

Parent Involvement

Involving parents at all phases is a key aspect of a successful RTI process. Parent support of their child's education increases the likelihood of success. A summary of home-school collaboration research (Esler, Godber & Christenson, 2002) lists the demonstrated benefits of these partnerships for not only students, but for teachers and parents. Benefits for students include higher achievement, higher rate of homework completion, positive attitudes about school, and observation of similarities between home and school. Benefits for parents include receiving ideas from school on how to help their children, learning more about educational programs and how the school works, becoming more confident about ways to help their child learn, and gaining a more positive view of teachers and the school. For teachers, collaboration with parents improves teacher morale, results in mutually more positive ratings of each other (parents of teachers and teachers of parents), greater support from parents of school issues and fund raising, and greater job satisfaction due to improved student achievement. As participants of a Tier 2 or Tier 3 RTI Student Team, parents can provide a critical perspective of their child thus increasing the likelihood that RTI interventions will be effective. For these reasons, schools must make a concerted effort to involve parents as early as possible, beginning with instruction in the core curriculum. This can be done through traditional methods such as parent-teacher conferences, regularly scheduled meetings, or by other methods. It is especially important to consider using community outreach through various community and private agencies, cultural groups, etc. that will inform parents who might typically avoid school involvement. Parent awareness of the RTI process at your school empowers them to understand and celebrate with their child as the school notifies parents of student progress on a regular basis.

Schools should provide parents with written information about its RTI program and be prepared to answer questions about RTI processes. Many schools that have already implemented RTI have prepared parent handouts that explain the process at their schools along with answers to commonly asked questions. It is recommended when preparing written information for parents that the handout should explain how the system is different from a traditional education system and about the vital and collaborative role that parents play within a RTI process. Parents should also be informed about the purpose of school-wide screening measures that are implemented three times per year to not only identify students at risk, but also to assist in matching student skill to instruction. It is important for parents to understand that as a result of the screening measures, their child will be challenged by instruction no matter what the skill level. This means that students who are struggling will get help to build expected skills. It also means that students who are gifted will be challenged with skill level appropriate instruction. The more parents are informed and involved, the greater the opportunity for successful RTI outcomes.

When parents are made aware of the whole process and then are notified that their child is in need of intervention, they understand this means extra help for their child. An outcome of the Montana RTI Pilot Project is the realization that parents are much more knowledgeable about their child's academic struggles by the time the child is referred for formal evaluation for special education because that parent has been continually informed about their child's response to increasingly more intense Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. As a result, it is highly recommended that parents be notified about the need for Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 interventions. A formal parent

Involving Parents in the RTI Process

School Events	How to Involve Parents
Beginning of school year for all students: “Back to School Night” Parent-Teacher Conferences Community Outreach (various agencies, cultural groups)	Send notice/handout home to all parents explaining the RTI process in place to address needs of all students; may include parent-teacher conferences, school newsletter items and success stories. A special effort for community outreach should be made so that parents who typically avoid school contact can also become aware of how the school plans to address the needs of all students.
Tier 1 data collection: CBM, DIBELS (screening); math and reading assessments; report cards; curriculum-based assessments (e.g. chapter tests) and informal assessments; MontCAS reports; any universally administered standardized, reliable, and valid tests results	Notify parent through written notice or document; provide contact information if parent has questions or needs clarification.
Tier 1 and Tier 2: individual student issues addressed	Conduct parent/teacher conference
Tier 2: RTI Student Team meets to address problems of identified students, design intervention and progress monitoring	Invite parent to attend these meetings; solicit input in a formal manner (parent student information sheet) if parent unable to attend
Tier 2: documentation of progress	Continue to send home reports, data reviewed by team; involve parent in the intervention process (Note: If we are teaching in a different way or teaching a targeted skill, the parent should know about this and be guided in helping the student at home to the extent the parent is willing and able.)
Tier 2 and Tier 3: RTI Student Team meetings to review progress and make instructional decisions	Invite parents to participate in meetings and/or receive any of the data that is used by the team with a summary of the meeting in writing accompanied by a follow-up telephone call and/or parent/teacher conference. Provide a graph of progress monitoring towards intervention goals to parent.
Tier 2 and Tier 3: decisions that result in a student spending <i>more time</i> in intensive instruction than typical peers	Send formal letter home explaining the need for more time in instruction to help accelerate learning; make follow-up call to address parent questions

notification letter of a student’s inclusion in Tier 2 or 3 intervention programs should be made, and in fact, the parent should be considered for inclusion during the problem solving process. A Student RTI Team conference is held as a student’s involvement in RTI increases. Decisions related to tier placement or the nature of individual progress monitoring will be made by the Team. At the Team meeting, the teacher providing the intervention shares on-going progress

monitoring information. The parent can be instrumental in intervention planning as a team member.

Because RTI is a method of delivering the general education curriculum for all students, written consent is *not* required before administering universal screenings, CBMs, and targeted diagnostic assessments within a multi-tiered RTI system when these tools are used to determine instructional need. However, when a student fails to respond to increasingly intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and the decision is made to evaluate a student for special education eligibility, written consent must be obtained in accordance with special education procedures.