

# A Parent's Guide to Response-to-Intervention\*

by Candace Cortiella

## What is Response-to-Intervention (RTI)?

The RTI process is a multi-step approach to providing services and interventions to students who struggle with learning at increasing levels of intensity. The progress students make at each stage of intervention is closely monitored. Results of this monitoring are used to make decisions about the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, in special education or both. The RTI process has the potential to limit the amount of academic failure that any student experiences and to increase the accuracy of special education evaluations. Its use could also reduce the number of children who are mistakenly identified as having learning disabilities when their learning problems are actually due to cultural differences or lack of adequate instruction. Information and data gathered by an RTI process can lead to earlier identification of children who have true disabilities and are in need of special education services.



## Important Terms to Know

**Intervention:** A change in instructing a student in the area of learning or behavioral difficulty to try to improve performance and achieve adequate progress.

**Progress monitoring:** A scientifically based practice used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

**Scientific, research-based instruction:** Curriculum and educational interventions that are research based and have been proven to be effective for most students

**Universal screening:** A step taken by school personnel early in the school year to determine which students are "at risk" for not meeting grade level standards. Universal screening can be accomplished by reviewing a student's recent performance on state or district tests or by administering an academic screening to all students in a given grade. Students whose scores on the screening fall below a certain cutoff point are identified as needing continued progress monitoring and possibly more intensive interventions.

## Benefits of Response-to-Intervention

The use of an RTI process as part of a school's procedures for determining whether a student has a learning disability and needs special education services can potentially:

- Reduce the time a student waits before receiving additional instructional assistance, including special education if needed
- Reduce the overall number of students referred for special education services and increase the number of students who succeed within general education
- Provide critical information about the instructional needs of the student, which can be used to create effective educational interventions
- Limit the amount of unnecessary testing that has little or no instructional relevance
- Ensure that students receive appropriate instruction, particularly in reading, prior to placement in special education.

## Essential Components of RTI

According to the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD) ([www.nrcl.org](http://www.nrcl.org)) the essential components of Response-to-Intervention include:

- Monitoring a student's progress in the general curriculum using appropriate screenings or tests (assessments)
- Choosing and implementing scientifically proven interventions to address a student's learning problems
- Following formal guidelines to decide which students are not making sufficient progress or responding to the intervention
- Monitoring how the student responds to the intervention by using assessments at least once a week or once every two weeks
- Making sure the interventions are provided accurately and consistently
- Determining the level of support that a student needs in order to be successful
- Giving parents notice of a referral and a request to conduct a formal evaluation if a disability is suspected as required by IDEA.

## Ensuring effective school wide programs

The careful analysis of performance data for all students is critical to a successful RTI process. It provides evidence that the school's curriculum and instructional process is providing acceptable progress for most students. For example, if 20 percent of the students in the general education program are not making acceptable progress based on desired benchmarks, the school must work to improve the overall curriculum and/or instructional program. If less than 20 percent are not making satisfactory progress, the general education program can be considered to be sufficiently effective and more intensive interventions are required for those students not meeting expectations.

## RESPONSE-TO-INTERVENTION: TEN QUESTIONS PARENTS SHOULD ASK

As states and school districts work to implement an RTI process that provides early help to struggling students, parents need to understand the components essential to the appropriate implementation of RTI. Here are ten questions to ask about RTI to help guide you through the process.

1. Is the school district currently using an RTI process to provide additional support to struggling students? If not, do they plan to?
2. What screening procedures are used to identify students in need of intervention?
3. What are the interventions and instructional programs being used? What research supports their effectiveness?
4. What process is used to determine the intervention that will be provided?
5. What length of time is allowed for an intervention before determining if the student is making adequate progress?
6. What strategy is being used to monitor student progress? What are the types of data that will be collected and how will student progress be conveyed to parents?
7. Is a written intervention plan provided to parents as part of the RTI process?
8. Is the teacher or other person responsible for providing the interventions trained in using them?
9. When and how will information about a student's performance and progress be provided?
10. At what point in the RTI process are students who are suspected of having a learning disability referred for formal evaluation?

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