

A Helping of Academic Alphabet Soup: What is R.t.I.?

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My grandmother always topped her chicken noodle soup with cinnamon. Most think it strange to spice a broth soup with cinnamon, but it is amazing! In this issue, I hope to ‘add a little spice’ to your ‘Educatoresé’ vocabulary. As I stated before, it is my goal to support parents by serving a ‘helping of academic alphabet soup’ to explain the meaning of educational acronyms or terms and how they apply to your child’s learning.

Q: What does R.t.I. stand for? A: Response-to-Intervention; also known as Response-to-Instruction

Since the early 2000’s, schools have been made more accountable for their students’ performance. For many districts, a multi-tiered system of support, MTSS, provides a systematic approach to delivering high quality instruction for all students through tiers of instruction meant to meet students’ learning needs. At its inception, Rtl was intended as an alternative approach for identifying students with learning disabilities but it has spread to include all learners.

Q: What do educators mean when they say R.t.I.?

Each district utilizes Rtl a little differently from the next. Regardless of the district, there is a basic framework that includes three tiers: Tier 1 for *all* learners, Tier 2 for *some* learners and Tier 3 for *few* learners.

Tier 1 includes the core instruction within the regular classroom. Classroom teachers use data [ie. high-ceiling assessments, benchmark assessments, or unit tests] to differentiate the instruction in all core subject areas like English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

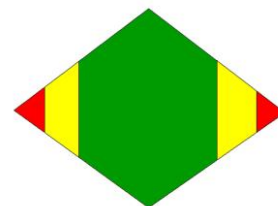


Tier 2 includes targeted interventions that could happen within or outside the classroom as a response to the data collected. Typically, Specialist teachers will meet with small groups of students who have similar learning needs and deliver a specific, research-based intervention to support the students’ learning needs.

Tier 3 includes highly individualized interventions that typically happen outside the regular classroom. This level of support involves Specialists supporting learners in pairs, trios, and even one-on-one environments.

Q: How would R.t.I. impact my child’s learning?

Originally, the Rtl framework was shaped as a triangle divided into three sections representing the three tiers. As districts adopted the Rtl framework as the primary method of matching student learning needs to services, teachers of gifted learners quickly responded with an alternative shape: a diamond. The five sectioned diamond illustrates the



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full spectrum of learning needs from Tier 1 for all learners and Tiers 2 and 3 on both the support and challenge ends.

Schools that use the RtI framework are data-driven; using benchmark data to dynamically respond to the instruction happening in the classroom. The differentiated instruction in Tier 1 and small group intervention in Tier 2 are meant to be fluid and ever-changing as teachers use the data to find instructional strategies and content that matches the students' learning needs. Generally, because of this, if your child's school uses RtI with gifted education, don't be alarmed if your child receives additional challenge for one unit but not for the following unit. The teachers are constantly regrouping students based on their areas of strength [for additional challenge] and areas of weakness [for additional support]. A variation of this would be W.I.N [What I Need] time where a specific time in the day is set aside for all students to receive an intervention that is a "right fit, right now" for their learning needs whether they need support or challenge based on the RtI diamond.

Resources:

Dai, D., & Chen, F. (2013). Three Paradigms of Gifted Education: In Search of Conceptual Clarity in Research and Practice. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 151-168.

Montana Office of Public Instruction. (2015, July 6). Retrieved October 6, 2015, from Montana RtI: http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/Gifted/RtI_GTFramework.pdf

Peters, S., Matthews, M., McBee, M., & McCoach, B. (2013). *Beyond Gifted Education: Designing and Implementing Advanced Academic Programs*. Waco: Prufrock Press.