

RTI² COVID-19 FAQ

School closures and the implementation of distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic have raised questions regarding how schools can address the needs of our students receiving critical tiered interventions once they return to school. The table below provides guidance related to RTI² based on frequently asked questions. As always, please continue to communicate intervention decisions and plans with parents.

Districts should consult with their local board attorneys to ensure their processes comply with state and federal law. As we learn more about school reopening and best practices, further guidance will be issued.

For questions related to RTI², please contact RTI.Questions@tn.gov

End of Year Procedures	
<p>Dates</p> <p><i>When recording the end-of-year date on an intervention plan, should we use the school closure date or the end of the school year?</i></p> <p><i>When entering an intervention end date in our student information system for students receiving a dyslexia-specific intervention, which date should we use?</i></p>	<p>If a school RTI² team typically records the end-of-year date on the student's intervention plan, record the date that the student last received the specific intervention identified on the plan with fidelity. If the intervention "ended" due to school closures, note the dates of this "pause" on the intervention plan since the team has not ended or changed the intervention. These "pause" dates before and after the instructional break may be helpful to compare skill learning loss, learning recovery, and overall growth.</p> <p>For students receiving dyslexia-specific interventions, it is an LEA decision whether to include an intervention end date in their student information system (SIS). If the LEA does choose to include the intervention end date, it is recommended that they record the date the student last received interventions with fidelity.</p>
<p>Coding</p> <p><i>What is the expectation for coding students who needed a dyslexia-specific intervention during the 2019-20 school year?</i></p>	<p>Students for whom the RTI² team determined the need for a dyslexia-specific intervention due to one or more characteristics of dyslexia during the 2019-20 school year should be coded as such in the student information system (SIS) by June 30, 2020. It is an LEA decision whether to include an intervention end date in their SIS.</p>
<p>Progress Monitoring</p> <p><i>If progress monitoring data was collected during the school closures, how should that data be used?</i></p>	<p>Progress monitoring data that was collected during school closures should include qualitative information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount and fidelity of intervention (e.g., Did learning take place daily? Did the learning use appropriate materials? Did students receive feedback from their teacher?) provided during progress monitoring data collection; • how the data was collected (i.e., online, student printables, etc.); • relevant information that provides context for the results (i.e., distractions, parent involvement, student attentiveness, etc.). <p>While progress monitoring data collected during school closures may provide valuable insight into the impact of these closures on student learning, RTI² teams are encouraged <i>not</i> to make any significant intervention changes following the school closure (such as tier changes). However, this remains a team decision based on evidence of student progress or lack of progress. For example, if the student was consistently performing in the</p>

	<p>average range prior to the closures and their skills remain commensurate with their peers, the team may consider decreasing the intensity of interventions. As a reminder, all progress monitoring updates and resulting decisions should be communicated to parents.</p>
<p>End of Year Meetings</p> <p><i>What should RTI² teams do to close out the 2019-20 school year?</i></p> <p><i>Given the disruption in learning, how should RTI² teams make decisions during and immediately following the closure?</i></p>	<p>It is recommended that school RTI² teams meet to update student records with any relevant information that may help inform intervention decisions in the fall. For example, the team might provide information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student’s response to intervention prior to the school closures, including both quantitative and qualitative data; • teacher observations, notes, and recommendations; • parent input; • changes to the intervention that the team had considered making prior to school closure; • whether tiered interventions were provided during school closure, and if so, the frequency and fidelity with which interventions have been provided virtually. <p>Due to the disruption of learning during the school closures, it is recommended that RTI² teams do <i>not</i> make any significant intervention changes following the school closure (such as tier changes). However, this remains a team decision based on evidence of student progress or lack of progress. Intervention plans and changes should always be communicated to parents in a timely manner.</p> <p>The team should also develop a plan for where to store student intervention information, as well as how to transfer information to new grade levels and schools as needed. Teams should consider how next year’s teams will access the information if they cannot consistently access physical files next school year, including how student information will be kept confidential if stored virtually.</p>
<p>Upon Reopening</p>	
<p>Historical Data</p> <p><i>Are we “starting over” with data collection for students in tiers, or can we still use last year’s data to inform decisions for this year?</i></p>	<p>All historical interventions and progress monitoring should be considered when RTI² teams make decisions regarding interventions. The data collected prior to school closures in the 2019-2020 school year should be included in decision-making. The beginning of the school year is not a “start over” but rather a continuation of data collection as appropriate with the start of school re-acclimation processes. RTI² teams should consider the disruption to learning that occurred due to extended school closures when analyzing data.</p>
<p>Learning loss and learning recovery</p> <p><i>What are some ways LEAs can help students recoup learning gaps caused by the closures?</i></p>	<p>Learning loss is the decline in knowledge or skills due to a disruption in learning.</p> <p>Learning recovery is the time it takes to regain skills to the prior level of functioning.</p> <p>As schools reopen, it is likely that the disruption to learning will result in students experiencing some learning loss of skills, including those who were previously not receiving intervention. This will require an adjustment period for all students in order to address academic needs. Therefore, LEAs will need to put a plan in place for all students to receive intervention opportunities. Options LEAs may consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify essential skills for each grade level/course to inform instructional planning.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow time for a quick review of essential skills from the prior year/course. This will provide all students with the ability to reacquaint themselves with the previous year's learning and for teachers to assess current knowledge and skills. • Provide access to essential grade-level standards for all students. • Create time in the daily schedule for all students to engage in reteaching and extension based on individual needs. • Embed missed essential skills into intervention for at-risk students if needed.
<p>Planning Intervention</p> <p><i>When should schools begin interventions for students once school reopens?</i></p> <p><i>In the absence of student data from this spring, including the spring universal screening, how should school RTI² teams make decisions about student intervention?</i></p>	<p>When reopening school, schools should prioritize restarting interventions with students previously assigned to Tier II and Tier III. A district can reinstate previous interventions until it has the opportunity to complete universal screening and diagnostic assessments. Reinstating previous interventions will allow data collection to occur; however, school teams should make decisions on a student-by-student basis using prior progress data (including 2019-20 data), amount of instruction missed, and whether the student received supports during school closure.</p> <p>The department strongly recommends that schools and district focus on re-acclimating and establishing relationships and routines in the opening days of school. When appropriate, districts should complete fall universal screening, diagnostics. As always, communicate any intervention changes and plans to parents.</p> <p>In addition to students previously identified as in need of intervention, many students may demonstrate a need for remediation. For students not in Tier II or III, the intervention block may be used to provide whole class lessons in areas needing remediation. Students who continue to demonstrate significant learning loss despite remediation and intervention efforts may need more intensive interventions. RTI² teams can use various data points to help with decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring data • Student attendance and participation in distance learning • Teacher observation • Parent observation and input • Formative data gathered • Student work samples • At-risk student populations (i.e., special education, English learners) <p>A parent may request an evaluation at any time regardless of the student's placement in RTI and all requests must be considered. See federal memo here.</p>
<p>Universal Screener</p> <p><i>How and when should LEAs administer the universal screener after reopening?</i></p>	<p>Upon reopening, students should be assessed to make decisions regarding academic learning loss. However, students will require a readjustment period to re-develop their skills and accurately demonstrate what they know. Therefore, it is <i>not</i> advised to give the Universal Screener immediately and instead wait to administer the Universal Screener during the LEAs normal timeframe, which allows students time to participate in some form of learning recovery.</p> <p>The department will provide the Start of Year Checkpoint/Benchmark to districts at the start of the school year, an optional standards-based benchmark assessment. Like other standards-based assessments, the data from this tool should be considered as one of</p>

	<p>multiple data sources when making student placement decisions, but it does <i>not</i> take the place of the skills-based universal screener.</p> <p>As always, universal screening results should be shared with parents, including for students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.</p>
<p>Progress Monitoring</p> <p><i>How and when should LEAs progress monitor students in intervention after reopening?</i></p>	<p>Progress monitoring schedules should be prioritized with Tier II and Tier III intervention groups. The department strongly recommends that schools and district focus on re-acclimating and establishing relationships and routines in the opening days of school. A district can reinstate previous interventions until it has the opportunity to complete universal screening and diagnostic assessments. Reinstating previous interventions will allow progress monitoring to be prioritized.</p> <p>Educators should anticipate some learning loss upon the start of school. The rate at which a student regains skills should help the RTI² teams determine if the student's change or lack of change in skill development is due to a disruption to learning, if the student needs a more intensive intervention, or if a referral for a special education evaluation is appropriate.</p> <p>As a reminder, nationally normed, general outcome measures on grade level must be administered to help identify the student's achievement gap. Since these measure broad student outcomes, teams should also consider additional measures on the student's instructional level to measure incremental progress more effectively. Additionally, teams may want to consider other sources of data that indicate whether the student is mastering specific skills taught (e.g. formative assessments for lesson planning purposes).</p> <p>As always, progress monitoring data should be regularly shared with parents.</p>
<p>Early Warning System</p> <p><i>Should adjustments be made to the Early Warning System to make up for the absence of spring data?</i></p>	<p>Early Warning Systems consist of multiple sources of data that help to identify students who are at risk. In the absence of spring sources of data, LEAs will need to consider reestablishing their criteria, thresholds for each indicator, and/or the weight of indicators for identifying at-risk students.</p>
<p>Special Education Referrals</p>	
<p>Parent Referrals</p> <p><i>What is the appropriate response for a parent referral during the period of school closures?</i></p>	<p>LEAs have an obligation to ensure that special education evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not delayed or denied because of the implementation of an RTI strategy. A parent may request an evaluation at any time regardless of the student's placement in RTI. See federal memo here.</p> <p>All parent requests for special education evaluation should be considered within a reasonable period of time. Make sure to collect all relevant information to help the referral team make an informed decision as to whether there is reason to suspect an educational disability. If the team suspects a disability, the team must initiate the evaluation process by obtaining consent for evaluation and providing the parent with prior written notice. All evaluation criteria and eligibility guidelines are still required. If the team does not suspect a disability, it may decide not to evaluate and must provide the parent with prior written notice.</p>

<p>Pre-Referral Considerations</p> <p><i>What should teams take into consideration before referring a student?</i></p>	<p>As schools reopen, an initial learning loss of skills can be expected, depending on the student's access to instruction during school closures. Before referring a student based on their current progress, consideration should be given to all factors that may have influenced the student's skill level or needs. A referral is appropriate if you suspect that an educational disability is a reason for underperformance and demonstration of a potential need for specialized instruction. It may not be appropriate to refer if the primary reason for underperformance is due to lack of instruction, inconsistent instruction during school closure, vision, or hearing difficulties (unless an impairment is suspected), adjustment to school re-entry, or concerns that can be addressed through general education programming.</p>
<p>Referral Data</p> <p><i>What data can be used to help determine if a referral is appropriate? Does a team have to start over with interventions in fall before referring a student for an evaluation?</i></p>	<p>All historical interventions and progress monitoring (see applicable sections above) should be considered when teams make decisions regarding referrals for special education. See the reopening toolkit for special education for more information regarding referrals. If the team suspects a disability, it must initiate the evaluation process. As a reminder, all evaluation criteria and eligibility guidelines are still required.</p>
<p>Special Education Evaluations</p>	
<p>Ruling Out Lack of Instruction</p> <p><i>How can a lack of instruction be ruled out given the interruption to instruction with school closures?</i></p>	<p>Teams are required to determine that a lack of instruction within the deficit area is not the primary cause of underperformance. All students have experienced a longer than normal instructional break and some learning loss in skills is normal over breaks. Assessment teams should apply the problem-solving model to help make decisions. For example, determine if the student has been instructed in areas of deficit within the grade-level curriculum or intensive intervention. Consider whether the student previously demonstrated skills and can regain skills lost due to the break in instruction through remediation/intervention.</p> <p>Sources of information that may be helpful include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • previous or current curriculum and intervention content, • completed scope and sequence as indicated by a student's report card, • previous and current teacher input, • review of past interventions and progress monitoring, • attendance records, and • information regarding any additional loss of instructional time (e.g., frequent classroom removals).
<p>Gap Analysis/Rate of Improvement</p> <p><i>Should the evaluation team use last year's data or this year's data to determine the rate of improvement and gap analysis?</i></p>	<p>The gap analysis, like every other source of information, should be viewed in the context of the problem-solving model to help determine the student's responsiveness to intervention. If a team has multiple sets of data from one school year to the next or changes assessment measures, (e.g., change in skills assessed such as CVC fluency to reading passage fluency or from an assessment source such as AIMSweb to DIBELS) it would be helpful to view the student's growth over time when making decisions. Compare the data, reviewing the student's past and present progress monitoring outcomes. For example, consider the gap analysis based on the 2019-2020 progress monitoring compared to the data collected in the 2020-2021 school year. If the student was making significant progress the year prior and suddenly appears well-behind grade-level expectations, is that atypical compared to peers, or do the team and parent agree more</p>

	<p>time is needed to determine if the gap is more reflective of learning loss/learning recovery?</p> <p>Investigate any differences and the factors that may contribute to changes in the rate of student improvement (such as comparing start of year loss to like peers, considering if the rate of improvement gains momentum with interventions and tier I remediation or determining whether the measures are more/less targeting areas of deficit). Investigating such differences may require additional assessments, observations, teacher/parent input, and/or changes to progress monitoring measures if needed. All the collected information and professional interpretation of the data should be included in the written report so that the IEP team can make an informed decision regarding eligibility for services.</p>
<p>Fidelity Checks</p> <p><i>What is needed to determine if an intervention was provided with fidelity?</i></p>	<p>Fidelity is important to ensure an intervention was implemented as designed and the student was engaged in instruction. The intention is to have sufficient data to demonstrate the student was provided with appropriate instruction during the intervention. The evaluation should help determine if the collected data adequately demonstrates this intent. If there were problems initially with fidelity, the evaluation should investigate whether there was a difference in student performance/improvement when fidelity was improved to help determine if a lack of fidelity was the reason for the lack of progress.</p>
<p>Observations</p> <p><i>Are observations still required as part of the evaluation during school closures?</i></p>	<p>Systematic observations are required and are a valuable component of the SLD evaluation. If they were not completed as part of the evaluation before face-to-face assessments were restricted, they will need to be completed once it is safe to do so.</p>