

## Reference Desk Response No. 143: Impact of Response to Intervention on Eligibility Rates

### Question:

1. What is the impact of Response to Intervention (Rtl) on identification and eligibility rates for students with disabilities?

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### Report

Following an established REL-NEI Reference Desk research protocol, we conducted a search for rigorous research reports as well as descriptive and policy-oriented briefs and articles in this area. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, several educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google and other search engines. We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves, but offer this list to you for your information only.

Our Reference Desk researchers were unable to locate rigorous research that specifically addresses the impact of implementing Rtl models on eligibility rates. We did find resources that discuss eligibility rate changes in the context of the federal government's new regulations. The Individuals with Disabilities Act, "IDEA and its predecessor, P.L. 94-142, have always required that lack of instruction must be considered in the eligibility decision-making process. In other words, a child should never be identified as needing special education if his or her learning/behavioral deficits are the result of a failure to provide quality instruction or the lack of access to quality instruction. A significant change to that requirement is found in IDEA 2004, one that once again links IDEA to NCLB (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2006 below)." Recent interpretations of the law indicate a shift away from a "discrepancy" or "wait to fail" model of identifying students as learning disabled (LD) and to one that is focused in providing quality instruction such as suggested by RTI models. For the purposes of this response, researchers understand RTI to be "a multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners. Students' progress is closely monitored at each stage of intervention to determine the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, in special education, or both" (RTI Action Network, below).

We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed Response to Intervention (Rtl) to supplement the research findings that directly address the questions. We have also included a selection of articles addressing how to best implement Rtl.

### Question:

1. **What is the impact of Response to Intervention (RTI) on identification and eligibility rates for students with disabilities?**

Note that the resources below address the "potential" impact on eligibility rates.

- 1.1. Concurrent Paper and Poster Sessions 2.2 Measuring "Response" in Response to Intervention (RTI).** *Compton, D.; June 6 -8, 2007; 2007 Research Conference; Washington, D.C.*  
Source: Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U. S. Department of Education  
([http://ies.ed.gov/director/conferences/07ies\\_conference/agenda.asp](http://ies.ed.gov/director/conferences/07ies_conference/agenda.asp))

This resource is a PowerPoint presentation about "The Course of Reading Disability in First Grade." It provides some general background on Rtl, but then focuses on Tier 2 interventions (tiers that delineate levels of instructional interventions based on student skill need). The purpose

of the study was to explore, among other ideas, “how responsiveness to the instructional approaches can be used to identify children as LD at the end of first grade.”

**1.2. NASDSE Explains Response to Intervention.** *National Association of State Directors of Special Education; August, 2006; GATA, Issue 7, Volume 2; 12 pages;*

Source: Center for Educational Networking, through Google search  
(<http://www.cenmi.org/Portals/0/FocusArticles/GATA06-04.pdf>)

“This FOCUS on Results document provides the reader with a basic understanding of Response to Intervention (RtI). ...Several problems in the traditional general and special education systems were increasingly recognized by the mid- to late 1990s.” One such problem identified in the research is, “Eligibility determination procedures that had weak relationships to instructional interventions and, in some cases, were unreliable, invalid, and unintentionally caused harm by delaying intervention.”

**1.3. Myths About Response to Intervention (RTI) Implementation.** *East, B.; n.d.; RTI Action Network.*

Source: RTI Action Network, through Google search  
(<http://www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/What/ar/MythsAboutRTI>)

Eleven myths are discussed in this short article including, “time to disposition” issues which are associated with the special education identification process.

**1.4. The New Evaluation and Eligibility Standard: The End of LD as We Know it?** *Martin, J.; 2007; Texas; 24 pages.*

Source: Google general search  
(<http://209.85.173.132/search?q=cache:UXgpjismRXNEJ:www.vbisd.org/sped/EducatorResource/guide/eLibrary/Evaluation/LD%2520Eligibility%2520-%2520Martin%2520LRP%25204-07.pdf+RTI+LD+%22eligibility+rates+%22&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a>)

This is a discussion of the changes in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) 2004. From page 1, “The issue, moreover, has become ripe for debate, since LD eligibility increased 36% in the 10 years preceding the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, to the point that it now accounts for more than half of all IDEA eligibility. Commission Report, at 23.” From page 12, “Concerns over increases in LD numbers—Certain commentators that contributed to the rule-making process expressed concern that the RtI option might result in dramatic increases in referrals and placements in special education. Citing research, USDOE disagreed, stating: “[w]e do not believe that eligibility criteria based on RTI models will result in dramatic increases in referrals and special education placements.”

**1.5. The Top Five Things Non-Special Ed Folks Should Know about Maine’s New Special Ed Regulations.** *Tchao, A.; 2007; School Law Advisory: Drummond Woodsum & MaMahon; 4 pages.*

Source: Google general search  
(<http://www.schoollaw.com/html/pdf/562.pdf>)

“This article highlights five of the most important new developments in special education of which non-special education administrators should be aware. The changes come largely from Maine’s new special education regulations, which went into effect on August 3, 2007.” From page 2, “Approximately 50% of every school unit’s special education population is made up of students with learning disabilities. Thus, any changes in the eligibility standards for that category potentially could have very significant effects on eligibility rates and special education costs.”

### Additional Organizations to Consult

- **RTI Action Network**

([http://rtinetwork.org/?gclid=CJaOxf\\_PkZoCFSRPagodOg-1-w](http://rtinetwork.org/?gclid=CJaOxf_PkZoCFSRPagodOg-1-w))

“The RTI Action Network is dedicated to the effective implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) in school districts nationwide. Our goal is to guide educators and families in the large-scale implementation of RTI so that each child has access to quality instruction and that struggling students – including those with learning disabilities – are identified early and receive the necessary supports to be successful. The RTI Action Network is a program of the [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#), funded by the Cisco Foundation and in partnership with the nation’s leading education associations and top RTI experts.”

- **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities**

(<http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/Home.aspx>)

This center provides nation-wide information on a variety of topics including research-based information on effective practices for children with disabilities.

### Resources on Response to Intervention in General

- **Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for Elementary and Middle Schools.** Gersten, R., Beckmann, S., Clarke, B., Foegen, A., Marsh, L., Star, J. R., & Witzel, B.; 2009; *IES Practice Guide NCEE 2009-4060*; 104 pages.  
Source: IES National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance ([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti\\_math\\_pg\\_042109.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti_math_pg_042109.pdf))  
“Students struggling with mathematics may benefit from early interventions aimed at improving their mathematics ability and ultimately preventing subsequent failure. This guide provides eight specific recommendations intended to help teachers, principals, and school administrators use Response to Intervention (RtI) to identify students who need assistance in mathematics and to address the needs of these students through focused interventions. The guide provides suggestions on how to carry out each recommendation and explains how educators can overcome potential roadblocks to implementing the recommendations.”
- **Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades.** Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C.M., Dimino, J., Linan-Thompson, S., & Tilly, W.D.; 2009; *IES Practice Guide NCEE 2009-4045*; 60 pages.  
Source: IES National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance ([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti\\_reading\\_pg\\_021809.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf))  
“In the primary grades students with reading difficulties may need intervention to prevent future reading failure. This guide offers specific recommendations to help educators identify students in need of intervention and implement evidence-based interventions to promote their reading achievement. It also describes how to carry out each recommendation, including how to address potential roadblocks in implementing them.” \

### Key words and search strings used in the search:

“special education” AND “response to intervention” OR RTI OR LD AND “eligibility determination” OR “eligibility rates” OR “discrepancy model rate” OR identification OR “identification rates”

### Search databases and websites:

Sources For Rigorous Research Reports: Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL); What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); Doing What Works (DWW); National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Institute for Education Sciences (IES); The Campbell Collaboration; IES Practice Guides

Other Federally Funded Sites: The Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center; The National High School Center; The Center on Innovation and Improvement; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Datasets: K – 12; National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS); National Household Education Survey (NHES); Crime and Safety Data; Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS); National Longitudinal Studies (NLS-72, HS&B, NELS:88); Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE); National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education; National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing; National Research and Development Center for English Language Learners; National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities; Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8; National Dropout Prevention Center/Network; National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities

Additional Data Resources: Education Development Center; WestEd; American Institutes for Research; Just for Kids; Great Schools; PSK12; Kids Count; School Data Direct; The Education Trust; SRI International; ERIC; EBSCO Databases; <http://www.google.com>; <http://www.goglescholar.com>;

### REL Northeast and Islands

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