



Responsiveness to Intervention: Research, Policy, and Implementation

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Sam Kirk's 1962 Observation

In the first edition of his classic, college introductory special education text:

- A learning disability refers to a retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, writing, arithmetic, or other school subject resulting from a psychological handicap It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural or **instructional factors** (Kirk, 1962, p. 263).



Across Methods: “Signature” Characteristic of SLD

Unexpected and **Specific** Learning Failure

The child with **unexpected** learning failure (or underachievement) is perceived by parents and teachers as generally competent. The learning difficulty is surprising and puzzling.

Specific learning failure suggests neurological dysfunction and processing deficits, which are presumed to cause severe learning and performance problems.



SLD Determination and IDEA 2004 (P.L. 108-446)

New language in IDEA:

“... a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures....”

Sec. 614(b)6B

- The language of IDEA 2004 does not specifically use the term “responsiveness to intervention (RTI).”
- In the special education research literature, the process mentioned in this language is generally considered as referring to responsiveness to intervention (RTI).
- RTI is not mandated (e.g., “. . . a local agency *may* use a process. . .”).



Research Elements of RTI

- Three applications:
 - Prevent academic problems through early identification
 - Intervene with low performing students
 - Assist in identifying students with SLD
- Implementation of a scientifically-based, differentiated curriculum with different instructional methods
- Two or more tiers of increasingly *intense* scientific, research-based interventions (*Intensity* dimensions include duration, frequency and time of interventions, group size, and instructor skill level)
- Explicit decision rules for assessing learners' progress (e.g., level and/or rate)



Contrasting Research and Local Site Characteristics

1. Multiple year investment: "We're not there yet."
 2. Multiple screening and progress monitoring measures
 3. Student-level problem-solving framework; Rare to observe standard intervention protocols in Tier 2
 4. Positive efforts: Parental notification procedures and engagement
- (More info
http://nrclid.org/RTI_Practices/)



RTI as a SLD Determination Component

- Assessment for decision making about special education (disability and need) status
- Should be the highest standard of implementation
- Standard intervention protocol
- High frequency of progress monitoring
- Explicit decision rules (e.g., final status and slope)
- High degree of treatment integrity
- RTI is one component; an initial threshold



RTI as a Test

1. What constitutes more comprehensive and intensive assessment and where does it fit?
 - What is a meaningful taxonomy of intervention intensity that distinguishes tiers?
2. What measures and procedures will document the tier's intensity, fidelity, and effectiveness?

(Compton, D., April 2006, NRCLD SEA conference)



What should we expect?

Assume staff discuss a student's responsiveness to an intervention. What might we expect?

1. How were the student's academic or behavioral difficulties determined?
2. How was a match made to the chosen intervention?
3. Was the intervention (dosage) intense enough?
4. Was the intervention delivered with fidelity?
5. How was responsiveness assessed? Did the progress measure match the intervention?
6. Were the cut scores objectively stated for judging responsiveness?
7. Hard question: Can a parent request a more intense intervention (more intense tier level)?



When Considering an Alternative SLD Component: What is the LD problem?

- Too many students
- Minority over/under representation
- Identification requires students to fail
- Confounding of different high-incidence disabilities
- Over-generalized concept to LA
- Cost in assessment and services
- Identification occurs too late

Resource: *Getting Started*
http://nrclid.org/sea/presentations_worksheets/big1/Section1.pdf



Evaluating Alternative SLD

Approaches (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002)

Does the component:

- Address the *multi-faceted nature* of SLD?
- Apply across the *age spectrum*?
- Apply with *known measures* with *demonstrated technical adequacy*?
- *Reduce overidentification*?
- *Reduce inappropriate variability* in prevalence?
- More likely to identify students who *meet present conceptualizations* of SLD?



Thank You

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