

this and determine whether there are any differences between Tier III services and special education services; and, if so, what they are and how children are helped by them.

3. How will teachers know how to teach a student if there is not a disability label?

For too long we have assumed that there are always special strategies for teaching students with certain identified disabilities. While there are some unique strategies, particularly for students with certain challenges related to processing information, in general the knowledge and skills needed by students with all learning challenges differ primarily in the frequency, duration or intensity of a teacher's instruction and related supports.

4. Is this just a ploy by the WVDE not to identify students so schools will make AYP?

All states have a federal requirement to identify or select students whose learning challenges are such that they warrant the services and protections of IDEA. The WVDE intends to remain in compliance with all federal regulations under IDEA. Students selected for services and protections of IDEA will be counted in federal reports. Federal and state funding will not be affected by this project in any way. The number of students that a school and county will report for accountability purposes will not be affected by this project.

5. If I want my child or student to have a label, may I ask for one?

The AIR schools will be applying this model for all decisions in the school related to the selection of students for the services and protections of IDEA when the student's learning profile is akin to those typically related to specific learning disability, emotional/behavioral disorder, (mild) mental impairment, other health impairment or orthopedic impairment. Because, in some cases, an identified disability allows for easier access to community services and other

unique supports, schools may specifically identify students with needs in the following area:

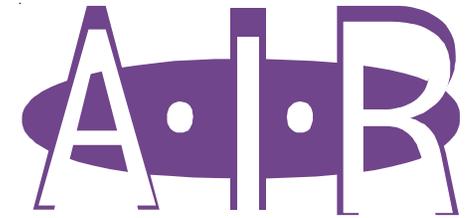
- Autism
- Blindness and low vision
- Deaf blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Hard of Hearing
- Mental impairment (in the moderate or severe range)
- Multiple Disabilities
- Speech/Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury

6. How will I know what is really wrong with my child?

The multidisciplinary evaluation will identify the areas in which a child needs instructional, behavioral and social supports. Those will form the foundation for the goals on the student's IEP.

7. How will the principal of my child's school know what kind of teacher can help my child the most?

Principals must consider the areas of expertise noted on a teacher's West Virginia Teaching License when assigning children to a teacher. In West Virginia, special education teachers have the option of pursuing courses that result in a license that reflects knowledge to address the needs of students with challenges involving processing of information they hear or read, behaviors that reflect social or emotional issues and/or a slower learning rate. A child's IEP always includes goals that, when achieved, will allow a student to achieve benchmarks for his or her grade and age. The principal will consider all aspects of your child's needs when assigning your child to a teacher.



Alternate Identification and Reporting

A demonstration and evaluation of IDEA entitlements without disability labels in 15 West Virginia schools.

A project implemented and funded through Collaboration of the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Programs, Extended and Early Learning, Mid-South Regional Resource Center, and seven West Virginia Counties

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), in consultation with the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), is establishing a three year project in 15 schools in 7 counties in West Virginia to explore and evaluate a model of national merit. The WVDE will be exploring the distinction and quality of services for students who have received increasingly intensive services in a response to intervention process and been selected through a multidisciplinary evaluation process to receive an entitlement to the services and protections of IDEA but without a designated disability label.

Students who would previously have been identified as having a specific learning disability, emotional/behavioral disorder, (mild) mental impairment, other health impairment or orthopedic impairment will be selected, based on criteria consistent with federal regulations, for continued services that are agreed upon by an Individual Education Program (IEP) team based wholly on the student's demonstrated needs. Services will be determined by data collected during the response to intervention process, and subsequent to it, as well as within the multidisciplinary evaluation and will be consistent with those characteristics of specially designed instruction as provided for in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The goals of this project are:

- To establish and reinforce the commonality of instructional and behavioral needs for students.
- To transition parents, administrators, and teachers to a model of support that is based on the student's instructional and behavioral needs and not a defined area of disability..
- To diminish the burden that a label appears to place on a student emotionally and the associated low expectations.
- To contribute to the national dialogue associated with research and practice related to early intervention, Response to Intervention and appropriate instruction and support for students who demonstrate the need for the protections of IDEA. This research and practice includes the distinction between intensive interventions for an unidentified student and the specially designed instruction that is the right of an entitled student

The Alternate Identification and Reporting (AIR) project will be demonstrated and evaluated in the following schools:

Hampshire County

Augusta Elementary
Romney Elementary

Harrison County

West Milford Elementary

Kanawha County

Flinn Elementary

Pendleton County

Franklin Elementary

Putnam County

Conner Street Elementary
Winfield Elementary

Tyler County

Boreman Elementary
Sistersville Elementary

Wood County

Emerson Elementary
Lubeck Elementary
Madison Elementary
Neale Elementary
Williamstown Elementary
Worthington Elementary

The federally funded Mid South Regional Resource Center at the University of Kentucky is providing technical assistance to the West Virginia Department of Education in the implementation of the AIR project.

Selected Schools in the AIR project are characterized by the following:

1. The school is a Response to Intervention (RTI) Demonstration School or has a principal who has established an RTI Demonstration School.
2. The school agrees to expand the RTI process through all grades by June 2008.
3. The school agrees to participate for the three years of the project.
4. The parent community will be well informed of the AIR project .
5. All federal regulations associated with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will be complied with in the selection of students for continued services and the protections of IDEA.
6. The school is committed to providing appropriate instruction and services in a manner that seeks not to divide but to include all students in its comprehensive planning and use of resources.

Questions and Answers

1. Why is the WVDE implementing this project?

There are several important reasons for implementing this project. Students with learning challenges are more alike than they are different. When their academic, social or behavioral challenges result in application of a label, low expectations often follow from teachers and the community. There is also an historical concern that the burden of a label affects a youth's self concept and capacity to learn.

2. Why do the AIR schools have to be Response to Intervention demonstration schools?

This presents another important reason for implementing this project. Thirty six schools in West Virginia have been using the Response to Intervention process for several years to intervene early with struggling students. They are now seeing a few students still failing to meet grade level benchmarks despite Tier III or intensive interventions. If those students are selected for services and protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools are unclear as to how IEP services will differ from those that they have already received. This project gives schools and the WVDE a chance to consider