

## Response to Intervention – One Step at a Time

**“The quality of a school as a learning community can be measured by how effectively it addresses the needs of struggling students.” (Wright, 2006)**

Schools are judged by their success in working with marginal learners who would otherwise fall through the cracks and become lost. Response to Intervention or RTI is a means to expand schools’ capacity to reach and support diverse and at-risk learners. The RTI model is comprised of three Tiers of Intervention: Tier I, universal strategies for all children; Tier II, interventions individualized to the needs of at-risk learners; and Tier III, intensive interventions for students with severe, chronic academic or behavioral needs.

RTI is an intense and overwhelming process that has the potential to grow into an immense, sprawling initiative, impacting all of the programs and services available within the district. Since Thomaston is just beginning the RTI process, we will choose our initial goals carefully to ensure efficient and effective implementation and to avoid becoming overwhelmed at the magnitude of the task.

On Friday, August 28, 2009, Dr. John Hintze presented a very thorough overview of Response to Intervention. His presentation provided the staff with an in-depth exposure into a process from beginning to end of what RTI is, why it is needed, how it works, and that it takes time and planning to implement. Now, the district must work incrementally to make RTI operational, starting with the first steps of implementation. If we go back to Dr. Hintze’s slide of the graphic organizer that he designated as “one to remember”, we can see the components that must be in place for RTI to be implemented properly. This is where our district must begin: **curriculum and instruction, assessment practices, and data driven decision making.**

It is essential to initiate and establish a process of setting goals, collecting data, making instructional decisions based on student outcomes, and providing appropriate interventions. The Monday Data Team Meetings will provide all staff with the opportunity to look at student performance data, both academic and behavioral, as it relates to standards-based criteria. The meetings will allow staff to collaboratively develop common interventions that will help students meet these goals.

Data teams in grades K-6 will choose three goals to address: one behavioral, one reading and one mathematics. Some of the goals are preset, such as DRA, and others will be developed by the team with the help of district personnel. Data teams in grades 7-12 will choose two goals to address: one behavioral and one content specific. A suggestion for grades 7-10 could include a focus on areas of concern in the CMT or CAPT.

If we choose manageable goals and work through the process in a controlled manner, we will achieve three things:

- Address the needs of all students
- Begin to implement the RTI model in a systematic, organized manner
- Ensure success for students and staff