

Response to Intervention (RtI) comes to Illinois Early Childhood Programs!!

Many IDEC members have expressed curiosity about the Response to Intervention (RtI) movement and how it might impact the early childhood field here in Illinois, so let's talk about it!

What is "Response to Intervention (RtI)"?

Response to Intervention (RtI) refers to a general and special education service delivery model designed to positively impact student achievement of essential skills. Generally, the RtI service delivery model is defined as one in which high-quality instruction and/or interventions matched to student needs is/are provided and important educational decisions are made using student learning rate over time and level of performance. This frequently used definition comes from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE) document, authored by George Batsche and others. Copies may be ordered from the www.nasde.org website at a cost of \$15 each. The core RtI principles include the following, also excerpted from the NASDE document. One (1), we can effectively teach all children; two (2), intervention should occur early when the first signs of learning difficulties arise; three (3), a multi-tiered model of service delivery should be employed; four (4), a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tiered model should be used; five (5), research-based scientifically validated intervention/instruction should be used to the extent available; six (6), student progress should be monitored to inform instruction; and finally (7), instructional and programmatic decisions should be based on data. Other resources on RtI are also available from the NASDE website. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) supports the RtI service delivery model and resources on RtI are located on the CEC website (www.cec.sped.org; look under "News and Issues", then "Current Special Education Topics", and the "Response to Intervention").

What is the status of Response to Intervention (RtI) in the state of Illinois?

The state of Illinois formally adopted an RtI service delivery model when new special education rules and regulations were adopted in June 2007. The state of Illinois "RtI Plan" can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/pdf/rti_state_plan.pdf. During Spring 2008, districts must conduct a "self-assessment" of their ability to implement an RtI service delivery model. District officials must submit their completed district self assessment no later than May 23, 2008, to the Illinois State Board of Education by emailing it to rtiselfassessment@isbe.net. A Webinar was held on April 11th, 2008 to help districts conduct their self-assessment according to an ISBE template, and the Webinar is posted on the ISBE website with the PowerPoint presentation; a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section is to be developed and posted very soon. Each district's plan must be ready for implementation by January 2009.

How will this apply to preschool-age children?

Although the RtI model will not be mandated for implementation around the state for preschool-age children, tiered instructional models that include these core principles represent "recommended practice" in early childhood programs. One frequently referenced RtI model for preschool-age children is the "Recognition and Response" model being developed at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. One of the "Recognition and Response" co-authors is Virginia Buysse, President Elect of DEC. You can access it at the FPG website: www.fpg.unc.edu/~randr/. Furthermore, "Recognition & Response" is consistent with practice guidelines and program standards endorsed by the early childhood field, such as National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Program Standards, Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices, Head Start Program Performance Standards and Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. A Webinar on "Recognition and Response" is available through www.nectac.org (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center). One

of the other “Recognition and Response” authors, Mary Ruth Coleman, is also the immediate Past President of CEC. She stated quite eloquently in Niagara Falls at the 2007 DEC Conference that in the early childhood vision, adults “recognize” that some children are going to have difficulty experiencing success with the recommended general preschool curriculum and instructional practices so then the adults “respond” to the children in order to help them be more successful; in the RtI models developed for older children, the responsibility seems to lie with the student to respond to instruction. For more information, read Mary Ruth’s comments at the RtI location on the CEC website noted above. All IDEC members are encouraged to ask about development of their district’s RtI plan and to see about including provisions for “recommended EC practices” to be included in the plan for our young learners.

Are there any local resources for Preschool RtI models?

Yes, several different models are currently being developed around the state. In March, 2008, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) held Early Childhood (EC) Coordinator Roundtables in Joliet and Springfield. At these meetings, panel presentations were conducted by staff from the following districts; Indian Prairie District # 204 (LuAnn Shields, Pam Laubenstein, Lisa Snow and Robin Miller Young; e-mail contact: LuAnn_Shields@ipsd.org), Valley View U-365 (Donna Nylander and Lisa Cipriano; e-mail contact: nylanderd@vvsd.org), and North Suburban Special Education District (NSSED) (Nancy Kind; e-mail contact: nkind@nssed.org), on current, preliminary efforts to create tiered models of instruction that include the RtI principles noted above. Maureen Whalen of Woodford County Special Education Cooperative was invited but unable to attend, and she is happy to reply to requests for information about their program (contact: mwhalen@schools.mtco.com). In addition to the EC Roundtables, ISBE, Division of Early Childhood will be offering ongoing professional development focusing on preschool RtI, so look for more opportunities to learn about this topic through ISBE technical assistance projects, STARNET and IRC. Also, the DEC’s national conference to be held in Minneapolis, MN in October 2008 will have EC RtI and Problem-solving as a theme. Think about going! More information can be accessed at the DEC website: <http://www.dec-sped.org>.

How can we get more information on RtI in general?

Remember that Response to Intervention (RtI) is just one keyword that will describe this change in service delivery models. You should also be alert to other key words, such as “Problem-solving”, typically a four-step process interdisciplinary teams use to (1) determine how a student’s (or group of students) performance of essential skills is discrepant from a desired level, (2) generate possible solutions to improve student performance, (3) decide on an intervention plan and then implement it with integrity, and then (4) to review student(s) progress to determine efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention. Using the terms “Tiered Instructional Model,” “Progress Monitoring,” and “Early Intervening Services” will also help you tap into the sources of information that might be helpful.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS: A number of PowerPoint presentations that have been conducted at recent conferences can still be accessed by the sponsoring organization. Check the following locations for more information:

A. www.illinoiscec.org The Illinois Council for Exceptional Children (ICEC). There is a wonderful PowerPoint of the conference double session held in November 2006 by Dr. Judy Hackett and Dr. Tim Thomas on RtI, especially as it is envisioned to be implemented across Illinois. After accessing the website, look under “Conventions”, and then click on the first page of their PowerPoint.

B. www.iaase.org The Illinois Alliance of Administrators in Special Education (IAASE) have presentations on RtI that may be viewed. They host several well-attended conferences around the state several times a year. After logging on, check the PowerPoint presentations for September 2007 conference held in Tinley Park, in particular.

C. www.nasponline.org/ The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). There are many resources here, though some are “Members Only”, such as downloading the presenters’ PowerPoints from the recently held conference (April 2008) in New Orleans. Find a colleague who is a NASP member and ask them to help you locate the needed resources.

D. www.ilispa.org/ The Illinois School Psychologists Association (ISPA) is the repository of resources from the Flex Delivery System and up-to-date state of Illinois RtI resources. Go to the home page, and click on the “RtI” icon on the bottom of the page.

E. www.dec-sped.org The Division for Early Childhood (DEC of CEC); look under “Conference” and then “Highlights from Last Year”, for PDF documents of presentations from the Fall 2007 conference held in Niagara Falls.

F. www.rti2007.org/ Many different professional groups were brought together in December 2007 by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to assist states with RtI implementation.

WEBSITES: Here is a list of websites that may have useful resources:

A. <http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/illinois-aspire.htm> This is the website for a large federally funded “State Personnel Development Grant” administered by the state of Illinois to “increase the capacity of school systems to provide early intervening services, aligned with the general education curriculum, to at-risk students and students with disabilities”. Through this website, you will be able to locate Regional Coordinators who can help you with RtI questions.

B. <http://www.studentprogress.org/> This website was designed to help educators learn how to monitor students’ progress; it is funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

C. <http://www.rtinetwork.org> A website that just came “on-line” sponsored by several national education organizations, with support from the National Center for Learning Disabilities. It has a “Pre-K” section that includes a nice visual of the similarities and differences of the elementary and Pre-K RtI (“Recognition and Response”) models.

D. www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/ A website for the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion located at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill), it includes many resources on professional development for early childhood educators interested in inclusion and RtI.

E. www.interventioncentral.org A wealth of information on RtI topics, including assessment tools and instructional strategies to meet the needs of struggling students. You can join his list-serve by logging onto the website and adding your e-mail address.

F. www.rti4success.org Another resource on the basics of RtI, sponsored by the American Institute for Research.

LISTSERV: Here is a list of some additional listserv you may want to join:

- a. ilispa@sbcglobal.net Respondents from around Illinois and the Midwest ask and answer questions about development and implementation of RtI models, preschool through high school. Operated by the Illinois School Psychologists Association (ISPA), though you do not need to be an ISPA member to join the list-serve.
- b. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NASP-RTI/> A list-serve operated by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) though you do not need to be a NASP member to join. Members ask and answer questions about RtI from across the country.
- c. Npdci-news@listserve.unc.edu A list-serve affiliated with the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion located at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (UNC-CH), noted above.

TRAINING AND PRINT RESOURCES: Many local, state, and national professional organizations are offering training modules on RtI related topics at annual conferences or as special “stand alone” training sessions; check also for articles in the “practitioner” publications of these organizations as well as the data-based articles in peer-reviewed journals. Larger Illinois districts and special education “cooperatives” (i.e., www.sased.org) are also sources for training. The Illinois Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Conference Program Committee is working hard to secure speakers on various components of RtI for the Fall 2008 conference to be held November 6, 7 and 8 at the Eaglewood Resort in Itasca. Check the website periodically as more information will be posted as it becomes available.

A brief listing of published references on RtI, Recognition and Response, and tiered instructional models is presented below. More on RtI resources in the next IDEC newsletter!

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