

## **Ask OTIS: Response to Intervention and Early Intervening Services**

***Q: I have heard the terms RTI and EIS recently. What do these terms mean for students?***

The proposed federal regulations for IDEiA 2004 give states the option to prohibit the use of a severe discrepancy model in determining whether or not a student has a learning disability. Findings of the President's Commission on Excellence and Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) research indicate that a discrepancy model has not proven to be an effective means of identifying students in need of specially designed instruction. Additionally, the discrepancy model had led to an over identification of students with LD as well as disproportionality among certain student groups. In a way, the discrepancy model waits for students to fail before alternative instructional strategies are implemented.

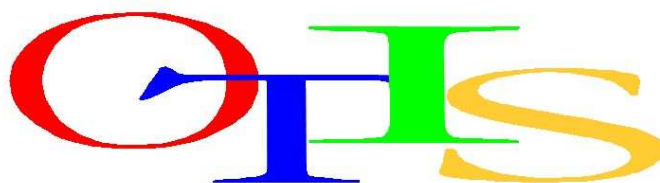
Conversely, Response to Intervention (RTI) is based on problem solving models that use progress monitoring in order to determine a student's response to quality intervention, i.e., scientific, research-based intervention. Critical elements of an RTI model include: a) universal screening, b) establishing an operational definition of the problem area, c) baseline data prior to an intervention, d) a written plan, e) progress monitoring, and f) comparison of pre-intervention and post-intervention data.

One possible model of addressing RTI is the Three Tier Model. Under this model,

- Tier 1 intervention is conducted with the whole class and involves scientifically-based curricula designed to meet the needs of the majority of students.
- Tier 2 is supplemental intervention targeting students who did not respond to Tier 1 efforts. Tier 2 interventions focus on instructional fundamentals and students are assessed with weekly progress monitoring.
- Tier 3 is supplemental intervention targeting students who did not respond to Tier 1 or Tier 2 efforts. Under Tier 3, a student would receive intensive individual intervention and would be assessed with twice-weekly progress monitoring.
- Lastly, if a student is unresponsive to the previous three tiers of intervention, the need for specially designed instruction, or special education services, would be considered.

Under this model, students would be eligible for special education services as LD only after layers of quality intervention have been applied without success. It is important to note that tiers following Tier 1 are supplemental. This means that these interventions are provided in addition to previous interventions rather than in place of.

IDEiA also adds Early Intervening Services (EIS) to the statute. EIS allows a local educational agency (LEA) to use up to 15 percent of IDEA Part B funds to develop and implement coordinated, early intervening services for students K-12 *in the general education environment*



who have not been identified as needing special education services. These funds can be used for professional development, educational evaluations, services and supports, and scientifically-based literacy instruction.

EIS and RTI can be coordinated in order to provide positive behavioral and academic supports, school-wide screening, tiered levels of intervention, progress monitoring, use of student data in decision-making (including eligibility for special education services), and quality outcomes for students with learning disabilities. Although we do not know for sure what our state regulations will look like, we can assume that they will include elements of EIS and RTI. We can also assume that there will be a role for occupational therapists. OTs might work with school teams to help identify appropriate Tier I interventions. In order to do this, we will need to be knowledgeable about general education curriculum, grade level standards, and other general education issues. OTs will also need to be more involved in middle schools, high schools and transition services. The state regulations could also allow for the provision of OT services before the child is eligible for special education under IDEA. Thus, OTs might provide early intervening services as part of the Tier II or Tier III interventions.

For more information on the effectiveness of educational interventions, see the What Works Clearinghouse at <http://www.w-w-c.org/>. This clearinghouse was established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. Additionally, the Council of Chief State School Officers ([www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)) has a Powerpoint presentation on RTI. Look for it under the IDEA Partnerships Project information. Lastly, the National Center for Technology Innovation (NCTI), another IDEA Partnerships organization, published the RTI Wire website in their most recent QuickClicks Newsletter. The RTI Wire organizes categories of free resources online that explore RTI and can be located at [http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/rti/rti\\_wire.php](http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/rti/rti_wire.php). Sample topics include Understanding the Model, Using Teams to Problem-Solve, Selecting the Right Intervention, Monitoring Student Progress, and Graphing Data for Visual Analysis. To go to the NCTI Tech Topics Page, go to <http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/resources/dl/default.asp#RTI>. Finally, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education has published the resource guide "Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation." It is available from [www.nasdse.org](http://www.nasdse.org).

*This article was written by Sara Woodward, Dottie Handley-More, and Yvonne Swinth, OTIS Co-Chairs. It originally appeared in the WOTA Newsletter in June, 2006 (Volume 64, Number 3 p. 7).*

*OTIS (Occupational Therapists In Schools) is a standing committee for the Washington Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA) that was set up to help support therapists in school-based practice.*