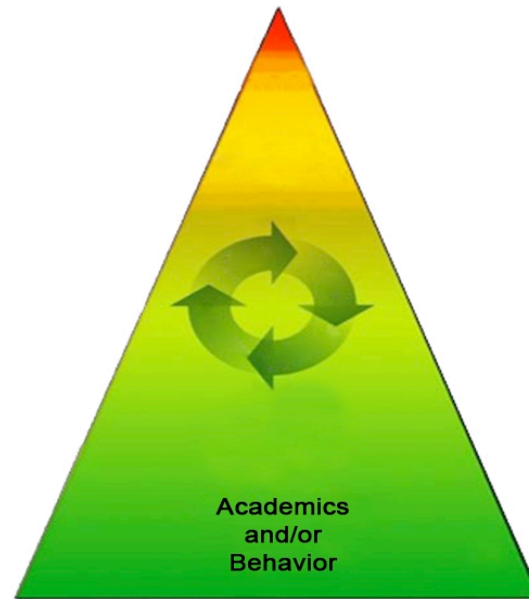


Response to Intervention (RtI) - A Parent's Guide



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What is RtI?

Response to Intervention (RtI) is an approach for redesigning and establishing teaching and learning environments that are effective, efficient, relevant, and durable for all students, families, and educators. RtI involves an education process that matches instructional and intervention strategies and supports to student needs in an informed, ongoing approach for planning, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of instruction, curricular supports, and interventions.

RtI is also a process designed to help schools focus on and provide high-quality instruction and interventions to students who may be struggling with learning. An intervention is a specific type of instruction that is used to help with a specific type of problem. Interventions are matched to student needs. Student progress is monitored often to check the effectiveness of the instruction and interventions. The data collected on a student's progress are used to shape instruction and make educational decisions. Use of an RtI process can help avoid a "wait to fail" situation because students get help promptly within the general education environment.

RtI has three important parts: 1) A multi-tiered model of school supports, 2) Using a problem solving method for decision-making at each tier, and 3) Using data to inform instruction at each tier.

Part 1: Multi-Tiered Model of School Supports

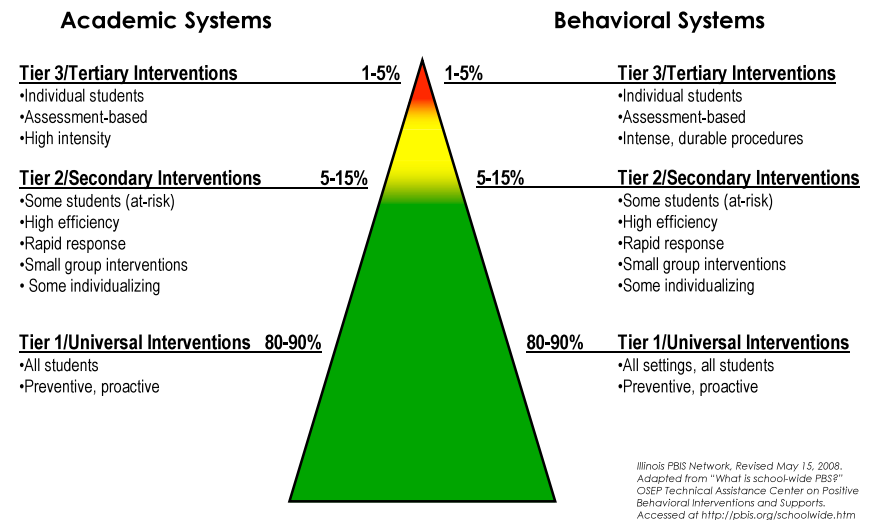
In an RtI framework, resources are allocated in accordance with students' needs. This framework is usually shown as a multi-tiered model (see Figure 1) that involves more and more intense instruction and interventions across the tiers. The level of intensity of instruction and interventions a student receives is determined by how he or she responds to the instruction and/or intervention. Like the model shown in Figure 1, Illinois' RtI model has three tiers.

Tier 1 is the foundation. This is the instruction that all students receive in the general education classroom with their general education teacher. It is called Tier 1 instruction or core instruction. Schools need to make sure that the materials and instructional practices they use are of high quality and have

been shown by research to be effective (research-based). Research-based instruction involves teaching strategies or methods that have been proven to be effective in helping children learn. Another important issue related to high quality instruction and interventions is the fidelity of using the materials for their intended purpose. Instructional materials are designed and developed for a specific reason and it is important that the materials are used as they are intended.

Figure 1

School-Wide Systems for Student Success:
A Response to Intervention (RtI) Model



At Tier I, teachers *differentiate* instruction by proactively planning and implementing a variety of instructional methods matched to varying student skill needs within the classroom.

Schools use a universal or school-wide screening of all students to identify students who may need more than high quality core instruction at Tier 1. When screening results show that a student may need more support, the general education teacher may need to make adjustments to instruction and/or the classroom environment. Such adjustments may be sufficient to address the student's learning needs. In some cases, the school team might

also decide that the best way to help a student who has not progressed sufficiently in the core instruction, even when the teacher differentiates instruction and uses other strategies to enhance student learning, is to provide supplemental interventions at Tier 2.

At Tier 2, supplemental interventions are provided with an increased level of intensity *in addition to core instruction* for small groups of students who show some risk of not meeting grade level standards. 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 each student. Tier 2 interventions usually involve additional practice and skill building. There are many different kinds of interventions and instruction that can happen in the classroom or outside the classroom in small groups.

At Tier 3, interventions are provided at a higher level of intensity in comparison to Tier 2 and are also provided *in addition to core instruction*. Tier 3 interventions are typically provided to a small group of two to three students or to an individual student by a staff member. Interventions are tailored specifically to meet the needs of each student.

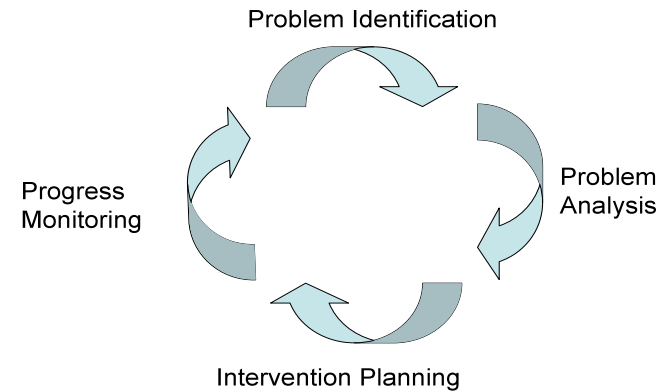
Students may move fluidly among the tiers as a result of their response to the interventions they receive. For example, if data show progress, a student can move from Tier I to Tier II and back to Tier I within a relatively short period of time. It is also important that students receive the types and levels of interventions they need when they need them. Accordingly, movement across the tiers is not necessarily sequential. For example, a student with significant gaps in performance may immediately require intensive Tier 3 interventions and would, therefore, not receive Tier 2 interventions prior to Tier 3.

Part 2: The Problem Solving Method of Decision-Making

In RtI, the problem solving method is used to match instructional resources to educational need. The problem solving method is used at all three tiers: for all students (Tier 1), for groups of students (Tier 2), and for individual or small groups of students (Tier 3). Problem solving typically consists of four steps, as shown in Figure 2 and discussed below it.

Figure 2

Steps of Problem Solving



Step 1. Identify the problem: Determine the gap or difference between the expectation and what is actually occurring in terms of student performance. Problems may be defined using school-wide, small group, or individual student data.

Step 2. Analyze the problem: Use information collected from a variety of sources, such as universal screening, progress monitoring, student work, parents' input, etc., to determine why the learning and/or behavior problem(s) may be occurring.

Step 3. Develop and implement a plan:

- Set a goal that describes the expected improvement in learning,
- Select the instruction and/or intervention(s) that will address the problem,
- Identify how progress will be monitored, and
- Carry out the instructional changes and/or interventions and check to make sure they are being done correctly (with fidelity).

Step 4. Monitor student progress: Collect and use school-wide, small group, and individual student data to determine if the plan is working or if changes are needed.

Problem Solving for All Students (Tier 1)

At Tier 1, universal screening data are used to determine if the core curriculum is effective. School teams consider how many students are meeting benchmarks and grade level standards. If the majority of students are not meeting benchmark, changes and/or improvements in core curriculum and instruction should occur immediately. Universal screening data are also used to make instructional changes to better meet student skill needs and to identify students who may need more support.

Problem Solving for Groups of Students (Tier 2)

Universal screening results are used to identify groups of students who have some risk of not meeting grade level standards and who have common needs. The problem solving process can be used for a group of students to identify scientifically-based, standard protocol interventions that are proven to address the specific skill need(s) of the group. The term “standard protocol” refers to an intervention proven to be effective in addressing one or more skill sets. Standard protocol interventions are selected and used by schools to address multiple students’ needs and are delivered in a predetermined format.

Problem Solving for Smaller Groups and/or Individual Students (Tier 3)

Universal screening and/or progress monitoring data may show that some students have large gaps in skills. At this level, the problem solving process involves the examination of data for smaller groups of students and/or individual students who have more intense skill needs. As with Tier 2, scientifically-based, standard protocol interventions can be provided to address the needs of multiple students, while some students may have specific skill needs that require individualized, research-based interventions delineated in an intervention plan.

Part 3: Using Data to Inform Instruction

In an RtI model, as interventions get more intensive, student progress is monitored more often. Knowing if student performance is improving helps guide educational planning.

At Tier 1, data are collected as often as three times during the school year and are used for screening and benchmarking of all students in important areas such as reading, math, writing, and behavior. This means that schools use the information to measure where all students are performing compared to grade level benchmarks and how much progress the students are making. The data also help schools determine if their core instructional practices are effective for most students.

At Tier 2, data are collected as frequently as twice a month to determine whether the extra instruction and interventions are making a difference and whether a change in instruction and/or intervention is needed.

At Tier 3, data are collected for the same reasons as Tier 2 but are collected more often (e.g., weekly) so that decisions and changes to the student’s instruction can be made sooner.

In an RtI model, tools used for universal screening should be in line with the district’s instructional materials and practices, provided the materials and practices are scientifically, research-based. Progress monitoring tools should be consistent across all three tiers. Additionally, all of the screening and progress monitoring tools should be scientifically, research-based.

The information collected through universal screening and progress monitoring is used to help the team answer the following questions about the student’s learning:

- Is the student making progress?
- Are the current interventions helping the student learn in the identified problem area?
- Is the student making enough progress to close the gap in the identified area?

- If the interventions are no longer provided, is the student able to continue to make progress? If not, can the current interventions be continued with only general education resources?

The Role of Parents in an RtI Process

Parents are important partners in all aspects of their child’s education. In an RtI process, school teams should involve parents from the beginning. If a student is having academic and/or behavioral difficulties, the classroom teacher is often the first person to share information with the child’s parents. Depending on the level of concern, the teacher may also meet with a building level team to present the concerns about the student’s school performance. The building team typically consists of school staff who review available student information and collect additional information from the parents to gain a better understanding of the student’s needs.

Using all of the data available, the team identifies interventions that match the student’s needs, and as discussed previously, this may involve scientifically-based, standard protocol group interventions or individualized interventions. As the process continues, parents should receive progress monitoring reports and regular communication from the classroom teacher. If a student requires individualized interventions, parents should be active members of the problem solving team that develops the individual intervention plan and participate in the problem solving process.

If your child is identified as being at risk for learning or behavioral difficulties, to be involved you can:

- Communicate regularly with your child’s teacher.
- Ask what interventions, matched to your child’s needs, are being used to address academic and/or behavioral problems.
- When possible, use the same strategies or interventions at home.
- Ask the school what formal guidelines they are using for progress monitoring.
- Ask your school to provide you with regular progress monitoring reports.

- If your child is getting more individualized Tier 3 interventions, attend meetings of the problem solving team. Remember, you are the expert regarding your child!
- Praise your child for any progress or general improvement in the area(s) of concern.
- When possible, make suggestions for strategies or interventions based on what you know works well at home.
- Always ask questions when things are not clear!

RtI and Special Education

When a student is participating in an RtI process, data showing that the student has a significant skill deficit and is making insufficient progress, even when provided with intense, research-based interventions, could lead the school team to suspect that the student has a disability that may require special education services. Another possible consideration is the student’s need to receive ongoing, additional, and substantial specialized supports and services in order to participate and make progress in the general education curriculum.

To determine special education eligibility, existing data collected during the RtI process will be used as an important source of evaluation information. The school team, which includes a student’s parents, will determine if these data are sufficient to determine eligibility or if additional evaluation data are needed. During this process, the interventions the student has been receiving should continue to be provided.

If you believe that your child is in need of special education services, you have the legal right to ask the school to evaluate your child to determine whether he or she has a disability and is eligible to receive special education services. *You can ask the school to evaluate your child at any time, regardless of where your child is in the RtI process.* If an evaluation is needed, keep in mind that it will involve the use of existing RtI data, as discussed above.

Supplemental resources to this Parent’s Guide include “Parents’ Frequently Asked Questions on RtI” and “Reading and RtI: Putting it All Together.” All documents are available under “Parent Resources” on the Illinois ASPIRE website at <http://www.illinoisaspire.org>.

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