



A helping hand for literacy ◀

## Frequently asked Questions

### **Q: What is Response to Intervention?**

**A:** Response to Intervention (RtI) is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about change in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions (NASDSE, 2005). RtI is based on:

- Problem-solving models that use progress monitoring to gauge the intensity of intervention in relation to students' response to intervention.
- Schoolwide screening to determine the distribution of student prevention streams.
- Evidence-based interventions that match students' instructional needs.

### **Q: What is driving the adoption of Response to Intervention?**

**A:** RtI is not a new model. In fact, it has been used in the context of special education and intervention programs for decades. What is driving renewed interest in the model and its application to general education is the NCLB requirement that *all* students reach proficiency by 2014. As districts move toward that goal, they are looking for proven models that encompass effective instruction, data-driven decision making and a significant impact on student achievement.

In addition, the government passed an amendment to IDEA legislation in 2004 that provides new guidelines for streaming students into special education programs. In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability that makes him eligible for IDEA-funded special education programs, the new IDEA provision states that "a local education agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability and oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading

skill, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning.” Furthermore, it states that, “In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific research-based intervention,” as a part of the required evaluation procedures. While the discrepancy model may continue to be used, the new law encourages the use of an RtI model as a viable alternative. Districts with a disproportionate number of minorities and Title 1 students in special education program are required to use 15% of their IDEA funds for interventions targeted for those subgroups. The regulations were released on Oct. 13.

**Q: Isn’t RtI just a special education pre-referral system?**

**A:** No. Special education eligibility decisions can be a by-product of an RtI model, but identification for special education is not the primary goal. Using RtI as the model for making those decisions, special education services (i.e., what does this student need?) are determined by the student’s rate of response to intervention and the size of the gap that exists between the student and the benchmark.

The major issues in RtI involve the need to enhance the range and diversity of academic and behavioral interventions in general education and to increase the impact of supplemental interventions, not how to make eligibility decisions that divorce special education from general education.

**Q: What is the “incidental use” provision in the IDEA legislation?**

**A:** The new IDEA law continues the Section 613 “incidental use” provision, which allows, under certain conditions, education software, online staff development and other technologies to be purchased with IDEA funds and used by non-special education students or teachers on an “incidental use” basis. The conditions are:

- (1) the price for a school must be the same regardless of the number of students or teachers using it;
- (2) no special education students may be denied access; and
- (3) having nonspecial education teachers and students use products or services should not increase the wear-and-tear.

These conditions generally hold for software or services that are licensed on a schoolwide basis. In addition, the law allows a portion of a schoolwide program’s allocation of IDEA funds to be commingled with Title I and other Federal funds to serve all students in such schools and to be

used for school improvement. NCLB's Title I Schoolwide Programs allows for funding to serve the entire student population in cases where more than 40% of the school population would otherwise qualify for the Title I program, so long as the targeted student population is also served by these funds. Thus, districts looking to provide an instructional solution to all students may be able to use both Title I and IDEA funds to help pay those costs.

**Q: How does the three-tiered RtI model work?**

A: In the three-tiered model, students are assessed based on a state or district benchmark, typically using the state test scores from the previous year. Based on those results, students are streamed into one of three tiers:

- Tier 1: General curriculum (school semesters) – primary prevention
- Tier 2: Intensive, short-term intervention (typically 10-30 weeks) – secondary prevention/intervention
- Tier 3: Individualized, long-term intervention – tertiary prevention/intervention

Tier 1: Students in tier 1, which typically represents 75-85% of the student population, are given regular curriculum instruction with frequent progress monitoring to assess their response to instruction. Students who are responding well will continue in Tier 1 with continued progress monitoring. Students who don't respond will move to Tier 2 intervention.

Tier 2: Students in Tier 2, which typically represents 10-15% of the student population, receive intensive intervention and frequent progress monitoring to assess results. Tier 2 interventions should produce results within 10-30 weeks. Responders will either continue in Tier 2 intervention or move to Tier 1 with monitoring. Non-responders will move to Tier 3 for more intensive, individualized instruction.

Tier 3: Students in Tier 3, which typically represents 5-10% of the population, receive intensive, individualized instruction based on their requirements. Frequent progress monitoring and modifications will be used to determine whether students need to stay in Tier 3 intervention.

**Q: Is the three-tiered model the only RtI model?**

A: No. There are several viable models for implementing RtI, including: designating risk with CBM benchmark + progress monitoring; research-based preventative tutoring; defining response

in terms of CBM slope/final status; and streaming non-responders into abbreviated evaluation programs to distinguish learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities and mental retardation.

**Q: What proportion of general population students is likely to be identified as at risk for Tier 1 monitoring?**

A: While the ideal model holds that 75-85% of students are in the primary prevention layer, national proficiency statistics show that, on average, only 30% of students are meeting reading and math proficiency levels. The proportion of students classified as Tier 1 monitoring will vary according to each district's AYP scores and percentile goals. Generally, however, 20-45% of the Tier 1 population will fall into the "at-risk" monitoring category.

**Q: Are there any special funds associated with RtI?**

A: Currently, there are discretionary competitive grants available at the federal level. The newest grant is being awarded on Nov. 16, with potential funds ranging from \$200K to \$1.2M. These will be awarded to research and/or research-district partnerships investigating the use and impact of RtI models.

There are also state-level funds available for districts implementing an RtI model. Most of those funds are directed towards professional development for teachers and administrators around the RtI model. Interested districts can check with their state education department to find out what programs are available.

**Q: How do AutoSkill solutions align with RtI?**

A: AutoSkill intervention solutions align to the core requirements as outlined in the Response to Intervention (RtI) guidelines: high quality instruction; active role for educators in students' assessment; universal screening of academics and behavior; continuous progress monitoring of student performance; continuous progress monitoring to pinpoint students' difficulties; implementation of research-based interventions; fidelity of intervention; and availability of progress monitoring data to determine interventions' effectiveness and to make any modifications as needed.

For a complete description on our alignment with RtI, please see the AutoSkill-Response to Intervention Alignment documentation.

**Q: Where does AutoSkill fit into the three-tiered RtI model?**

**A:** AutoSkill solutions primarily fit into Tier 2 and Tier 3 for intensive, individualized intervention. However, given the high number of at-risk Tier 1 students in progress monitoring, AutoSkill solutions can be applied as a supplementary program in general education for students scoring at basic and below basic levels. At-risk Tier 1 students can work on AutoSkill solutions in before school/after school programs, at dedicated classroom workstations and in lab settings to close their achievement gap. With a flexible delivery model and individualized training methodology, AutoSkill solutions enable 1-20+ students for every teacher to work on foundation reading and math skills, making it easier to scale RtI-based interventions across student populations, schools and districts.

**Q: How many weeks of student training on AutoSkill solutions are needed before decisions can be made about their progress?**

**A:** Before 10 weeks, facilitators can assess whether students identified as at risk need to move to Tier 2 intervention or continue with additional supplementary instruction. For students in Tier 2 intervention, significant progress can be made in 10-30 weeks of training.

Tier 3 students who are learning disabled can achieve great results with Academy of READING and Academy of MATH. Classroom studies show that students who train four to five times per week for 30 minutes a day can make significant progress in a school year.