

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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To: Nebraska Educators
From: Doug Christensen, Commissioner of Education
Re: Response to Intervention (RtI)
Date: July 2006

With equity as a core value and the central policy of the State Board of Education, it frames the work we do at the Department and with you in the schools. Equity is defined as equal opportunity for **all** children to learn and assurance that there are equitable outcomes for **all** of our children. Our work, then, is about improving achievement for **all** children, and **ALL means each and every one of them.**

As we begin to address the challenges in our state, we are far better off, more efficient and effective, if we do this work together. This means all of us: regular education, special education, administrators, teachers, policy makers, and specialists working toward the same outcome of making sure achievement occurs for all children.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a process imbedded in IDEA 2004 that applies to all children and is not just for the identification of students for special education. RtI is a model that enables all educators to put in place practices and procedures to improve achievement. The problem-solving process inherent to the RtI initiative involves identifying and defining the issue/problem, creating a solution/intervention that is based on what each child needs, implementing the intervention, collecting data to monitor progress and making adjustments to the intervention based on the data. The child is identified at the earliest moment when the student encounters difficulty rather than allowing the child to progress through the system without success, often resulting in the student being removed from the mainstream environment.

RtI becomes a model for intervening early on behalf of any child who is having difficulty. The goal is for all educators to put in place the practices and procedures that will enable each child to have an opportunity to learn and progress.

What resources are available for implementing RtI? Three pilot sites funded by NDE, Grand Island Public Schools, Westside Community Schools and Lincoln Public Schools, are in the process of implementing RtI and are willing to share with other districts the practices they have in place. An RtI Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to NDE is in place to make recommendations about statewide implementation and training needs. NDE is working in partnership with the Departments of School Psychology at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and Omaha in developing short-term and long-term training for implementing RtI throughout Nebraska. A Technical Assistance document is the

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beginning phase of this training plan. Additionally, school districts have the ability to use up to 15% of their IDEA funds for early intervening services (EIS). Districts also may use up to 5% of state special education funds through “flex funding” arrangements to support such services.

To summarize, the goals of the RtI initiative are to:

- Improve overall achievement of all students, not just those with disabilities;
- Identify learning problems at the earliest possible time, addressing needs and applying interventions that improve student achievement, keeping students at grade level, on task and moving with age and grade level peers as much as possible; and
- Create a new level of working together in our schools -- all staff working collaboratively and cooperatively on behalf of all children.

This is about all children. The work is something we can and should do if we are serious about the all children equity agenda. Thank you for the work you are already doing and for the work that will integrate RtI into your regular practices.