Introduce yourself (or selves) as the facilitator(s) and briefly cite your professional experience in regard to RTI implementation.

Today we are talking about RTI implementation, practices, and considerations at the middle school level. We will discuss some ways that other middle schools have already implemented RTI and how those methods might influence your own implementation procedures.
I (we) have four areas to cover with you. We will begin by briefly reviewing:

1. How the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) defines RTI and the essential components of screening, progress monitoring, data-based decision making, and the multi-level prevention system for instruction as it was conceptualized at the elementary school level.

2. We will quickly review how information was gathered about RTI practices in middle schools, which will be highlighted in this presentation. We know less about RTI at the secondary level, so we wanted to find out how RTI already has been implemented in middle schools. Much of the information in this presentation is drawn from those practitioners’ experiences.

After this brief introduction, we will:

3. Describe how the essential components are conceptualized and implemented in the middle schools participating in our information-gathering study. We also will include information on considerations for your own school models.

4. Finally, we conclude with some practitioner considerations for RTI implementation at the middle school level.
Participant Outcomes

By the end of the training, participants should be able to:

1. Articulate the four essential components of RTI.
2. Understand RTI essential components in middle schools.
3. Understand RTI implementation of key components.
4. Understand the implementation plan worksheets to begin developing their own plans.

“Response to Intervention in Middle Schools” has four objectives. By the end of the training, you should be able to:

1. Articulate the four essential components of RTI and understand how they work as a whole framework.
2. Understand how the RTI essential components might work in middle schools; particularly, we hope you begin to conceptualize how RTI might work in your own school framework.
3. Understand RTI implementation of key components.
4. Understand the implementation plan worksheets to begin developing your own plans that fit the needs of your school.

For each section, we will end with a “reflections” section and provide an activity handout to help you begin thinking about actions and activities to help ease the implementation processes for your school.
So, what is Response to Intervention?
Think-Pair-Share

- What do you think about when you hear RTI?

The Think-Pair-Share activity is optional. The purpose of the activity is to engage the audience and conduct an informal assessment of the audience’s knowledge of RTI.

Think about what words come to mind when you hear RTI.

Give participants approximately 20 seconds.

Pair and share with your neighbor/table, and list as many words as you can.

Give participants approximately 2-3 minutes.

Allow two or three pairs/tables to orally share their lists. The text below may be adapted based on the responses.

Thank you to the pairs/tables that shared their lists. We heard a lot of the same terms repeated. We heard terms related to RTI as an innovation (possible terms include “screening,” “progress monitoring,” and “interventions”) and the implementation of RTI (possible terms include “parent involvement,” “leadership,” “teams”). Today we will be focusing on RTI as an innovation. In other words, what needs to be in place in order for RTI to happen. We refer to the innovation as the implementing the essential components of RTI. We will briefly talk about the implementation of RTI and its components, but it is first important to understand what RTI is and why we should implement RTI.

We are about to discuss what we consider the essential components of RTI. Even though these components are more widely known at the elementary school level, many middle schools use the same essential components in their own RTI models. However, at the elementary level, RTI is viewed as a prevention model, but it is often a remediation model at the secondary level.
Although we are still learning exactly which RTI components make sense and how they should be conceptualized and implemented at the middle school level, NCRTI uses this definition to capture the purpose and function of RTI.

We commonly refer to “universal screening” as the process that schools use to identify students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes.

Using frequent progress monitoring assessments provides schools with the data to monitor student progress in instructional interventions.

Having a multi-level prevention system in your school will provide your students with increasingly intense levels of evidence-based instruction and interventions based on each student’s responsiveness.

The “linchpin” that allows staff to use screening and progress monitoring data to drive instructional decision making is for schools to have an explicit, systematic process for data-based decision making.

Using the students’ data (e.g., screening, progress monitoring) allows school staff to quickly adjust the intensity and nature of interventions based on student responsiveness.
Essential RTI Components

- Screening
- Schoolwide, multi-level instructional prevention system:
  - Primary (Level I)
  - Secondary (Level II)
  - Tertiary (Level III)
- Progress monitoring
- Data-based decision making for:
  - Instructional decision making
  - Movement within the multi-level system
  - Disability identification (in accordance with state law)
  - Evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention

As noted in the definition, the National Center on Response to Intervention has identified four essential components that make up RTI.

1. **Screening** – a system for identifying students at risk for poor learning outcomes.
2. **Multi-level prevention system** – at least three increasingly intense levels of instructional support.
   - a) **Primary**, which is the core instruction and curriculum.
   - b) **Secondary**, which is in addition to the primary level and provides supports targeted to students’ needs.
   - c) **Tertiary**, also supplemental to primary, but more intense than secondary.
3. **Progress monitoring** – a system for monitoring the effectiveness of the supports provided to students.
4. **Data-based decision making** for
   - a) **Instruction** – determining who needs assistance, what type of instruction or assistance is needed, whether the duration and intensity are sufficient.
   - b) **Movement within the multi-level system** – when to move students to something more or less intense, who is responding and/or not responding.
   - c) **Disability identification** – when to refer for special education evaluation, how the student compares to his or her peers, did he or she receive appropriate instruction. This, of course, is in accordance with the state law.
   - d) **Evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention**
The Center developed this graphic to highlight the RTI framework. Many of you probably associate the traditional red, green, and yellow triangle with RTI. In reality, the triangle does not represent the RTI framework; it represents only one component: multi-level prevention. The Center graphic takes into account all of 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 left, you see screening; to the right, progress monitoring; and at the bottom, the multi-level prevention system. The three outer components 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 center 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.

Next, I’m going to talk about each essential component in a little more detail.
Now that you have a basic overview of how we conceptualize Response to Intervention, we want to orient you to how we gathered information about RTI at the middle school level, which I will discuss very briefly. This information will be used throughout our discussion on RTI at the secondary level. We’ll provide information on how other schools have implemented the framework, and we will offer some suggestions for your own schools as you move forward with implementation.
The information about RTI in middle schools came from schools representing 28 states across the nation. NCRTI staff wanted to be as thorough and inclusive as possible when recruiting schools. They initially found middle schools by using a snowball sampling method and looked at such venues as school websites, RTI summits, conference presentations, self-nomination, peer nomination, and publications to identify potential middle school sites that exhibited some level of RTI planning and implementation. They then contacted 82 schools and asked them to participate in this project. Forty-two schools agreed to participate and also met the initial selection criteria of implementing the four essential components of RTI.
Also, NCRTI staff conducted in-depth phone interviews with administrators and staff from these 42 schools about their RTI initial implementation, data-based decision making team, screening practices, progress monitoring practices, and multi-level instructional system.

The next stage of data collection involved telephone-based data-collection surveys. At a minimum, we sought to include schools with the following criteria (based on Shinn, 2008):

- One screening assessment at least once per year in one content area
- Progress monitoring at least once per month for secondary-level interventions
- Progress monitoring at least two times per month for tertiary-level interventions
- At least three levels (or tiers) of prevention
- A predetermined data-based decision-making process

They then invited 20 schools that met all of these selection criteria to participate in the follow-up phone survey, and these schools were offered a small stipend. Of the 20 schools invited, 17 schools participated in the follow-up data-collection phone survey.

When the schools demonstrated positive student outcomes based on their data, NCRTI staff asked to make an on-site visit to observe RTI practices and identify implementation characteristics that were common among the middle schools. We also offered the schools a stipend for allowing us to visit. Two NCRTI staff members visited 12 middle schools to observe the RTI processes in the middle schools.
We want to provide you an understanding of the range and variety of schools that participated in the study.

The majority (77%) of schools served 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-grade students.

Participating school demographics were fairly diverse and included small, rural; mid-range suburban; and large, urban schools. School size ranged from 160 to 1,370 students; 27% reported less than 500 students, 60% reported between 500 and 1,000 students; and 13% reported more than 1,000 students.

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students (as measured by percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch) ranged steadily from 0% to 60%, with one school at 80%. The schools’ ethnic diversity also varied, with 13% of schools having enrollments more than 5 percentage points below their respective state’s average white non-Hispanic enrollment, 20% within 5 percentage points of average, and 67% more than 5 percentage points above average.

The number of students with an individualized education program (IEP) ranged from 7% to 20%.
Before we discuss the processes involved in preparing your school for RTI implementation, we first focus on how middle schools have implemented the RTI essential components. We introduced the essential components briefly at the beginning of the session.
Do you remember our essential components graphic from early in the presentation? We will use it to illustrate how RTI works.

As we start our discussion about the RTI essential components in middle schools, we’ll start with screening.
Screening Practices

- **Purpose.** Screening data give school staff a broad view of:
  - Class-wide needs
  - Individual student risk status

- **Tools.** Key staff members researched and chose tools that matched the method, frequency, and content area that best fit their needs.

- **Frequency.** Nearly 75% of schools (30/42) screened 3 times each year.

The National Center on RTI defines “screening” as brief assessments that are valid, reliable, and evidence based. These screenings are conducted with all students or targeted groups to identify students who may be at risk of academic failure and, therefore, likely to need additional or alternative forms of instruction to supplement the primary or core curriculum.

All of the middle schools in the study used screening tools to identify the students who needed additional supports. Screening tools varied school by school; many used multiple screening measures (e.g., oral reading fluency and Jamestown reading passages with comprehension questions). The most common screening tools for reading and math were AIMSweb, MAP (NWEA), CBMs, and state assessment results.

The majority of schools (30/42) screen 3 times each year. Several administrators referred to the importance of collecting data from a mid-year screening assessment. With that mid-year screen, staff could identify when:

- Students’ at-risk status changed.
- Students were making expected gains.
- Classes were making expected gains.

Although the schools all implemented screening practices, there are other considerations about whether schools already know which students need help due to the elementary school data already collected. Therefore, your schools might want to first assess their own needs to determine whether an additional screening tool is necessary to identify at-risk students.
Note: There is a video link at the end of the notes for this slide.

Although not all secondary schools might need screening, most of the school staff in our study emphasized how valuable they found the data. In addition, several middle schools reported that their mid-year screening has been a vital data collection activity. The winter screening identified students who had started slipping, but it also was a key indicator of when classes or entire grades needed a boost in a particular area.

Because the testimony of colleagues carries so much value, we’re going to watch a quick video to hear how a few practitioners view the importance of screening.

*VIDEO HERE – importance of screening: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaHWoN-LVFc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaHWoN-LVFc)*
Schools had to decide what outcomes they wanted from a screening assessment: What do they want to know after testing the students?

Following that, schools decided what their needs were for screening assessments. Some were worried about reading fluency or comprehension gaps, while others wanted to predict to their end-of-the-year “high-stakes” tests. Many schools already had access to existing data for their middle school students because students entered middle school with a performance history.

As your district and school considers your screening needs, you will need to determine:

- Content areas
- Types of screening tools
- Assessment frequency
- Follow-up diagnostic assessments

Once you determine your ideal screening practices, the district and team can decide how to proceed in implementing screening practices.

Adolescent students arrive in middle school with a school performance history. Middle school personnel will want to consider this performance history and the data records of their incoming students. Although school staff received performance history and initial information about future academic performance, all middle school personnel advocated for the value of continuing screening assessments to identify potentially at-risk students needing additional instruction or intervention. Furthermore, as new students transfer into the school, the staff need a way to determine their academic needs.

Many school staff began determining their needs by using the data from their own state assessments. The state assessment is a free data source that will give you an idea about whether you actually need additional screening tools, or whether it provides the information you need to meet your students’ needs.

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Choosing Screening Tools

Participating middle schools considered:

- Their desired outcomes from an assessment.
  - Determine basic skills gaps.
  - Predict school performance.
- Existing data collection tools.

“Because we are screening..., we see problems in real time, so we are identifying kids before there is a major deficit.”

—Middle School Principal
One of the questions we get most from the field is “Which screening tool should we use?”

The National Center on Response to Intervention has developed a **Screening Tools Chart** that can be accessed through the Center’s website at [http://www.rti4success.org/screeningTools](http://www.rti4success.org/screeningTools). The tools chart does not recommend tools, but it provides users with a consumer report on available tools, similar to what you may find when searching for a car. A team of experts on screening have rated the effectiveness of commercially available tools by evaluating data given by the vendor, and their ratings are shown in the chart.

The chart offers information about the technical rigor, classification accuracy, efficiency, cost, and implementation requirements of the tools. Teams can use the chart to identify the tool that best meets the needs of the school.

The Screening Tools Chart is available on NCRTI’s website. I recommend that you use it online because 90% of it is hyperlinked, which will give you access to more information.

I also recommend that you download the User Guide and Audio tour for tool charts.

The User Guide explains the importance of different evidence ratings and provides guiding questions to assist the team in determining their individual needs.

Some of these are more geared toward elementary school, and some include measures for middle school. Again, your own state assessment is a free (and mandatory) data source!
Think-Pair-Share

Screening Processes

- Think about how to implement screening in your school.
- If you already have a screening practice, how are the data and results working for your needs?

Ask participants to:

Think about screening processes in your school.
Pair with your neighbor/table.
Share with thoughts with your neighbor or table.
If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.
Screening Handout

- Take a few minutes to review the handout and think about questions.

Just like the handouts for the implementation processes, we have handouts for the essential components as well.

We will take about 5 minutes to review the handout on screening. We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
The next essential component of an RTI framework is a **school-wide, multi-level prevention system**.

**School-wide** implies that we are referring to preventive instruction for all students, not just providing a series of interventions for some students. This instructional system is also designed to be **preventive**, meaning instructional supports are put in place BEFORE a child fails. It is important to remember that special education is not what we are trying to prevent. Instead, special education is another level of support designed to prevent general school failure.
Multi-Level Instruction

- Middle schools follow the same general instructional framework that has been found in elementary schools:
  - Primary prevention
  - Secondary intervention
  - Tertiary intervention

Quick slide.

Read

Many of the schools in the study worked very hard to implement three levels of intervention. However, many schools had only the resources, or even the need, for just two levels of intervention. For example, they really had only a secondary level of intervention. So, while we discuss three levels of intervention, it may not be the exact right model for your own students.
Primary prevention is crucial because it supports the majority of your student population.

All middle schools indicated that their most important RTI focus was solidifying their core instruction and that improving their core instruction was pivotal to RTI implementation success—to have at least 80% of their students meeting proficiency standards. In middle school, the primary prevention is all content area instruction.

Ways that the staff in our study suggested improving their primary instruction include—

- Engaging students in their learning – While important in every classroom, at every level of instruction, many middle schools emphasized their efforts to engage their students in the primary level of instruction. Some of the techniques were to review each section and lesson’s objectives with the class, write out the day’s objectives on the board, quickly review past lessons, and generalize information to the next objectives. Many of these techniques helped the students understand and generalize their learning goals.

- Every student knows the learning goals.

- Some schools invested heavily in a research-based core curriculum that aligned with their state standards and focused on fidelity of implementation to ensure that the curriculum was implemented with high quality. Implementing a districtwide standardized curriculum ensured that all students in all classes received the same lessons. Obviously, the school district has a role in providing a standardized curriculum and ensures that staff have the resources to provide schools with the support and scientifically research-based curriculum that is aligned to state standards.

Schools also ensured that all their staff members received appropriate professional development in differentiated instruction and other instructional strategies. Many schools supported recently trained staff by providing modeling, coaching, and feedback until the staff members could successfully and independently use the instructional method. Once a school’s staff thought that their primary level (core instruction) was solid, they began putting more emphasis on the secondary level of intervention.
This middle school principal emphasized that when they first implemented RTI, they needed to focus first on their core instruction for all their students; so, prior to worrying about intervention classes, they first provided professional development and emphasized fidelity of implementation at their primary level of prevention. They credit their success of the rest of their RTI framework to first solidifying the primary level.
Middle School Practices for Secondary Intervention

- **Class size.** The student-teacher ratio was ~ 10–15:1
- **Schedule.** Interventions often occurred during electives or an already existing “flex” class period.
- **Delivery.** General education teachers most frequently taught the intervention classes, but some schools reported a combination of general educators, special educators, and specialists.
- **Frequency.** Most students received interventions daily.
- **Duration.** Most interventions were a class-long session (typical time was 44 minutes).

When screening scores indicated that a group of students was not meeting the school’s predetermined levels of proficiency, those students received more intensified instruction in secondary-level interventions. Secondary-level instruction is delivered to those students identified as needing additional academic instruction. For example, these are the students that your data show are struggling to meet your standards and need additional instructional support.

Some of the middle schools intensified secondary-level instruction in several ways:

- **Smaller class sizes** for specialized classes (e.g., a 1:10 teacher/student ratio)
- **Homogenous classes** of students with similar instructional needs
- **Expert teachers** prepared to deliver instruction in the specific areas of concern
- **Frequency and duration** of instruction increased

All middle schools scheduled their secondary level of intervention in place instead of an elective class. These interventions often occur daily and consist of small groups of students with similar instructional needs.

In secondary-level interventions, many schools also used standard protocols, (i.e., research based, validated, prepackaged, scripted instructional programs for reading and mathematics). Most schools had a menu of standard protocols from which to choose when determining students’ instructional needs. As one principal stated, "We try, at our [secondary level], to put our students in cohorts as best we can with similar deficiencies, or areas of weakness, so that we can really target instruction."

In many middle schools, a general education teacher taught secondary-level intervention classes during elective class time for a full-class period. Some schools offered classes in a block framework, wherein classes met every other day for a longer period of time (e.g., 1½). Other schools were able to hire interventionists, whose sole job was to teach the more intensive classes. No matter the background of the instructor, all teachers of intervention classes were specifically prepared to teach the intensive instructional methods.

At this point, you probably are wondering how to fit in extra classes in an already packed schedule. We’ll offer some ideas in a moment.
The tertiary level is considered the most intensive level of individualized instruction for the hardest-to-teach students. Only a small percentage of a school’s student population should need this level of individualized instruction. Schools employed various techniques to provide students with such intensive instruction. As we mentioned earlier, not all schools implemented a tertiary level of intervention. However, many did in order to target those students who were very far behind academically.

The tertiary level is a very important difference from a traditional elementary model. Some schools could consider immediately placing students into the tertiary level if their prior data indicated they were academically far enough behind their peers. Why wait and make students go through the secondary level when they are already so far behind?

The tertiary level also was used for those students who did not respond to the secondary-level interventions. This approach allowed the schools to further increase the intensity of the instruction.

Schools reported struggling the most with scheduling such individualized instruction. Some schools used the already existing special education structure to provide tertiary instruction. Others pulled students from elective classes or even core content classes (e.g., social studies or science), with the understanding that if a student can’t read, he or she won’t be able to understand social studies.

Many schools relied on the expertise of special education teachers, special education instructional techniques, and instructional programs to develop their tertiary level of intervention.

A few examples about the differences between secondary interventions and tertiary level interventions are:

- **Class sizes.** Class sizes for schools with promising tertiary-level classes reported a teacher to student ratio of 3-4:1, or smaller.

- **Individualized instruction.** The instructional techniques were designed for each individual student’s specific deficits

- **Increased instructional time.** Students often received a daily tertiary-level class in addition to a secondary-level class and the core-level general education classes (i.e., three periods per day).

During our discussion on data based decision making, we’ll talk about how the decisions are made for which students need interventions.
Many educators ask how it is possible to schedule the multi-level instructional classes. Truly, the schools’ methods varied greatly, but we wanted to provide you just one middle school’s example of how staff adjusted time to build in interventions. Clearly schools have to build their schedules to meet their needs, and this school has adjusted its schedule several times to try to accommodate all needs. This is their latest version, although the principal said they may tweak again depending on their students’ data and needs.

One of the first things you might notice when looking at this schedule is that every grade operates on a different timeline each day. The intervention times also are staggered between grades but common within each grade level. All sixth graders needing intervention received their intervention classes during the morning “tutorial” time.

For example, the 6th-grade homeroom is 10 minutes longer to accommodate the intervention time early in the morning. The 7th- and 8th-grade classes are on a slightly different schedule the rest of the day. The students are well aware of their schedules because the staff works with them at the beginning of the school year to ensure everyone knows where they belong. They provide a little more “hand-holding” with the sixth graders. The school works on a bell system, and the students pay attention to which bells are theirs—the 6th grade versus the 7th and 8th grades.

You’ll also notice that one of the changes the school made was to shorten their transition time between classes. They now have 2-minute transition times, allowing them more instructional time in their day. Both 7th and 8th graders have morning block times focused on content area (“basic”). The 7th grade then has a block for intervention time.
In 2010, NCRTI released its **Instructional Intervention Tools Chart** that can be accessed through the Center’s website at [http://www.rti4success.org/instructionTools](http://www.rti4success.org/instructionTools), to help users determine the effectiveness of interventions used in secondary- and tertiary-level prevention systems. On the left hand side, you will see the program and the published research that was evaluated for that particular program. Study quality and effect size data are provided to assist consumers in evaluating the efficacy of specific programs. On the Center’s website, there is an easy-to-use video to show you how to interpret the Tools Chart as well as a User Guide.

Again, I recommend that you use this online so you can utilize the links, and download the User Guide to help you and your team through the process.
Think-Pair-Share

Multi-Level Instruction

- What techniques do you employ in your primary prevention level to boost instructional outcomes?
- What specific practices differentiate your secondary and tertiary instructional levels?
- How will you ensure that intensive-level instruction remains aligned to the core curriculum?

Ask participants to:

Think about multi-level instruction, including primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level interventions. What does your school already have in place? What do you need to implement?

Give participants approximately 20 seconds.

Pair with your neighbor/table.

Share thoughts with your neighbor or table.

If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.
We will take about 5 minutes to review the handout on the multi-level prevention system. We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
Let’s move on to the next essential component: progress monitoring.
Progress monitoring practices vary widely among middle schools.

Schools have developed many different techniques and frequencies for monitoring the progress of their students. The National Center on Response to Intervention recommends at least monthly progress monitoring for secondary level and weekly for tertiary level.

Schools reported that they are always searching for appropriate measures for their interventions. Many wanted tools that align with their curriculum standards so they can know if they are addressing the identified weakness. The most common tools were assessments that accompanied instructional curricula, or intervention programs, and curriculum-based measures (called CBMs). Often the CBMs were district- or school-created and normed. For example, one school district created district-wide assessments that corresponded to their goals for the students. The teachers had these tools and were able to easily monitor their students’ progress. Other schools developed their own independent assessments that allowed their teachers to keep track of their students’ learning goals.

Progress monitoring data give multiple layers of information to staff members about the success of the interventions both for individual students and for entire intervention programs. Frequent progress monitoring data provides teachers and students immediate feedback about whether students are reaching their learning goals and if the intervention meets the students’ needs. When determining responsiveness, many schools used a trend line with 3 to 6 data points and made instructional decisions based on students’ progress toward a goal score (or aim line). Instructional decisions often were made in a team setting using multiple data sources (e.g., screening scores, progress monitoring data, formative assessments, behavior reports, grades). Most schools actively involved their students in their own data collection and graphing.

Many schools involved their students in the progress monitoring process. As one principal stated, “Students have to progress monitor. They have to be involved in their progress monitoring. Students, especially at the middle school level, are very savvy and very aware that they are not in the same place as their peers. They have to know that they are making growth. They have to see their small gains or large gains and be able to celebrate.”

Common decisions made from the progress monitoring data included:

- Continuing with an intervention if the student was making progress
- Changing an intervention
  - Middle school staff wanted to be flexible with their students’ schedules, allowing them to respond quickly to the students’ academic needs. So, when students met their learning goals, they could be moved back to a normal schedule. Or, when students needed a different intervention, staff were able to move the student to a more appropriate intervention class.
- Moving a student to a tertiary-level intervention if the student was not responsive to the secondary-level intervention
- Moving a student back to primary-level interventions
As with screening, the National Center on Response to Intervention has developed the Progress Monitoring Tools Chart, which can be accessed through the NCRTI’s website at http://www.rti4success.org/progressMonitoringTools. Given the extensive research being conducted in the area of progress monitoring, the Progress Monitoring Tools Chart has more indicators (columns) and tools than the Screening Tools Chart. The chart assesses the reliability, validity, sensitivity, technical rigor, cost, and implementation requirements of the tools.

Again, I recommend that you use this tool online so you can use the links, and download the User Guide to help you and your team through the process.

Note that none of these progress monitoring tools currently have high school level probes, and that’s a challenge. Some include middle school probes. We have seen high schools use some of these probes for students who are several years behind and need progress monitoring for lower reading levels.
Think-Pair-Share

Progress Monitoring

- What tools will you use to measure each content area and level of intervention?
- With what frequency do you need to collect student data for secondary-level and tertiary-level intervention classes?

Ask participants to:

Think about progress monitoring, including frequency at the primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level interventions. What assessments and tools does your school already have in place? What do you need to implement?

Give participants approximately 20 seconds.

Pair with your neighbor/table.

Share thoughts with your neighbor or table.

If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.
Essential Components Guiding Questions: Progress Monitoring Handout

- Take a few minutes to review the handout and think about questions.

Just like before, we will take about 5 minutes to review the handout on progress monitoring. We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
Implementation of screening, progress monitoring, and a multi-level system of support alone is not sufficient for RTI. A systematic, comprehensive data-based decision-making process is necessary to connect the pieces.

Looking at the graphic, you will see that arrows go in both directions, in and out of the circle, meaning that progress monitoring and screening data are necessary for data-based decision making and data-based decision making impacts progress monitoring and screening decisions. This also applies to the multi-level prevention system.
The purpose of a data-based decision-making framework is for school administration and key staff members to have an established procedure to make instructional decisions that are immediately responsive to students’ needs based on the screening and progress monitoring data collected. Collecting and analyzing student data on a regular basis allows staff to be immediately responsive to students’ instructional needs.

The decision-making framework is a set of established routines and procedures for making decisions at all levels of RTI implementation, and it provides explicit decision rules for assessing student progress. School staff members should have an established decision-making system for collecting and analyzing data. The data-based decision making process facilitates analysis of the student data to evaluate whether students are benefitting from the instructional interventions and curriculums.

To facilitate the decision-making process, many of the schools established a data-based decision-making team (RTI team) to make student instructional decisions. Many times this was the same team that led the implementation processes we described earlier today.

For example, one school reported, “We have a math and reading literacy team that analyzes data and notifies students and families of our plans. The leadership team meets weekly, and we manage any individual issues that arise.”

When schools reported having a shared decision-making process, they more easily established the decision-making procedures and routines.
In this example of how one school has established its process, staff used multiple levels and types of data to make instructional decisions.

For instance, they have established a “screening questionnaire,” which asks for a brief report from the feeder elementary schools on how each student is doing in reading and math. These data give staff a starting data point prior to the beginning-of-the-year screener for incoming students. This school uses all the screening data when making decisions about what the screening information means.

The school principal credits the leadership data team meetings for gaining buy-in for the RTI initiative. The team has core members (i.e., administrators, counselors, school psychologist, special education teachers) and has the general education teachers rotate onto the team to experience the data-based decision-making process. The diversity of team members provides the team with a breadth and depth of professional expertise to meet the needs of the students.

Leadership teams meet regularly to discuss students receiving interventions – to see if the interventions are working, or if the student still needs the intervention, for example. Teachers also are able to refer students to the team if a student starts demonstrating need (that was not “caught” by the screener).

This school is starting to explore the idea of involving the students in the team data-based decision-making process so they can more fully participate in their learning.
Think-Pair-Share

Data-Based Decision Making

- What types of data (screening and progress monitoring) will you use to make data-based instructional decisions?
- What are your data-based decision-making procedures (decision tree)?

Ask participants to:

Think about data-based decision making. Give participants approximately 20 seconds.
Pair with your neighbor/table.
Share thoughts with your neighbor or table.

If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.
Just like before, we will take about 5 minutes to review the handout on data-based decision making. We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
Now that you understand how the essential components have been used in middle schools, we will discuss the processes that schools used when they implemented RTI. Today, we will focus on the first three stages of implementation:

1. Exploring and Adopting
2. Planning
3. Implementing

As you are aware, there are many dimensions and activities within each implementation stage. We will highlight a few of the practices that middle school practitioners found valuable during their implementation experiences.

On a side note: We won’t address Stage 4 (Continuously Improving) because we know you are at the beginning of the implementation process. When you’re ready to refine and sustain your model, there are implementation resources for you to use.
The first stage in the implementation process is the Exploring and Adopting stage. This is the critical stage when school personnel begin understanding RTI, determining if RTI will work for their school, and preparing for the RTI implementation process. During this stage, the school and district leaders carefully research and consider the implications and expected RTI outcomes. The Exploring and Adopting stage lays the foundation for RTI implementation.

The information we’re presenting stems from the key considerations we heard from other middle schools, but they are not comprehensive of the entire implementation process. Today we will highlight four features that help school staff move forward with implementation activities.

**Focus** - Until stakeholders are clear about the focus (what is being implemented and why it is being implemented), many may be reluctant to support implementation efforts.

**Culture** - Is the school climate and culture ready for RTI?

**Leadership** - Effective leadership sets the context for successful implementation of RTI by creating broad awareness and initial buy-in for the implementation of an innovation.

**Leadership teams** - For RTI to achieve success in the performance of individual students and school improvement, full support of local leadership is required.
Focus: Why did schools choose RTI?

- To close the student achievement gap
- To meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) every year with every subgroup
- To address undesirable and disruptive behaviors

The “focus” of implementation was the reason a school or district decided to change.

The key question administrators asked themselves was phrased something like “What do we want to accomplish with RTI implementation?”

Prior to implementation, administrators decided how and why RTI could meet their students’ academic and behavioral needs.

Agreeing on a focus can provide the impetus for RTI implementation. The school leaders work to clearly establish and communicate the goals and expected outcomes to create the foundation for innovation implementation.

The participating middle schools commonly stated that the goals were—
- To close the achievement gap.
- To meet AYP.
- To address undesirable and disruptive behaviors.

Some questions you may want to ask yourself to determine your own goals are “What is your school’s focus?” and “What brought you here today to learn about implementation?”
Shaping the school culture often began with administrators setting clear expectations that RTI was pivotal and necessary for meeting the needs of their students.

Culture changes progressed throughout implementation activities. For example, several schools’ practitioners (administrators and staff) reported that cultural change began as the staff worked together during team meetings and collaboration sessions and progressed and spread through the whole teaching staff during implementation activities.

School staff reported perceptual changes. Some of the cultural shifts included developing a common knowledge around RTI, data collection, and student achievement.

For example, some of the common sentiments across schools were that “every student can learn” and “all staff can teach all students.”

For many schools, this shift in roles and responsibilities was a significant, difficult challenge to current practices. Staff saw that RTI implementation activities took focused attention, planning, and extra time and required change in everyday practices; but frequently, once the implementation practices began producing attributable student outcomes, the teaching staff was so enthusiastic and excited about what they were doing, and the changes they saw in the students, that they couldn’t imagine going back to their traditional teaching methods.
This information is directly from the middle schools. The staff and administrators all emphasized how important leadership was for the RTI process. Here are a few of their strongest points for your consideration.

**Leadership**

Strong principal leadership in the middle schools:

- Provided ongoing professional development.
- Provided staff with sufficient time to understand RTI.
- Addressed staff questions and concerns.
- Led school structural changes to accommodate collaboration and intervention time.
- Promoted staff buy-in through hands-on involvement in the decision-making process.
- Ensured that new hires are willing to embrace RTI.

**Principals** played an integral role in implementing RTI components and processes. They provided staff with the time necessary to understand the language, structure, and changes, as well as the benefits and challenges of implementing RTI. From these middle schools, we believe that for other middle schools wishing to implement RTI, the more knowledge the administration shares with the staff, the better that staff will understand and implement the essential components.

Leadership in the middle schools allowed teachers to be flexible and creative during the implementation process. For example, one teacher told us that “the administration gave [teachers] freedom to take risks, try new things, learn from what doesn’t work, and move forward with what does work.”

Furthermore, school staff across many middle schools reported that their principals were responsive to their resource and training needs and provided the support and resources they needed for successful implementation. One teacher said, “Leadership is supportive of the teachers. Anything the teachers need, the administration provides it.”

The take-away from the middle school interviews is that the principal of the school is often the person who leads the changes in the school schedule to fit time for teacher collaboration and arranging classroom schedules to arrange intervention classes. This approach often is arranged in collaboration with other staff members, allowing the staff to participate in the decision making and facilitating understanding of the framework.
Many of the school principals established a RTI leadership team to facilitate the implementation process. One school reported, “It was the first thing we did.” Most teams included, but were not limited to, administrators, counselors, special education and general education teachers, data coordinators, RTI coordinators, coaches, and reading and math specialists.

Some of the examples of the team’s responsibilities from the participating schools are as follows:

- **Agenda.** A staff member sets the agenda for the team meetings and records the team’s instructional decisions.
- **Data.** A staff member collects and provides the student data to the rest of the team.
- **Instructional decisions.** When an instructional change was made, one of the team members took responsibility for ensuring that the change was implemented.
- **Follow-up.** Teams also made decisions about how to ensure that the students involved are responsive to the interventions.
- **Communication.** A system is in place to maintain transparency of the decision-making process, decisions, and follow-up procedures for the rest of the staff and the students involved.

One participating school principal and the school staff members reported that the school’s data-based decision-making team was the reason that the school staff experienced buy-in of the RTI process. The team setting provided all school staff with an opportunity to participate in, evaluate, and understand the data-based decision-making process upon which instructional decisions were made. In this particular school, the RTI team consisted of the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselors, special education teachers, RTI interventionists, and a district intervention specialist. Three general education teachers also participated in each meeting, the general education staff took turns attending each meeting, and thus all staff in the school had the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process at least one time during the school year. Everyone participated, collaborated, and shared knowledge. The staff members all reported placing high value on meeting participation, and their professional knowledge and expertise were pivotal to the decision-making process.
Prestine and Bowen (1993) discussed the critical need for building staff capacity and facilitating true systemic leadership throughout your faculty. All staff are empowered to lead organizational changes in your school.

Although principals endorsed and led the implementation activities, they emphasized that decisions were made in collaboration with other staff members, which facilitated both the decision-making process as well as staff participation, buy-in, and understanding of RTI. The principals stated that systemic leadership was necessary for RTI being established as their school’s framework for addressing their goals (e.g., improved student achievement and behavior).

During the Exploring and Adapting process, recruit those teachers who will be your staff leaders because they are central to building systemic leadership. These leaders are important particularly in light of the turnover among staff and developing the knowledge and skills of new staff in the district and school. Identify which staff will excel in the different roles and who can help set priorities, work towards consensus, mentor others, and lead the implementation process.
Think-Pair-Share

Exploring and Adopting

- How will RTI benefit your school (*focus*)?
- Are staff ready to embrace RTI (*culture*)?
- Will the principal lead the RTI changes (*leadership*)?
- Which staff members are helping lead RTI (*systemic leadership*)?

*NOTE: Maybe suggest some questions for the participants to think about.*

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**Ask participants to:**

**Think** about Exploring and Adopting.
You have about 20 seconds for each question.

**Pair** with your neighbor or small group.

**Share** with your initial thoughts with your neighbor or group.

*If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.*

*NOTE: Maybe suggest some questions for the participants to think about.*
We will take about 5 minutes to review the handout with guiding questions about Focus, Culture, Leadership, and Leadership Teams. We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
Planning

- Building staff knowledge
- Continuous professional development
- Implementation plan development

When your school team decides that RTI is the right path for your outcomes, the next stage is planning for RTI implementation. The purpose of the planning stage in the implementation process is to develop clear plans, processes, and procedures that lead to successful implementation. This approach is essential to construct the infrastructure and structural supports necessary to support RTI implementation.

By establishing infrastructure and proper supports PRIOR to implementation, sites are more likely to experience increased practitioner and community support, more timely student benefit, and more efficient use of resources.

In the schools visited, the leaders and the leadership team built consensus, formulated plans, provided guidance and supports, and readied the school for implementation.
Staff Knowledge Building

Key actions for staff understanding were:

- Clearly stating the **purpose, goals, and expected outcomes** of RTI.
- Developing an implementation **plan** with staff.
- Establishing frequently used **communication** pathways.
- Listening to and addressing staff **concerns**.
- Having a **shared language** of RTI concepts.

As the school starts to build its plans, it will begin to bring the rest of the staff on board through such activities as RTI introduction, established communication channels, and professional development sessions. Any organizational change must have the staff’s support and understanding to be successful. Staff knowledge-building activities often led to staff understanding, and acceptance. The administrators established structures and resources that encouraged the staff to fully participate in and understand the process and essential components of RTI.

Administrators focused on being transparent and clear when introducing RTI implementation activities, implications, changes, language, goals, challenges, and benefits. One of the first steps of the implementation process was to introduce RTI to the staff as soon as possible, including information about the purpose, goals, and expected outcomes.

**VIDEO (4:51) – General Education Teachers Involvement:**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWMapp3AlkA

Note: At the end of the notes for this slide, there is a video for participants about involving general education teachers in this process.
Continuous Professional Development

- The ongoing knowledge building served to:
  - Facilitate understanding of the RTI process.
  - Prepare teachers to:
    - Teach interventions with fidelity.
    - Monitor students’ progress.
    - Use data to make instructional decisions.

“Professional development takes a lot of resources and time, but it is necessary to keep all staff informed and up-to-date on the innovation, techniques, and curriculum.”

—Middle School Coach

Professional development was emphasized as a critical factor for building staff abilities, knowledge, and competencies.

Universally, schools used professional development to ensure that staff members responsible for beginning implementation had the appropriate skills and support to implement their areas of responsibility. Most schools reported sending teams to relevant professional development conferences and training sessions.

Most schools spent the majority of their PD and scheduled inservice discussing RTI, and school administrators scheduled RTI-related inservices throughout the year to provide ongoing professional development.

Many used a “train the trainer” model. In this model, their experienced staff were proficient at the professional development modules, presented the information, and then provided feedback, coaching, and supports for the school staff. Sometimes, with specific instructional curricula, schools used the program’s trainers.

For pop-up quote: One middle school coach said: Professional development takes a lot of resources and time, but it is necessary to keep all staff informed and up-to-date on the innovation, techniques, and curriculum.
Implementation Plan Development

In the middle schools, the Leadership Teams:

- Established a **timeline** to focus on RTI planning, guidance, and implementation steps.
- Clearly defined their **implementation goals** and **schedule** for essential components, assessment tools, and intervention programs.
- Identified **staff members** to lead implementation activities for each essential component (e.g., screening, progress monitoring, and multi-level instruction).
- Ensured that their **coaches** were prepared to assist teachers in implementing interventions and assessing fidelity.

As you begin to develop your implementation plan, you will want to look at your current school structure and schedule, funding, resources, existing interventions, and current staff skills and knowledge. Your leadership team determines which key staff members will lead each essential component.

Some key actions in plan development include:

**Establishing a timeline** for your **implementation steps**. Which essential components will you first implement and when?

**Define your goals and schedule.** How will you modify and manipulate your existing school structure to ensure a good fit for screening, progress monitoring, data-based decision making, and intervention classes?

**Identify staff members to lead implementation activities.** Choose staff members who are interested and who believe that they are able to effectively implement the component.

**Ensure that coaches are prepared** to provide structural support and feedback to staff.

Several administrators said that visiting neighboring schools with an established RTI program was useful to learn about their models, resources, methods, and tools. The administrators and staff emphasized that a crucial activity for each school was to carefully research and choose the tools—such as screening assessment(s), progress monitoring assessments, and tiered intervention methods—that were the best match for their students’ needs.
Ask participants to:

**Think** about **planning** activities in your school.
You have about 20 seconds to reflect on each question.

**Pair** with your neighbor.

**Share** with your thoughts with your neighbor or table.

*If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.*
We will take about 5 minutes to review the handout with guiding questions about planning, focusing on knowledge building, professional development, and developing your RTI plan. We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
Implementation step number 3, is implementing, meaning when your team puts your RTI plan in action. This step is when schools start to build the pieces of their planned RTI model.

When NCRTI staff asked schools for their recommendation to others just beginning implementation, the most common response was “start small.”

We saw two different examples for implementing the essential components:

Building one component at a time, or starting with a small pilot group within the school. This might mean starting in one school, grade, content area, or classroom, or begin by 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 changes, sites may need to revisit earlier stages, explore their needs, adopt new guidelines and procedures, and build infrastructure for new procedures.
Some school staff began their implementation process by implementing one essential component at a time. Most middle school staff members who chose this method began by choosing and administering their universal screening assessment first, allowing them to collect baseline data on their students. During the planning process, schools had identified a screening assessment that they felt fit their needs. School administrators emphasized that screening was a logical starting point for their models because they were able to appropriately identify which and how many students needed interventions.

School staff reported an advantage in that the staff, parents, and students were more informed about a student’s learning than waiting for the results of a high-stakes test such as a state assessment. With the progress monitoring information, they had data on which to evaluate instructional decisions. With their implementation plans as a blueprint, school administrators methodically built their RTI model by implementing one essential component at a time.
When some schools implemented RTI, they opted to “start small” by focusing on small pilot groups, thus creating a full-model pilot. For instance, they started with one class of students and implemented all essential components (screening, multi-level instruction, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making). This approach is different from implementing one essential component throughout the school.

For example, the leadership team identified (usually through the state assessment data) a group of students struggling in reading. They then provided an assessment to determine the best instructional interventions for the group. Once they determined which interventions were needed, they implemented an intervention program, and progress-monitored the students. Because the group was initially small, each component of the RTI implementation seemed manageable to the staff involved.

The staff involved in the initial innovation were able to inform and prepare fellow staff members when the school was ready to scale-up. Having your plan in place to “scale-up” is pivotal so the implementation process doesn’t stall or end with the small group. Many schools moved forward with other groups within six months to a year of initial implementation. Again, all staff members were well aware of the plan and implementation schedule, and thus they participated in, prepared for, and helped implement the scaling-up activities.
Think-Pair-Share

Implementing

- Where are you in your current implementation activities?
- What implementation method might work best for your school’s current resources, staff, and students?

Ask participants to:

Think about implementing activities in your school.
You have about 10 minutes to reflect on each question
Pair with your neighbor.
Share with your thoughts with your neighbor or table.

If there is time, ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group as well.
As we did earlier, we will take about 15 minutes to review the handout with guiding questions about implementing, focusing on questions to help guide you in deciding how you want to proceed with the implementation process.

We can discuss any questions you might have regarding any of the sections.
As a kind of wrap-up to this session, we want to share some key advice from the administrators of these middle schools. The principals involved in this study were enthusiastic, positive, and pleased with their RTI frameworks supporting their students. They were very encouraging of other middle schools interested in moving forward with RTI implementation activities.

For example, one principal said, “We have pockets around the country where people are doing [RTI] well at the middle school level. It’s not just an elementary thing. It can be done, and done well, at the middle school.”

While principals and staff were encouraging and enthusiastic with their RTI models, they also acknowledged that implementation is a process that takes patience, guidance, professional development, and data-based decision making. Even the principals with many years of implementation discussed constantly “tweaking” their models to make things better for their students.

The listed statements are some of their observations and recommendations for other middle schools beginning the RTI implementation process (read slide).
Finally, some of the take-away messages for successful implementation are:

- First of all, innovative, creative, determined, knowledgeable leaders are key to making any systems change happen successfully. The **school leadership** has to be able to lead the charge and empower staff to put the pieces in place. The leaders know how to keep staff motivated and interested. They find the right staff to take charge of pivotal components.

- Thoughtful, focused, and transparent **communication** channels are essential to facilitating staff involvement, trust, and a shared understanding throughout the entire RTI implementation process. Principals in this study emphasized that communicating the decisions of the leadership team to the rest of the staff built trust and understanding about the RTI processes.

- Universally, schools used **professional development** to ensure that staff members who were responsible for beginning implementation had the appropriate skills and support to implement their areas of responsibility.

- Many administrators in middle schools stated that one of the most important actions they took while exploring RTI was to assemble the **RTI leadership team**. A leadership team should be established to facilitate decision making about implementation guidance, training needs, staff development, implementation of screening and progress monitoring assessments, and intervention implementation.

- The schools had a very specific plan in place for collecting and making **decisions about the data**. The components of RTI mean more than just assessing and putting instructional practices in place. Schools need a systematic method to have a cohesive system. By this, we mean that screening occurs on the first week of September, first week of January, and first week of May every year.
Next Steps

- Review “Implementation Guiding Questions” handout and develop implementation plans.
- Review “Essential Components Guiding Questions” handout and develop essential components plans.
- Communicate information to colleagues.

We’ve given you a lot of information today, and you’ve reviewed some resources and guiding questions. We hope that this information provides you with the foundation you need to get started with RTI implementation in your middle schools. You can use and adapt your handouts to fit your needs and help develop preliminary plans for RTI.
On our website, we have several documents to provide more in-depth information and tools to further facilitate your implementation efforts.

If possible, it might be useful to have these documents handy, or link to the PDFs and illustrate the documents’ contents.
Thank you for your time today. Please don’t hesitate to contact us with additional questions or concerns as you move forward.