

WHAT IS RTI?

Dr. Bonnie Lesley, CEI President

Educators who do not yet know what RTI is will know it soon, especially those in grades K-3.

RTI or “Response-to-Intervention” is one of the new initiatives in the reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* of 2004. Districts are now encouraged to use this early intervention process (similar to the three-tiered reading model in *Reading First*) as a way to identify children with learning disabilities (LD) as early as possible. The current identification model is the IQ-Academic Discrepancy Model, which researchers term as the “wait till they fail” model. It is also criticized for over-identification of students as LD, especially over-identification of minority and second-language students. Reid Lyon, probably the biggest advocate for *Reading First*, states that as many as 70% of the students currently identified as LD are not, in fact. They simply have not had appropriate, scientifically-based instruction.

The goals for RTI are many. Its advocates believe that it will result in:

- Implementation of scientifically-based reading programs in tier I for all children;
- More use of progress monitoring and curriculum-based assessments to measure individual student progress;
- Many fewer children failing to learn to read before grade 3;
- Fewer numbers of students identified for special education services;
- Savings of tax-payer dollars now required for special education.

RTI is a K-12 program, but the law notes that it is particularly important at K-3. *IDEA* allows up to 15% of Part B allocations to districts to be spent on these early intervention programs. Although the

language in the law speaks more explicitly about reading interventions in tiers II-III, the definition of LD includes difficulties in mathematics reasoning and computation, so schools will need those interventions as well. Schools will no doubt need to combine their special education funds with other funds for struggling readers to pay for the professional development, assessments, materials, equipment, intervention programs, and staffing that will be required.

It is important to note that RTI moves major responsibility for special education identification for children with learning disabilities from special educators to general educators and changes the identification from an event to a process that may require one or more years as children move through the intervention tiers. It will be effective only with the involvement of all teachers working as a team.

CEI'S RESPONSE TO RTI

Essential Learning Systems (ELS) and *Mathematical Learning Systems (MLS)* are excellent tier II-III interventions. They align perfectly with the requirements. They are soundly grounded in scientifically-based evidence of what works with struggling learners; they correlate with the standards in reading and mathematics at those early grades; they have comprehensive assessment systems, including progress monitoring and mastery checks; *ELS* is aligned with both *DIBELS* and *TPRI* (two of the tests likely to be mandated); and, best of all, they are both effective in accelerating student learning and raising achievement.

Educators can greatly simplify their lives (and daily schedules) by using RTI, its assessments, and its interventions to address the needs of all its struggling learners in one overall plan and with one set of interventions for reading and math. CEI's *ELS* and *MLS* programs are proven effective with dyslexic, limited-English, learning disabled, economically

disadvantaged, and at-risk children—all those children currently failing the grade 3 assessments. Schools using this umbrella approach will save not only a great deal of money, but they will also save a great deal of time that would otherwise have to be spent in professional development, planning, monitoring, and assessing more than one program. It will also simplify greatly the school schedule. Further, using *ELS* and *MLS* for all these needs will significantly reduce the complexity of communicating with parents.

Best of all, children will thrive and grow academically! **More than 99% of the schools using our programs made their AYP in 2004-05.**

Call Melinda Mace at 800.234.7319 or e-mail her at melindam@ceilearning.com for more information on how to use *ELS* and *MLS* in your RTI implementation and for a bibliography on RTI. See CEI's webpage at www.ceilearning.com for the scientifically-based evidence grounding *ELS*. A similar paper on *MLS* will be available soon.



CEI products for



EACH STUDENT'S NEEDS