Chapter 1
Overview

INTRODUCTION
Response to Intervention is a service delivery model designed to assist teachers in providing research-based instructional strategies to students who are failing their academic subjects, particularly reading and math. This service delivery model typically has three or four tiers, and as a student moves through the tiers, the intensity of the interventions increases. Failure to be successful at the end of the third or fourth tier could mean placement into a special education service delivery model.

This chapter presents an overview of the RTI model, including its history, implementation barriers, and tiers and protocols. The chapter also includes a discussion of teacher perceptions, issues surrounding leadership and professional development, and viewpoints of both critics and supporters of RTI.

HISTORY OF RTI
With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), the federal government mandated that the way schools identify students for special education placement by using the discrepancy model was no longer valid in and of itself. Schools were permitted to use the discrepancy model, but they also had to use some other form of identifying children who were struggling. Under the previous system that used only the discrepancy
model, students were given an IQ test and an achievement test by the school psychologist, and there had to be a 2-point discrepancy between the two tests in order for the child to qualify for special education services. If there was not a 2-point discrepancy, the child was put back into the general education classroom without any additional support from the classroom or the special education teacher. Under IDEA, the RTI service delivery model emerged as the other form of identifying and helping struggling students.

RTI is not a new concept in the educational world. It has been used for over 30 years under a variety of names, including “Teacher Assisted Team Model, Pre-Referral Intervention Model, Mainstream Assistance Team Model, School-Based Consultant Team Model, and Problem-Solving Model” (All Kinds of Minds, 2008, p. 1). However, until the IDEA mandate occurred in 2004, there was no consistent terminology or consensus on what the service delivery model should look like. With the new law, a more tangible model—RTI—was developed.

RTI was first offered at the elementary (K–5) educational level and has been successful there. It has slowly made its way into the secondary educational arena but has encountered some difficulties. Unfortunately, the federal government did not provide specific guidelines on how schools should set up the RTI service delivery model, nor did it even recommend the number of specific tiers. Each school district is left to determine its own direction. Elementary schools have been able to overcome this lack of guidance easier than secondary schools, for reasons such as single-teacher instruction and stronger emphasis on training and professional development. Examples of some of the unique barriers that secondary schools face with RTI implementation are discussed in the next section.

BARRIERS TO RTI IMPLEMENTATION
AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Unlike at elementary schools, students attending middle and high school typically have a different teacher for each academic subject. This arrangement can cause problems because secondary teachers may not ever see, let alone talk with, one another, especially if they are teaching different subject areas or are not on the same team. Since teamwork is a huge part of RTI, this lack of collaboration can be a pitfall for offering RTI at the secondary level.
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