

Bemidji Area Schools

Response to Intervention – FAQs

Q: It seems like the district is trying to keep students out of special education by implementing RtI. Is that what's happening?

A: RtI is a framework suggested in federal law (IDEA) as a research-based sequence of steps that can be used by school districts to ensure that the “right” students are being accepted into special education programs. The “right” students are those who do not respond to differentiated core instruction or behavioral assistance supported by evidence-based, intensive intervention strategies. We know much more about what these “evidence-based, intensive intervention strategies” are than we did even 5 or 10 years ago. Many of these strategies implemented within regular education can be very effective for many students, and can actually prevent the need for special education. Through RtI, we are trying to find out whether or not a student will respond and make progress when we use strategies matched to his/her needs within regular education. If the student fails to make progress, we consider special education. We owe it to our students to try these steps before making life-changing decisions regarding their educational futures. So, no, the district is not trying to keep students out of special education...we are trying to ensure that the “right” students get in.

Q: Do I have to go through the RtI-Level step if I think a student needs special education?

A: In most cases, interventions at the RtI-Level step can be highly effective for many children. They may help the child enough so that a special education evaluation isn't necessary. The district's step-by-step RtI Intervention Process should be followed, beginning with the RtI-Level step, except in extreme cases (i.e. child is exhibiting behavior that is harmful to self or others, etc.). In extreme cases, you should consult your building principal and your TAT.

Q: Where do I find the “Intervention Referral Forms”?

A: The “Intervention Referral Form” is found on the school district website. In the pull-down menu under “Curriculum”, click on “Response to Intervention – RtI”. On that page, click on “RtI Procedures and Processes” on the left side of the screen. The forms will appear in the center of the screen in a bulleted listing.

Q: How do I know which children I should discuss at my RtI Team Meeting?

A: Using assessment data, classroom observation, and teacher judgment, watch for students who are not progressing as they should, regardless of whether they're already receiving any additional assistance from programs like Title I or AOM. Some students may need something additional or different because their progress is not acceptable. Discuss students at your RtI Team when you feel you need help in finding an intervention or program that meets the student's needs -- when the

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child's current programming just doesn't seem to be enough, and you don't know what to do next. You can discuss any student at your RtI Team, regardless of whether or not you plan to bring the discussion to the TAT or refer the student to special education.

Q: Should I try to implement an intervention for a student who has poor attendance? Some of my students really need help, but they're hardly ever in school.

A: If a student needs an intervention, s/he should be provided that intervention and often as is necessary and possible. Making sure the parent knows about the intervention (and the importance of getting the child to school) may be helpful. Collaborating with attendance monitors and/or Indian Education personnel and informing them of the intervention may also be helpful. Connecting with the child through the intervention may also be encouraging and confidence-building for that child. We want to show care and concern for all children and never give up on them. We should provide the best we can for any child under the circumstances presented to us.

Q: Do the classroom teachers have to do all, or even any, of the interventions? Can other school personnel do the interventions?

A: No, the classroom teacher is not responsible for completing all the interventions. Interventions done in Title I and AOM also work. It would be very difficult for a classroom teacher to find time to do lengthy, intensive interventions. If a classroom teacher can find time to complete an intervention at either the RtI or TAT level, this teacher may do so; however, an intervention may be implemented by any school staff member who is trained to deliver that intervention. "Best practice" recommends that the most at-risk students be taught by the most highly-trained person--usually a teacher. Many of our district paraprofessionals, however, have been trained in many of the district's accepted interventions, and would do a fine job implementing them. RtI and TAT Team Members should collaborate with support personnel to find the best fit, intervention program, and interventionist for the student.

Note: In the past, a classroom teacher was required to deliver at least one of the TAT-level interventions; however, this is no longer the case. As long as TAT-level interventions are delivered by trained personnel and meet the recommendations set by special education, they will be considered acceptable. (See next question for the recommendations of special education.)

Q: What are the recommendations for interventions at the RtI and TAT Levels?

A: At the less-intensive RtI Level, it is recommended that academic interventions be conducted at least 2 to 3 times a week for at least 10 minutes a day. For behavioral interventions at the RtI Level, a behavioral skill or strategy must be taught and reinforced with the student, and the interventionist should have frequent (not necessarily daily) contact with the student. At the TAT Level, academic

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interventions should be conducted for 5 days a week for at least 20 minutes a day. For behavioral interventions at the TAT Level, a behavioral skill or strategy must be taught and reinforced with the student, and the interventionist should have daily contact with the student. There are no exact time-spent-per-day requirements for behavioral interventions.

Q: What if the Title I/AOM programs are full? What if a classroom teacher can't find time to implement an intervention in the classroom?

A: Collaborating with the Title I and AOM program personnel and implementing a flexible schedule should be considered. Sometimes a student can be "slotted" into an intervention program creatively – with a group from another classroom or at a time not previously considered. Occasionally, a schedule can be changed to better accommodate the student. Classroom teachers should also consider the possibility of implementing an intervention themselves during small group or station time, or quiet seatwork or independent reading time. Some classroom teachers replace a group's station or guided reading time with an intervention 3 or more days a week. The District RtI Committee is also addressing this issue – more information will follow.

Q: Do we have to follow the intervention recommendations suggested at the RtI-Level? I believe my student would benefit from an intervention a little more intensive than what the recommendations suggest.

A: The intervention recommendations are meant to be the minimum guidelines. You can increase the number of days a week, the number of minutes a day, etc. of an intervention as you see fit, depending on the needs of the student.

Q: Do I have to do two interventions at the RtI-Level, or can I just do one?

A: Your student's needs should guide your decisions. It is fine to do just one intervention at the RtI Level. If your RtI Team feels TAT involvement is warranted after this first intervention, you may proceed to that level. But if you feel your student could benefit from another intervention at the RtI Level, and you aren't feeling the need to go to the TAT, feel free to try a 2nd, or even a 3rd intervention at this less-intensive level.

Q: How long should an RtI-Level intervention last?

A: It depends on the student and the intervention. Some interventions take a while to work, and some work better with one student than another. Generally, you should try an intervention for at least 4 – 8 weeks (with at least 4 – 5 progress monitoring data points) before making a decision about whether or not an intervention is working. And some interventions, like Reading Recovery, LLI, and Repeated Reading, will usually take longer than 8 weeks to come to "fruition". Give the interventions a chance to work, but if the child's progress monitoring graph looks "flat" and the student doesn't seem to be making progress after a few weeks, you may wish to discuss with your team a change of intervention.

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Q: Does a parent need to be contacted for every intervention you try, even a less-intensive intervention at the RtI Level?

A: Yes, best practice would suggest that parents should be informed if their child is going to receive any type of intervention, even if a teacher isn't considering the possibility of a special education referral. This contact can be in the form of a letter, phone call, or personal meeting. Title I/AOM and Minnesota Reading Corps personnel have form letters already developed for certain interventions.

Q: What if we don't have enough time to discuss a child's needs and develop an intervention within one meeting time?

A: As we get used to this process, we will become more efficient at discussing and planning for a child's needs. Some RtI Teams, however, are finding they need more time to complete their work, or they are finding that team meetings may not be scheduled at times they are needed. In these cases, teams are getting creative with finding extra collaboration time. Discuss this issue with your team, and see if you can find alternative times to meet in between scheduled RtI Team Meetings, if needed. Note: This issue is also being discussed at the district level and within the District RtI Committee.

Q: When are we going to start doing fidelity checks/observations for the interventions?

A: The district RtI Committee will determine when they want this to begin. Preferably, a colleague will observe a teacher as close as possible to the start of intervention implementation. Observations are non-evaluative and meant for fidelity purposes only. Teachers will be informed as to when the fidelity checks will begin.

Q: What should I use as a progress monitoring tool?

A: You may use any tool you feel is appropriate and will give you the best information on your students. Some other tools that may be appropriate are running records, the Quick Phonics Screener (QPS), the Phonological Awareness Skills Test (PAST), the San Diego Quick Assessment, the Primary Spelling Inventory, or a curricular sight word assessment. MAP Skills is also a great tool. You may wish to consider using a combination of progress monitoring tools to get the best picture of your student's progress.

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Q: If I start an intervention with a student toward the end of the school year, can the intervention be carried over through the summer and picked up again in the fall without having to start the “number of days” count over?

A: It depends on the student and the intervention. In some cases, students change so much over the summer that the intervention you started isn't even appropriate anymore. But if a team decides an intervention is still appropriate, you should conduct the previously-started intervention for the entire month of September before making any referral decisions, no matter how many days you conducted the intervention the previous spring.

Q: What will our RtI Team Meetings look like now that we've started discussing students? Are we no longer discussing our grade-level goals and strategies like we did last year?

A: Your RtI Team Meeting agenda is up to your team to decide. You may discuss any combination of the following, depending on the needs at the time of the meeting:

- Individual students (determining needs and interventions, examining progress, problem-solving, decision-making, etc.)
- Grade-Level goals and strategies (progress toward goals, how to be more instructionally effective, lesson and activity design related to the goal, progress toward goal, students who are not making acceptable progress toward the goal, examination of student work, etc.)
- Data (student and/or whole grade level)
- Other as assigned by the principal.

You should continue to keep notes on your discussions on the “Agenda and Notes Sheets” in your white RtI folder.

Q: Because of a holiday, my RtI Team doesn't meet for another month. Do I have to wait until the next meeting to start an intervention on a student?

A: No, you don't have to wait. We want to provide interventions to students in a timely fashion. If you feel comfortable, go ahead and determine the needs of your student and an appropriate intervention, and get started. If you feel you need assistance, see if one or two of your RtI colleagues are available for an impromptu meeting. Inform your RtI Team at your next meeting what you've done and how it's going, and ask for further suggestions at that time.