

## Using RTI to Improve Preschool Outcomes

December 13, 2011 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

### About this Talk

THE TALK IS CONCLUDED.

SCROLL BELOW FOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

AppleTree Institute in Washington DC has been implementing RTI in preschool settings since 2007 to support the development of language, social-emotional, and foundational academic skills of three and four year-old children. Join Mary Anne Lesiak and Lydia Carlis as they explore the application of multi-tiered systems of support in early childhood settings and answer your questions about key issues. Ms. Lesiak and Dr. Carlis will offer specific tips for how school teams can work together to introduce and sustain RTI at the preschool level.

Read more about [Mary Anne Lesiak](#) and [Lydia Carlis](#).

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### Transcript



**Noelani Mussman**

I'm interested in benchmarks for determining the need to move to the next tier of support. I'm also interested in information about RTI for behavior and social emotional needs.



**Lydia Carlis**

Hi, Noelani! A first support is to use your state's early learning standards to determine benchmarks. When states develop standards, they work with developmental and content experts to determine what children should know and be able to do by the end of a certain grade (or age) level across the domains. In DC, the Social Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning standards are a good start. We have then used the process of backwards mapping to determine what prerequisite skills, or steps, a child would need to master to get to the standard by the end of pre-k. We also use a blend of nationally normed data and criterion referenced data, so that we know how children are performing against their national peers as well as how they are making gains in comparison to their classroom and school peers in making determinations about tiers. We aggregate data across years so we have benchmarks, or expected performance, across multiple years of students. Using this method, we can understand how likely it is that a student who began at level A would reach level E by the end of the year, or by a particular quarter, on any particular assessment. This is critical information to help teachers in making informed decisions using their current year's data. By comparing data within a school year, we can help teachers recognize if a particular child's performance is a trend or an outlier. If several children in a teacher's classroom are demonstrating less than expected growth, it is likely the teacher should focus on differentiating instruction at Tier

**A** 1. If only a few children are not performing at the expected levels, the teacher would consider more targeted or intensive supports for the area of deficit. The process is the same for behavioral concerns, but it is even more important to define our metrics since most teachers will agree on how to measure if a student knows his or her ABCs and numbers, but are less likely to automatically have the same understanding of what ?follows directions? looks like (smile)! In all cases, we try to remain focused on supporting teachers and improving outcomes for children.

**Q** **Tonya Pickens**

Is there a free online source to use for recording data in all Pre-K Domains, or assessed by standard, that will produce charts to track student progress?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**

Hi, Tonya! We referenced ChartDog 2.0 as a possible support in another response. You might also look at the [State University of New York?s Oswego website](#), which has a page created to help school psychologists track students? progress on curriculum-based measures. The great thing about using Excel templates is that with a little tweaking and a lot of care not to delete important formulas, you can customize a data collection method specific to your needs pretty quickly. As standards vary by state, I am not aware of a single tool that will map data for all pre-k domains across all standards for a particular state.

**Q** **Michelle Robertson**

How are RTI strategies in preschool being aligned with Kindergarten? Are the strategies similar or different?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

Hi Michelle! By strategies, I am assuming that you mean intervention strategies (helping children learn) as opposed to process strategies (how you hold the data-review meeting, for example). I think the alignment strategies and challenges for RTI are similar for other aspects of learning. For most folks implementing RTI in preschool, the goal is to ensure that children are ready for kindergarten across all domains. That requires that we (the preschool contingent) understand the ?demands? of kindergarten. Academic standards alignment is obviously important, but there are often other things that children must master in order to be successful in K. Some schools in our area require kindergarten children to work independently in their seat or at a center. This is something that we can help children learn to do. Getting this kind of knowledge about local kindergartens often falls on preschool teachers, staff, and parents who often must actively seek out this information.

One of the differences between RTI in Kindergarten/elementary school and preschool has to do with the availability of standardized intervention curriculum. Generally, there are two types of RTI approaches, standard protocol and problem solving (see [Approaches to RTI](#)). Briefly, the standard protocol approach involves implementation a prescribed program or set of materials (Voyageur as

**A** a reading intervention, for example) while the problem-solving model involves bringing a team to develop a unique set of research-based strategies and materials. While some elementary grades have access to standardized protocols, there are very few that exist for the prekindergarten level. Generally, all pre-K RTI uses the problem-solving approach. In my practice, I would say another difference between RTI in preschool and kindergarten involves the target. In preschool, we have specific standards around social emotional development, self-regulation, approaches to learning. Our field does a very good job of recognizing the importance of these domains. In our setting, we have done some really great things using the RTI framework to help children with behavior. In elementary school, the focus often shifts towards traditional academic domains such as reading and math. These are important, of course. But in elementary school, children who are struggling with behavior are often dealt with through traditional school discipline strategies rather than through the instructional process.

**Q** **Jose Catasus**

What would be the most practical yet economic way for teacher in Pre-K to document progress monitoring?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

This is not an endorsement, but we have found Google Docs to be the nexus of practical and economical. Google Docs is a free cloud-based application that allows real-time sharing of documents to anyone with Internet access. Google Docs has a spreadsheet application that is similar to a more popular, expensive one that we all likely have on our computers. Someone with strong knowledge of spreadsheet programs can save formulas and benchmarks result in nicely color-coded tables automatically as the data are entered. These data can also be turned into graphs, but that takes someone to actually do it. Teachers do not need a strong knowledge of spreadsheets to enter the data, just a link and Internet access. I have not used it, but there is a tool called [Chart Dog 2.0](#) that is designed specifically to make charts for RTI. It looks a little more challenging, but could provide a much more sophisticated graph.

**Q** **Leigh Rohde**

What are assessment tools (besides IGDIs and GRTR) are being used in preschool?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

The selection of assessment tools in preschool is very small, but growing. Based on the tools that you have named, it looks like you are searching for screening / progress monitoring tools for early literacy. The PALS Pre-K from the University of Virginia is one that quickly comes to mind that is not on your list. One resource that really helped inform our thinking about assessment is Dr. Natalie Rathvon. In her book *Early Reading Assessment*, she provides a wonderful overview about the purposes of assessment and how assessments should vary based on their purposes. While the book is focused on reading assessment, the discussion of assessment would be helpful to anyone interested in assessment in general. If you know what you want to measure and how you want to

**A** measure it, [SEDL has a reading assessment database](#) that includes Pre-K.

**Q** **Latashia Scott**

How do you begin the process of implementing RTI into Early Childhood Settings?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

Very methodically! RTI implementation asks parents, teachers, administrators - basically everyone connected to your program - to change something they are doing now. If it's difficult or if people don't clearly understand the need for change, then it's not likely to be successful. You want to make sure that you get lots of people together who share your vision for RTI. The National Center for Learning Disabilities published a document called [Roadmap to Pre-K RTI](#) which is available on the RTINetwork.org website. Near the back maybe around page 20 there is a process guide for implementing a pre-K RTI program and a program readiness assessment. These could be good documents to get you started.

**Q** **Edris Harrell**

What RTI strategies have you found particularly helpful for ELL students?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**

Hi, Edris! At AppleTree, we believe it's important that our teachers understand that "good teaching is good teaching!" We also want them to understand how using specific strategies strategically can be especially helpful for ELL students. Barbara R. Foorman and Joseph Torgesen (2001) put it this way - to meet the needs of children most at risk of reading failure, the same instructional components are relevant but they need to be made "more explicit and comprehensive, more intensive, and more supportive" in small-group or one-on-one formats. As early childhood professionals, it is also heartening to know that the research and best practices that have informed special education and English as second language instruction are shared with early childhood research and best practices. So, we focus on supporting teachers' intentional use of several strategies common in early childhood research on developmentally appropriate practice that are also best practice for English language learners: Inclusion, which provides opportunities for ongoing support through peer modeling; Multi-sensory instruction Thematic or concept-based instruction Contextualized instruction; Scaffolding; Small, flexible grouping; Differentiated instruction; Positive behavior management ;Focus on scientifically based reading research (phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, letter ID, comprehension, vocabulary, emergent writing); Repeated exposure/practice Intentional Dialogue. By beginning with training teachers to implement these practices with quality for all children, we are in a much better place to help them strategically focus one or a few of these strategies with specific students through instruction that is "more explicit and comprehensive, more intensive, and more supportive" in small-group or one-on-one formats.

**Q** **Tracy**  
How does RtI fit with community based 4K programs?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**  
Tracy, you made me do some homework! I was not familiar with 4K programs prior to receiving this question, so thank you for bringing what looks to be an important service option for children and families to my attention. From my limited reading, it seems that across possible formal community-based program settings, the constant is a licensed pre-K teacher. This would imply specific training and coursework in areas such as teaching exceptional children and positive behavior supports, along with some instruction on human development. This is important foundational knowledge to support teachers' ability to implement a response to intervention program. Even the most trained and skilled teacher will need some support and professional development. An RTI framework should work well in a community-based 4K program if teachers are provided with adequate training and resources to implement the program, and parents and families are educated on the RTI process and their rights related to special education, as well as how they can partner with the program to maximize supports for their child. The decision to ensure a highly qualified teacher in 4K classrooms, regardless of setting, is a foundational step to a successful RTI approach.

**Q** **Leeann Weigman**  
What screening tools might you suggest in the area of fine motor development?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**  
Leeann, it can be so difficult to measure areas of learning outside of literacy and math! Fortunately, more there are some formal assessment tools that recognize fine motor development as an important area for which to screen. The Texas Department of Education has aggregated a list of motor development assessments, which includes an annotated bibliography and summarizes the information in table format, in [TARGET: Texas Guide for Effective Teaching, Motor Assessment](#). Portions of some formal screening measures include a fine motor development component, such as the Denver Developmental Screening Test II (DDST-II) and Brigance. If you are looking for a more informal tool, the Virginia Department of Education has created a [fine and gross motor developmental screening](#), and basic interpretation parameters, which is available for free online.

**Q** **Patricia McCarthy**  
How can this be used to design good 504 plans?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**  
Patricia, 504 plans definitely fit into the framework of an RTI model! By focusing on ongoing data collection related to students' response to instruction or interventions, a school team can make informed decisions about the strategies that may be most effective for a student. I have not encountered 504 plans in preschool, though, because young children are still gaining

**A** self-regulation and language, so any developmental impairments are likely to have significant impact on their ability to access the curriculum in a meaningful way. That said, if a 504 plan is warranted, using the problem-solving approach or decision-making framework that is common to student support teams and multidisciplinary teams, staff can design, implement, evaluate and revise a student's 504 plan to make sure it is meeting the child's needs. A good 504 plan, like a good Tier 2 plan or IEP, is a living document that will reflect the latest data on student performance and response to intervention or accommodations, in the case of a 504.

**Q** **Kay**

Can you give some guidelines when RTI is used as a precursor to qualifying for a program?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**

This is tough one, Kay! In our work in charter schools, RTI cannot be used as qualification for acceptance into a program - students are randomly selected for participation in our programs based on a formal lottery system with date of birth as the only qualifier, regardless of tier classification. So, this is a difficult question for us to respond to. Based on AppleTree's mission to close the achievement gap for children before they enter kindergarten, however, our ultimate goal is to serve students most at risk for later academic failure and to provide a high quality education to all children regardless of risk. So, we would love to support as many students who need additional support as possible! For programs that have discretion regarding entry criteria, we would encourage them to think about their mission, assess the skills and competencies of their teaching staff to ascertain the program's ability to serve students whose backgrounds align with that mission, and determine the gaps between your goals and your current resources. Next, partner with someone who can help you develop a plan to address those gaps and commit to provide ongoing training and support for teachers to meet the needs of all students.

**Q** **Pam May**

What should be the longest time a child should stay on each Tier before an evaluation is done. I am speaking of the child with some high needs. Can a child skip RTI and be evaluated?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**

Hi, Pam! Universal screening and regular progress monitoring is an integral part of a quality RTI framework. However, I believe you are asking about formal evaluations that would be ordered through a multidisciplinary team (MDT) when a child is suspected of having a disability. A parent, teacher, or other school official may request a formal evaluation at any time. The multidisciplinary team would determine the need for an evaluation, based on available data sources. So, RTI when done well should actually support the MDT process by providing data to use in determining the need for additional assessments. At our schools, when a child is referred to MDT, we immediately put a Tier 2 plan in place that runs simultaneously with the MDT process of formal evaluations, if ordered. This way, we are able to use general education data on a child's response to instruction in the area of targeted concern as an important source of data to inform the process. In addition,



**A** the MDT and initial IEP process can take months before a determination is even made, so implementing Tier 2 supports during the MDT process ensures the child is receiving targeted, differentiated instruction during this sometimes long process. So, we do not view the processes as dichotomous, but harmonious, especially for children with high levels of need! In RTI, the arrow of services points up, meaning that to the maximum extent classroom teachers should still provide high quality Tier 1 and Tier 2 (general education support) even if a child also needs Tier 3 (individualized education) to meet his or her needs. RTI does not stop once a child has an IEP, rather an IEP is one important part of a comprehensive RTI system. And, regardless of which tier a child enters RTI supports, we believe a school should make every effort to implement best practices across tiers before, during, and after a formal evaluation process is completed. To answer another part of your question, most of the literature we have read has shown 6-week cycles to be pretty common in RTI. Within that six weeks, data are collected at least weekly for academic concerns, and typically at least daily, or even more frequently throughout the day, for behavior concerns. These data help to inform if the intervention being implemented is effective, and supports the need for changes to intensity, frequency, or duration of the intervention to maximize effectiveness. Decisions about changes to an existing plan might be made bi-weekly, so the team has time to see if the student is adequately responding to the instructional interventions in place.

**Q** **Sheldon. H. Horowitz, Ed.D.**

I shared the announcement of this RTI Talk with a number of people and almost all of them wondered aloud about how difficult a proposition Pre-K RTI would be, not for children who presented as being "at risk" for struggle with learning, but in general. One person described the Pre-K world as a "wild west" experience, where the majority of programs were "shooting from the hip" when it comes to adhering to a curriculum or collecting any sort of data. What would you say to these folks who seem to question the importance of Tier I instruction for these very young learners?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**

Thank you for your question, Sheldon! This may be the perception because as we mentioned in our responses to Michelle and Andrea, there are fewer standard protocol interventions available for early childhood, meaning that teachers have to use the problem-solving approach. I would say to your colleagues, however, that the major difference between a research-based problem-solving approach and a standard protocol approach is in the source of the intervention. In both models, all interventions must have a plan of implementation, criteria for successful response, and assessment to monitor progress. Also in both models, data collection and analysis are critical components. I'm sure your colleagues would concede that not all standard protocol interventions have been demonstrated effective, and not all effective standard protocol interventions are implemented with fidelity across all settings. And, shooting from the hip is still possible with a standard protocol intervention? a teacher having access to a standard intervention and a teacher using that intervention as written are not always synonymous... So, practitioner implementation, or fidelity of implementation, is still a key factor in both models. There is a definite structure to either a problem-solving approach or a standard protocol approach. As more research is developed and

**A** disseminated in early childhood RTI, more standard protocol interventions should become available to support practitioners in their work. As with elementary educators, however, teachers should always evaluate the potential effectiveness of a standard intervention with their population of students and for their students' specific needs. The idea behind RTI is that one size fits all instruction is not effective for all children. Therefore, all teachers should be encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of any intervention for their own students through ongoing data collection, whether an intervention was "shot from the hip" or developed and tested in a Research I university lab (smile).

**Q** **Kathy Filipiak**  
What assessment tools do you rely on to track the progress of preschoolers?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**  
Hi Kathy, The answer to your question depends on the domain. For language and literacy, we have used the IGDI's, the Get Ready to Read!, and some subtests from the PALS Pre-K. For math and social-emotional development, we haven't found anything to implement consistently. AppleTree was awarded an i3 grant from the Department of Education last year. As part of the grant, we are piloting a program that includes standards-based progress monitoring instruments for early literacy and math. Early validation data on our math tool, administered to over 600 students last year at three points throughout last year's pilot, are extremely promising! Our tool was demonstrated to be highly predictive of students' year-end performance on our standardized math assessment, the Test of Early Mathematics Ability (TEMA). We are piloting the language and literacy tool this year, and hope to see strong relationships to our standardized language and literacy assessments. We have not developed a formal social-emotional progress monitoring tool, but have developed and are piloting a social emotional screener this year, which we hope to validate against the Teacher-Child Rating Scale, a nationally normed social-emotional tool we use as part of our i3 performance measures, that provides information on about student task orientation, behavior control, and peer social skills.

**Q** **Lolita Short**  
What is your opinion on using parents/guardians to implement a period of intervention during the evaluation process? Can they be sufficiently trained in one day to administer the strategies with the expectation of children making significant progress in a six week period?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**  
Thank you for bringing up this important topic, Lolita. In general, we have been successful in getting parents to implement parts of intervention plans at home to go along with interventions that are happening at the school. We begin by putting information about RTI into our parent handbook and principals review the process with parents face-to-face at beginning of year parent handbook meetings. Parents are so important in the lives of young children and one of our goals is to help parents understand how they can support their children's learning. We think this is



**A** especially important for parents who may not have had very positive experiences with schools when they were students. Teachers share all children's progress with parents regularly through informal conversations, parent-teacher conferences, and regular progress reports. Due to this earlier communication, parents are generally aware of any concerns prior to beginning the Tier 2 process. We formally notify all parents that their child may benefit from Tier 2 of the RTI process, and review the steps of RTI from the parent handbook, as soon as we begin a data collection process to inform Tier 2 and invite them to participate in the Tier 2 planning process. Interventions are delivered in the classroom and the parents are asked if they are willing to try some things at home. Most parents are very willing. It is important to tailor the intervention so that it works for the family and is a positive experience. For example, if a student is having behavioral difficulties at school, one of the interventions that may be selected is a social story that features the child having success at school in a specific area of difficulty in words and pictures. A copy of the social storybook can be sent home with the family so that they can enjoy a quiet, cozy reading of the social story together. It reinforces the desired behavior and hopefully gives the parent the opportunity to view their child as successful!

**Q** **Pam VanFaasen**  
What types of systems are preschools using to take data on behavior?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**  
Hi Pam! I'm not sure what you mean by "systems," but I can describe what we do when we are taking data on behavior. The first thing that we do is establish data around the behavior norms for the entire class. We do this because we want to make sure that a strong Tier 1 is in place and to establish norms for the entire class so we can better determine an outlier. We do this by having someone take data on specific, observable, and measurable behaviors for all students in a classroom. We have typically started with event recording during specific components of the day that previous data have demonstrated to be most problematic—teacher-directed time! We also collect some data during independent activities, such as free choice centers and recess, to have a comparison for how children behave during different types of learning activities. When children receive a consequence for negative behavior, we use a modified ABC form to document which rule the child had difficulty following and how much time it took for the child to return to his or her active learning experience, with the goal being one minute. Data are housed electronically in spreadsheets that are set up to help teachers see their classroom's range of scores (highest and lowest), the average score, and the median score (the score at which half of the students scored higher and half scored lower). These "at a glance" tools are useful for teachers making decisions about how to support behavior.

**Q** **a volunteer Pre-K mom**  
I work part time in the Pre-K program where both of my children went to school when they were younger. The idea of Pre-K RTI is great and I think it would benefit all kids if this type of approach was taken from the very beginning of their school experience. But how can we (the director, the

**Q** full-time teachers, me and the other part-timers) learn how to do this well? Any online courses you can recommend? Any videos to watch? Any other suggestions?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

Hi! First of all, thank you volunteering, especially now that your children are older. Implementing RTI requires lots of cooperation and coordination. Proper implementation will impact everyone. It is good to get as many folks on board as possible. Strong leadership from your program's director or instructional leader is really key. Someone knowledgeable about RTI and respected in your preschool community is necessary. Also, depending on the governance model (private, school-based, community-based, co-op) it would be helpful to get board members, owners, and other folks informed and excited. The RTI Action Network has excellent resources to help folks talk about [adopting and implementing RTI](#). The teachers and staff should be involved too. You may want to suggest organizing a professional learning community to read and discuss adopting the model over a few months. The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement has helpful information on [Professional Learning Communities](#). Once you have some agreement, call on local resources to ensure that your implementation works in context. Try reaching out to the local elementary school principal and see if they are doing RTI. To enhance alignment and increase the numbers of children ready for K, principals may be helpful in thinking about how this could work. If you are not in a school-based program and your school district has an early ed program, leaders from those programs may be helpful too. You may also want to explore the local university or community college. There may be folks in the education, human development, psychology departments who are interested in supporting this type of work.

**Q** **Andrea Thomas-Harris**

How does the recognition and response of RTI at the Pre-School level differ from the Elementary school level?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

Basically, from my perspective, it doesn't differ all that much. Both models use varying levels of research-based instruction and data to ensure that all children learn. I think some elementary schools have advantages in funding and staffing. Some preschools have advantages in that they generally attend to a broader array of domains and are more comfortable in engaging families. Of course, these are broad over-generalizations! One practical difference is the number of scripted interventions available. Elementary practitioners have a much wider array of standard protocol interventions at their disposal. More researchers, such as those at the [Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood \(CRTIEC\)](#), are doing research on specific interventions for our age group and how effective they can be when administered by classroom teachers. This is an important factor when evaluating the potential of an intervention for your program. Standard protocol interventions are advantageous when you have varying levels of staff training and expertise, as these interventions provide more scripting and structure to ensure that all children struggling with a similar learning concern get the same level of support. There are potential drawbacks in that using a standard protocol intervention provides less room for staff to take into

**A** consideration the specific strengths or interests of a student, which we know can be helpful in increasing motivation and ultimately academic success.

**Q** **TRICIA**

As a parent and educator, I have been told by Special Ed. Teachers and school psychologist, that my son or another preschooler in question is just a late bloomer or just an active preschooler. Most of the time, I have been correct and the child falls behind in elementary school. How do you convince school specialists to put recommendations or IEP in place for preschoolers? Everything points out early intervention is best, yet, specialist do not want to assist this age group. I am sure I am not the only person running into this problem.

**A** **Lydia Carlis**

Tricia, this sounds frustrating! The Office of Special Education Policy (OSEP) is very clear that RTI can not be used to delay or deny evaluation decisions for students suspected of having a disability ([OSEP Memo, January 21, 2010](#)). First, RTI should be helpful in the multidisciplinary team process, as we wrote to Pam in Rapid City, SD. If a parent requests an evaluation for his or her child, a multidisciplinary team meeting should be held to determine the need for assessments ?it is a team decision that should be made with parents and appropriate school staff. When schools relied solely on the IQ-achievement discrepancy to make determination decisions, decisions were much more likely to be ?wait to fail? since students had to demonstrate a significant gap before they would be eligible for services. So, even if a school did determine evaluations were warranted, students would not qualify for services under this determination model for specific learning disabilities.

**Q** **Lorelei Morris**

Please provide an overview of the services you provide preschoolers and who delivers them.

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**

AppleTree develops and provides proven early childhood education programs to the neediest young children in the District of Columbia. AppleTree consists of a non-profit Institute and seven preschools. Our preschool classrooms are led by a lead teacher who has a bachelor?s degree and professional development in early childhood education. Regular classroom teachers provide Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Additionally, when children move to Tier 3, regular classroom teachers provide specialized support aligned with the goals of the IEP. Special education teachers provide instruction to support the goals of the IEP. We do have specialists on staff including social workers, SLPs, and contract for OT and PT.

**Q** **robin lipman**

Who provides the tiered supports? We only have community based preschools and our staff isn't available for on-site interventions.

**A** *Mary Anne Lesiak*

This is a really common, though difficult, situation. When thinking about RTI, we anticipated focusing on Tier 2 and interventions. While this does take considerable effort, we underestimated the amount of time, effort and resources that we spend on Tier 1. Identifying children for Tier 2 depends on children having access to a high-quality, research-based program every day. So before beginning to think about RTI, you want to have concrete data around the quality of the Tier 1. Do children have access to high-quality, Tier 1 instruction aligned with standards? Do you have this data?

**Q** *Lynn*

How frequent is the progress monitoring for students needing the various levels of tiered support?

**A** *Lydia Carlis*

At AppleTree, we implement universal screening and progress monitoring for all children, regardless of tier. Children who have accommodations built into their IEPs receive those accommodations during our universal assessments. These data help us analyze how children across tiers are benefiting from our program. For children who are receiving Tier 2 supports, progress monitoring minimums differ based on the nature of the plan. For academic plans, teachers collect progress monitoring data at least once per week. For behavior plans, teachers collect progress monitoring data at least once per day, and often times more frequently throughout the day. More important than collecting the data is to frequently review the data. Teachers meet at least bi-weekly with their principals to evaluate their implementation of the plan and students' response to intervention. If the data demonstrate that students are not making adequate progress, which teachers should determine prior to the start of the plan, the team will make changes to the plan, typically focusing on frequency (how often), intensity (size of group, explicitness of instruction within the intervention), or duration (length of sessions) of the intervention first before considering starting an all new intervention.

**Q** *Susan Hoheisel*

If you are working with a team that wants to pick and choose components of Response to Intervention to implement, what are the critical components of a good preschool RtI model?

**A** *Lydia Carlis*

The foundation of a high quality RTI model is an evidence-based Tier 1 instructional program. This instructional program should focus on curriculum (what to teach), instruction (how to teach) and environment (the context for learning) to ultimately support student achievement. Teachers need to collect universal screening data to know what children know and are able to do in important academic, behavior and cognitive domains. These data should be used to inform their differentiated instruction throughout the day. If a team wanted to pick and choose components of RTI, we would recommend they choose to focus solely on Tier 1 to ensure high quality curriculum, instruction, and environment that will meet the needs of the majority of students in their classroom.

**Q****DeAnna**

After I finish my masters degree in psychology with applied behavior analysis I would like to open a preschool for children with special needs. How can RTI be implemented in this preschool?

**A****Lydia Carlis**

A student's IEP is most often for one area of concern. This is because children have strengths and challenges across domains, and just because a child has a disability related to speech and language does not automatically mean he or she will have a disability in math. Special education teachers, and general education teachers working with students with identified special needs, can formally use RTI to evaluate special education students' response to instruction in the areas not affected by his or her disability. Informally, the principles of RTI are useful for special education staff implementing IEPs with students. By training your staff to take an RTI approach, you are reinforcing direct instruction of skills, frequent progress monitoring, and ongoing data analysis. As a behavior analyst, you might choose to use a celeration chart as a preferred method of data collection whenever appropriate, but regardless of how the data are collected they should be used to inform instructional decisions. These activities are very much in line with what we special educators are trained on as best practice.

**Q****andrea moss**

Do you think the somewhat renewed focus on early childhood funding will spur efforts for RTI in early childhood?

**A****Lydia Carlis**

Hi, Andrea. We hope that the renewed focus on early childhood funding will spur efforts for quality in early childhood settings, beginning with high-quality Tier 1 experiences for all children! We think there is a lot of work to do to define quality, and then ensure quality, at Tier 1, so that multi-tiered instructional models are layering targeted supports onto high-quality differentiated instruction for all children. We think that is where RTI discussions for early childhood should focus most heavily.

**Q****Mary Morgan**

How is the three tier model implemented at the preschool level?

**A****Mary Anne Lesiak**

Hi Mary! A three-tier preschool model has the same elements as the three-tier model in K-12, though some of them might appear different. Basically, Tier 1 is the high-quality, evidence based instructional program that is aligned with standards that ALL children have access to every day. The majority of children (approx. 80 percent) should make expected progress based on regular progress monitoring in a high quality Tier 1. Children who don't make expected progress in Tier 1 or who started so far behind that they need additional support to catch up are in Tier 2. Tier 2 is supplemental instruction provided in the regular classroom in addition to Tier 1. (No pull outs

**A** where children miss Tier 1.) Tier 2 instruction is planned and its success is also regularly monitored at regular, predetermined intervals. Tier 2 interventions can include greater frequency, more opportunities for practice, more explicit instruction, etc. and should be engaging and motivating for children. If children do not make progress, they may then be referred for Tier 3, which is a more intensive, individualized level of instruction in addition to Tiers 1 and 2. Variation exists among preschools running RTI programs, but this is a general outline.

**Q** **Suzanne Peretz**  
How can RTI be introduced to the preschool special education classroom?

**A** **Lydia Carlis**  
Hi, Suzanne! DeAnna from Nevada asked a similar question related to her ambitious goal of opening a new school! We believe the principles and practices of RTI can be used by special educators across levels of service or identified need.

**Q** **Elizabeth**  
What formative assessments do you prefer to use with this age group?

**A** **Mary Anne Lesiak**  
In an earlier question, we mentioned Natalie Rathvon's book *Early Reading Assessment* that describes the purposes of assessments and the properties that assessments should have to meet each purpose. When possible, we think that the best formative assessments are individually administered, brief, and are performance-based. Obviously, this is easier for traditional academic domains. For social emotional, we think that structured observation is still the best.

#### **Related Resources from RTINetwork.org:**

- [National Online Forum: Implementing RTI in Early Childhood Settings](#)
- [RTI in Pre-Kindergarten](#)
- [Recognition and Response](#)
- [RTI in EC/Preschool Settings Blog](#)

#### **Additional Resources:**

- [Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood](#)
- [Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Learning](#)
- [Florida's Voluntary PreKindergarten \(VPK\) Education Program](#)
- [Florida Center for Reading Research](#)
- [Research Works: Tools for Improving Child Development](#)