

## Response to Intervention and Special Education Referrals

### **What is Response to Intervention?**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an approach intended to help students perform at grade level. It is not special education, but it uses research based instructional methods. At least three times a year, most schools screen all students in basic academic areas like reading and mathematics. This process is called "Universal Screening." Students who are significantly below grade level are provided focused instruction with greater intensity than in the general education classroom. This intensive instruction is also provided in addition to the academic instruction provided normally, and not in place of it.

The idea behind RTI is two-fold: 1) that gaps in learning can often be caused by poor instruction or lack of instruction; and 2) when the additional, focused instruction reduces such gaps in a relatively short time, the gap was probably not the result of a disability. When students do not respond to the response to intervention model after a reasonable period of time, a referral for a special education evaluation is usually conducted.

### **Why would a parent consider RTI, rather than requesting a full evaluation?**

An educational evaluation conducted by a school psychologist is a snap shot of how a student performs compared to national norms. It will usually determine whether a student meets Indiana criteria for eligibility in one of the areas of special education, and give some indication of where specialized instruction should begin.

Response to intervention seeks first to intervene with a child based on the universal screening, and then address specific learning problems without the time and effort required to identify a child as having a disability. Furthermore, for the case conference team to identify a child as have a Specific Learning Disability, how the student progressed or did not progress in RTI is an important component of the diagnostic puzzle.

### **Response to intervention has been tried without success. Now what do I do?**

If a student does not make significant progress after a reasonable amount of time receiving directed intervention, either the school or the parent should request an educational evaluation. Parents requesting an educational evaluation should contact their child's teacher, counselor, or principal. Usually the school psychologist assigned to your child's school will try to meet with you personally soon after the evaluation has been requested. At this meeting, the school psychologist will review parents' legal rights and expectations related to the evaluation process. The school psychologist will also try to determine with the parent what the suspected disability might be, so that the right types of tests can be put into the diagnostic plan, and the parent can provide "informed" consent for the evaluation to proceed.