



---

## RTI Integrity Framework: A Tool for Monitoring and Evaluating RTI Implementation – Question and Answer

---

**Question:** Students requiring tertiary instruction must necessarily be absent for some part of classroom instruction. What do you recommend so that skills assessed by states standards testing are not compromised?

**NCRTI Answer:** Schedules are a common barrier to RTI implementation, particularly at the secondary level. Thus, it is important for school teams to consider the parts of the day where interventions may occur. In other words, if there are certain “non-negotiable” times of the day (e.g., math, science, P.E.) for supplemental intervention in your school, what parts of the day could be used for intervention? Some schools have addressed this question by designating a school-wide intervention time (or times) each day, and others have built interventions into before/after school periods. Given the short-term nature of many secondary interventions, others have designated certain instructional content from which a student may be pulled for a targeted amount of time. At the secondary grades, many schools use study halls or tutorial periods for intervention and others give students elective credit for supplemental intervention classes. To learn more about scheduling, read our center’s [brief](#) and watch the [webinar](#) on this topic titled, [RTI Scheduling Processes for Middle School](#).

---

**Question:** Does the process of documentation with RTI make it difficult on teachers? Meaning, are the tools used in connection with keeping up with the success or lack thereof a cause of stress on the educators? I know that paper work is a big stress factor for most. Or are the tools used to keep up with it all pretty quick and simple to utilize, in your opinion?

**NCRTI Answer:** RTI is a framework for helping schools to successfully serve all students. As with any systems change effort, there is some additional work involved in initial implementation planning, and some of this may include development and articulation of consistent processes and team norms. Once these processes are in place, however, RTI should help schools to organize and prioritize the data they collect. In many cases, following RTI assessment recommendations may actually help to *reduce* assessment and paperwork demands for teachers.

---

**Question:** What advice would you have for a district wide approach to RTI at the secondary level? We've been researching interventions and strategies that are research-based and evidenced-based, but it's really hard to get buy-in from the staff at the higher grade levels. They all believe interventions should be someone else's job, not theirs.

**Participant Comment:** At the middle school level, there may be as many as 5-7 teachers involved. The question is finding time and location for all to share success of RTI, unsatisfactory



results in some situations. Then it must be determined if changes are needed. Currently working in a middle school, and responsible for some monitoring, I find it a challenge to bring it all together and make meaningful changes for the students.

**NCRTI Answer:** As you likely know, RTI is thought of as a way to provide early and targeted instruction or interventions in identified areas of need to students who need additional help. Thus, it has been implemented widely and most successfully at the elementary level, particularly in primary grades. Strong, comprehensive RTI frameworks are quite lacking at the secondary level because it just has not been a good fit to this point. However, our center and others are working to identify and describe what is happening across the country in terms of RTI at the secondary level. Our partners at the University of Kansas have completed a multi-year study of middle schools implementing RTI. We have released a number of resources related to that study on our website, which you can find [here](#). I can also tell you that each of the middle schools has stated that implementing RTI at the secondary level requires a significant cultural shift in learning and teaching - away from “my students, your students” to “our students.” Teachers will have to think less about teaching content and more about ensuring that students are learning. All teachers can integrate strategies for reading in their instruction. Some of the factors that are common across more successful schools and districts are the following – strong, cohesive, knowledgeable leadership, making methodological practices part of the routine (e.g., weekly meetings to discuss student data), starting small – perhaps just one group of staff members in one grade in one content area, then using the testimony of that group to gain the support of others. Another successful strategy has been standardizing classes – so that Mr. X’s 7<sup>th</sup> grade math class is the same as Ms. Y’s 7<sup>th</sup> grade math class. At the high school level, our center worked with the National High School Center and the Center on Instruction in a collaborative project called the High School Tiered Interventions Initiative. One of the resources from that collaborative highlights lessons learned from eight high schools implementing RTI, which can be accessed here: [http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/HSTII\\_LessonsLearned.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/HSTII_LessonsLearned.pdf)

---

**Question:** Is there a model for RTI in Middle School classrooms, particularly when students rotate classrooms for major subjects?

**NCRTI Answer:** While there is not one "model" for RTI in middle schools, the NCRTI has done extensive work in the area of middle school RTI. We have products that address scheduling at the middle school, implementation processes, and FAQs. To access these resources, you can do a search on the NCRTI's homepage for "secondary" to arrive at the following link: <http://rti4success.org/search-view?title=secondary&body=secondary>

---

**Question:** How do you help keep schools organized and focused if there are handfuls of interventions used at a variety of schools across a larger district?



**NCRTI Answer:** Intervention selection is a process that should be handled carefully and with a great deal of thought and attention. There is any number of “interventions” available to teachers on the Internet and through other sources. However, interventions must be aligned with the identified area of need, must be supported by evidence, and must be appropriate for the target population of students with whom they are being implemented. We encourage districts to take an active role in providing direction to intervention selection. Selecting evidence-based practices involves a multistep process that demands the consideration of needs and priorities and the identification of practices that match those needs and priorities. A critical and sometimes overlooked step in this process is a review of existing evidence to ensure that identified practices meet established criteria for being evidence-based. Once evidence-based practices are selected, the process shifts to implementing those practices with fidelity and evaluating the effectiveness of those practices in improving student outcomes. To select appropriate evidence-based practices, NCRTI recommends the following steps:

1. Identify needs and priorities.
2. Select practices to address needs.
3. Evaluate evidence claims.
4. Implement practices.
5. Evaluate effectiveness.

---

**Question:** On slide 9, multi-level prevention system, you discussed using programs with fidelity. How does this relate to secondary schools, where we don't use packaged programs in our core? We use textbooks and teachers have a lot of freedom to do what they think is best as long as they follow the scope and sequence set forth by our district.

**NCRTI Answer:** Several other responses have covered the resources the NCRTI has available related to secondary level RTI, and I encourage you to explore those. However, some specific findings we've noticed through our work with middle schools and through the HSTII collaborative include relying on observational data and formative assessment data to measure fidelity in lieu of more rigorous fidelity assessment methods. Other tools used to check for fidelity include student progress monitoring results, checklists of procedures completed by observers, checklists of prescribed intervention procedures, interviews with teachers, permanent products, videos of instruction implementation, and teacher to teacher observation. Not only is there a lack of tools available for use at the high school level to assess fidelity (adherence to the implementation of all aspects of RTI as intended), but also the domain-specific knowledge required of the assessor is significant and poses an additional challenge. The coordination of the numerous components involved in RTI implementation is especially complex at the high school level and thus lends itself to lower fidelity of implementation, making the need for careful observation of instruction and communication among staff members non-negotiable.

---



**Question:** At the very end of the webinar, you discuss examples from the field. You talked about external evaluators going to school sites that were piloting RTI and performing evaluations. Is that an option? If so, how can we set that up?

**NCRTI Answer:** This evaluation is an example of how one state has used the RTI Integrity Rubric to support its evaluation of RTI processes. In this example, Washington SEA staff developed structured interviews based on the RTI Integrity Rubric and used it as part of the evaluation of its RTI pilot sites. We will be recording and posting a webinar that details Washington's process in the near future. Please visit [www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org) and the monthly *RTI Responder* ([www.rti4success.org/newsletter](http://www.rti4success.org/newsletter)) for updates.

---

**Question:** On slide 11, multi-level prevention system, you talked about the section on the work sheet regarding tertiary level interventions. One of the questions on #18 of the work sheet asks about whether the tertiary level intervention is always implemented as a supplement to the core or if they replace the core in some cases. I thought the secondary and tertiary interventions should exist in addition to and in conjunction with the core. Why would they replace the core? Is that question only there to ensure people are not replacing the core, or is there a case where the intervention would replace the core instruction?

**NCRTI Answer:** When possible, tertiary/intensive interventions should supplement the student's core program. However, there may be individual students who are so significantly behind their peers that they do not benefit from core instruction. Thus, an alternative program may be appropriate for these students. Importantly, the decision to remove students from the core program should be made on a case-by-case basis, and should be driven by data. In these cases, the student's instructional program should be individualized and regularly evaluated through a review of progress monitoring data. Finally, it is important for instructional teams to consider what they are doing to make the student's tertiary program more intensive than the core or secondary programs.

---

**Question:** Does an intervention such, as speech language therapy due to a communication disorder, support the core?

**NCRTI Answer:** In the response to intervention framework our center is primarily referring to academic or behavioral interventions. Students are eligible for special education, regardless of the category, based on the impact the disability has on the student's capacity to make progress in general education. Thus, when planning any specially designed instruction, the extent to which instruction supports access to the core curriculum should be an important consideration.

---



**Question:** What would you suggest for a school that is mostly using one intervention (i.e. Tier) for Tier II and III?

**NCRTI Answer:** In cases where the same instructional tools are used, it is important for teams to consider what they are doing to make the tertiary program more intense than the secondary program. In some cases, this may mean changing the instructional materials used. It does not, however, have to mean that. Other ways teams may address increasing intensity could include: (1) group size or composition, (2) skill level/experience of the interventionist (when possible, the most skilled interventionists should work with the neediest students), (3) number of repetitions per lesson/skill, (4) duration (number of weeks of intervention or number of minutes per lesson), (5) frequency (number of meetings per week or per day).

---

**Question:** Can "well-trained staff" mean a tutor from our local college if he/she has been trained in the intervention?

**Participant Comment:** I also like the question about "well trained staff." I think that it is very important to put some clear parameters around that. We are considering training teacher prep candidates to be intervention providers, by training them in a particular intervention and closely supervising (by faculty and district staff) their implementation. This doesn't meet the qualifications of a specialist, but it does make the candidate relatively "well trained." We're struggling with whether this will 'fit the bill' in terms of ensuring that interventionists have adequate specialization to offer appropriately intensified instruction. As far as fidelity is concerned, we need a tighter operation definition of "well trained staff" to guide us.

**NCRTI Answer:** It could mean that, particularly when a standard protocol (i.e., a rigorously evaluated intervention that has a script or very specific lesson plan) is used for secondary prevention. At the same time, proper training is essential, and it is important to have procedures in place to monitor the fidelity of the instructional delivery. Also, keep in mind that it is ideal for the most skilled interventionist to work with the neediest students. Thus, when possible, teachers should be used to deliver tertiary interventions.

---

**Question:** Are there specific certification requirements for the different tiers?

**NCRTI Answer:** No. However, it is common to see reading specialists, math specialists, and/or special educators as the designated interventionists at the secondary and tertiary prevention levels.

---



**Question:** What key indicators can we use to assess students more frequently?

**NCRTI Answer:** The Screening and Progress Monitoring Tools Charts were recently updated at [www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org) and provide a review of resources for assessing students in both reading and math at the primary and secondary grade levels.

---

**Question:** Do you have a suggestion for a tier II intervention for behavior?

**NCRTI Answer:** As a federally funded center, we can't make specific recommendations or suggestions for interventions. Our center has also focused more on academic interventions. A fantastic site I recommend for looking at behavioral interventions is the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Center, which can be accessed at [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

---

**Question:** I was reading on the PowerPoint about factors that relate to the entire RTI framework and it has listed communication with and involvement of parents. Why? Why is this not being done throughout the districts and how can we as parents get schools to involve us more?

**Participant Comment:** Maybe a great suggestion would be to include willing parents to be trained to help bring our thoughts together and then just maybe we can grasp it all together in order to help all students etc. All about teamwork!

**Participant Comment:** Parents should step up! I have tried to offer my help to the school and district, but they are somewhere between receptive and willing, which is to say, they have not taken me up on it. I interpret this to mean that they simply aren't ready, and I have learned the hard way that readiness is necessary before progress can be made. So I'm being patient, but persistently present as well.

**Participant Comment:** I would like to contribute to an answer for your question. I too am concerned about the quality and level of districts' involvement of parents in RTI implementation. I think that part of the problem is this: You must know something incredibly well in order to be able to teach it to others, and RTI implementation is so complex, often more so than schools know before they take it on, that schools struggle to communicate with parents when they are still struggling themselves with the concepts. My children's schools' communication about screening and PM is inadequate and misguided, in my opinion, but they are trying to keep parents in the loop just as they are trying to figure out what they are doing. It's the classic problem of building the ship while it floats.

**NCRTI Answer:** We have found that parents are often not included or not fully included in the framework, and as such we feel that it's important for us to emphasize that they should be active and meaningful participants. I have no answer as to why parents aren't involved more - could be



because of time constraints, school staff getting caught up in day to day business, etc. I hope that it is not out of any negative intent. We hope that by emphasizing the essential role that parents play that more districts and schools will involve them more thoughtfully and thoroughly.

---

**Question:** Special education teachers tend to be concerned only with IEP goals, which often do not support core classes. General education teachers become frustrated when this is the case. RTI might help resolve some frustrations, but what is your suggestion to create an amicable collaboration?

**NCRTI Answer:** First, make sure that special and general education teachers are included in data review meetings for the students they work with. Students who receive special education services are students first, so it is important that both general and special education teachers are aware of their instructional programs and progress. Second, use of the same screening and progress monitoring tools across general and special education can also help ease the transition between programs because data can provide special educators with current information to include in students' present levels of performance, and it may be used as baseline information for setting IEP goals. On the flip side, progress monitoring data that demonstrates strong student progress can be a useful source of information for general educators in cases where students exit special education. Finally, special education teachers should be aware of curriculum standards so that IEP goals and instructional planning may be used to help students with disabilities develop the skills they need to access general education. For many students, this may mean that special education instruction includes emphasis on skills below their current grade level, but that are required for them to successfully access the general education curriculum.

---

**Question:** I have not read it on your RTI site, but I was not aware that RTI was to also be considered when a child misses doing homework or is ranking a "D" in class. You all have a lot of great information that I am trying to keep up with. Seems like that is not the appropriate RTI Process, but I don't know so please enlighten me.

**NCRTI Answer:** Homework completion and grades are indicators that should be paid attention to, particularly at the high school level. I'd like to refer you to the National High School Center and their work on early warning systems. Their website is <http://www.betterhighschools.org>. Additionally, poor homework completion and poor grades (particularly with secondary students) should also be considered when looking at behavior - they could be a screener for behavior concerns.

---

**Question:** Our district is stating that the implementation of RTI will substantially reduce the need to identify students. Is this an accurate or legal view?



**NCRTI Answer:** Implementation of RTI may lead to more accurate referrals to special education due to the fact that all decisions must be supported by data. It is the hope that early and specific intervention can reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to special education. In fact, the 15% that can be used for coordinated early intervening services was based on the amount that districts historically spent on referring students who then did not qualify for special education services.

---