



Response to Intervention (RtI) in Early Childhood

CENTER FOR RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD (CRtIEC)



RtI in Early Childhood: Questions and Implications

- What is RtI?
- Why use RtI in Early Childhood?
- How does RtI differ from traditional models of service delivery in schools?
- What does the RtI model look like in practice?
- How CRtIEC can help?



What is Response to Intervention (RtI)?

RtI is a systematic problem-solving process designed to help teachers:

- Allow for earlier identification of students' difficulties in the classroom
- Provide students with a level of instructional intensity matched to level of ability
- Provide a method to gauge the effectiveness of instruction and guide change or improvement to instruction



What is Response to Intervention (RtI)? *Continued*

- RtI is intended to reduce the need for special education by intervening early (not waiting for the student to fail prior to intervention)
- RtI services are based on researched strategies
- Today, RtI is currently utilized for school-aged children (k-12), but there is no standard model in early childhood (pre-k)



RtI: Accountability and Support in Early Childhood

- RtI is preventative, targets all children (not just those in ECSE), & has the potential to reduce referrals in schools
- RtI emphasizes the need for High Quality Care and Education through promotion of research-based curricula and instruction
- RtI is supported through Early Childhood movements, including *Early Reading First*, *Good Start*, and *Grow Smart*, as well as universal preschool initiatives



RtI as a Response to Tradition

- Prior to RtI, children were identified with learning disabilities after experiencing school failure
- This traditional model, known as the discrepancy model (a.k.a. wait-to-fail), relies on teacher or parent referral and requires a severe discrepancy between a child's aptitude (intelligence) and achievement (ability in a content area) scores in order to *potentially* receive services
- RtI emphasizes that all children are screened early in their education and then continuously monitored to identify the need for targeted or intensive interventions



Response to Intervention in Practice

RtI relies on a multi-tier prevention system to identify students with Learning Disabilities:

Tier 1: Primary prevention level, Universal Instruction

Tier 2: Secondary prevention level, Targeted Instruction

Tier 3: Tertiary prevention level, Intensive Instruction

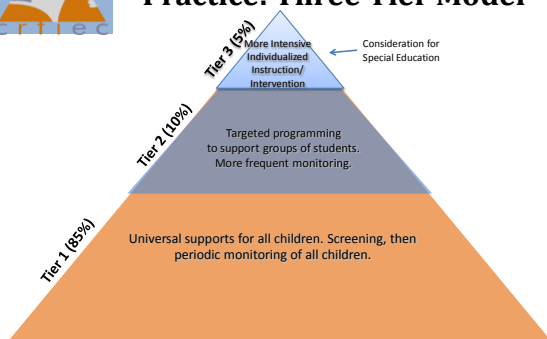


Typical RtI Procedure and Practice

- Screen all students to identify possible students at-risk for academic problems
- Progress monitor students suspected to be at risk to (dis)confirm risk
- Provide additional academic help to at-risk students while progress is monitored
- Identify students who do not respond to additional assistance and provide more intensive educational help; students identified receive comprehensive evaluation to answer questions and to determine disability
- Monitor progress in intensive prevention to set IEP goals, develop effective programs, and determine exit decisions



Response to Intervention in Practice: Three-Tier Model



Response to Intervention in Practice: Three-Tier Model

- The following slides give an overview of an RtI service delivery model
- Characteristics of a typical RtI model are indicated by the color blue: these include features that are **not** early childhood specific, but instead, are universal despite the target population
- Characteristics of RtI model specific to Early Childhood are indicated by the color orange

RtI Tier-1 Service Delivery: Primary Prevention and Universal Instruction

- **Children Served:** All students
- **Intervention Practices:** include evidence-based universal curriculum that meets specified criteria (e.g. early literacy and language)
- **Instruction Targets:** oral language and vocabulary; phonological and phonemic awareness, print awareness and alphabet knowledge; comprehension
- **Emphasis:** daily large and small group instruction on early literacy and language
- **Teacher involvement:** combination of teacher-directed and independent activities
- **Instruction:** low to moderate specificity of instructional design
- **Student progress monitoring:** quarterly in the four curricular areas
- **Data-Based Decision Making:** local norms establishing expected level and rate of performance

RtI Tier-2 Service Delivery : Secondary Prevention and Targeted Instruction

- **Children Served:** students not making adequate progress in Tier 1
- **Intervention Practices:** supplemental to Tier 1; small groups with support of classroom aides and/or paraprofessionals; include increasing opportunities to respond in the 4 curricular areas delivered in center activities that are paraprofessional-supported
- **Instructional design:** Moderate to high specificity of on targeted skills from core curricula
- **Teacher involvement:** paraprofessional and classroom aide supported center activities
- **Progress Monitoring:** carried out monthly and as well as weekly mastery monitoring probes designed to measure the skills being taught in specific curricular domains
- **Data-Based Decision Making:** ongoing mastery monitoring results in targeted intervention and targeted services delivered to children who score below the expected rate of progress (1 SD or more below norms)

RtI Tier-3 Service Delivery: Tertiary Prevention and Intensive Instruction

- **Children Served:** students not making adequate progress in Tier 2
- **Intervention Practices:** supplemental or alternative to T1 instruction; systematic scope and sequence of skills, scripting of lessons, explicit direct teaching, scaffolded learning, sufficient practice to learn skills to mastery, ample opportunities to practice, immediate teacher feedback
- **Teacher Involvement:** paraprofessional and classroom aide led activities delivered to small groups of 1 to 3 students and can include an additional 15-30 minutes of scripted instruction
- **Progress monitoring:** monthly with weekly curriculum-based assessments designed for measuring progress in acquisition of high priority skills targeted by Tier 3 intervention
- **Data-Based Decision Making:** ongoing progress monitoring results in targeted intervention; Progress in Tier 3 can lead to Tier 2 or Tier 1 services; Continued lack of progress in Tier 3 results in special education services with individualized intervention addressing unique needs



Implications of RtI in Early Childhood: Considerations

- There is an increased emphasis on helping children acquire key school readiness concepts prior to kindergarten and some children require additional supports to learn
- Early childhood currently has standardized interventions, research-based curricula, and an assessment system but prekindergarten programs have no evidence-based approaches for early identification and intervention in educational domains including those of literacy and language
- Existing models that are based on the RtI framework, including the EMERGE model (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Recognition and Response have shown positive results



Implications of RtI in Early Childhood Education & the added Benefit of RtI

In school-based preschool programs that emphasize early school age intervention for low-income students, which emphasize parent involvement and early literacy skills studies have shown that program participation beginning prior to kindergarten is related to the following:

- Higher school achievement
- Higher rates of school completion through age 20
- Lower rates of school dropout
- Lower rates of juvenile arrest for violent and non-violent charges
- Less need for school remedial services



Challenges with RtI in Early Childhood (Reynolds et al. 2001)

Percentage of respondents indicating area was a SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE:

Insufficient trained personnel	63.3%
Lack of resources	56.7%
Lack of Tier-2 and Tier-3 strategies	53.3%
Lack of progress monitoring tools	53.3%
Lack of knowledge for putting RtI model together	46.7%



Where do we begin? Focus on Tier I

- We know that a research based Tier-1 model needs to reach students in programs including but not limited to ECFE, ECSE, and School Readiness.
- We know successful Tier-1 classrooms have the following features:
 - Instruction:** robust instructional strategies (direct instruction, teaching of specific skills)
 - Infrastructure:** educationally rich and relevant physical environment (classroom layout) and materials (classroom resources available to children and staff)
 - Curriculum:** robust research-based curricula
 - Data-Based Decision Making:** have a method for assessing student performance



Where do we begin? Focus on Tier I

- We know that without robust Tier-1 models schools rely on previously discredited concepts
- Ideally Tier-1 models should have an
 - Emphasis on Maturation (intervene early)
 - Emphasis on Enriched Environment (ensure sufficient opportunities to gain important skills)
 - Emphasis on Teacher and Parent self-report and checklists (obtain direct measures of child performance at regular intervals and in response to intervention trials)
- Once Tier-1 is established, Tier-2 and Tier 3 models will be put into place



How can CRtIEC Help?

- Currently, the University of Minnesota CRtIEC network is working to build a Minnesota Model
- CRtIEC provides support for assessment resources, progress monitoring and screening
- CRtIEC provides the latest information on standards and benchmarking as it becomes available
- Additionally, CRtIEC provides substantial support for participating schools in exchange for participation in data collection efforts



How can CRtIEC Help? Contacting Key People and Getting Involved

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- [Join the Network!](#)
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