



**TO:** P-12 Education Committee  
**FROM:** Ken Slentz   
**SUBJECT:** Initiatives Related to Response to Intervention  
**DATE:** April 21, 2014

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**   
**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

The purpose of this item is to provide the Board of Regents with information on the Department's initiatives related to Response to Intervention (Rtl), including the use of Rtl as a data-driven instructional framework to support implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

For information and discussion.

**Proposed Handling**

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the April 2014 meeting.

**Procedural History**

In October 2007, the Board of Regents approved regulations to define the minimal components of an Rtl program and to require, effective July 1, 2012, that all school districts have an Rtl program in place as part of the process to determine if a student in grades K-4 is a student with a learning disability in the area of reading.

In November 2010, section 100.2(ee) of the Regulations of the Commissioner relating to academic intervention services (AIS) was amended to provide that a school district may provide an RTI program in lieu of providing AIS to eligible students.

## **Background Information**

Rtl is a multi-tiered framework of assessment, instruction, and intervention to ensure that students who are struggling academically are identified early and are provided targeted instruction at varying levels of intervention. Because the Rtl process identifies students at the earliest signs of difficulty, Rtl is preventive in nature and provides immediate support to students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes.

Rtl begins with high quality research-based curriculum instruction in the student's regular classroom. Instruction is matched to student need through provision of differentiated instruction in the core curriculum. School-wide screening is administered to all students, and for students who fall below grade- or age-level proficiency, or who are at risk of falling below proficiency level, additional instructional support is provided in a multi-tiered format, with increasing levels of intensity and targeted focus of instruction. Through consistent progress monitoring, students who have not mastered critical skills or who are not making sufficient progress after receiving the most intensive level of instructional intervention, may require a referral for an individual evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. Rtl has proven to be an effective and instructionally relevant approach that provides extensive and objective information to assist in a determination as to whether a student's learning difficulties are the result of an instructional program or approach or possibly the result of a disability.

By Commissioner Regulation, Rtl programs must minimally include:

- Appropriate instruction delivered to all students in the general education class by qualified personnel. Appropriate instruction in reading means scientific research-based reading programs that include explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency (including oral reading skills) and reading comprehension strategies.
- Screenings applied to all students in the class to identify those students who are not making academic progress at expected rates.
- Instruction matched to student need with increasingly intensive levels of targeted intervention and instruction for students who do not make satisfactory progress in their levels of performance and/or in their rate of learning to meet age- or grade-level standards.
- Repeated assessments of student achievement which should include curriculum-based measures (CBMs) to determine if interventions are resulting in student progress toward age- or grade-level standards<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The assessment tools selected for progress monitoring should be specific to the skills being measured. CBMs are a frequently used tool for progress monitoring. For example, in reading, an appropriate progress monitoring tool would target the specific essential element(s) of reading with which an individual student is having difficulty, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and/or comprehension.

- The application of information about the student’s response to intervention to make educational decisions about changes in goals, instruction and/or services and the decision to make a referral for special education programs and/or services.
- Written notification to the parents when the student requires an intervention beyond that provided to all students in the general education classroom that provides information about the:
  - amount and nature of student performance data that will be collected and the general education services that will be provided;
  - strategies for increasing the student’s rate of learning; and
  - parents’ right to request an evaluation for special education programs and/or services.

Each school district must select and define the specific structure and components of its Rtl program, including, but not limited to, the:

- criteria for determining the levels of intervention to be provided to students;
- types of interventions;
- amount and nature of student performance data to be collected; and
- manner and frequency for progress monitoring.

Each school district implementing an Rtl program must take appropriate steps to ensure that staff has the knowledge and skills necessary to implement an Rtl program and that such a program is implemented consistent with the specific structure and components of the Rtl model.

### **Technical Assistance Initiatives**

Since the October 2007 adoption of these regulations, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has taken the following steps to assist districts in the planning, development and implementation of Rtl frameworks. While Rtl is a general education program, the Office of Special Education has the lead on these initiatives, using Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) discretionary funds, to support Rtl programs that lead to the more appropriate identification of students with disabilities and as a comprehensive early intervening service.

- Established a statewide Rtl Technical Assistance Center (TAC) through a contract with Buffalo State College ([www.nysrti.org](http://www.nysrti.org)). The purpose is to provide regional professional development and webinar sessions, work with selected schools to support their development and implementation of Rtl programs and host the State’s website for information on Rtl.
- Provided grants to 14 schools to employ a literacy coach and to receive ongoing technical assistance and professional development from the Rtl TAC to implement systems of Rtl. See <http://www.nysrti.org/page/pilot-schools/>.

- Issued “A Parent’s Guide to Response to Intervention,” for parents, families and others with information regarding RtI. (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/RTI/rti-pamphlet.pdf>). Also see other resources for parents at <http://www.nysrti.org/page/for-parents/>.
- Issued a guidance document, “Response to Intervention - Guidance for New York State School Districts” providing guidance related to the evaluation and determination of learning disabilities in reading for students K-4 that must include data from the RtI process (Chapter X). (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/RTI/guidance-oct10.pdf>).
- Provided webinars and regional training on RtI. For a listing of current and past regional training and webinar sessions, see <http://www.nysrti.org/page/professional-development/>
- Provided guidance and regional training on RtI programs and English language learners (ELLs). See <http://www.nysrti.org/page/lep-ell/>.

In addition, NYSED was awarded a federal State Personnel Development Grant to expand its technical assistance resources to scale up implementation of RtI across the State. In order to effect broader implementation of RtI across school districts and grade levels, NYSED is expanding the State’s capacity to provide professional development on RtI to school personnel and parents statewide and to offer support for high-quality implementation of RtI in grades Pre-K through Grade 8 as follows:

- Four regionally-based professional development teams have been established to provide technical assistance to school personnel on the implementation of RtI, including:
  - professional development sessions and on-site technical assistance, over the next two and one-half years, to 194 schools in 61 school districts which includes 49 schools in NYC<sup>2</sup>;
  - regional professional development sessions for preschool providers to implement early Recognition and Response programs at the preschool level; and
  - information sessions for parents to increase their understanding of and support for RtI.

The services of NYS RtI TAC have been expanded to host a number of statewide webinars on RtI and coordinate the professional development content to be delivered across the State by the RtI regional professional development teams.

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<sup>2</sup> 153 school districts applied for this technical assistance, which demonstrates the high level of statewide interest in RtI programs.

## **Rtl and the Implementation of the CCLS**

Implementing the CCLS within a systemic Rtl framework of instruction, assessment and interventions is an important educational strategy to close the achievement gaps for all students, including students at risk, students with disabilities and ELLs, by preventing smaller learning problems from becoming insurmountable gaps. Within the Rtl process, data-based decision making through universal screening and progress monitoring provides ongoing, current data to determine the current skill level of students, identify students early on who are struggling and to use this data to inform the instructional program. Having these tiered systems of instructional support available will be essential for struggling learners, students with disabilities and ELLs. Accordingly, districts are strongly encouraged to provide professional development that focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary to implement an effective Rtl plan. To assist districts with this, the RTI Technical Assistance Center is offering a series of webinars on Rtl and the Common Core. This webinar strand “Using your Rtl Model to Differentiate and Support the ELA Common Core Learning Standards” is being presented by Dr. Katherine Dougherty Stahl, New York University, Clinical Associate Professor of Literacy. The purpose is to help school personnel understand how their Rtl framework can support the teaching and learning of CCLS in literacy. This webinar strand includes the following webinar topics:

- Operationalizing the Six Shifts of CCLS within an Rtl Framework
- Complex Text: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners in Tier 1
- Differentiation in the Tier 1 Setting
- Tiered Interventions and CCLS

All webinars are archived (see <http://www.nysrti.org/page/professional-development/>).

### **Panel Presentation**

Panelists from Geneva City School District and a representative of the NYS Rtl TAC will discuss Rtl implementation efforts and results. In addition to questions from the Board of Regents, the panel’s discussion will be focused around the following questions:

- What are the specific activities/strategies taken to implement Rtl in your school?
- What have been the challenges to implementation?
- How has Rtl implementation changed your instructional program?
- What has been the impact of implementing Rtl on student achievement? On referrals for special education?
- How is data used to inform instruction? Identify students with disabilities?
- What are some ways NYSED can continue to support the field’s efforts to implement Rtl?

**Nina McCarthy      Principal  
West Street Elementary School  
Geneva City School District**

The West Street Elementary School is a small city PreK-2 school with a total enrollment of 517 students, with eight sections each of kindergarten through grade 2. Approximately 72 percent of the student population qualifies for a free or reduced lunch. 30 percent of the students enrolled in the school are Hispanic, 12 percent are African American, ten percent are multi-racial, two percent are Asian, and 46 percent are Caucasian. 13 percent are English Language Learners population and nine percent of all students are identified as students with disabilities.

**Katherine A. Dougherty Stahl – NYS RtI TAC Consortium Member**

Katherine Stahl is Clinical Associate Professor of Literacy at New York University (NYU) where she teaches graduate courses and directs the NYU Literacy Clinic. As a consortium member with the NYS RtI TAC, she provides technical assistance and professional development to selected schools in NYC and Long Island to implement RtI. This fall, Dr. Stahl conducted regional forums for the NYS RtI TAC on utilizing an RtI framework to implement the CCLS.

Her research focuses on reading acquisition, struggling readers, and comprehension. Her books include Assessment for Reading Instruction (2nd Ed.) and Reading Research at Work: Foundations of Effective Practice. Dr. Stahl's articles have appeared in Reading Research Quarterly, The Reading Teacher, and the Journal of Literacy Research. She is the editor for The Reading Teacher's Research into Practice feature section and the 2010 recipient of Harvard's Jeanne S. Chall Visiting Researcher Award. In addition to teaching in public elementary classrooms for over 25 years, she has extensive practice working with readers in clinical settings.