Response to Intervention in Middle Schools: Considerations for Implementation

National Center on Response to Intervention
Session Agenda

- What is Response to Intervention (RTI)?
- Overview of middle school information-gathering activities
- Essential components in middle schools
- RTI implementation considerations
Participant Outcomes

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

- Articulate the four essential components of RTI.
- Understand RTI essential components in middle schools.
- Understand RTI implementation of key components.
- Understand the implementation plan worksheets to begin developing their own plans.
What Is RTI?
Think-Pair-Share

- What do you think about when you hear RTI?
What Do We Mean by RTI?

Response to Intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.
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
Essential Components of RTI
Middle School Information-Gathering Activities
Research Participants

NCRTI staff spoke with middle school representatives from the following states:

Alaska  Iowa  Ohio
Arizona  Maine  Oregon
California  Maryland  Pennsylvania
Colorado  Minnesota  South Carolina
Connecticut  Mississippi  Texas
Florida  Missouri  Utah
Georgia  Montana  Virginia
Idaho  New York  Washington
Illinois  North Dakota  Wisconsin

Wyoming
Information-Gathering Activities

NCRTI staff did the following:

- Initially called and asked schools to participate.
- Conducted two-hour phone interviews with participants.
  - Asked about RTI practices for screening, progress monitoring, data-based decision making, and multi-level instructional practices.
- Conducted follow-up two-hour phone calls with schools that implemented all essential components.
- Conducted site visits with schools.
School Demographics

- Most schools served 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.
- Schools represented rural, suburban, and urban schools.
- Many schools had diverse student populations.
- Individualized education programs (IEPs) ranged from 7% to 20% of the student population.
RTI Essential Components in Middle Schools
Essential Components of RTI

- Screening
- Data-Based Decision Making
- Progress Monitoring
- Multi-Level Prevention System
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.
Screening Importance

“You can’t forget about universal screens that scoop up students you may have missed before because they were making it with their understanding at one level, but the bar got raised and now they’re falling behind.”
—Middle School Principal
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
# NCRTI Screening Tools Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>Classification Accuracy</th>
<th>Generalizability</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
<th>Disaggregated Reliability, Validity, and Classification Data for Diverse Populations</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Chart Legend:**
- [ ] Convincing Evidence
- [ ] Partially Convincing Evidence
- [ ] Unconvincing Evidence
- [ ] No Evidence Submitted

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**National Center on Response to Intervention**
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?
Screening Handout

- Take a few minutes to review the handout and think about questions.
Essential Components of RTI
Multi-Level Instruction

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

- Improving the primary level of prevention (core instruction)
  - This practice is pivotal to RTI implementation success.
- Engaging students in their learning
  - Every student knows the learning goals.
- Using a standardized curriculum
  - Mr. X’s 6th-grade math is the same as Ms. Y’s 6th-grade math.
Primary Prevention

“Our ‘big bucks’ go into Tier I [primary prevention].”
—Middle School Principal
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).
Middle School Practices for Tertiary Intervention

- **Class size.** The student-teacher ratio was 3-4:1.
- **Schedule.** Most tertiary classes occurred in place of core and elective classes in other subject areas.
  - Tertiary-level interventions often were delivered in addition to the core curriculum.
- **Delivery.** Special educators and full-time interventionists were the most common teachers.
  - Many schools had co-teaching (two teachers delivered the interventions) models for the tertiary level.
- **Frequency.** Instruction was provided daily.
- **Duration.** Usually classes lasted one class period each day.
  - Many students needing tertiary-level instruction had two intensive classes (e.g., in lieu of both electives).
  - Often, length is dependent upon individual student’s needs (e.g., problem severity, subject, intervention method).
## Example School Schedule

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<thead>
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<th>Grade 6</th>
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## Instructional Intervention Tools Chart

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<th>Program</th>
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<th>Study Quality</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
<th>Disaggregated Sample</th>
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<td>Corrective Reading Decoding</td>
<td>Benner, Beaudoin, &amp; Stein (2005)</td>
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<td>4 Reading, Inadequate information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gunn, Biglan, Smolkovski, &amp; Ary (2000)</td>
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<td>5 Reading, Inadequate information</td>
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<td>Early Vocabulary Connections</td>
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<td>Hot Math Tutoring</td>
<td>Fuchs, et al. (2008)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>4 Math, Mean 0.88, Range 0.38 to 1.15</td>
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<td>My Sidewalks Intensive Reading Intervention</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>Number Rockets</td>
<td>Fuchs et al. (2009)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>7 Math, Mean 0.33, Range 0.03 to 0.64</td>
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<td>Schwartz (2005)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>10 Reading, Mean 0.90, Range 0.14 to 2.09</td>
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</table>

Legend: ○ Convincing Evidence, ● Partially Convincing Evidence, ○ Unconvincing Evidence
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?
Essential Components Guiding Questions: Multi-Level Prevention System Handout

- Take a few minutes to review the handout and think about questions.
Essential Components of RTI
Progress Monitoring Practices in Middle Schools

- Progress monitoring practices were diverse.
- The most common tools were assessment programs and curriculum-based measures (CBMs).
- Most middle schools implemented progress monitoring.
  - For secondary level, progress monitoring often was weekly, but frequency ranged from weekly to monthly.
  - For tertiary level, progress monitoring often was twice a week, but frequency ranged from daily to twice a month.
- The schools involved students in their progress monitoring.
# Progress Monitoring Tools Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>Reliability of the Performance Level Score</th>
<th>Reliability of the Slope</th>
<th>Validity of the Performance Level Score</th>
<th>Predictive Validity of the Slope of Improvement</th>
<th>Alternate Forms</th>
<th>Sensitive to Student Improvement</th>
<th>End-of-Year Benchmarks</th>
<th>Rates of Improvement Specified</th>
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**Chart Legend:**
- **Convincing Direct Evidence**
- **Partially Convincing Evidence or Convincing Indirect Evidence**
- **Unconvincing Evidence**
- **No Evidence Submitted**
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?
Essential Components Guiding Questions: Progress Monitoring Handout

- Take a few minutes to review the handout and think about questions.
Essential Components of RTI
### Data-Based Decision Making

- Data analysis at all levels of RTI implementation (e.g., state, district, school, grade level)
- Established routines and procedures for making decisions
- Explicit decision rules for assessing student progress (e.g., state and district benchmarks, level, and/or rate)
- Weekly RTI data-based decision-making teams to review student data to make data-informed instructional decisions
Data-Based Decision Making: Middle School Example

- Prescreening questionnaire is used for all incoming 6th graders. This questionnaire may even serve as the screener if appropriate data are provided.

- District-provided cut scores are used to determine which students are in need of interventions.
  - In addition, the results of diagnostic assessments, grades, and other sources of "soft data" are used to inform data discussions.

- School counselors organize all the data (screening, progress monitoring, and “soft data”).

- Leadership team meets to discuss all students receiving interventions and those students who have been referred to the team by content-area teachers.
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)?
Essential Components Guiding Questions: Data-Based Decision-Making Handout

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

1. Exploring and adopting
2. Planning
3. Implementing
4. Continuously improving
Exploring and Adopting

- Focus
- Culture
- Leadership
- Leadership team
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
Culture: “RTI = All Staff + All Kids”

- Schools reported a cultural shift in language and thinking.
  - Teachers think less about teaching content and more about ensuring that students learn.
  - “We [staff] all believe that all students can learn.”
  - All staff own all students; no more “my student” or “his student.”
  - All teachers can teach reading and mathematics.
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.
Leadership Team

- A leadership team should be established early in the process. This team:
  - Facilitates decision making about implementation.
  - Establishes professional development needs.
  - Plans implementation activities.
  - Leads data-based decision-making needs.
Leadership Team

- The Leadership Team emphasized systemic leadership.
  - Principals emphasized that RTI implementation decisions were made in collaboration with school staff members.
  - Staff leaders facilitated and promoted buy-in and understanding of RTI among colleagues.

“As an administrator, it is critical to have the teachers push [RTI] forward, while the administrator is in the background pushing.” —Middle School Principal
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*)?
Implementation Guiding Questions: Exploring and Adopting Handout

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

- Building staff knowledge
- Continuous professional development
- Implementation plan development
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.
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
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.
Think-Pair-Share

Planning

- What are some activities that you can easily establish to build staff knowledge?
- What professional development opportunities can you access to begin the implementation process?
- How will you begin the plan development process?
Implementation Guiding Questions: Planning Handout

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

- “One essential component”
- “One small group”
“One Essential Component”

- Build model with one component at a time.
  - For example, first screening, then data-based decision making, then progress monitoring, then intervention levels.

- Administrators recommended:
  - Having a timeline for implementation of each essential component.
  - Training staff in advance of each component implementation.
  - Beginning with a component that makes sense for the school based on existing tools, structures, and resources.
“One Small Group”

- Build model with one pilot group at a time.
  - For example, implementing all essential components with one class of students.

- Administrators recommended:
  - Collecting data from the pilot group.
  - Investigating which components and their associated features worked well.
  - Identifying which components and their associated features needed to be refined.
  - Scaling-up to other classes, grades, and content areas.
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?
Implementation Guiding Questions: Implementing Handout

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

- RTI is possible in middle schools.
- Assess the resources already in existence; then see what else is needed.
- Apply innovative techniques and interventions.
- Use your data: keep what works, change what doesn’t.
- Leadership is key to putting change in motion.
- Combine professional development with coaching.
- Provide time for teachers to integrate and use what they have learned.
Key Findings From Middle Schools

- Strong, cohesive, knowledgeable building leadership
- Use of open, transparent communication
- Continuous professional development opportunities
- Establishment of a leadership/planning team
- Routine use of data-based decision-making practices
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.
Additional Resources


- RTI Implementation Processes for Middle Schools (June 2011)

- RTI Scheduling Processes for Middle Schools (July 2011)

- RTI in Middle Schools: Frequently Asked Questions (August 2011)

- Middle School Essential Components report (Fall 2012)
National Center on Response to Intervention

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