Welcome to the second year of this column. I hope that the beginning of the school year finds you invigorated and excited about the upcoming year.

What do you do when you find a student isn’t on grade level or isn’t progressing like the classroom teacher hopes? Are you sometimes frustrated when a student doesn’t qualify for services under special education? Is there a strategy to supplement the curriculum and have teachers focus on each specific child’s needs? The answer may be Response to Intervention (RTI), a way to determine the success of intervention strategies that has been a hot topic for the past year.

Our school district sent me and other administrators to a workshop to find out more about this mysterious term so we could develop a plan for our buildings. We met with the primary teachers in each building to introduce the concept and map out our plan. To implement this process, we use the following personnel to serve K-2 students:

- Classroom teachers;
- Title I teachers;
- Instructional support team teachers;
- AmeriCorps Reads teachers; and
- AmeriCorps Youth students.

We began using the RTI practice for the 2005-2006 school year. All students were assessed at the beginning of the year. The K-2 students who scored below benchmark received 20 extra minutes of individual or small-group instruction three times per week with a person (or a combination of people) from above. We monitored the strategic-level students once a month and the intensive-level students every two weeks.

We have tweaked our RTI process for the 2006-07 school year a bit. Scheduled meetings are needed to monitor specific students’ progress, review data, and discuss interventions used. I also will build in time to discuss this subject during faculty meetings and building grade-level meetings.

In the workshops that I’ve attended, it seems that 30 minutes of additional instruction five times per week is optimal. Some school districts are scheduling language arts at the same time across the primary grades with the RTI time scheduled for 30 minutes within this block.

For my next article, I’m asking my fellow principals about their use of RTI. How are you using RTI in your building? Is it working? What would you change? Please send your experiences to realworldideas@naesp.org. Your insights might make it into the next issue.

Signing off from the educational “real world,”

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