



What's the Big IDEA? #6

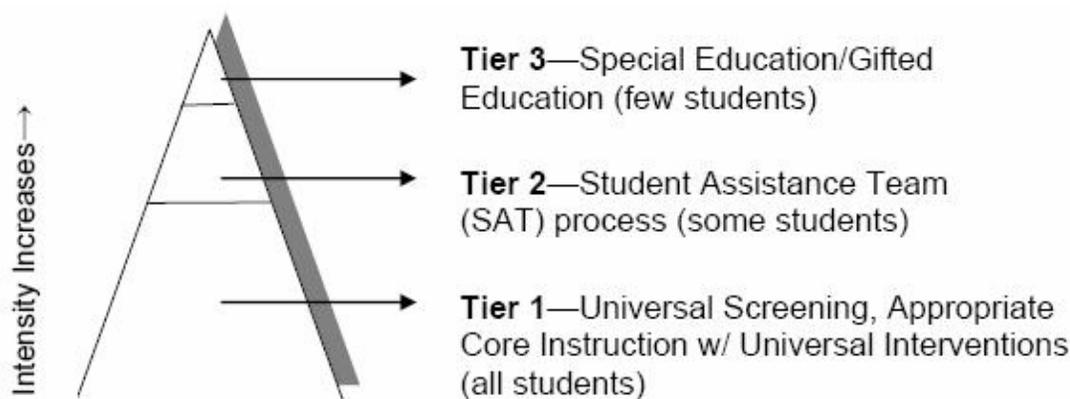
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. This series is designed to offer information about IDEA as amended in 2004. Each fact sheet will focus on a different aspect of IDEA.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

My daughter is having difficulty in her 3rd grade classroom. Her teacher says she is behind in her math and her reading. The teacher is inviting me to attend a SAT meeting to discuss Tier 2 RtI strategies. What does this mean? What do I need to know before the meeting?

Let's begin with some background. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) is a school-based group charged with developing positive academic and behavioral interventions so students will benefit from the instruction provided in their general education classroom. The SAT uses a Response to Intervention (RtI) process to develop interventions for students who need extra support as well as for those who need enrichment.

RtI is the acronym for Response to Intervention. In New Mexico, we have a 3-tiered RtI model designed to provide research-based interventions to respond to the academic and behavioral needs of *all* students. The model provides a continuum of support to students, ranging from least to most intensive. The graphic below shows a model of New Mexico's RtI framework.



Tier 1 takes up the majority of the pyramid. This is because Tier 1 interventions are designed for all students. The foundation of Tier 1 is a research-based core curriculum that is delivered through daily direct instruction 60-90 minutes per day. Adjustments can be made and support provided through supplemental (additional) instruction or intensive assistance (placement in smaller groups, or the use of remedial strategies). Progress is monitored frequently. In addition, Universal Screening is done at Tier 1. This means that all students are screened for general health and well-being; English language proficiency; and academic proficiency. School-wide Behavioral Interventions are also implemented at the Tier 1 level. This would include school-wide programs such as character building or bullying-prevention programs, and school and classroom rules. National models suggest that 80% of a school's students should be effectively served through Tier 1 practices. If not, the school's core programs, practices, and behavioral systems need to be evaluated. Tier 1 is basically the teaching that is done in the classroom every day. The term Tier 1 is used to indicate that the teacher is receiving guidance and strategies from others in order to improve his/her effectiveness.

Your child's teacher monitors progress frequently at Tier 1 so if a child is not making adequate progress at this level, the teacher will suggest a meeting with the Student Assistance Team (SAT) in order to explore other ways to meet your child's academic needs. Who is on the SAT? The core group includes school administrators, general ed. teachers, and specialists as needed. The child's general ed. teacher is always a member of the team. Parent permission is not required to conduct a SAT team meeting, but parents should always be invited. You will want to be prepared to discuss your concerns about your child's progress as well as your observations about what works and doesn't work with your child. Remember, you know your child best, so your ideas are essential for developing a plan that is effective for your child. The SAT will review her academic and/or behavioral performance and design Tier 2 interventions.

Tier 2 interventions frequently build upon the Tier 1 strategies. For example, more instruction is provided in smaller groups and specialists may come in to teach specific strategies or programs. In addition, there would be more frequent progress monitoring. If the response to Tier 2 interventions results in improved academic performance, your child may return to Tier 1 universal interventions. However, if the response to SAT Tier 2 interventions is poor, the SAT team may suggest a comprehensive evaluation to determine if your child is eligible for special education services. Data collected from Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions will be used as part of the evaluation process.

NOTE: As the parent, you can request a multidisciplinary evaluation at any time during the intervention process. You do not need to wait for the SAT team to decide that an evaluation is warranted. The RtI process can not be used to delay an evaluation for determining a suspected disability [34 CFR 300.301(b)]. However, since the RtI process will provide valuable information for the team, it is important to continue using RtI strategies throughout the evaluation process.

In determining eligibility for Tier 3, formal assessments done by an educational diagnostician as well as response to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions are considered. This is particularly important if the SAT believes a child may have a specific learning disability (SLD). There are two ways a child may be determined to have a specific learning disability. Schools may use an IQ/Performance comparison or a dual-discrepancy model. An IQ/Performance comparison uses testing done by a diagnostician. Eligibility is determined by a gap between the child's expected performance (based on IQ score) and the child's actual academic performance (based on scores from achievement testing). The dual-discrepancy model means that schools use both RtI results **and** the scores for IQ and academic performance to determine a child's eligibility for special education services. Schools can not use RtI as the sole criterion for determining whether a child has a SLD. They must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies (34 CFR 300.307, 300.309, 300.311). In New Mexico, effective July 2009, schools must use a dual-discrepancy model for children in K-3rd grades. If the student is beyond 3rd grade, the school can use **either** the dual-discrepancy model **or** the IQ/performance comparison.

If a student qualifies for special education services, the IEP team determines individualized programming as well as the need for related services. Special education services are Tier 3 interventions. Tier 3 interventions do not have to be provided in a separate classroom. Students can receive Tier 3 interventions from special education teachers and related service providers in the general education setting. As a member of the IEP team, remember you have a say in where your child receives services.

For more detailed information about RtI, call Parents Reaching Out to request our RtI handbook. You can also download the book from our website at www.parentsreachingout.org

Other resources for more information about RtI:

NM Public Education Department - www.ped.state.nm.us/RtI/index.html

RtI Action Network – www.rtinetwork.org

National Center on Response to Intervention – www.rti4success.org

Some information in this document was adapted from *Understanding and Implementing the Response to Intervention (RtI) Framework in New Mexico: A Quick Guide*, which is a copyright free technical assistance manual prepared by the New Mexico Public Education Department, Quality Assurance Bureau, Fall 2009.

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