

What Is Response to Intervention (RTI)?

RTI is a multistep process that schools use to:

- Provide services and interventions to help all students, including students who struggle with learning
- Improve the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs, including the need for special education.

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 the appropriate instruction, particularly in reading, prior to placement in special education.
- Limitations of Response to Intervention
- While many schools have been using RTI for a number of years, RTI is generally being used as a school-wide prevention model-Not specifically as an approach used to identify students who have learning disabilities.
- In addition, schools' use of RTI tends to be focused on the early elementary grades and limited to the academic area of reading, with some focus on early math. As schools attempt to develop RTI process that address and strengthen other academic areas and focus on students beyond elementary school, little information or research on which to base such models is available.
- Since an RTI process identifies the lowest performing students within a group-such as a class or grade – within the school, students who are highly intelligent (frequently referred to as “gifted”) yet aren't performing up to their potential will most likely not be identified for intervention. While these students may have a learning disability, they typically would not be identified as needing special education through

What RTI Is Not

The following practices are not appropriate instructional interventions and should not be part of an RTI plan:

Special or reassigned seating in the classroom

Shortened assignments

Communications with the parent about the child at regular parent teacher conferences or other informal communications

Classroom observations

Suspension

Retention

More of the same/ general classroom instruction and/or assignments

an RTI process.

- Lastly, RTI alone is generally not sufficient to identify a learning disability. While the information collected during the RTI process will, as mentioned above, play an important role in making decisions about student need and creating effective instructional plans, additional information is needed to satisfy the evaluation requirements of IDEA and make a well-informed, individualized decision about each student.
- Despite these limitations, a well implemented, research-based RTI process promises to offer earlier, or relevant help for students at risk for learning disabilities and provide critical information about the instructional need of the student, which can be used to create effective educational interventions.

A Three-Tier Model

While there is no single, thoroughly researched and widely practiced “model” of the RTI process, it is generally defined as a three-tier (or 3-step) model of school supports that uses research-based academic and/or behavior interventions. At all stages of the process, RTI should focus on discovering how to make the student more successful rather than focusing on the student’s lack of success.

A three-tier RTI model includes:

➤ **Tier 1: Screening and Group interventions**

Students who are “at-risk” are identified using universal screenings and/or results on state or district-wide test and could include weekly progress monitoring of all students for a brief period. Identified students receive supplemental instruction, or interventions, generally delivered in small groups during the student’s regular school day in the regular classroom. The length of time for this step can vary, but it generally should not exceed eight weeks. During that time, student progress is closely monitored using a validated screening system such as curriculum based measurement. Students not showing adequate progress are moved to Tier 2.

➤ **Tier 2: Targeted Interventions:**

Students not making adequate progress in the regular classroom in Tier 1 are provided with more intensive services and interventions. These services are provided in addition to instructions in the general curriculum. These interventions are provided in small group settings. A longer period of time may be required for this tier, but should generally not exceed a grading period. Best practice is to meet about every 3 to 4 weeks to see if there are any improvements.

Students who continue to show too little progress at this level of intervention are then considered for more intensive interventions as part of Tier 3.

➤ **Tier3: Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Evaluation**

Students receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the student's skill deficits. Students who do not respond to these targeted interventions are then considered for eligibility as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The data collected during Tiers 1,2, and 3 are included and used to make the eligibility decision.

At any point in an RTI process, IDEA allows parents to request in writing, a formal evaluation to determine eligibility for special education. An RTI process cannot be used to deny or delay a formal evaluation for special education.

Questions for RTI meeting

- How will I be notified of my child's screening results?
- What screening procedures will be used to identify my child's need for intervention?
- What are the interventions and supports will my child be receiving through RTI?
- What process is used to determine the intervention that will be provided?
- Will I receive information on how to help my child at home?
- Will students receiving interventions miss important instruction?
- How will interventions be delivered so the student isn't made to feel different?
- What length of time is allowed for an intervention before determining if the student is making adequate progress?
- Is the teacher or other person responsible for providing the interventions trained in using them?
- At what point in the RTI process are students who are suspected of having a learning disability referred for a formal evaluation?
- How will the information gathered during RTI, such as progress monitoring data, be used to determine the student's need for special education?