

Nuggets of Knowledge

April, 2009

Department of Curriculum, Instruction, & Accountability

Response to Instruction and Intervention - RtI²

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell acknowledged in his November 14, 2008 letter to county and district superintendents (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/le/lyr08ltr1114.asp>) that Response to Intervention (RtI) has emerged nationally as an effective strategy to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Jack O'Connell states in his letter that the California Department of Education is utilizing the term Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) to refer to a general education strategy that is a well-integrated system and addresses the needs of all students, including both high achieving and struggling learners. RtI² is defined by the CDE as: "a systematic, data-driven approach to instruction that benefits every student. California has expanded the notion of Response to Intervention to RtI². RtI² is meant to communicate the full spectrum of instruction, from general core, to supplemental or intensive, to meet the academic and behavioral needs of students. RtI² integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education through a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student."

Among the essential and core components of RtI² (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/rticorecomponents.asp>) are:

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| *High-quality classroom instruction | *Research-based instruction | *Universal screening |
| *Continuous classroom progress monitoring | *Parent Involvement | *Fidelity of program implementation |
| *Progress monitoring during instruction and interventions | *Staff development and collaboration | *Research-based interventions |

The purpose of Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtI²) implementation is to create the conditions necessary to close the achievement gap in California's schools and districts. RtI² focuses on individual student needs and provides a system of support for struggling students through school wide collaboration and shared responsibility for the learning of all students. RtI² also incorporates an assessment analysis and frequent progress monitoring system to determine the effectiveness of the acceleration or interventions and to determine any needed modifications. Interventions are designed to include the use of effective student support strategies and standards and research-based instruction that has been demonstrated to be effective through scientific research. RtI² promotes early intervention for students who require extra support through a linked system of support. In addition, the data collected in the RtI² approach can be a part of the process to identify students with disabilities.

An example of the need for a Response to Intervention system can be found in the Solution Tree's publication of *Pyramid Response to Intervention* by Austin Buffum, Mike Mattos, and Chris Weber. In this book, the authors cite an example of a student who experienced many struggles and challenges within the school system, including an inability to grasp phonics, as well as homework and attendance problems. This student was retained in first grade but continued to fall further behind academically and the student's classroom behavior began to deteriorate. The school's student study team recognized that the limited number of interventions utilized had not had a sufficient effect for this student and the team was considering special education placement. However, the precise academic needs of the student had not yet been identified. The authors of *Pyramid Response to Intervention* state that this student "needs a solid core curriculum, a prompt diagnosis of the specific needs, and an academic prescription that targets deficiencies with explicit, high-quality interventions...a positive behavior contract that acknowledges and rewards behavior and assignment completion." The authors assert that this student and others would benefit from the implementation of a Response to Intervention (RtI) system which promises to systematically meet all students' needs with research-based interventions that are taught by the best educators and frequently monitored to determine appropriate adjustments.

A comprehensive list of Resources for Response to Instruction and Intervention can be found on the CDE website at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/rtiresources.asp>.

Contact Julie Graves for more information at 661-636-4440 or jugraves@kern.org.

California Technology Assistance Project (CTAP)

In these times of financial crisis, we find ourselves trying to adapt to changing conditions which raise questions about our core values, services, and priorities. This year at CTAP, we have had the opportunity to reflect on questions such as, "How can districts do more with less? How do we provide professional development in new less costly ways? If they can't come to us, how do we get to them?"

One of CTAP's responsibilities is to find ways of infusing technology into the classroom. For a long time that responsibility was centered on student access to more technology such as: more computers, internet, building technology-rich lesson plans, and training on interactive white boards. What we are finding now is that most schools have access to basic technology, but many teachers don't know how to integrate all the new tools into meaningful curriculum. We need to create a technology rich educational environment which invites innovation and creativity *and* keeps everyone aware of the dangers of misusing the information that is only a "click" away.

One tool available to teachers is the program *Global Learning Exchange* (<http://web.me.com/gle/connect/Welcome.html>). *Global Learning Exchange* uses a district's existing technology, combines it with the motivating factor of social networking, and connects classrooms globally in **standards-based** activities. Students share their work via videoconferences and take responsibility for answering the academic and cultural questions of their global peers. CTAP has supported the curriculum and the web development here in Kern. In March, participating students presented their work with a Singapore classroom at the California Student Technology Showcase.

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Teaching English Language Learners

From *American Educator*, Summer, 2008

By Claude Goldenberg

What is the best way to teach English Language Development? The most current research identifies the following two main ideas when looking at best practices for English learners:

- 1) Teaching strategies which facilitate the understanding of how the English language is constructed helps English learner students learn the language, but students also need to be in situations where they can **use the language** for genuine communication.
- 2) Effective second language instruction provides a combination of the following:
 - Explicit teaching that helps the student directly and efficiently learn the features of the second language such as syntax, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and norms of social usages; and
 - Ample opportunities to use the second language in meaningful and motivating situations.

The National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition's (NCELA) 2006 study (NCELA, 2006. *How Has the English Language Learner Population Changed in Recent Years?* Washington, DC: NCELA) indicates that students benefit the most when ELD is taught as a distinct time during the school day.

Benefits from an actual separate class period include the following:

- Teachers spent more time on oral English and were more efficient and focused in their use of time.
- The ELD block was by design, targeted at oral English Language Development, and teachers taught accordingly.
- In contrast, when there was no ELD block, less time was spent on the structure and features of the English language. The study also revealed that schools who did not designate a specific ELD block time just added additional ELA activities such as reading.

According to the October, 2008 article featured in *Aiming High* (A SCOE Publication) the school staff should:

- ◆ Agree to a consistent school - wide time of day for ELD instruction;
- ◆ Discuss and plan placements that cluster students by CELDT level and also by local benchmarks utilizing all four language domains;
- ◆ Plan instructional delivery, strategies, and resources; and
- ◆ Assess students regularly, monitor progress, and change placements as appropriate.

Sample ELD lesson

During a review of students' progress, a first grade teacher notices that several of her students at the beginning and early intermediate level are not using "is" and "are" correctly in simple sentences. The teacher plans a lesson to facilitate the correct usage of both words.

- Teacher reads a story, emphasizing where "is" and "are" are found.
- Teacher asks questions such as:
 - Who is the main character? *Lucy is the main character.*
 - Who are Lucy's friends? *Oscar and Maggie are her friends.*
- Additional examples are elicited from the story using frames: There is one _____. There are (numbers) _____.
- Further review and extension of additional samples are visually illustrated in a pocket chart with student practice utilizing sentence frames with a partner. Sentence frames are modified for the level of difficulty as the students become increasingly fluent.

As educators focus their ELD instruction and collaborate with their colleagues we will see English learners communicating more effectively in both written and oral forms. English learners will also have improved comprehension and listening abilities. These language skills are essential to content learning and will lead to greater student success.

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For more information or to suggest topics for future newsletters, contact Kathleen White at 636-4635 or kawhite@kern.org.