Welcome

This special issue of Intervention News will cover the important topic of RtI: Response to Intervention. Information is provided to alert readers on how Reading First and RtI overlap in their underlying principles, to inform readers of the characteristics of an RtI system and to update readers regarding what Florida is doing with RtI: the Florida PS/RtI Project. In the concluding sections, two ‘myths’ surrounding RtI will be shared along with important links and recommendations for further reading.

How do Reading First and Response to Intervention Align?
By Joseph Torgesen, Director Emeritus of FCRR

We want teachers and principals in Reading First schools to understand that what they have been trying to accomplish in the Reading First program is very similar to the most important goals of the “Response to Intervention” model of instruction. Key elements of RtI involve: 1) providing strong classroom instruction for all students; 2) administering high quality assessments to monitor progress and identify students in need of more powerful instruction; and, 3) designing and delivering interventions that are responsive to student needs. Reading First schools that have improved their ability to do these three things over the past several years are well on their way toward high quality implementation of the “response to intervention” instructional model. Although RtI trainers may use some different terms than you are used to, the essential ideas of Reading First and the RtI model for instruction are very similar.

If you would like to learn more about similarities between the RtI model and Reading First, you can access a brief article on this topic titled Using an RtI model to guide early reading instruction: Effects on identification rates for students with learning disabilities which presents some information about the impact of the RtI model within Reading First Schools in Florida. This document is available at:


Response to Intervention: An Overview
By George Batsche, PS/RtI Project Co-Director

Response to Intervention (RtI) has received considerable attention from practicing educators since its inclusion as one criterion for eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD) in the statute and regulations for Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004. In addition, RtI is part of the eligibility process for the new Emotional and/or Behavior Disorders (EBD) category that replaces the EH/SED category in Florida. However, the application of RtI is much broader than its use in SLD or EBD identification. In fact, the basic components of RtI are included in broad-based general education reform initiatives such as the Continuous Improvement Model (CIM) and Reading First. The successful implementation of RtI principles encompasses general education initiatives first and special education application second.

Response to Intervention, in many ways, is simply another term for “data-based decision making” applied to education. The essential components of RtI include:

1. An integrated data collection/assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery;
2. A problem-solving method; and
3. Multiple tiers of intervention service delivery.

The “response” component of RtI requires two specific skill applications. First, interventions must be evidence-based for the type of problem, the demographics of the student (e.g., gender, race, language) and the setting factors (levels of supervision, number of students in the room). Second, evidence must exist that the intervention was implemented with integrity and that the level of implementation (e.g., number of minutes per week) was documented.

The basic components of RtI are applied first to all students in a building to determine what percent of the students are responding to the “core curriculum” (both academic and behavior). Three questions are asked:

1. Is the core curriculum effective? (80% of students making...
An Overview cont’d

benchmarks) and in addition to core instruction. Academic Engaged Time (AET) predicts achievement better than any other variable.
3. Interventions focus on particular skill areas that need strengthening.

Progress monitoring of student performance is conducted frequently with the same measures used to assess Tier 1 performance. In an effective Tier 2 intervention, approximately 70% of the students receiving Tier 2 instruction should have a positive response to intervention and demonstrate aim lines that will reach benchmark performance. A small percent of students will not respond to Tier 2 levels of instruction and will require the most intensive instruction (Tier 3).

Tier 3 interventions are developed based on individual student needs following a problem-solving process that will use diagnostic assessment to inform intervention development. Progress monitoring of intervention effectiveness is the same for Tier 3 as in Tier 2. Characteristics of Tier 3 interventions are:

1. Interventions are delivered to very small groups of students or to students individually.
2. Interventions must be provided in addition to Tier 1 instruction. Tier 3 children should be receiving the most instructional minutes. It is critical that Tier 3 instruction does not supplant the core instruction.
3. Interventions focus more narrowly on defined skill areas.

The tiers of instruction vary in minutes of instruction, number of children in the group, frequency of assessment and the focus of instruction, ranging from a broad focus in Tier 1 to a very narrow focus in Tier 3. It is important to note that each school may have very different ‘looking’ tiers based on the needs of their students, but the underlying principles of time, size of group, assessment and focus should remain consistent across schools.

An Overview cont’d

The Florida Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Statewide Project

The Florida Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) Statewide Project was funded by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) in 2006. The Project was awarded to the University of South Florida and charged with implementing two major components: A Statewide Training Initiative for all school districts in the State of Florida and a Demonstration Site/Pilot School Initiative to evaluate the impact of PS/RtI on educators, parents and students in controlled settings. Demonstration District/Pilot Site Initiative

Forty schools (in eight school districts—12% of school districts in Florida) have been awarded Mini-Grants to serve as Pilot Sites for the purpose of evaluating the impact of Problem Solving/Response to Intervention. The eight districts include Clay, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, St. Johns, and Walton. Each district has identified Comparison Schools—in addition to the Pilot Schools—to ensure a robust research design. Each of the 40 pilot schools will be supported through the services of a dedicated, full-time PS/RtI Coach—one Coach for 3 schools. Coaches completed five days of training in July, 2007 and will receive additional training, as well as mentoring and support by a Regional Coordinator throughout the year. Each district will receive 5 days of training during the 2007-2008 school year. The training will be targeted specifically to the needs of each of the Pilot Schools. Train-
Statewide Project cont’d

...ing will be conducted by the Regional Coordinators and the Site-Based Coaches.

Technical Assistance (TA) will be provided to the Pilot Site Coaches and the Pilot Site Administrators by the Regional Coordinators. Technical Assistance will take the form of face-to-face TA, Web-Based TA, and telephone/email communication. Monthly TA sessions are scheduled with Pilot Site Coaches. Regularly scheduled TA meetings will be used to assist and support Pilot Site Administrators.

Statewide Training Initiative

In Fall, 2007, the Project will initiate statewide training for school-based teams from school districts across Florida. During the 2007-2008 School Year, 5 days of training will be provided in each of the three state regions (North, Central, and South). The training will be conducted by the Regional Coordinators and support staff.

Technical Assistance (TA) will be provided to the school-based teams participating in the Statewide Training on a quarterly basis. TA needs assessment will be conducted by the Regional Coordinators to determine the content of the TA sessions in order to ensure an efficient TA Process. The content of each TA session will be communicated to the school-based teams in advance to ensure that the participants understand clearly the focus of the TA. In addition to these face-to-face meetings, web-based TA will be provided as well. The web-based TA will be provided based on on-going input from the school-based teams.

Florida is unique in its attempt to conduct a statewide initiative that includes both pilot sites AND statewide training. The undertaking is a comprehensive, coordinated effort—and an exciting (ad)venture.

A Project website has been developed and is operational:

www.Floridarti.usf.edu

Myths about Response to Intervention (RtI) Implementation

By The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)  www.nasdse.org

Myth # 1: The outcome and intent of RtI is identification, and therefore special education remains its own entity that “occurs” subsequent to “trying RtI.”

There are two overarching goals of RtI. The first is to deliver evidence-based interventions and the second is to use students’ response to those interventions as a basis for determining instructional needs and intensity. Special education eligibility decisions can be a product of these efforts, but is not the primary goal. Using RtI as the data base for making that decision, special education services (i.e., what does this student need?) are determined by the student’s rate of response to intervention and the size of the gap that exists between the student and the benchmark. As a result, identification is not about the student’s label, but rather about determining what interventions are most helpful in closing the gap in a timely manner. Special education services can be a means to providing effective intervention services for students, but are inherently linked to instructional efforts that occurred in general education. The delivery of special education programs is part of an integrated service delivery system that is pictured as a circle (recycling on itself until success is found), not as a straight line, where special education programs are the last thing on the line (and sometimes a goal, or end in itself). The major issues in RtI involve the need to enhance the range and diversity of academic and behavioral interventions in general education (Tier I) and to increase the impact of supplemental interventions in Tiers II and III, not how to make eligibility decisions that divorce special education from general education.

Myth # 2: Tier 3 (or the last tier in a tiered model) is only special education.

Tier 3 is the most intense level of intervention provided to students in general education. A student who does not respond to these intense interventions MAY qualify for special education services when it has been demonstrated that either the intensity or type of intervention required to improve student performance either exceeds the resources in general education or are not available in general education settings. Tier 3
in the conceptual model advocated by NASDSE and many other professionals is INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION, which may or may not include special education services. If Tier 3 is defined exclusively as special education, it is possible that additional intensive instructional programs would be set up OUTSIDE of the triangle model, which defeats the purpose of having the model for delivering services to all students.

To download (free) the complete document including other myths surrounding RtI visit the link http://www.nasdse.org/documents/Myths%20about%20RtI.pdf

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Recommended Readings and Links


• Florida PS/RtI Project website: www.Floridarti.usf.edu
• National Association of School Psychologists: www.nasponline.org
• National Association of State Directors of Special Education: www.nasdse.org

What’s New?

• FCRR has launched a new website called Empowering Teachers that provides grade specific guidance to kindergarten and first grade teachers on how to implement differentiated instruction based on student data. You can explore the Empowering Teachers website at http://www.fcrr.org/assessment/ET/index.html.

• Assessment Programs at FCRR is sponsoring three ESE Reading Academies: Reaching *Students with Mild Disabilities* in September. ESE Directors have received registration information and a flyer explaining the content. For more information contact your district ESE Director or view the flyer at http://www.fcrr.org/assessment.htm.