



Understanding the Response to Intervention Process: A Parent's Guide

*Office of Special Programs,
Extended and Early Learning*

January 2008

Dr. Steven L. Paine
State Superintendent of Schools
West Virginia Department of Education

West Virginia Department of Education



**WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION
2007-2008**

Delores W. Cook, President
Priscilla M. Haden, Vice President
Ronald B. Spencer, Secretary

Robert W. Dunlevy, Member
Barbara N. Fish, Member
Burma Hatfield, Member
Lowell E. Johnson, Member
Gayle C. Manchin, Member
Jenny N. Phillips, Member

Brian E. Noland, Ex Officio
Chancellor
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

James L. Skidmore, Ex Officio
Chancellor
West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education

Steven L. Paine, Ex Officio
State Superintendent of Schools
West Virginia Department of Education

Foreword

All children need strong literacy skills to succeed in school and life in the 21st century. The capacity to not only read fluently but also understand and apply knowledge gained through reading provides the foundation for communicating effectively, problem solving, critical thinking and productivity. The West Virginia Department of Education has focused on improving reading in the early grades through the establishment of a process for ensuring that the needs of every child are met. Response to Intervention (RTI) is a school-wide and district-led effort designed to ensure successful academic, behavioral and emotional outcomes for all students. When schools establish effective RTI processes in the early grades, high-quality, targeted instruction can reduce the number of children demonstrating academic difficulties.

As the RTI process is established across grades in the next several years, the focus will be on using it to improve the important literacy skills. It is, though, a framework for organizing all instruction and meeting individual learning needs. Within the RTI process, all students receive high quality instruction; and struggling students receive additional and increasingly more supportive reading instruction. For a small number of children with specific learning disabilities, the RTI process can lead to earlier identification and provision of special education services.

Over the past five years, the West Virginia Department of Education has supported the understanding and initiation of the RTI process at the elementary school level. By July 2009, all elementary schools will have firmly established RTI frameworks and will begin to use the process to identify students with learning disabilities. Middle and high schools will implement their models by July 2010 and July 2011, respectively.

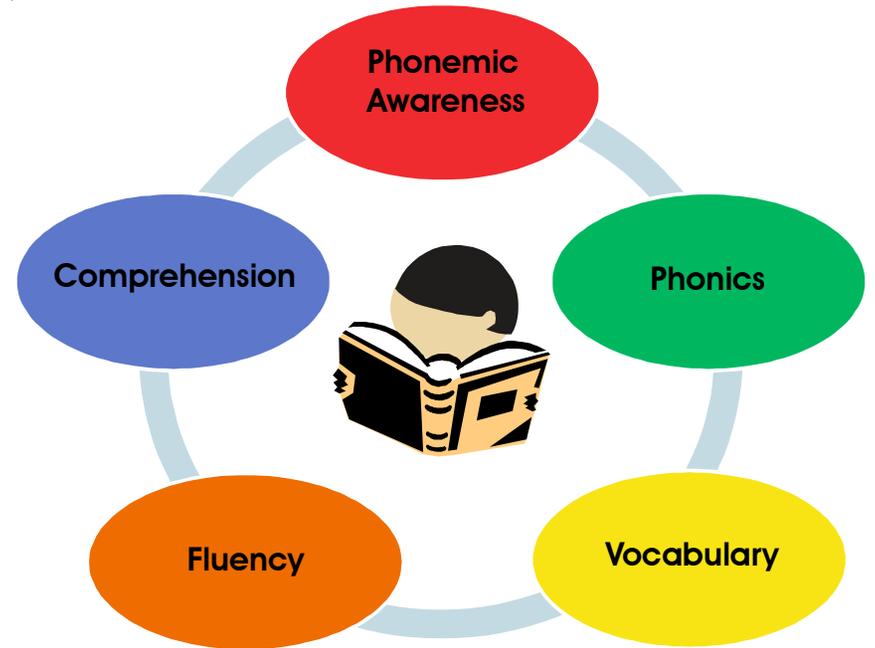
Just as schools focus on building and supporting strong reading skills, parents, too, play an important role in this task. As West Virginia schools work to develop robust intervention and prevention processes, it is important that parents understand the components essential to the appropriate implementation of RTI. This parent's guide provides an overview of the RTI framework and offers suggestions for meaningful participation in the process.

The West Virginia Department of Education will continue to support RTI as a prevention and intervention framework for all students across all grades. I believe this document will be extremely useful to parents and am pleased to provide this valuable resource.



Dr. Steven L. Paine
State Superintendent of Schools

Five Necessary Components for Building Skillful Readers



“Success in school starts with reading and when children become good readers in the early grades, they are prepared to learn throughout their school years and beyond.”

(National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)

Additional Resources for Parents

Florida Center on Reading Research

<http://www.fcrr.org/curriculum/curriculumForParents.htm>

The Partnership for Reading

<http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/>

The International Reading Association

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

National Center for Learning Disabilities (Parent Center)

<http://www.nclld.org/content/view/827/527/>

Schwab Learning

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

Reading is Fundamental

<http://www.rif.org/parents/>

Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers

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

Contact Information

Three-Tier Reading Model and RTI

Linda Palenchar

Coordinator
Learning Disabilities
Office of Special Programs
lpalench@access.k12.wv.us
(304) 558-2696, Ext. 53228

Parent Involvement

Betsy Peterson

Coordinator
Parent-Educator Resources
Office of Special Programs
bpeterso@access.k12.wv.us
(304) 558-2696, Ext. 53272

Introduction

For many years, the primary option available to a student who struggled in the general classroom was a placement in special education. In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was revised, and an important change occurred in how schools think about students who need extra help to learn grade-level curriculum.

A major change in the law is the emphasis on **early intervention services** for children who are at risk for academic or behavioral problems. The idea is to intervene early enough to **prevent** learning problems. Schools no longer wait for students to fail before providing intervention. Instead, a multi-step process is used to provide interventions to students who struggle to learn. Response to Intervention (RTI) involves tiers or levels of services that can be provided to students to help them achieve. In West Virginia, all elementary schools are required to have this process in place by July 2009. Middle schools and high schools will establish the process by July 2010 and 2011 respectively.

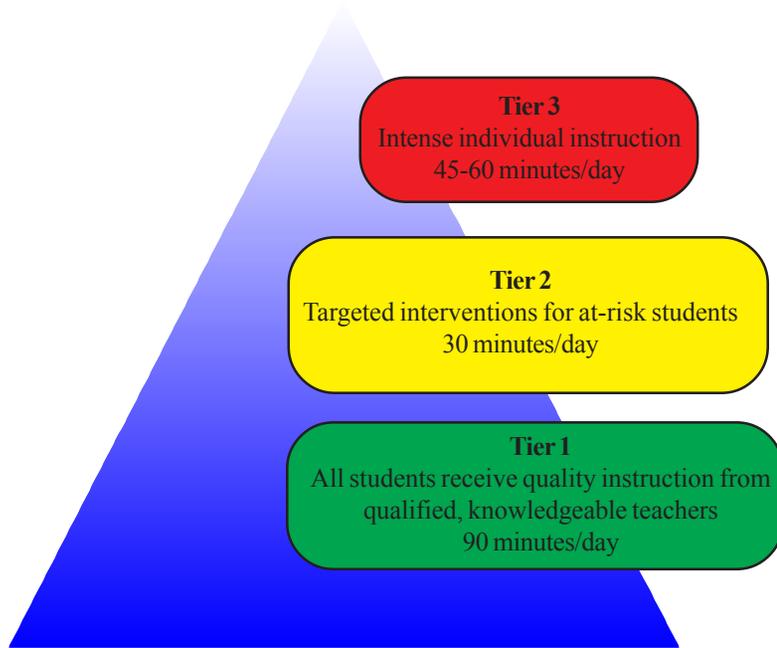
What is RTI?

Response to Intervention is a process based on using scientific research-based instructional strategies that are matched to individual student needs. Teachers use assessment data to monitor students' progress and make important decisions about **what** and **how** to teach children who are not making sufficient progress.

In West Virginia, schools provide three tiers of instruction and intervention. RTI processes may be applied to all content areas, but the three-tier model has begun with the area of reading because it is the essential skill upon which school success lies.

A graphic representation of the three-tier reading model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: 3-Tier Reading Model



Three Tier Reading Model

Tier 1: Screening and Differentiated Classroom Instruction

In Tier 1, the classroom teacher delivers scientific research-based reading instruction to all students. There are five essential reading areas that are emphasized in the core reading curriculum: **phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension**. Each of these reading areas must be addressed sufficiently in the early grades to ensure successful reading in later grades, across all content areas, and eventually in the work place.

At Tier 1 **all** students are screened on their basic reading skills. Schools may use a variety of assessments to determine which children may be at risk for reading difficulty. Many schools in West Virginia currently use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early

RTI and Special Education

If attempts to improve your child's skills are unsuccessful at Tiers 1, 2 or 3, it is sometimes necessary to make a referral to evaluate a child for special education services. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine if your child has a disability and needs specially designed instruction. Parent involvement and roles in the special education process are well defined by IDEA and West Virginia Policy 2419: *Regulations for the Education of Students with Exceptionalities*. More information about these laws is available on the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Programs, Extended and Early Learning Web site at <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/policy2419.html>

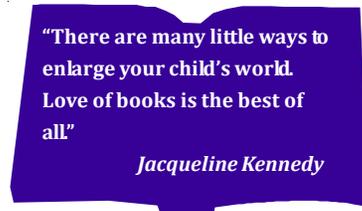
Policy 2419 makes clear that at any time during the RTI process, the parent has the right to request an evaluation. For more information on how RTI relates to the special education referral, evaluation and eligibility processes, contact the Office of Special Programs, Extended and Early Learning at **1-800-642-8541**.

Conclusion

This document provides a brief overview of the RTI process. This deliberate means of addressing the needs of students at risk is not only new for parents but also for some schools. If you have questions about RTI, the place to begin is with your child's teacher or principal. You can also visit the Office of Special Programs RTI Web site at <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/Rtl.html> for more information, forms and links to other Web sites about RTI.

Remember, RTI is not a program. It is a way of organizing good instruction for the benefit of all children. It encourages schools to provide early intervention services to help prevent academic difficulties. For a small number of children, it is also used to identify specific learning disabilities. Most importantly, it is a positive, proactive approach to educating each and every child.

- ◆ Reading to and with your child every day;
- ◆ Obtaining a library card and visiting the library often;
- ◆ Asking your child about his/her school day;
- ◆ Monitoring and helping with homework;
- ◆ Asking for a conference if you notice that your child is experiencing difficulty;
- ◆ Praising your child for good work and progress.



If your child is struggling and needs the additional support of Tier 2, you might:

- ◆ Make a referral to the Instructional Intervention Team (this may be called something different at your school so be sure to ask) and/or the Student Assistance Team (SAT);
- ◆ Attend team meetings;
- ◆ Suggest intervention strategies;
- ◆ If appropriate, implement and reinforce specific strategies at home;
- ◆ Share your observations of what helps your child to learn.

At Tier 3, parent involvement may include:

- ◆ Maintaining regular communication with you child's teacher;
- ◆ Visiting your county's Parent-Educator Resource Center. See <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/percs/PERCUpdate.htm>;
- ◆ Consenting to evaluate your child for special education;
- ◆ Actively participating in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings if your child is determined to have a disability and is eligible for special education;
- ◆ Understanding your rights as the parent of a child with a disability.

Literacy Skills (DIBELS) in September, January and May to determine how students are progressing. This assessment and other screening measures give teachers important information about which students are *on track* and which students need additional reading support.

Tier 2: Intervention

For some students, core reading instruction provided by the general classroom teacher is not enough. Tier 2 focuses on students who do not achieve the minimum levels of satisfactory reading performance based on screening results. At this level, students receive additional reading intervention. This instruction is recommended to be 30 minutes each day, **beyond** the 90-minute core reading program, to small groups of children (three to five students) who need help with similar skills. Intervention teachers, such as Title I reading specialists, special education teachers and contracted teachers, work with students on specific skills to *catch them up* on grade level reading skills. The main purpose of Tier 2 instruction is to teach important skills that may be missing and help the child master grade level skills.

Interventionists assess and monitor student progress closely at Tier 2. This information helps teachers plan appropriate lessons and change techniques that are not working. Tier 2 interventions are recommended to be implemented for a minimum of two eight - to 12 - week periods, but could be longer depending on student progress toward benchmarks. Some children may not need this additional support after the intervention. Other children may not respond as hoped and may need even more support, which is provided in Tier 3.

Tier 3: Intensive Intervention

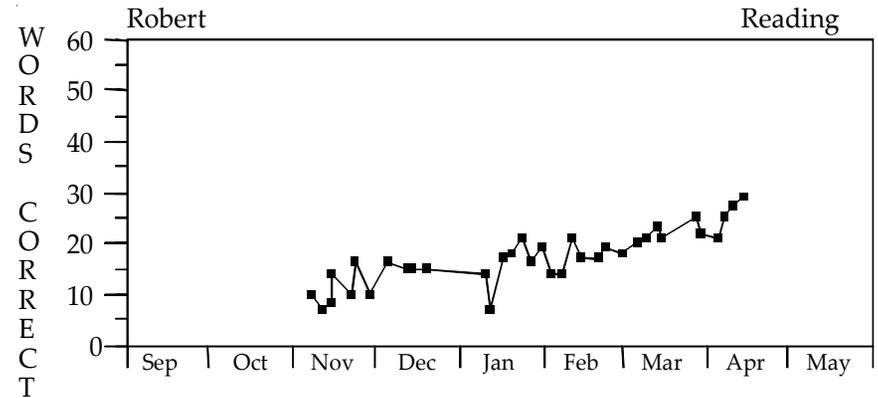
A small percentage of children who have received Tier 2 support may continue to have considerable difficulty in reading. At Tier 3, students might receive up to an additional 60 minutes of intervention each day in addition to the general education core reading program. Instruction at Tier 3 is even more intense and explicit than at Tier 2. Group sizes are smaller, one to three students, so that individual needs can be addressed by the interventionist.

Tier 3 services are not restricted to special education services. Some children who need this level of support may be eligible for special education because they are determined to have specific learning disabilities. Other children simply have not had the opportunity to learn, such as those with extended absences in the early grades when beginning reading skills were being taught, and need more time and support to master the reading process.

The Importance of Progress Monitoring

One of the most important aspects of the RTI process is the use of regular progress monitoring. Information gathered through regular assessment of the child's academic skills helps teachers make important instructional decisions. Progress monitoring goes beyond the weekly spelling or math tests that are used to give grades. The point of progress monitoring is to help you and your child's teacher make better decisions about what type of help your child might need.

Progress monitoring actually helps teachers **change teaching**. The methods, the amount of time, the materials, the size of the group, and other aspects of instruction can be changed to meet your child's individual, specific needs. Regular progress monitoring helps teachers chart student progress over time and compares the child's actual learning rate with what is expected at that grade level.



(National Center for Student Progress Monitoring, 2007)

Teachers will be able to share your child's progress through graphs and other records such as intervention plans that indicate both the success of teaching and learning. If your child is not making good progress, remember the teacher's first strategy is to use the progress monitoring information to change instruction. For more information about progress monitoring, go to the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring Web site at <http://www.studentprogress.org/family/default.asp>.

Parent Involvement in the RTI Process

At each level of the three-tier model, teachers and parents communicate about a child's academic progress. Some ways to get and stay involved in your child's education include:

- ◆ Attending school functions such as parent-teacher conferences or "Back-to-School" night;
- ◆ Getting to know your child's teacher and his/her expectations for the student;
- ◆ Asking questions about the three-tier reading model and how your child's needs are being met;
- ◆ Learning about the benchmark assessments given three times a year to all children and more frequently to those who struggle;