Welcome participants to the presentation “Implementing Response to Intervention.” Introduce yourself and briefly cite your professional experience with respect to RTI implementation.

For this webinar, you will need the following materials for participants:

- Slides printed out (one for each participant)
- Stages of Implementation Handout (one for each participant)
- Exploring and Adopting Handout (one for each participant)
- RTI Integrity Rubric (one for each participant)
- RTI Integrity Worksheet (one for each participant)
- Pens, pencils, and notepads on each table

If time allows, give participants time at the beginning of the training to complete the RTI Integrity Rubric Worksheet with their teams using the RTI Integrity Rubric. If time does not allow, ask teams to complete this before the training.

Instructions for reading speaker’s notes:

- Text formatted in standard font is intended to be read aloud by the facilitator.
- Text formatted in bold is excerpted directly from the presentation slides.
- Text formatted in italics is intended as directions or notes for the facilitator; italicized text is not meant to be read aloud.
The presentation today will cover the following topics.

*Read bullets.*

The content of the presentation is focused on the research on best practices for successfully implementing a new program or practice. This implementation research is general and can be applied to any program or practice; in this presentation, we will focus on its application of the research to RTI.

*Estimated time: approximately 60-90 min*

*Introduction: 5 min*

*What is implementation and why is it important? 10 min*

*NCRTI Stages of Implementation: 20 min*

*Considerations for implementing RTI: 20 min*

*Closing: 5 min*
The objectives for this training are as follows:

Read bullets.
Before we begin, I would like to remind you of the essential components of RTI. The Center has developed this graphic to highlight the RTI framework. Many of you probably associate the red, green, and yellow triangle with RTI. In reality, the triangle does not represent the RTI framework; it only represents one component, the multi-level prevention system. The Center graphic takes into account all the essential components, and—most important—the use of data to make decisions, which often is absent from the traditional RTI triangle.

If you look to the far left, you see “screening”; to the far right, “progress monitoring”; and at the bottom, the “multi-level prevention system.” The three outer components both require and are necessary parts of data-based decision making, which is why the arrows travel in both directions. If the three other components are in place, but data-based decision making is absent, then RTI is technically not being implemented.

In the inner ring, you will see the phrase “culturally responsive,” meaning the screening tools, progress monitoring tools, core instruction, interventions, and data-based decision making procedures should all be culturally responsive. In the same ring, you will notice the phrase “evidence-based,” implying that all components are evidence-based. If these components are implemented through a cohesive model, we would expect to see improved student outcomes.
Let’s first consider what implementation is and why it is important.
What Is Implementation?

“a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions”

(Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005, p. 5)

*Read quote.*

Implementation is a process, not an event. Implementation processes are purposeful and are described in sufficient detail such that independent observers can detect the presence and strength of the "specified set of activities" related to implementation.
You also should know that the research being presented today comes out of a field known as implementation science. Although we are applying this research to RTI specifically, implementation science covers a variety of fields and contexts. Implementation science was initiated in the policy area by Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973 (as cited in Fixen et al., 2005).

*Read slide.*
Throughout the presentation, you will want to be aware of the difference between an innovation and implementation.

*Read slide.*

To summarize, the innovation is **what** is being introduced and the implementation is **how** it is introduced. For our purpose today, the innovation we are focusing on is RTI, but the same principles can be applied to other innovations.
When thinking about implementation, we must be aware that two sets of activities, innovation and implementation activities, will determine student outcomes.

We often focus our attention on the innovation, the particular program that we are implementing. We think about the components of RTI and what they look like. When we think about progress monitoring, we look at the research and the NCRTI tools; we focus on the “what” of progress monitoring.

We tend to neglect the second piece, however: the implementation. How do you get the innovation in place? What do you need to do to ensure that all teachers, building principals, et cetera, are implementing RTI with fidelity? Are teachers trained? Do you have all the necessary materials to support the innovation? Is the infrastructure in place to allow RTI to happen? Both the innovation and implementation activities are essential to implement RTI with integrity, and attending to both will affect student outcomes and the overall efficacy of RTI.
Think-Pair-Share

With your neighbor, share the following:

- How would you define the term fidelity?
- How much does fidelity matter to implementation?

Ask participants to follow these three steps:

**Think** about a particular topic. (20 seconds)

**Pair** with your neighbor/table.

**Share** with your neighbor/table. (2–3 minutes)

Have two or three pairs/tables orally share their lists with the entire group.
I have already mentioned the term **fidelity** a few times, and you can expect to hear it more throughout the webinar.

*Read bullets.*

It is crucial that **fidelity** be central to our discussions and plans for the implementation of evidence-based programs.
We will now move into the next segment of the presentation, in which we will discuss the stages of RTI implementation.
One common mistake that people make in implementing RTI or other initiatives is to jump into implementation before they have really laid the groundwork for it to be successful. To address this common problem, the National Center on RTI reviewed the literature on implementation to determine the stages, or steps, that are important to pass through to make implementation of RTI most effective.

Based on Dean Fixsen’s implementation research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NCRTI has identified stages of RTI implementation. Fixsen identified six stages of implementation, which NCRTI has condensed into four stages. Note that the stages are labeled and numbered differently by the RTI Action Network (www.rtinetwork.org) but are based on the same research. NCRTI stages are:

1: Exploring and Adopting
2: Planning
3: Implementing
4: Continuously Improving

It is important to note that these stages are not mutually exclusive. A site may be in the continuously improving stage but at the same time can be refining its process by exploring and adopting, planning for, and implementing new practices.
As we discuss each stage of implementation, you can use the “Stages of Implementation” handout to take notes. This will help you differentiate the notable features of each stage. You may use your notes in an activity with your table groups later today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Implementation Handout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1:</strong> Exploring and Adopting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of this stage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the key activities of this stage?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Put another way, the Exploring and Adopting stage is the one in which you decide that you want to implement the program.
Stage 1. Exploring and Adopting: Purpose

“To assess the potential match between the community needs, program needs, and community resources and to make a decision to proceed (or not)”

(Fixsen et al., 2005, p. 15)

The purpose of the Exploring and Adopting stage, according to Fixsen is...

*Read slide.*
The Exploring and Adopting stage is a very important stage in the implementation process. Until stakeholders are clear about what is being implemented and why it is being implemented, many may be reluctant to support implementation efforts. Effective leadership is needed to create momentum for the implementation of RTI.

During the Exploring and Adopting stage, sites...

*Read bullets.*
At this stage, needs assessment data should be used to prioritize the needs of the larger organization (district or state), individual sites (that is, schools), and subgroups within the population (for example, ELLs, grade levels). From these evidence-based needs, stakeholders can determine desired outcomes and determine the match between needs, desired outcomes, and RTI.
Because there are a lot of activities involved in Exploring and Adopting, we have created a handout to help teams in this stage plan each of the activities. If you are in this stage, we encourage you to take this handout back with you and complete it with your team.
We will now move to stage 2, the Planning stage.

Planning

1. Decide you want to do “it.”
2. Plan for “it.”
3. Just do “it.”
4. Improve and sustain “it.”

Evaluate “it.”
Stage 2. Planning: Purpose

- Develop clear plans, processes, and procedures.
- Construct the infrastructure and structural supports necessary to support RTI implementation.

The second stage of implementation is the Planning stage, in which sites prepare for implementation. The purpose of this stage is to develop clear plans, processes, and procedures that lead to successful implementation and to construct the infrastructure and structural supports necessary to support RTI implementation.

Research has shown that if people do not have clear processes and procedures, they are unlikely to achieve desired outcomes. Some sites fail to plan, or they move too quickly through the planning process. Poor planning can lead to frustrated administrators and teachers, wasted resources, ineffective implementation, and little-if-any positive impact on student outcomes.

By establishing infrastructure and proper supports prior to implementation, sites are more likely to experience fuller practitioner and community support, more efficient use of resources, and more timely student benefit.
Stage 2. Planning: Key Activities

- Define leadership roles.
- Develop plans for implementation, professional development, and evaluation.
- Reallocate resources to support RTI implementation.
- Create policies, procedures, and guidance.
- Perform an “audit” of existing assessment and curricular materials and, if necessary, acquire or eliminate materials.
- Plan for and provide ongoing professional development.
- Plan for ongoing evaluations.

Some other actions that you might take during the planning stage might be to...

Read bullets.
During this stage of implementation, effective use of data is central to developing an action plan and determining measurable benchmarks of progress. At this stage, we are not just creating an action plan; we are using data to determine what is needed, and we are setting measurable objectives. Data-based decision making during the planning stage should continue to incorporate needs assessment data and also should consider data on existing and needed resources and evaluation data collected at trainings and other planning activities.
We will now move to stage 3, the Implementing stage.
Stage 3. Implementing: Purpose

- To bring all components of the RTI framework into full operation so that it is:
  - Embraced by practitioners.
  - Integrated into all schools and classrooms.
  - Implemented with fidelity.

Full operation of RTI occurs when the RTI framework is embraced by staff and integrated into all schools and classrooms with fidelity. This may take several years to achieve, however. You might choose to begin implementing RTI on a small scale. This might mean implementing in one school, grade, content area, or classroom—or focusing on one or two components of RTI. Regardless of where and how implementation begins, sites will need to make adjustments and adaptations based on their initial attempts to implement RTI. In making these adjustments, sites may need to revisit earlier stages, to explore their needs and adopt new guidelines and procedures, to plan for implementation of the adaptations and adjustments, and to build infrastructure for new procedures.

When RTI is fully implemented, it is “business as usual” and has become woven into the culture of the school. In addition, staff are skilled in data-based decision making, administrators and leaders support and facilitate new practices, procedures and processes are routine, community members understand and accept the framework, and expected outcomes are clear. Instruction is evidence-based and culturally responsive. It is important to remember that significant changes in student achievement are unlikely to be seen until all components of RTI are fully implemented with fidelity.

A helpful tool for evaluating fidelity of implementation is the RTI Integrity Rubric and Worksheet, which you completed prior to the training. This tool should be used regularly and across a variety of focus areas and grades so that teams can be aware of which essential components of RTI are not being implemented with fidelity and plan how to make improvements.
Stage 3. Implementing: Key Activities

- Deliver components of RTI with fidelity.
- Plan to scale up RTI to include additional classrooms, grades, and/or content areas.
- Evaluate implementation fidelity and outcomes.
- Establish and refine procedures and guidelines.
- Provide ongoing professional development.

During the Implementing stage, sites...

*Read bullets.*
In stage 3, data-based decision making is fully integrated into all the essential components of RTI. At the practitioner level, educators are using screening and progress monitoring data within a multi-level prevention system. More information about how to integrate data-based decision making into each of these components can be found in the “Assessment” and “Data-Based Decision Making” webinars in the Implementer Series.

At the organizational level, evaluation data should consider both fidelity of implementation and achievement or other student outcomes. I will discuss evaluation of fidelity more in later slides.
Finally, in stage 4, teams work to improve and sustain the program’s implementation.
Effective schools continuously strive to improve practices to achieve better outcomes for students. This stage ensures that the RTI framework remains relevant to the needs of the district and schools. During this stage, sites evaluate their progress, adjust practices based on the evaluation, and monitor changes to ensure sustainability of RTI. Innovative practices may be introduced to enhance the match between the RTI framework and the evolving needs of the schools, district, or state.

In instituting innovative practices, care must be taken to ensure that these practices do not have adverse effects that threaten the fidelity of RTI. Changes in the community, personnel, funding, and political support also may present challenges to the RTI framework. Addressing these challenges and understanding how they relate to training, guidance, and allocation of funds are necessary to ensure that RTI implementation can be sustained in times of change.
Stage 4. Continuously Improving: Key Activities

- Conduct ongoing evaluations of the impact of RTI on student achievement (with particular focus on subgroups) and the fidelity of implementation.
- Refine plan, guidance, and practice.
- Identify desirable and undesirable innovations.
- Provide ongoing professional development.
- Monitor and address changes to ensure sustainability.

During the Continuously Improving stage, sites...

*Read bullets.*
The graphic on the slide summarizes the evaluation data cycle. Evaluation should be an ongoing process that incorporates both evaluation of fidelity of implementation and evaluation of student achievement outcomes. These data should be used to regularly refine the plan, including goals and benchmarks, and provide guidance for practitioners. The data also should be used to identify professional development needs and plan professional development in those areas. Finally, evaluation data can be used to determine whether innovations are achieving desired outcomes. Once these improvements are in place, the evaluation process does not stop. The improvements should then be evaluated, and as a result, the cycle is continuous. That is why this stage is called “continuously improving.”
Read slide.

Evaluate at each stage to determine movement to the next stage!
Give groups about 5 min (depending on time) to discuss with their groups. Then ask a few groups to share.

Activity

- Think of the top area of need (ELA, math, behavior, grade level) in your district or school. Using the notes that you have been taking, discuss with your groups:
  - At what stage of implementation is your district or school in this area? Why?
  - What steps would your district or school need to take to pass into the next level?
We are now going to turn our attention to what research tells us about several implementation strategies. We will discuss those that have been shown to be effective and those that have been shown to be ineffective.
Think-Pair-Share

Think of an evidence-based school program or procedure that was not sustained in your school.

With your neighbor, share the following:
- Why did this happen?
- What does it take to sustain use of an evidence-based practice?

Ask participants to follow these three steps:
- **Think** about a particular topic. (20 seconds)
- **Pair** with your neighbor/table.
- **Share** with your neighbor/table. (2–3 minutes)
- Have two or three pairs/tables orally share their lists with the entire group.
Most commonly, groups will use one main strategy to support implementation. None of these strategies alone, however, is effective.

1. With dissemination alone, people are simply told what to do, maybe through an email, and are expected to begin implementing without any training or guidance.
2. Many of you are probably also familiar with the training/PD alone scenario. In this case, you come to training, you learn about the new intervention, and you are then expected to do it.
3. Laws and policies alone: In 2006, a state mandated RTI in Grades K–12 and did nothing else. It is not surprising that nothing happened. Now the state is putting in training and coaching, but this is an example of how laws and policies alone do not achieve positive outcomes.
4. Special funding alone (grants): Funding often helps schools that are starting a new intervention, but funding alone does not lead to scale-up. When money runs out, the intervention also may “run out.”
In a review of the research, Fixsen identified core components that should be integrated into an implementation approach. These core components are staff selection, staff training, ongoing coaching, and evaluation. No strategy can lead to effective implementation in and of itself, but these strategies can lead to effective implementation when combined.

The RTI leadership team plays a critical role in planning for and ensuring that these core strategies are implemented. It is important that the leadership team consists of people across a wide array of roles and perspectives, including an administrator with decision-making authority, a data specialist, and a special education and general education representative.
Before a program is implemented, it is important to make sure that qualified staff will be carrying out the program. You will need to select practitioners as well as organization staff, including trainers, coaches, evaluators, and administrators. The skills required for each role is unique, so selection criteria should match accordingly. More research is needed on the best practices for staff selection. Evidence suggests, however, that background, academic record, and direct observation and assessment of skills may be important aspects of staff selection.
Preservice and Inservice Training

- Important Components of Training:
  - Knowledge of the program and practices
  - Demonstrations of key skills
  - Practice of key skills with feedback

- Training in itself does not guarantee behavior change

(Flxsen et al., 2005)

Next, these qualified staff should be trained so that they understand the program’s background information, theory, philosophy, and core components. Trainings should also provide opportunities for staff to practice new skills and receive feedback in a safe environment. Although training is important, it is important to keep in mind that training in itself does not guarantee behavior change or lead to effective implementation.
After staff are trained, most of the learning takes place on the job with the help of a consultant or coach. The coaching process allows practitioners to learn how to implement RTI to their unique situations and ensure that they are implementing RTI with fidelity. Changing practices can be very stressful, and providing emotional and personal support can help teachers continue in spite of the stress. In the context of classrooms and schools, coaching can happen through principal walk-throughs, professional learning communities or teacher study groups, and through the guidance of academic coaches, such as literacy, math, RTI, or PBIS specialists.
Evaluation of Fidelity

- Evaluations should measure three types of fidelity:
  - **Context fidelity**: prerequisites that must be in place for a program or practice to operate (e.g., staff qualifications, student/teacher ratios, facilities)
  - **Compliance fidelity**: the extent to which staff use the essential components of the evidence-based program (RTI)
  - **Competence fidelity**: the level of skill shown by the practitioner while delivering the program (RTI)

(Fixsen et al., 2005)

Evaluations should be used to ensure that individual staff and the larger organization are implementing the program with fidelity. Fixsen (2005) describes three types of fidelity that are important to evaluate.

*Read slide.*

These results can then inform needs for staff selection, training, and coaching.
You also can think about the level of support provided for RTI implementation efforts in terms of a continuum of dissemination from “letting it happen” to “making it happen,” as Greenhalgh puts it.

**Letting it happen**—This would be when an innovation, such as RTI, is disseminated (such as during a meeting or through email) with the hope that it will be implemented. Can you imagine telling staff in an email to start progress monitoring? Most likely, nothing would happen.

**Helping it happen**—This is when the information is disseminated and training is provided. In this case, there is more hope that the innovation will be implemented. If staff receive training on progress monitoring, they have a bit more guidance and understanding of how it works. It is still unclear, however, how it would play out with their students in the classroom.

**Making it happen**—In this case, strategic, evidence-based support is provided so that RTI is implemented with fidelity. This requires active participation required by those implementing the programs (the school staff). This leads to more effective implementation and greater benefits to students because the interventions get to students more quickly.
Here is a research example of this continuum of support. In a meta-analysis of the effect of training and coaching on teachers’ implementation in the classroom, Joyce and Showers (2002) demonstrated the effects of different levels of support. As you can see, with only a discussion of what would be implemented, only 10% of teachers were able to demonstrate knowledge, 5% could demonstrate skills, and none could use their skills in the classroom. With professional development that includes theory and discussion and adds a demonstration in training, the percentage of teachers demonstrating knowledge jumps up to 30%, and those who can demonstrate new skills jumps up to 20%, but still none are able to use their skills in the classroom. By adding practice and feedback in training, the percentage demonstrating knowledge doubles to 60%, new skills triples to 60%, yet still only 5% can use their skills in the classroom.

It is not until teachers receive coaching in the classroom that nearly all can demonstrate knowledge, new skills, and actually use their skills. While it is important for teachers to learn the background of a new program and its core components during a training, most learning occurs on the job with the help of a consultant or coach.
When getting ready to implement an innovation, we can feel overwhelmed by perceived barriers. We think that we will never have the time, the right policies, buy-in from staff, funding, or structure within our schools to make an innovation work.

These barriers perpetuate the idea that we don’t have any control. But who sets the policies, the schedules? If we always think in terms of barriers, we will always see barriers instead of the opportunity to overcome them.
Inevitably, there will be barriers to implementation, so teams should plan for them.

- Start by identifying potential barriers prior to implementation. Ask yourselves, “What is going to block us from doing this?”
- Prepare for potential barriers.
- Build capacity of implementation teams to identify and address issues immediately.

The biggest mistake is to ignore barriers or hope they will resolve themselves.
Teams often encounter barriers when they try to shove a new innovation, such as RTI, into an existing service delivery system. Evidence shows that this strategy is not effective and will lead to poor outcomes: The innovation will rarely be fully implemented in a reasonable time frame; components will be viewed as incompatible and will be ignored or not implemented with fidelity; and the innovation will eventually disappear.
Let’s give a hypothetical example of a school team that decides that it will implement RTI. However, the team looks at implementation only in the context of the existing system.

- Implementing a research-based core curriculum makes sense to the team and is easily implemented because other policies support this (for example, funding, resources from the district, guidance).

- The team thinks that universal screening and progress monitoring will be easy. The core curriculum comes with its own premade measures. The professional development schedule for the year is already made, however, and conducting screening and progress monitoring is not on the list. It is up to the teachers to do it with fidelity (no additional time is given to teachers to learn on their own either).

- In addition, the system for providing tiered interventions is not implemented as intended. The schedule for the year is predetermined, and teachers must figure out when interventions will be delivered. Further, training in intervention delivery was not on the PD schedule and materials are limited to what the principal purchased over the summer.

- Finally, the current system does not include sufficient time and systematic routines for analyzing and using data. They have no time allocated for this, and it is not part of existing meetings. Teachers must try to make their own time.

In essence, RTI is never fully implemented and thus is unlikely to make any impact. Teachers never received the training to implement screening, progress monitoring, or tiered interventions with fidelity, and data-based decision making was completely ignored. After “trying it for a while” and not seeing results, RTI soon disappears.
In order for the innovation to be effective, we must first evaluate the current infrastructure. We will need to ask:

- What do we need?
- What needs to be in place in order to do those things?
- How do we put those things in place?
- What supports the implementation; what doesn’t?

Instead of changing the innovation to fit the service delivery system, we change the service delivery system to fit the innovation.

**Effective Strategy: Change System to Support Innovation**

- Evaluate current infrastructure and identify and address potential barriers to implementation.
- Structure technical assistance and service delivery system to support innovation.
This is what that process might look like in relation to RTI. First, we ensure that we have a full understanding of how to implement each of RTI's core components. Then we evaluate our service delivery system to determine what must be changed in order to fully implement RTI. In this case, we decide to make changes in professional development, schedule teaming time, schedule times for assessments and interventions, and restructure priorities.
Think-Pair-Share

Using your notes on your Integrity Rubric Worksheet, share the following:

- Which components of RTI are not fully implemented in your district or school?
- Are there ways that the system can change so that those components are fully implemented?

Give groups 2–3 min to discuss, and then ask a few groups to share.
As you are planning and implementing, here are some important points to keep in mind:

- Training itself will not lead to effective implementation. Efforts in staff selection, training, coaching, and evaluation should be combined to ensure that staff are skilled and are implementing RTI with fidelity.
- Barriers are inevitable; but if we plan for them, we can overcome them.
- If the current system is not compatible with RTI implementation, RTI cannot be implemented with fidelity.
- Remember that the RTI framework has multiple components, and it is important that all the parts are implemented together with fidelity. If you pick and choose which elements to implement, you are unlikely to achieve positive outcomes.
Ask participants to think back on the presentation. Have them write three things they learned, two points that were confirmed, and one (or more) things they would like to do after the training. After giving participants a few minutes, have them share what they wrote with their table groups. After 2 or 3 more minutes, invite tables to share any common answers.
These are some resources that can help you at any stage of implementation.

The first three websites have webinars, checklists, timelines, and other tools that can help you at any stage of RTI implementation. The National Implementation Research Network provides a host of resources, including papers and presentations on implementation research. These materials are not specific to RTI, but many of them provided the background research for this presentation and other RTI-specific resources on implementation.

The last two websites will be helpful for those implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the behavior component of RTI. These websites have many implementation tools, such as readiness tools and self-assessments. An Evaluation Blueprint on the PBIS website provides guidance on implementing a continuous cycle of evaluation.
References


Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
References (continued)


Questions?

National Center on Response to Intervention

www.rti4success.org