Iowa Department of Education

Guidance Document

Response to Intervention

Iowa Department of Education
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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the commitment and outcomes across workgroups that contributed to Iowa's Response to Intervention System. We would also like to extend deep appreciation to those who contribute every day to ensuring that Iowa's children and youth grow up physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally healthy. Special appreciation is expressed to those who have and will continue to work to implement Response to Intervention across our educational system in Iowa.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Guidance Document

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of Response to Intervention (RtI), including essential components. Iowa's RtI document is designed to provide the state with common language and understanding of RtI, why RtI is important for improving student results, general timelines for implementation and answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

WHAT IS RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION?

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a process by which schools use data to identify the academic and behavioral supports each and every student needs to be successful in school and leave school ready for life. The process provides students with evidence-based instruction and interventions matched to their needs and monitors student progress to improve their educational outcomes. RtI also allows educators to evaluate the overall health of their system and target resources by providing the necessary data to determine which elements of the education system are performing adequately and which require further development. RtI is a decision-making framework composed of evidence-based practices in assessment and instruction. RtI *is not* a packaged program, set of assessments or curriculum that can be purchased.

Essential Components

RtI is also a framework for educating all children to high levels of proficiency. It is driven by general education, though it has been demonstrated to be effective for students served in special programs (e.g., Special Education, English Language Learners etc.) The RtI Process takes place within Universal, Targeted, and Intensive levels of instruction. Each of these levels provides increasingly intensive instruction, based on student needs, to support student progress toward proficiency. The essential components that must be in place to ensure that RtI is implemented effectively are below. Critical to each and every one of these components is fidelity of implementation.

> (a) Robust Universal instruction in the Iowa Core
>
> (b) Universal screening
>
> (c) Evidence-based instructional interventions at the Targeted and Intensive levels
>
> (d) Progress monitoring
>
> (e) Data-based decision-making

RtI uses universal screening information to identify struggling students at the earliest grade levels and provide students with additional instructional time and intensity during the school day. RtI also provides more advanced curriculum and additional instructional time and intensity to those who are on-track to exceed benchmarks and need extended learning. With RtI, students are monitored often to ensure they are progressing, and when they are not, they receive additional learning opportunities.

A valid, reliable, and technically adequate universal screening assessment is used to determine students' likelihood of future success on a relevant outcome measure. A healthy system would show that 80 -90% of the students are projected to be successful on an outcome measure and therefore are responding positively to the instruction they are receiving.
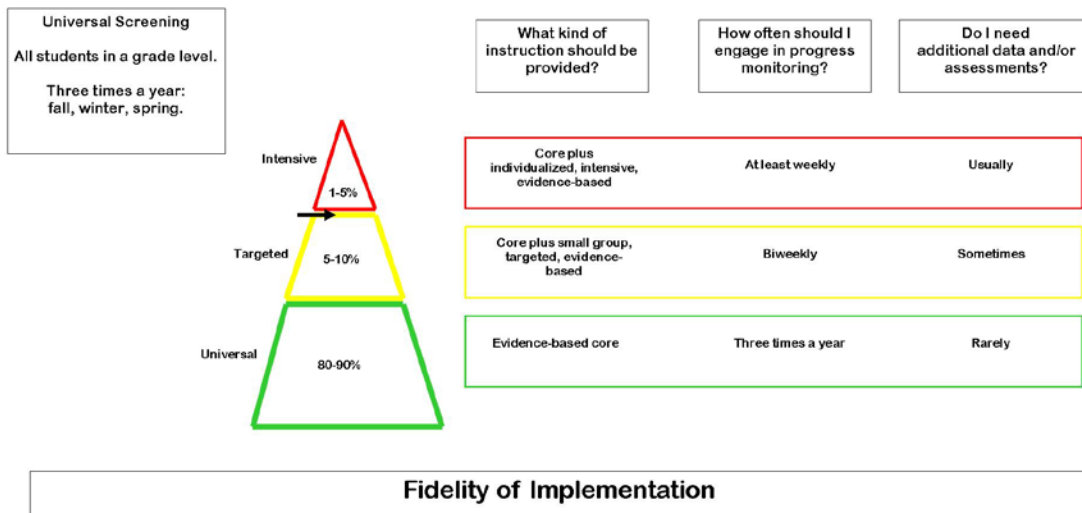
Universal screening data are used to determine students' likelihood of future success on a relevant outcome measure, or likelihood of meeting or exceeding future benchmarks. A valid, reliable, and technically adequate universal screening assessment will predict a high likelihood of future success for 80-90% of students in a healthy system. For most of these students, instruction in an effective Universal curriculum and instructional program should be sufficient to keep them on-track. A few of these students who are particularly advanced will require more intensive support to ensure that they are achieving the growth of which they are capable.

In a healthy system the remaining 5 - 20 percent of students may not achieve proficiency based on universal instruction alone. These students need additional, targeted support to be successful in meeting the standards outlined in the Iowa Core, which is provided through the Universal curriculum and instructional program. Additional support is given in the form of evidence-based instructional or behavioral interventions that match the needs of the students. Interventions are implemented while progress is monitored using a valid and reliable progress monitoring assessment to determine whether the student is responding to the instruction, intervention, or support being provided.

The progress monitoring data along with other relevant information about student skills, (i.e., grades, work samples, observations) are reviewed frequently to determine students response to the additional supports they are receiving. In a healthy system it is possible that 1 - 5 percent of students will still require additional support beyond the universal curriculum and evidence-based instructional or behavioral interventions. For this small group of students additional data are often required to determine the best way for educators to match evidence-based interventions to their needs. Progress monitoring is continued and may be conducted more frequently as these students need to be evaluated on a more consistent basis to ensure they are responding favorably to the instruction they are receiving.

Figure 1: Response to Intervention: Data-Based Decision Making Process

The process of data-based decision making within an RtI system is depicted graphically in Figure 1. Universal screening assessments will be used three times a year (fall, winter, spring) to determine students' likelihood of future success on a relevant outcome measure. These assessments will be identified through the RtI assessment workgroup. Based on the universal screening assessment a healthy system would have ≥ 80% of students meeting benchmark goals to indicate they are likely to earn a score at or above the proficiency level on an end of year outcome measure that aligns with the Iowa Core.

Additional data and/or assessment information is needed when it is unclear why a student may not be responding positively to the instruction they are receiving. Universal screening data along with progress monitoring data are two pieces of information that can be used to determine who these students are. Because screening and progress monitoring assessments are not meant to determine what to teach it is sometimes necessary to collect additional information. This information could be a review of records, interviews, observations, student work samples, or additional assessment information. Collecting additional information will require time and resources and therefore should only be conducted when a student is clearly not benefiting from their current instructional program. A general guideline is that the intensity of the instruction is typically aligned with the intensity of the assessment data needed.

Instruction that is research-based will be provided to all students. Those students in universal level will receive universal instruction that is aligned with the Iowa Core. These are the state adopted standards that outline what educators are expected to teach and students are expected to learn. Students in targeted level will receive universal instruction plus small group, targeted, evidence based instruction. And students in the intensive level typically will receive universal instruction plus individualized intensive evidence-based instruction.

In order to determine if students are responding positively to instruction progress monitoring will occur. Students in Universal level will not require progress monitoring beyond universal screening three times a year. Students in Targeted level will receive progress monitoring at least once every two weeks to determine if they are responding positively to the instruction or if a change is warranted. Students in Intensive level will require progress monitoring at least weekly to determine if they are responding positively or if a change in instruction is needed. Again, the intensity of instruction is typically aligned with the intensity of assessment data needed. A student who is not responding and demonstrates a need for more intensive and targeted instruction is a student who warrants being monitored very closely. Frequent progress monitoring will capture students' response to the instruction allowing educators to make informed decisions about the allocation of time and resources needed.

Data-Based Decision Making

The very foundation of RtI is sound data-based decision-making. Sound data-based decision-making is a process by which people work together to: a) define the problem; b) generate and then validate assumed causes; c) determine a course of action; d) implement the action; and e) evaluate the outcome.

Defining the problem. In data-based decision making defining the problem can occur at the district, school, grade, classroom, disaggregated group or student level. Districts can take the data from universal screening and end of year outcome measures to determine which schools are meeting the needs of at least 80% of the student population. This information can be disaggregated by grade, classroom, groups of students, as well as for individual students. If an entire grade does not have at least 80% of the students meeting grade level expectations then it does not make sense to try to define the problem one student at a time but rather it would make sense to define the problem at the grade level.

Generating and Validating Assumed Causes. Formulating some assumed causes for why the problem is occurring is the next step in data-based decision making. This will help outline what additional data or information will be needed to validate (confirm or disconfirm) the assumed cause. This process of gathering information until the assumed cause is determined is an important step that will lead to determining a course of action.

Determining Course of Action. Based on the assumed causes a course of action is determined and is the next step in data-based decision making. If multiple assumed causes are identified then prioritizing is important to appropriately distribute resources based on need and importance. Determining a course of action is something that should be done with careful consideration to efficiency, cost, and expected outcome.

Implementing the Action. The implementation of the action is the next step in data-based decision making and is a critical component to successfully addressing the problem. Having the right people doing the right things cannot be overlooked. This is often where the "rubber hits the road" and without follow through the best plans will not address the problem.

Evaluating the Outcome. The final step in data-based decision making is to determine if instruction is working by monitoring the progress of the action. If the problem was defined correctly the assumed causes should have been validated and from this a course of action determined and implemented. Therefore having a plan for monitoring how it is going is critical. However, if results are not favorable that does not automatically mean the action chosen is wrong, rather it could mean that something has broken down along the way within any one of the data-based decision making steps.

WHY RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION IN IOWA?

At the recent Iowa Education Summit held in July 2011, Governor Terry E. Branstad set the following educational goal for Iowa:

The academic achievement and career preparation of all Iowa students will be the best in the United States and on par with the most competitive countries in the world.

Throughout the 20th century, Iowa demonstrated outstanding leadership in education both nationally and internationally, consistently scoring within the top 5 states in student academic performance. In fact, in 1992, no state scored higher than Iowa on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in fourth-grade reading – a critical point in the educational development of our children and youth, given that this is a time children truly start "reading to learn" rather than "learning to read" (Fiester, 2010). It is an unfortunate reality that even with significant investments in curriculum and instruction, state reading and math achievement trend lines from 1992 through 2010 remain essentially flat and achievement gaps for special education students, poor, minority, and English Language Learners are not closing. To punctuate this reality, data from the 2009 administration of NAEP indicate that not only has Iowa's student achievement across grades stagnated, in some cases achievement has regressed - even while other states have improved. As a case in point, the achievement gap between students in Iowa with and without disabilities on the 2009 NAEP is the **worst** in the nation. Iowa struggles with disproportionately suspending and expelling minority students from classroom instructional time, further exacerbating Iowa's achievement gaps across subgroups. Iowa consistently identifies more students in need of special education services (13.8 percent) than the national average (13.2 percent) (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) and despite long standing efforts at system-level data-based decision making and non-traditional assessment practices for special education identification, Iowa's schools struggle with disproportionate representation in special education based on race/ethnicity.

Results are clear across both academic and social-behavioral indicators - Iowa must focus statewide efforts to move student progress in the right direction. Our future is changing, and Iowa is poised to not only reclaim our position as a national leader in education and realize the Governor's promise, but more importantly to grant all our students the right to succeed in school and beyond. To address our challenge, Iowa has mobilized our entire educational system to support a comprehensive system to address each and every student's need: Response to Intervention. We understand RtI is not a panacea, and implementing this data-based decision making process will not be the single solution to reforming Iowa's education system. RtI can and will, however, establish a system of appropriate identification of system

needs as well as student need(s) that are efficiently matched to supports and/or instruction needed to increase academic and behavioral success – all anchored within an integrated data system that allows teachers and administrators to input and display information leading to informed decisions. Successful statewide implementation of RtI will incur benefit for all stakeholders in Iowa's education system, including students and families, teachers, schools, AEAs, and the state.

For students & families: Higher Achievement for All
Safe and Caring Learning Environments

For all school personnel: More Time Teaching
Less Time Assessing
Less Time with Behavioral Management Issues

For School Systems   Healthy Indicators to Focus Priorities
Ability to Target Resources on Effective Interventions
Less Time Invested in Disciplinary Referrals
Increase in Achievement across all Students

For Iowa's DE and AEA System: Healthy Indicators to Focus Priorities
Ability to Target Resources on Effective Interventions
Elimination of the Achievement Gap
Elimination of Academic and Social-Behavioral Instructional Casualties
Elimination of Disproportionality in Special Education and Suspensions/Expulsions

HOW WILL RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION BE IMPLEMENTED IN IOWA?

The Structure

The Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) is leading the implementation of RtI in Iowa, in partnership with Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs) and local school districts. The IDOE has established a State Implementation Team (SIT) for RtI that will support AEAs and districts in scaling-up and sustaining RtI statewide. The SIT is made up of IDOE personnel and AEA administrators. The IDOE staff who serve on the SIT are the coordinators of seven RtI workgroups responsible for coordinating support in critical areas: Assessment, Content, Leadership, Finance, Healthy System Indicators, Data Systems, and Communication. The table below lists the responsibilities of each of these groups.

Team or Group	Function or Responsibility
State Implementation Team	The State Implementation Team is responsible for (1) coordinating the work across all focused RtI Teams, (2) steering the implementation of RtI statewide, (3) analyzing RtI progress and outcomes, (4) recommending actions for improvement/next steps, and (5) providing leadership for AEA, District and School teams.
Healthy System Indicators	The Healthy System Indicator Team is responsible for defining and establishing a healthy indicators formula, cut scores, data structure and reporting format for schools, districts, AEAs and the state to use to determine whether an RtI system is operating effectively, and working with the Data Systems group to make those available to users.
Leadership	The leadership team is responsible for establishing the leadership infrastructure needed to support and build a statewide RtI System.
Assessment	The Assessment workgroup is responsible for establishing the universal screening and progress monitoring assessment system to provide educators the tools they need to obtain valid and reliable information used to make decisions about student across universal, targeted, and intensive levels of support.
Content	The Content workgroup is responsible for defining evidence-based interventions at the universal, targeted, and intensive levels of support in the system and making recommendations on which interventions meet those criteria.
Data Systems	The Data Systems workgroup is responsible for building a statewide data system for use by teachers, administrators, AEA and IDOE personnel that will support the implementation of RtI.
Finance	The finance team is responsible for determining and allocating the

	financial resources needed to build a statewide RtI System.	

In addition to the teams listed above, implementation teams will be required at the AEA, district, and building levels. These teams will be responsible for decision-making, alignment of resources, and development of capacity at each level of the system.

In order to achieve systemic change and implement RtI successfully across the state, a framework will be employed that allows for appropriate decision-making at each level of the system. All stakeholders will have opportunities to provide input on decisions made by the IDOE and will have their own space within which to implement RtI. The table below outlines roles that the IDOE, AEAs, and districts will play in implementing RtI statewide.

Iowa Department of Education	Area Education Agencies	Local Education Agencies
• The timeline for the implementation of RtI statewide. • The criteria by which the health of the RtI system will be evaluated. • The method by which the implementation of RtI statewide will be evaluated. • How to direct state and federal funds to implement RtI. • What data will be required in the statewide RtI data system. • The criteria that will be used to determine the technical adequacy of universal screening and progress monitoring tools, and research-based and evidence-based interventions at the Targeted and Intensive levels of support. • The criteria that will be used to determine the adequacy of Universal instruction in the Iowa Core Curriculum.	• How to support schools in the implementation of the Iowa Core with fidelity at the Universal level. • How to support schools' implementation of universal screening and progress monitoring. • How AEA funds will be directed to support implementation of RtI. • How to support schools in the implementation of evidence-based interventions at the Targeted and Intensive levels of support. • How each of these steps will be implemented and monitored for fidelity	• How to arrange schedules to accommodate the needs of students in an RtI system. • How to direct local funds to support the implementation of RtI. • Which evidence-based interventions to employ with specific students in need of support at the Targeted or Intensive levels.

The Schedule

The initial focus of RtI in Iowa will be on providing evidence-based instruction in reading for Kindergarten through sixth grades, and on selection of universal screening and progress

monitoring tools to be used in Iowa. All RtI workgroups are currently developing products to support the goal of selecting appropriate universal screening and progress monitoring tools in reading that can be supported in a statewide RtI data system. Under the the leadership and direction of the IDOE, the education system will begin training AEA and district personnel on the screening and progress monitoring tools as early as spring of 2012-2013.

After elementary reading strategies have been successfully implemented, the education system will integrate mathematics and behavior into the RtI system, as well. The system will eventually span grades K-12, though initial efforts will be made to facilitate implementation at the elementary level. The reason for this is that the research and lessons learned from the field have focused on the elementary level and how best to support students' needs related to reading, math, and behavior. As new research emerges we will continue to look at how best to meet the needs of students in middle and high school.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will the Iowa Department of Education support districts implementing RtI?

The IDOE will provide the materials and professional development to the AEAs on the essential components of RtI. The timeline and plans will be made available to AEAs and districts over the 2011-2012 school year in relation to each of the work groups (i.e., State Implementation Team, Data Systems, Assessment, Content, Finance, Leadership, and Healthy Systems Indicators).

What is the IDOE's guidance on assessment tools used as part of an RtI system?

Schools will need multiple pieces of assessment data to answer questions that are critical to address in an RtI system. For example, "who is at-risk for academic or behavioral failure?" requires different data then asking "how are certain students responding to a particular intervention?" The IDOE is working to identify which assessments are currently available for schools that assist in addressing these critical questions. A guidance document outlining how to evaluate assessments will be made available along with results for universal screening and progress monitoring assessments in the 2011-2012 school year.

What is the connection between RtI and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?

RtI and PBIS are both research-based frameworks that allow for increased support depending on the needs of the student and depend on a strong universal core for all students. RtI typically focuses on academic supports, while PBIS focuses on behavior. RtI and PBIS both rely on universal screening and progress monitoring data to match research-based interventions to individual student needs. The Iowa system will be built around both RtI and PBIS, since we recognize that for students to fully participate and benefit from instruction they receive in school their needs must first be addressed which may include behavioral and social-emotional as well as academic needs.

How does an RtI system benefit English Language Learner (ELL) students?

When schools look at the health of their system this should include looking at students who are linguistically and/or culturally diverse. Looking at the data by disaggregated groups allows schools to determine if there are differences in performance across groups. Strategies/interventions can then be identified and implemented to address the needs of these students. Identifying the appropriate strategies/interventions should be grounded in the research around language instruction. Knowledge of this research will influence what schools need to do to best meet the needs of these students in regard to the assessments and instruction they receive.

How does an RtI system benefit students with disabilities?

For those students not yet identified as having a disability an RtI system may benefit them by identifying them as at-risk earlier than would have otherwise occurred. Students should be identified sooner with the use of a universal screener and progress monitoring assessments which would then allow educators to provide evidence-based interventions matched to students needs. For those students who are already identified they will continue to receive individualized instruction and their progress will be monitored. With consistent progress monitoring it can be determined when a student's performance warrants less intensive interventions and when it may require more intensive supports within the tiered system of support.

How does an RtI system benefit students who are exceeding benchmarks?

Similar to how students who are at-risk are identified by conducting universal screening, students who are performing above grade level expectations should also be identified using a universal screener. These students' needs should be addressed and their performance reviewed at least three times a year. This allows schools to monitor the growth of these students so that instructional changes can be made to best meet their needs.

How does RtI fit with the Iowa Core?

Iowa Core includes the standards that all students must demonstrate to ensure success in school and college and career readiness upon high school graduation. RtI is the data-based decision making process by which schools use data to identify the academic and behavioral supports each and every student needs to meet the standards.

GLOSSARY

Core Curriculum—is the body of knowledge that all students are expected to learn. Curriculum can be specific knowledge and learning processes. In Iowa this would be the Iowa Core.

Data-Based Decision Making—the process of making informed decisions for student success, through ongoing collection and analysis of data.

Differentiated Instruction—refers to educators tailoring the curriculum, teaching environments, and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for students in order to meet each student's needs.

Evidence-Based Intervention –interventions for which data from scientific, rigorous research designs have demonstrated (or empirically validated) the efficacy of the intervention.

Intensive Intervention—characterized by an increased focus of instruction or support. Intensity can be increased through many dimensions including frequency and duration (e.g., minutes per lesson and for how many weeks), focus on instruction, format of the lesson, and size of the instructional group. With RtI, intensive is sometimes referred to tier three intervention.

Intervention—a thoughtful and purposeful plan to increase support for student learning for those students who fail to respond to universal instruction related to academic and/or behavioral expectations

Iowa Core—a consistent set of expectations for schools and students in Iowa.

Tiered System of Support—describes levels in intensity for instructional and data purposes within a multi-tiered system.

Progress Monitoring—is used to assess students' academic performance, to quantify a student's rate of improvement, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

Research-Based Interventions - interventions which may incorporate design features that have been researched generally; however, the intervention, curricula or program as a whole has not been studied using a rigorous research design, as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Response to Intervention (RtI)-- RtI is a decision-making framework to judge the overall health of one's educational system, to provide supports to students who need extra supports, and to measure whether or not these supports are making a difference for those children in academic as well as behavioral domains.

Universal Instruction—the course of study, instruction and assessment deemed critical for student success. Universal instruction in Iowa refers to the state adopted standards that outline what educators are expected to teach and students are expected to learn.

Universal Screening—is used to determine which students are at-risk for not performing at the proficient level on an end of year outcome measure. Tools that are efficient to administer and score, are predictive of students performance, and aligned to content areas within the Iowa Core across the K-12 span and will look different in elementary, middle and high schools.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

National Websites:

Center on Instruction: http://centeroninstruction.org/

- Information on Literacy, Math, English Language Learning, Special Education, Early Learning, and RtI
- Resources include: syntheses/summaries of best practices, practitioner guides, training materials, examples from the field, standards and assessments, and professional development events
- Documents are diverse in that they address state-level, school improvement, classroom, and individual student application

National Center on Response to Intervention http://www.rti4success.org

- Evaluation Tool charts for Universal Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Instructional Interventions
- Webinars on various topics related to RtI
- Implementation guidance documents and tools

RtI Action Network: http://www.rtinetwork.org/

- Instruments related to self-assessments, beliefs, perceptions, timetables, data analysis for RtI
- Monthly Newsletter for up-to-date information on RtI
- Articles and Information for Pre-K, K-5, Middle School, High School, and Parents and Families

Other State websites:

Colorado: http://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/

- Implementation Guides and Power Point Presentations
- Information is available for districts, schools, and classrooms

Kansas: http://www.kansasmtss.org/index.htm

- Include both academics and behavior in their system
- Information is available for parents, reading, math

Florida: http://www.florida-rti.org/

- Includes both academics and behavior
- Detailed information provided on the process of state implementation

Michigan: http://miblsi.cenmi.org/Home.aspx

- Include both academics and behavior in their system
- Information is available for secondary, implementation, evaluation and support

Washington: http://www.k12.wa.us/RTI/default.aspx

- Include Formative Assessment in their discussion of assessments
- Information is available for reading, math, writing, behavior, early childhood, and secondary students