1. **What is at the heart of RtI?**
   The purpose of RtI is to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, identify students with learning or behavioral problems, and ensure that they receive appropriate instruction and related supports. The goals of RtI are to:
   - Integrate all the resources to minimize risk for the long-term negative consequences associated with poor learning or behavioral outcomes
   - Strengthen the process of appropriate disability identification

2. **What impact does RtI have on students who are not struggling?**
   An important Component of an effective RtI framework is the quality of the core curriculum, where all students receive high-quality instruction that is culturally and linguistically responsive and aligned to the state’s achievement standards. This allows teachers and parents to be confident that a student’s need for appropriate and effective instruction is being met. In a well designed RtI system, the core curriculum should be effective and sufficient for about 80% of the student population.

3. **What are culturally and linguistically responsive practices?**
   The use of culturally and linguistically responsive practices by teachers and other school staff involves purposeful consideration of the cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic factors that may have an impact on students’ success or failure in the classroom. Instruction should be differentiated according to how students learn, build on existing student knowledge and experience, and be language appropriate. In addition, decisions about Tier 2 and 3 interventions should be informed by an awareness of students’ cultural and linguistic strengths and challenges in relation to their responsiveness to instruction.

4. **What are differentiated learning activities?**
   Teachers use student assessment data and knowledge of student readiness, learning preferences, language and culture to offer students in the same class different teaching and learning strategies to address their needs. Differentiation can involve mixed instructional groupings, team teaching, peer tutoring, learning centers, and accommodations to ensure that all students have access to the instructional program. Differentiated instruction is NOT the same as providing more intensive interventions to students with learning problems.

5. **What is the RtI prevention framework?**
   RtI has three levels of prevention: primary (core curriculum), secondary (Tier 2 intervention), and tertiary (Tier 3 intervention). Through this framework, student assessment and instruction are linked for data-based decision-making. If students move through the framework’s specified levels of prevention, their instructional program becomes more intensive and more individualized to target their specific areas of learning or behavioral need.

6. **Is RtI an “Exceptional Student Education” program?**
   No. RtI is not synonymous with Exceptional Student Education. Rather, Exceptional Student Education is an important component of a comprehensive RtI framework that incorporates primary (core), secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention. All school staff (e.g., principal, assistant principal, general educators, Exceptional Student Education teachers, content specialists,
psychologists) should work together to implement their RtI framework and make decisions regarding appropriate intensity of interventions for students.

7. **What does RtI have to do with identifying students for special education?**
   IDEA 2004 allows states to use a process based on a student’s response to scientific, research-based interventions to determine if the child has a specific learning disability (SLD). In an RtI framework, a student’s response to or success with instruction and interventions received across the levels of RtI would be considered as part of the comprehensive evaluation for SLD eligibility.

8. **How does an RtI framework work in conjunction with the Inclusion Model and Least Restrictive Environment?** Aren’t ESE students requiring more intensive levels of instruction removed from the general education classroom to receive those services?
   Within an RtI framework, the levels refer only to the intensity of the services, not where the services are delivered. Students may receive different levels of intervention within the general education classroom or in a separate location with a general education teacher or other educator/service provider.

9. **How will the ESE teacher plan interventions for a student after he or she has been found eligible for services through the RtI process?**
   The multidisciplinary team continues to work together until effective interventions have been implemented and the student makes positive progress toward his/her stated goal(s), regardless of the setting in the school within which the student is receiving services.

10. **Can students move back and forth between levels of the prevention system?**
    Yes, students should move back and forth across the levels of the prevention system based on their success (response) or difficulty (minimal/no response) at the level where they are receiving intervention services, i.e., according to their documented progress based on the data. Also, students can receive intervention in one academic area at the secondary or tertiary level of the prevention system while receiving instruction in another academic area in primary prevention (core curriculum).

11. **If a parent requests an immediate evaluation within the sixty (60) day time frame during or prior to the RtI process, is the school obligated to provide an evaluation?**
    The 60-day requirement in Florida stipulates that if the parent requests an evaluation before interventions have been attempted or completed, the district must complete the general education interventions concurrently with the evaluation, but prior to the determination of the student’s eligibility for ESE services. Parents are to receive frequent progress monitoring updates throughout the RtI process in such a way that they are assured of actions taken to improve their child’s educational outcomes. Eligibility will be determined based on all collected data and the student’s response to the intervention(s) implemented.

12. **What is the criterion for a successful intervention?**
    An academic intervention is successful if there is a sustained narrowing of the achievement gap for the struggling learner as demonstrated by data collected through ongoing progress monitoring. A behavioral intervention is successful if there is a reduction in the problem behavior and/or an increase in desired replacement behaviors.

13. **How long should interventions be implemented in RtI?**
The amount of time required to identify and verify effective intervention(s) will vary by academic/behavioral skill, the age, and the grade level of the student. Interventions should be continued as long as the student exhibits a positive response. The interventions will be modified as appropriate when a student’s progress is less than expected (questionable or poor response to the interventions).

14. What documentation is required with the RtI model?
Districts document the problem-solving, assessment, and intervention strategies and outcomes using the intervention plan and progress monitoring guidelines. The intervention plan will include a goal statement, specific intervention(s) to be implemented, and information pertaining to the intervention (who carries out the intervention, when and where it occurs, length of the intervention sessions, and materials/resources needed for the intervention). Also, performance comparisons with grade-level and classroom peers, as well as documentation of parent involvement and fidelity assurance are necessary. The use of graphs and/or charts is a basic component of RtI, and is used to demonstrate the student’s rate of progress toward the stated goal(s). In addition, other data collection strategies may be employed at the teacher or building level. Such strategies should produce documentation of a student’s progress, or lack of progress via graphs or charts.

15. How/what do we communicate to parents?
Regardless of whether the parent initiated a concern or the teacher initiated a concern, parent involvement is critical and should be facilitated throughout the process, beginning with the problem identification phase. The district should communicate the progress monitoring information to the parent each time the data are analyzed. Parents should be involved in all decisions regarding modifications to interventions and related changes to a student’s curriculum.

16. How does RtI work from one school year to the next?
A student will begin a school year on whatever Tier of instruction/intervention he or she was on at the end of the previous school year. However, it will almost always be necessary to extend the time on the tier to allow for an adjustment period to the student’s new teacher, new peer group, different curriculum, etc., in an effort to “tease out” factors that may be impacting a student’s academic performance. In general, a student should remain on the current tier for at least eight (8) weeks into the new school year to ensure that “adjustment” factors have been ruled out or dealt with satisfactorily. During that time, the school’s problem-solving team will review students’ intervention plans and performance data, and determine if changes need to be made to the plans. NOTE: Students who have been previously discussed at a school-based problem-solving team meeting, and who are at the Tier 2 or Tier 3 level of instruction/intervention, are identified on the district’s student database (SMS). This identification is indicated on the “Proficiencies” panel under the “MCPS Specific” menu.

17. What if a student’s academic performance is below expectations, but the cause appears to be a lack of motivation, rather than a skill deficit?
In those cases where the student appears to have the ability to perform grade level work, the focus should be primarily on behavioral interventions to address the lack of effort or motivation. However, it is often difficult to exclude academic deficits with certainty. Therefore, best practice would dictate that academic interventions be attempted in tandem with behavioral interventions.

18. When implementing an intervention for a student who is below grade level, should the student’s progress be graphed on the instructional level or the grade level expectations?
The student’s progress should be monitored (tracked and graphed) on BOTH instructional level and grade level instruments. While RtI required a student to be compared to grade level peers, information as to how rapidly a student is progressing in a below grade level intervention will help the problem-solving team determine a reasonable and realistic period of time before the student may be expected to achieve grade-level proficiency. Therefore, even if progress on grade level progress monitoring instruments is not occurring at a desirable rate of improvement, rapid improvement on below grade level instruments would suggest that the student is moving toward proficiency and may only need more time in the intervention(s) to achieve it.

19. Do we compare the student’s performance to age-level or grade-level peers?
When considering eligibility for ESE services, the first question to ask is whether or not the student is performing comparably to grade-level peers. If the student is performing on grade level for the grade he/she is currently in, the student could not be determined eligible for ESE services on the basis of having a specific learning disability. Students who have been retained are generally subject to the same requirement, since the idea of retention is to allow a student to master skills they had not mastered the first time through a grade. As long as the retained student is meeting the standards for the current grade he/she is in, eligibility for ESE services should not be considered. However, if the student has been retained and is not meeting grade-level expectations and the ongoing progress monitoring data indicates a need for continuing intensive intervention, then eligibility for ESE services may be considered.

20. If a student has gone through the Problem-Solving/RtI process and was successful (the intervention was discontinued), can interventions be implemented again if the student begins to “slip” in his/her performance?
The purpose of the Problem-Solving/RtI Process is to find whatever solutions the student needs to be successful. This level of support may change over time depending upon the student’s performance, so it is not unusual for students to be provided with Tier 1 or Tier 2 interventions, as the need is indicated.

21. Is a student’s attendance history important when considering eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Program services?
Yes. If a student has been absent more than 10% of any previous school year, the question must be asked whether or not that student may have missed instruction in a significant number of skills needed to build a solid foundation in an academic domain. This situation may indicate a “causative factor” impacting the student’s current academic performance, and may exclude the student from being determined eligible for SLD services. In this type of case, more diagnostic testing in the subject area of concern may reveal some basic skill deficit(s) that “below” grade level interventions might address more quickly and effectively.

22. What constitutes an “appropriate” intervention within the Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Process?
Interventions in the Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Process are determined by three guiding questions:
1. Is the intervention linked to the presenting problem?
For example, if the identified deficit is in phonological awareness for a first grade student, appropriate intervention would include phonemic awareness activities. Moving the child’s seat or shortening assignments are considered instructional modifications, not interventions, and do not result in improved phonological awareness.
2. Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the intervention?
School leaders, the school psychologist, and district-level contacts for subject
areas or behavior concerns can help to determine if the intervention is research based and effective.

3. Can the intervention be delivered with fidelity?
   It is important to provide the interventions in the way they are intended by following specific directions and protocol and to administer the interventions over the recommended length of time.

23. What constitutes “positive” versus “poor” response to intervention?
   Under the Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Process, there is not a quantitative cut-off that determines if the student’s response was positive, questionable or poor. The goal of RtI is to have students be successful within the general education setting and to intervene systematically with appropriate interventions before the child has the chance to fail. However, for some students, despite appropriate intervention that has been delivered with fidelity, they may still need more support than can be provided with interventions in the general education setting. These are the students who, with the documentation of other relevant data, may be considered for additional services. The school’s problem-solving team determines the student’s response to intervention based on the graphed ongoing progress monitoring data.

24. How is a student’s response to intervention measured?
   Response to intervention is measured by ongoing, continuous progress monitoring. It is important to determine the student’s baseline performance prior to intervention and to monitor the student’s progress throughout the intervention process. A student’s response to intervention should reflect the student’s actual level of performance on the monitoring measures through data (numerical values).

25. Who collects the data for the Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Process?
   Classroom teachers often collect the data under the RtI process, much as they do for other instructional initiatives. However, the spirit and intent of problem-solving teams is for all members of the school’s problem-solving team to collaborate and assist in improving educational outcomes for students. It is appropriate for individual schools to determine who can be helpful to the classroom teacher in collecting, monitoring and graphing student data. Trained intervention specialists or other team members may provide assistance in this regard.

26. Are technology-based (computer) programs considered to be interventions?
   It depends on the program. If a computer program contains an instructional component, it could be considered an intervention, but only if it is research-based. Programs that contain no instructional component do not satisfy the requirements to be considered interventions.

27. What role do classroom grades play in RtI?
   Classroom grades are one valuable piece of data that can be used in the RtI process, but because grades may involve some degree of subjectivity, they should not be used as the sole measure of a student’s progress toward an academic goal. It is always preferable to use ongoing progress monitoring instruments, whenever possible.

28. How many interventions need to be implemented at each tier of instruction? Is one intervention enough, or should several interventions be implemented prior to intensifying the intervention plan (progressing to the next tier of instruction)?
   If an intervention is determined to be appropriate in focus and intensity, and implemented with fidelity, the student’s progress monitoring data will guide the decision by the problem-solving team
to adjust or change the intervention. If a student’s progress monitoring data indicates a poor response to the intervention, the team will re-enter the problem-solving process to ensure appropriate identification and analysis of the problem. If the team members determine that the problem was accurately identified and analyzed, but the intervention was not successful, they may choose to develop a different intervention to be implemented. If the student’s progress monitoring data indicates a questionable response to the intervention, the team members may determine that other intervention(s) need to be developed at that level of intensity, or the original intervention may need to be intensified.

29. Why are we asked to monitor a specific skill (e.g., phonics) rather than a collection of skills (e.g., reading)? If a student is struggling in any specific skill, wouldn’t that be evident in a broad assessment of an academic domain (assessment including many skills within a domain)?

Broad academic assessments typically include a variety of skills, and cannot be used to monitor a student’s mastery of a particular skill over time. Also, they fail to provide information about a student’s development of prerequisite skills needed for overall skill mastery. Additionally, a student’s potential eligibility for ESE support services within the Specific Learning Disabilities category is determined by their rate of progress in mastering specific academic skills.