


Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI):
Identifying Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)
for State Educational Agencies

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD)
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Overview


Presentation topics

- Define RTI
- RTI and SLD
- Four Parts of RTI Sequence
- Advantages of RTI
- Key Questions for RTI Implementation
- Vanderbilt Reading Study
- NRCLD




What is Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI)?

1. Implementation of a differentiated curriculum with different instructional methods
2. Two or more tiers of increasingly intense scientific, research-based interventions
3. Instructional intensity addressed through duration, frequency and time of interventions, group size, and instructor skill level
4. Individual problem-solving model or standardized intervention protocol for intervention tiers




What is Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI)? (continued)

5. Screening and progress monitoring to assess entire class progress and individual student progress
6. Explicit decision rules for assessing learners' progress (e.g., level or rate)
7. Fidelity measures to assess consistency of instructional methods and curriculum




Using RTI to Define Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Terms of Severe Low Achievement

- RTI eliminates poor instructional quality as a possible explanation for learning difficulty
- SLD designation is used only for nonresponders who have received validated instruction. The assumption: If a child does not respond to instruction that is effective for the vast majority of children, then something is different about the child




Simplified RTI Procedure: Four Parts

1. All children in a class, school, or district are tested once in the fall to identify those students at risk for long-term difficulties
2. The responsiveness of at-risk students to general education instruction (Tier 1) is monitored to determine those whose needs are not being met and therefore require a more intensive intervention (Tier 2 and Beyond: Small Group)




Simplified RTI Procedure: Four Parts (continued)

3. For at-risk students, a research-validated Tier 2 and Beyond intervention is implemented; student progress is monitored throughout; and students are re-tested after the intervention
4. Those students who do not respond to validated intervention are identified for multidisciplinary team evaluation for possible disability determination and special education placement



Advantages of RTI Approach

- Provides instructional assistance in a timely fashion (e.g., NOT a wait-to-fail model)
- Helps ensure a student's poor academic performance is not due to poor instruction or inappropriate curriculum
- Informs teacher and improves instruction because assessment data are collected and closely linked to interventions



Advantages of Using RTI Approach (continued)

- In some RTI models, nonresponders are not labeled
 - to avoid stigma
 - to avoid disability categories (e.g., learning disability, behavioral disability, mental retardation)

Using RTI as Part of SLD Identification Process

- Tier 2 and Beyond intervention is viewed as the 'test' to which at-risk students respond for determining disability
- Using an appropriate measurement tool, response to Tier 2 and Beyond intervention needs to be measured and categorized as either
 - Responsive to intervention (not SLD)
 - Unresponsive to intervention (evaluate for SLD)

Implementing an RTI Approach: 5 Dimensions

- Number of tiers (2-5; this example uses 3)
- Nature of intervention
 - Individualized (e.g., problem solving)
 - Standardized scientific research-based protocol
- How at-risk students are identified
 - Percentile cut on norm-referenced test (screening)
 - Cut-point on curriculum-based measurement (CBM) with several weeks of progress monitoring (e.g., CBM)

Implementing an RTI Approach: 5 Dimensions (continued)

- How 'response' is defined
 - Final status on norm-referenced test or using a benchmark
 - Improvement from pretest to posttest
 - Slope and final status
- What happens to nonresponders
 - Comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation to distinguish:
 - specific learning disability (SLD)
 - behavioral disability (BD)
 - mental retardation (MR)
 - speech-language impairment (SLI)
 - other disability designation

Example RTI Dimension 1: Number of Tiers

- Tier 1: General education instruction
 - Scientific, research-based curriculum
 - Consistent implementation
 - Works for vast majority of students
 - Screen all students, with weekly monitoring of at-risk students who do not respond to general education instruction
- Tier 2 and Beyond: Small-group intervention
- Tier 3 (or final tier): Special education (individualized intervention)

Continuum of School-Wide Instruction

Adapted from "What is School-Wide PBST?"

Example RTI Dimension 2: Nature of Intervention (Tier 2 and Beyond)

- Tier 1 general education instruction augmented by small-group instruction
 - 2-4 students
 - 3-4 intervention sessions per week
 - 30-60 minutes per session
 - Conducted by trained and supervised personnel (not the classroom teacher)
 - Conducted in and out of the general education classroom
 - 9-12 weeks in duration

Example RTI Dimension 3: Identifying At-Risk Students

- Designating risk with curriculum-based measurement (CBM) screening and progress monitoring
 - All students are tested or screened in the fall
 - Students scoring below a specific score (cut-score) are designated as at risk
 - For at-risk students, response to general education instruction is monitored using CBM
 - Administer CBM (progress monitoring) at least weekly to all at-risk students for 8-12 weeks
 - At end of 8-12 weeks, identify students whose level or slope (rate of improvement) is not adequate
 - Refer these students to Tier 2 and Beyond intervention

A Primer: Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)

- Teachers assess students' academic performance, using brief measures
- Each alternate form of the CBM test assesses performance on a measure of what is expected by end of year
- The CBM score is viewed as an indicator of overall performance
- Major RTI purposes: Screening and progress monitoring
 - To designate risk (measured once near beginning of the year and possibly again mid-year and at year's end) — screening
 - To describe rate of response to instruction (measured weekly on alternate forms, with a slope of improvement calculated) — progress monitoring

Example RTI Dimension 4: Defining Response

- Designating response to Tier 2 and Beyond intervention using dual discrepancy measures (slope and level):
 - Administer CBM at least weekly during Tier 2 and Beyond intervention
 - At end of Tier 2 and Beyond intervention, identify students whose slope (rate of improvement) and final level are adequate
 - Refer students whose rates are inadequate

What We Look For in CBM Progress Monitoring

- Increasing slope (rate of improvement) and high final level:
 - Student is responding to the instructional program
 - Scores are increasing over time and final score meets standardized level
- Flat or decreasing slope and low final level:
 - Student is not responding to the instructional program
 - Scores show no pattern of increasing over time and final score does not meet standardized level

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Example RTI Dimension 5: Multidisciplinary Evaluation for Nonresponders

- To answer designed questions that arise during Tier 1 instruction (general education) and Tier 2 and Beyond intervention by distinguishing among SLD, BD, MR, and SLI
 - Multidisciplinary IQ measure (e.g., 2-subtest WAIS)
 - Teacher behavior rating scale (e.g., Social Skills Rating Scale, Quay) and classroom observation of problem behavior
 - Measures of expressive and pragmatic language (e.g., the CELF)

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Overview of NRCLD Vanderbilt Reading Study

- Fall CBM screen cut-point to designate at risk
 - < 15 words per minute beginning of first grade
- Monitor at-risk students weekly for 8 weeks to determine Tier 1 (general education) response
- Students whose CBM (rate of improvement) across the 5 weeks (Tier 1—general education) is low (< 1.8 words per week increase) enter Tier 2 intervention

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Overview of NRCLD Vanderbilt Reading Study (continued)

- Tier 2 intervention: 3-4 times per week for 9-12 weeks; 45 minutes per session in groups of 3; taught by trained and supervised paraprofessionals
- Students whose slope (rate of improvement) across the 9-12 weeks of Tier 2 intervention is flat or decreasing (<1.8 words per week increase) and whose final level is low (< 40 words per minute end of first grade) receive multidisciplinary evaluation
- Students whose slope is increasing or whose final level meets standards return to only Tier 1 (general education) instruction or continue with Tier 1 and Tier 2 intervention

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NRCLD SLD and RTI Resource Products

- Executive Summary of the NRCLD Symposium on Responsiveness to Intervention
- Responsiveness to Intervention in the SLD Determination Process
- RTI Implementation Tool for Reading
- Screening Tool for Well-Described Responsiveness to Intervention Models and Comparison Models
- Responsiveness to Intervention: An SLD Determination Resource
- SLD Identification Overview: General Information and Tools to Get Started
- Specific Learning Disabilities and Responsiveness to Intervention Resource List
- A Research-Based View of Specific Learning Disabilities: Implementing Change
- Responsiveness to Intervention in Conjunction with Learning Disability Determination

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NRCLD Project Staff

- Vanderbilt University**
 - Doug Fuchs, Co-Director & Principal Investigator
 - Dan Reschly, Co-Director & Principal Investigator
 - Lynn Fuchs, Principal Investigator
 - Don Compton, Principal Investigator
 - Joan Bryant, Project Coordinator
- University of Kansas**
 - Don Deshler, Co-Director & Principal Investigator
 - Daryl Mellard, Principal Investigator
 - Sonja de Boer, Project Coordinator
 - Julie Tollefson, Dissemination Coordinator
 - Melinda McKnight, Research Assistant
 - Barb Starrett, Research Assistant
 - Evelyn Johnson, Consultant
 - Sara Byrd, Consultant

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 Thank you!

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