

Summary from the DEC/NAEYC/NHSA Work Group Meeting

November 30, 2010 | Washington, DC

Background

On November 30, 2010, a DEC/NAEYC/NHSA work group was convened to obtain input on key issues related to Response to Intervention in early childhood (RTI-EC). The work group members represented diverse organizational affiliations and roles, such as faculty, early childhood teachers and administrators, parents, and state-level coordinators.

Work Group Members

	DEC
Bill Brown	Faculty (SC)
Samtra Devard	Parent, Hope Center Network for Families (DE)
Jim Lesko	619 Coordinator/State EC Administrator (DE)
Donna Nylander	Early Childhood Administrator (IL)
	NAEYC
Marica Cox	Administrator (DC)
Ida Rose Florez	Faculty (AZ)
Diane Tunis	Head Start Teacher (MD)
Bea Vargas	Early Childhood Administrator (TX)
	NHSA
Heather Brown	Parent, Community Action Program (NH)
Mary Ann Cornish	Head Start Director (VA)
Regina Harrell	Family & Community Services Director (NC)
Connie Robers	Head Start Director (WI)

Questions Posed

The discussion was documented and summarized around the same standard set of questions posed during eight listening sessions on this topic:

1. How much is RTI occurring in your state, community, or program?
2. What do you think are the key features of an early childhood RTI system?
3. What do you think is important to include in guidance on RTI in early childhood?

Summary of Key Themes

- The topic of RTI was new for most work group members. Some acknowledged that this meeting provided the first opportunity to learn about this concept and others reported that their familiarity with RTI was limited to hearing about public schools or pre-k programs in their communities that were implementing this approach, and they had no direct experience themselves with it. A few administrators reported that they had taken steps to adopt RTI, but these efforts were limited in terms of scope (e.g., focusing on implementing only one component of RTI) and type of program (e.g., only used within early special education programs). Work group members who were parents indicated that RTI for school-age children didn't always inform parents about the RTI process or involve them in meaningful ways.
- Work group members nominated a variety of features that should define RTI in early childhood. One suggestion was that RTI be considered a framework for organizing early care and education practices to address the needs of every child. Other participants nominated many separate features that could potentially be a part of an RTI framework. These included meaningful assessment to inform instructional planning and decision-making, intentional teaching linked to standards and evidence-based practices, and methods to promote teaming and family engagement. There also were suggestions that RTI approaches need to focus on children birth to 5 and their families in different contexts, reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity within the early care and education system, and address all developmental domains (including social-emotional development and academic learning).
- Work group members mentioned that some foundational elements for building an RTI approach are already in place in many early childhood programs, but these are overshadowed by the challenges in implementing this approach. There were suggestions that RTI was intended to extend effective instructional practices already being implemented in many programs by bringing together services and supports for children who need them. However, others expressed concerns about how RTI would fit with existing federal and state policies and regulations, the focus on children's deficits in learning, the lack of resources to fund RTI, and the push-down of instructional practices used in k-12 programs for children in pre-k. There was wide consensus that guidance needed to provide additional information and guidance to support implementation of RTI in early childhood prior to kindergarten entry.