"RTI Essential Component: Data-based Decision Making"

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Hi and welcome to the National Center on RTI's webinar on the Essential Component of Data-based Decision Making. My name is Amy Elledge, and I am the Deputy Director of the National Center on RTI

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To begin I'd like to go over the definition of RTI. The National Center on RTI has a definition for RTI that includes what we consider to be the essential components. You'll see in the first part, response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a school-wide, multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. It is important to point out that RTI is a **school-wide** prevention system, as opposed to being a pre-referral for special education and it is **multi-level** as opposed to multi-tier. Although this will be addressed in more detail in later slides, it is important to understand that there are three levels of instruction in an RTI framework and districts, schools, and states can have multiple tiers within those three levels of instruction in order to prevent school failure.

The second part of the definition highlights the essential components of a RTI framework.

- The first component involves schools identifying students at risk for poor learning outcomes. We commonly refer to this process as **universal screening**.
- The next component involves monitoring student progress, which we commonly refer to as **progress monitoring**.
- The next component referenced relates to providing evidence based interventions based on student's responsiveness. It is not merely the delivery of interventions, but that there is **multi-level prevention system** in which students have access to increasingly intense levels of instruction and interventions.
- The last component involves the use of data (e.g., screening, progress monitoring) to adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions based on student responsiveness. In other words, there is an explicit, systematic process for **data-based decision making**.

Some people mistakenly believe that RTI is only about special education. It is important to remember that RTI is a school-wide, multi-level prevention system that results in data that may be used as part of the determination process for identifying students with specific learning disabilities or other disabilities. That is in accordance with your state law.

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So as I mentioned, RTI is a **preventive** framework. RTI is not another name for a pre-referral process. The intent of RTI is to improve outcomes for all students while providing immediate supplemental supports to students at risk for poor learning outcomes. And remember, RTI may be a component of a comprehensive evaluation for SLD determination but that is not why we implement an RTI model.

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So as you saw in the definition, the Center has identified four essential components for RTI.

The first is Screening – or a system for identifying students at-risk for poor learning outcomes.
The second is Progress Monitoring – or a system for monitoring the effectiveness of the supports provided to students.
The third is a Multi-level prevention system – or at least three increasingly intense levels of instructional support. Those levels are:

- **Primary** which the core instruction and curriculum.
- **Secondary** which is in addition to the primary level and provides supports targeted to students' needs
- **Tertiary,** also supplemental to primary, but more intense than secondary.

And finally we have Data-based decision making we can use it for:

- Instruction – who needs assistance, what type of instruction or assistance is needed, is the duration and intensity sufficient
- Movement between levels – when to move students to something more or less intensive, who is responding and/or not responding
- Disability identification – when do you refer for special education evaluation, how does this student compare to his/her peers, did he/she receive appropriate instruction (in accordance with state law).

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The Center has developed a 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 of the essential components and most importantly the use of data to make decisions, which is often 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 require and are necessary parts of data-based decision making, which is why the arrows travel both directions. If these components are in place, but data decision making is absent, then RTI is technically not being implemented. If you look in the center ring you will see 'culturally responsive', meaning the screening tools, progress monitoring tools, interventions, & data-based decision making procedures are all culturally responsive. In the same ring, you will notice the phrase evidence based, implying all components are evidence based. If these components are implemented through a cohesive model, we expect to see improved student outcomes.

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In a comprehensive RTI framework, data analysis is at all levels of RTI implementation, not just at the student level. For example,

- States use RTI data to establish policy and guidance and allocate resources,
- Districts use data to evaluate the effectiveness of RTI, establish policies and procedures, and allocate resources
- Schools use data to evaluate the effectiveness of their overall framework and the essential components, assess alignment among grade levels, allocate resources
- Grade level teams use data to evaluate core curriculum and instruction, identify students for secondary and tertiary instruction

Data analysis and decision making also occurs in all levels of the prevention system. For example, in primary, we are interested in how effective the core curriculum is as well as instruction of the curriculum. We also look at decisions about differentiation of instruction. With secondary and tertiary, we are looking at student level decisions, but also looking at how well particular interventions work for the majority of students in the secondary and tertiary levels.

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The center recommends establishing and procedures, for data based decision making and data sharing. Districts and schools should have established routines, ideally in writing, for making decisions. Written procedures increase fidelity of the data-based decision making process; ensure equity of resources among students, classes and schools; and help train new teachers more efficiently. Data-based decision making should reflect the use of logical and evidence-based practices. Teams should follow pre-established routines and procedures for making decisions. For example, data teams should meet at regularly scheduled intervals, such as monthly or bi-monthly, to systematically review data.

Districts and schools should also establish explicit decision rules for assessing student progress and for sharing the information. This includes goal setting procedures, changing instruction/interventions, referring students to special programs, and moving students to more or less intensive tiers.

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Data reviews should be conducted at logical, predetermined intervals. The reviews should be scheduled prior to the beginning of instruction, involve established meeting structure and involve relevant team members.

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Articulating routines and procedures in writing helps ensure and assess if established routines and procedures are being implemented with integrity. Ongoing evaluation of the selected routines and procedures is necessary to ensure they are culturally and linguistically responsive and lead to the desired outcome.

What are you looking for?
Well, data fishing can be fun, but may can lead to problems. It can cause a delay in the use of data (especially if there are a lot of data), change the focus of the analysis, miss important trends or issues. You should identity what you are interested in knowing prior to your data analysis. If you are unclear what you are looking for, conduct an analysis of the more critical outcomes first (graduation, reading performance) and then focus on outcomes in other issues. It is important to prioritize.
Identify what you are looking for at all levels of analysis (district, school, grade, class, students) and levels of prevention (efficacy, struggling students)

How will you look for it?
Develop a plan on how you will systematically analyze your data. This can increase the efficiency of your data analysis activities. It also helps manage the output many data systems offer. Only the most critical data is needed first. It allows you to know where to delve in deeper.

How will you know if you found it?
Determine how much evidence is needed for the team to identify a problem. Once identified the team can continue moving through the problem solving process in order to develop an action plan.

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The third area we recommend establishing routines and procedures for involves decision rules. This includes goals setting procedures, changing instruction/interventions, referring students to special programs, and moving students to more or less intensive tiers. Decision rules should be established at all levels, including class, grade and school.

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Fourth, you should establish routines and procedures for sharing data. You should communicate both the purpose and the results. This should occur throughout the year, for example following benchmark

testing. Dissemination with discussion is preferred. Encourage all school teams to talk about results, patterns, possible interpretations and likely next steps.

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So what types of decisions can data inform? We can:

- Identify students who need additional assessment and instruction
- Evaluate effectiveness of core curriculum and instruction-Is the core curriculum effective for most students?
- Can make decisions about allocate resources
- Evaluate effectiveness of instruction programs for target groups- are there differences for different target groups. For example between ELL and Title 1.
- Disability Identification - how do we know if the student should be referred and is eligible for disability identification?

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Using Screening data you can see students that are falling below their peers or determined benchmarks and are in need of additional assessment or instruction. On the left- this is an example of an individual student's grade 2 screening score. This box plot compares the student to his/her peer group, which is represented in the box plot. We can see that the student is performing well below his/her peer group. On the right we can see which students are scoring below the target.

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Progress monitoring data can be used to confirm or disconfirm if students identified through screening as "at risk" are at risk for poor learning outcomes. The graph on the left shows that despite a low score on the screener this student is progressing adequately in primary prevention in the general education classroom. In contrast the graph on the right shows a student whose risk status would be confirmed, and he or she would enter Tier 2, or secondary prevention.

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This data shows that all the students in the class fall below the target score indicating that the core curriculum is not effective for all students. So here we can evaluate the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the core curriculum.

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Districts, schools, and grade level teams can look at district wide, school wide, grade wide, or class wide performance over the year. This chart shows changes in percentage of students meeting criteria for

each benchmark. This chart indicates that although only 55% of students met the criteria at the beginning of the year, 80% met it by the end of year. In general, it appears that instruction for that year is effective as students as a whole showed improvement across the year, but there might be a concern that students did not begin the year meeting the criteria.

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RESOURCE ALLOCATION: Which schools appear to need additional support or further analysis? In looking closer at the schools in the district, the district might find School E (dark purple) is performing far below the other schools in all three grades. It therefore may be necessary to provide school E with additional supports and resources.

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Districts and schools can also analyze performance by target group. Are students in title one performing similarly to students in general education? Are students with disabilities performing at similar rates as students without disabilities? Growth rates are found at the bottom. It appears, based on this data, that the general education students in this districts are outperforming the target group, yet both the Title I and Special Education populations fall below the target. It is also important to note that compared to other groups, the special education students remain fairly flat across the year.

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In terms of disability identification the National Center on RTI does not provide guidance on SLD. We recommend you contact your state department of special ed. and determine what the procedures are for your state.

Federal law states that, “To ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math, the group must consider” two things. The first one is that “Data that demonstrate that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings.” Screening data that looks at the growth rate of all students can help you answer this question. Progress monitoring data that can be shared with parents can supports the next piece, “data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals.”

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As mentioned previously to ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math, the group must consider whether there is “Data that demonstrate that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings.” Screening data that looks at the growth rate of all students can help you answer this question.

For example in this graph you can clearly see that when compared to his peers, this student is performing well below his peer group, but that the majority of his peers are above the cut score indicating that the instruction is appropriate for most students.

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Progress monitoring data that can be shared with parent supports the next piece, "data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals."

This graph shows that across 9 assessments the student has not shown progress.

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Some things to remember, good data in, good data out. Know where your data come from and the validity of that data. Focus on the picture, or all students. Are most students making progress? All instructional and curriculum decisions should be based on data. And finally, keep it simple and efficient. Don't collect data just because you can. Know why you're collecting it and what it will help you do/what decisions it can guide.

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In closing, just a few considerations when implementing on RTI model. It's easy to identify your model components, but implementing can be quite difficult and can take at least two to four years to get into full implementation. We recommend that you select and implement evidence-based practices and procedures. The tools charts available through the RTI Center can help you do that.

You should also implement the essential components and identified framework with integrity. It's not enough to implement screening and progress monitoring with integrity, you also must ensure that the interventions, core curriculum and instruction, and data decision making procedures are implemented with integrity.

It is important to ensure that cultural and linguistic and socio-economic factors are reflected in the RTI framework and its components. On the tools chart, there is a column that provides information about how particular tools have been used with different groups. District and schools teams should continually evaluate the efficacy of the model and model components for diverse populations.

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For more information you can visit our website at www.rti4success.org In addition to the progress monitoring tools chart, you will also find two other tools charts- on screening tools and instructional programs.

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Please e-mail any questions that you have to RTIWebinars@air.org. We will be having a live chat on December 16th from 2:00-3:00pm eastern standard time to answer any questions submitted via e-mail as well as any additional questions that come up during the online chat