

**Crosby Independent School District
ABC's of Response to Intervention**



Dear Parent,

This booklet explains the Response to Intervention (RTI) program for the Crosby Independent School District. RTI is an approach for teaching your child based on their individual needs. Once you understand it, you can find out how your school uses it to teach your child. This booklet also includes resources you can use to learn more about RTI.

What is RTI?

RTI stands for **R**esponse **T**o **I**ntervention. It can also be referred to as a “multi-tiered system of support,” or MTSS. The purpose of this approach is to help all students, including struggling learners. It is not a special kind of program or book. Many Texas schools use this approach to make sure that every student has opportunities to learn and work on grade level. The purpose of RTI is to close gaps and create success.

RTI is getting a lot of attention now. In 2004, Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). This is a special education law. It initially used a “discrepancy model.” In this model, a student was identified as having a specific disability if he or she was working below what is expected for his or her IQ. The state of Texas no longer uses this model.

Today, Crosby ISD, along with other school districts in Texas use a cross-battery approach to assess students for a learning disability. This is the concept of using a variety of assessment tools to

determine if a pattern of cognitive strengths and weaknesses exist and if they are related to academic underachievement.

RTI is the other way that IDEA allows schools to identify learning disabilities. When students continuously struggle with learning they are considered to be “at risk.” With additional help, or intervention, many can catch up. In schools using RTI, teachers provide prescriptive intervention as a means to closing the gap. In instances where students are making limited progress over a period of time, the committee may refer the student for a special education evaluation based on progress. They do not wait for students to fail.

How are students identified for RTI?

Students are given a universal screener three times per year, Beginning of the Year, Middle of the Year, and End of the Year. The RTI team identifies students falling below the cut score and looks at diagnostic data to determine if the student is functioning more than one year below grade level. Based on data from screeners, students are grouped into various Tiers. Tier 1 is for students who have the skills to learn grade level content, but are having difficulty acquiring a skill, approximately 80% of students fall into this category. Tier 2 students are those that are found to be performing more than one year below grade level and require interventions to fill learning gaps. Tier 2 is comprised of around 15% of the grade level population. Tier 3 students are identified as being more than two years below grade level. These students are missing key prerequisite skills from previous years. Tier 3 is a very small group of students, usually around 15%.

Intervention is intensive instruction to help students close gaps in learning. Teachers record the progress of at-risk students through progress monitoring probes. Over time, if a student does not catch up, it may be a sign of a learning disability. If the student is evaluated for special education, RTI records can be useful. They can help you and your child’s teachers decide whether special education is needed.

RTI is applicable to any content area, however, it is most often used for reading and math. It may also be used to improve student behavior. In Crosby ISD:

1. Classroom teachers provide effective instruction to all students.
2. Teachers assess all students several times a year. This helps them know whether students are working on grade level.
3. Teachers use this assessment information to identify at-risk students. These are students who are working below grade level.
4. Teachers use assessment information to plan intervention that meets at-risk students’ needs.
5. At-risk students receive this intervention.
6. Teachers check the progress of at-risk students often. Students who catch up to grade level no longer need intervention.

1. Classroom teachers provide effective instruction to all students. Many schools schedule blocks of time for content-area instruction so that students get enough daily instruction in each area. Based

on research, effective teachers design daily lessons that focus on what is important for success. They explain a new concept and show students how to use it. Then they guide students' practice. Students practice many times what they have learned. Teachers also make sure students know how to behave in school.

2. Teachers assess all students several times a year. These test or screening times often are the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Teachers compare students' scores to "benchmark" scores. Benchmark scores are what are expected for all students at that grade level for that time of year. Students whose scores are below the benchmark are at risk for learning problems. Teachers may test them more to find out where they are having trouble.

3. Teachers use this assessment information to identify at-risk students. These are students who are working below grade level. At-risk students need immediate help to prevent learning problems. In schools using RTI, teachers know which students are at risk.

4. Teachers use assessment information to plan instruction that meets at-risk students' needs. Teachers review students' scores. They form small groups of students with similar needs. They identify the at-risk students' gaps in learning, set goals, and plan interventions.

5. At-risk students receive intervention. It targets the skills students need to close learning gaps. Intervention is provided in small groups where students can get more attention and practice. Ideally, students receive interventions four times per week.

6. Teachers check the progress of at-risk students often. At-risk students are assessed every week. This is called progress monitoring. Teachers can chart each student's progress to know whether the intervention is working. It is working when students close their gaps in learning, or "respond to intervention." When students do not meet their learning goals, teachers adjust the intervention. If at-risk students meet their goals and catch up to grade level, they no longer need intervention.

RTI methods can be used to support good school behavior too. Many schools use Positive Behavior Intervention Supports. (PBIS) to help students learn how to behave in school. In schools using PBIS, all teachers know the behaviors students need to use. They teach these behaviors to their students. They use a system to remind students how to behave. When students have behavior problems, teachers help them learn a better way to act. They reteach the correct behavior. Some students may have a behavior plan to promote the use of correct behaviors.

Will RTI be used in my child's school?

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) encourages schools to use RTI, but allows school districts and charter schools to decide. The Crosby Independent School District uses RTI across all grade levels.

What grades use RTI?

RTI can be used in any grade. It is designed for students who are 1 or more years below grade level, therefore Kindergarten students are typically not considered to be a year below grade level.

However, remediation is offered to all Kindergarten students who struggle to acquire basic concepts.

Who benefits from RTI?

All students benefit from RTI. RTI focuses on high-quality instruction for all students. Since all students are usually tested several times a year, teachers have a clear picture of student performance. They know who is at-risk, and can give those students interventions to close their learning gaps. Teachers chart students' progress and adjust lessons to meet their needs.

How do I know if my child is at-risk and receiving intervention?

The school will inform you if your child is identified as at-risk and is receiving intervention. At-risk students automatically receive intervention. You do not need to give your permission. You should get a description of the intervention. You will also be told how your child's progress will be measured. A teacher or interventionist will provide intervention that matches your child's needs. Your child will be taught in a small group of children with similar needs, learning communities, or work on a computer.

How do I know if RTI is helping my child?

Every week your child will be assessed to measure progress. The teacher uses this information to make sure the intervention is working. Meet with your child's teacher to learn how your child's needs are being met. The intervention should be helping your child to close his learning gap. Ask the teacher how your child's progress will be reported to you.

What if RTI doesn't work for my child?

Sometimes an at-risk student does not make enough progress in the intervention. The teacher knows this from checking the student's progress. When this happens, the teacher tries a different strategy. The student's progress is checked again. If the student is still not meeting goals, the teacher may ask other teachers for ideas to solve the problem. Then if the student continues to struggle with learning, a school team may meet to figure out what is needed. You may meet with the team.

At any time, you have the right to request an evaluation for special education for your child. Or, the team may decide that your child needs an evaluation for special education. You must give permission for this. After your child is evaluated, you and the school team will meet. The team may look at RTI information, such as what interventions were taught and how your child responded. You and the team will look at other information, too. Together, you will decide whether your child may require specialized supports and services. RTI information also helps you and the team plan your child's instruction.

Remember, you can ask for an evaluation at any time if you think your child has a learning disability. This is different from being at-risk. Your child does not have to wait until intervention is over. To do this, give written request for the special education evaluation to the school. The school must respond to the request:

- 1) The school will begin the evaluation process. Your rights will be explained, and you will give written consent. Your child can continue to receive intervention.

OR

- 2) The school will not evaluate your child. You will get a written explanation about why a disability is not suspected. Your child can continue to receive intervention.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: Is RTI a specific program that Texas schools must use?

A: No, RTI is not a specific program; RTI is a way of teaching struggling students and making sure that they are successful. Texas schools are not required to use RTI, but any school can choose to use it. Schools using RTI use “evidence-based” programs or resources. This means they are based on scientific research. If students start to struggle with learning or behavior, they get help quickly. Crosby ISD is a Response to Intervention District.

Q: How will I receive information about my child’s progress?

A: Weekly progress monitoring sheets are reviewed every 3 weeks by the RTI committee. Parents are always invited to attend and serve as a member of the RTI committee meeting.

Q: What does instruction look like in a school using RTI?

A: All RTI schools aim for high-quality instruction. When you visit your child’s class, look for:

- Scheduled time for content-area instruction.
- Students with content area resources and materials.
- Daily, direct instruction from the teacher.
- Students working in small groups or pairs to practice what they are learning.
- Classroom routines that promote learning.
- Students getting clear feedback from the teacher.
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There are many other features. Ask your child’s teacher or principal to tell you about how they provide high-quality instruction.

Q: How does my child’s teacher decide that my child needs intervention?

A: In schools using RTI, students are assessed several times during the year. Teachers compare each student’s score to a “cut score.” This score indicates which students are missing prerequisite skills necessary to access their current grade level content. Students falling below the cut score are further assessed using a diagnostic assessment.

Q: My child needs intervention, and it is provided during the school day. Will my child miss important content-area instruction?

A: All students get daily content-area instruction. Reading and math are especially important. If students do not learn basic skills, they struggle later. In CISD, teachers try to schedule intervention time so at-risk students do not miss content-area instruction.

Q: How does RTI work for student with behavior problems?

A: Students receiving RTI for behavior are taught which behaviors are expected of them. All teachers and school staff know the rules. They all use the same responses when rules are not followed. Teachers identify students who need help behaving. Then they meet with these students to help understand the specific behaviors they need to change. Sometimes teachers make an agreement or contract with the student. It clearly spells out reminders and goals for changing behavior. Teachers monitor whether the student uses the new behaviors. They may use a chart to show how behavior is improving.

Q: Our school uses a “pull-out” intervention program for my child. Will this make him feel bad?

A: All parents want their children to be successful. Be sure to talk with your child’s teacher about any concerns. Work together to present this as a good thing. When a child is struggling, there is no time to waste. Many teachers treat intervention time as simply another small-group learning activity. Students often like the additional small-group instruction. They start to feel confident as their learning skills improve.

Q: What should I expect to see on a progress report if my child is at-risk?

A: The classroom teacher and/or interventionist will report progress. Either one can discuss how intervention is working to meet your child’s needs and intervention goals to close gaps in learning. You may see work samples of what your child is learning. The report may also show your child’s scores on multiple progress checks. Students receiving Tier 2 & 3 are given a short assessment (probe) weekly to assess progress. This helps teachers know whether the intervention is working. You can ask the teacher about your child’s progress: What do the scores mean? What gaps in learning does my child have? How is my child behaving? How does the intervention work to close the gaps in my child’s learning? What strategies can I use with my child at home?

Q: What does it mean if my child does not make enough progress to close her learning gap?

A: RTI focuses on closing a student’s learning gap. That is why it is so important for teachers to check student progress often. Rates of learning can be different from one student to the next. Some students quickly learn and then no longer need intervention. Others may take longer. When the progress checks show a student’s needs are not being met in intervention, she may need other services. It could be a sign that she has a learning disability.

Q: If my child receives RTI support, does this mean that he won’t need special education later?

A: Not necessarily, RTI is designed to prevent learning difficulties. Its purpose is to close a student’s learning gap. Intervention works for many students. But intervention may not work for

some. These students may need special education for their learning disabilities. RTI helps to identify them.

Q: When can parents request a special education evaluation?

A: A parent can request an evaluation for special education at any time. Your child can continue to get intervention while the evaluation is taking place. When the evaluation is done, you will meet with the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee. RTI information may be used to help identify a learning disability. You will review the teacher notes about how your child responds to intervention. This will help you and the committee decide if your child has a learning disability and needs special education.

Q: My child has specific learning disabilities and already receives special education. Can my child also benefit from RTI?

A: All students can benefit from RTI. Your child's special education teacher and classroom teacher do many of the same things for students with learning disabilities that they do for others. They will both assess your child several times during the school year. They will both use the assessment information to plan instruction that meets your son's needs. They also will follow your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) to close his learning gap.

Q: My child receives speech therapy and has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Now they are having trouble reading. Can they get help with reading, too?

A: The IEP specifies the special instruction they receive to improve speech problems. Talk to the classroom teacher to find out about your child's reading problems. The teacher can tell you what is being done to meet your child's needs and if your child is progressing. The school can also offer assistance for helping your child at home as well.

If intervention does not help, your child may have a learning disability. They may need special education instruction in reading. An ARD committee, including you, will study progress monitoring data. You and the rest of the ARD Committee will decide if your child needs special education reading instruction.

Q: My third grader is having trouble in school. I asked the teacher if my child needs special education. The teacher says that he knows he is struggling, and wants to try RTI. They will put him into a daily intervention group for extra help. How long should I let the teacher try RTI before I ask to have him tested for special education?

A: A parent can request a special education evaluation at any time. However, the teacher and/or interventionist need time to try interventions. Intervention often lasts 9-12 weeks. Students receiving Tier 2 & 3 Intervention are progress monitored every week. Ask the teacher to let you know how your child is doing. If you think your child is falling behind, then request a special education evaluation. He can keep receiving intervention during the evaluation process.

Q: My son is currently receiving RTI, but I think he is getting farther behind. I think he has a learning disability. How can I get him tested for special education?

A: You must formally request testing for special education in writing. When you make a formal request, you will be invited to meet with campus designees to discuss your concerns and as a team, come up with a plan of action. You will get a booklet about your rights. It is called Notice of Procedural Safeguards.

If the school agrees that your child has characteristics of a student with a learning disability, you will be told about the evaluation process. Be sure to ask any questions you may have. Once you sign a consent form, testing can begin. During this time, Your son will continue to receive intervention. When the testing is completed, you and other members of the ARD committee will meet to decide if he needs special education.

If, however, the LEA does not suspect that the child has a disability, and denies the request for an initial evaluation, the LEA must provide written notice to parents explaining why the public agency refuses to conduct an initial evaluation and the information that was used as the basis for this decision. 34 CFR §300.503(a) and (b). The parent can challenge this decision by requesting a due process hearing under 34 CFR §300.507 or filing a State complaint under 34 CFR §300.153 to resolve the dispute regarding the child's need for an evaluation. It would be inconsistent with the evaluation provisions at 34 CFR §§300.301 through 300.111 for an LEA to reject a referral and delay without provision of an initial evaluation on the basis that a child has not participated in an RTI framework.

Q:What is my role as a parent?

A: Your role is to support your child and to help your child be successful. You can do this in many ways. Monitor your child's learning. Ask your child to tell you what her or she is learning and to show you examples of work. Read to your child, and ask you child to read to you. When your child has homework, be nearby. Review your child's work or help with practice, and give feedback. Ask your child's teacher how you can help at home. If your child is at-risk and receiving intervention, find out specific ways you can lend support. Finally, be positive and celebrate successes.

Q: I am a foster parent. My foster child is behind in reading and math. Can she get intervention services too?

A: Yes. Inform her teacher about her needs. When you enroll her, give the school the 2085 form. It shows who the child's Education Decision Maker is (usually you, the foster parent). Share information from her education portfolio. Ask how soon she can be screened for RTI. If your foster child moves to a different school, be sure to get her intervention records. These records are not required, but they are very helpful. They can save valuable time in assessing her and can help find the right intervention for her at the new school.

If the school does not use RTI, ask about tutoring and other services. Children in foster care can get many academic support services at no cost. School counselors and caseworkers know about these services.

If your foster child receives special education, he or she must have a surrogate parent. This is someone trained to represent the child when educational decisions are made. You or someone else, such as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), may be appointed as the surrogate parent.

Q: I want to learn more about RTI. What are some websites I can visit?

A: For more information, visit these websites:

- Building RTI Capacity, <http://BuildingRTI.utexas.org> (resources for educators and parents).
- Center for Development and Learning, www.cdl.org (many resources and articles available).
- Council for Exceptional Children, www.ced.sped.org (professional organization for parents, teachers, and professionals).
- National Association for School Psychologists, Response to Intervention (RTI): A Primer for Parents, www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/RTIprimer.aspx
- National Center for Learning Disabilities, www.ncid.org (also sponsors RTI Action Network. www.RTInetwork.org).
- National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, <http://www.ncrld.org/topics/parents.html>, the ABC's of RTI: A Guide for Parents, www.ncride.org/free/download/ABC_or_RTI.pdf
- Texas Center for Learning Disabilities, www.texasldcenter.org
- U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov (free materials available).

References:

National Association of State Directors of Special Education. (2005) Response to intervention: Policy considerations and implementation.

Questions About RTI:

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