A Summary and Critique of *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children*

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Gifted education constantly experiences trends that could potentially be advantageous or harmful to the goals that leaders in gifted education have worked so hard to implement. No Child Left Behind Act, which was introduced in 2001, focused much of its attention on students who weren’t meeting the minimal standards; and thus, did not allow much attention or funding to go towards students who were excelling. The Common Core Standards is the most recent new force implemented to change the educational system, and currently seems to have more wiggle room for addressing highly capable learners. The Response to Intervention (RTI) method, however, seems to be a trend that addresses the needs of all students; including gifted and “twice-exceptional” (2e) students. Parenting for High Potential writes, “Neither NCLB nor RTI were designed with gifted children in mind. However, NCLB had sweeping ramifications for how money was spent in schools, and RTI may govern how gifted children—with and without accompanying disabilities—are identified and served” (17). The article, *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children*, introduces the implications that RTI has on gifted and 2e children, and further explains how the method can be used at each step with that population.

Although most intervention programs are designed for students who are struggling to meet the minimal standards in the classroom, RTI has the potential to impact students at all levels of giftedness. *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children* states, “The use of the RTI framework for gifted students would support advanced learning needs of children in terms of a faster paced, more complex, greater depth and/or breadth with respect to their curriculum and instruction (1). The article continues with an explanation of how RTI could be adapted to meet the needs of gifted children in each of the components: universal screening and assessment, established protocols, the problem solving approach and the tiered system of interventions. Instead of using RTI to screen children for deficits, the universal screening component of RTI should be used to assess student strengths and areas for giftedness. The article writes, “It is our contention that universal screening be applied for the purpose of recognizing student strengths and abilities in an effort to provide appropriate education to students whose development is advanced” (2). Although it’s clear that a universal screening process would give school districts and classroom teachers helpful information when trying to meet the needs of their gifted population, the article is unclear in how to implement a universal screening process in schools that don’t already screen for giftedness. *RTI and the Gifted Child: What Every Parent Should Know*, delves into the issues regarding the implementation of RTI and complications that might arise. The article states, “Although IDEA 2004 requires states to use RTI as part of the comprehensive evaluation process for determining specific learning disabilities, RTI cannot constitute the entire process. States that have terminated their use of test score discrepancies substantially restrict a child’s access to comprehensive, individual evaluation” (22). *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children* seems to focus more on general ways RTI can be used with gifted children, but does not address specific obstacles that could arise when individual schools try to implement the system.

According to *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children,* RTI supports and services are implemented through multiple levels of interventions. It states, “Typical models have three levels of intervention, with Tiers I and II focused on small group interventions, increasing in intensity to the individual level of Tier III” (3). The use of appropriate and specific interventions is possibly the most important part of RTI, but the article provides little information regarding examples of interventions that might fall at each tier. Clark (2008) provides an entire chapter regarding the educational modifications that could be made to support gifted learners that are moderately gifted, highly gifted and profoundly gifted. For the moderately gifted, students might be in gifted clusters or be provided with mentors (404). “Highly and profoundly gifted students are found far less often, but because of their more demanding needs, they required greater opportunities for accelerated pacing, more advanced materials, and higher levels of complexity and depth in their work. These needed modifications are most effectively offered by special classes, such as resource or advanced placement classes, or by special schools, such as magnet schools or governor’s schools” (404). These specific programming options for gifted students support the general statements made in *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children,* and encouragea system that is flexible in the services it makes available to children.

If RTI is implemented appropriately in schools, it has the power to provide increased differentiation options in individual classrooms and supply students with an education that meets their needs. RTI approaches can be used in place of school psychologists who are generally placed at multiple schools and overloaded with evaluating students who are not meeting the minimal standards. *Response to Intervention for Gifted Children* mentions the need to make faculty and staff aware of how RTI can be used with gifted learners, and this is possibly the most important reminder in the article. RTI is useless if teachers and administrators in the school don’t understand how to assess gifted students and provide tiered interventions in the classroom. *RTI and the Gifted Child: What Every Parent Should Know* reminds parents and educators that, “The RTI model, with its focus on daily interventions in each and every classroom, has the potential to offer all gifted students consistent, differentiated instructional strategies without requiring the student to have been previously labeled as gifted” (21). Although many schools, including my own, has provided training in RTI; most schools have not mentioned how RTI could be used with gifted students and that should be the next trend in education.

References

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