

# WHAT IS RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION AND HOW CAN IT HELP MY CHILD?

**Traditional Service Delivery.** Traditionally in the schools, students with learning needs (academic, behavioral, and/or social/emotional needs) are given very few options. If the teacher and parents believe the problem is a big concern, that student is evaluated for special education or other categorical programs such as Title I, ESL, literacy services, etc. For an academic problem, often a special education evaluation is done. This evaluation typically involves examining whether or not there is a discrepancy between the student's "ability" and their academic performance. The tools used to assess this discrepancy include standardized, published intelligence and academic tests. If the student qualifies to receive special education services, he or she is given those services. However, if the student does not qualify for services, there are few options available for them or for their parents and teacher(s). Obviously there are many disadvantages to this model of serving students.

**A New Approach in Service Delivery.** In the last decade, a movement has developed across the United States that has resulted in students with learning and/or behavioral challenges being provided with more flexible and responsive services without having to rely solely on special education. In contrast to traditional service delivery, there are several key differences in the new approach: (1) early intervention in the typical, general education learning environment is emphasized, (2) this system maximizes **all** staff's expertise and services, and makes effective use of **all** existing resources, (3) the intent is to assess the student's strengths and weaknesses based on their academic performance or behavior in the regular educational setting, (4) interventions are delivered in this setting and are based on reliable and measurable information, (5) the student's response to the intervention is directly and frequently monitored and charted, and (6) this system is intended to de-emphasize categories and labels while encouraging creativity, problem solving, and providing support to students in a timely manner.

**Terminology.** This movement is referred to in many different ways across the country. Connecticut uses the name *Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI)*. Although these different names all may indicate slight variations in the model being used in various areas, all of these models are based on the important concepts of linking assessment to intervention and making data-based decisions.

## **RTI:**

**An Introduction.** When using an RTI model, a team of school personnel meets regularly to problem

solve. The first step is to identify a problem using data. Next, additional information is collected on the problem and hypotheses are developed as to why that problem is occurring. Based on the hypothesized cause of the problem, an intervention plan is created and implemented. Progress is closely monitored through charted data in order to determine whether the plan is effective or not and whether changes in the plan are needed. This process typically emphasizes the use of functional and multidimensional assessment procedures to identify, analyze, and monitor progress, and places emphasis on alterable variables (e.g., the classroom environment, the instructional design) when intervening in a problem. Additionally, use of research based interventions and the importance of decision-making based on data is stressed.

The implementation of a problem solving service delivery model is not meant to replace special education. However, eligibility for special education must be re-conceptualized. Eligibility or entitlement decisions under an RTI service delivery model no longer rely on a discrepancy between "ability" and performance to determine if students "qualify" for special education under a specific disability category. In an RTI system, a discrepancy is still considered as part of the entitlement/eligibility decision, however, the discrepancy is between the student's skills and the skills of his or her same age peers.

The primary purpose of assessment in an RTI system is to lead to effective interventions in the general education setting. Ideally then, eligibility for special education may be conceptualized as a **resistance to repeated** attempts at intervention in the general education setting. Additionally, sometimes a student demonstrates that they are responsive to intensive intervention and can be successful in the general education. However, if the needed level of intervention is so intense that it exceeds the level of resources in general education, then eligibility for special education should be considered.

As mentioned earlier, this system maximizes **all** staff's expertise and services, and makes effective use of **all** existing resources. Special education teachers, math and reading specialists, classroom teachers and trained paraprofessionals will all be used to provide intervention to students who are at risk and require more frequent and intensive intervention.

If you would like more information on the RTI/SRBI model, please contact your child's principal.