Lauren Milne  
Richard Hansen  
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RTI Articles Review

Three articles discussed the RTI (Response to Intervention) model being utilized in schools. The first two articles, “English Language Learners and the Response to Intervention” and “A Cultural, Linguistic, and Ecological Framework for Response to Intervention with English Language Learners”, detailed the importance and effectiveness of utilizing a three-tiered RTI model with individuals in ELL classrooms. The third and final article, “Response to Intervention: Investigating the New Role of Special Educators” discusses the benefits of having an RTI model in special education classrooms.

In a general sense of the term, RTI is an integration of “a multitier preventative instructional system…and specifies the systematic use of a data-driven decision process to enhance outcomes for all children” (TEACHING 6-7). According to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE, 2005), in order to implement RTI effectively across general, remedial, and special education classes, four key principles must be upheld. These principles are that “School systems must reorganize to provide multiple tiers of generally effective instructional practices with a core curriculum that meets the needs of most students….Across the multiple tiers, all students are provided with access to high quality instruction matching students’ needs…Formative assessment data are gathered to document the match between students’ needs and their instruction…[and] RTI is evaluated across tiers using a problem-solving model of data-based decision making” (TEACHING 25).

The reasoning behind why RTI should be used is based around almost 30 years of research. As researched by Heller, Holtsman, & Messick (1982) and Simmons et al. (2002), it can be noted that when formative evaluation, accompanied with a continuum of effective instructional techniques were used, there are significant gains in both student and school-level achievement in academic and social-behavioral domains. The research concluded that “RTI, with the focus on collaboration between school professionals and a commitment to effective strategies that support integration and student proficiency, provides excellent opportunity for all students to have meaningful access to the general education curriculum” (TEACHING 25). RTI is considered as the replacement for educating by a discrepancy model. The discrepancy formula has garnered the nickname of a “wait to fail model”. This is because the educational intervention (i.e. the actual assistance needed) happens to late after too many processes and procedures for getting into the program. Instead, RTI intervenes early, with a multi-tiered approach for effectively addressing each need. (TEACHING 66).

Naturally, like all processes, RTI has its pros and cons. Though the idea and the procedure should theoretically produce positive results, there are times when the process by which it is being implemented does not meet the mark. For example, Kamps et al. (2007) reported that using a three-tiered RTI model (with Tier 2 addressing the needs of ELLs in small group instruction) resulted in higher gains than English as a second language (ESL) alone. “Consequently, the use of RTI without a foundation in culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction may lead to *greater* disproportionality (both under and over representation) of ELLs in special education” (TEACHING 66). Based upon these examples, it is appropriate to assume that without a person first approach (i.e. knowledge of the person’s social and cultural background before educational needs), a higher percentage of positive outcome through RTI cannot be reached.

While reading these articles I learned many new things. I was also surprised by a number of others. Though it shouldn’t have surprised me, I found it very interesting that students in the ELL programs have some of the most difficulty with the RTI model. One would assume that the RTI model, as it is so highly viewed, should implement strategies to effectively approach the student’s needs. Those needs include both language education and cultural practices being met. Yet, somehow, the student’s are missing their cultural needs in school. Also in regard to ELL programs, I was surprised that the students were referred to special education during their time spent in tier 2. I would have thought (or rather hoped) that there would be no need of referral until tier 3. Obviously, this is something I am going to have to research further to fully understand.

**References**

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