, Mr. Fenton concluded that Liam would benefit from extra help with math concepts at the secondary prevention level.



For the secondary level of instruction, Ms. Woods, a math specialist, worked with Liam and five other students 45 minutes each day, three days a week. They worked in a small room adjacent to the library. For this instruction, Ms. Woods chose a math program known for successfully helping middle-school students with difficulties in math concepts. This instruction was in addition to the math instruction Liam received at the primary level in the general education math class. Ms. Woods and Mr. Fenton frequently met and made plans together to ensure Liam's progress. After six weeks of secondary level instruction, Ms. Woods could see that Liam continued to make very little progress.

At this point, Ms. Woods, along with Mr. Fenton, Liam's parents, and other school staff members met and decided Liam would benefit from instruction at the tertiary level. They began another math intervention and monitored his progress. Using a new intervention at the tertiary level, a math specialist worked with Liam on an individual basis for 40–50 minutes every day in a small room next to the office. After two weeks, Liam's scores on the progress monitoring assessments began to increase by nearly one point each week, indicating good progress. Liam continued to receive tertiary intervention. Mr. Fenton, the math specialist, and other staff were confident that Liam would likely reach his math goal at the end of the year.

Essential Component #4

Data-Based Decision Making: Deciding What Works

School staff members look carefully at the information from the screening and progress monitoring measures. They use the information to evaluate overall achievement of students in the school and make decisions about instruction. Using the assessment scores, teachers and school staff members can decide which students might benefit from secondary level instruction and which students might need tertiary instruction. Progress monitoring results tell teachers and staff a lot about how well a certain type of instruction is working. If the student is not making progress, the school staff is likely to decide that either another type of instruction or more intense instruction is needed. Schools usually use set guidelines, or decision rules, to help them determine when to change instruction or provide a student with another level of prevention.



Data-Based Decision Making At Lincoln Middle School

Back at Lincoln Middle School, the progress monitoring team is meeting to make decisions about the best instruction for several students whose progress is in question. To make sound decisions about each student, every member of the progress monitoring team has a copy of information, or data, about that student. Progress monitoring graphs are included in the information.

Laura, a sixth grader, is one of the students the team is concerned about. She is receiving reading instruction in a small group at the secondary level in addition to primary level instruction. A reading specialist works with this group three days a week, 20 minutes a day, to improve the students' reading comprehension. Laura's progress is monitored frequently with an assessment that evaluates her reading comprehension. Laura's reading teacher has given a copy of Laura's progress monitoring graph to each member of the team. From the chart, they can tell that if Laura continues at her current rate of progress, her reading comprehension score on the year-end assessment will only be 24. The year-end or benchmark goal for a sixth grader is a score of 30. The graph is an important piece of data on which the team can base its decisions about Laura.

School staff members want Laura to reach her goal. With her present instruction, she seems to be making only slight progress. It is not enough. After a thoughtful discussion about Laura, and based on the team's decision rules for evaluating progress, the team decides to have Laura continue with the same instruction at the secondary level but at a greater intensity. Laura will receive extra help for 45 minutes each day rather than 20 minutes a day, three days a week. This will significantly increase the time Laura receives extra support and instruction.

As it turned out, this was a good decision. After several weeks with this more intense schedule, Laura's rate of progress increased and her graph showed that it was likely she would meet her goal.

Questions to ask about Data-Based Decision Making

- How will the parent be involved in the decision?
- How will decisions be followed up on and communicated to parents?



Other Important Aspects Of Response To Intervention

Instruction That Works

An important part of RTI is the use of appropriate interventions for students who need extra help. The term *intervention* means a specific type of instruction that is used to help with a specific type of problem. Schools need to ensure that the interventions they use are of high quality and have been shown by research to be effective (research based). For example, a person who has a knee injury may have to do a set of specific exercises prescribed by a physical therapist. The injured person wants to feel sure that the exercises have been used many times before and have been shown to work well. In the same way, teachers must use teaching methods and materials that have been successful. Schools using an RTI framework use high quality interventions that rigorous scientific research has shown work well with students who need extra help.

Questions to Ask About Instruction That Works

- What materials and methods of instruction are used in my child's general education class? In the intervention program?
- How does the school know that the programs are research based?
- Do the teachers and staff helping my child have special training in reading? In math? In behavior?
- Do the teachers and staff helping my child have special training in using the materials and methods?

School Staff Working Together

One of the many positive results of implementing RTI practices is that school staff members experience an increased level of collaboration, or working together, to support students. The principal, the general education teachers, the special education teachers, the reading specialists, the school psychologists, and other staff members share responsibility for helping each student succeed.



Questions to Ask About School Staff Working Together

- Other than the general education teacher, who is helping my child?
- Do the teachers and other school staff members share information with each other about how my child is doing?
- What information will I, as a parent, receive following those meetings?
- How can I communicate with these staff members?

Fidelity: Using Instruction And Materials The Right Way

Fidelity of *implementation* is using instruction or materials in the way they were designed to be used. When teachers in schools use proven methods and materials, it is important that they use them the right way. The “best way” to use a resource is established when the intervention is created or researched. This could involve a specific sequence of activities, timing, or frequency, for example. It is important that educators use the materials in the manner suggested by the researchers or designers. This helps teachers identify the reason(s) students are or are not making progress and maximizes the chance for success.

For example, think of recipes for cakes and cookies. The recipes include not only the ingredients needed but also instructions about how to use the ingredients in the right way. “Tried and true” recipes for cakes have been developed and tested by baking experts who know the recipes work well when the directions are followed. For example, when making a cake it is important to follow the instructions to alternate the addition of dry and liquid ingredients. Following these instructions results in a cake that is light in texture. Not following the instructions is likely to result in a cake that is dense and bread-like. Just like recipes, materials and methods in the classroom work best if used in exactly the way developers designed them to be used.

Questions to Ask About Fidelity

- What process does the school have in place to ensure that instructional materials and methods are being used as they are supposed to be used?



Resources

A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention, National Center on Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.nclld.org/learning-disability-resources/parent-advocacy-guides/parent-guide-response-intervention>

Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention. Available online at <http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/essential-components-rti-closer-look-response-intervention>

Parent Pages, The Learning Disabilities Resource Kit: Specific Learning Disabilities Determination Procedures and Responsiveness to Intervention, NRCLD (National Research Center on Learning Disabilities). Available online at http://www.nrclld.org/resource_kit/

PBIS – OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports. Available online at <http://www.pbis.org/>

Responsiveness to Intervention: Questions PARENTS Must Ask, Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2006. Available online at <http://www.lदानatl.org/news/responsiveness.asp>

Response to Intervention (RTI): A Primer for Parents, 2006. Written by Mary Beth Klotz and Andrea Canter, National Association of School Psychologists. Available online at <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/rtiprimer.aspx>

Schwab Learning: A Parent's Guide to Helping Kids with Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.SchwabLearning.org>

Additional Resources

To talk with a parent in your state, go to www.taalliance.org

If you want more detailed information about RTI, you can find it in the RTI manual titled *Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI): How to Do It*. Available online at http://www.nrclld.org/rti_manual/



Disclaimer: *The ABCs of RTI* contains information from other public and private organizations that may be useful to the reader. These materials are merely examples of resources that may be available. Inclusion of this information does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any products or services offered or views expressed. This publication also contains links to websites created and maintained by outside organizations, provided for the reader's convenience. The Department is not responsible for the accuracy of this information.

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