We're "Doing RTI" - A Closer Look at Implementation

**Question:** Will your Sample Integrity Rubrics from the webinar be available for download?

**Answer:** Our Integrity Rubric is available as a downloadable PDF at: http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/rti-integrity-rubric-and-worksheet. This web page also has a link to a worksheet that allows teams to use the rubric to evaluate their own implementation.

**Question:** What elements of the integrity rubric should schools emphasize if they are in the early phases of implementing RTI?

**Answer:** I would focus on three areas: developing a strong primary core, implementing a progress monitoring system, and data based decision making.

**Question:** Where can teams go to find information about evidence-based interventions and tools for screening and progress monitoring?

**Answer:** The National RTI Center has several tools charts that provide technical reviews of Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Instruction tools: http://www.rti4success.org/toolschartsLanding.

**Question:** When you did your surveys, did you only use brick and mortar programs that already had RTI in place?

**Answer:** All of our pilot sites are brick and mortar programs.

**Question:** What are the decision rules/guidelines used by teams to determine response?

**Answer:** This often depends on the progress monitoring tools you are using. In general, you should graphically compare the student's progress to his/her goal line. If the student's progress is below the goal line, it indicates that an instructional change is needed; if the lines match, no change is needed; if the student's progress line (aka trend line) is above the goal line, the goal
should be raised. Another, less sensitive method is to look at the 4 most recent progress monitoring data points. If these data points are below the goal line, a change is needed; if they hover around the goal line, no change is necessary; if above the goal line, raise the goal. Never lower the goal.

The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring has several useful modules about goal setting and evaluating progress in reading, math, and writing: [www.studentprogress.org](http://www.studentprogress.org). In addition, a Progress Monitoring training module will be available through the NCRTI site in the near future.

**Question:** We are beginning to implement RTI in our elementary schools but have not yet begun in our secondary schools. One major issue seems to be finding time to have the RTI meetings. What the thoughts around using PLC time to have discussions around RTI, grouping, etc?

**Participant Comment:** I like the idea of using PLC time to conduct RTI Meetings. We have data review meetings three times per year to discuss students in every grade and Universal Screening results. We schedule these during the teachers’ common plan times for each grade level, although it can last for several days depending on how many students you may have in RTI.

**Answer:** In the White River school district we have a significant PLC initiative. PLCs provide a foundation for our RTI work. We do use PLC time for RTI team meetings. As a specific example, we have changed the focus and process for our secondary RTI meetings. The building RTI team will continue to meet and review group data, but the student by student review of progress monitoring will migrate to the weekly PLC meeting time.

**Question:** How often do your RTI teams meet to discuss the placement of students in RTI?

**Answer:** It depends on the purpose of the meeting. Meetings to review screening data typically occur at least once per term. Meetings to evaluate progress of students receiving interventions tend to be more frequent, often 1-2 times per month.

**Question:** What did you find to be the most critical piece to successful implementation of RTI at Elem and MS levels?

**Answer:** District and building level leadership are two of the most critical pieces. Another critical component is the implementation of interventions at both Tiers 2 and 3.
Participant Comment: I agree. District and building level leadership is crucial for a successful, effective implementation of RTI. Another critical piece is staff development in the processes being implemented at each Tier (universal screening tools, progress monitoring tools, documentation requirements, etc.)

Question: I plan to have student-led RTI meetings next year, has anyone done this? If so, how did you start?

Participant Comment: I have not observed student-run RTI meetings. However, I have observed schools where students know exactly where they stand in terms of progress monitoring feedback. Each student had a score sheet in their backpack or back pocket and appeared to enjoy sharing their progress with other teachers, parents, etc. My impression is that when students know where they are and where they need to be is very motivating (when appropriate instruction is in place).

Participant Comment: I agree, when students know where they stand, they are more motivated to take the next steps toward improving their achievement.

Answer: We have not yet implemented student-led RTI meetings in White River. We have begun the process of sharing progress monitoring data with students, however.

Question: What are the realities of sustaining RTI frameworks in schools after funds are cut? What do you anticipate to be the biggest challenge to maintain (i.e., RTI coaches, data entry, decision-making teams, etc.)

Participant Comment: Maintaining an effective framework for RTI can be tricky with tightening budgets. I learned the hard way that building capacity within your faculty is extremely important in this process. This makes it everyone’s responsibility.

Answer: We have worked really hard to embed RTI practices into the way we do business. It makes it less likely that RTI will go away as funds are cut. There is also a district leadership component in that budget support, to the extent possible, is found.

Question: Where in your process you do have parental involvement?

Participant Comment: Our parents are informed of the RTI process when students move from Tier 1 to Tier 2. We invite parents to all Tier 3 meetings.
**Answer:** Communication with families is evaluated in the "Other Factors" section of the integrity rubric, which comes after the "Data-Based Decision Making" section. The integrity rubric is available as a downloadable PDF at: [http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/rti-integrity-rubric-and-worksheet](http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/rti-integrity-rubric-and-worksheet).

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**Question:** When do you recommend evaluation for Special Education?

**Answer:** This is an often asked question. The answer varies somewhat depending upon whether or not it is an elementary or secondary issue. At the elementary level, our interventions for tertiary are the same for general and special education students. We use progress monitoring and in program evaluation to determine if the students are responding at an adequate rate. We make sure we have at least 6 to 8 data points and look carefully at the 4 most recent points. The question we ask is: are these data points above or below the aimline? If we consistently get information that the student is making very poor progress then we convene the team to determine if this a student who will need intensive support throughout their school career.

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**Question:** I think that interviewing and surveying schools after they have begun implementing RTI as to the quality and extent to which they are able to implement RTI is a great idea. I'm just wondering what the approach or philosophy is when giving such feedback to the schools which were interviewed?

**Answer:** This interview was part of an evaluation of these districts' participation in a grant and so was a requirement for them. In advance of the interview, we spent a significant amount of time preparing district RTI coordinators about what would be asked, staff participation, and time expected. We ran the interviews in a conversational format, taking breaks to provide information as needed. After the interviews, we provided written feedback that included a rating, notes about what was said in the interview, and suggestions about resources for improving in certain areas. We gave the district RTI coordinator the opportunity to review and respond/clarify anything in the report, and we gave it to them to share with schools and use as they wished.

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**Question:** I like the idea of structured interviews, rather than surveys. I am curious as to how honest teachers can truly be about implementation when the school administrator/leaders are present.
Answer: You're right that this is a potential limitation of the interview process, but for our purposes we felt that it was most important to get the impressions of the entire team (given time and resource constraints). Also, we generally found that teachers weren't shy!

Participant Comment: Thank you for providing valuable training in RTI implementation! Your webinars and training modules are very helpful!

Participant Comment: I am very new to RTI so I appreciate this forum to read what others are doing.

Participant Comment: I found it surprising how proud kids were when they progressed, no matter how small the increment. In addition, data walls were evident in the teacher workrooms. One school used colored yarn to depict risk levels (green, yellow, red). Each piece of yarn represented a student. The yarn had a bead on it that could be moved up and down to represent rate over time. This allowed all school staffs a visual representation of where each student was performing.

Participant Comment: We have a data room with charts depicting recent assessments, but I really like the yarn idea.

Question: What process do you use to discuss data and move students in and out of tiers? How many students can realistically be discussed in a ½ hour or hour meeting? More specifically, most schools seem to use data meetings at grade levels to examine student data and determine appropriate interventions. On some occasions schools have a referral form for teachers to complete and refer students to the “RTI Problem Solving Team.” What are your thoughts about “referring” students to RTI and can you provide examples of when this may be appropriate?

Answer: It is important to keep in mind that RTI is a framework for supporting all students. It is not a specific product/test, class, or program. Thus, if a school is implementing RTI, then ALL students are a part of that system. A student should never be “referred to RTI” because even students at or above benchmark are served at the primary prevention level of the system.

With respect to the structure of team meetings, purposes of these meetings may vary and they should be scheduled to reflect this. Thus, there should be periodic meetings to review screening/benchmark data (e.g., once per term) and to review progress data for students receiving interventions (e.g. 1-2 times per month). If during the course of these data meetings (or other school activities), an individual student’s progress or behavior arises as an issue, s/he should be referred to a more intensive level of intervention, or to a student study team/problem solving team for further discussion. We recommend inviting the parent to these meetings and devoting
specific minutes to each component of the agenda to promote efficiency and time to generate productive solutions. For example:

Teacher/referring people introduce problem & presents data (5-10 min)

Team members—including the parent—ask clarifying questions (5 min)

Team brainstorms solutions (5 min)

Teacher and/or group agree upon a solution to try (5 min; protocol for this may vary depending on whether the issue is academic or behavioral)

Designate person responsible for follow-up and identify a date to check back with the group (5 min)

If, however, data suggest that the group is not progressing, then the data team may need to determine group level instructional modifications (e.g., evaluate fidelity, reconstitute the group, determine match of the intervention to the group’s skill deficiencies).

**Participant Comment:** I like your meeting framework! I use something similar during my Tier 3 meetings. I schedule Tier 3 meetings for 30 minutes, giving time for teachers and parents to discuss progress, behaviors, and any changes with non-educational factors.

**Participant Comment:** An important factor in EC determination when looking at progress monitoring is whether the intervention the student is receiving was implemented with fidelity.

**Participant Comment:** I agree, fidelity can be a real issue when determining if a specific intervention is effective or not. Another issue would be student absences, where they are not getting the intervention as prescribed.

**Participant Comment:** When assessing the effectiveness of school-wide RTI implementation, I discovered fidelity of implementation to be the biggest factor with reference to why the interventions were not effective. If fidelity of implementation is actually the problem, then intense cycles of instructional coaching must take place. One-shot PD doesn't cut it. Teachers need in-class modeling of the evidence-based intervention/strategy, time for guided practice, and time for reflection and feedback.

**Participant Comment:** That plan for improving fidelity sounds great! It is hard to find time to do the modeling, observing, commentary, and reflection, but is definitely needed to honor the intervention and student being served.
Participant Comment: I came to this conclusion after reviewing feedback from site leaders on a large-scale implementation of an RTI literacy framework in low-performing high schools. My concern is whether the problem is actually one of fidelity of implementation, inadequate response to the need, or the fact that interventions/strategies are not teacher-proof.

Question: I have found when determining group level instructional modification it is critical to examine the allocated time devoted to the intervention. Does it mirror the research conducted on the intervention?

Answer: Is this a question that considers the amount of actual instructional time? If so what we have found is that prior to implementing RTI, many of our interventions were being done for limited amounts of time. An example would be providing 30 minutes of reading for a student who had significant skill deficits. That same student would now be getting 90 minutes of explicit reading instruction. Time allocated for instruction is a critical fidelity issue.

Question: RTI Center, the framework for meetings was very helpful! Is this information provided as a guideline on your website?

Answer: This isn't currently posted on our site, but is an example of the type of meeting structure that we have seen work well when out working with sites. This transcript will be available on our website in roughly a week, so it will be available there.

Question: Our district does not support failure to progress through RTI as the sole justification for placement in special education. What course of action is best practice when a student does not qualify for special education services through traditional discrepancy method?

Answer: You’re right. RTI should never be used to delay or deny a referral to special education if a disability is suspected. Also, in most states, use of RTI v. discrepancy is typically required to be laid out in districts' identification policies and procedures for LD eligibility. That is, teams must use identification procedures consistently across students who are evaluated. Keep in mind that professional judgment is an option when a discrepancy is not observed. It should, however, be used rarely and judiciously.

Participant Comment: I have had this experience as well. I have had several students who did not make adequate progress in RTI interventions, as noted through documented progress
monitoring. The student would be referred for an evaluation for possible Special Education placement. The evaluation would be completed and show that the student is a "slow learner" and no placement in Sp. Ed. is offered. I am always searching for new interventions, strategies, etc. to help students like this.

**Participant Comment:** This concern is one that keeps me up at night. If RTI is a solution for wait-to-fail, then what can now do for students who are low-low and do not qualify for services? To me, that is the BIG quandary.

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**Question:** Another problem we are faced with is: when are interventions being given and what instruction is the student missing? If the student is missing grade-level instruction will the gap ever close?

**Answer:** This is a critical question. We have had the discussion many times. What we have found as helpful is to create a master schedule that has dedicated intervention blocks. This reduces the amount of general education that students have to miss while they are being given an intervention.

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**Participant Comment:** We have before and after school tutoring, as well as providing interventions during our "exploratories" which makes students miss art and music. It is hard to plan for interventions around crucial classroom instruction. These students need to live in dorms and do interventions in the evenings.

**Participant Comment:** I worry about the quality of instruction before/after school as good tutors are hard to come by. Again, I turn to assistive tech to help these kids realize success in the general education curriculum (as an add-on to evidence-based intensive interventions).

**Participant Comment:** Our teachers do the before-after school tutoring, so they are highly qualified. We also use a lot of flexible grouping during classroom instruction, utilizing computer-based programs.

**Participant Comment:** Great model! The fact you use qualified teachers for before/after school speaks volumes to the integrity of your framework!

**Participant Comment:** In a recent search on this topic, I found an example of what a master schedule with intervention blocks looks like. It may have been on Pennsylvania's state education agency website. It is very helpful for elementary levels.
Participant Comment: I have thoroughly enjoyed the chat! I have gained valuable information on improving the RTI process for my school.

Participant Comment: Thank you so much for this forum. I have a lot of information that will help me to improve my program's RTI program.