# Frequently Asked Questions about Response to Intervention (RtI)

The questions and answers in this document have been categorized by various topics.

We encourage the reader to review the Illinois RtI state plan and the district self-assessment tool prior to reading through these questions and answers.

State RtI Plan: http://www.isbe.net/pdf/rti_state_plan.pdf

District Self-Assessment Template: http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/rti_template.doc

Teleconference and presentation materials were offered to districts to assist them with the self-assessment template on April 11, 2008. There is also an email link for questions specific to RtI, that email address is rtiselfassessment@isbe.net.

## Implementation of RtI

1.  *What subjects should RtI encompass?  Only math and reading?  Sciences? Electives and arts?*

    RtI should encompass the core academic areas, i.e., reading, math, writing, science, and social studies; however, when planning for the implementation of RtI, districts should focus on reading and math as their starting point and expand to include all core academic areas.

2.  *We are a Reading First District and have been told that RtI groups can NEVER be part of the uninterrupted Reading block. This confuses me, because I do not understand what the difference is between grade level reading instruction and functional level reading instruction. I can understand not having the RtI group during "Guided" or "Shared" Reading, but I don't understand why it can't take place during the "Literacy Centers" time. Can someone clarify this for me?*

    The 90-minute Literacy Block in Reading First is for Tier I or core program instruction only.  If a student is in need of additional interventions those interventions are *in addition to the 90 minutes*. Pulling a student out of the core program minutes for Tier II or Tier III instruction completely defeats the purpose of giving students *more instruction* to help them catch up.  If a student needs Tier II or Tier III interventions those would be outside of the 90 minutes of literacy instruction all students receive.

3.  *What types of supports are available to develop and implement RtI (called "Recognition and Response") in early childhood programs?*

    The state and federal regulations emphasize response to intervention being implemented in kindergarten through twelfth grade.  However, many districts across Illinois implement Recognition and Response or another form of response

to intervention in their early childhood programs.  What these districts must consider is how the two programs align and allow students to transition from early childhood to kindergarten.  The early childhood program should support the K-12 RtI plan.

Due to the current requirement on implementing RtI in the K-12 settings, the state will focus their supports at this level of implementation.  Nevertheless, a district may choose to coordinate with their early childhood program staff and involve this staff in the implementation process for RtI in K-12 to ensure a seamless transition between the two programs.

4.    *To what degree does a district have to implement an RtI process and how much latitude are they given to implement at their own pace?*

With the completion of the district self-assessment tool, a district will have a better understanding of what the district already has in place and what it needs to implement RtI.  ISBE will also have a better knowledge of how to best support districts in implementing RtI.  The district plan that is due January 1, 2009, will outline what a district needs and will establish a timeline of activities to fully implement RtI.

Research indicates that RtI needs to be phased into the K-12 setting to be adequately implemented.  Therefore, the district's plan should clearly delineate the transitional phases the district will commit to for full implementation of RtI.  In K-12 districts, the place to start is at the elementary level and a district should work up to the secondary level.  With that said, secondary schools are not exempt from taking immediate steps with training and implementation of activities, such as differentiated instruction, reading across the curriculum, explicit teaching routines and the use of data to make educational decisions. Also, high school districts must meet the January 1, 2009, timeline for developing a district RtI plan.

5.    *Are different curricula needed for each tier?*

Curricula should be aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards and Assessment Frameworks.  Scientific, research-based interventions are intended to be provided in addition to, not in place of, the core curriculum.  Interventions provided to a student should match his or her needs, as identified through universal screening and ongoing progress monitoring tools.  These tools should utilize curriculum based measures (CBMs); therefore, different curricula may not be needed.  However, districts will need to investigate the interventions and assessment tools that are currently available to supplement their curricula when they complete their self assessment.

6.  *What are some math programs that are approved under the RtI guidelines for tiers 1, 2, and 3?*

    The ISBE has not reviewed specific programs.  However, several other agencies have conducted evaluations of programs.  Here are some of the internet resources that can provide this information:

    http://whatworks.ed.gov/  On the menu bar towards the top of the page select "Intervention/Topic Reports" then below this, the specific topics on which you would like information will display.  From that list, select the topic of your choice. You can customize a chart or select specific program reports from their report.

    http://fcrr.org/FCRRReports/index.aspx

    http://www.studentprogress.org/  Under the small picture of the students at desks titled "Review of Tools" select the "chart" link.

    http://www.promisingpractices.net/default.asp  (select the link in the left margin titled: "Programs that Work"

    http://www.interventioncentral.com/

7.  *When do students receive Tier 2 or 3 interventions or special education services—what subject area is missed (especially at different grade levels K-5, 6-8, 9-12)?*

    This is a scheduling issue that should be determined at the local level.  This should be one of the areas considered when the district completed its self-assessment.  Increased literacy intervention blocks are becoming common practice across the state.  Time is found by carefully examining current master schedules to determine how time is currently allocated and how to use staff resources flexibly in order to provide interventions for students.

8.  *What certification is required for staff who work with students under an RtI model?*

    Teacher certification specific to providing interventions is not required for staff members that work with students under the RtI model.  The staff member that provides interventions should be trained in the program or curriculum that is used by the district.

9.  *How do we adequately implement RtI at the secondary level?*

    The numerous bodies of research reviewed by ISBE have explained that RtI may look different at the secondary level.  The research was conducted by different universities and recognized by professional education associations.  Specific

universal screening tools may not be as prevalent for the secondary education setting; however, curriculum-based and/or department-level assessments could be used as universal screening tools to assist educators in making data-based decisions regarding student performance.  Additionally, the assessments already in place, such as ISAT, EXPLORE, PLAN, and PSAE could be used to make curriculum decisions.

Current research also states that reading must be taught across each content area.  *Every* teacher should be reinforcing reading comprehension skills, regardless of the content or the grade-level he or she teaches.  Teachers must focus their instruction on how students engage with the text to ensure that all students have a full understanding of the text and can demonstrate more than rote learning of the material.  This is where differentiated instructional practices need to be emphasized.  Response to Intervention is about the classroom teacher using a variety of strategies to engage all students in active learning practices to promote the synthesis of learning with the students' demonstration of knowledge.

Below are links to some presentations and resources regarding this topic (the mouse icon/bullet means select that hyperlink on the designated webpage):

http://www.centeroninstruction.org/
🖰 Reading
🖰 4-12 (There are 3 sections: Resources, Research, and Exemplars)

http://www.rti4success.org/
🖰 Events: RtI Summit
🖰 Summit Presentations
🖰 Friday, December 7, 2008: presentation RTI and Secondary Education presentation
http://www.kucrl.org/cec2007/ and http://www.kucrl.org/sim/

http://www.nsdc.org/connect/projects/resultsbased.cfm
🖰 What Works in the High School:  Results Based Staff Development

10.  *What is the role of the special education staff members in RtI for students already identified with disabilities?*

The role of each staff member is determined at the local level.  In regards to a special educator, the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) need to ensure that they comply with the Illinois Administrative Code specific to Work Load for Special Educators 226.735 which states in part:
   *In order to provide students with IEPs the free, appropriate education to which they are entitled, each entity subject to this Part shall adopt a plan specifying limits on the work load of its special educators so that all services required*

*under students' IEPs, as well as all needed ancillary and support services, can be provided at the requisite level of intensity.*

11. *In what setting/location can interventions specific to the RtI model be provided?*

    According to the federal regulations, 34 CFR 300.309(b)(1):
    > *Data that demonstrate that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings, delivered by qualified personnel.*

    Therefore, general education instruction and interventions must be provided in the general education settings. These include interventions specific to the RtI model since RtI is considered a general education practice.

12. *Is the implementation of PBIS a mandate?*

    Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is not being mandated. However, districts do need to use a district- or school-wide positive behavior intervention system to provide a tiered approach to meeting students' behavioral needs.

13. *What are some of the behavior assessments used? Do you have websites that also suggest interventions for the behavioral component?*

    There are a number of assessments and screening tools available; however, research shows that the most effective means of intervention for student behavior is the implementation of a school-wide system of support for behavior. A school-wide systems approach could include an analysis of the school data related to behavior and/or the analysis of the results from screening and assessment tools. Illinois is the national leader in the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. The Illinois PBIS Network is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, and is a component of the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center.

    Data used to determine the need for additional student behavioral support, include office disciplinary referrals, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions.

    For more information on PBIS, please visit www.pbis.org, or www.pbisillinois.org

14. *Is there any discussion when RtI will be mandatory for making emotional disability eligibility decisions?*

    At this time there is not a discussion for the formal use of RtI for making eligibility decisions for emotional disability. However, research has demonstrated that a school-wide systems approach is the most effective way to provide behavioral

interventions (see previous answer).  In the State RtI plan, we support the use of behavioral interventions and "continuous monitoring leads to responsive levels of interventions" (p. 3).  State and federal regulations define the eligibility for services under the category of emotional disability.

## Collaborative Effort

15.  *How does a school coordinate the efforts of Title I, 3 tier model, and reading specialist services?*

All of the supports and services available within the school should be coordinated collaboratively through an integrated approach rather than isolated departments and services with separate curricula and assessments.  Again, this should have been considered when the district completed its self-assessment.

16.  *Are English language learners eligible to participate in RtI?  If so eligible, how does their status affect participation in RtI?*

RtI is intended to benefit all K-12 students; therefore, students who are identified as English language learners (ELL) would participate in RtI just as any other student would participate.  Accordingly, teachers specific to ELL, Title I, Reading and any other content or specialty field should work together to identify and meet students' needs.  Resources on literacy and ELL students are available on the Doing What Works website of the U.S. Department of Education (http://dww.ed.gov/).  English Language Learners is a topic link on the homepage at the time of this publication; however, this webpage is updated regularly with new topic links.  Therefore, if ELL is not currently available, type English Language Learners in the Search bar and the archived information will become available.

17.  *How do gifted students fit into the RtI model?*

All students, including those identified as gifted, can benefit from RtI because of the differentiated instructional practices that take place in all classes.  Classroom teachers that differentiate their instruction provide multiple learning opportunities at various levels of learning.  Students are afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways.  Further, if a student is identified as gifted but is experiencing difficulties in a specific academic or behavioral skill, that student could be considered for some type of intervention to address the targeted skill area.

Through analysis of universal screening data, students' strengths and weaknesses should be identified and instructional decisions need to be based on this data.  Teachers need to tailor their instruction to meet the full range of students' needs.

## Parent Involvement

18.  *What is the process of sharing data with parents regarding the RtI process? What content is shared?  How frequently is the data shared?  Who will analyze the collected data?*

One of the main components of the RtI process is the collaborative team effort. Since the parents are a member of this team, the data sharing and decision-making will be a part of this team process.  Raw score data may be analyzed by building personnel; however, the results or conclusions drawn from this analysis should be shared with the student team, which includes the parent.  The information shared should be specific to the student's deficit area and allow the team to make informed instructional decisions regarding the student's progress or lack of progress in a timely manner.  The frequency of the data sharing and decision-making timeline should be established by the team when the student's intervention plan is initially developed.  Pre-planning future meeting dates allows all team members to appropriately adjust their schedules if necessary to attend the meetings and be a full member of the decision-making process.

19.  *How do we increase parent involvement and parent education activities to implement RtI as it is intended?*

A wealth of resources is available through local chapters of parent and school partnership entities and on the Internet.  Additionally, several ISBE divisions provide resources for schools to increase parent involvement.  As part of our State RtI Plan we have committed to providing activities for parents and schools to increase parent involvement and parent education on this topic.  The Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center for Parents (formerly known as Parent and Educator Partnership) has a variety of resources to assist districts and parents with collaboration and parent involvement activities.  Links to several parent resources are also available on the Illinois ASPIRE website at www.illinoisaspire.org.


## Identification Process

20.  *What are the criteria and process for when a student is referred to RtI?  At what age are they covered?*

In our state plan we define our belief as "In a quality educational environment student academic and behavioral needs must be identified and monitored continuously with documented student performance data used to make instructional decisions."  Therefore, with the three-tier model described in our plan, a school district should administer a universal screening tool in core

academic areas at the beginning of each academic year. The results of this screening tool would then be analyzed by a building level team for the identification of students' strengths and weaknesses and to examine the effectiveness of the core curriculum and instruction. The team would then discuss which students would benefit from supplemental interventions in addition to the core curriculum. Ideally this identification would take place in kindergarten for the student to achieve the greatest benefit from the RtI process; however, such identification could occur at any grade level.

A student would not be "referred" to RtI the same as a student would be referred for a special education evaluation. These are two different processes. A student is identified for RtI through the data collection and analysis by a building-level team. A special education request for evaluation can be "made by a parent of a child or by an employee of a State educational agency, another State agency, a local educational agency, or a community service agency" (23 IAC 226.110(b)). "Each school district shall develop and make known to all concerned persons procedures by which an evaluation may be requested" (23 IAC 226.110(a)).

The Illinois state plan is to be implemented at all grade levels (K-12).

21.   *Who is involved in the identification process for students who may need interventions? Do parents have any role, and if so, what is it?*

Initially, a building level team consists of building staff members; however, once a student is identified by the team as a student who may need interventions, the parents of said child would become a member of the problem-solving team. The goal of the team is to work through the problem-solving model to develop an intervention plan. The parent is a full collaborative member of the team bringing in their own knowledge of the student's learning history to develop the student intervention plan.

22.   *How is it determined who will receive services under RtI?*

As discussed under Question 20, a school team can use universal screening data to identify students who may be in need of additional assessment and/or supplemental or intensive intervention and instruction beyond what is provided through core programming. The team would then use a problem solving process like the one described in the State RtI Plan to determine the level and types of interventions a student might need.

It is important to clarify that RtI is not a *service*. It is a thinking and problem-solving process. ALL students should receive what they need because a district uses an RtI process for determining students' educational needs to be successful.

## Data Tools

*23.*    *What is the institutionalized process of data gathering for the RtI process?*

Illinois is an open adoption state for curriculum, and we will hold with this philosophy when it comes to data gathering for RtI. Therefore, there is currently no "institutionalized" data-gathering process, and we do not plan to establish one beyond requiring districts to implement RtI in alignment with the State RtI Plan. Accordingly, decisions about specific data-gathering processes and tools will be made at the local level and could be considered as local assessment data for district improvement planning.

We can, however, provide information on common data-gathering practices for purposes such as determining student needs and progress monitoring. In general, data gathering to determine student needs typically involves record reviews (e.g., student work, grades, office referrals), interviews (e.g., teachers, parents), observation of the student and the learning environment and testing (e.g., scientifically, research-based universal screening, curriculum-based measures, classroom tests, district-wide and state tests).

The universal screening tool and the curriculum-based measures need to fully align to the district's curricula. Each district needs to analyze their curricula for alignment with the Illinois Learning Standards and Assessment Frameworks to ensure that the curricula can meet the state-approved grade level standards. Additionally, the local assessments, i.e., scientifically, research-based universal screening, curriculum-based measures, classroom tests, department-level tests, and district-wide tests, need to align to the district curricula to ensure that the assessments can adequately measure their students' mastery in the core instruction.

With regard to data gathering for progress monitoring, as stated in the State RtI Plan:

*Within a three-tier intervention model using RtI, progressively more intensive interventions and supports are coupled with more frequent progress monitoring. At Tier 1 data are collected and used as a general screening process for all students and to determine effectiveness of core instructional practices. At Tier 2 data are collected to determine the effectiveness of an intervention and determine if an instructional change is needed. At Tier 3, data are collected for the same reasons as Tier 2, but are collected on a more frequent basis so that educational decisions can be made in a timelier manner. Data systems used for progress monitoring within an RtI model should be consistent across all three tiers and be scientifically based.*

The use of ongoing assessment tools serve three functions, 1) teachers have a consistent and relatively accurate set goals for students, 2) expectations are consistent for all students, and 3) the data collected allows teachers to

continually check on the impact that their classroom instruction has in relation to grade-level standards.

**Team Process**

24. *What is the process for defining what is to be accomplished? How will the content of the intervention be defined?*

    As described in the State RtI Plan, building teams will typically use a four-step problem solving method of decision making to match instructional resources to a student's educational needs. The first two steps of this process are particularly relevant to this question. The first step involves defining the problem the student is experiencing by determining the discrepancy between expected performance and the student's actual performance. Once this has been determined, the team moves to the second step, which involves establishing a student performance goal in the targeted area(s), developing a plan that details specific interventions to address the goal and delineating how the student's progress will be monitored and implementation integrity will be ensured.

25. *What is the timeline for continuing to use the intervention before determining that a special education evaluation is needed? Is there a maximum time that a student can remain in RtI?*

    A special education evaluation may be requested at any time, as the federal and state regulations maintain. Furthermore, Illinois regulations at 23 Illinois Administrative Code 226.130 state "… the district shall not use any child's participation in the [RtI] process as the basis for denying a parent's request for an evaluation." There is no set timeline or maximum amount of time that interventions should continue in general education prior to special education referral. The school team, which includes the parent, must consider each student's needs on an individual basis and use student data to determine how long an intervention should be continued. Factors they will need to consider are: Is the student progressing? Are the interventions being provided sufficient to meet the student's needs? Is the student making sufficient progress to close the gap in the identified area(s)? Can the current interventions be maintained?

26. *How does the RtI process affect the evaluation process?*

    The Special Education Eligibility Considerations section of the State RtI Plan states "…eligibility decisions typically occur within Tier 3 when students do not respond to the most intensive interventions, but may occur at any tier." Additionally, the data collected during the RtI process can and should be used as part of the evaluation process for determining special education eligibility. Also see the response to Question 25.

**Special Education Evaluation**

27. *After the RtI interventions start, when does the timeline for the referral process begin and how are parents informed of their right to an evaluation? Will RtI be included in the Parent Guide?*

    As discussed in the response to Question 25, there is not a specific timeline for implementing interventions prior to referral for special education evaluation. This team decision should be based on student data, and parents may request a special education evaluation at any time during the intervention process. In accordance with the federal regulations at 34 CFR 300.311(a)(7)(ii)(C), districts must be able to document that the child's parents were informed of their right to make such a request, but the regulations do not specify the form of such a notice. ISBE will provide guidance to districts about this issue in the near future.

    In terms of the 60 school-day timeline for completing a special education evaluation, this timeline does not begin until the district receives informed, written parental request for such an evaluation.

    We are currently in the process of revising the Parents' Guide and RtI will be included in the revised guide. This document will explain that universal screening and progress monitoring data primarily prompt intervention support and that decisions are always based on students' progress toward goals, discrepancy from peers, and educational needs.

28. *If a student is found to need an evaluation, what are the types of evaluations used to address processing deficits? Is only the RtI data used, or is other testing included?*

    Neither federal nor state regulations require assessment of processing deficits when conducting an evaluation to determine eligibility under the category of specific learning disability (SLD). The regulations do, however, require that a full and individual evaluation be conducted before the initial provision of special education and related services. The state special education regulations at 23 IAC 226.130 state the following in regard to determining SLD eligibility: "…each district shall, no later than the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, implement the use of a process that determines how the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as part of [emphasis added] the evaluation procedure described in 34 CFR 300.304." Therefore, while a district must utilize an RtI process as part of the evaluation procedures, it is expected that evaluation data will be collected from multiple sources. The decision about other types of data needed and the evaluation tools used to collect them lies with the district team, which includes the parent.

29. *How can the paperwork be minimized?*

The specific documentation and paperwork associated with designing and providing academic and behavioral interventions and progress monitoring will be a local decision. However, in accordance with IDEA 2004, we will be developing state criteria for eligibility determination of a student suspected of having SLD. Districts will need to meet the documentation and reporting requirements that will be associated with implementation of these criteria.

30. *How do students with disabilities already receiving special education services fit into the RtI process?*

All students need to receive instruction in the core general education curriculum, and interventions should be targeted to meet the students' identified strengths and weaknesses. The main difference for students that receive special education services is that a special educator provides services determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

31. *If a student has an IEP for behavior, can he still receive early intervening services (EIS) for reading?*

The response to this question depends on the funding source a district uses to provide the EIS. The federal regulations at 34 CFR 300.226(a) permit districts to use up to 15 percent of their IDEA Part B funds to develop and implement coordinated EIS for students in grades K-12 who are not currently identified as needing special education and related services. In January 2006 the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) published a question and answer document relevant to RtI and early intervening services (EIS). Their response regarding EIS paid for with IDEA Part B funds is as follows:

> *"However, children with disabilities who are currently identified as needing… [special education and related] services may not receive RTI services that are funded with IDEA funds used for EIS…" because EIS is "… for students who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment."*

Therefore, a district may not provide EIS funded with IDEA Part B dollars to a student who already has an IEP. However, there is nothing that would prevent a district from using funding sources other than IDEA Part B to provide EIS to such a student, provided this was an allowable use of funds under the different fund source and EIS was determined to be the most appropriate means of addressing the student's learning needs.

## State Education Agency Responsibility

32. *What technical assistance, resources and support will ISBE employ to support public awareness, parent training and personnel training to implement assist district with implementing RtI?*

    ISBE already has several training modules that can be utilized for professional development and support to districts, including the modules posted on the Illinois ASPIRE website at www.illinoisaspire.org).  However, the district self-assessment tool will determine what additional resources we need to provide to districts to best support RtI implementation.  Once the district self assessments have been reviewed and summarized, we will plan our supports based on the identified needs of the districts.  It is projected that training will begin in late summer or early fall of 2008.

33. *To fully implement RtI with fidelity and integrity there is an increased emphasis on data collection and analysis; what technology and training opportunities will be provided to staff members that are involved in implementing RtI?*

    Under the State RtI Plan ISBE has made a commitment to:
    - *"Work with district administrators and staff representing both general and special education, such as those involved in curriculum and instruction, bilingual education, professional development, etc., to reinforce their leadership and implementation roles in the RtI process.*
    - *Oversee and coordinate the provision of professional development to assist districts in the development and implementation of a plan for Response to Intervention(RtI) (e.g., Illinois ASPIRE, the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center [ISTAC], Regional Support Providers [RESPROs], Intermediate Service Center [ISCs], Regional Offices of Education [ROEs]), Institutions of Higher Education [IHEs], and special education joint agreements/cooperatives).*
    - *Oversee and coordinate the provision of ongoing technical assistance to districts as requested (e.g., Illinois ASPIRE, ISTAC, RESPROS, ISCs, ROEs, Illinois Resource Center [IRC] and special education joint agreements/cooperatives)."*

    The district self-assessment template will assist us in determining the types and levels of assistance that districts need in order to implement RtI.  Professional development and technical assistance activities are expected to begin in late summer or early fall of 2008.

34. *What funding sources are available to districts for implementing RtI?*

    The State RtI Plan fully discusses funding options available to districts.  As a state agency we are continuing to analyze other funding sources and as these become available, we will notify qualified districts.

35.   *Can Title I monies be used to purchase progress monitoring tools?*

      According to the USDOE's webinar on June 16, 2008:

      *"Generally, Title I, [school-wide Title I] … funds may be used to fund progress monitoring if it is used to determine the response to an intervention that may be funded by Title I, … funds."*

      Therefore, school-wide Title I funds may be used to purchase progress monitoring tools.

36.   *Will there be uniformity in developing student intervention plans—identifying and meeting student needs?*

      The technical assistance and support provided by the state will clarify the expectations of identifying and meeting student needs.  Specific components of a student's intervention plan will be based on the problem-solving model with the use of data-based decision-making and quality interventions.

37.   *Will there be a template available to districts to assist them in completing the RtI plans that are due in January 2009?*

      Rather than developing a separate template , the Illinois State Board of Education intends to use the District Improvement Plan (DIP) template available on the Interactive Illinois Report Card website (http://iirc.niu.edu/) for districts to incorporate objectives and activities that address the required components of the District RtI Plan..  Guidelines for completing this process will be available at the end of the summer 2008.  In the interim, districts may access basic information about the DIP, including a downloadable DIP work template, on the ISBE website at http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/district.htm.