National High School Center

Meeting the Needs of Significantly Struggling Learners in High School:

A Look at Approaches to Tiered Intervention

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The Challenge

When high school students are significantly lagging behind their peers, schools have too often guided these students into special education services, even if they do not actually have a disability (Countinho & Oswald, 2004). Adopting more targeted, instructional strategies earlier within the general education setting would, in many cases, be more appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of many struggling learners.

Although some elementary schools are reorganizing to better implement tiered interventions to provide more targeted and appropriate academic, social and behavioral supports so that struggling students get the appropriate level of assistance they need to succeed, few high schools have systematically implemented tiered interventions. Schools often organize interventions into levels that represent an increase in support. These levels include universal interventions available to all students, such as more classroom instruction on a particular subject; targeted interventions, wherein students are provided more support than peers, such as tutoring; and intensive interventions that involve more individualized services tailored to the unique needs of the individual student.

Effective tiered intervention strategies depend on accurate diagnostic information and data about what is or is not working for students and what new adjustments need to be made, such as whether to move a student into or out of a more intensive level of support. One increasingly popular approach to gathering and adjusting to key diagnostic information is Response to Intervention (RTI), which may utilize progress monitoring as one of its components.

When identifying students with learning disabilities (LD), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004 (IDEA 2004) allows educators to use a process, such as RTI, that is based on a child's response to scientific, research-based interventions. IDEA 2004 allows educators to use an approach such as RTI instead of, or in addition to, the IQ-achievement discrepancy approach.[1] To date, much attention has been focused on the promise RTI holds as an alternative method to identify students with LD in the early grades.

In addition to being a method used in a comprehensive evaluation for LD, RTI can be applied more broadly across schools as a diagnostic approach that shapes instruction and informs decisions about intervention, eligibility for special programs, design of individualized education programs (IEPs) and effectiveness of special education programs (Batsche et al., 2005). More broadly applied, RTI is a data-based approach to decision-making that can influence the nature of instruction, early intervention and LD determination (Strangeman et al., 2006).

The RTI approach means students are more regularly monitored to determine progress, and scientifically based instruction and intervention are more regularly customized to meet individual student needs. This data-driven approach helps schools identify those students who are identified as having LD earlier and more effectively, while appropriately serving those students who are at-risk and far behind for other reasons such as inadequate prior instruction.

RTI may also reduce the bias in the assessment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Field research on the use of RTI in Minneapolis Public Schools, for instance, showed a reduction of the number of African-American students referred for special education evaluations and the number placed in special education over a four-year period (Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003).

Although RTI has largely been of central concern in the elementary grades, students who arrive in high school performing below grade level in reading, writing or mathematics may benefit from the increased attention to instructional interventions and progress monitoring offered by RTI constructs. Students who have LD that have gone undetected in elementary school stand a better

Response to Intervention: What Is It?

RTI involves a tiered approach to providing the most appropriate instruction, services and scientifically based interventions to struggling students — with increasing intensity at each tier (Cortiella, 2005). RTI is often used in conjunction with identifying students as having a specific learning disability. The RTI approach holds promise for supporting all struggling learners.

Specifically, the IDEA regulations cite the following related to RTI:

Sec. 300.307 Specific learning disabilities.

(a) General. A State must adopt, consistent with Sec. 300.309, criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in Sec. 300.8(c)(10). In addition, the criteria adopted by the State —

(1) Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined in Sec. 300.8(c)(10);

(2) Must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention; and

(3) May permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined in Sec. 300.8(c)(10).

(b) Consistency with State criteria. A public agency must use the State criteria adopted pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3; 1401(30); 1414(b)(6))

chance of being identified as in need of special education. RTI takes the focus off individual student deficits and refocuses attention on the interaction between teaching and learning.

Because RTI has thus far been implemented primarily in early elementary grades, it is not clear precisely what RTI might look like at the high school level. If, as some would argue, RTI is viewed strictly as a model for identifying students with LD, the tiered interventions that accompany RTI may need to be accelerated or more flexibly applied at the high school level. This is in part due to a sense of urgency that exists once a student arrives in high school. Students who arrive in high school with previously undiagnosed LD do not have much time to respond to the sort of interventions that might help them catch up to their peers.

This brief first defines the RTI model, drawing from various examples established in K–8 settings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; Fuchs et al., 2003). The brief then explores implications of applying RTI to the high school level and provides resources appropriate for this application. In particular, this brief points to the promise that RTI constructs hold for monitoring instruction and learning for all students at the high school level and specifically for monitoring the success of targeted interventions focused on transitions and dropout prevention. Implementing RTI requires that general education teachers focus on the instructional supports they provide all students, rather than the identification of deficits in the students who are not achieving at the level expected. The successful implementation of RTI constructs will require the coordination and collaboration of educational professionals across the system to identify the most effective and developmentally appropriate instructional interventions and progress monitoring tools for high school students.

Implementing Response to Intervention

Those implementing RTI services typically employ a three-tiered approach.[2]

1. The first level of intervention begins with evidence-based instruction, progress monitoring and support that is provided to all students. When students begin to falter academically, they receive more specialized prevention or remediation within the general education setting.
2. In the second tier, students who have not been successful in tier one receive targeted interventions, and progress is monitored frequently to determine the intervention's effectiveness. If one intervention is not successful, another more intense intervention may be tried. At this stage, general education teachers typically receive support as needed from other educators in implementing interventions and monitoring student progress.
3. In the third tier, with parental consent, a comprehensive evaluation may be conducted by a team to determine eligibility for special education.

This multi-tiered approach is designed to deliver research-based instruction informed by data, including individualized instruction with remedial opportunities made available in the general education setting. The regular monitoring of the student's response to instruction is particularly important as a means to determine if a student should move from one stage of support to the next. Typically, those students at risk of not meeting end-of-year goals are identified for frequent progress monitoring and remedial instruction. If students in tier three make significant progress, they can move back to tier two and receive less intensive instructional interventions.

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A hallmark of the RTI approach is that it focuses on student outcomes that may help increase accountability for all learners within the general education setting. It promotes collaboration among not only general education teachers and special education teachers, but also among teachers of English language learners, Title I teachers, administrators and parents. The close progress monitoring required of RTI has the potential to reduce the number of students incorrectly identified as having LD when they may be struggling due to cultural differences or poor instruction (Cortiella, 2005).

Regularly collecting, examining and adjusting to what is learned from student data is a process that can be streamlined in the classroom in a way that benefits all students and can be a powerful tool to help make a teacher's job more efficient rather than more difficult. While additional professional development might be necessary to help teachers learn to implement levels of more targeted instruction and other supportive interventions in response to the data uncovered by RTI, the result can be tiers of students moving through instructional materials, rather than numerous individual students being frustrated in their learning.

Background

For years, IQ discrepancy models have been criticized for being an insufficient means for the identification of LD. Typically under this model, student scores on a nationally normed achievement test are compared with their measured ability (IQ), and students are referred for special education services if there is a large enough discrepancy between their achievement on the assessment and their measured ability.

However, discrepancy models have been critiqued for a number of reasons. For example, in the early grades, students have to wait — and fall farther behind — until a large enough discrepancy exists before receiving services. As outlined in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, the discrepancy model of diagnosis cannot be required for identifying students with learning disabilities. Also problematic is the lack of alignment between evaluation measures and instruction. Given the increased focus of assessment and accountability provisions in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), it is especially critical that appropriate and effective evaluation measures and intervention practices be in place for underperforming groups of students (Ernst, Miller, Robinson, & Tilly, 2005).

The Role of All Education Professionals

RTI requires the commitment and expertise of all school professionals, not just a handful of special education teachers and school psychologists. RTI refocuses our attention from a deficit framework and instead allows us to view the complexities of a student's achievement and the link between achievement and instructional approaches. Successful implementation of RTI centers on the coordination and collaboration of district and school staff to ensure the most effective instructional approaches are used to meet the needs of students.

If a school or district elects to utilize an RTI approach to identify students with specific LD as well as those who are struggling for other reasons, many options are then available to states, districts and schools for the implementation of appropriate services and interventions designed to meet the needs of struggling students.

Description of Two RTI Approaches

The two most commonly used RTI approaches are (1) *standard treatment* and (2) *problem-solving protocol*. While these two approaches to RTI are sometimes described as being very different from each other, they actually have several common elements, and both fit within a problem-solving framework (Christ et al., 2005). In practice, many schools and districts combine or blend aspects of the two approaches to fit their needs. Regardless, to better understand them, these two approaches are described separately.

The standard treatment protocol utilizes a line of inquiry that follows a series of steps — assess, identify problems, intervene, and assess. However, rather than having a team select from among several options for intervention, the standard treatment protocol, as its name would suggest, follows a standard research-based protocol to deliver the intervention. The idea is that the standard protocol ensures fidelity of treatment and the protocol utilizes only empirically supported instructional approaches (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997; McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2005).

The problem-solving approach has been used for years as a prereferral strategy by a number of school districts. Like the standard treatment protocol, it follows a series of steps — assess, identify problems, intervene, and assess. However, it differs from the standard protocol in its level of individualization and the depth of analysis prior to selection of the intervention. As a result, some see the problem-solving approach as more flexible than standard protocol (Tilly, Reschly, & Grimes, 1999). Calling this model the problem-solving model has created some confusion in the field, for both models utilize problem-solving as part of their processes.

Unlike the standard protocol, the problem-based approach is designed to focus on sub-skills with specific, targeted interventions. Procedural problem analysis examples include the functional assessment of academic skills (Daly et al., 1996; Daly et al., 1997; Daly et al., 1999) and curriculum-based evaluation (Heartland AEA 11, 2000; Howell & Nolet, 2000; Upah & Tilly, 2002).

The approach follows an inquiry process that requires teams of educators to assess student performance, identify potential problems, develop a plan to address the problem, implement the plan, and assess the effectiveness of the plan. Because the problem-solving approach involves teams of professionals who select appropriate interventions from a range of options, some believe that this model provides flexibility in tailoring the interventions to the specific needs of the students (Canter, 2004; Iverson, 2002). The problem-solving approach, however, requires teams to be familiar with a broad array of interventions.

Both the standard treatment protocol and the problem-solving approach draw on a tiered model of services. Both generally include three or four tiers of services. At the first tier is a research-based general curriculum: the services that all students at every level receive. As students move up the tiers, the services provided become more intensive. So, for example, tier 2 would include targeted instruction and tier three would represent intensive instructional or behavioral intervention.

One High School Example

In California, schools are not permitted to use IQ-Achievement testing as a criterion for determining eligibility for special education services. The Long Beach Unified School District in California employs regular assessments and tiered interventions as part of both

the prereferral process and as best practice for serving the needs of all students. The district has responded to their high school students' literacy needs using a multi-tiered approach that incorporates a battery of eighth-grade assessments that are used to determine the needs of incoming ninth graders. In the spring, all eighth-grade students participate in a screening series, which is an examination of multiple measures of student achievement that includes the CA standards test, course grades and an assessment that is part of the *Language!* curriculum the district has adopted. All incoming ninth-grade students receive core literacy instruction. Based on a review of assessment data, students entering high school half a year to two years behind receive the core literacy instructional program as well as an additional literacy workshop course that provides them with support materials that scaffold the core literacy program. Entering high school students who are more than two years below grade level are enrolled in a double block of language arts that consists of an intensive English language arts program or an after-school reading program.

For their language arts curriculum, Long Beach has adopted the *Language!* and Lindamood-Bell curricula for intensive instructional programs in literacy. Lindamood-Bell focuses on developing phonemic skills for students having serious difficulties with text. Typically, students spend a semester in that intensive intervention and then transition into *Language!* Student progress is monitored throughout the school year using "cluster tests" taken primarily from the Lindamood-Bell and *Language!* curricula. In addition to the systematic supports for students, the Long Beach model includes monthly support meetings for teachers, summer institutes, and coaches that provide professional learning opportunities for teachers.

While the Long Beach approach to instruction and tiered intervention shares its key characteristics with RTI, they do not call this practice RTI, but simply call it "best practice for all students." They ask, "What do the data say about how students are performing and what instructional programs are necessary to support student growth?" Another important aspect of the Long Beach system, according to Office of Special Education Assistant Superintendent Judy Elliott, is that they do not base their decisions on a single data point. Multiple sources of data are examined to determine student needs. Long Beach views its practice as a systems approach to good instruction for all students rather than just a process to diagnose students with learning disabilities. They had such success with the practice at the high school level that they have recently applied it to their middle schools. Roughly 7 percent of students in Long Beach have IEPs as opposed to an average of 12–14 percent nationally (Elliott, 2006).

Many schools and districts across the country have adopted a problem-based, tiered model. States such as Iowa (see Ernst et al., 2005), Illinois, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Florida have also been recognized as leaders in this area. Also, the Vermont Department of Education adapted Colorado's RTI self-assessment tool for schools (see Resources section). Many of these states have adopted RTI models, and some have passed legislation or education regulations on RTI as well as on early intervening services designed to support those students who have not been identified as needing special education or related services but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment. The state of Oregon, in collaboration with the Tigard-Tualtin School District, has also partnered to provide other educators with a number of resources and tools that will support the implementation of an RTI model.

RTI at the High School Level

Much of the RTI work has been conducted in the elementary grades. However, RTI has important implications for high schools.

First, the progress of students who arrive in high school already receiving supplemental services — or extra tutoring — designed to increase academic achievement of struggling students needs to be monitored. Second, while a primary goal of RTI is early intervention and identification, some academic and behavioral challenges may not surface until high school or may have gone unidentified. Third, high student mobility between districts and states and from other countries means that high schools around the nation must serve students new to their school system. Thus, screening students in reading, writing and mathematics as they transition from middle to high school can be an important step to appropriately tailoring instructional approaches to students in ways that can help them succeed.

RTI constructs hold great promise for high schools, particularly for programs and progress monitoring of specific interventions that focus on high school-related issues like transitions and dropout prevention. A number of those interventions — Check and Connect (a dropout prevention intervention), Positive Behavioral Support, RENEW (Rehabilitation, Empowerment, Natural supports, Education and Work), and programs that develop cognitive and metacognitive skills — can be further refined and enhanced through RTI activities.[3]

As a result, in districts where RTI has been adopted, high school teachers and administrators need to be trained in this approach to monitoring and intervention. The success of RTI at the high school level rests on the capacity of educational professionals to collect and interpret student achievement data and to identify and implement interventions that support student progress. Because RTI is a schoolwide effort to refocus attention from identifying deficiencies in students to identifying scientifically based instructional practices that support the learning of all students, it is essential that *all* professionals receive ongoing professional development. Implementing RTI requires changes in teacher roles as well as the culture of classrooms and schools. Successful implementation depends as much upon the degree to which staff members are amenable to those changes as it does upon new RTI technologies (Mellard & Deshler, 2004).

Additionally, outreach to families and communities regarding the role RTI can play in strengthening student learning will be key to its successful implementation. As students enter into more intense levels of RTI that involve a comprehensive evaluation to determine appropriateness of special education services, parents are notified. But community and family outreach needs to start sooner for greater support for, and understanding of, the RTI approach overall. The resources section at the end of this brief lists a number of parent-oriented materials that might be useful in advancing awareness of RTI in schools.

The practices that schools and districts adopt will require ongoing capacity-building and collaboration (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). However, the approach can result in a more coherent educational experience for all students.

Specifically, there are a number of issues related to RTI at the high school level. Some of these are related to research and development, others are RTI practices in high school.

1. Identify screening and progress monitoring tools for high school level students across subject areas: Although DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is frequently used as a universal screener in the

early elementary grades to identify students who are at-risk for reading difficulties and have not responded to tier one (universal instruction) interventions, we know less about measures that can capture the complexity of reading tasks required in middle and high school. The Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation or GRADE (American Guidance Service, 2001) and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised or WRMT-R (Woodcock, 1998) are two commonly employed group and individually administered diagnostics for secondary students. RTI will require that high schools identify multiple, universally administered, standardized, reliable and valid measures that can help identify students who are not keeping pace with their peers across a number of subject areas.

Student progress must be carefully monitored over time, using measures that are tied to local curricular and state content and achievement standards. Not only is it important that the assessments are tied to specific standards, those measures need to be sensitive enough to pick up benchmarks that will lead to the ultimate instructional target within each content area. These measures need to help educators determine whether a student's difficulties are related to instruction, language or cognitive abilities at this developmental level.

2. Identify high school appropriate intervention models that work across subjects: Identification of age- and developmentally appropriate interventions that will work for high school students across subject areas and intervention levels will be key to RTI working at the high school level. This is especially important because the students are assessed on their mastery of grade-level content, so instruction must therefore address grade-level content. Fidelity of intervention is another area that needs to be address within the range of interventions. As interventions are being developed and tested for their effectiveness, we need to be confident that those interventions are implemented with fidelity. With the support of research, states and local education agencies must determine how interventions will be monitored for consistency and integrity. High schools can work to build capacity for multi-tiered reading instruction using RTI to benefit struggling adolescent readers. Drs. Don Deshler and Jean Schumaker have conducted seminal research on multi-tiered reading instruction designed to reach older students using the Strategies Intervention Model developed at the University of Kansas. However, schools and districts need to determine the intervention models that will best meet the needs of the students they serve.

3. Consider implementation issues unique to high schools: When selecting an RTI approach, one must consider implementation issues related to program structure, how students will move through the process (with careful attention to the urgency for identifying real learning disabilities and the problem of inappropriate identification, particularly of English learners), sequencing of activities within tiers, timelines, balancing flexibility with consistency and cut scores for moving between tiers that will work best in a particular high school. It is also important to consider the importance of incorporating culturally responsive principles when considering the appropriate intervention for students from diverse backgrounds.

4. Examine the changing roles for general and special education teachers: Because RTI focuses attention on the connections between instructional interventions and student achievement, the roles and responsibilities of teachers will continue to need examination. No longer will students receiving supplemental services for special education be isolated in self-contained special education classrooms. This has implications not only for general education teachers, but for the special education teacher as well. For example, in addition to

monitoring student progress, general education teachers may need to be trained in techniques that support more targeted instruction. Special education teachers may find their roles shifting to an even greater degree to be team teachers in general education settings or to provide professional development for their general education colleagues.

5. Determine universal instruction across content areas: High schools need to determine what constitutes high-quality, universal instruction across content areas. In addition, high school teachers need professional development in, for example, differentiated instructional techniques that will help ensure student access to instructional interventions that are effectively implemented.

6. Ensure structural supports for professional collaboration: Because RTI models require a great deal of collaboration and coherence, high schools present a unique challenge because of their departmental structures. Teams of educators need opportunities to meet to review student progress and discuss intervention strategies across departments.

7. Ensure ongoing professional development: Because high-quality instruction is key to the RTI model (students should not be identified for tier two services because of ineffective instruction in tier one), staff development is critical to the model's success. Professional development should include introductions to RTI, assessment processes, intervention strategies, effective teaching strategies, best practices for monitoring student progress, interpreting a range of assessment data and using the data to inform instructional interventions.

8. Expand parent communication: Effective parent communications are another key to the successful use of RTI. High schools using RTI should consider refining parent outreach that goes beyond what is required to include community-building awareness and support of RTI.

RTI Research Under Way

To more clearly explore the implications that RTI will and can have on high schools, more research is needed. The U.S. Department of Education has recently given a $1.5 million research grant for a partnership between the University of Kansas and the Illinois Education Department to develop systems for implementing RTI. The purpose of this grant is to create a sustainable approach to building school and district capacity to support students with complex needs. The focus of this partnership is blending academic and positive behavioral supports and the development of decision rules for secondary and tertiary levels of support. One of the sites in the partnership is a high school model demonstration. The National High School Center will be following the results of these demonstrations.

"What RTI does is put everybody on the same playing field. It doesn't matter what your language structure is, whether or not you're disabled, or whether or not you're poor. What matters is what you need to progress at a satisfactory pace in the general curriculum."

Wayne Sailor, Associate Director
Beach Center on Disability at University of Kansas

The Bottom Line

Although the adoption of RTI is clearly becoming more widely used as a result of IDEA 2004 regulations, many practitioners acknowledge that the widespread implementation of RTI will take a number of years and will require ongoing professional development of school personnel at all levels if implementation of RTI is to widely serve the needs of students (for information on professional development, see *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation*, Batsche et al., 2005, pp. 39–42).

Resources

Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, RTI Research Grants. (http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/funding/response/index.asp)

The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring (NCSPM). The Center's mission is to provide technical assistance to states and districts and disseminate information about progress monitoring practices proven to work in different academic content areas (K–5). Their Web site includes articles, PowerPoint presentations and links to resources about student progress monitoring. A technical review committee reviews tools and has created a chart of scientifically based tools to measure K–5 students' progress. (http://www.studentprogress.org/)

The Center on Instruction has several resources available on their Web site (http://www.centeroninstruction.org/). Many of these resources, however, address K–8 interventions.

The Access Center (http://www.k8accesscenter.org/) is a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, whose mission is to improve educational outcomes for elementary and middle school students with disabilities.

National Center for Learning Disabilities. Parent Advocacy Briefs on NCLB are helpful resources to understand how NCLB and IDEA work together to support students with disabilities. (http://www.ld.org/nclb)

National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc (NASDSE). (http://www.nasdse.org/)
This site provides a wealth of resources including a link to NASDSE's RTI initiatives and NASDSE RTI documents. Other resource links will be added to this page in the near future. In addition, there is a link to the National State Policy Database (NSPD), which allows you to locate and download full copies or specific sections of the federal and state special education laws.

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt). (http://www.nccrest.org)
NCCRESt, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, provides technical assistance and professional development to close the achievement gap between students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their peers, and reduce inappropriate referrals to special education. They have a position statement on Cultural Considerations and Challenges in RTI Models (http://www.nccrest.org/publications/position_statements.html) among other resources, including practitioner briefs such as the 2004 Preventing Disproportionate Representation: Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Prereferral Interventions by Shernaz Garcia and Alba Ortiz (http://www.nccrest.org/Briefs/Pre-referral_Brief.pdf?v_document_name=Pre-Referral%20Brief).

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD). Responsiveness to Intervention Symposium (http://www.nrcld.org/). The NRCLD conducts research on the identification of learning disabilities; formulates implementation recommendations; disseminates findings; and provides technical assistance to national, state, and local constituencies.

Council for Exceptional Children. Policy Guide "Response to Intervention — the Promise and the Peril." (http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=7617)

RTI Bibliography developed at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. (http://www.coe.iup.edu/kovaleski/RTI%20bibliography.htm)

Minneapolis Problem Solving Model. (http://speced.mpls.k12.mn.us/PSM.html)

Oregon Resources. (http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/idea/RTI.aspx)

Washington Resources. (http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/pubdocs/RTI.pdf)

OSEP's IDEA Web site. (http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home). This site was created to provide a "one-stop shop" for resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations, released on August 3, 2006.

RTI-Wire. (http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/RTI/RTI_wire.php)

Wrightslaw — Articles and Free Publications. (http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/RTI.index.htm)

References and Weblinks from the National Association of School Psychologists Web site. (http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/RTIreference.pdf)

The Regional Resource and Federal Centers (RRFC) Network. (http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/). The RRFC Network is made up of the six Regional Resource Centers for Special Education (RRC) and the Federal Resource Center (FRC).

Deshler, D. D., Mellard, D. F., Tollefson, J. M., & Byrd, S. E. (2005). Research topics in responsiveness to intervention: Introduction to the special series. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38, 483–484. This article reviews a symposium on RTI organized by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, a joint project of KU-CRL and Vanderbilt University, and introduces 14 of the symposium papers featured in this issue.

Ehren, B. J., & Nelson, N. W. (2005). Identification of language impairment within the responsiveness to intervention approach. *56th Annual Conference Commemorative Booklet*. Baltimore, MD: International Dyslexia Association. This article discusses responsiveness to intervention models and the identification of students with language impairments.

Ehren, B. J., & Nelson, N. W. (2005). The Responsiveness to Intervention approach and language impairment. *Topics in Language Disorders, 25* (2), 119–131. This article examines the potential usefulness of a responsiveness to intervention approach for students with language impairments, including as a framework for identification and for enhancing services in schools.

Johnson, E., Mellard, D. F., & Byrd, S. E. (2005). Alternative models of learning disabilities identification: Considerations and initial conclusions. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 38,* 569–572. This article summarizes four presentations made during a 2003 symposium on RTI that addressed the question "What are alternative models of LD identification other than RTI?"

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This article provides a conceptual background on responsiveness to intervention as a model for LD determination and describes the work of the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities and the federal regional resource centers to explore issues related to RTI.

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End Notes

[1] The RTI approach is considered by many to be a more effective and timely way of identifying learning disabilities than the more traditional discrepancy model that involves comparison of IQ tests with unexpectedly low achievement scores on standardized tests. Although this practice has shown great promise, its efficacy in more effectively identifying students with disabilities is yet to be demonstrated through well-designed empirical investigations.

[2] Some RTI models employ a four-tiered approach.

[3] For a more detailed description of one state's efforts to address drop out prevention using a multi-tiered approach, see the NHSC's March 2007 brief found at: http://www.betterhigh-schools.org/docs/Snapshot_Dropout PreventionNewHampshire_031307_2.pdf. For a more detailed discussion of practices that develop cognitive and metacognitive skills, see: Cobb, B., Sample, P., Alwell, M., and Johns, N. (2005). *The effects of cognitive-behavioral interventions on dropout prevention for youth with disabilities.* Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities.

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