

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII)

Introduction and Background

The International Reading Association (IRA) Commission on Response to Intervention (RtI) developed a document that articulates guiding principles of RtI. This document emphasizes a comprehensive, systemic and reflective approach to literacy instruction and assessment, utilized by educators with expertise in delivering differentiated literacy instruction to a wide range of students. “The IRA commission also supports the idea that RtI is not a specific program or model” (IRA, 2010).

RtI is a general education initiative based on the concept of prevention vs. a model of failure. All children should first be treated as general education students who receive high quality instruction with targeted interventions before being identified with specific learning disabilities. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, “A local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation procedures.” Neither the term RtI nor references to models or programs are included in the statute. It should be noted that up to 15% of the IDEA funds may be used for early interventions.

The Position of the Keystone State Reading Association (KSRA)

KSRA concurs with the IRA’s comprehensive view of language and literacy that includes oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, and reading comprehension.

KSRA supports IRA’s conceptual stance and guiding principles on RtI. KSRA finds these principles particularly crucial to Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) practices in Pennsylvania. The RtII framework:

- **Provides high quality literacy instruction for all students.**
- **Emphasizes responsive teaching and differentiation.**
- **Calls for effective collaboration to ensure cohesiveness of instruction for all readers.**
- **Values expertise in language and literacy learning.**
- **Requires meaningful and multiple assessments that reflect authentic language and literacy activities be used to plan appropriate instruction.**

Areas of Concern

Research

Literacy educators must hold themselves, district personnel, and other presenters accountable to accurate interpretation of studies that promote research-based instruction. In addition, research, especially the research supporting specific programs, should be critically evaluated for validity, conflicts of interest and other aspects of high quality research (Gall, J. P., Gall & Borg, 2005; International Reading Association, 2002; Pressley, Duke & Boling, 2004).

Interpretation of the Standard Protocol Model of RtI

Two main models have emerged for the implementation of RtI: the problem solving and the standard protocol models. Pennsylvania is one of several states in the nation to adopt the standard protocol model (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). *The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) Response to Instruction and Intervention Glossary* (2010) defines standard protocol as “intensive, short-term instructional interventions that follow a specified script and have research to support its effectiveness.”

KSRA promotes a reconceptualization of this interpretation of standard protocol in Pennsylvania in which instructional choices are presented through a different lens. Children with similar needs receive the same

intervention in which “a standard set of empirically supported instructional approaches are implemented to prevent and remediate academic problems” (Christ, Burns, & Ysseldyke, 2005).

KSRA is concerned that school districts may use RtII primarily for the purpose of identifying students with specific learning disabilities (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008). Rather, KSRA recommends that school districts design and implement RtII for the purpose of providing all students with responsive teaching and differentiation based on teacher expertise informed by purposeful and multiple assessments.

Professional Development and Collaborative Decision Making

KSRA recommends that general educators, reading specialists, literacy coaches, special education teachers, speech and language therapists, school psychologists and administrators need relevant expertise in literacy. Specifically, they need to understand how to use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments as well as data analysis in differentiating instruction. This will encourage greater cohesiveness in planning and implementing high quality literacy instruction for all students.

References

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