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## Information

### *Professional Services Committee*

#### **Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>): Background Information and Authorizations**

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**Executive Summary:** This agenda item presents background information on Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>), how it is implemented in California's public schools and the credentials that authorize instruction at the various levels. Staff seeks direction from the Commission regarding providing further information on this topic at future Commission meetings.

**Recommended Action:** For information only

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**Strategic Plan Goal: 1**

**Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators**

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators and for the accreditation of credential programs

January 2011



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# **Response to Instruction and Intervention(RtI<sup>2</sup>): Background Information and Authorizations**

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## **Introduction**

This agenda item presents background information on Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>), how it is implemented in California's public schools and the credentials that authorize instruction at the various levels. Response to Intervention has its roots in special education and is often used as one tool in the identification of students with specific learning disabilities. RtI<sup>2</sup> applies this model to support students in general education settings and is cited as highly successful in supporting students in non-special education settings and in preventing the disproportional identification of students in certain racial and ethnic subgroups into special education.

## **Background**

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tiered approach to assisting struggling learners which focuses on early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs. RtI's focus is to match the level and types of academic interventions to students' needs. Student progress is monitored regularly and educational decisions are made based on the data. RtI is supported at the national level by the U.S. Department of Education (<http://www.rti4success.org/>) and other agencies (e.g., RTI Action Network, <http://www.rtinetwork.org/about-us/position-statement>) but implementation varies in each state and within each district.

Commission staff has been asked questions and received emails from the field about the appropriate authorizations for individuals who teach in multi-tiered settings. Because of these requests for information and confusion in the field, staff began to communicate with the California Department of Education (CDE) staff, in both special education and general education, regarding California's approach to Response to Intervention.

In California, Response to Intervention has been defined as Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>). The following information on Response to Instruction and Intervention in California's schools comes from the California Department of Education's web page (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/>) and the information describes the multiple ways to implement Response to Intervention (RtI).

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>) is a school wide process of early intervention and prevention of academic and behavioral difficulties. It is a process that utilizes all resources within a school in a collaborative manner to create a single, well-integrated system of instruction and interventions informed by student outcome data. Accountability for positive outcomes for all students is a shared responsibility of all staff members.

RtI<sup>2</sup> is designed to be used in schools in three ways:

1. *Prevention.* All students are screened to determine their level of performance in relation to grade-level benchmarks, standards, and potential indicators of academic and behavioral difficulties. Rather than wait for students to fail, schools provide research-based instruction within general education.
2. *Intervention.* Based on frequent progress monitoring, interventions are provided for general education students not progressing at a rate or level of achievement commensurate with their peers. These students are then selected to receive more intense interventions.
3. *Component of specific learning disability (SLD) determination.* The RtI<sup>2</sup> approach can be one component of SLD determination as addressed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 statute and regulations. The data from the RtI<sup>2</sup> process may be used to demonstrate that a student has received research-based instruction and interventions as part of the eligibility determination process.

The CDE web page describes the array of individuals involved in a RtI<sup>2</sup> system as the following:

- General Education Teachers
- Special Education Teachers
- Reading Specialists/Coaches
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- School Psychologists
- School Counselors
- Paraeducators
- Parents and Caregivers

Provided in the Appendix A are two additional resources from the CDE that provide additional information on RtI<sup>2</sup> in California:

1. The California Department of Education's philosophy and definition in response to instruction and intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>).
2. Core Components to a Strong Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>).

### **Multi-Tiered Instruction**

A common model, described in the CDE document *Determining Specific Learning Disability Eligibility Using RtI<sup>2</sup>*, encompasses three tiers of RtI<sup>2</sup> instruction that are available for students. Although many districts in California implement multi-tier intervention models with four or five tiers, the remainder of this agenda item will focus on the three tier model as an illustrative example.

In all models, the tiers increase in intensity, strategies, and support if a student needs additional assistance. All students could begin in Tier I for a subject or grade level if RtI<sup>2</sup> interventions are offered in general education classroom. A teacher needs to hold a multiple subject or single subject teaching credential, or the equivalent, to teach general education students. The CDE website describes Tier I as follows:

#### ***Tier I. Benchmark: Screening and Targeted Instruction***

In Tier I, the focus is on a core instructional program that uses a scientifically validated curriculum with all students in the general education classroom. During

the course of instruction, the school uses universal screening measures to identify each student's level of proficiency in key academic areas. The screening data are organized to enable the review of both group and individual performance on critical measures. Instruction is differentiated in response to this data for small groups and individual students. Students who continue to lag behind their peers despite the provision of targeted instruction may receive additional Tier I instruction or may be considered for more intensive interventions at Tier II.

If a student is struggling in the general education classroom or Tier I, a second Tier setting might be appropriate for the student for a selected subject or subjects. The CDE website describes Tier II as follows:

***Tier II. Strategic: Targeted Short-term Interventions***

In Tier II, supplemental instruction is provided to those students who exhibit a poor response to the targeted instruction provided through Tier I. Tier II intervention is provided in addition to, and not in lieu of, core instruction and can be delivered through an individualized problem-solving approach and/or a standard treatment protocol.

A problem-solving approach allows school teams to design individualized interventions to address the specific needs of each student. A standard treatment protocol uses a set of research-based practices to provide interventions in a systematic manner with all participating students who have similar needs. Such interventions are generally highly structured and have a high probability of producing positive results for large numbers of students.

Tier II supplemental interventions may be discontinued for students who improve in critical academic/behavioral measures as a result of the intervention. Some students may exhibit progress but continue to need Tier II supplemental supports. Those students who fail to display meaningful progress in spite of supplemental supports are considered for more intensive interventions in Tier III.

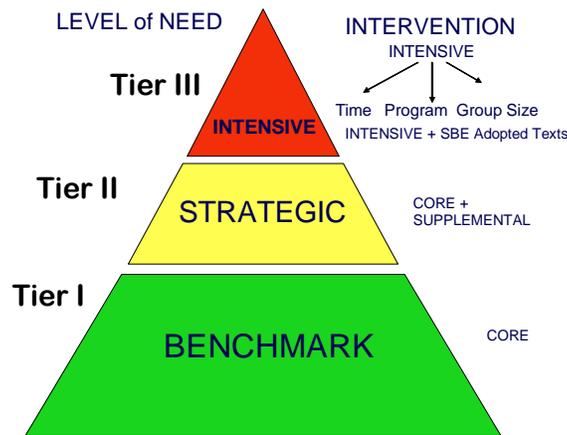
It is possible that some students with identified special needs might be appropriately placed in a Tier II setting. If the Tier II classroom contains both general education and special education students, a teacher needs to hold a multiple subject or single subject credential, or the equivalent, to teach the general education students. If the Tier II classroom contains only special education students, the teacher might hold either a multiple subject or single subject credential or equivalent, or a special education credential depending on the Individualized Education Programs (IEP) of the students assigned to the class.

The most intensive instruction and intervention is Tier III (in a three tier model) where the size of the group, the strategies used with the students and the time focusing on the content can all be manipulated to maximize student learning. Primarily students in Tier III settings will be students with identified special needs. This may vary across districts in how each district has elected to implement RtI<sup>2</sup>. CDE describes Tier III as follows:

### ***Tier III. Intensive: Interventions with Increased Intensity***

In Tier III, students receive a greater degree of intensive interventions. Modifications in frequency, duration, or teacher-student ratio or all three are strategies to increase intensity. SBE [State Board of Education]-approved intervention programs based on research may serve as the core curriculum for students in this intensive level of intervention at fourth grade and above. As in Tier II, interventions are provided flexibly depending on the school site resources and careful blending of all interventions.

The following graphic, from the CDE web page, visually represents the information provided above:



### **Credentials that Authorize Instruction in each of the Tiers**

An individual must be authorized to teach the students in his or her classroom. It is not the Tier that determines what authorization a teacher must hold, but the students the individual is teaching. For students in general education the teacher must hold a multiple subject or single subject teaching credential, or the equivalent. If the class is part of a departmentalized program (i.e., mathematics or history), the teacher should hold the appropriate single subject credential, or the equivalent, and if the class is a multiple subject class where the same students have two or more subjects together with the same teacher, the teacher should hold a multiple subject credential, or the equivalent.

If one or more of the students is identified as a student with special needs, a student with an IEP, and the most appropriate placement is in a special education setting, the teacher must hold an Education Specialist Teaching Credential, or the equivalent, to provide the special education services. The credential context is even more complicated because the teacher must hold an Education Specialist Teaching Credential which authorizes the teacher to provide instructional services to students in the specific identified disability category of the student(s).

Prior to 1998, when the Education Specialist Program Standards were previously revised, all individuals earning an authorization to teach students with special needs always held a general education teaching credential and had teaching experience prior to beginning the preparation program for the special education teaching credential. Beginning with the prior revision of the

program standards, and continuing with the currently adopted program standards, the Education Specialist teaching credential became and remains an initial teaching credential. This means that an individual earning an Education Specialist teaching credential as his or her first teaching credential now, most likely has no other teaching credential and is not authorized to teach general education students.

As California districts have implemented RtI<sup>2</sup> there are reports from districts and others that it may be difficult to find individuals with appropriate credentials to teach in the Tier II settings. If the individual holds only the Education Specialist Teaching Credential, he or she is not authorized to teach general education students, as the teacher of record, who may also be in the class along with students with identified special needs.

The table below summarizes the authorizations needed for each of the three tiers of RtI<sup>2</sup> when Tier III is defined by the district as only for students with an IEP.

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Authorization Needed by the Teacher</b>
III	Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Education Specialist Teaching Credential, or the equivalent, with authorization in the appropriate disability category
II	General education students and students with special needs	For general education students: Multiple or Single Subject Teaching Credential, or the equivalent. For students with special needs: Education Specialist Teaching Credential with authorization in the appropriate disability category, or the equivalent
I	General education students and possibly some mainstreamed students with special needs	Multiple or Single Subject Teaching credential, or the equivalent

Each of California’s school districts decides how to implement RtI<sup>2</sup> independently, considering the guidance provided by CDE. If a school district has special education teachers who received their special education teaching credential before about 2001, the special education teaching credential was most likely earned on top of a general education teaching credential. An individual holding both the general education and special education teaching credential is an appropriate individual to teach in Tier II settings since it is highly likely that there will be both general education and special education students in the class.

For persons who hold special education teaching credentials earned from about 2001 on, the special education teaching credential maybe the individual’s only teaching credential. If the teacher in the Tier II setting holds one of the Education Specialist Teaching Credentials but does not hold an additional general education teaching credential, he or she is not authorized to teach any general education students who may be in the Tier II setting.

Due to the complexity of credentialing issues related to implementation of RtI<sup>2</sup> the Certification Division typically receives questions from districts such as the following:

1. “Can an individual holding an Education Specialist Mild/Moderate credential teach a general education intervention class?”
2. “Can an individual holding an Education Specialist Mild/Moderate credential teach an elective course for general education students?”
3. “As I understand the school site plan, it is to assign special and general education students to the same class, which is taught by a teacher with a special education credential. The teacher in question does not also possess a general education credential. Is this an acceptable assignment?”

Based on emails to the Certification Division and questions asked at the annual Credential Counselors and Analysts of California (CCAC) conference, staff recognizes that there remains confusion in the field related to the appropriate assignments for multi-tiered settings.

### ***Questions for Discussion:***

*The following questions are posed as a framework for the Commission’s discussion of the effects of the RtI<sup>2</sup> system on credentialing issues:*

1. As districts identify the most appropriate teacher for a Tier II or Tier III setting, does the individual hold the appropriate credential(s) to teach in the assignment?
2. If districts are having problems finding sufficient teachers for Tiers II or III:
  - a. Would there be interest in developing a limited general education Added Authorization for individuals holding an Education Specialist Teaching Credential, or the equivalent, that would authorize teaching general education students in Tiers II or III?
  - b. Would there be interest in developing a limited special education Added Authorization for individuals holding a general education teaching credential that would authorize teaching special education students in Tiers II or III?

### **Next Steps and Staff Direction**

Based on the Commission’s discussion of the first question, staff could collect information from districts related to the supply and demand for individuals teaching in Tier II (Strategic Tier) of RtI<sup>2</sup>, or staff could hold a stakeholder meeting to discuss this topic. Commission staff has communicated with staff at the California Department of Education, both the Special Education Division and the English Learner and Curriculum Support Division, in preparation for this agenda item. There is an agreement for the two agencies to work together on this topic.

It is important to note that the federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Education Act (ESEA) is expected to be reauthorized in the near future. It is unclear if the reauthorization of ESEA would impact how RtI<sup>2</sup> is implemented in California. In addition the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) will take place in the future and it is unclear if that might have an impact on RtI<sup>2</sup>.

Staff seeks direction from the Commission relative to further information needed concerning staffing the RtI<sup>2</sup> models implemented in California’s public schools.

## Appendix A

### **The California Department of Education's philosophy and definition in response to instruction and intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>). (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/rtiphilosphydefine.asp>)**

The California Department of Education's philosophy and definition of Response to Instruction and Intervention provides a basis for understanding a systematic, data-driven approach to instruction believed to benefit every student in the effort to close the achievement gap.

#### ***Philosophy***

As embodied in the core purpose of the California Department of Education, "We believe that the public school system must meet the comprehensive learning needs of each student to reach high expectations. Equity of access to quality public education is the right of every student and the responsibility of the State of California."<sup>1</sup>

In addition, according to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, "Real, measurable progress has been made since the institution of standards-based education. But, while improvement in our schools has been nearly universal, our across-the-board success has still failed to close an achievement gap that threatens the future of our diverse state. Recognizing this is important. Addressing it is imperative. Too often, the struggles of the African American student, the English learner and the learning disabled student were hidden by overall school achievement gains. That day is past. Today we are holding ourselves accountable for the results of all children. And when we see significant groups of students falling far short of the goal of proficiency that we hold for all students we must act. Today, equipped with specific knowledge of those gaps, we must focus as never before on solutions."<sup>2</sup>

Of the many solution strategies that have been employed nationwide, the RtI<sup>2</sup> model hopes to create in California's schools and districts the conditions necessary for closing the achievement gap. RtI<sup>2</sup> focuses on the individual student and provides a vehicle to strengthen performance for struggling students before educational problems increase in intensity and special education seems the only viable option. Leadership is critical to the implementation of RtI<sup>2</sup>. To be effective, RtI<sup>2</sup> must harness and coordinate the full resources of the school, district, and community. Administrators and their leadership teams, in collaboration with all teachers, have central roles in the planning, implementation, and successful day to day use of the RtI<sup>2</sup> approach. Analyzing how students respond to instruction and interventions is an organizing principle for structures and programs that already exist in our schools. An education system implementing RtI<sup>2</sup> promotes collaboration and shared responsibility for the learning of all students across all personnel and programs located in any given school.

#### **Definition**

In California, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>) is a systematic, data-driven approach to instruction that benefits every student. California has expanded the notion of Response to Intervention to RtI<sup>2</sup>. RtI<sup>2</sup> 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. RtI<sup>2</sup> integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special

education through a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student.

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### Footnotes

1. California Department of Education. Belief and Purpose. 18 January 2008. (accessed August 25, 2008).
2. Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, "State of Education Address." Address given before educational leaders, Sacramento, California, February 6, 2007.

### **Core Components to a Strong Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>).** (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/rticorecomponents.asp>)

A cohesive RtI<sup>2</sup> process integrates resources from general education, categorical programs and special education into a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student. The following core components are critical to the full implementation of a strong RtI<sup>2</sup> process.

1. **High-quality classroom instruction.** Students receive high-quality and culturally relevant, standards-based instruction in their classroom setting by highly qualified teachers.
2. **Research-based instruction.** The instruction that is provided within the classroom is culturally responsive and has been demonstrated to be effective through scientific research.
3. **Universal screening.** School staff assess all students to determine students' needs. Based on the collected data, school staff determine which students require close progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, additional targeted assessment, a specific research based intervention, or acceleration.
4. **Continuous classroom progress monitoring.** Classroom performance of all students is monitored continually within the classroom. In this way, teachers can identify those learners who need more depth and complexity in daily work and those who are not meeting benchmarks or other expected standards and adjust instruction accordingly.
5. **Research-based interventions.** When monitoring data indicate a lack of progress, an appropriate research-based intervention is implemented. The interventions are designed to increase the intensity of the students' instructional experience.
6. **Progress monitoring during instruction and interventions.** School staff use progress monitoring data to determine the effectiveness of the acceleration or intervention and to make any modifications, as needed. Carefully defined data are collected on a frequent basis to provide a cumulative record of the students' progress, acceleration and/or response to instruction and intervention.
7. **Fidelity of program implementation.** Student success in the RtI<sup>2</sup> model requires fidelity of implementation in the delivery of content and instructional strategies specific to the learning and/or behavioral needs of the student.

8. **Staff development and collaboration.** All school staff are trained in assessments, data analysis, programs, and research-based instructional practices and strategies. Site grade level or interdisciplinary teams use a collaborative approach to analyze student data and work together in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the intervention process.
9. **Parent involvement.** The involvement and active participation of parents at all stages of the instructional and intervention process is essential to improving the educational outcomes of their students. Parents are kept informed of the progress of their students in their native language or other mode of communication, and their input is valued in making appropriate decisions.
10. **Specific Learning Disability Determination.** The RtI<sup>2</sup> approach may be one component of Specific Learning Disability determination as addressed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 statute and regulations. As part of determining eligibility, the data from the RtI<sup>2</sup> process may be used to ensure that a student has received research-based instruction and interventions.