

## What is Response to Intervention (RtI)?

RtI is the practice of meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students through a variety of services containing the following key elements:

- High-quality instruction and **scientific research-based** tiered interventions aligned with individual student need
- Frequent monitoring of student progress to make results-based academic and/or behavioral decisions
- Application of student response data to important educational decisions (such as those regarding placement, intervention, curriculum, and instructional goals and methodologies)

The instructional approaches used within the general education setting should result in academic and/or behavioral progress for the majority of the students. Struggling students are identified using data-based student **progress monitoring** and provided intensive instruction. The use of scientifically validated curricula and teaching methods expected in an RtI model leads to data-based school improvement.

## What are the benefits of RtI?

RtI holds the promise of ensuring that all children have access to high quality instruction and that struggling learners, including those with learning disabilities (LD), are identified, supported, and served early and effectively. Driven and documented by reliable data, the implementation of RtI in Texas schools can result in:

- more effective instruction;
- increased student achievement;
- **more appropriate LD identification**;
- increased professional collaboration; and
- overall school improvement.

## What should a multi-tiered RtI model include?

To ensure that appropriate instruction directly addresses students' academic and behavioral difficulties in the general education setting, a multi-tiered service delivery model is used. Included are layers of increasingly intense intervention responding to student-specific needs.

**Tier 1:** Teachers use high-quality core class instruction aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in which about 80% or more of the students are successful. This tier is the crucial foundation of the RtI instructional model.

**Tier 2:** Students are identified for individual or small group intervention in addition to core class instruction. This level includes scientific research-based programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier 1 activities. District-established **standard protocol** matches appropriate intervention strategies to specific student needs. Tier 2 addresses the needs of approximately 10–15% of the students.

Tier 3: Students who have not responded adequately to Tiers 1 and 2 receive specific, custom-designed individual or small group instruction (designed using a **problem-solving** model) beyond the instruction in Tier 1. This level of intervention is aimed at those students who have identified difficulties academically or behaviorally. Tier 3 addresses the needs of approximately 5–10% of the students.

	<b>TIER 1: CORE CLASS CURRICULUM</b>	<b>TIER 2: SMALL GROUP INTERVENTION</b>	<b>TIER 3: INTENSIVE INTERVENTION</b>
<b>Focus</b>	All students	Identified students with marked difficulties who have not responded to Tier 1 efforts	Identified students with marked difficulties who have not responded to Tier 1 and Tier 2 efforts
<b>Program</b>	Scientific research-based curriculum and instruction	Specialized scientific research-based intervention	Individualized and responsive intervention
<b>Grouping</b>	As needed	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:5–10)	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:3)
<b>Time</b>	*90 minutes per day or more	*20 – 30 minutes per day in small group in addition to 90 minutes of core instruction	*50 minutes per day in individual or small group instruction in addition to 90 minutes of core instruction
<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Universal Screening</b> at beginning, middle, and end of the academic year (or more often, if appropriate)	Weekly progress monitoring on target skill(s) to ensure adequate progress and learning	Weekly progress monitoring on target skill(s) to ensure adequate progress and learning
<b>Interventionist</b>	General education teacher	Determined by the school (may be classroom teacher, specialized teacher, external interventionist, paraprofessional, etc.)	Determined by the school (may be classroom teacher, specialized teacher, external interventionist, paraprofessional, etc.)
<b>Setting</b>	General education classroom	Appropriate setting in the classroom or outside the classroom designated by the school	Appropriate setting outside the classroom designated by the school

\*time amounts are examples for use in comparing relative times and not intended to be recommendations; instructional time will vary depending on circumstances unique to each school.

## What is meant by “fidelity of implementation”?

Current research indicates that the most common cause of failed intervention is a lack of **fidelity of implementation**. Scientific research may indicate that an intervention model is successful, but that success can only be dependably duplicated if teachers are provided sufficient on-going program-specific training, agree to implement all aspects of the model as designed and as tested, and uphold that agreement. Fidelity to the researched design should be documented; gaps in fidelity should be identified and corrected.

## How are decisions made about effective instruction in an RtI model?

To determine the effectiveness of an intervention, student progress is monitored through formative assessments that are sensitive to small changes in student behavior and performance. The following three types of assessments are typical of RtI:

1. **Universal screening** of all students identifies those not making academic or behavioral progress at expected rates.
2. **Diagnostics** determine what students can and cannot do in academic and behavioral domains.
3. **Progress monitoring** determines whether academic or behavioral interventions are producing the desired effects.

Progress monitoring helps teachers choose efficient, targeted instructional techniques and establish goals which enable all students to advance appropriately toward attainment of state achievement standards. RtI decision-making processes are dependent upon reliable student performance data and data-collection systems.

## Why is progress monitoring so important?

Benefits of Progress Monitoring:

- Accelerated learning due to appropriate instruction
- Informed instructional decisions
- Effective communication with families and other professionals about students’ progress
- High expectations for students by teachers
- Appropriate special education referrals
- Documentation of student progress for accountability purposes

## Who is responsible for RtI?

Since RtI is a whole-school instructional framework intended to improve instruction and learning for all students, all faculty and staff members share responsibility for RtI.

**The Principal** is the instructional leader of the school and so must be the leader in developing and implementing an RtI model.

**Counselors and diagnosticians** play an important roles in designing the RtI model to be used that may include making scheduling decisions, identifying student needs and monitoring progress, and helping to make decisions on appropriate interventions.

**Teachers**, of course, are the most important component of an Rtl team and need to understand all aspects Rtl. Since teachers provide the bulk of the instruction and have the most opportunity to observe student progress, their support of Rtl is crucial to success. Teachers should be included in every stage of developing an Rtl model. The activities that comprise Rtl typically occur in the general education setting as schools use a variety of strategies to assist struggling students. General and special education staff coordinate and collaborate to develop a process for Rtl implementation, and such collaboration may lead to a shift in roles played by teachers from both areas. General education teachers may need training in many practices currently used primarily by special education teachers. The expertise of special education teachers can strengthen general education instruction as they provide that training, help to customize Tier 3 services, provide Tier 2 and 3 services, and, in general, team more closely with general education faculty.

**Paraprofessionals** may implement small-group interventions, assess progress, and maintain crucial databases showing that progress.

### **What role does Rtl play in determining learning disability (LD) eligibility?**

As established by the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, LEAs may choose to use Rtl as one of a variety of ways to determine appropriate LD eligibility. This use of Rtl addresses concerns with models of LD identification that primarily rely on the use of IQ tests and performance discrepancy. Additional information regarding the use of Rtl in determining LD eligibility is available in a question and answer format at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/guidance/rules/index.html/>

### **Is Rtl appropriate for secondary programs?**

Little research is currently available on the use of Rtl in secondary schools. Clearly all students can benefit from quality instructional strategies used across the curriculum (Tier 1), and students who arrive in high school performing below grade level can benefit from research-based instructional interventions and progress monitoring (Tiers 2 and 3). Currently, schools often address the needs of struggling students through tutoring programs offered during and/or after school or on Saturdays. Through an Rtl model, such tutoring would be provided by teachers trained in scientifically researched instructional models, interventions would be carefully chosen to directly target deficient skills, and students' individual progress would be carefully monitored to determine the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and to make appropriate adjustments. Using an Rtl model, faculty and staff shift from a focus on the student's difficulties to a focus on planned and actual growth in response to carefully chosen and authentically implemented interventions.

Secondary schools implementing Rtl will have unique considerations. Districts may want to scale up to a secondary Rtl model, beginning with early grades only and gradually adding grade levels over multiple academic years. Another scale-up option that could work in both elementary and secondary schools is beginning with a focus only on improving Tier 1 instruction and adding Tiers 2 and 3 in the next two academic years. Regardless of the approach, issues that must be carefully considered include the following:

- What universal screening and progress monitoring options are available for secondary students and appropriate for the campus population?

- At Tier 1, what are the universal high-quality instructional practices that will be used across all subject areas?
- What age-appropriate interventions are available?
- Can a standard protocol identification of suitable interventions be established for the most common areas of need?
- In what ways might the structure of the school day impede intervention implementation?
- In what ways might the traditional school day structure be modified to accommodate an Rtl model?
- How can program-specific professional development be provided to all teachers?
- How can opportunities for professional collaboration be expanded?
- In what ways can parent involvement and communication be increased to support the Rtl model?

### **Can an Rtl model be used to address **behavioral concerns**?**

Behavioral issues can negatively impact learning as learning difficulties can negatively impact behavior. As students' academic success improves in school, their social and behavioral success tends to improve as well. Nevertheless, an Rtl model specifically designed to address behavioral difficulties can

- improve the pace of that improvement;
- support academic growth; and
- help improve the climate of the school.

Both academic and behavioral interventions contain the same components:

- The needs of most students are met through high-quality, research-based universal instructional and behavioral practices.
- Students needing additional intervention are identified and served through Tier 2 interventions. Tier 2 interventions are chosen through a campus-designed standard protocol or problem-based model. Student progress is carefully monitored, and interventions are modified as necessary.
- Custom-designed Tier 3 interventions are implemented with the small percentage of students who are not successful with Tier 2 interventions.
- Fidelity of implementation is crucial to success at all three tiers.

As with academic models, the focus of the entire school using Rtl to address behavioral concerns can shift from identifying negative behavior to teaching and promoting positive behavior.

### **What state and federal financial support is available for Rtl?**

Although no state or federal funds are specifically appropriated for Rtl implementation, several funding sources may appropriately be accessed by districts to support this initiative, including but not limited to the following:

- **Accelerated Reading Instruction/Accelerated Math Instruction (ARI/AMI)** - State funding is granted directly to districts for the purpose of identifying and serving students in Grades K-8 who are at risk of not meeting grade-level expectations in reading and math.

- **Compensatory Education Funds** - In addition to serving students at risk of dropping out of school, as defined in Section 29.081(d) of the Texas Education Code, a school district may serve students who meet local eligibility criteria adopted by the board of trustees.
- **High School Allotment** – Rtl initiatives directed at improving academic success, disciplinary/behavioral issues, and drop out prevention may be appropriately funded for Grade 6 – 12 using the high school allotment.
- **IDEA-B Early Intervening Services (EIS)** - LEAs may use up to 15% of the entitlement received under IDEA-B to support Rtl implementation. Local education agencies (LEAs) are encouraged to consider Rtl when using EIS funds and when addressing student emotional/behavioral health and/or disproportionate representation by race/ethnicity in special education.
- **Reading First** - Reading First funds support struggling readers in K-3 through professional development and technical assistance in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Funds also support professional development for K-12 Special Education teachers.
- **Title I, Part A Funds** - Title I, Part A funds must be expended for programs/activities/strategies that are scientifically-based on research and meet needs (identified in the campus' comprehensive needs assessment process) which are listed in the campus' improvement plan.

### **What statewide initiatives exist to support Rtl implementation?**

The Response to Intervention Coordinating Council (RtlCC) was formed in December 2007 to provide support and guidance to TEA and districts as Rtl models are designed and implemented. In addition to representatives from several TEA divisions, all of whom work together to model braiding various services for successful Rtl implementation;

Rtl CC membership includes representatives from the following associations:

- American Federation of Teachers, Texas Chapter (TEXAS-AFT)
- Education Service Centers (ESCs)
- Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA)
- Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP)
- Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL (TXCC)
- Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA)
- Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA)

As determined at the conception of the RtIICC, the council's 2007-09 goals are as follows:

1. Create state guidance tools available to districts on the TEA website.

<b>Guidance Tool</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
The Texas definition of RtI	September 2008
The elements of an effective RtI model	September 2008
Information about appropriate funding sources for RtI implementation	Work in progress
A glossary of RtI terms	September 2008
Frequently asked questions and answers	September 2008
Links to useful resources	September 2008
Information about training opportunities	September 2008
Connections to ESC support	September 2008
Images of successful RtI implementation	Work in progress
Sample forms, procedures, etc. for modification and use by LEAs	Work in progress

2. Provide guidance and direction for the provision of effective RtI professional development through the state system of ESCs.