



School Psychologists and Response to Intervention

The California Association of School Psychologists Board of Directors supports the implementation of systems that provide students with multiple tiers of support to meet both academic, social-emotional and behavioral needs. The purpose of this paper is to outline the essential knowledge and skills that school psychologists need to actively participate in the academic supports that are part of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). In this paper we use the term Response to Intervention (RTI2) to refer to the academic supports that may or may not be part of an overarching MTSS. RTI2 is used instead of simply RTI to emphasize the importance of core instruction as well as interventions. The purpose of the paper is primarily to consider professional development needs for school psychologists, not to provide a thorough review of RTI models.

Introduction to Response to Intervention and the Three-Tiered Model

RTI2 models have three critical components: (a) a focus on high quality, research-based instruction at all levels, (b) monitoring student progress in response to that instruction and (c) determining the need for more intensive services based upon two separate criteria: the student's standing in comparison to benchmarks and rate of growth in response to instruction/intervention. RTI models require collaboration between regular and special education in the provision of services. This collaboration may involve activities such as consultation regarding assessment of progress or direct service to students.

IDEA 2004 includes language that allows for the use of "a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as a part of the evaluation procedures" (Section 614 (b)(6)B). Using response to intervention represents an approach to assessment that is based in a problem-solving approach rather than the traditional model emphasizing differential diagnosis. A problem-solving approach, in its simplest form, involves four steps: defining the problem, implementing an intervention, evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention, and making a decision as to the need for further intervention (either a different intervention or more intense intervention). The focus of assessment shifts from diagnosing student problems that prevent him or her from learning to determining what strategies are most effective in promoting student learning. When the resources needed to establish learning become too intensive for general education to manage, eligibility for special supports and services is considered. In addition, the assessment process is ongoing and occurs prior to and over the life of the intervention process. Essential to understanding and implementing RTI2 models are (a) using data measuring a student's response to an intervention as a key part of an evaluation and (b) the requirement that all assessments be instructionally relevant, and (c) new standards for technical adequacy associated with intervention delivery (e.g. intervention integrity), measurement of child behaviors (e.g. adequate modeling of trend or growth over time) and systems of decision-making (e.g. cut-scores).

Maximizing the potential of an RTI2 model requires systems level change addressing such issues as: (a) the provision of evidence-based core instruction (b) the provision of intervention services within general education, (c) monitoring and analyzing data on student progress and (d) the use of that data in determining eligibility for services. School psychologists have the training and background to be active consultants in the development and implementation of RTI2 models in their schools.

A consideration critical to California practitioners is to ensure that RTI2 models are responsive to the diversity of our schools. As California school psychologists work with districts to implement RTI2 models, it will be particularly important that issues of language and culture are addressed and models are designed to account for these variables. For example, expected response to interventions may be different for children with diverse language backgrounds. School psychologists should seek to inform themselves about research regarding RTI2 and diversity as it becomes available in order to more appropriately work with the model in their respective schools.

Response to intervention is often presented as a three-tier model in which each tier provides an increasingly intensive level of intervention. A child's learning acquisition subsequent to academic intervention is utilized to determine if he or she requires more intensive instruction in order to make further progress. The model rests upon the use of empirically supported and evidence-based instruction for all students. Students not making sufficient progress in response to this instruction are first provided with interventions within the classroom. Such interventions would likely be extensions of the curriculum and be provided by teachers individually or in small groups. Children not showing adequate progress in response to these classroom interventions would be referred for further analysis of the academic problem and more intense interventions. Intensity can be increased through such characteristics as duration, size of group or nature of instruction. Such interventions are generally provided by trained professionals other than the teacher and often outside of the child's classroom. Children who do not respond to these first- and second-tier interventions may either be referred for a more intensive intervention or a comprehensive evaluation.

Comprehensive evaluations should serve to identify instructional need and determine special education eligibility. Along with progress monitoring and other data gathered at tiers one and two, additional data sources that provide reliable, valid and instructionally relevant information are selected as necessary.

Knowledge/Skills Important for the School Psychologist

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION PRACTICES. School psychologists need to have the knowledge and skills that will promote sound educational practice (i.e., the use of effective behavioral/instructional strategies and interventions that facilitate student attainment of academic standards). This is the foundational knowledge that forms the basis for response to intervention models.

- Across all tiers, school psychologists need general knowledge of the California standards and expectations and how the school curricula and general education assessments relate to these standards.
- Recognizing that behavior can impede learning, behavior management strategies are also part of this model. School psychologists have knowledge of effective school wide, classroom-based and student behavior management strategies. Such strategies are also applied within a problem-solving model.
- At tier one, school psychologists should be able to assist school staff in determining if the general education curriculum and classroom-based interventions have the requisite empirical support to help students reach state standards. In other words, they need to be able to help schools evaluate the adequacy of their general education strategies.

- At tier two, school psychologists need the skills necessary to promote the use of evidence-based interventions that go beyond typical classroom-based instruction. These interventions are generally delivered by specialists outside of the classroom and target specific skill deficits. School psychologists need to have knowledge of effective intervention strategies in general and how to evaluate the likely effectiveness of specific interventions or strategies through such approaches as functional academic assessment.
- At tier three, school psychologists need to have the knowledge and skills necessary to consider all variables that potentially affect student learning. This includes knowledge of how to identify areas of academic need and the required instructional accommodations and modifications to facilitate attainment of state standards.

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS. School psychologists have the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate the likely effectiveness of instruction and intervention for a particular child.

- Across all tiers, school psychologists need to have access to resources related to interventions with proven efficacy and the skills to determine whether an intervention is likely to be effective in a given situation.
- Across all tiers, school psychologists need to know strategies designed to increase the likely effectiveness of an intervention such as intervention training and monitoring of implementation.
- Across all tiers, school psychologists need to know how ecological (both home and school) and student related variables influence intervention design and implementation.
- Across all tiers, school psychologists need the knowledge and skills required to utilize single-subject experimental design strategies to determine effective interventions for identified students.
- At tier one, school psychologists need to have knowledge of effective classroom-based instruction and methods for differentiating instructional strategies according to student need.
- At tier two, school psychologists need to know how to identify key student and intervention characteristics and consider these characteristics in determining which interventions are most likely to result in positive outcomes.
- At tier two, school psychologists need to have the ability to identify specific skill or performance deficits in order to assist in the process of selecting specific interventions.
- At tier three, school psychologists need knowledge of assessments that will provide information useful in designing and implementing interventions.

- At tier three, school psychologists will have the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate the development of and participate in comprehensive assessments that identify areas of academic need and areas in which a student may require instructional accommodations and modifications. These data are also used to determine if the student is eligible for special education. The comprehensive evaluation considers all variables that potentially affect the individual student's learning. This is the most intensive level of individual assessment. Comprehensive assessment data sources are selected because they (a) are judged to have the potential to provide information about a student's specific learning needs and (b) have been supported by the empirical literature to provide data useful in the selection of instructional accommodations and modifications.

MONITORING PROGRESS AND RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION. School psychologists have the knowledge and skills needed to monitor the academic progress of students as they strive to meet state standards.

- Across all tiers, school psychologists have the knowledge and skills to monitor student progress over time and use these data to inform decisions about instructional effectiveness.
- At tier one, progress monitoring involves (a) collecting data for all students through universal screening, (b) the development of benchmarks and (c) the monitoring of individual students. School psychologists need to possess the knowledge and skills required to facilitate the use of valid and reliable methods of screening students in the general education curriculum and identifying students at risk of academic failure. School psychologists should assist schools in collecting and analyzing data for establishing benchmarks to serve as key indicators for adequate academic progress. School psychologists also should be prepared to promote the use of systems for monitoring the progress of individual students in relation to these key benchmarks.
- At tier two, school psychologists have the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate the development of systems for (a) monitoring the progress of individual students in response to interventions, (b) helping teachers use that information to adjust instruction and (c) comparing a student's growth and the level of performance to his or her peers.
- At tier three, in addition to progress monitoring skills required to address tier two questions, school psychologists also have the knowledge and skills needed to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. These evaluations use data from multiple sources to address educational need and eligibility for special education services. School psychologists have the knowledge and skills to identify data sources and assessment tools that (a) are judged to have the potential to provide information about a specific student's specific learning needs and (b) are supported by the empirical literature to provide data useful in the selection of instructional accommodations and modifications. Such data sources may include instructionally relevant information collected at tiers one and two: for example, data identifying specific performance or skill deficits.

Resources/Guidance/Training

All-around site for many different links pertaining to IDEA 2004 and RTI

www.nasponline.org/advocacy/ldreferencesnew.pdy

California depository for web site pertain to RTI; includes sites and reports on other state successfully using RTI models: www.casponline.org

INTERVENTIONS

What Works Clearinghouse www.whatworks.ed.gov

Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000. Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read. www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp

www.nasponline.org

Florida Center for Reading Research

www.fcrr.orgwww.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/index.html

University of Oregon reading tests reviews www.idea.uoregon.edu

PROGRESS MONITORING AND CBM

CBM and NCLB -<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/aypstr/index.html>

Training materials/probes www.interventioncentral.org

Read Naturally www.readnaturally.com

CBM Website List - <http://www.luc.edu/schools/education/c487/lap/velde.htm>

Progress monitoring www.studentprogress.orgwww.aimsweb.com

University of Oregon – DIBELS <http://dibels.uoregon.edu> and www.idea.uoregon.edu

Florida Project -<http://sss.usf.edu/cbm/cbm.htm>

IDEA 2004

<http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/2004LDRoundtableRecsTransmittal.pdf>

<http://www.ideapractices.org/>

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/lr/ideareathztn.asp>

http://www.cec.sped.org/pp/IDEA_120204.pdf

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/idea/news/05.0613.regs.reformat.htm>

RTI

National Association of State Directors of Special Education has publication on RTI

www.nasdse.org

www.wested.org/nercc/rti.htm

www.nrcl.org/symposium2003/index.html

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Written by Catherine Christo, Ph.D., Region X Representative on the CASP Board of
Directors and the CASP RTI workgroup.