The purpose of this article is to discuss the major components of Response to Intervention, or RTI, namely (I) universal screening, (II) a tiered organization of supports and services, (III) progress monitoring, and (IV) evidence-based interventions. The goal of this article is to help parents make an informed decision as to whether or not these vital components are being implemented in their schools to help their children learn. The last section of my article is primarily intended to help my readers distinguish between GEIs and RTI.

Response to Intervention (abbreviated RTI or RtI) refers to a three-tier system that addresses the diverse academic needs of all students by providing evidence-based practices, progress monitoring, and collaborative problem solving. “Three-tier system” is a term in education that refers to three distinct levels of service delivery. Each level covers different types of interventions and supports for a clearly defined group of students.

Tier 1 is the general education classroom. It represents the least-intensive and preventive level of service delivery. Universal screening (e.g., diagnostic assessments) identifies those students likely to need more targeted interventions.

**For more information**

Visit the National Center on RTI website at <http://www.rti4success.org/> or the RTI Action Network website at <http://www.rtinetwork.org/> for a quick review of efficient and valid universal screening measures.

In the second tier (Tier 2), students receive more intensive and explicit instruction, often delivered through one or more of the following strategies: increasing the duration and frequency of instruction; placing students in smaller groups; or providing instruction by teachers with more expertise (Hannan, Holbrook, & Ricci, 2012). If students do not make progress after a specified period of Tier 2, they are then provided instruction that is considered Tier 3 intervention, which provides increasingly more intense individualized instruction and interventions or an alternative research-based curriculum. If Tier 3 is not successful, a student is considered as potentially having a learning disability and the referral process for a special education evaluation may begin.

PROGRESS MONITORING

To determine whether students are making appropriate progress and also identify any students who may need more intensive instruction, continuous progress monitoring across the tier-level interventions is essential. When monitoring progress, educators use instruments based on standardized and validated curriculum-based measurement (CBM; Deno, 1985, 1986, 1989, 2003; Fuchs & Deno, 1991; Shinn, 1989, 1998), such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS, AIMSweb, or early numeracy, in frequent intervals of three to four weeks to assess a student’s growth over time. [For the purposes of using RTI as an early component of specific learning disability (SLD) determination, CBM fits its intended purpose of monitoring progress given its documented effectiveness in monitoring progress for students with disabilities (Deno, 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986b, 1999; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2005)]. These computer-based instruments typically offer benchmark indicators to assess a student’s academic progress. Through the use of this dynamic indicator of student achievement, teachers can identify each student’s areas of need and make decisions regarding changes in programming, placement, or intensity of instruction in a timely manner if “non-responsiveness” (resistance to interventions) is found. Within an RTI process, students who are receiving appropriate educational services are expected to show progress in their current instructional program. A student who is responding to evidence-based instruction will demonstrate adequate growth patterns over time in a progress-monitoring data chart. In contrast, a student who does not show growth in response to a level of evidence-based instruction is a non-responder (Hannan et al., 2012). Non-responders to interventions are students who do not make adequate progress despite participation in evidence-based instruction (McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2005).

**For more information**

Visit the National Center on RTI website at <http://www.rti4success.org/> or the National Center on Intensive Intervention website at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/> for a quick review of reliable and valid progress monitoring tools. Be sure to view the Academic Progress Monitoring Chart at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring>

CONTINUUM OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Under the RTI approach, instructional practices and interventions are based on what empirical, scientific, and rigorous research has shown to be effective with students. These intervention programs may include SRSD for Writing Strategies (NCRTI, 2010; NCII, 2012), Stepping Stones to Literacy (NCRTI, 2010; WWC, 2007) or Number Rockets (NCRTI, 2010). Also, an important thing to keep in mind is that non-responsiveness to an intervention could also be caused by the “absence of good teaching” and this (and many other problems) can be tackled by having highly qualified and knowledgeable personnel deliver the necessary interventions (Hannan et al., 2012).

**For more information**

The following websites present examples of

evidence-based interventions.

What Works Clearinghouse

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Best Evidence Encyclopedia

<http://www.bestevidence.org/>

National Center on RTI

<http://www.rti4success.org/>

National Center on Intensive Intervention

<http://www.intensiveintervention.org/>

Evidence Based Intervention Network

<http://ebi.missouri.edu/>

Intervention Central

<http://www.interventioncentral.org/>

*What Are the Differences Between GEIs and RTI?*

The purpose of this section is to raise awareness of general education intervention (GEI) in schools, which according to Zirkel (2012) does not necessarily equate to RTI. As specifically noted by Zirkel, RTI in the IDEA should not be confused with “the more generic, long-standing practice of general education interventions (GEIs).” GEIs include student assistance teams and teacher support teams (“problem solving teams”). Perry Zirkel, a university professor of education and law at Lehigh University, explains why GEIs are legally not equivalent to RTI. In his article “The Legal Dimension of RTI—Confusion Confirmed: A Response to Walker and Daves,” Zirkel contends that “the IDEA recognizes only RTI for SLD identification and that GEI does not equate to RTI.” Zirkel opines that “the GEI variations do not provide for research-based instruction and continuous progress monitoring, particularly at the first tier.” Similarly, he also opines that “they are not a multi-tiered process with at least a third tier, which is the minimum in both the law and the literature.” This is a point or premise which remains un-rebutted (Zirkel, 2012).

References

Kamei-Hannan, C., Holbrook, M.C., Ricci, L.A. (2012). Applying a response-to-intervention model to literacy instruction for students who are blind or have low vision. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 106*(2), 69-80.

McMaster, K.L., Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., Compton, D.L. (2005). Responding to nonresponders: an experimental field trial of identification and intervention methods. *Exceptional Children, 71*(4), 445-463.

Zirkel, P.A. (2012). The Legal Dimensions of RTI—Confusion Confirmed: A Response to Walker and Daves. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 35*(2), 72-75.