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Snapshots from Five Schools Implementing RTI: Practices and Perspectives

*Kathryn Klingler Tackett
The University of Texas
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Agenda

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Selection and Description of Sites
- Caveats
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion
- Questions



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Introduction

- The webinar and the accompanying brief (to be released in the Spring of 2008) describe school-level practices related to RTI in 5 public U.S. schools.
- The focus is on effective instruction and the implementation of effective instruction.
- These resources should not serve as a “how-to” manual.
- The content in these resources should not be considered as “best practices.”
- Col-Sped looks forward to following these five schools for the next several years.



Selection of Sites

- “What are other states, districts, and schools doing?”
- Worked with national experts on RTI implementation to identify schools and school districts that were working, in any capacity, on aspects of RTI.
- 15 sites participated in an hour-long phone interview.
- 5 sites were selected by a steering committee based on the evidence that the sites were implementing RTI in such a way that was consistent with the preponderance of research and that they represented settings where RTI might be particularly helpful (e.g., high poverty, high risk, high ELL, etc.).
- One-day site visits were conducted in the Spring of 2007.



Description of Participating Sites

- The identity of the five implementation sites will not be disclosed, per their request.
- The sites span grades K-8, serve nearly 3000 students, and represent 5 distinct geographic regions.



Participating Sites

School	State	Grades	RTI Content Areas	Free and Reduced Lunch	English Language Learners
A	Oregon	K - 5	Reading, writing, math, behavior, and attendance	56%	38%
B	Wisconsin	5 - 6	Reading and math	13%	1%
C	Pennsylvania	K - 4	Reading and math	44%	1%
D	Florida	K - 5	Reading	56%	3%
E	California	6 - 8	Reading	50%	22%

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Caveats

- Webinar and accompanying report are organized in a FAQs format; not all sites will be highlighted in every response for the sake of clarity and brevity.
- The description of practices should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the practices.
- This webinar merely offers a “snapshot” of what the five sites are currently doing.
- The selection and effectiveness of certain strategies were influenced by local circumstances.
- Some of the described practices may, over time, be subject to more rigorous types of research.



Frequently Asked Questions

- Why did the sites decide to begin implementing RTI?
- ***What were the key steps for implementing RTI?***
- Who leads the implementation of RTI at the campus level?
- ***What kind of professional development on RTI was offered to the staff?***
- How do they decide which students receive intervention?
- ***Who provides the interventions?***
- ***When do interventions occur?***
- How frequently do they screen, and who administers these measures?
- How frequently do they progress monitor, and who administers these measures?
- How do they monitor fidelity?
- How do they manage screening and progress monitoring data?
- ***What role, if any, does RTI play in special education eligibility decisions?***
- ***What challenges do they report having in implementing RTI?***
- ***What are the perceived benefits of implementing RTI?***
- ***What funds (local, state, or federal) are being used in implement RTI?***
- ***What type of support do the districts provide?***
- What sources of information/assistance about RTI implementation have the sites accessed?



What were the key steps for implementing RTI?

- Two main themes were evident across all five sites
 - Prior to implementation, all of the sites examined their current practices in order to determine which components of RTI were in place on their campuses and the degree to which those practices were effective.
 - All of the schools began implementing RTI in phases; no site attempted a school-wide implementation of all elements of RTI simultaneously at the beginning of Year I.



What were the key steps for implementing RTI?

- Schools differed in the ways they “rolled out” RTI.
- School C piloted RTI in grades K-2 during Year 1 to determine what worked, what did not work, what resources were needed, etc.
 - Struck a balance between “going slowly, but not too slowly.”
- School D’s district office assists schools in beginning RTI implementation.
 - Interested schools select one grade level to begin RTI implementation.
 - District RTI team “models every step of the way.”
 - District team recognizes that the schools differ in terms of needs, resources, and circumstances, and that the implementation of RTI should proceed in ways that reflect those differences.



What kind of professional development on RTI was offered to the staff?

- Most of the schools follow a “train the trainers” model.
- Professional development occurs not only during days set aside for professional development but also during team meetings.
- As the RTI implementation at each site has grown more sophisticated, the professional development has increasingly focused on specific practices.
 - School A covers topics such as progress monitoring and data analysis.
 - School D offers refreshers on effective implementation of their intervention programs.



Who provides the interventions?

- The sites vary in the personnel used to implement interventions, with staff capacity, scheduling, and student need being the major factors influencing schools' decisions.
 - At School A, educational assistants administer all of the interventions.
 - At Schools B and E, an array of instructional personnel teach Tier II interventions.
 - At Schools C and D, general education teachers teach Tier II interventions.
 - At most of the schools, reading specialists and/or special education teachers administer the most intense interventions (Tiers III or IV).



When do interventions occur?

- Scheduling was a significant challenge for all of the sites.
- Creativity was repeatedly mentioned as necessary to successfully schedule interventions.
- Interventions are scheduled for the same time periods to permit easy transitions.
 - Schools C and D offer homogenous Tier II interventions within grade levels.
 - At Schools B and E, in Tier II interventions, material introduced in the core curricula is either pretaught or retaught.



What role, if any, does RTI play in special education eligibility decisions?

- All sites follow their state and/or district guidelines in terms of making special education eligibility decisions.
- Schools A , C, and E are in states that have provided guidance to districts and schools interested in using RTI as part of identification.
- Schools B and D continue to use the discrepancy model in their identification process.



What challenges do the sites report having in implementing RTI?

- Along with scheduling, teacher buy-in was identified as a key challenge.
- 4 of the sites reported that teacher support for RTI increased as the students began making progress.
 - School A's RTI leadership team asked teachers to “take a leap of faith.”
 - School B involved all teachers in data sharing and discussions.
 - School C purposely selected teachers to serve on the RTI leadership team.
- Resources were a challenge for School C.



What are the perceived benefits of implementing RTI?

- All of the sites reported that RTI has enabled them to better serve all of their students.
 - Schools A and E cited the variety of available interventions; fewer students could “slip through the cracks.”
- Another oft-cited benefit was increased collaboration among teachers.
 - Schools B and C reported that their teachers were “all on the same page.”
- “RTI has allowed all students to benefit from all teachers.”
- School B reported increased student motivation as students are actively involved in discussions regarding their progress monitoring data.



What funds (local, state, or federal) are being used to implement RTI?

- The sites utilize a range of funding sources to support RTI's implementation.
 - School A benefits from state and district funds “earmarked” for RTI implementation.
 - School D used discretionary funds to purchase materials and hire extra personnel.
 - Schools B and E did not receive any additional funding to implement RTI.
 - “The primary driver for implementing RTI has been the reallocation of resources.”



What type of support do the districts provide?

- All sites received support from their district offices in the form of “permission” to implement flexible schedules and realign teacher roles within an RTI framework.
 - School B has received “a great deal” of support in terms of time to review student data, planning and scheduling interventions, and opportunities for ongoing staff development.
 - School E’s district supports the suspension of science and social studies for those student who required two to three hours of daily intervention.
 - School E’s district supports the use of Special Education teachers to provide interventions to all students, regardless of a student’s eligibility (as long as at least one student is identified as needing services).



Conclusions

- Certain trends emerged through examining the data collected from the five sites.
- These trends are merely descriptive, not evaluative or by any means exhaustive.
- All sites implemented RTI in phases. For schools and districts beginning implementation, this might mean introducing and “mastering” one RTI element at a time, implementing RTI in one grade level at a time, or, at the district level, piloting RTI in one school before implementing more widely.
- The sites all relied on “creative” scheduling and flexible uses of funds and teachers to implement RTI. Consider realigning teachers and other staff’s responsibilities to fit within a RTI framework. RTI implementation will require some tough choices.
- RTI implementation is a dynamic process. All sites reported changing their implementation throughout the year. Do what works. Use data to guide implementation. If a practice appears to be increasing students’ scores over time, keep doing it. If not, change it.





Questions?

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