



Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

“The Practitioner’s Best Friend”
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‘Critical Questions’ Series
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RTI: WHAT ARE THE BIG IDEAS?

Background

Many districts and buildings across the state and country are identifying themselves as Response to Intervention (RTI) sites. Workshops are being presented around RTI. Publishers are jumping on the bandwagon with materials that are identified as RTI. RTI is gaining momentum as a school-wide framework for improving students’ outcomes. At the federal level, NCLB 2001, Reading First and IDEA 2004 align with principles and components of an RTI framework. RTI is consistent with the national focus on accountability, data-based decision making and evidence based practices.

What is RTI?

RTI is an integrated, multi-tiered approach to instruction, assessment and intervention that allows schools to identify struggling students early, and provide appropriate interventions to improve student outcomes.

RTI is most commonly conceptualized as a three-tiered instructional model. This is reflected in Washington’s three-tiered K-12 Reading Model. The three-tiered model is also the approach adopted by OSPI, Office of Special Education Publication: *Using Response to Intervention (RTI) for Washington’s Students*. In a three-tiered model, Tier-I (core curriculum) is the core instructional program provided to all students. At this level all students receive high quality, instruction implemented with fidelity in the general education classroom. Instruction provided in Tier-I is both differentiated and culturally responsive and is designed to serve approximately 80-90% of the student body. Instruction is matched to student needs. Fidelity refers to the degree to which the core instruction is implemented as designed, intended and planned. Tier-II, (strategic or supplemental) are interventions/instruction provided to the 5-10% of students not being successful in the core curriculum. Strategic

interventions supplement the instruction being provided in the core and is targeted at identified student needs. Typically Tier-II interventions are provided in a smaller group and are carefully monitored to determine if student response is adequate. Interventions provided at Tier-III (intensive) are individually designed for the approximately 5% of students with the most need and monitored weekly or daily for effectiveness and student response.

Core Principles

The following are core principles of an RTI model:

- **High-Quality, Research-Based Classroom Instruction**-This means that the curriculum and instructional approaches must have a high probability of success for the majority of students. In the area of reading for example, the core instruction needs to include the five components of the Reading First Initiative, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.
- **Universal Screening**-School staff conduct universal screening of academics and behavior. Specific criteria are applied to determine which students are in need of further monitoring or intervention. Many schools in Washington use DIBELS or another form of oral reading fluency screening for this purpose.
- **Progress Monitoring**-These are assessments that can be collected frequently and are sensitive to changes in student learning and can be used to monitor a student's progress. Use of progress monitoring allows teachers to quickly identify students who are not meeting standards. The frequency of progress monitoring increases as students move through the three tiered model. In the area of reading, many schools use the progress monitoring component in DIBELS. Several districts use or are developing progress monitoring procedures in math.
- **Collaborative Teams**-Schools develop or use existing student intervention teams to support the RTI process. The roles of existing teams usually has to change from a traditional referral to special education to a problem solving process that assists with assessment and intervention design at all three tiers.
- **Data Decision Rules**-A common feature of RTI models is data decision rules about when a student is not responding to instruction/intervention and when to make an instructional change.

Policy Coherence

In Washington, there is increased emphasis upon meeting state standards, and alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment. RTI can be a critical partner to Washington schools as they work to align their curriculum, instruction and assessment and move all students to meeting state standards. Use of research-based curriculum, implemented with fidelity and evaluated for results is embedded in an RTI model. Assessment is specifically aligned to curriculum and instructional methods are differentiated based upon student needs.

In a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, four critical questions of learning are raised: What is it we expect students to learn? How will we know when they have learned? How will we respond when they do not learn? How will we respond when they already know it? An RTI model helps provide answers to questions two and three. Under the umbrella of a PLC, an RTI model provides a specific, systematic approach, using interventions that are evaluated for effectiveness to respond to students who are not learning and need additional time and support.

Statewide RTI

The state has a multi-year Response to Intervention Pilot Project that includes a number of schools and school districts from across the state. Training and consultation have been provided to schools through the Educational Service Districts. Additional resources are anticipated during the 2008-2009 school year as OSPI begins the implementation of a major state improvement grant from the federal government. OSPI in conjunction with Washington State School Directors Association has developed some model policies and procedure for RTI.

Resources

Using Response to Intervention (RTI) for Washington's Students-OSPI
June 2006

K-12 Reading Model: Implementation Guide-OSPI January 2005

RTI: A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Response to Intervention-D. Mellard & E. Johnson Corwin Press, 2008

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