

# AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE TO RTI IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

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The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) is committed to supporting a successful education for **all** students.

In that spirit and in response to widespread interest, the New Hampshire Response to Intervention Task Force has prepared this guide to understanding and implementing RTI for local districts.

# Message from Kathleen Murphy, Director, Division of Instruction

Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education  
Tel. 603-271-3144



Mary S. Heath  
Deputy Commissioner  
Tel. 603-271-7301

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, N.H. 03301  
FAX 603-271-1953  
Citizens Services Line 1-800-339-9900

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The New Hampshire Department of Education endorses the implementation of RtI (Response to Intervention) as a systematic framework for providing instruction to all children.

The Department has partnered with a number of stakeholders throughout the state to develop a guidance document and action plan to assist school districts as they implement RtI strategies.

The focus of this effort is to ensure that the professional staff of New Hampshire gain a deeper knowledge of the RtI framework, delve into the complexities of student learning and behavior, use data analysis to drive instruction, and implement strategies that will support student growth.

In addition, the intent of the RtI task force is to ensure that high quality professional development be afforded to all educators across the state and that the training and coaching opportunities be sustained over time.

The work that took place by the members of the task force is outstanding. For the last eighteen months, they have worked tirelessly to develop a tool and guidance that will be useful to the field as they develop interventions that support student learning and positive behavior.

It has truly been a privilege for the staff at the Department of Education to work with the RtI task force. They are exceptional educators, committed to seeking ways to assist children.

This document will not be the end of the conversation regarding RtI but the beginning of many opportunities to learn and grow together.

Sincerely,

  
Kathleen A. Murphy  
Director Division of Instruction

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER- EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

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## What Is RTI?

**RTI is a commitment to our students to provide instructional and behavioral support whenever it is needed.**

- RTI is a school-wide systematic framework based on educational research. RTI is not an “add on” but rather a school-wide, systems approach to school improvement.
- RTI is an approach to **whole-school reform** that uses educators’ shared knowledge and collaboration to provide relevant and targeted instruction with fidelity, gather student outcome data, analyze student progress, and adjust instruction or behavioral responses to each student’s needs.
- RTI is a system of organizing data-driven instruction.
- RTI is a process to guide instruction and improve outcomes for ALL students.

The key components of RTI are:

- Universal school-wide screening
- Progress monitoring
- Data-driven decision-making teams
- Systematic tiered instruction and interventions

The New Hampshire RTI Task Force adopted this definition from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education:

**RTI is the practice of 1) providing high-quality instruction or intervention matched to student needs and 2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to 3) make important educational decisions.**

Some examples of RTI now used in New Hampshire are the **Reading First** initiative, the **New Hampshire Literacy Plan**, and **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports** (PBIS). All three rely on tiered models of increasing support and intervention.

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**HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION OR INTERVENTION MATCHED TO STUDENT NEED** refers to instruction or intervention that has been demonstrated through scientific research and practice to produce high learning rates for most students and fits a student's need. Individual responses to even the best instruction or intervention vary. The use of scientifically based instruction or intervention increases the probability of, but does not guarantee, positive individual response. Therefore, individual response is assessed in RTI and instruction or intervention or goals are modified depending on results with individual students.

**LEARNING RATE AND LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE** is the primary sources of information used in ongoing decision making. Learning rate is a student's growth in achievement or behavior competencies over time. Level of performance is a student's relative standing on some dimension of achievement or performance (either criterion- or norm-referenced). Both vary significantly among students. Most students with achievement or behavioral challenges respond positively to explicit and intense instruction or interventions. Decisions about the use of more or less intense interventions are based on learning rate and level. More intense interventions may occur in general education classrooms or pull-out programs supported by general, compensatory, or special education funding.

**IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL DECISIONS** about intensity and the likely duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction in multiple tiers of intervention. Decisions about the necessity of more intense interventions, including eligibility for special education or exit from special education or other services, are informed by data on learning rate and level.

Batsche, G., Elliott, J., Graden, J., Grimes, J., Kovalski, J., Prasse, D., Reschly, D., Shrag, J., and Tilly, D. (2005). [Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation](#). Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

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## Why RTI?

Schools are increasingly held responsible for student achievement. This shift occurred in part through the passage of the [No Child Left Behind Act](#) (NCLB) of 2001 and the reauthorization of the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act](#) (IDEA) in 2004.

This new era of accountability follows more than two decades of educational research. The research has identified essential systems and practices that, when well implemented, can lead to an effective, durable school-based response to improve both learning and behavior.

The NCLB and IDEA legislation, in the context of this growing body of research and evidence-based practices, catalyzed efforts to improve instructional and behavioral practices.

**NCLB** set expectations for educators to provide standards-based instruction and to measure student learning outcomes, annually, for all students in grades 3 through 8, and once in high school, through state assessments.

**IDEA** reinforces participation and progress in the general education curriculum for students with disabilities through a strengthened relationship between general and special education. **IDEA** also emphasizes proactive, preventive approaches to address behaviors that interfere with learning.

Many New Hampshire districts have implemented or are in the process of implementing RTI at the local level and many districts desire to continue enhancing their services through developing Response to Intervention frameworks.

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## **RTI in New Hampshire**

New Hampshire educators must now measure the progress **all** students are making toward Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) in elementary and middle school or toward Grade-Span Expectations (GSEs) in high school. Both appear in the [New Hampshire curriculum frameworks](#).

By providing students with standards-based curriculum, and measuring the progress of individual students in disability, ethnicity and socioeconomic groups, it is possible to determine if **all** students are making progress.

New Hampshire's [Follow the Child](#) initiative further emphasizes the need for schools to attend to each student's personal learning and social, emotional and physical development and to offer timely interventions as needed. It encourages districts to establish processes by which to follow each child's progress over time.

[How is New Hampshire doing in terms of student outcomes?](#)

### ***Academics***

Since the inception of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) in Fall 2005, [New Hampshire's assessment results](#) have trended upward. Proficiency in reading in grades 3 through 8 has increased from 65% in 2005 to 73% in 2008. Mathematics proficiency has similarly increased from 61% in 2005 to 68% in 2008.

However, further analysis shows significant achievement gaps remain between general education students and students in disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic subgroups.

### ***Behavior***

The NHDOE has promoted multi-tiered systems of behavior support for almost a decade. During that time, more than 25% of New Hampshire schools have implemented [positive behavior systems](#) and most have seen improvements in school climate and reductions in problem behaviors, suspensions and expulsions. This

has increased time for learning, teaching, and leadership activities in many schools.

However, closer analysis reveals variability across schools and instructional levels.

Our New Hampshire statistics underscore the need for schools and districts to **analyze their own academic and behavioral data** in order to measure the progress and growth made by individual students and sub-groups of students.

With this analysis of data, school improvement teams will have a baseline from which to judge **which systems are effective** and **which would benefit from restructuring or refinement.**

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## **Seven Guiding Principles of RTI**

### **1. ALL students are part of ONE proactive educational system.**

- ALL students can learn.
- ALL available resources are used to teach ALL students.

### **2. Scientific, research-based/ evidence-based instruction is used.**

- Curriculum and instructional approaches must have a high probability of success for most students.
- Instructional time is used efficiently and effectively.

### **3. Instructionally relevant, valid and reliable assessments serve different purposes.**

- Screening assessments collect data to identify low- and high-performing students at risk of not having their needs met.
- Diagnostic assessments gather information from multiple sources to determine why students are not benefiting from instruction.
- Formative assessments guide instruction through the frequent, ongoing collection of both formal and informal data.

### **4. A systematic, collaborative method is used to base decisions on a continuum of student needs.**

- The core cycle of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is strong.
- Increasing levels of support are based on increasing levels of student needs.

### **5. Data guide instructional decisions.**

- Data are used to align curriculum and instruction.
- Data are used to allocate resources.
- Data drive professional development decisions.

### **6. Staff receive professional development, follow-up modeling, and coaching to ensure effectiveness and fidelity at all levels of instruction.**

- Staff receive ongoing training and support to assimilate new knowledge and skills.

- Staff anticipate and are willing to meet newly emerging needs based on student performance.

## **7. Leadership is vital**

- Strong administrative support ensures commitment and resources.
- Strong teacher support means sharing in the common goal of improving instruction.
- A leadership team builds internal capacity and sustainability over time.

*Adapted from Heartland (Iowa) Area  
Education Agency*

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## Getting Started

School leaders may struggle with where to begin in designing a tiered model of intervention and support. One approach to begin this crucial work is through the design of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). School leaders may start by posing the questions raised by DuFour and others in [\*Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work\*](#) (2008):

**Exactly what is it we want all students to learn? What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do we expect them to acquire as a result of this course, grade level, or unit of instruction?**

**How will we know if each student is learning each of the essential skills, concepts, and dispositions we have deemed most essential?**

**How will we respond when some of our students do not learn? What process will we put in place to ensure students receive additional time and support for learning in a timely, directive, and systematic way?**

**How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are already proficient?**

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## **Commitment to a Systems Approach**

***A district's decision to implement an RTI framework signifies a commitment to a systems approach to school improvement.***

A new school-wide or district-wide initiative requires effective leadership. Leaders must be able to articulate the vision for systemic change and to communicate and support the implementation plan.

Initially, the focus for developing an RTI framework might be dictated by the results of NECAP assessments or data on behavioral indicators. A school that is addressing reading achievement might initially focus on reading and literacy development, while another school might begin with a mathematics focus. Developing the capacity for instruction and assessment is ongoing and continually expanding through the process of school improvement.

School leaders must understand that systemic change requires new practices that may alter school structures.

RTI entails the development of new school-wide practices that include:

- curricula aligned with rigorous standards
- revising school schedules to accommodate a tiered model of instruction and intervention;
- aligning ongoing professional development to support staff expertise;
- institutionalizing the use of data to measure student progress and the fidelity of instruction; using teams for problem-solving and data analysis; and
- developing collaborative instructional teams to implement the RTI systematic framework.

Many options are available for implementing RTI, including a problem-solving approach and a standard treatment protocol. Many schools blend aspects of the two to meet their needs. The [Iris Center](#) and the [IDEA Partnership](#) have more information about

distinctions between the problem-solving approach and the standard treatment protocol.

While such change may present a challenge to many schools, it also creates a powerful opportunity for New Hampshire educational communities to collaborate in a structured, problem-solving process to improve learning results for **all** students.

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## **Putting RTI into Practice**

Schools should devote adequate planning time to address the four critical phases in developing an RTI framework:

### **1. Building consensus**

The importance of building understanding, agreement, commitment among all members of the school community (general and special educators, administrators, specialists, paraprofessionals, parents and families, school board members) before developing an RTI infrastructure cannot be underestimated.

### **2. Developing infrastructure**

A building Leadership team should receive professional development, training, and skill development to lead the RTI initiative. This team then plans ongoing professional development matched to the needs of the staff and the greater school community. Under this team's guidance, building staff systematically address the [RTI Guiding Principles](#) in building the RtI infrastructure. A useful resource for facilitating this process is the NASDE presentation [Response to Intervention \(RtI\): Blueprints for Implementation at the State, District and Local Levels](#). The [Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project](#) also contains resources.

### **3. Implementing RTI**

A school-wide evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's Tier 1 curriculum and instruction is undertaken and the master schedule is structured around students' instructional needs. All assessment schedules are publicized, ongoing decision-making teams are established, and tiered interventions are developed according to student needs. Staff members are identified to provide interventions without the limitations of traditional assigned roles. The implementation model is fluid and may allow schools and districts to prioritize phases of implementation. [The National Implementation Research Network](#) has numerous resources.

### **4. Fidelity of Implementation**

Ensuring that universal screening, progress monitoring, and evidence based curriculum and instruction are implemented with fidelity is crucial in establishing a systematic RTI framework.

Student achievement can be deeply affected, for example, by whether an intervention or assessment is delivered with the accuracy and integrity with which it was developed.

As noted by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, many studies have examined the importance of fidelity of implementation in the effective delivery of interventions. In these studies, positive student outcomes may be attributed to three common factors:

1. fidelity of implementation of the process at the school level;
2. degree to which the selected interventions are empirically supported; and
3. [fidelity of intervention implementation](#) at the teacher level (Johnson et al., 2006).

Schools will find that implementing an RTI systematic framework requires vision, dedication, and a clear understanding and engagement from all education professionals and the extended educational community.

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## **Building the Systematic RTI Framework**

The essential RTI components are [Universal School-wide Screening](#), [Progress Monitoring](#), [Data-Driven Decision-Making Teams](#), and [Systematic Tiered Instruction and Interventions](#).

### **Universal School-Wide Screening**

#### ***Academic***

“Schools use universal screening in essential academic areas to identify each student’s level of proficiency (usually three times a year). The screening data are organized in a format that allow for the inspection of both group and individual performance on specific skills. Teachers meet in grade level or department teams to analyze data on all students, set group goals for the next assessment period, and plan for whole class instructional change based on the data. Interventions at Tier 1 are oriented towards whole group instructional procedures.” –National Association of State Directors of Special Education

#### ***Behavior***

Schools also use universal behavior screenings to identify children and youth at risk of school failure due to social, emotional, or behavioral challenges. Screening data are used with other risk indicators such as absences, tardies, office discipline referrals, and non-medical illness visits to the nurse to determine if students are making adequate progress in meeting school-wide expectations for behavior and social-emotional development. Students who do not respond to Tier 1 interventions are supported by a Tier 2 problem-solving team which makes recommendations for early and efficient interventions.

### **Progress Monitoring**

Progress monitoring is a research-based practice that assesses students’ academic and behavioral performance and evaluates the effectiveness of instruction. It can be implemented with individual students or an entire class. It is important especially for struggling students to measure progress frequently enough to make instructional decisions.

Schools regularly monitor student progress to evaluate the

effectiveness of the instruction offered and measure student progress.

How does it work? Students' current levels of performance are measured and goals are set for learning that will take place over time. Student performance in Tier 2 and Tier 3 must be measured frequently (weekly or monthly).

Progress toward meeting the learning goals is measured by comparing students' expected and actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed to meet individual students' learning needs.

An RTI model accomplishes this work through a team that uses data for decision-making. Data analysis teams (DATs) convene after benchmark screenings to review universal data, select students for tiered interventions, and discuss instructional strategies. See the [National Center on Student Progress Monitoring](#), for more information.

### **Data-Driven Decision-Making Teams**

Teams of teachers, specialists and administrators meet regularly to analyze data from student screenings and progress monitoring.

These data are used to make instructional decisions at the system, classroom, and individual student levels.

Data team meetings are a vital part of creating curricular improvements, designing interventions, and deciding which students will benefit from additional tiered instruction.

RTI teams use a systematic process to analyze data from school-wide universal screening at the Tier 1 level to assist teachers in planning and implementing instructional strategies differentiated on the basis of students' varying skill levels (Kovaleski & Pedersen, 2008).

The same kind of team process is used for designing instruction and placing students into other tiers (i.e., Tiers 2 and 3).

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## **Systematic Tiered Instruction and Interventions**

Although the assessment components—universal screening and progress monitoring—are essential elements of RTI implementation, the instructional adaptations based on the assessment outcomes truly drive the changes we hope to see in students who are identified as having some level of risk of not meeting academic or behavioral expectations.

The heart of the RTI model lies in the use of [tiered instructional processes](#). Instruction delivered to students varies according to the nature and severity of students' difficulties.

The RTI framework uses a multi-tiered approach to instruction and behavior. Primary prevention is provided to *all* students at Tier 1, secondary prevention and intervention is provided to *some* students at risk of school failure at Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions are provided to those *few* students with intensive needs. (Some schools may use a four-tier model; many states and local districts use a three-tier model.)

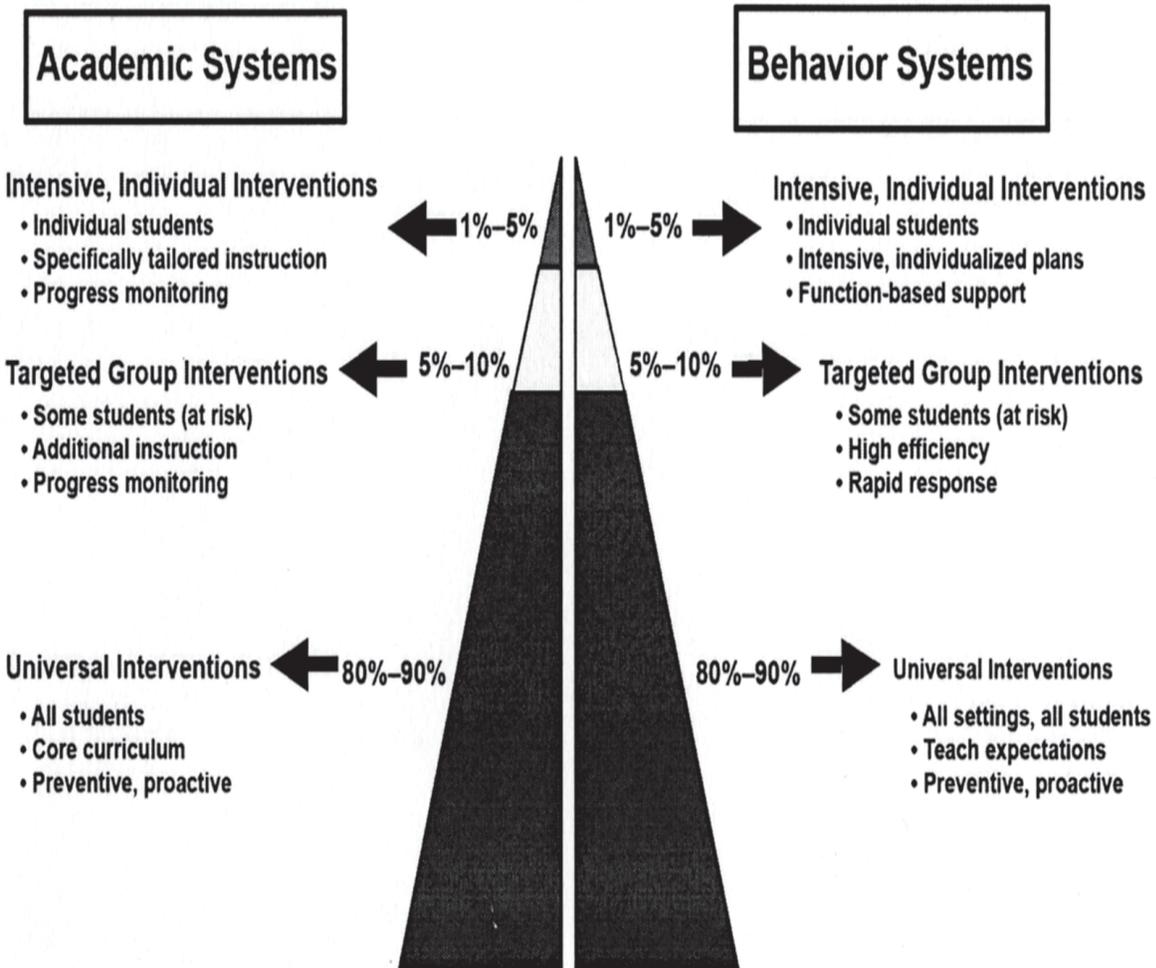
**Tier 1**- High quality general instruction and positive behavioral support is provided to **all** students in the general education classroom or setting. Features of Tier 1 include a core curriculum aligned to GLEs and GSEs, research-based instruction, differentiated instruction, and systematic screening. *In addition:*

**Tier 2**- Interventions are provided to those students (typically 10-15%) who do not respond to Tier I and require additional support. Features of Tier 2 include targeted/supplemental instruction or behavioral support for small groups of students with similar learning or behavioral requirements or needs. Frequent progress monitoring of academic or behavioral progress is required. This may or may not be considered a special education service. *In addition:*

**Tier 3**- Intensive or specially designed instruction is provided to very small groups of students who demonstrate significant learning or behavioral needs and have not responded adequately to primary and secondary interventions. Frequent progress monitoring of academic or behavioral progress is required. This may or may not be considered a special education service. [Back to Top](#)

## The Three-Tier Model

### The Three-Tier Model of Prevention and Intervention



**NASDSE**

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## Sample RTI Framework: Literacy

A 3-tier arrangement for K-3 reading:

**Tier 1 – General Education:** All students receive high-quality general instruction in the general education classroom.

- Research-validated reading instruction and curriculum emphasizing the five critical elements of beginning reading
- Multiple grouping formats to meet student needs
- Core classroom instruction of 90 or more uninterrupted minutes daily
- Universal screening at the beginning of year for all students
- Benchmark assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the academic year
- General education teacher in a general education classroom
- Ongoing professional development

**Tier 2 – Supplemental (Targeted) Instruction:** Students identified with marked reading difficulties who have not responded to Tier I efforts receive additional support.

- Specialized, research-validated reading program(s) emphasizing the five critical elements of beginning reading
- Homogeneous small-group instruction (1:3-5)
- Minimum of 30 minutes daily in small group in addition to 90 minutes of core reading program
- Progress monitoring twice monthly on targeted skills to ensure progress and learning
- Setting (within or outside of general education class) designated by school
- Personnel (e.g. classroom teacher, reading specialist, special educator, highly trained paraprofessional) determined by school

**Tier 3 – Intensive Intervention:** Students identified with marked difficulties in reading who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction receive additional support.

- Sustained, intensive, research-validated reading program(s) emphasizing the five critical components of beginning reading
- Individual or homogeneous small-group instruction (1:1-3)
- Minimum of two 30-minute small-group or 1:1 sessions daily in addition to 90 minutes of core reading program

- Progress monitoring twice monthly on targeted skills to ensure progress and learning
- Appropriate setting designated by school
- Personnel determined by school

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## **Sample RTI Framework: Behavior**

A 3-tier arrangement for middle school behavior support:

**Tier 1 – General Education:** All students receive high-quality general instruction in the general education classroom.

- The systematic teaching of school-wide behavioral expectations (Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Engaged) in locations (classroom, hallways, playground, cafeteria, arrival/departure, bathrooms, assemblies)
- High rates (4:1) of acknowledgements for students exhibiting appropriate prosocial behavioral expectations
- Clear definitions of problem behaviors and differentiation between minor and major behaviors
- Clear and appropriate procedures for responding to and consequences for problem behaviors
- An efficient office discipline referral form
- Appropriate behavior management and instructional management interventions provided by the general education teacher in the general education classroom
- An efficient and effective data collection and management system
- Benchmarks for key behavioral indicators such as office referrals, attendance, tardies, visits to the nurse's office
- A systematic screening process for all students at least once a year
- Ongoing professional development

**Tier 2 – Supplemental (Targeted) Instruction:** Students identified as at risk of school failure based on behavioral challenges who have not responded to Tier I efforts receive additional support.

- A strength-based perspective on behavior support
- A function-based perspective on behavior support
- An early and efficient first intervention
- Specialized, small-group interventions based on common needs, skills and the function of behavior (e.g., Check In-Check Out, social skills, anger management, mentoring, service-learning, etc.)
- Progress monitoring on targeted skills to ensure progress and

- learning
- Setting (within or outside of general education class) designated by school
- Personnel (classroom teacher, reading specialist, external interventionist) determined by school
- Family engagement activities characterized by high levels of two-way communication

**Tier 3 – Intensive Intervention:** Students identified with chronic and intensive difficulties in behavior who have not responded to Tier 1 and Tier 2 efforts receive additional support.

- A strength-based perspective on behavior support
- Functional behavioral assessments that result in function-based behavior support plans implemented with fidelity and assessed regularly
- Sustained, intensive, research-validated social, emotional, and/or behavioral program(s) delivered with high fidelity
- Appropriate setting designated by school
- Highly qualified personnel with specialized expertise
- Family engagement activities characterized by high levels of two-way communication

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## **RTI and Learning Disabilities**

RTI is not a program or special education referral process. It is a school-wide, systemic approach to making instructional or behavioral decisions to help all students succeed. It may be used in special education determinations, however.

IDEA now requires states to adopt criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. These criteria must permit local districts to use RTI data and research-based procedures as part of an evaluation for special education to assist in identifying and determining eligibility for students suspected of having a specific learning disability.

New Hampshire rules for the education of children with educational disabilities also require school districts to have a policy to identify how they determine student eligibility for a specific learning disability.

[Identifying a learning disability through RTI](#) shifts the focus of the evaluation process from the former “discrepancy model” to an approach that emphasizes the student’s instructional needs and relies on repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals.

## **Parent and Family Involvement**

Creating capacity to support all students’ success requires collaboration by all members of the educational community. Parent and family involvement in the school improvement process is essential. As schools assess student learning needs and make plans to provide additional instruction and supports, parents are critical participants. It is important that they understand screening and progress monitoring data and are active participants in celebrating student improvements. The Parent Information Center has been an early advocate of the advantages of developing an RTI framework and has published [A Family Guide to Response to Intervention](#).

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## Summary

The new age of educational accountability has required new thinking about the effectiveness of our schools. Schools are now evaluating all students' learning progress and redesigning school-wide systems to offer the curriculum, instruction, and assessment frameworks that meet learning needs and ensure achievement for **all** students.

The design of an RTI school-wide systematic framework can provide all students with the individualized supports they may need as they travel their educational journey. This redesign process may represent a sea change for some schools but our country is built on research, innovation, and design in all aspects of our life. Education is at the center of the challenges our nation faces. We are expected to lead the way for today's generation of learners.

Providing an aligned curriculum, ensuring high-quality instruction, offering targeted interventions and supports as needed, and using progress monitoring to measure student progress require a new way of organizing and supporting student learning.

Teams of educators will need to work together to review student results and discuss the curriculum, instruction, and assessments for all students. Professional development will need to be embedded and ongoing. Time must be allocated and protected to allow educators to hold the conversations necessary for this new collaborative approach to work. Effective and shared leadership is essential for articulating the vision and supporting the design of an RTI system-wide framework.

The design of an RTI system-wide framework will vary from school to school and will evolve and change as students' needs change and educational research sheds new light on student learning. These are exciting days for education. Our work has just begun.

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[National Association of State Directors of Special Education](#)

[National Center on Learning Disabilities Resource Kit](#)

[National Center on Response to Intervention](#)

[New Hampshire Responds](#)

[New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(NHCEBIS\)](#)

[New Hampshire Family Resource Connections](#)

Parent Information Center: [\*A Family Guide to Response to Intervention\*](#)

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[University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability](#)

[What Works Clearinghouse](#)

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## The New Hampshire RTI Task Force Members

- **Brian Balke**, Assistant Superintendent, Goffstown School District
- **Peter Bonaccorsi**, Principal and President NHASP, Milford School District, NAESP Affiliate
- **Dean Cascadden**, Superintendent, Bow School District
- **Janet Catalfano**, Education Consultant, NHDOE Bureau of Integrated Programs
- **Raina Chick**, School Psychologist, NH School Psychologist Association President, Task Force Co-Chair
- **Nancy Childress**, Program Specialist, NHDOE Bureau of Integrated Programs
- **Ginny Clifford**, Consultant, NHDOE Bureau of Credentialing
- **Deb Connell**, Administrator, NHDOE Bureau of Integrated Programs
- **Heather Cummings**, Curriculum Coordinator, Governor Wentworth School District
- **Mary Ford**, Associate Dean of Education, Granite State College
- **Debra Hackett**, Middle School Science NEA Affiliate
- **Laura Hailey**, President, AFT Affiliate
- **Mary Heath**, Deputy Commissioner, NHDOE
- **Mary Clare Heffernan**, SERESC—Southeast Regional Education Center
- **Amy Jenks**, State Improvement Grant Coordinator, NHDOE Bureau of Special Education
- **Kathy McGhee**, Learning Disabilities Specialist, Canterbury School District
- **Elaine McNulty**, Task Force Co-Chair, Former District Director of Special Education
- **Michael McSheehan**, Assistant Professor; Project Coordinator, Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire
- **Kathleen Murphy**, Director, NHDOE Division of Instruction
- **Dr. Howard Muscott**, Director, NH Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- **Kristine Pelletier**, Literacy Implementation Specialist K-5, Manchester School District
- **Virginia Phinney**, Reading First Site Coordinator, Farmington School District
- **Sandy Plocharczyk**, NHSAA SPED Support Center Director, Task Force Co-Chair, ASSA Affiliate

- **Susan Randall**, Consultant, NHDOE High School Redesign
- **Ann Remus**, Education Consultant, Southeast Regional Education Center
- **Heather Thalheimer**, Director, NH Parent Information Center
- **Santina Thibedeau**, Administrator, NHDOE Bureau of Special Education
- **Laura Wasielewski**, Director of Teacher Education Programs, Education Department Chair, St. Anselm College
- **Deb Wiswell**, Administrator, NHDOE Bureau of Accountability

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUPPORT

- **Michelle Gauthier**, Assistant to NHDOE Deputy Commissioner
- **Ellie Riel**, Administrative Support, NHDOE

#### NEW ENGLAND COMPREHENSIVE CENTER SUPPORT

- **Carol Keirstead**, Director, New England Comprehensive Center
- **Andrea Reade**, Research Associate, New England Comprehensive Center

#### IN MEMORY OF

**Dennise Maslakowski**, Associate Vice President for the College of Graduate Studies, Plymouth State University

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