



Oklahoma School Psychological Association Position Statement: Response to Intervention

The Oklahoma School Psychological Association (OSPA) supports the changes in the most recent revision of IDEA (2005). Specifically, OSPA supports the inclusion of proposed modifications within IDEA (2005) regarding identification of students suspected of having learning disabilities. In this revision, IDEA allows for alternative assessment procedures to identify specific learning disabilities in children, and OSPA supports the use of Response-to-Intervention (RTI) as a major component of this model.

Definition of RTI

RTI is a data-based model of assessment, which incorporates problem-solving principles. Schools implementing RTI models monitor a student's response to a particular evidence-based intervention designed to address a specific need, typically using a single-participant research design. If the student does not respond positively to interventions that research has demonstrated are effective for most other students, then schools can rule out poor instruction as an explanation for low achievement. Within the RTI model, "interventions" can include high quality, evidence-based instructional practices administered at the classroom, small group, or individual student levels, or in a combination of such delivery modes. Furthermore, as practitioners increase the intensity of intervention for a student, they glean important information regarding how severe the student's need is. Taken together, ruling out poor instruction and assessing the intensity of student need are critical factors in determining special education eligibility within the RTI model.

Available data suggest RTI is a valid model of assessment; however, the research is ongoing and most districts implementing problem-solving models view RTI as an evolving enterprise that requires continuous evaluation and modification as the data indicates. A current limitation of the RTI approach is that no standard exists to determine how much change is required for schools to consider a child "responsive to intervention" versus "resistant or non-responsive to intervention."

Despite the questions regarding how much change indicates a positive student response to intervention, RTI is distinctly advantageous due to its focus on early identification of struggling learners, prevention of serious academic difficulties, and early intervention. Within an RTI model, school psychologists' efforts to determine and respond to a child's needs focus on intervention rather than on the process of eligibility determination.

Finally, RTI approaches may be implemented within a larger system of school support that provides opportunities for all students to experience success. Such approaches can help to ensure the delivery of effective general education instruction and access to early interventions which can prevent the onset of learning difficulties. Students exhibiting low achievement despite receiving high quality general education instruction may be considered for individualized assessment within an RTI model.

Components of an effective RTI assessment approach may include the following:

- Assessing the students current functioning, including areas of strength and difficulty. The purpose of such assessment is to define concerns that will be targeted for intervention, inform the intervention plan and to collect baseline data regarding the students pre-intervention functioning. Practitioners will select assessment instruments and procedures based on such purposes.
- Setting an appropriate learning goal that the student can reasonably achieve within a brief intervention period. Such a goal must be realistic, as practitioners can use the goal as a standard for determining whether the intervention was effective for the student.
- Implementing with integrity evidence-based interventions designed to address the student's specific needs. "Evidence-based" means that a creditable body of scientific data exists, supporting the intervention's efficacy in resolving a particular problem.
- Monitoring the student's response to the intervention using both ongoing data-collection and pre-post measures.

If a referred student fails to respond to an intervention, the lack of response does not necessarily indicate the presence of a specific learning disability and/or eligibility for special education services. It may be necessary in many instances to modify the initial intervention or implement more intense interventions in order to adequately document student unresponsiveness or responsiveness. Moreover, the use of procedures that are not traditionally associated with problem-solving approaches, such as standardized, norm-referenced assessments, may be warranted to assist in documenting the presence of a learning disability and are strongly indicated when other types of disabilities are suspected (e.g. mental retardation, emotional disturbance, etc.).

Role of School Psychologists

With the introduction of RTI and the increased focus on early intervention in IDEA legislation, many school psychologists will likely need to apply problem-solving consultation skills, alternative assessment procedures, and skills in measuring student response to intervention accurately and adequately. Armed with a sound knowledge base, school psychologists have the skills necessary to collaborate with parents, teachers and school staff to adapt a particular intervention to meet the needs of a particular student body. Additionally, school psychologists can measure student outcomes reliably and validly in order to answer the question, "did the selected intervention produce the desired effects for a particular student body (or a particular student)?" Finally, by virtue of their training and experiences in assessment, consultation, and intervention, school psychologists will take a leadership role in developing and implementing RTI policies and procedures at the local level.

OSPA's Contributions

- OSPA will support training efforts by collaborating with School Psychology training programs, the Department of Education, the Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Preparation, school districts, and other professional organizations.
- OSPA will provide training through professional development activities at the state and local level. These activities will include the development of a cadre of trainers with expertise in RTI who will provide support to school psychologists across the state.
- OSPA will collaborate with the State Department of Education to develop policies and procedures that ensure a fair, equitable, and valid process of RTI assessment process within the state of Oklahoma.
- OSPA supports parent involvement throughout the RTI assessment process.

In summary, OSPA supports the inclusion of RTI in considering the identification of students suspected of specific learning disabilities. We support using RTI to assist students in both regular and special education. Further, we consider RTI models within Oklahoma to be an evolving practice that districts will need to evaluate and modify as the data indicates is necessary.

For more information about OSPA's position on RTI, please contact Gary Duhon (405) 744-9436 gary.duhon@okstate.edu.

The OSPA would like to express appreciation to the Nebraska School Psychology Association (NSPA) for sharing their position statement regarding RTI. Excerpts from the NSPA position statement were borrowed and incorporated within this document.

The opinions expressed by the OSPA are consistent with recommendations of the National Association of School Psychologists.