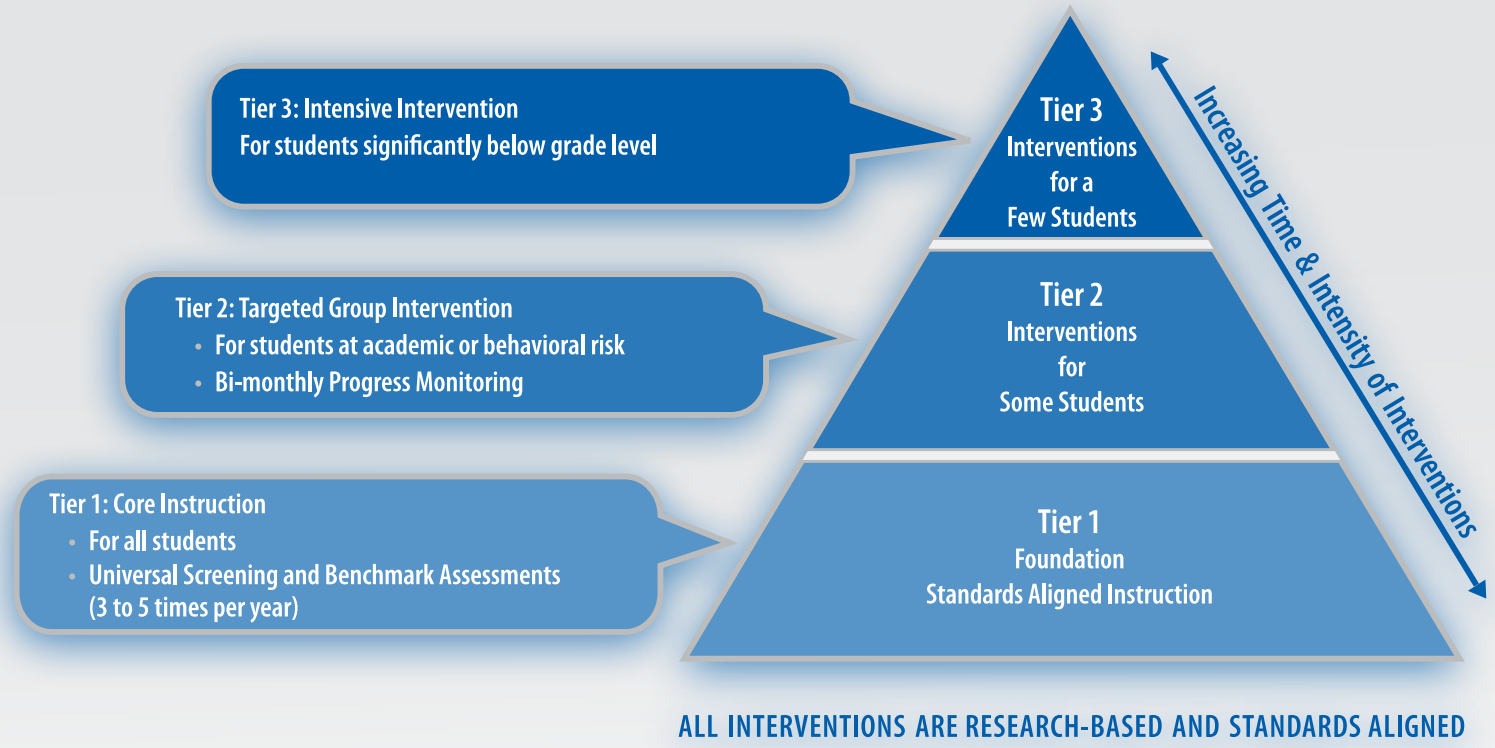
RtI inPA

A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention (RtI) in Pennsylvania



ALL INTERVENTIONS ARE RESEARCH-BASED AND STANDARDS ALIGNED

A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention (RtI) in Pennsylvania

Introduction

Parental and family engagement is an important factor in improving student achievement. Unique to Pennsylvania is our inclusion of parental engagement as a key feature of the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. We recognize the critical role of parents in this standards aligned school improvement strategy and offer this resource as a means to ensure their meaningful participation.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-step school improvement approach to provide early academic and behavioral supports to struggling students rather than waiting for a child to fail before offering help. This series of resources has been developed to provide parents with information about RtI and guidance to assist with their active participation in the RtI process. Presented together in this packet, each resource is available separately through PaTTAN at www.pattan.net.

All parents want their children to do well in school. They know that children need to be skilled in reading and math and have good "people skills" to flourish in 21st century jobs. Children learn from their parents and teachers that they are expected to master the curriculum and keep pace with their peers. Not surprisingly, when they don't meet these expectations, they become discouraged. This guide provides answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about RtI and a parent's role in the instructional strategy. Also, specific questions parents should ask are provided to assist parents in getting the information they need about RtI from the child's school/district in order to participate in a meaningful way in the RtI process.

1. FAQ: What is Response to Intervention (RtI)?

In Pennsylvania, RtI is a three-tier (or three-step) prevention, early identification and intervening strategy provided in general education classrooms, and refers to a process that emphasizes how well students respond to changes in instruction. The learning of ALL students is assessed early and often. RtI uses standards aligned (what students must know and be able to do) and research-based (what has been proven to work) interventions that are both based on research and aligned to state standards at increasing levels of intensity to support students who struggle with reading and math and to help them reach state standards. RtI depends on a strong, standards aligned, research-based core curriculum (the "general curriculum") and school-wide behavior program that are both based on research and aligned to Pennsylvania standards. Perhaps the most important benefit of an RtI approach is that it is not a "wait to fail" model because students get help promptly in the general education setting. In Pennsylvania, ALL students have the opportunity to get needed help in general education classes, potentially significantly reducing the number of students referred for special education services. In the RtI model, students who continue to struggle in Tier 3 are referred for a special education evaluation, and data from the RtI process can be used to determine eligibility as a student with a specific learning disability. RtI is not a prereferral system, an individual teacher, classroom, special education program, an added period of reading instruction, or a separate stand-alone initiative. RtI is not preferential seating, shortened assignments, classroom observations, suspension, or retention. Finally, RtI is not a one-shot attempt at remediation.

2. FAQ: What are the key features of RtI?

Standards aligned instruction: High quality instruction and behavioral support in general education for all students (the core curriculum) that is supported by research and aligned to Pennsylvania standards. (PA Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening: http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/lib/k12/Reading.pdf)

Screening and assessment of all students (Universal Screening) in academics and behavior: All students are screened early in the school year to determine which students are "at risk" for not meeting grade level academic and behavioral standards and benchmarks.

Shared responsibility of all students: All staff and parents use a collaborative approach and assume an active role in student testing and instruction.

Instructional decisions based on student progress data (Data-based decision-making):

Progress monitoring: Continuous measuring of student performance and use of progress monitoring scores to determine progress toward instructional and grade level goals. Results of student progress monitoring must be provided to parents. Scores can come from daily, weekly and yearly testing.

Benchmark and outcome assessment: Student progress is assessed periodically throughout the year, and at the end of the year against grade level benchmarks and standards.

Tiered interventions: Students receive increasingly intense levels of targeted instruction and scientifically research-based interventions based on their needs.

Research-based interventions: Research-based curriculum and interventions have been proven by research to be effective for most students (http://www.ncld.org/images/stories/downloads/parent_center/rti_final.pdf).

> "The principle of using research-based practices is to guard against wasting time on ineffective practices."
>
> (Dr. Judy Elliott)

Flexible grouping: Rather than being in the same group all year, students move among ability-based instructional groups based on need and skill mastery.

Fidelity of Implementations: Research-based interventions can deliver what is promised in the research only if they are implemented as intended (or with fidelity). Research-based educational programs are like the medicine your physician prescribes. Improvement in a medical condition requires that the medicine be taken as prescribed. Likewise, to provide the intended results, research-based educational programs must be delivered in the manner prescribed by the publisher.

Parental Engagement: Parents are informed of child's needs, interventions, progress and the **right to request a special education evaluation at any time**. (See FAQ 5a)

Questions Parents Should Ask

- *Is my child's school using an RtI process to provide support to struggling students?*
- *Are there written materials for parents that explain the RtI process?*

RtI: A Public Health Analogy

We can think of RtI as similar to a public health model. In public health, everyone gets wellness information on how to stay healthy and receives basic, broad vaccinations. That's the first tier or level of intervention. In spite of this first tier of intervention, some people will get ill. Or, we might discover as the result of large-scale screening of the population, that some people need more specialized treatment. This level of specialized treatment is considered the second level of intervention, which is not for the general population, but for a smaller segment of maybe 10 to 15 percent of the total population. Even within this second-tier group, though, some persons, 5 percent or so, are going to need further, very specialized treatment. This highest level is referred to as the third level of intervention and is the most intensive and most costly level of intervention.

RtI can work as the public health model applied to students' school performance. School staff provides a high-quality education for all students and conducts screenings to ensure that everyone is learning from that instruction. For students whose academic screening results suggest that a closer look and a more intense intervention is needed, the schools will have procedures to ensure that the appropriate services are provided, and that the student's progress (or lack of progress) in response to that intervention is monitored.

(Adapted from "Basic Principles of the Responsiveness-to-Intervention Approach" http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=1056)

3. FAQ: What is scientific, research-based instruction?

"Scientific, research-based instruction refers to specific curriculum and educational interventions that have been proven to be effective – that is, the research reported in scientific peer-reviewed journals." (http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/rtiprimer.aspx)

Questions Parents Should Ask

- *What research-based programs are being used and what research supports the effectiveness of the program(s)?*
- *What process is used to match the intervention(s) to my child's needs?*
- *How many weeks and minutes per day of instruction will my child receive in this program?*
- *Is a written intervention plan provided to parents as part of the RtI process?*
- *How can parents know that the interventions are being carried out as intended (with fidelity)?*
- *What training is required to effectively teach the research-based programs?*
- *Is my child's teacher trained in the intervention program as recommended by the publisher?*

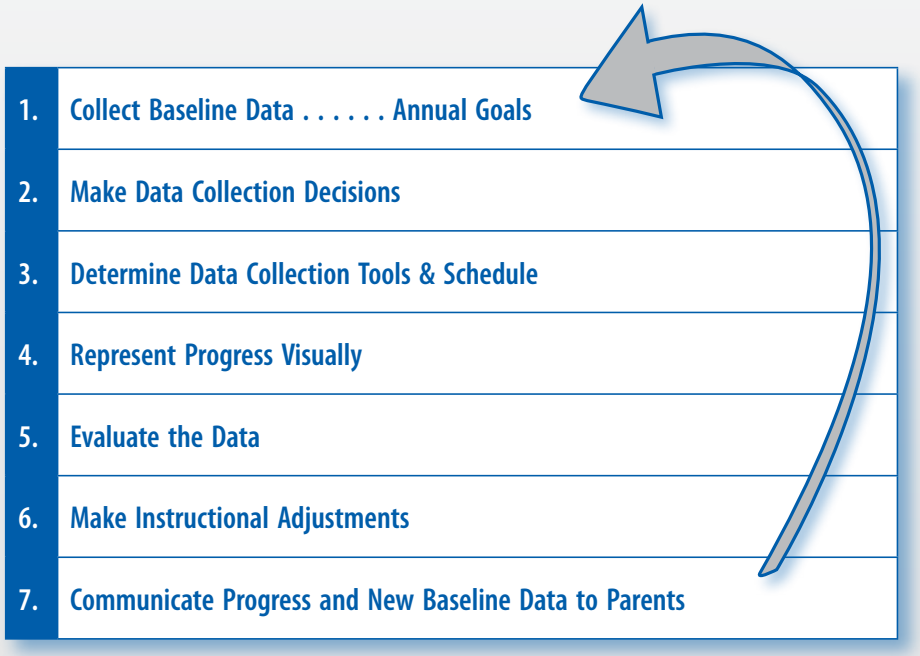
4. FAQ: What is progress monitoring?

Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) require that students are provided with research-based instruction and progress monitoring before entering special education. Progress monitoring involves frequent, brief measures of student performance to determine whether students are learning what is taught and what specific skill(s) may need more intensive instruction. Progress monitoring of ALL students begins with screening early and often against grade level standards, usually three times a year (e.g., DIBELS, Aimsweb). For student who need a more intensive intervention, the frequency of progress monitoring may increase to twice a month or weekly.

Weight-Watcher Analogy

Think about the Weight Watcher's model. Assume you weigh 150 pounds (Baseline Data). You want to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks (Goal). You decide whether you want to be on the Flex Plan or the Core Plan (Curriculum). You weigh yourself every week (Progress Monitoring). At the end of 10 weeks, you should have made progress toward your goal. This is impossible to determine without baseline data.

The Seven Steps of Progress Monitoring for ALL Students



Baseline data (where a student is currently performing) is the starting point in progress monitoring.

Questions Parents Should Ask

- *What school-wide screening measures are in place?*
- *How will my child be screened to spot a possible need for intervention?*
- *What are my child's progress monitoring "baseline" scores?*
- *How long will an intervention be tried before determining that a child is or is not making adequate progress?*
- *What will be used to measure my child's progress?*
- *When and how will information about my child's progress be provided to me?*
- *How can I help my child benefit from RtI interventions?*

5. FAQ: What role can RtI play in determining special education eligibility?

The law gives school districts the option of using RtI procedures as part of the evaluation process to determine eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD) using multiple measures. A comprehensive assessment is still required. Once the RtI instructional framework (three steps of instruction) three-tier process is in place, implemented with fidelity, schools may consider using RtI as part of the process for determining SLD eligibility.

5a. FAQ: When can I request a special education evaluation for my child?

§14.123. Evaluation.

(c) Parents may request an evaluation at any time, and the request must be in writing. The school entity shall MAKE THE PERMISSION TO EVALUATE FORM readily available for that purpose. If a request is made orally to any professional employee or administraator of the school entity, that individual shall provide a copy of the PERMISSION TO EVALUATE form to the parents within 10 CALENDAR days of the oral request.

Questions Parents Should Ask

- *How will the school determine if my child has a learning disability?*
- *What are the timelines for the completion of a special education evaluation?*
- *Who is heading up the district's RtI efforts?*
- *Will the district hold regular, public meetings to discuss its RtI programs?*

6. FAQ: How can my child's school district fund RtI supports?

EIS Early Intervening Services (EIS) are a set of coordinated services for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade three) who are **not** currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in general education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides for the use of up to 15 percent of federal special education funds to develop and implement early intervening services. Response to Intervention is an Early Intervening strategy.

RtI Glossary for Parents

Assessment: The process of measuring and documenting what students have learned.

Baseline Data: Basic information on a student's current performance level, which is gathered before a program or intervention begins. It is the starting point to be used to compare a student's learning before a program or instruction begins.

Benchmark Assessment: The periodic assessment (a minimum of 3 times per year) of all students compared to age or grade level standards.

Collaboration: Cooperation between two or more people with shared goals and perceived outcomes occurring in a climate of trust.

Core Curriculum: The planned instruction in a content area, which is central and usually mandatory for all students of a school (e.g. reading, math, science).

Curriculum-Based Measurements (CBM): A concise method used to find out how students are progressing in basic academic areas such as math, reading, writing, and spelling.

Data-Based Decision-Making: The use of student data to guide the design, implementation, and adjustment of instruction.

Differentiated Instruction: Instruction that matches the specific strengths and needs of each learner.

Early Intervening Services: A set of coordinated services for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in general education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows school districts to use up to 15 percent of their federal special education funds to develop and implement early intervening services, unless required based upon disproportionality.

English Language Learners (ELLs): Students whose first language is other than English and who are in the process of learning English.

Explicit Instruction: Instruction that is clear, deliberate, and visible.

Fidelity: Using a program or method of instruction as it was intended to be used.

Five "Big Ideas" of Reading: Critical areas of reading for all tiers.

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992). Print is not involved. For example, asking the student: "What sound do you hear at the beginning of the word cat?" or "What word rhymes with tree?"

Phonics: The basic concept that letters represent segments of speech. Students are taught letter names, the relationships between letters and sounds, an understanding that these relationships are systematic and predictable, and the use of these relationships to read and write words.

Fluency: The ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to decoding (the ability to apply knowledge of letter sound relationships, including letter patterns, to decipher and pronounce written word), thereby allowing the reader to focus attention on the meaning and message of the text. Text is read with

RtI Glossary for Parents - continued

appropriate intonation and expression that sounds very much like conversational speech.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary development involves word knowledge, word instruction, word learning strategies and usage.

Comprehension: The process of constructing meaning from written text. It includes such skills as: activating prior knowledge, literal understanding of what is read, sequencing, summarizing, making inferences, predicting, and making connections between new and unknown information.

Flexible Grouping: The ability for students to move among different groups based upon their performance and instructional needs.

Instructional Intervention: Clear, deliberate and carefully planned instruction delivered by trained personnel tailored to meet the identified needs of struggling students.

Intensive Intervention: Instruction delivered with increased opportunities for practice and teach feedback.

Multisensory: Engaging the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (movement) senses at the same time.

Outcome Assessment: The measurement of how students have performed at the end of planned instruction or at the end of the year.

Parental Engagement: The meaningful and active involvement of parents and family members in the educational process.

Progress Monitoring: Continuous measuring and comparing of student learning to determine progress toward targeted skills with the purpose of appropriately adjusting instruction.

Research-Based Interventions: Instructional programs, strategies, methods, and materials that have been proven to work.

State Standards: What students should know and be able to do at grade level. The Pennsylvania State Standards are available at: www.pde.state.pa.us.

Standards Aligned: The process of matching curriculum, instruction and materials to the Pennsylvania State Standards (what students should know and be able to do).

Systematic Instruction: Carefully planned teaching based on the identified strengths and needs of students.

Targeted Instruction: Teaching that is focused on an identified goal and based on the identified strengths and needs of a child.

Universal Screening (School-Wide Screening): A quick check of all students' current level of performance in a content or skill area. This is administered three times per year.

RtI Resources for Parents

- Response to Intervention: What It Is and What It's Not
  http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/files/RtI/RtI-WhatItI.pdf

- Early Intervening Services (EIS) and Response to Intervention (RtI) http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/files/RTI/EIS-RtI-Ftsht.pdf

- Pennsylvania Department of Education RtI Information
  http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/teachlead/ResponsetoIntervention(RtI).aspx

- Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) www.pattan.net

  King of Prussia: 800-441-3215

  Harrisburg: 800-360-7282

  Pittsburgh: 800-446-5607

- Parent Training Information Centers in Pennsylvania

  - Parent Education Network (PEN): 1-800-522-5827
  - Parent Education Leadership and Advocacy Center (PEAL Center): 866-950-1040
  - Hispanos Unidos para Ninos Excepcionales (HUNE): 215-425-6203
  - The Parent Mentor Program: 814-563-3470 and 888-447-1431

- Response to Intervention: A Primer for Parents
  http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/rtiprimer.aspx)

- National Center for Learning Disabilities: A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention
  http://www.ncld.org/images/stories/downloads/parent_center/rti_final.pdf

- Student Progress Monitoring: What This Means for Your Child
  http://www.rti4success.org/images/stories/pdfs/whatthismeans.pdf

- Learning Disabilities Resource Kit: Specific Learning Disabilities Determination Procedures and Responsiveness to Intervention
  http://www.nrcld.org/resource_kit/#parent

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