

Frequently Asked Questions about RTI

What is RTI?

RTI is a process designed to help schools focus on and provide high-quality instruction and interventions to students who may be struggling with learning. An intervention is a specific type of **instruction** that is used to help with a specific type of problem.

1. What are the essential components of RTI?

The core features of an RTI process are:

- High quality, research-based instruction in general education.
- Universal screening and benchmarking of academics in order to determine which students need additional interventions and closer monitoring of progress.
- Multiple tiers of scientific, research-based instruction and interventions that are matched to student need and increase in intensity across the tiers.
- Use of a collaborative team for development, implementation, and monitoring of the intervention system at each tier.
- Continuous monitoring of student progress during instruction and interventions, using formative progress monitoring data to determine if students are meeting goals.
- Documentation of parent involvement throughout the process, i.e. progress reports.

2. What are some of the key terms of RTI?

Universal Screening is an assessment process typically completed in the fall, winter, and spring of each school year. Students are given quick, accurate predictors of reading and math to determine which students are “at risk” for not meeting grade level standards that may interfere with their learning. The students whose assessment scores fall below a certain cut score, or **benchmark**, are identified as needing additional academic instruction or interventions. For example, some schools decide that those students falling between the 25th and 10th percentile of local or national norms need Tier 2, or small group, intervention supports and those students falling below the 10th percentile of local or national norms need Tier 3, the most intense intervention supports. Classroom teachers, with the assistance of well-trained support staff, typically administer the screening measures.

An example in the area of reading is as follows: The strongest predictor of reading success is taking a one minute sample of oral reading fluency and determining the number of correct words read per minute and the number of errors. This type of assessment is known as reading curriculum based measurement, or R-CBM or Oral Reading Fluency, ORF. R-CBM is considered the best predictor of students’ “reading health.”

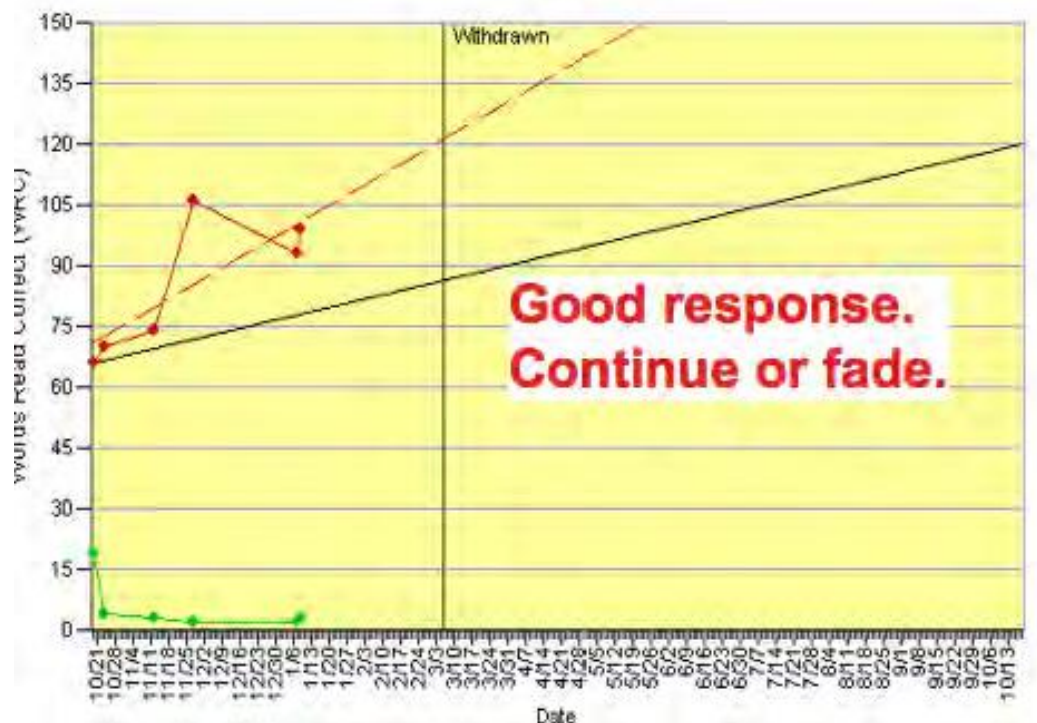
Screening and Benchmarking data are examined to determine first whether or not instruction at Tier 1 is meeting the needs of the majority of students. If the majority of students are succeeding in the core (Tier 1) curriculum, students in need of additional Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports are identified. These students’ academic needs are matched to appropriate interventions. These interventions can begin immediately. Because this process is part of general education, there is no legal requirement for formal parental consent. However, it is critical that parents be informed and involved in the process.

Progress Monitoring is a scientifically-based data collection practice that is used to frequently assess students’ performance to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and intervention. At Tier 1, all students in grade 6 are typically progress monitored three times during the school year with the universal screening and benchmarking process. All students in grades 7 and 8 are screened once a year. At Tier 2, students are typically progress monitored twice a month or more often, and at Tier 3 progress monitoring typically increases to once weekly. When these data are graphed, decisions can easily be made as to whether the instruction and interventions are producing the desired outcome and should be continued or gradually faded, whether the desired outcomes are

questionable and intensity should be increased, or whether the outcomes are negative and a change should be made immediately in the student's instruction and intervention.

The graphs below chart progress monitoring data for an individual student and provide examples of standardized data-based decision rules. The solid dark line is the performance target, while the red line shows actual student performance and progress. The school team would use these data to determine the student's response to intervention and make decisions about changes that might be needed in the intervention.

The graph on the left shows a positive response to intervention, which would lead to a team decision to either continue the intervention or begin to fade it. The graph on the right shows a poor response to intervention, which would result in a team decision to change the intervention in some way, e.g., increase the amount of time the current intervention is provided or implement a different intervention.



Scientific, Research-Based Instruction refers to specific curricula and interventions that have been researched and proven to be effective and reported in scientific, peer-reviewed journals. The research will typically state that if implemented or delivered with high treatment integrity (as designed), the instruction and/or intervention should be effective for specific student needs.

Effective Instruction and Intervention: The following is cited from the “Effective Instruction” page of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) website (<http://www.pattan.net/teachlead/effectiveinstruction.aspx>):

Instruction is the purposeful design, implementation, and evaluation of student learning toward a specific goal. Specifically, effective instruction involves the organization of content, the selection of appropriate learning activities, and the ongoing assessment of student progress toward learning objectives. It is the one variable in the classroom that we control. The goal of effective instruction is to improve student achievement and produce independent, self-regulated learners.

It is also important that instruction be:

- Explicit (I do, We do, You do), which involves teachers modeling skills, students practicing with guided support from teachers, and students doing skills independently.
- Systematic, in that there is a logical order/sequence of instruction, with skills building upon one another. A good systematic program should include a lot of cumulative review and guided practice of previous skills.

Effective interventions are evidence-based, proven to address the targeted skill(s), and implemented as designed (with fidelity).

3. What are the five essential components of reading?

Instruction in reading is the core teaching that occurs with all students. This instruction focuses on the five essential components of reading, which are: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. In addition, oral language development and writing are also included as essential components of literacy. Students need explicit and systematic instruction in the essential components of literacy. This is particularly important for students who are struggling. Parents are encouraged to ask the school district **how the intensity of instruction increases** in the essential components of reading for those students who are struggling and below benchmark. Intensity could increase by more focus on **specific skill deficits**, increasing the amount of time of instruction, and/or reduced group size. Parents are also encouraged to ask the school district for their procedures for ensuring **high treatment integrity** in both their instruction and intervention processes. High treatment integrity refers to implementation of scientifically-based programs exactly as they are designed to ensure the best, most effective student outcomes.

4. What are the potential benefits of RtI?

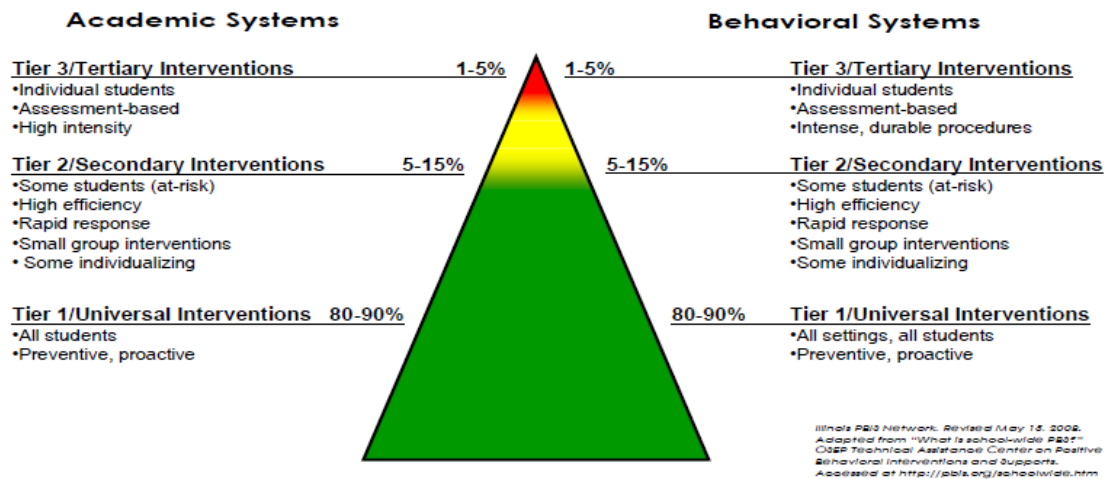
One of the strongest benefits of an RtI approach is that it eliminates a “wait to fail” situation because students get assistance at their level of need promptly within the general education setting. Additional benefits include the following:

- Progress monitoring data drive instructional and intervention changes and keep teachers and parents informed on an ongoing basis regarding a student’s response to instruction and intervention.
- Data regarding student progress are presented in a graphed format that is easy to understand.
- A multi-tiered system of supports provides flexibility to access interventions as needed. For example, if data show progress, a student can move from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and back to Tier 1 within a relatively short period of time.
- RtI techniques have been favored for reducing the likelihood that students from diverse racial, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds are incorrectly identified as having a disability.

5. What is the Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

As shown in the illustration below, a multi-tiered system involves more and more intense instruction and interventions across the tiers. The level of intensity of instruction and interventions a student receives is determined by how he or she responds to the instruction and/or intervention. Like the illustration, Tennessee's RtI model utilizes three tiers. It is important to note that the percentages of students at each tier shown in the illustration and discussed below are not absolute and are provided as examples only. The percentages can serve to help schools think about *how* multi-tiered services are structured and the *intended effect* of the services.

School-Wide Systems for Student Success: A Response to Intervention (RtI) Model



Tier 1: This is the core curriculum and instruction that all students receive. A key question to ask is “Does the core curriculum meet the needs of *most* (e.g., 80-90%) students?” Whole Group/Core Instruction is differentiated to meet ALL students’ needs and is implemented by the general education teacher. For example, many schools have a daily 90-minute Language Arts block for all students with instruction provided by the general education teacher.

Tier 2: This tier involves small group interventions for *some* students (e.g., 5-15%) needing MORE instruction or supplementary interventions. For example, intervention time may be 30 minutes per day in addition to the Core and can be implemented by the general education teacher or other trained and qualified staff (e.g., ELL teacher, related services staff, paraprofessional). These interventions are usually provided to a small group of students with similar skill needs.

Tier 3: At this tier, intensive interventions are provided for a *few* students (e.g., 1-5%) needing the MOST. For example, intervention time may be 60 minutes per day *in addition to* the Core. These interventions are typically implemented by other trained and qualified staff that *could* include the special education teacher. For some students, this could also be a replacement core curriculum. Some students may need a replacement core when they are significantly discrepant (e.g., more than two years behind) from typical peers and the general core is not explicit enough to meet their intense skill needs. Providing a replacement core should be given careful consideration by the RtI team and done with a very small percentage (e.g., 1-3%) of the student population. It is important that the replacement core be evidence-based, aligned with the general core curriculum, and proven to address the specific set of skills being targeted. When students receive a replacement core, there should be weekly progress monitoring and

review of the data to ensure a positive response/improved student outcomes. Students should be re-introduced to the general core curriculum as soon as possible so they benefit from this instruction as well.

6. *What is AIMSweb?*

AIMSweb is a type of measurement system commonly used for screening, benchmarking, and progress monitoring in reading and math. This measurement system meet the criteria established by the National Center on Response to Intervention.

This system contains a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through eighth grade. AIMSweb includes a computerized database for organizing and reporting the data collected. More information is available at <http://aimsweb.com/>

7. *Can students move back and forth between levels of RtI?*

Yes, students should move back and forth across the levels of the prevention system based on their success (response) or difficulty (minimal/no response) at the level where they are receiving intervention services, i.e., according to their documented progress based on the data. Also, students can receive intervention in one academic area at the secondary or tertiary level of the prevention system while receiving instruction in another academic area in primary prevention (core curriculum).

8. *What is the criterion for a successful intervention?*

An academic intervention is successful if there is a sustained narrowing of the achievement gap for the struggling learner as demonstrated by data collected through ongoing progress monitoring.

9. *How long should interventions be implemented in RtI?*

The amount of time required to identify and verify effective intervention(s) will vary by academic/behavioral skill, the age, and the grade level of the student. Interventions should be continued as long as the student exhibits a positive response. The interventions will be modified as appropriate when a student's progress is less than expected (questionable or poor response to the interventions).

10. *What if a student's academic performance is below expectations, but the cause appears to be a lack of motivation, rather than a skill deficit?*

In those cases where the student appears to have the ability to perform grade level work, the focus should be primarily on behavioral interventions to address the lack of effort or motivation.

However, it is often difficult to exclude academic deficits with certainty. Therefore, best practice would dictate that academic interventions be attempted in tandem with behavioral interventions.

11. *If a student has gone through the Problem-Solving/RtI process and was successful (the intervention was discontinued), can interventions be implemented again if the student begins to "slip" in his/her performance?*

The purpose of the Problem-Solving/RtI Process is to find whatever solutions the student needs to be successful. This level of support may change over time depending upon the student's performance, so it is not unusual for students to be provided with Tier 1 or Tier 2 interventions, as the need is indicated.

12. *What role do classroom grades play in RtI?*

Classroom grades are one valuable piece of data that can be used in the RtI process, but because grades may involve some degree of subjectivity, they should not be used as the sole measure of a student's progress toward an academic goal. It is always preferable to use ongoing progress monitoring instruments designed to assess skill-based instruction and acquisition.