RTI and SLP Services

This guide is designed to increase understanding for Texas school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) about their role in Response to Intervention (RTI), as well as to provide information on RTI implementation. **There are important RTI activities for SLPs that can contribute to student success and assist with identification of speech, language, and/or learning disabilities.**

What is RTI?

Response to Intervention is an early detection and support system that identifies struggling students and assists them before they fall behind. **The goals of RTI are to provide specific supports and then to use data from the student's response to intervention to assist with identification of speech, language, or learning disabilities.** When students have difficulty with academics or behavior, their needs are quickly identified, and interventions are provided to meet those needs. RTI is designed as early intervention to prevent long-term academic failure. Prevention of speech, language, and communication disorders is one of the key roles and responsibilities of school-based SLPs and as such, can compliment and augment RTI services.

Key Features

The following is a listing of the key features of an RTI process:

- RTI is primarily a general education initiative designed to provide the necessary support as soon as a student shows signs of academic or behavioral struggle.

- RTI is based on a problem-solving model that uses data to inform decision-making.

- RTI interventions are systematically applied at increasing levels of intensity and focus, and are derived from research-based practices.

- RTI is highly dependent on progress monitoring and data collection.

- RTI intervention plans are designed, implemented, and monitored by a multidisciplinary team of professionals.

- RTI can aid in the determination of a **speech-language or learning disability.**

The 3 Tier Model

Although there may be different applications of the RTI process, it is generally depicted as a three tier model which allows for increasing intensity of instruction to students in direct proportion to individual needs.

Tier 1— Core Instruction includes: scientifically-based curriculum following state standards; behavioral support systems; effective, highly engaging instruction; well-trained teachers; universal screening; periodic progress monitoring, usually at the beginning, middle, and end of school year; and in-classroom supports such as small-group instruction or tutoring for students who have difficulty keeping pace with grade level expectations.

Tier 2— Targeted Group Intervention is provided **for students who perform** below expected levels in the classroom or who need specific supports to make expected progress in Tier 1. Tier 2 intervention includes: evidence-based practice protocols; behavioral support and intervention; effective, highly engaging and focused intervention; skilled teachers/service providers; small, homogenous groups; and frequent progress monitoring of the target skills. Tier 2 intervention is provided in addition to Tier 1 Core Instruction.

Tier 3— Intensive Individualized Intervention is **provided for students** who have received Tier 2 intervention and continue to have significant difficulty keeping pace with grade-level expectations. Students in Tier 3 intervention need more frequent, explicit, intensive, individualized intervention for longer periods of time. Tier 3 intervention includes: research-based and evidence-based intervention; intensive, individualized intervention for increased duration; behavioral support and intervention; skilled teachers/service providers; very frequent progress monitoring of the target skills. Tier 3 intervention is provided in addition to Tier 1 Core Instruction.

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          Tier 1
      Core Instruction

         Tier 2
         Targeted

        Tier 3
        Intensive
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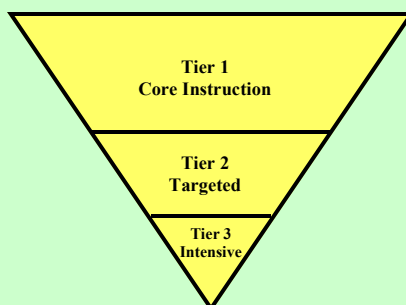
3 Tier Model and the SLP

SLPs are well equipped to participate in RTI activities within a 3 Tier RTI Model. **The SLP's key roles in RTI are to provide intervention through general education for students not meeting expectations in speech & language skills and to use RTI data to assist with identification of speech, language, or learning disabilities. Prevention of communication disorders is one activity listed in the definition of speech-language pathology services in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

Tier 1— The SLP provides mostly indirect services to support quality instruction in the classroom and to participate in prevention activities. Direct services include expanded speech and language screening or providing support for struggling students through a variety of classroom activities that support oral language development. Indirect activities include completing student observations, helping the teacher make connection between oral language and literacy, and staff development to promote understanding of students' language learning needs

Tier 2— The SLP provides a combination of direct intervention and indirect services. Direct services **include targeted group intervention** to support students' speech and language skills in small, same-ability groups. Indirect activities include helping to select research-based literacy interventions, completing student observations, and assisting with frequent progress monitoring of Tier 2 literacy intervention.

Tier 3— The SLP provides mostly direct intervention and identification services. Direct services include intensive, individualized intervention to support students' speech and language skills. Indirect activities include helping to select research-based interventions, completing student observations, assisting with frequent progress monitoring, and **helping the team** make decisions regarding referral for special education evaluation.

RTI and the Law

NCLB
The components of RTI supported in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) focus on accountability for results and include:

High Quality Instruction— NCLB heightened the expectation for delivery of consistent, high-quality instruction in all classrooms. Explicit and systematic instruction does not leave anything to chance, and moves students from teacher-dependence to learner-independence. The teacher focuses the lesson with explicit instruction, uses guided instruction and student teamwork to practice the skills, and then allows students to demonstrate mastery of the skill.

Research-Based Instruction— Both federal education laws, NCLB and IDEA 2004, require the use of scientifically-based educational practices, defined as "research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs" (NCLB, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 910 [37]).

Universal Screening— All students are screened in essential academic areas. Results from the screening provide information about whether students are at expected skill levels or need assistance so they do not fall behind. Screening results allow for review of both group and individual performance on essential skills.

Periodic Progress Monitoring— All students are assessed on essential skills using beginning, mid-, and end-of-year curriculum-based measures to insure that all students are meeting grade level expectation. Periodic progress monitoring meets the NCLB provision of accountability for student learning.

Early Intervention— Emphasis is on providing quality instruction and interventions in the early grades to prevent more serious problems or failure later on.

RTI and the Law (con't)

IDEA
IDEA 2004 includes language allowing states to use an RTI process rather than an IQ discrepancy model for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. Federal regulations permit the use of the RTI process to "ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction." (34 CFR 300 & 301, 2006).
IDEA regulations require that appropriate instruction in general education settings has been delivered by highly qualified personnel and that data-based documentation of repeated assessments at reasonable intervals has been collected.

Reading Skills

In 2000, the National Reading Panel issued a report identifying five key skills central to reading achievement:
Phonemic Awareness— the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words.
Phonics— an understanding of the relationship between letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sound (phonemes) of spoken language.
Fluency— the ability to read text accurately and quickly with proper expression.
Vocabulary— the words one must know to communicate effectively.
Text Comprehension— understanding the meaning of what is read. Comprehension is the reason for reading.
The SLP has most involvement in the Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Vocabulary areas of reading development.

Purposes of RTI

1. **Intervention to support students as soon as data indicates they are struggling to meet grade-level expectations.**
2. **Prevention of communication disorders**
3. Identification of disabilities and the need for special education.

RTI ensures that students who need intervention for explicit, direct instruction receive it. Although school districts are not required to include SLPs in their RTI framework, there is nothing in federal regulations to preclude active participation of SLPs in addressing all three purposes of RTI.

RTI and Workload

The desired outcomes of RTI and SLP services are intervention for prevention and identification of communication disorders. Some SLPs wonder how they will have time to provide intervention services to general education students in addition to their speech caseload responsibilities. Using a Workload Approach to providing speech-language services is the answer to this concern. A Workload Approach focuses on the individual needs of students, documents the full range of roles and responsibilities of the SLP, and allows SLPs to contribute to improved student performance and provide educationally relevant services. A continuum of service delivery models and flexible scheduling are essential components in a Workload Approach. RTI for prevention services fit well into a workload approach. Providing classroom consultation, indirect SLP services, and direct SLP services in an RTI framework should be woven in and around IEP services provided by the SLP. As the SLP is developing a schedule, s/he should schedule time for SLP services through RTI. The RTI needs of students will change over the course of the school year. Consultation and indirect services may remain constant throughout the year but the provision of direct services through RTI may ebb and flow. Students who need direct RTI/prevention services should not remain in these services for an extended period of time. For example, at the beginning of the school year, the SLP may need to provide direct services to a small group of children; however, after several weeks of services, the students who respond to intervention should be exited from intervention and those who do not respond to intervention, should be referred for special education testing. By using a Workload Approach, the SLP will have time to provide the services that are needed to prevent special education placement; thereby resulting in a short period of intervention verses multiple years of speech

RTI and Funding

RTI is a fundamental change to educating students in this country. This may necessitate changes to current funding mechanisms for general education and special programs or services. In the future, resources will be allocated with the single-minded purpose of helping all students meet grade level expectations. SLP services are most commonly funded through special education. It is possible to find ways to allocate SLP time to provide direct and indirect services in an RTI model within existing funding parameters.
Find additional funding information at:
http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/RtI/index.html

RTI Team Membership

Each school should have a multi-disciplinary team comprised of various school professionals. The team should meet regularly and develop an intervention plan and monitor the progress for each student who is struggling. Typically, the classroom teacher will bring concerns regarding a struggling student to the intervention team. The concerns are discussed with the team and an intervention plan is developed. The team membership may vary depending on the area of concern. Usually the team is comprised of the following as core members:

- Campus administrator— campus leader and facilitator of the intervention team process.
- Reading specialist or Reading teacher— expert in the reading development process.
- General education teacher/ Intervention Specialist— the teacher of the struggling student.
- General education teacher— a teacher who is knowledgeable about differentiated instruction.

Additional members that may be added depending on the area of concern:

- Speech-Language Pathologist— campus SLP may be added when the concerns are in articulation, language, stuttering, and voice.
- Counselor or School Psychologist— may be added when the concerns are in the area of behavior.
- Nurse— may be added when the concerns are in the medical area.

This intervention team may be called a variety of names such as Instructional Support Team (IST), Child Study Team (CST), or Intervention Assistance Team (IAT). It is recommended that the team NOT be named a Pre-Referral Team. This name perpetuates an assumption that the purpose of the intervention team is to process a special education referral.

RTI and Parent Involvement

In an RTI model, parents should be engaged as partners in the general education intervention process. Recommended communication to parents may include:

- Recommendation on how they can help their child make progress
- Information about RTI and the services in place at the school for supporting students
- Speech, language, and communication skill development information
- Results of RTI progress monitoring
- Home activities
- Information for parent monitoring of home practice activities for Tier 1 and 2
- Information about Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention and SLP involvement
- District parent permission for participation in supplementary speech RTI services
- Information regarding participation in parent-teacher conferences or in RTI problem solving team
- Provide required informed notice and consent for special education referral and evaluation, as needed

Districts may develop an information and parent permission form for the student to receive direct services by the SLP through the general education intervention process.

RTI and Language

Language and RTI is a little more difficult to implement but there are options available that have been proven to work. Below is a list that has been gathered from visiting with SLPs across the state.
1. Story Lab— This is a classroom-based lesson that will facilitate talking and writing about personal experiences. Students will learn to talk about what really matters, talk about events in ways that engage and make sense to the listener, and identify and express feelings related to the event. The program helps the SLP determine the student's ability to ask and answer questions and expand their language skills.
2. LINC— This is a published classroom based language program. It has been used to determine a child's language abilities. Through the very clever activities, the SLP will be able to work on vocabulary, following directions, sequencing, problem solving, communicating with peers and adults and much, much more. This program is available through mindworksresources.com.

General Language Strategies:
- Provide corrective feedback on language usage errors.
- Present student with correct and incorrect sentence forms and ask student to identify them as a correct or incorrect Also, have student correct the incorrect sentences.
- Teach students the problem-solving model so they will be able to determine their own needs, strengths, weaknesses, and what to do/who to talk to in order to improve their skills.
- Provide Venn Diagrams, Describing Charts and visual aids that may be used by classroom teachers and parents/caregivers.

RTI and Articulation

There are a variety of programs for articulation intervention. Below you will see a list of some programs that have been implemented across the states.

1. ARtIC Lab: A bilingual RTI program for elementary school students (grades 2-5) exhibiting mild articulation deficits in English and Spanish. It is a 20-hour, evidence-based program that provides sound placement instruction, intensive drill work, and sound generalization activities. This program is available through superduperinc.com.
2. Quick Artic: This is an RTI approach implemented in Terrebone Parish School System, Louisiana. It is a four-step process. It is used with students that are identified as at-risk. Children with 3 or more errors move to tier 3. Children with 1 or 2 errors, move through the 4 step process. Children's speech sounds are probed every 2 weeks. As they reach a mastery of 75% or greater on error sounds, they are exited from the process and return to general education.
3. Speedy Speech Model: This is an RTI approach implemented in North Shore District 112, Illinois. Students are screened for misarticulations. Students with mild misarticulations receive 5-7 minutes of intensive, direct 1:1 services 5 times a week for an 8 week period. Interventions are provided in the hallways and are tailored for each student's level of proficiency.
4. Problem Solving Model: This is an RTI approach implemented in Iowa. All students that are referred for an evaluation are screened and receive 6-9 weeks of intensive intervention. At the end of the 6 or 9 weeks, the intervention team determines the need for evaluation.
5. Articulation Resource Center Model: This is an RTI approach implemented in San Diego schools. Students are referred for services. The SLP screens the students. Students with simple sound errors are recommended for the services. The SLP provides highly interactive speech improvement classes to 5-10 students for two 30 minute sessions per week.

General articulation strategies:
- Provide corrective feedback on articulation errors.
- Use auditory feedback devices to amplify the student's productions.
- Set up a "center" with a list of words for their sound and a recorded auditory bombardment list.
- Provide a communication lab for students who are at risk as well as students who have been dismissed since all goals except complete carry-over have been mastered.

RTI and Voice

RTI for suspected voice disorders is an area that has not been widely addressed in public schools. Red flags for a voice disorder include chronic or persistent hoarseness, hyper/hyponasality, or aphonia. When these symptoms are observed, the student should be referred for a comprehensive speech evaluation through the special education referral process. When a voice disorder is suspected, a medical evaluation may be needed.

Tier 1 prevention activities may be effective when used with students who show initial stages of vocal abuse/misuse. Monitoring through RTI may be used by the SLP when gathering data to determine if red flag vocal behaviors are chronic and persistent. General strategies that encourage good vocal hygiene are appropriate for all students.

RTI and Stuttering

School-age children with a possible fluency disorder should be referred for special education evaluation and treatment. If intervention through an RTI model is provided it should be in a dynamic assessment model offered as part of the comprehensive evaluation for eligibility determination. For example, the SLP may obtain consent to work with the student on a scheduled basis during the 60-day evaluation window and then provide data about the student's response to intervention to the ARD Committee to assist in making eligibility decisions and planning treatment.

RTI may be used to address stuttering in the preschool years with children who show beginning signs of stuttering. SLPs who encounter preschool children who have one or more risk factors should recommend moving forward with a comprehensive evaluation. Risk factors include an increase in the frequency of sound/syllable repetitions or an increase in the duration of prolongations and blocking behaviors; time post onset (6-12 months); signs of awareness; presence of struggle behaviors; and concomitant disorders.

Following is an example of how a tiered intervention system may work for a preschool child showing signs of stuttering who does not exhibit risk factors.

Tier 1: The SLP consults with the child's family and preschool teacher, providing information about normal fluency development and risk factors for persistent stuttering. The SLP provides suggestions for ways to interact with the child to facilitate speech in a comfortable manner that encourages fluency.

Tier 2: The SLP observes the child in the preschool setting and/or home and provides suggestions for ways to manage the environment to support developing fluency.

Tier 3: The SLP demonstrates fluency enhancing strategies to both the parent and the teacher. The SLP then observes the parent/teacher implementation of these strategies, allowing the SLP to collect data, provide additional suggestions, and aide in the recommendation regarding the need for a comprehensive evaluation.
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Tier 1 Support & Co-Teaching

The goal of RTI is to ensure that all children and adolescents have access to high-quality instruction and learning opportunities and further, that struggling learners are identified, supported and served early and effectively. At Tier 1, teachers check to see if instruction is working in order to determine if the learners are responding, and if not responding, provide supports to scaffold learning. Effective instruction for all students with additional supports for struggling students is provided in Tier 1. SLPs can provide direct Tier 1 supports for students struggling with language, articulation, or communication demands of the general curriculum.

When providing direct Tier 1 support, SLPs can use co-teaching approaches as viable service delivery options to provide specialized instruction and support in the context of the general education classroom. Co-teaching allows two professionals with equivalent credentials and employment status to share instructional responsibility and accountability. The purpose of co-teaching is to support struggling students in the general curriculum. When students struggle with language demands of the curriculum, oral language foundations for literacy, or articulation development, co-teaching approaches with the SLP and teacher collaborating together can be effective for providing Tier 1 support.

Co-teaching approaches are selected based on students' needs and the specific learning targets. Two or more co-teaching approaches can easily be used in a single lesson. The following co-teaching approaches are most commonly used when SLPs and teachers work together in providing Tier 1 support.

- Station Teaching - Teachers divide the lesson content into 3 segments and group the students so 1/3 begins with each part of content. The teacher works with a group, the SLP works with a group and the third group works independently. The groups rotate station to station so by the end of the lesson all students have completed all 3 stations and both the teacher and the SLP have each worked with every student.
- Parallel Teaching - Professionals divide students into two groups and lead the same instruction with both groups. The groups do not rotate and students receive instruction from either the teacher or the SLP. One example of parallel teaching is: following direct instruction, parallel teaching can be used for discussion questions with the teacher leading one group and the SLP leading one group.
- Teaming - Both the teacher and the SLP share responsibility for leading instruction with the entire class. They each have different but equally active roles. For example, the teacher may lead the lesson and the SLP may model taking Cornell notes on the white board. Teaming can result in energizing, entertaining and engaging instruction; however with teaming the teacher loses flexible grouping capacity and whole group instruction may not allow for the individualized instruction that struggling students need to continue making progress in the general education curriculum.
- One Teach, One Observe – The teacher manages instruction of the whole group and the SLP systematically gathers data. This approach is used periodically when the teacher and SLP need specific information for decision-making. For example, the teacher may lead a class discussion and the teacher may observe selected students to track a specific language skill such as use of subordinate clauses.
- Alternative Teaching – The teacher or the SLP teaches most of the students and the other takes a small group for a specific instructional purpose. The small group can meet for a few minutes while others check homework or complete a warm-up task; or meet after initial instruction for re-teaching or additional work on a specific skill.

Friend, M. (2008). Co-Teach! Greensboro, NC: Marilyn Friend, Inc.

Web Resources

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems
http://www.nccrest.org/

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education
http://www.nasdse.org/
http://www.nasdse.org/Projects/ResponsetoInterventionRtIProject/tabid/411/Default.aspx

The International Reading Association
http://www.reading.org/General/Publications/ReadingToday/RTY-0906-RTI.aspx

Council for Exceptional Children
http://www.cec.sped.org//AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home

U.S. Department of Education
http://osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/ta_responsiveness_intervention.asp

National Center on Response to Intervention
http://www.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=891&Itemid=124

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality
http://www.tqsource.org/forum/index.php?board=13.0

TEA Website
http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/rti/

Education Resources Information Center
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?
nfpb=true&&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ719686&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ719686

ASHA, page about RTI
http://www.asha.org/slp/schools/prof-consult/RtoI.htm

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