

Exhibit 2-C

Frequently Asked Questions about Response to Intervention and RTI Teams: A Handout for Teachers*

Schools across the nation have steadily raised their academic expectations in recent years. While most students are able to meet these higher learning standards, some children struggle with the demands of school and begin to fall behind their peers in academics or show behavior problems. There are many possible reasons why students experience school difficulties. To better accommodate the learning needs of all students, our school has adopted a school-wide approach called *Response to Intervention* or RTI.

What is RTI? RTI is a flexible problem-solving model in which schools provide timely assistance to students and match that help to each learner's level of need. Schools who use RTI organize their school intervention services into three levels, or *Tiers*.

What do these three levels of RTI support look like? Students with emerging difficulties in school are first given *Tier I*, universal support. If that help is not sufficient, they are next provided with *Tier II*, individualized assistance. Students with significant school delays who do not 'respond' to Tier I and Tier II interventions may be eligible for *Tier III*, intensive supports.

Tier I Supports. Universal, or Tier I, supports are those academic and behavioral strategies that all teachers routinely use at the first sign that a student is having problems in their classrooms. As examples of Tier I supports, instructors may change their method of instruction, provide a child with additional individual help, or check the child's homework each day. Teachers who use Tier I supports with students should keep a log of their intervention efforts and the student's progress.

Tier II Supports. If the student continues to fall significantly behind peers despite classroom supports, the teacher can refer the child to the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) Team for Tier II, individualized support. The RTI Team contacts the student's parent(s) and meets with the teacher to collect detailed information about the child's academic levels, study and learning habits, and general classroom behaviors. With that information, the team and teacher identify possible reasons why a student is experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties and put together a practical, research-based, classroom-friendly 'intervention plan' to address those student problems. This individualized plan is tailored to the student's specific learning needs. The classroom teacher may carry out the intervention plan alone. Or other school staff, such as reading or math specialists, may help the teacher put the plan into place.

While the intervention plan is in action, the RTI Team regularly monitors the student using academic or behavior measures—such as curriculum-based measurement or daily behavior report cards—to see if the child is making satisfactory progress. Information about the student’s progress is shared with the parent(s) and classroom teacher. If the data collected show that the student is not achieving his or her expected goals for improvement, the RTI Team and classroom teacher meet again to change the intervention plan.

Tier III Supports. If the RTI Team finds—after trying several individualized intervention plans—that a student still has not make significant progress, the school may refer the student for Tier III supports. In many schools, Tier III supports include services available under Section 504 or Special Education. Students may need to go through a formal evaluation process, including specialized testing, to determine if they qualify for Tier III services.

How does an RTI Team differ from a Clinical Evaluation Team? Clinical Evaluation Teams are responsible for identifying children who may have educational disabilities and be eligible for Special Education or §504 Services. Clinical Evaluation Teams are typically composed largely of clinical evaluation staff such as school psychologists and speech/language pathologists. In contrast to Clinical Evaluation Teams, RTI Teams focus solely on creating strategies to help children to be more successful in general-education classrooms. Classroom teachers are central and highly valued members of RTI Teams. Among its core components, the RTI Team model promotes a collegial atmosphere in which teachers work together to solve student problems, employs research-based intervention ideas to promote student success, and uses dependable but time-friendly assessment methods to measure the progress of struggling learners.

Who serves on an RTI Team—and what do they do? The RTI Team consists of a group of educators who work together as effective problem-solvers. Any school staff member can serve on an RTI Team. To help RTI Team meetings run more smoothly, team members take on structured roles. The *facilitator* runs the meeting, keeps participants on task, and checks in with the referring teacher to make sure that he or she agrees with the interventions being proposed. The *recorder* takes notes on the meeting proceedings in sufficient detail to create a detailed, written intervention plan. The *time-keeper* tracks elapsed time during the meeting to ensure that team members use valuable meeting time efficiently. The *case manager* assists the referring teacher in collecting information about the student prior to the meeting and may also support the teacher in starting the intervention plan. Additionally, RTI Teams

have a *coordinator* who takes care of logistical issues such as scheduling meetings, maintaining a meeting calendar, and, when possible, arranging substitute teacher coverage for those attending an RTI Team meeting.

What happens when a student is referred to the RTI Team? Any teacher in the school can refer a student to the RTI Team. The RTI Team meeting process is based on an efficient, research-based problem-solving model. To initiate an RTI Team meeting, the classroom teacher first completes a referral form, providing relevant background information about the student. An initial RTI Team meeting is then scheduled. At that meeting, the team and teacher explore reasons for the student's learning or behavioral difficulties. They also identify student strengths. Then the group and referring teacher brainstorm about interventions likely to meet the needs of the referred student. The team notes those intervention ideas that the teacher finds most acceptable and collaborates with the instructor to turn them into a formal intervention plan. Additionally, the RTI Team and teacher come up with methods to track the student's improvement during the intervention. Before the meeting adjourns, a follow-up meeting date is set to review the student's progress.

How do I get more information about the RTI process in our school? If you would like to know more about your school's RTI Team or overall RTI process, talk with your principal or RTI Team coordinator.

* Sections of this handout were adapted from Wright, J. (n.d.) *Frequently asked questions about the Syracuse School-Based Intervention Team Project...* Retrieved December 22, 2006, from http://www.jimwrightonline.com/pdfdocs/sbit/sbit_Forms_Sept05/sbitFAQs.pdf