

RTI in Early Childhood

March 30, 2011 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

About this Talk

Join **Donna Nylander** and **Jim Lesko** during our next RTI Talk as they answer your questions about adapting the specific applications of RTI to fit within the early childhood culture and to address the developmental needs of young children. They will also offer tips based on lessons learned working with local schools to guide the development of a Pre-K RTI model, as well as policy recommendations to help build the state and local support needed to implement a successful model.

Transcript

Q **Deb Dunn**

As a K-12 charter school seeing more and more young children enter Kindergarten, seemingly not "school ready", what can we do to support Rtl and early intervention in Pre-K? (and in Kindergarten)

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**

One of the most important steps that can be taken around this inquiry is to make a connection with the early care and education community in your area. Invite discussions with community ECE practitioners to talk about how each of you can work together to prepare children to be successful as they begin their K-12 journey. Perhaps offer the ECE community opportunities for professional development on topics like exploring the state's early learning guidelines, how to strengthen children's early literacy skills, and how to integrate learning math skills in everyday activities. These types of supports help the strengthen Tier I concepts, which is a crucial step toward ensuring children have the learning opportunities they need to be successful.

Q **Wayne Myers**

Would like suggestions on making RTI transitions to Kindergarten so K teachers do not start the process over!

A **Donna Nylander**

To give you a little background, at the Valley View EC Center we have 250 students. Approximately 100 of those students transition to kindergarten. Our EC students feed into 10 elementary schools.

- First, elementary schools teams (kindergarten teacher, inclusion support teacher, and assistant principal) come to EC to observe (January-March) the students that will be attending their schools. They also met with individual teachers and discuss the core curriculum indicators of learning, universal screening and how the students' needs will be met in the kindergarten. We discuss how many minutes of support a student might need in Language & Literacy and Math. This process is

- A** done for IEP students and students at-risk. The data and documentation are very helpful. Knowing what interventions have been used and worked for the students has been helpful as well.
- Next, elementary staff attend annual reviews for IEP students (April-May), which provides a smooth transition and an opportunity to meet the parents. The discussions that happened in the winter are the foundations for the student to start the year.
 - Then, in the fall (first 4 weeks of school) the EC Center start the year with a 4 -days- a- week schedule so teachers can go to the kindergartens and support the teachers with the former EC students. The teachers say they are very prepared for the students who come from early childhood.

Q **Melisa Cellan**

According to the United States Department of Ed and OSEP.... "The IDEA does not require, or encourage, an LEA to use an RTI approach prior to a referral for evaluation or as part of determining whether a 3-, 4-, or 5-year old is eligible for special education and related services." How are states and districts proceeding with RTI in early childhood without blocking early intervention services, which are often essential for remediation? In many cases I wish these students could receive this critical early intervention without identification, thru an RTI model, however, there is no funding attached and districts don't have early childhood resources if there is no funding. That is how all our EC intervention and specialists are funded. Kinda backwards.....please discuss

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**

This is a valid question and one that calls for the broader field of early childhood education to address. In other arenas I have used the phrase ?response to instruction? and I must admit I have copied that from someone I overheard use the phrase but unfortunately I am unable to give the citation. That phrase has stuck with me. To have a great impact on a larger number of children, I believe we need to be doing a better job at helping practitioners to adapt/accommodate/modify their instructional practices to meet the individual developmental learning demands of children.

In the best of places practitioners become adept at providing instruction with fidelity and continuously adapt and modify instruction and practice (more small group and one-on-one engagement) to meet the individual needs of children. The instructional process becomes one of responding to the instructional needs of children, rather than only considering the children?s response to a particular and specific intervention. Instruction becomes a cyclical process with instruction being implemented, ongoing monitoring of children?s acquisition of skills, adapting and modifying instruction, and the cycle continues.

Some children will continue to need to receive specific and stronger support. However, if we can instead strengthen our general early childhood instructional practices through good professional development and strong administrative support and making available resources, then we can hopefully expect to see fewer children needing specific RTI support and stronger instructional practices supporting development.



Donna Nylander

Melisa, this is a standard question when discussing RTI. I would like to refer you to some written documents discussing this topic.

- The Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood dedicated their August 1, 2007 newsletter, *DEC Communicator*, to RTI in Early Childhood: An Emerging Practice.
- OSEP put out a memorandum discussing this topic, particularly about not holding off services for students from Headstart. That was disseminated in the fall of 2010.
- A Joint Position Statement on RTI with NAEYC/DEC/NHSA - This is in the development stages. Keep updated on the position statement on the Web site: [Response to Intervention in Early Childhood](#).



Elaine

Where do you start the intervention process when students have very little academic exposure?



Jim Lesko, Ed.D.

This is a very relevant question when thinking about young children in early childhood settings. As a part of our early RTI process with young children, one of the first questions we ask parents is how much opportunity has the child had in early childhood settings. We have made a decision that children having lacked the opportunity to spend time in quality settings first need ample time to be exposed to effective instruction practices before any decision is made about next steps.

It is critical to provide children with time in settings in which the curriculum is being implemented with sufficient fidelity and to monitor development through ongoing progress monitoring. After a time period, which we consider to be approximately 8 to 12 weeks, the team would look at the monitoring data and then make a determination if additional instructional intervention is needed or if it is simply a matter of continued exposure to effective instruction that will make the most impact on learning.



Elaine

What is the difference between RTI and special education's IEP individualized instructional program?



Jim Lesko, Ed.D.

A child with an IEP has already completed a comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation process to determine that he/she already has an identified disability. The team has made a determination that the curriculum is not impeding learning nor is making basic instructional accommodations helping with the learning process. The full evaluation process has identified the existence of a disability that requires special educational practices to support learning. The IEP has then been developed to identify the specific educational instructional strategies that will be used in the educational environment to support learning.

A When thinking about RTI we are looking at situations in which the child has yet to be identified as needing special education support. In RTI, the system is still examining if the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity to make sure it is not general educational practices impeding learning. Second, in RTI the system is also looking at the impact more intensive instructional support may have on learning to rule out the need for special education.

Q **Penny Dominici**
How do you pinpoint a deficit in children with very low language?

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**
Many questions come to mind with this inquiry. The key question is to determine if the "deficit" is due to low quality early experiences or a result of other issues impacting language development. Hart and Risley (1995) in their landmark analysis of early language experiences on longer term vocabulary development, (Meaningful Differences In the Everyday Experiences of Young Children), artfully lay out the impact low language interactions have on children's vocabulary.

An important step is to first determine if the low language is due to less than positive prior experiences. A second question to ask is if the deficit due to a change in primary language usage and expectations. A key question is this area would be determining if the low language is also present in the child's primary language, if that language is other than English. The answers to these questions will then direct the course for the next steps of intervention and instruction.

Q **Kam Matthews**
What kinds of assessment measures can be used to determine which Pre-K students need interventions?

A **Donna Nylander**
What is important is that the Tier 1 curriculum and programs is taught with integrity. There are many important components that should be in place for all students. Universal screening is an emerging early childhood practice (see the new program standards recently released by NAEYC). This is for academics and behavior. We believe that RTI is not just for academics. So before you can talk assessment measurements, you need to ask the following questions: is there a research-based curriculum used, is there a scope and sequence, a consistent daily routine, intentional planning and teaching used, teacher directed and child directed activities, embedding goals into centers, used of the state standards, parent involvement, field trips, adaptations and assessment from the curriculum, universal screening tool such as Preschool IGDI (Individual Growth and Development Indicators, available from the [Get it! Got it! Go! Web site](#) from University of Minnesota).

A You can use this tool to monitor process and rate of growth of students. We also use the Creative Curriculum Gold Assessment. The 38 Objectives for Development & Learning are implemented by the teachers for each student. The objectives focus on the following areas of development and learning: Social -Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math. We monitor the students' progress and rate of growth by completing the assessment three times a year. Once these assessment measures are analyzed, then it can be determined which students are in need of further interventions to make progress.

Q **Elaine Weil**
What research based progress monitoring tools are used at the pre-K level? Is there a specific curriculum recommended or approved for preschool RtI?

A **Donna Nylander**
This question is asked a lot by the early childhood community. One of the challenges of early childhood and RTI is that we are learning alongside the research. The What Works Clearinghouse is beginning to compile this information. Another suggestion is that you become familiar with the universities that are doing research on RTI. Also attend conferences such as Division for Early Childhood Conference and the Center for RTI in Early Childhood (CRTIEC) summit to learn what the experts are saying. Important Web sites to become familiar with:

- [CRTIEC](#)
- [RTI Action Network](#)
- [Response to Intervention in Early Childhood](#)
- [Recognition and Response](#)
- [Center for Social Emotional Foundation and Early Literacy \(CSEFEL\)](#)
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- [Council for Exceptional Children Division of Early Childhood](#)

I attended the second annual RTI Early Childhood Summit in October 2010, which was sponsored by the Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood. Presenters who are doing cutting edge research presented their work. The PowerPoint presentations are available at the [CRITEC Web site](#).

One particular presentation was given by Dr. Kathleen Roskos, Brandi Noll and Ruth Kaminski on Product Review Tools for Early Literacy Instructional Materials and Programs. In this presentation they describe a Preschool Curriculum Checklist, a tool for rating the strength of instructional design of early literacy curricula and the "Best Choice," a product review tool.

Another important intervention to use is the social emotional component as part of the curriculum. [The Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Literacy \(CSEFEL\)](#) is an excellent site. It offers 4 modules to provide Tier 1 support for students.

Q *Christina Biloh*

Do you suggest any specific state or federal funding sources available to support this initiative?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) replied in a [memorandum addressing the use of IDEA funds for RTI below kindergarten](#) that it is not appropriate to be using IDEA (Section 619) funds for RTI with children below kindergarten age. Given that directive from OSEP, states and local programs must identify alternative strategies to support RTI in early childhood settings. It is certainly possible, though challenging in these economic times, for states and local programs to funds RTI-like strategies. The resources funding state and local prekindergarten programs can be accessed in alternative ways to support RTI.

I see the most important strategy being professional development (PD) for practitioners involved in these programs. PD is needed around curriculum and instructional fidelity, how to implement effective performance-based assessment, collecting and analyzing classroom-based data, classroom organizational management around using small group and one-on-one teacher/child engagement, and embedding instructional targets across classroom routines is some of the most important PD topics that will help in settings. For children not in programs but where there may be a question about their development, I suggest accessing locally-funded prekindergarten programs as a setting for trying RTI-like strategies. If a child makes adequate gains then identifying funding sources to enroll that child in a community early education program is one alternative. If the child does not make adequate progress then a referral for a more comprehensive evaluation may be the most appropriate next step. It calls on practitioners to be creative in identifying alternatives to support children.

Q *Heidi Hubbard*

In many schools, the Pre-K RTI process follows the school age RTI requiring the 6 week tier 1/ 6 week tier 2/ 6 week tier 3 timeframe. While useful data is collected, in the developmental framework of early childhood, many opportunities are missed to address either specific or global needs. What do you see as the critical factors and differences between the school age and the Pre-K model?

A *Donna Nylander*

We have been implementing RTI practices since 2007. We are not experts, but we have learned a few things that might shed some light on your question. We do generally use the recommending timeframe for each tier. However, because there is not a lot of research on RTI in EC, we are continually assessing our Tier 1 programming and offering professional development for the staff. I like to say RTI stands for ?Really Terrific Instruction.? We need to enhance our practices in intentional teaching and dynamic assessment. We want to make sure that we are providing

A students with a core curriculum in academics and social emotional development. We look at the number of students that may not be making progress in the classroom. If 80% of the students are being successful, then we know the curriculum and instruction being delivered is effective. If we are not hitting that 80% target, then even though we have 6 weeks of data for a student who is struggling, we may provide support to the teacher to make sure that there is integrity in the curriculum and instruction.

The other thing that may be different is that RTI in EC is more of a flexible, fluid tiered model. The vision can be a dotted line between the tiers so that students can move between tiers depending on their skills or learning style. A student can be a Tier 3 student and need more intensive interventions for one particular skill or for a period of time, but that does not mean he is destined to be a Tier 3 student throughout his early childhood years. The similarity is that a core curriculum is taught with consistency and integrity. There is a dynamic assessment system and a problem-solving team that supports the teacher with Tier 2 and 3 students. The Valley View EC problem-solving team, called the TIPS (Targeted Intervention Problem-Solving) Team, meets monthly with teachers to talk about the data collection and documentation. Strategies and interventions are suggestions in ways to adapt and modify the curriculum and instruction. With Tier 3 students, we provide additional support with support staff and progress monitor weekly for rate of growth and progress.

Q **Kim Moore**

What research based interventions are you aware of that would support PK at tier 2 and 3?

A **Donna Nylander**

Kim, this is a frequently asked question from many early childhood professionals, teachers and researchers. We are learning alongside research in this area too. When thinking about Tier 2 & 3 interventions it is important to think about the individual students it is for. Our first step is that the teacher meets with the problem-solving team and shows the data and documentation on the needs of the student. Once we see the lack of progress or growth, we start strategizing. These suggestions are not so much a purchased researched-based intervention, but more of a best practice intervention. Here are a couple of examples that have been successful. Remember this is just a couple of examples.

- Raphael is a four year old, getting ready for kindergarten, who could not identify all the letters in his name. Louie needed Tier 3 Intensive Intervention: Each center in the class had specific activities for Raphael to identify letters in his name. At the block center letters were taped to blocks, at the sensory table he dug for letters in his name, at the house keeping center he baked cookies with the letters in his name, at the book center he identified letters in books, in music he chose songs that started with the letters in his name. The psychologist was in class everyday for 20 minutes to provide intention bombardment with letters in his name. The speech pathologist was in the classroom twice a week for an hour. The occupational therapist and the program

- A** coordinator also provided interventions. This type of intensive intervention was provided for 4 weeks. At the end Raphael could match, label, and identify the letters in his name.
- A Tier 2 intervention with a small group of students. Again the teacher brought the students and their data to a problem-solving meeting. The intervention was to have the students more engaged with shared book reading. One of the suggestions was to pre-read the story in a small group before it was read to the large group. Vocabulary and talking about the feelings of the characters were role played and the students became familiar with the story. Next the story was read in a large group. After 3 weeks of this activity, the small group of students started to answer questions and participate in large group discussions. They gained the skill and confidence to learn. Examples of interventions from the What Works Clearinghouse.
 - Dialogic Reading is an interactive shared picture book reading practice designed to enhance young children's language and literacy skills. During the shared reading practice, the adult and the child switch roles so that the child learns to become the storyteller with the assistance of the adult who functions as an active listener and questioner. Two related practices are reviewed in the WWC intervention reports on Interactive Shared Book Reading and Shared Book Reading. Dialogic Reading was found to have positive effects on oral language.
 - DaisyQuest is a software bundle that offers computer-assisted instruction in phonological awareness, targeting children aged three to seven years (or preschool to second grade). The instructional activities, framed in a fairy tale involving a search for a friendly dragon named Daisy, teach children how to recognize words that rhyme; words that have the same beginning, middle, and ending sounds; and words that can be formed from a series of phonemes presented separately, as well as how to count the number of sounds in words. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) also reviewed the effects of DaisyQuest on the beginning reading skills of children in kindergarten through third grade and the findings are reported in a separate WWC intervention report. DaisyQuest was found to have positive effects on phonological processing.

Q **Andja Marich**

Are you aware of any Recognition and Response programs in the Chicago area or Northwest Indiana. I piloted a program in our special education cooperative last year and modified it for this year. Most of the ideas were gathered from EC RTI documents I was able to gather. I have not been able to locate any facilities nearby that are implementing R & R yet. Thank you.

A **Donna Nylander**

Andja, there are a few programs in the suburbs near Chicago of which I am aware, including Indian Prairie District 204, Naperville District 203 and our program, Valley View District 365U Romeoville/Bolingbrook, IL.

I would also recommend you go to the Web site for the StarNet Statewide EC Professional Development System Region 2 to contact Kathy Slattery for information. Pam Reising Rechner, Senior Consultant at ISBE is another very good source and Brian Michalski, Director of the Illinois Resource Center/Early Childhood section will have information about schools implementing RTI in Preschool as well.

Q **Barbara Kamen**

How have you seen this model work? I am picturing training pre-school teachers through the school district and monitoring their progress using district personnel? Is that a model you have seen or used?

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**

We have several local education agencies (LEAs) that have implemented RTI models with their local community based early childhood (EC) programs. The LEAs have made a commitment to work collaboratively with local programs. Local EC programs make a commitment to work through strategies so that they can support RTI within. These models most often call on both programs to do some role release and role exchanges. LEAs take on the role of providing technical assistance and professional development to local programs, helping them problem solve what is needed to best support children. Local programs agree to reorganize and restructure how they implement instruction and learning.

Often teachers reorganize the classroom, change their routines, learn new strategies to embed small group times, acquire skills in teacher reflection to enhance problem solving, learn how to take data and use it for instruction. Most often all of this takes time because it is often an add-on to what individuals are already doing. What we have seen are great results for adults and children. We have seen many children demonstrate great potential for learning. We have also seen many adults grow professionally in many ways. The benefits have outweighed the initial time burdens and everyone has agreed it was a positive experience for all.

Q **Kim Riley**

What are the specific advantages to using RTI in early childhood settings compared to not using RTI in those settings?

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**

It would seem that the advantage to using a ?Response To Instruction? approach [a term I used in another response] would reflect upon practitioners that would now be adept at instructional planning, tuned into children?s developmental performance and using that information on an ongoing basis for instructional planning with all children in their respective learning settings. The result would be all children benefiting from the knowledge and skills of the practitioner.

The opposite would be children spending time in a setting where the practitioner treats all children as similar without regards to individual learning needs--both strengths and challenges. The result would likely be children not keeping pace with expectations and lacking the opportunity for extra experiences that would strengthen their learning process. Whereas a supportive environment reflecting responsive practices results in learning environments that support a diverse group of

A learners at all levels through a variety of learning modes.

Q *Kim Riley*

How would fidelity of implementation be ensured? What type of training would early childhood specialists require in order to properly implement RTI?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

This is always a challenging yet engaging element to any tiered intervention process. I think that fidelity is most critical to Tier 1, where there is less attention to intervention and more focus on the essential practices around ongoing implementation of curriculum and instruction. There are a few published curriculums that have implementation checklists and those are a good start. In my state we have created checklists linked to the state's early learning guidelines. The checklists are structured to enable a practitioner to determine if they are providing instructional situations that allow children to be engaged in learning opportunities to acquire the skills they need to be successful (i.e., skills aligned to later kindergarten grade level expectations).

The question about training is broad. Training needs depend upon the expectations and responsibilities of each individual involved in the response process. Classroom teachers will need professional development about general child development, assessment, progress monitoring strategies, data analysis, interpretation of data into instructional strategies, classroom management to name a few. What I think is important to consider is that the process is not something expected of only the setting practitioner. It should be a process that involves a team of individuals, which can include the teacher, assistant teacher and center director or the teacher and instructional support team. All individuals involved in the process need to understand how to use assessment and instructional knowledge as a part of the broader instructional decision-making process. It is not a simple process, though it is a framework very doable by a committed group of individuals to ensuring that all children learn.

Q *Peggy Randolph*

How long should RTI be used in the preschool setting before deciding to refer a child for more testing or dismissing the child?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

There is no hard science to help answer this question. It is more a matter of using good professional judgment that includes collecting and using monitoring data along with effective team decision making. Previously we have talked about looking at the child's prior experiences as well as their current developmental levels as important elements as a part of the decision-making process. One also has to consider the element of fidelity of instruction and then look at rate of progress. From there, the team considers both intensity of intervention and type [small group and

A one-on-one] and then again asks if the child is making progress at a stronger rate and ?catching up.?

We have been using similar tier time periods of 6-8 weeks and looking at weekly monitoring data as a part of the decision-making process. A child coming from a poor prior experience background and low development may require more time for intervention to make a determination. A child coming from a rich background of experiences and making little to no substantial rate of progress may require less time to determine more assistance may be needed.

Q **Carla Heintz**
What are the essential pieces of RTI at the early childhood level?

A **Donna Nylander**
Here is the Valley View understanding of the essential components though research from the work of CRTIEC and Recognition and Response.

Essential Component 1- Tiered Model of service. Involves screening ALL children & monitor the progress of those who require targeted interventions. Universal screening within the first 2 months (NAEYC 2005) and 2 more times on a set schedule after that (winter, spring). Students have intentional instruction and interventions that match their needs.

TIER 1- Universal Instruction - MOST children meet criteria (approximately 80%)

TIER 2- Targeted Interventions- SOME children (approximately 15%) may need targeted interventions, along with progress monitoring (e.g. every 8-10 weeks).

TIER 3- Intensive Instruction - A FEW children (approximately 5%) will need more individualized interventions & receive more frequent progress monitoring (e.g. 4-6 weeks).

Essential Component 2- Professional Development/Leadership Structure- Early Childhood Programs need to offer teachers opportunities to learn about RTI. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) need to be developed to offer opportunities to learn about this initiative. Identify areas of need, such as deciding on a research-based curriculum, a social-emotional program for students with challenging behavior, and an assessment system that assess the curriculum on an ongoing bases. Everyone should be involved in the process. Professional development should not be a one shot workshop, but one topic for an intense period of time. At Valley View training was provided on the Center for Social Emotional Foundation and Early Literacy (CSEFEL) model for 2 years to build a quality Tier 1 foundation for working with students with challenging behavior. There are 6 staff in each PLC Core Group. The universal Leadership Team has representatives from each PLC Core Group that leads the school community decision making.

A Essential Component 3: Evidence based practices - Early Childhood beliefs and practices are aligned with core principals of RTI. A high-quality program with highly qualified teachers is a priority. Using best practices that are developmentally and individually appropriate are an important part of the model. A research based curriculum is important as well.

Essential Component 4: Develop a Problem-Solving Approach A problem-solving approach is essential to support teachers in the RTI process. Teachers will no longer be working in isolation. They will look to support staff and members identified on a problem-solving team to assist them with analyzing data and strategize to support students who need more intensive interventions. Data will be collected consistently by teacher at specified intervals. Build a collaborative relationships with support staff and redefine the roles of Psychologist, Social Worker, speech pathologist, occupational and physical therapists so there are more opportunities to intervene with identified students. Applying the problem-solving model created by University of Kansas (CRTIEC) is a very helpful model for teachers to understand the process.

Essential Component 5: Accountability for Student Outcomes Early Childhood teachers are being asked to take responsibility for student outcomes. Through the RTI process it will assist teachers in the data collection and documentation process through screening and assessment tools. Accountability for student learning is the expectation and goal that will give students the tools to be successful lifelong learners.

Q **Michele Simpson**

Are there any states presently using RTI for preschool/pre-k successfully?

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**

I went to the website for the [Center for RTI in Early Childhood](#) to respond to this question. The Center did a survey of state policymakers inquiring the "state" of RTI in state and local programs. From the survey it appears that there a handful of states with statewide policies. There also appears to be a handful of states where RTI in early childhood is happening in local jurisdictions. I would encourage those interested to go to the Center's website where there is much information about RTI in early childhood ? the Center is a good resource.

Q **Michaela Duggan**

In what ways are parents encouraged to be involved with RTI in early childhood?

A **Donna Nylander**

Right now my experience has been that we need to educate the parents about what is RTI. Involvement should be similar to what happens now in a high-quality early childhood program. We begin the year with a curriculum night and we discuss the universal screening we will be using to

A assess the children. This is a way to start exposing parents to the terminology they will be hearing from teachers. We also provide parents with reports about their child's progress from the curriculum assessment at parent teacher conferences (fall), in the winter, and again in the spring. Teachers continue to communicate with the parents on an ongoing bases. Parents are also on the Building Leadership Team to offer their perspective to programming.

Q **Linda Culotti**

Our school district pre-K program has been involved with an Early Reading First Grant. We have been doing Rtl with some of our students. We would like know if you use the Creative Curriculum Individual Checklists in any manner in the Rtl process?

A **Donna Nylander**

We are using the Creative Curriculum Gold Assessment online. This has been very valuable. We have used the data from the assessment tool along with the IGDI data and have analyzed the information to see which students need additional interventions in small-group instruction or intense individual instruction. We also are able to use this data for school-wide programming. If there is something that many students are lacking or needing to learn, then we target that concern school-wide (such as purchased rhyming materials, games).

Q **Donna Friedeck**

Do you recommned using a screener in Pre-K? Is so, when and what do you recommend using?

A **Jim Lesko, Ed.D.**

Screeners are an essential part of any comprehensive preschool program and become an essential part of an RTI in early childhood model. It is important for practitioners to know which children are on target in their development and which children are not on target in all the critical domains of development. The screeners will need to be used periodically as children develop in a program because children can at times "go off target." It is from the list of children that are not on target that the practitioners can then begin to take a closer look at what is going on for those individual children.

Q **Diana Z. Gage**

Please deliniate the Tiers of interventions (Tier I, II, III) as you see them in developing emotional self-control in the preschool age population. I am referring to severe cases where other children and teachers are being injured by a child's display of emotion, or emotional reaction to requirements of safety and security

A *Donna Nylander*

The RTI process works for behavior as well as academics. What we found is that using a model like the Center for Social Emotional Foundation and Early Literacy's (CSEFEL) starts with what should be in place in Tier 1. It is important that everyone involved with the students is consistent in Tier 1 practices and philosophy. This also includes school-wide expectations. Once that is in place, less students will be in Tier 2, with these students more small group instruction is provided and repetition of the expectations are consistently taught. Keep the data and if there are a few Tier 3 students (and we have had them) that's when a problem-solving team supports the teacher and weekly progress monitoring occurs. At this point it is extremely important that the parents, caretakers, and even bus drivers understand the expectations for this student. A Behavior Support Plan may need to be written for this student too.

Q *Diana Z. Gage*

We are committed to developing children's abilities, including self-control. Our program does not use traditional reinforcers as stickers and food bits. We aim to develop the relationship between caregiver and child, to work from developing the ability to attach (attachment), to developing initiative and self-control. As a quality pre-school environment, we intend on improving behaviors through relationships. Still, do you think that FBA assessment is appropriate in situations where behaviors are severe? As I understand FBA's (Functional Behavioral Assessments), the focus is "behavioral" not "relational behavioral"... what do you think about the usefulness of FBAs in preschool programs?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) are a natural extension to the RTI process. FBAs can be considered an ongoing part of the progress monitoring and data collection processes, which are integral to RTI in any setting - if they are structured to be a part of the continuous performance review process. I think that FBAs can lend themselves to being used in natural settings, where it is often best to support learning.

Q *Jodeen Lord*

Can RtI successfully be implemented in an early childhood classroom where the teaching philosophy is play based learning?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

Absolutely ? remember that RTI is about having the practitioner adapting/accommodating/modifying instruction based upon the performance demonstrated needs of the children in the classroom. So if a child is demonstrating needs in the social and emotional area, the practitioner would be planning for intentional activities to be occurring in the learning centers to support that particular child. Play-based learning reflects an approach in which the

A practitioner is planning intentional activities that support learning and is a natural fit for an RTI model.

Q *kerrie ramsdell*

How are related services being included in the EC RTI? With more evidence supporting early motor red flags for neuro disabilities, like ASD, how are you including those domains (motor and self-care) to support language and early literacy with OT, PT, ST?

A *Donna Nylander*

This is a great question. I have said before redefining the roles of support staff is extremely important. The traditional roles do not lend themselves to RTI practices. My firsthand experience at Valley View has the "motor" staff doing a variety of things. One example is that they offer motor groups to all students at least once a week. They also are providing RTI observations, recommendations, and supports to the classroom. The students do not need to be on their schedule but are on their "radar." They also provide consultation to the classroom. Regarding does support staff support literacy, their services are all push in. They are part of the classroom. Also when they decide minutes for a student with an IEP, they add consultation as well as direct minutes. We also provide scheduled opportunities for the support staff to meet with classroom teams two times a month. The occupational therapist and speech language pathologist are also part of the problem-solving team.

Q *Prema Rao*

What adaptations in the regular pre-k curriculum would you suggest if RTI has to be implemented at this level?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

I do not see, in general, that any adaptations to the regular curriculum are needed. As Donna and I have indicated in several responses, the most critical piece to RTI in early childhood is the focus on Tier 1 and taking careful consideration to ensuring the curriculum and instructional practices are being implemented with fidelity. It becomes difficult to determine if a particular child is not learning if the curriculum is not being implemented as expected. It is only after particular children have been identified that the practitioner would then be expected to adapt or modify individual instructional practices to support individual children's learning. Those adaptations might be specific instructional targets or adaptations to the teacher's organizational management of the classroom to accommodate the need to individual learning times for children.

Q *Susan M*

Q When instruction is appropriately differentiated for individual children, does the need for Tier 2 and 3 interventions decrease? Should professional development focus on this instead of 'new' instructional supports?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

I think you have targeted a good question. I see Tier 2 and 3 as differentiated instructional strategies - what is different is the intensity. What I see as helpful is to help practitioners learn how to take and use data to determine if their differentiated strategies are helpful in supporting learning. I also see it as helpful for practitioners to learn how to manage their classroom routines so they can integrate these alternative instructional practices into the regular classroom day. Refocusing PD towards several of these efforts will be helpful to the overall process.

Q *Sandy*

I find that early childhood folks see RtI to be developmentally inappropriate. There's a long running battle. What's the answer?

A *Donna Nylander*

The answer is that RTI can be and should be done appropriately with preschool age children. DAP is still the best practice model. We still use all the quality principles of early childhood, what is different is that there is more intentional teaching embedded into the daily routine, there is a research-based curriculum, and teachers now have universal screening tools and curriculum-based tools to know which children need more interventions and who is learning in the rich Tier 1 environment for all students.

Q *Pam Nichols*

Will there eventually be any funding tied into and available to create effective RTI opportunities?

A *Jim Lesko, Ed.D.*

I believe that if we think creatively there are funds available on a professional development level that can help to support enhancing Tier 1 instruction. We need to be helping our state's professional development (PD) system focus PD on issues such as instructional planning, intentional teaching, performance assessment, assessment to instructional planning and classroom organizational management - as all elements that can support strong Tier 1 models. If we can do that, then we will have made great strides toward allowing for good RTI opportunities to occur. We should also be thinking about how states and LEAs can use other funds like Title 1 and state prekindergarten programs as environments that can be used for intervention response situations.

Q Corina McEntire

How can early childhood services (i.e. preschool, home visits, parent groups, etc.) apply a RTI framework to programming?

A Donna Nylander

RTI does not change what best practices are for early childhood. These are still important in a quality early childhood program. Home visits are still offered and with an RTI model you will have more specific information to share with parents and with continued progress monitoring home visits will be valuable. Parent groups, as well as having parents on leadership teams, are valuable.

Q Megan

Are there tools (reliable and valid) you would recommend for determining if a student has had "less than positive prior experiences"?

A Jim Lesko, Ed.D.

I have found that interview formats are a good strategy for arriving at this information. A colleague of mine, Verna Thompson at the Delaware Department of Education, has created a caregiver interview questionnaire that helps to arrive at some of this information. It is also helpful to identify what early education and care sites the child has been in and look at those sites' quality rating - again to give some information about prior experiences.

Q Ellen Dotts

How do we approach Head Start coordinators that are concerned about us using RTI to slow the identification process and the impact on the 10% mandated IEP enrollment?

A Jim Lesko, Ed.D.

It becomes necessary to engage coordinators in the discussion that RTI is a part of the overall child find and evaluation process. There is the ethical side of the process, that cautions us to act in a manner that identifies children that need special education. RTI in EC provides us with effective strategies to see where environment and early experiences have impacted development - it is these factors that have often resulted in inaccurate classification of children. RTI also helps teachers to become stronger practitioners as they learn new skills in instruction and management of classrooms. Talking with coordinators is most critical if doing the right thing for children is the priority - and each entity has their own compliance requirements to need to be addressed.

That concludes our RTI Talk for today. Thanks to everyone for the thoughtful questions and thanks to our

experts, Dr. Jim Lesko and Ms. Donna Nylander, for their time today.

Related Reading from RTINetwork.org:

- [RTI in Pre-Kindergarten](#)
- [Recognition and Response](#)
- [RTI in EC/Preschool Settings Blog](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood](#)
- [Research Works: Tools for Improving Child Development](#)
- [Office of Special Education Program's January 2011 memo](#)