

**One of the hottest topics in Special Education is what to do with Response to Intervention. At last, we have received word from the Department of Education! But, it is a word that we don't usually hear - WAIT. Wait for the State Department to convene a task force to decide the best avenues. While we are waiting for more clarification, we can become informed of the different aspects of RTI. Sharon Barnett, school psychologist, has gleaned information from several sources to answer our questions.**

### What is RTI?

RTI (Response to Intervention) is an alternate method of identifying student with Specific Learning Disabilities. It is used **only** with students suspected of having an SLD. RTI uses curriculum-based data gathered prior to and during interventions to determine whether or not the child has an SLD (vs. using the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy model). This approach will require collaboration between general and special education at every level and will take several years to develop in individual school districts.

### Is the use of RTI mandatory?

Joseph Fisher and Susan Bunch released a memo on March 14, 2007 to "reassure school districts that the use of RTI processes are **not mandatory** for identifying students with Learning Disabilities."

### What is mandatory with regard to SLD criteria?

According to the March 14<sup>th</sup> memo, the law has "raised the bar" for the quality, documentation, and rigor of all interventions used prior to referral, regardless of whether districts use the RTI or IQ discrepancy model. We must provide documentation to assure that the underachieving child suspected of having an SLD received appropriate, scientifically-validated instruction in reading and math. The state department has convened an RTI/SLD study group to develop guidance for districts around these issues.

### What do we need to do now?

- 1) Data should demonstrate that prior to, or as part of the referral process, the child was provided appropriate, scientifically-validated instruction in **regular education settings**, by qualified personnel. (Interventions should be delivered by certified teacher).
- 2) Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals (at least every 2 weeks), reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, should be provided to the child's parents.

At the recent annual SPED conference, attendees were told to "hold your horses" with regard to RTI until the DOE's study group develops guidelines for us. However, if you just can't wait, here are some resources for the curious:

- The State SPED web site <http://state.tn.us/education/speced/seannounce.shtml> has several excellent resources.
- You can find suggestions for RTI Professional Development at the same website, under Report/Form. Select "Suggestions for RTI Professional Development"
- Under Memorandum at the bottom of the page look for two memos titled "Operationalizing RTI..." and find Case Studies and examples of RTI in practice.
- The Tennessee Reading First Initiative's web site is excellent: [http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/cireadfirst/intervention\\_guide.pdf](http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/cireadfirst/intervention_guide.pdf)
- Online training modules for RTI have been developed by IRIS and can be found at <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/online/modules.html>

## Transition Services Plan/Transition Assessment

Melinda Dunlap

IDEA emphasizes that students with disabilities are to be prepared for employment and independent living. The process of planning how they will transition from secondary school to adult living is an individualized process that is part of the IEP.

IDEA 2004 requires that transition services be included in the IEP beginning with the first IEP after the child is 16. Tennessee regulations still require **transition planning to begin at age 14**.

At each grade level, special education service providers should include information in the IEP folder to assist in the ongoing transitional assessment of the student. A timeline for items to be included with the Transition Assessment in the IEP folder was developed by the Sevier County Transition team. While this is a “work-in-progress,” it is important that **middle school teachers** begin to compile the following items in the transition folder to forward to the high school:

- Kuder/Oasis
- Comprehensive Vocational Assessment to determine learning styles
- 4-year Plan
- TCAP scores
- Pre-and Post-test from Self-Advocacy/Determination
- Any transition Assessment

The format of the Sevier County Transition Assessment form was recently modified (by Linda Strickland -GPHS) to a landscape format to include school system headers and contact numbers. The new form can be downloaded from the Sevier County Special Education website (<http://www.slc.sevier.org/trnsprof.pdf>). Contact the Special Education Consultant assigned to your school for transition/vocational assessment resources.

### **Extended School Year**

Extended School Year forms are on the website near the bottom of the County Forms page – with the IEP-related forms. Remember that ESY should be marked and goals developed on EasyIEP. Copies of those goals should be attached to the forms. These may be faxed to 429-5744 or sent to Kaye Thomas at PFM or at the Sped Office. ESY will be June 18 – July 12, 2007, 8:30 to 12:30 Monday through Thursday at PFM. These forms are **due May 4, 2007**.

## Academy for Gifted Education

A two-week summer course will qualify regular and special ed teachers to teach Gifted students. This summer program is held at MTSU. There is no cost for tuition or for room and board if you stay in the dorm. For more information, call one of the county gifted teachers or check on the state website.

### EasyIEP

Everyone should be trained on EasyIEP by this time. There is an end user manual and a quick reference booklet on the EasyIEP home page (<https://go1.easyiep.com/tlsevieriep>). Refresh your memory with this, but if you need help, call Jeff (748-7711). Jeff also did a great article for the newsletter. It was too long for this space, but is full of “good stuff.” It has been placed on the website.

**By June 22, all of the IEPs done since December 1, 2006 should be in EasyIEP.** The PCG trainer at the initial training session implied that goals/benchmarks are optional. They are not for us. **Tennessee’s law (expected in October) will likely retain the annual goals and benchmarks requirement for all IEPs.**

### **Ponder this:**

**WHEN WE TEACH THE  
SAME THING TO  
ALL KIDS AT THE SAME  
TIME,  
1/3 ALREADY KNOW IT,  
1/3 GET IT, AND  
1/3 NEVER WILL.  
SO 2/3 OF THE KIDS ARE  
WASTING  
THEIR TIME.**