EVALUATION OF THE

2009 Annual Evaluation Report

Submitted to
National Center for Learning Disabilities

Submitted by
Pierrel Associates, LLC

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I. Evaluation Overview

From January through June 2009, Pierrel Associates, LLC, carried out several evaluation tasks for the RTI Action Network, a project of the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) that is supported by a grant from the Cisco Foundation.

The Winter/Spring 2009 evaluation involved the following activities.

- **Developing RTI implementation stories that document use of RTI Action Network resources.** These stories are based on information gathered during the follow-up telephone interviews with survey respondents, which were conducted during Fall 2008. The stories are intended to serve two purposes—provide content for the Web site similar to the current “Voices from the Field” stories and provide evidence on use of RTI Action Network resources.

  All statements concerning use of RTI Action Network resources are shaded in light blue throughout this report.

- **Developing an estimate of the number of students affected by educators’ use of the RTI Action Network Web site.** This estimate is based on information gathered from the online survey of registered Web site users conducting in Fall 2008.

- **Developing and piloting a survey of online professional development provided by the RTI Action Network.** Two surveys were developed and one piloted with the RTI National Online Forum held on April 30, 2009.
II. RTI Implementation Stories with Evidence of Use of RTI Action Network Resources

During late Fall 2008, Pierrel Associates completed follow-up interviews with 38 individuals who responded to the online survey that was conducted in early Fall 2008. Of those 38 interviews, 17 were of particular interest because the individual seemed very knowledgeable, interested, articulate, and in a position to contribute to future Network activities.

As part of the Winter/Spring 2009 evaluation activities, the evaluator sought to expand on the information provided during the interview and to develop a publishable “RTI Implementation Story” that included a discussion of how that individual is using RTI Action Network information and resources. To begin the process, the evaluator created a story template, which is included in an appendix to this report. This template includes the following topics.

- How We Got Started
- What We’re Doing
- How We Did It
- The Tools and Resources We Used (including RTI Action Network resources)
- The Tools and Resources We Developed\(^1\)
- Our Results
- Some Lessons We’ve Learned

Based on the interview notes, the evaluators developed a preliminary draft of the desired story that included notes and questions for the “storytellers.” The evaluator contacted each one by telephone and/or email and then sent the draft story via email. Through an iterative process, the final stories that appear in this section were developed. Often the individual felt the need to go through an approval process, which in some cases caused a delay in returning the final story.

The names, positions, and states for the 10 individuals who provided complete RTI implementation stories are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Deris</td>
<td>Intervention Specialist, Minnesota</td>
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<td>Nicole Power</td>
<td>District RTI Coordinator, Oklahoma</td>
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<td>Roberta Witte</td>
<td>Special Education Resource Teacher at the Elementary Level, California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa Whitlow</td>
<td>Assistant Principal at the Elementary Level, New York</td>
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<td>Mindy Gardzinski</td>
<td>Assistant Principal at the Elementary Level, Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle Warren</td>
<td>School Psychologist in a School District, Oklahoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terri Metcalfe</td>
<td>Regional RTI Coordinator for Multiple Districts, Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Wagmeister</td>
<td>Director in a Multi-district Educational Service Unit, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherry Abernathy</td>
<td>State RTI Consultant, North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Palenchar</td>
<td>State RTI Coordinator, West Virginia</td>
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\(^1\) Several people did not provide information on this because they felt that the tools they had developed were not yet ready to be shared.
I am an intervention specialist. I have been in this district role for the past 2 years. Before taking on this position, I was a special education teacher in both Louisiana and Minnesota working in programs for school-age students with autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, emotion/behavioral disabilities, and developmental disabilities, and in early childhood special education programs.

RTI planning in my district began in the summer just prior to the 2007-2008 academic year. The special education director, special education supervisor, the director of research and evaluation, and I collaborated in order to choose three of the 10 elementary schools in which we would pilot the RTI framework. The K to 5 elementary schools selected were those whose personnel were interested in the concept of RTI and were open to change within their schools. The principal in one of the pilot schools was familiar with RTI due to his experience in another district. Another principal volunteered her school to be a pilot. The third pilot school was already involved in the Reading First program and was ready to make the transition to more comprehensive RTI and declined being part of the pilot. Currently, the RTI initiative is focused on reading, although some schools also have Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) programs in place.

All students in the two pilot schools receive Tier 1 of the RTI program—high-quality differentiated classroom instruction. There are approximately 18 and 19 staff involved, respectively, in RTI implementation in the schools. This comprises the entire teaching staff within these schools.

Student screenings occur every year to determine the level of intervention required. Students evaluated and found to be performing at 10 to 15 percent below grade level or benchmark are deemed struggling and in need of intervention. In addition to the screening, data on the student progress is obtained three times a year (fall, winter, spring) and measured against benchmarks. Tools used for this purpose include DIBELS and AIMSweb. The teachers often track the progress of the students on graphs. This helps the students to visualize their progress and keeps them motivated.

Students who test for reading at right below grade level or close to it are considered as Tier 2, not only those who underperform. This decision was made due to a lack of resources in the district. The majority of students are subsequently categorized as Tier 2, making it more feasible to work with the majority population of the students. In this way, the district meets the expectations of RTI, although in a nontraditional approach. Introduction of
Tier 3 intervention is expected in the next year or two. A total of about 105 students (out of about 750) in the pilot schools were selected to receive intervention. This means that about 14 percent of the students participating are receiving intervention services.

How We Did It

In my position, I provide the oversight for the interventions, and I check the accuracy of school-wide screening and benchmarking. I meet with staff at the two schools and I am on the problem solving/student success team at one of the schools. I assist with providing trainings for each benchmarking period, usually just a refresher but we make sure that everyone is on the same page so that we have fidelity.

I am also responsible for answering questions concerning RTI, and I give presentations on it to staff in the pilot schools. I am also the person who relays information to staff regarding upcoming trainings.

There have been several challenges we’ve run up against along the way. For example, there is a systematic plan for RTI and how interventions will be selected and implemented. However, at first staff wanted to try other interventions before systematically going through the ones first agreed upon. That was easily solved, as we explained in meetings that we’re going to do it systematically now, even though we appreciate all the great ideas that people are coming up with.

We also had difficulty finding a common screening tool. Many wanted to use curriculum-based measures and some wanted to use the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA). This is an issue that we are still addressing.

Another challenge dealt more with logistics and finding the time to conduct the interventions. The schools have started to solve this issue by either going to block scheduling where all grade levels have a common reading period or by conducting interventions during DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time.

Another major challenge was having the staff to do the interventions. Tapping into community resources has been one good solution to this. We’ve partnered with other places, including the service learning program at the local community college and the Minnesota Reading Corps, an AmeriCorps project that has provided trained people to do screening, benchmarking, and interventions.
The RTI Action Network is helpful in my work. I like how it’s fine-tuned to different instructional levels. It’s user friendly, and the Network thought of parents in making the site useful to them too.

When questions arise regarding RTI, I use the Web site to pass on helpful information. For example, if a building principal asks me a question, I can pull an article to answer the question.

Also, the webinars are great. I’ve watched a couple live, but it’s nice that—if you can’t go because of a meeting or something—you can go back to the archives.

I’ve shared information about the site with principals and others, and I tell them to check it out. In turn, principals have shared information about the site with their teachers, and teachers then go in and check out the site. I think it’s helpful to them to know that there are resources available to them.

In addition, Minnesota is fortunate to have had a variety of resources to assist school districts in the implementation of RTI. The state had a Minnesota RTI Center that was funded by the state department of education. The MN RTI Center was housed at State regional cooperative consisting of several districts that have already implemented RTI for a number of years. I participated in weekly phone conferences to discuss what is going on in our district, problem solve and to receive guidance and feedback from the MN RTI Center. Unfortunately, this recently ended due to lack of funding, but it has been very helpful to us in getting started with RTI.

The greatest benefit of RTI practice is that we’re finally able to help students who were caught in the middle—those who didn’t qualify for special education and weren’t getting help from their teachers because of caseloads and schedules. Students aren’t getting lost in the shuffle, and that helps with their self-esteem. They see that they can be successful, even some who have never been successful before.

Parents are also pleased with RTI because they are getting up to date information about how their child is performing. They’re seeing visuals that show their child’s progress, and they know exactly what is being done to help their child. In a recent survey of parents, virtually all of the responses were positive. Parents reported gains in their child’s reading and willingness to do homework. In a survey of parents and community members, all of the feedback on RTI was positive, with many reporting that this approach evens the playing field. These survey respondents were very happy that there was intervention available for students not in special education, and they suggested that this programming should be celebrated and shared with all PTAs and the school board.
In another recent survey, students too reported that their reading has improved and they enjoy retelling the stories—though some wished they could have a shorter time set aside for intervention.

RTI is gratifying for the staff because they are able to see the concrete progress that students are making. They’re also getting more resources to do their jobs. In a survey of teachers, all of the responses were positive, with teachers stating that students’ reading has improved as a result of them receiving intervention services.

The student progress data are compiled and presented in report form to the administrative cabinet of the district. In general, our test results are showing fewer referrals for special education, more students reading on grade level, and higher standardized test scores.

- We exceeded our goal that at least 40 percent of the students identified as being “at risk” on early literacy and reading fluency curriculum-based measurements (CBM) would improve to the “some risk” category. In fact, 66 percent of students (25 or 38) moved from at risk to some risk.

- We exceeded our goal that at least 60 percent of the students identified as being “low risk” on early literacy and reading fluency CBMs would improve to the “established” or “no risk” category. In fact 77 percent (55 of 72) moved from low risk to no risk.

- Our “quiet room” referral data indicate that 26 percent of students had fewer time-out referrals after implementation of RTI. Just 9 percent had more referrals; the remaining students were either never referred or remained the same.

Our schools have benefited from the use of RTI, and we are looking to expand it into other district schools. RTI is working so well that we plan to expand the program from the three pilot schools to all elementary schools within 3 to 5 years. We are currently working on a report to the administrative cabinet to detail and assess the steps, procedures, training, and costs related to RTI implementation.

Some Lessons We’ve Learned

RTI is not something you buy in a box; it is about teamwork and working towards the goal of having all students be successful. It is imperative that open communication is occurring among staff and parents to ensure the success of RTI.

One important aspect is that this isn’t something you implement in one school year; it is a complex process that should be studied and implemented slowly to be most effective.
How We Got Started

I am the RTI Coordinator for our school district and also a speech-language pathologist (SLP) in Earl Harris Elementary School.

Bethany is a small urban school district near Oklahoma City. Bethany schools began to implement a problem solving model of RTI in the 2005-2006 school year. Our story initially began when our special services director, Mary Stevens, returned from a conference on RTI and couldn’t wait for our school to get started. Her enthusiasm for RTI was infectious! Our first step was to find someone who could show us the ropes. Local RTI specialist, Gary Duhon, an associate professor of school psychology at Oklahoma State University helped us set up an appropriate model and provided professional development for our staff.

What We’re Doing

Our district uses a 4-Tier system of problem solving. Tier 1 is core instruction received by all students. This includes a 90-minute literacy block and differentiated instruction for reading. Universal screenings are given to all students at least three times per year in the areas of reading, math, writing, and articulation.

Those students who are in need of more intensive instruction, based on screening results, receive Tier 2 services. Tier 2 services consist of low intensity interventions that focus on specific skills that the student is missing. Each intervention at Tier 2 is tailored to the needs of the individual student and carried out by general education teachers or other certified professionals or by paraprofessionals.

Students who are not successful with low intensity interventions then receive Tier 3 level services. These consist of medium intensity interventions that continue to focus on specific skills. Most Tier 3 interventions are provided by general education teachers. They offer explicit instruction, correction, and feedback.

All students who do not meet grade-level expectations are progress monitored weekly to make sure that they are progressing and that interventions are effective. The RTI team meets biweekly with all teachers to discuss individual student progress and develop intervention strategies. Members of the RTI team include: general education teachers, speech-language pathologists, the principal, a school psychologist, and the counselor. Other members who contribute their expertise are Title I teachers, special education teachers, and special service directors.
The first three levels of interventions are usually implemented by general education teachers and supported by other specialists through consultation. When a student continues to struggle despite general education interventions, they are placed on the most intensive end of the continuum. At this time, parent permission is obtained and special education implements a highly intensive individual intervention in addition to investigating other areas of relevance.

As we have become more familiar with RTI over the years, we feel more competent in its techniques and see more clearly the positive impact it has on all students in our school. Currently, our district is expanding RTI into the secondary settings. Over the last several years we began screening our secondary students and providing professional development at the secondary level. Plans are in place to fully implement interventions and begin decision making using an RTI model at the middle school level next year.

How We Did It

My district was one of the first in the state to implement RTI. It has been a challenging, but rewarding, endeavor. It does require specific documentation, and intervention planning, but it’s worth it.

My duties include attending team meetings, developing and monitoring interventions, and assisting in the eligibility process. I also collect and analyze student data to help pinpoint curriculum strengths and target weaknesses.

As with all change, RTI did not come easy. All members of the staff struggled with changing roles and expectations. Our biggest challenge was professional development. Making sure everyone understood why we were changing from a discrepancy model to a problem solving model was a big step. Next, we implemented training on effective interventions and how to analyze the data we are collecting.

One of our biggest challenges in keeping RTI running smoothly year to year is to ensure that every new teacher who comes to our school is trained in RTI. Our school sets high expectations for teachers and students. Although interventions are all tailored for individual students, we have developed policies and procedures to help make sure interventions are done with fidelity.

The Tools and Resources We Used

With over 700 students, our elementary is one of the largest in Oklahoma. Our screening process is low tech, keeping costs low and data collection high. We use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) three times a year for reading. Math screenings were developed based on state standards and curriculum. We also do writing and reading comprehension, using AIMSweb MAZE. DIBELS administration is done with a team of 10 teachers and paraprofessionals trained to administer DIBELS. Our team also listens for articulation errors during oral reading.
Any articulation referrals are followed up by our SLPs for further screening. Math, MAZE, and writing screenings are group administered and graded by the teacher. Our district uses the DIBELs data system, AIMSweb, and Excel to track our collected data. At the secondary level, state testing scores, grades, attendance, and behavior data are analyzed. At risk students are given more individualized screenings. All data is collected within one week and results are processed and returned to teachers the following week. Approximately 45 minutes of instructional time is used to screen students three times each year. The data we gather during this time helps us guide instruction and helps struggling students get immediate help.

I have used the RTI Action Network Web site more times than I can count. I like the general overview [Learn about RTI] and the Get Started section. I value the site for its articles, and I always share information about the site at conferences. I also like to visit the blogs to hear insights from other educators. Also, since we are one of the first districts in the state to implement RTI, I share information about the site with other Oklahoma school districts.

This Web site is the first place I always look for new information. Guidance on secondary and preschool models is plentiful. Our district is using the preschool information we found on the RTI Action Network Web site to improve our current model. I read the success stories from other schools for encouragement, and the questions others post help me continue to think of ways we can continue to improve on all we have accomplished.


A very low tech Excel spreadsheet tracks our math and writing screenings. Teachers collect data using “Tier forms” we have developed. They bring these forms with them to our problem solving meetings. During the meetings, student progress and decisions are recorded on an intervention log. At the end of the meetings, I collect and keep the forms for our records. Every student who receives interventions during the year has a file folder. All intervention data, screenings, and correspondence are collected in this folder. If a student moves, we can send the folder with them so other schools have the information. If a student moves to Tier 4, much of the information in the file folder can be used to help make eligibility decisions. We have also created an RTI Resource Manual for our teachers. These contain copies of forms, reminders of policy, and some of our favorite interventions.
I believe that RTI has many benefits. Everyone is receiving the attention that s/he needs without needing to “qualify” as in the old discrepancy model. It has also improved the way teachers teach: They are much more aware of curriculum strengths and weaknesses now and can guide their teaching based on screening results throughout the year.

Also, our staff is able to help many more students than we did through a discrepancy model. In the past we would test up to 80 students a year. If there was no discrepancy, they didn’t receive further help. Now we provide interventions for up to 150 students per year. Approximately 50 percent of these students respond to interventions and are able to catch up to their peers. Another 25 percent receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions in order to maintain success in the general education curriculum. The last 25 percent may receive more intense interventions through special education or other programs.

With RTI, students have been helped before they have reached the stage of needing special education. When this happens, it benefits everyone: students are encouraged, teachers receive “proof” that their teaching is effective, and parents are reassured.

Through intervention, many students have come a long way. For example, when we first began RTI, a teacher attended our first meeting having already decided that a student was learning disabled (LD). In fact, she had written LD in big letters on his progress monitoring book. The teacher was encouraged to try the interventions and monitor progress. By the end of the year, the student had reached grade level benchmarks and no longer needed interventions. During our last meeting, the teacher agreed that intervention, not special education, was what this student had needed. She then erased the big LD letters from the progress book. Three years later, this student is successfully completing fifth grade without interventions or special education supports. I believe that RTI provides tangible proof to teachers that they have the skills to help these struggling students. When teachers feel confident in their ability to assist all students, then they are not as quick to ask for special education help as their first option.

Using RTI has helped our staff work in a more cohesive manner. Prior to RTI, each teacher or specialist would have a piece of the puzzle regarding a student. We never had time or understood the necessity of sharing this information with each other. During our RTI team meetings, each person who works with a student can share “their piece” and complete a picture of this student. When everyone has all the information, it makes it much easier to develop a plan and work together toward achieving the goal.

Another benefit is that caseloads of some special education staff have decreased. This reflects the success of remediating early, before difficulties turn into disabilities. It also frees up time for special education teachers to participate in co-teaching and collaborating with general education in preventative efforts. Using RTI has led to a better understanding between

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# Our Results

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general and special education. Our teams are more aware of each other’s expertise and can work together for the benefit of all of our students.

We have also seen the impact of RTI reflected in our Academic Performance Index (API) scores. The 2 years prior to implementing RTI, our API scores were: 2004 API = 1258 and 2005 API = 1284. After using an RTI model for 1 year, our API jumped to 1390 in 2006! Great results encourage both administration and teachers to continue to use an RTI model.

I think the most important part of making RTI successful is administrative support and professional training for the teachers. The first year was the toughest, but providing good professional development was a step in the right direction. And you need to continue to provide ongoing professional development. Although it is a difficult process, our students are reaping its benefits, which is the most important reason for doing this.

Never give up! There are always going to be challenges. RTI isn't something you can implement and then breathe a sigh of relief when it’s in place. There is always something that can be done better. There are new ideas, better interventions, and more effective ways to reach kids. Remember to celebrate your victories with children in addition to targeting your weaknesses.
Four years ago, I was put in the role of resource specialist in order to work with exceptional children in grades pre-K through 8, and I’ve been helping my school to move towards fully implementing RTI. In the past, many of our teachers have done RTI unofficially, but making it an official program requires everyone to be on board. Historically, there was some reading intervention and pull-out services at the lower grades, but we have become much more structured in our approach, and it has been successful.

All 20 of our teachers are involved in implementing RTI. This year, we are using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) testing to track the development of 24 kindergarteners, 15 1st graders and two students in grades 2 and 4.

Our school is small, with only one class per grade level. Our plan is to track all students who fall below 40 percent in the standardized testing that we do in the fall of each academic year. I also assess all students coming in to our kindergarten and then follow the students through 1st grade. Any student who continues to have difficulties at the end of 1st grade will continue to be tracked.

I provide mostly push-in intervention but also do some on a pull-out basis. I also collect and interpret the data and go back to the teacher with the results. This allows us to zero in on and directly address the areas where each student struggles. Teachers collect individual data from textbook-based testing (curriculum-based measurement—CBM—for math and reading comprehension) and we use the Fall ITBS standardized tests to tune in to any student who may need additional support at the beginning of each school year. We also do a Spring Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) test of math and reading skills to document whether the curriculum and teaching methods have led to any positive changes in the student’s test scores. I track reading with the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Oral Reading Fluency rates for all of my low end (below 40%) and high end (above 90%) readers. Each teacher maintains the records of the students identified as needing Tier 1 intervention and alerts me, and we work together from there. We have also started to research and document the transition of Tier 2 students into Tier 3.

Since we are one small school and this is still new to us, this is how I look at the tiers:

- Tier 1. In September, we look at information on each student as the school year starts. ITBS testing data is received by mid-October. By
then, the classroom teacher has had the opportunity to do some informal evaluations and CBM measurements from the text books. We also know the history of most of the students, since the population does not change that much from year to year. Any students new to our school do take a grade level test to evaluate their math, reading, and writing skills. Small group work or one-on-one with the teacher may be initiated automatically if any student shows a need. This is not documented but the teacher will communicate with other teachers who have taught this student or ask me to observe in the classroom if needed.

- **Tier 2.** If ITBS and CBM data demonstrate scores below 40 percent, the teacher and I will collaborate on in-class support and, if there is need, on pull-out instruction. At this point, there is usually a small group of 1st graders who benefit from some reading intervention, so a small pull-out group is started. I do the DIBELS at this point on all 1st graders anyway, so this gives me a starting point at the beginning of the year. For the other grade levels, I am in certain classes due to students with IEPs and will do a re-teach or small group for any additional students who need support in that subject matter. Many times the 4th grade teacher will ask me to take a group that scored poorly on a particular math concept in order to re-teach; other times I am just in her class during math to support each day that a new concept is taught. Any student who needs extended time on a test also works with me.

- **Tier 3.** This may have a different meaning in our school. Most students do not have an IEP or specific testing already done. When we have tried to do a team intervention and provide support for a student during the school day as best we can and we still see that the student is struggling, then we push for outside assessment. Many times this is because we do not get support from parents or because parents do not want to acknowledge a learning issue. Our local public school district has been very supportive in doing the assessments under the update of IDEA 2004. Our parents live in many different school districts, but they are all assessed in the district where our private school is located. We are a true model of co-operation going on here in Saratoga, California. Those who qualify get speech therapy.

After assessment is done, we have a formal plan that has very detailed tracking. The classroom teachers get a simplified version of the testing data that I call a Student Learning Management Plan, and we use the Student Success Team plan approach for monthly updates. I took a course at Stanford from Dr. Mel Levine a few years ago, and I use the Schools Attuned method of looking at strengths vs. weaknesses to identify the student’s learning profile. That way, the classroom teacher is not overwhelmed.

We do a lot of documenting through the entire process, which is key to ensuring consistent planning and follow-through. At least we try, and each year we are getting better at this.
During the first year of implementation, I was rarely in the classroom. Rather, I mainly conducted mini-assessments of students in kindergarten. My goal was to discover and identify the students who were struggling. In the past, we have relied on the teacher’s intuition. We have now made the process more measures-based and streamlined. Teachers ask me to come into their classrooms to work, so I primarily do push-in rather than pull-out intervention activities.

The teachers do not have time to analyze the student data. Thus, they bring it to me; I interpret it, and make sense out of it all so that the student gets what s/he needs.

I wrote a grant in order to fund the supplies I needed, such as books for interventions, testing materials and aides for the students, like Books on Tape, the Read Naturally program and many Lindamood Bell supplies. Our school was awarded $5,000 in a grant, and then parent support added another $5,000. That has allowed me to purchase many supplies. I am the only person doing this work but now have much more support from the classroom teachers. I have had speakers come to the school to discuss learning styles, etc. but with limited success. Our Diocese (school district) had Mel Levine, MD come to speak to the entire Diocese. It was after that 2-day workshop that my methods actually started to get some support in my school. It still remains a teacher by teacher association to get this to work effectively for the student. Of course, without the support of my principal none of this would have happened!

Most of our Catholic schools do an excellent job with interventions on the traditional Tier 1 and even Tier 2 level. They just do not document it that much. There is documentation on reading through the use of DRA to monitor reading levels. Reports are sent at the end of each year to make sure all students are at grade level for grades 1, 2 and 3. Any students who are below that are asked to have summer reading support. A math report has recently been updated to include CBM since we changed math text books across the Diocese during the last school year.
New textbooks and new technology have allowed the regular teachers to utilize the RTI approach. I use DIBELS and AIMSweb to track our students’ progress. The students are exposed to curriculum-based measures and monitoring through the texts they are using and, unlike in the past, they are now being tested directly on what they were recently taught. We can then go back and re-teach specific areas that the students struggled with. These tools allow us to document, track, and ultimately improve their performance.

The RTI Action Network Web site is a helpful tool, as it provides information to me and helps me structure how I explain RTI to teachers. It has been a great source of concrete proof that I can point to when trying to get people on board. As a model, I use it to show what other educators are doing with RTI that is working. Having an authoritative source for the information I share legitimizes the RTI work we’re doing and helps with buy-in.

I also like the email reminders the Web site sends out. It keeps me updated when I don’t have time to go browse through the site. This way, I know what’s out there and can choose to go to the site when something interests me.

I have a binder of information that I have downloaded from the RTI Action Network. I started with “Ask the Experts,” which supported what I learned in my recent graduate courses. Since I am all alone in this quest, I then used “Building Support” and “The RTI Data Analysis Teaming Process” to get me going. This was extremely helpful to me this last year!

I have referred to many other articles, but will probably review them again this summer. The “Implementing RTI in Mathematics” also helped me this past year as we were working with new math text books. This is still so new for us as a school that I hope to be able to go back over this material so that next year a stronger plan is in place from Day 1! This is a very valuable resource to me since there is no district support. Also, my local public school has no idea how to implement RTI. At the SELPA meeting I attended last Fall, they again stated that they use the discrepancy model for special education since they have not yet figured out how to teach their teachers how to do RTI!

I have some forms that I developed for extrapolating data from an IEP report, behavior charts that I use to document observed behavior, and SST forms that I created from the public school model. All of my forms are now in a binder, but we are still revising them and learning to use them more.

We have student success stories, stories that show that RTI is working for our students. However, there is also clear, documented evidence of improvement in the performance of some students. With the RTI approach, we have been able to exit some students from the special education program,
and they are still successful.

The biggest benefit of RTI is that it allows us to identify struggling students early on. Prompt intervention and careful monitoring of student progress hopefully will prevent many students from needing more intensive intervention.

It is most important to have a supportive principal and teachers to implement RTI effectively. Getting them onboard is absolutely crucial.

I learned about RTI in graduate school, and so I think it is important that not only large public school districts find out about and use RTI. Small and private schools should realize that the RTI approach and materials are valid for them to use as well.
How We Got Started

I am the assistant principal at George Mather Forbes School No. 4, a K to 6 school in Rochester, New York. It is an urban school with 420 students, and about 87 percent of our students are African American and about 85 percent are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs). Our building has an equal number of general education and self-contained special education classrooms. Our self-contained classes are comprised of learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and other health impaired students. Seven of the fifteen self-contained classes are for students classified as mentally retarded who take the New York State Alternate Assessment. I have been an assistant principal for 8 years and I’ve been with my current school for 2 years. The school was given the National Title I Distinguished School award for closing the gap in our subgroups last year. We are very proud of that.

Before becoming an AP, I was a speech-language pathologist, so I am used to the approach and benefits of prevention and intervention. One of my responsibilities is to chair the intervention team at my school. The team is comprised of a school psychologist, social worker, general education teacher, special education teacher, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, and parent. Our task is to generate ideas for interventions for teachers and provide intervention for students. We also maintain data and track student progress. The team meets weekly. In the past the team was not respected by the staff so we changed the name to SOAR which stands for Success, Outreach, Achievement, and Resources—all things we want for our team and students. We looked at approaching it from a positive perspective and not a wait to fail approach.

Two years ago, the team members met and reviewed how the team was functioning. As a group we decided to look into RTI. Ms. Karon Jackson, our principal, was very supportive of the initiative and provided the personnel support to allow us to meet during the work day. Ms. Jackson and I met to create a plan on how we wanted to begin the process and a timeline for the year.

The team began to make changes during the first year, but these were mostly process changes. The team met over the summer to create a flow chart of what needed to happen with a referral to our team. We researched RTI and truly utilized the RTI Action Network and its Web resources.
RTI is a school-wide initiative in which all classrooms are involved. This includes general education, special education, counseling, and speech. The SOAR intervention team is responsible for resolving any RTI issues that arise. The team met over the summer to plan the implementation for the subsequent school year. The team debriefs at the end of each weekly meeting. We have often looked at the process and made some changes.

Our focus for RTI is primarily on reading and behavior, although we are looking into integrating science and social studies passages into the reading block so that the students are reading nonfiction content as well.

One resource we have used is the Wilson Language Training Fundations program. We use this as a base and build upon it. Fundations is used in all K to 3 classrooms; it teaches phonics, phonemic awareness, writing and spelling. Students who struggle with the skills in the whole group lesson work on those skills in a more intensive small group at another time during the day. The Wilson Reading program is used by our resource teacher to provide intervention to older students who are struggling readers. We have used the START IN (Students Are Responding To Intervention) program for older students as well. It is a program that helps with phonics, comprehension, and reading fluency. Our resource teacher also uses DIBELS to assess and progress monitor. All of our teachers have created data walls based on student performance on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). These walls are posted in our SOAR team meeting room. Teachers also use guided reading to meet the individual needs of the students.

We also use some supplementary materials for math and have an after school program that focuses on math and literacy. Our extended day program is aligned with what we do during the day. We used *Seven Keys to Comprehension* by Susan Zimmerman as a guide to plan what we did, along with the Madeline Hunter math literacy books.

I think that one of the great things our school does with RTI is that teachers look at specific students and assess what they need in order to make progress. These individualized plans are time consuming in the beginning, but it really pays off in the end. Our teachers individualize interventions to fit the student’s needs, and this is definitely beneficial to the students. Our district uses the Houghton Mifflin leveled reading program. At our school we follow the Fountas and Pinnell guided reading program. Teachers differentiate the needs of students based on using leveled text at the student’s instructional level.

We do interventions before we even think about special education testing. Students are tested for special education only after all types of interventions have been exhausted. We ask teachers to change the intervention if the student is not making progress. Ms. Jackson and I, as well as our instructional team, meet with teachers four times a year to review each
students’ progress. We review the Academic Intervention Services Plan (AIS) and the progress made on the goals.

The people on our team, along with the three other speech-language pathologists and three teachers on our instructional team, provide interventions. Teachers create an AIS plan based on the student’s performance on state or local assessments and their professional judgment and provide intervention within the classroom. If after a period of time and documented data, there is still no progress the teachers refer the student to SOAR. The SOAR team invites the parent to the meeting and, as a team, we develop a more intensive intervention with progress monitoring built in. The intervention may be provided by the classroom teacher or by a member of the team. The progress is monitored closely, and the goal changes if no gains are made.

This year we also participated in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) training funded by our district and were able to send four teachers to training throughout the year. Rob March was the presenter, and he was able to come to our building twice to walk through and assess where we were and where we need to go in PBIS. Dr. March was also able to provide some resources for RTI. The teachers who attended training have brought back the information and shared it with staff, and 97 percent of the staff voted to implement PBI in the fall of 2009. The PBIS team is meeting and planning over the summer. We have been selected to participate in RTI training through our district in the spring and summer of 2009, and we will be participating in training provided by Jim Wright.

How We Did It

At first, it was hard to get teachers on board. It has been challenging to get them to make data-based instructional decisions. We have done trainings to raise awareness about the benefits of RTI. We also send staff to workshops, conferences, and conventions that focus on RTI. We really want to make sure the staff have the professional development they need to effectively implement RTI for both academics and behavior.

The Tools and Resources We Used

I often refer to the RTI Action Network Web site to share information with teachers. I presented the Network’s site at a district conference, and people were very receptive to it.

The site is easy to maneuver, which is a true bonus for me, as I am not very technically inclined. The information is easy to find and the resources are great. I really enjoy the e-newsletter, and am considering the options of participating in a blog or chat room—both very new concepts to me.

We have also used Jim Wright’s book as a guide for our team. We have modeled our team meetings from his book *The RTI Toolkit*. I found this through the Web resources supplied on the RTI Action Network web site.
The Tools and Resources We Developed

We are still evolving. After our first full year, we debriefed and are making changes to our forms. We are developing a tracking form for progress monitoring for teachers, although it is a work in progress.

Our Results

Since employing RTI, I have witnessed a change in the reading readiness of some of our first graders. RTI has been especially beneficial for first graders who struggle with reading readiness due to a variety of factors, whether that is their lack of background experiences, vocabulary, or phonemic awareness. The RTI system now in place has really helped these students become closer to where they need to be in terms of reading.

Some Lessons We’ve Learned

Individualized monitoring and planning are time consuming activities, but they are necessary. The kids learn so much better and are equipped to continue performing well once their root issues are understood. Knowing exactly what to target in the intervention helps tremendously. This year, after our meetings with teachers, we were able to project how well the student would perform on the state assessment. We recognized through this meeting that we also need to focus on math.

Getting parents involved is sometimes difficult to achieve. However, it makes the process of using an RTI approach much easier when parents understand that informed data-based decisions are being made by the teachers who are providing their child’s education.

Most important to creating a successful RTI program is the district’s investment in staff professional development, both initially and long-term to ensure that skills are kept up-to-date. Also important is making sure the teachers are equipped with the tools and materials they need to be successful.

I think RTI makes sense. It focuses on the child and the child’s strengths and needs academically and behaviorally. I believe RTI can make a difference for children.
Mindy Gardzinski  
Assistant Principal, Mountain View Elementary School,  
Alleghany County (VA) Public Schools

How We Got Started

I have been assistant principal at Mountain View Elementary for 4 years. Prior to working at Mountain View, I worked for another school system in Alleghany County, Covington City Public Schools.

We started planning for RTI at Mountain View in July 2008 after the state of Virginia put out a request for pilot schools in the state. I wrote the pilot school grant, and we were one of the 16 schools chosen state-wide in June, 2008. Mountain View is also the RTI pilot school for Alleghany County Public Schools.

We put together a team of 7 teachers and 3 administrators (including me) who volunteered to attend a week-long RTI training in July. I am now the RTI facilitator for the school.

What We’re Doing

We started our RTI program with all grade levels, from junior kindergarten through grade 5, focusing on Tier 1 core instruction.

We continued to do somewhat of a Tier 2 because we are a Title 1 targeted assistance school. We have applied to be a school-wide Title I program, which would allow us to more easily serve all children in the school who need additional assistance.

Improving the overall quality of classroom instruction and increasing differentiation has been our goal. We want to get our faculty to start understanding and building on their knowledge of the RTI paradigm. My mantra has been ‘baby steps’.

To provide intervention to students who need it, we built a 45-minute intervention/enrichment block into every student’s schedule. This block was called “Power-Up”. Each teacher has an additional staff member in the classroom to help with intervention and enrichment. Intervention or enrichment is done based on student’s reading needs. We chose to start with reading, but plan on adding intervention and enrichment for math next school year.

All of our 600 students are enrolled and involved, and all 55 of our teachers are involved in RTI implementation in some way. We are in the beginning stages, but we hope to be fully implemented in our school within 2 to 3 years and in the whole district within 5 years.

We are planning some changes for 2009-2010 school year. We also have a systematic long-term plan. For the 2009-2010 school year we plan on
changing the way we do Power-Up. Instead of reading teachers remediating in their own classroom, this will happen by grade level. Teachers will provide interventions based on a manual we created with high-quality, research-based interventions identified. Grade-level teams will plan together on the interventions for different groups of students.

We use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) for universal screening of students. We’re also using Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), which is a state-provided tool that many Virginia schools use for universal screening, diagnosis, and progress monitoring.

In junior kindergarten through 3rd grade, teachers have done PALS quick checks and teachers in grades 4 and 5 have used teacher-created materials. Also, teachers have used classroom-based fluency testing/progress monitoring. We have purchased AIMSweb for the upcoming school year.

How We Did It

Initially we trained our grade-level coaches at a week-long RTI institute in July 2008 provided by the Department of Education (DOE). After that point, our team got together and came up with an implementation plan for what we wanted to accomplish the first year, semester by semester. We rolled out our plan at the beginning of the school year at the pre-school in-service days. The RTI coaches have also provided a lot of leadership. We meet every Tuesday after school, and they meet with their grade levels on Wednesday to discuss RTI and other instructional issues. We share strategies at these meetings.

Our main challenge has been the consensus-building piece. There should be some consensus when implementing any kind of change. RTI is part of the reauthorization of IDEA and something good for our students. Some members of our faculty have been averse to change. Change is often difficult, but at this point, about 75 percent of our faculty is on board, and we are focusing on trying to bring in the last 25 percent. We have gone back to some teachers and provided additional professional development to pick that piece up. However, we are still in the early stages of RTI implementation, so I’m sure that more challenges will arise.

We conducted a staff survey to obtain answers to three questions 1) Did teachers have any teachers or assistants scheduled in their classes that they didn’t think were needed or did they need additional help at any particular time of the day? 2) Would teachers be interested in being on a principal advisory committee? and 3) What additional professional development did teachers feel they needed in order to be more effective? It was interesting to see how different teachers reacted, particularly to question 3. It showed us how reflective our teachers are and how open they are to themselves being a learner. Since that initial survey, we conducted a second survey based on teachers’ reading instruction and professional development. This was part of us trying to become a school-wide Title I program. We found that we need
additional staff development on the five research-based components of reading instruction and that over a quarter of our staff feel uncomfortable with reading instruction for those above or below grade level.

At this point, our resources for RTI are limited due to the current budget situation. In December 2008, we did receive around $15,000 from the DOE to purchase progress monitoring tools. In our quest to become a Title I school, we are hoping to blur the lines of some of the different types of federal funding (IDEA and Title I particularly).

The Tools and Resources We Used

The RTI Action Network Web site has provided basic information and an overview which has been helpful in reinforcing information for teachers. However, I think that teachers really need specific strategies. I would like to show a webinar during one of our faculty meetings this coming year.

Our Results

I think that the big benefit of RTI is that it helps find and immediately remediate students’ weaknesses. We are only in the beginning stages, but our kindergarten teachers saw improvement this year. Teachers saw end-of-the-year gains by the end of the first semester. Only 4 students out 88 were identified as not meeting the PALS benchmark for the upcoming school year. Also a large majority of the kindergarteners were reading and writing on a mid-first grade level by the end of the school year. The level of performance that teachers didn’t expect to see until spring, they saw before the winter holiday break. The kindergarteners are quite advanced. We have more resources in the classrooms now, so students are advancing whether it is through enrichment or remediation.

Our special education referrals have been reduced this school year. Also, we expect to start seeing real gains in performance, particularly as we get further into RTI and student groups. As students like the kindergarteners move through the grades, they will have received this from the beginning of their school careers.

Some Lessons We’ve Learned

To get buy-in for RTI, you have to get the information about RTI out to people and then get them to understand that this is something they’re already doing. We’re just asking them to rethink it and adjust it somewhat.

Also, you need administrators who really believe in the process because you will face a lot of challenges. A core leadership team of teachers is also essential.
For the past 4 years, I have been a school psychologist. My job is to supervise targeted intervention programs, monitor IEP implementation, provide behavioral support to teachers and students, and consult with teachers and staff about academic and behavioral concerns in two elementary schools. The district currently has thirteen elementary schools.

RTI planning began 4 years ago in my district. I am a member of the team working to implement it in our schools. The team began with school psychologists working to implement RTI as the eligibility procedure for specific learning disability (SLD). As the district has moved through the RTI process, the team has expanded to the district level with the current goal of implementing pyramids of intervention for all students in the district. The goal is to improve the interventions that are currently in place while streamlining the process of students accessing those interventions.

In the two K to 5 schools that I work with, all staff (about 48 teachers) are involved in RTI. Union Public Schools currently has a 3-tier model. The district has a universal screening process that helps us target a smaller number of students who may require more intensive intervention programs. Curriculum-based measurement is then used to target the students who require more intensive intervention and may be considered for eligibility for special education services. We are using research-based interventions in support of the regular education curriculum. Those students who are participating in Tier 3 interventions are progress monitored weekly for a minimum of 10 weeks with curriculum-based measurement.

The two elementary schools that I am responsible for had 65 and 30 students participate in Tier 3 interventions during the 2008-2009 school year. One of them is a Title 1 school, so many students participate in some sort of intervention through various programs.

We have faced challenges in implementing RTI, primarily in resources and knowledge of the research that drove the change in our process. The initiative was initially led by special education, but since the implementation of RTI 4 years ago we have seen a change in philosophy at the district level. This summer our district has provided every school with training and professional development to help support pyramids of intervention and the building of a more concise procedure to move students through the interventions they require to be successful. It has been exciting to watch the support from district administration grow over the years.
### The Tools and Resources We Used

I use the RTI Action Network Web site frequently. I am always interested in seeing what other districts are doing and if there are any reports on how their processes are working. I keep up with the webinars and share that information with my colleagues.

### The Tools and Resources We Developed

One of the most helpful resources we currently have is our district norms. We have norms for kindergarten through 5th grade targeting reading, written expression, and math. The normative information is used to help us monitor a student’s progress through Tier 3 and determine eligibility for special education services if deemed appropriate. Having the visual representation, to share with both parents and teachers on a student’s progress or lack of progress has been helpful. We also use similar information to monitor our students currently receiving special education services and supports to help ensure that we are providing each student with the least restrictive environment to meet that student’s needs. This information is used for re-evaluation purposes, and program changes are made as necessary.

### Our Results

The district uses curriculum-based measures to report student performance. Staff now have data that shows how students are progressing, and parents are getting feedback on their child’s growth and being invited into the process of tracking their progress.

With the change to our Tier 3 model, including more consistent interventions and a change to our eligibility criteria, we have decreased the number of students who required Tier 3 interventions and also decreased the number of student who were then eligible for special education services after completing Tier 3 interventions.

We are also monitoring changes in the number of students who qualify for special education. Through RTI, students are getting additional support in targeted areas, and we are seeing them be successful without needing to be referred for special education services. Also students who weren’t eligible for special education are now able to get the help they need. For some, it wasn’t a disability, it was simply a lack of instruction.

There were times that our numbers in special education increased due to implementation difficulties and eligibility criteria. During the past year we improved our implementation and tightened our eligibility criteria and have seen a significant decrease in both the number of students who participated in Tier 3 interventions and the number of students eligible for special education after completing those interventions.

### Some Lessons We’ve Learned

This has been a difficult, but very rewarding, process. In the beginning, this process was started by a group of school psychologists who were following the research. It has expanded over 4 years to become a district initiative to create pyramids of intervention in each school to ensure student success. The biggest lesson we have learned through this process is the importance of sharing with teachers and staff the knowledge and research driving the decisions.
How We Got Started

For the past year, I have worked as a Technical Assistance Partner for Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative or MiBLSi. MiBLSi, which is funded by the Michigan Department of Education, formally began in 2003. I have been involved with MiBLSi as a literacy coach and state trainer since the first group of 35 schools went through the grant in 2004-2005. The mission of this state initiative is to provide schools with technical assistance in establishing an RTI model that focuses on school-wide reading and behavior systems.

MiBLSi will bring on another 98 schools in 2009-2010 which will bring the total schools involved in the project to over 400. We have a wide range of schools varying from rural buildings in the upper peninsula of Michigan to buildings within the Detroit Public School System. Our schools are involved in the training process for 3 years. In my current role, I coordinate all MiBLSi activities (including professional development for teams, coaching support, principal support, and consultation) for a region in the southwest part of the state. We have a Web site that describes MiBLSi in detail located at www.cenmi.org/miblsi.

What We’re Doing

In the MiBLSi training process, we have a series of phases, and it usually takes about a year for each phase. Phase 1 focuses on universal screening systems for reading and behavior. For reading, we train teams on how to implement a screening tool for all students—we use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)—and how to interpret and use the data. We also train on maximizing classroom instruction for all students and spend time analyzing the core curriculum for reading on what they are using to teach students every day.

For Phase 1 behavior, we focus on establishing school-wide positive behavior support system. We have building teams identify 3 to 5 expectations for the building, make a plan to teach and monitor those expectations, and get set up with School-wide Information System (SWIS) to track office discipline referrals. This year, we added a day on systems review to help schools ensure that all the pieces of their school-wide reading and behavior systems were in place as they were moving forward in the process. We end the first year of training with a data review day that helps teams sense of the data they are collecting on reading and behavior.

For Phase 2, we focus the training on secondary and tertiary supports in reading and behavior. We also maintain the data review days three times a
year to assist teams in that process. For Phase 3, we focus the training on sustaining the models they have built over the previous 2 years. The number of training days fades down to three data review days in the third phase.

How We Did It

Systems change is always difficult for staff, but once the bumps are ironed out, RTI seems to be working really well for a lot of buildings. Much of our work has been devoted to developing the MiBLSi training content, building the skills of coaches, assisting principals in troubleshooting, and helping building staff feel confident in using an RTI approach. Successful buildings and districts have put coaches in place to help with implementation and provide professional development. We have meetings for coaches and leadership days for principals where we provide additional training and opportunities to network. During these meetings, the participants are able to share their expertise and information about what practices have or have not worked for them.

The Tools and Resources We Used

I use the RTI Action Network Web site frequently. It is a great resource for both beginning and advanced schools. I like the research clips by Dr. Dave Tilly and the Ask the Experts tab under Professional Development. On the whole I find the Web site very well done and user friendly. As we are working with many middle schools, I also appreciate the information and resources for secondary schools.

The Tools and Resources We Developed

We collect different types of data for the MiBLSi grant. We collect DIBELS for elementary reading, AIMSweb for middle school reading and SWIS for behavior. We also use what we call “process” tools for the grant, which are basically checklists for school-wide reading and behavior. Some of these process tools we use from the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports system such as the team implementation checklist, and some we have adapted to fit our needs. Our Web site has a link to all of the tools that we use at www.cenmi.org/miblsi.

Our schools use graphs to monitor the progress of their at-risk students. These graphs are helpful because they allow parents to understand visually how their child is progressing in the area of reading. The results become more concrete and less abstract, which helps to convey the child’s progress to the parent.

Our Results

We use DIBELS and SWIS to track student performance. We are looking for trends that develop over time and comparing those to our state-wide test results. Overall as a project, we are seeing the DIBELS scores go up and the SWIS office discipline referrals go down. We have a chart of this on our Web site at www.cenmi.org/miblsi.

For the most part, RTI is working and the results are positive. I hear a lot of success stories. A special education director recently emailed me pages of
information on how RTI is working in his district. He was so enthusiastic, and said, “The RTI bus is gaining some serious speed!” He went on to list 25 positive RTI changes in the district, such as progress-monitoring for all intensive and strategic students.

Schools are finding that there is a powerful connection between school-wide reading and behavior models. For example, one of our middle school principals told me that he now has time to create a school schedule that includes a reading intervention block, because he doesn’t have 10 to 15 students outside his door for discipline problems every day.

**Some Lessons We’ve Learned**

We think a good way to address and overcome inevitable challenges with RTI models is by investing resources in school or district leadership teams, coaches and principals. Once coaches are in place in districts, they have the local capacity and knowledge, and along with administrative leadership, they can effect change.

Another important part of RTI is to facilitate communication among practitioners about their successes and failures. We have found it to be beneficial to get staff talking to staff in buildings and districts outside of their area. Communication is a key piece of ensuring that RTI is implemented effectively.

It sounds simple, but our outcome data tend to improves when our process data improves. That has been another key piece for us—slowing down and making sure that all of the pieces of the school-wide systems for reading and behavior are operating effectively.
How We Got Started

Ventura County is a very high energy place, and when things are going on, people want to learn about them and get involved. The Ventura County Office of Education, for which I work, provides educational services to the 21 local school districts in the county.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the Ventura County Office of Education set up collaborative, multi-disciplinary RtI2 Task Force. [In California, the California Department of Education refers to RTI as Response to Instruction and Intervention “RtI2.”] The task force included members from our educational services and student services branches and the SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area). SELPA is responsible for the implementation of the Ventura County Special Education Local Plan and insuring a free appropriate public education for all students with identified disabilities according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The task force developed a 4-year plan to implement the Response to Instruction and Intervention model in schools and districts across Ventura County. Our goals were to: 1) build district and school capacity to provide early intervention and enhance student achievement through a model of tiered interventions; 2) provide a replicable intervention model; and 3) promote a collaborative effort that offers a coordinated county-wide alternative to traditional identification methods for special education assessment. We are now in Year 3 of that 4-year plan.

What We’re Doing

I have been with Ventura County for 6 years, including 2 years in my current position as a director of curriculum, instruction, and continuous improvement. Some of my responsibilities include leadership coaching, school achievement analysis, program review, providing schools and districts with professional development, and working with schools and districts that are in program improvement. I co-chair, with my colleague Jeff Hamlin, the county’s RtI2 task force, as well as RtI2 collaboratives and symposia.

Before working for the Ventura County Office of Education, I was a principal for a National Blue Ribbon elementary school and a principal in public and private special education schools. As a principal, nearly 15 years ago, I tried to provide early intervention services without identification. I was excited about this approach then and still am today, particularly when I see what some schools and districts are doing now.

The Ventura RtI2 task force developed its own 3-tier instruction and intervention integrated model, with increasing levels of support to address the academic and the social, emotional, and behavior challenges of students.
We provide our RtI² graphic and a narrative with accompanying forms which can be found on our Web site at http://www.vcoe.org/cici/ResponseToInstructionInterventionRtI2/tabid/1918/Default.aspx

We provide a variety of resources to the 21 school districts in Ventura County that helps them develop and implement their own model of RtI² tiered interventions. We have a very inclusive approach to RtI² that allows us to serve kids early. We use this model in presentations and in providing support to districts. We believe that having a collaboratively developed county model helps to support consistency and a common language across all of the schools and districts involved. This also better supports students and their families who move between our county districts.

Some schools and districts are making wonderful gains and are doing great things as they implement and refine their RtI² framework. We have students with IEPs receiving services in the classrooms that use a tiered intervention provided by general and special educators, and schools where the schedule allows a time for all students to receive their “extra scoop” of support for either intervention or enrichment. Other models I have observed have a literacy room that provides specific targeted instruction to groups of students based on formative data.

At this point, every district is at least seriously considering RtI², and a number of them are piloting it. Our approach is comprehensive and inclusive. RtI² is happening in both the academic and social emotional and behavioral areas, and it is not viewed as being just special education or just general education; it’s a unified every education effort. We are hopeful that all of our districts will stay committed to the idea of RtI². I have seen what happens when we don’t intervene early. I believe that with an RtI² model we will see a decrease in the number of kids who need special education services. Responsive classroom instruction and intervention helps students avoid failure. We recently observed the number of Ventura County K-12 students identified as having a specific learning disability decreased by 7.25 percent between 2005 and 2008.

How We Did It

As its first task, the RtI² task force group developed a 4-year plan which was positively embraced by the 21 district superintendents across Ventura County. You can see our 4-year plan at http://www.vcoe.org/Portals/VcssoPortals/cici/RtI/4.9VCOE%20Task%20Force%20Work%20Plan.4.09.doc).

We held many collaborative conversations with a wide range of educators. The 14-member task force set a schedule to meet monthly and created a “think tank” atmosphere of high-quality discussions. The task force developed the Ventura County RtI² model and pyramid of interventions. Next, the Task Force provided materials and resources to the 21 school districts in Ventura County, helping districts create their own model of RtI² tiered interventions. The task force maintains a feedback loop to
continuously assess local needs. Responding to district staff requests, the task force coordinates RtI² symposia; district collaboratives; site visits; ongoing professional development training using a training of trainers model; and special events for decision makers, parents, and the community. RtI² is an agenda item at superintendent’s meetings as well as curriculum council and bilingual director’s meetings. We also present the model to local universities and offer technical and evaluative assistance. We maintain a Web site that is continually updated with information and resources. We found that some of our districts formed their own district RtI² task force modeled after our county task force with plans to link their district Web sites to our county RtI² Web site.

We are delighted that to be working directly with the California Department of Education to inform the development of the California RtI² model.

The Tools and Resources We Used

I am a frequent visitor to the RTI Action Network Web site. I love reading about the research and what’s happening. I’ve watched webcasts live and also ones that have been archived. I like the archives because we can provide links on our county Web site to resources that are of particular interest to our districts (for example, on the topic of English Learners and national experts describing their experiences to implement RTI at schools and districts.

Our Task Force uses many resources and shares research articles, journals and books with our schools and districts. We offer our own print and web resources page (see link below) which are listed on our Web site for easy access to our schools and districts. We originally began our own research by looking at the publications by NASDSE and the research by Fuchs and Fuchs. Our Task Force makes recommendation to our county resource library which now includes many books on RtI².

When I receive an email from the RTI Action Network, we often forward it to RtI2 coordinators in all of our districts. We have enjoyed sharing what the Network offers, particularly the webcasts and newsletters.

http://www.vcoe.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=y5Mq8%2b6g4e4%3d&tabid=2091


The Tools and Resources We Developed

During the 2007-2008 school year, we held a symposium that brought together local educators and experts in the state interested in RTI. Much to our surprise, about 450 people attended the event. We repeated the symposium in February 2009. Judy Elliot, [one of the RTI Action Network’s key advisors], gave the keynote address. Some schools and districts that are doing exceptional things with RtI² also presented their
We think that school leadership teams are ideal for this kind of event, because they include teachers and the site administrator, and they are the people who are ultimately responsible for making RTI work in their schools.

We also developed our own Web site (www.vcoe.org/cici). I and post our model, information, resources, and links to RTI Action Network resources on the Web site. Lots of people sign on to the site often, so I think it’s a useful resource for our districts.

We also continue to develop resources for our schools and district based on feedback received on our annual RtI² survey. Examples are the resource page to support English Language Learners and our many examples of supports for behavior. Our upcoming 2009-10 year will include professional development in the area of RtI² for behavior and RtI² for English Language Learners. We will also feature local schools showcasing their models of tiered instruction and intervention. You are welcome to visit our Web site where you will find RtI² supports and examples for many areas, including academic, social-emotional and behavior, ELL support, district support, and assessment and progress monitoring. There is also information on our professional development offerings and symposium information.

Our Results

Our Task Force activities are designed to build district and site capacity for the implementation of RtI² throughout Ventura County. It is our belief that this process will foster challenging learning experiences that engage all students. We implemented an annual VCOE survey and other data collection related to this framework. Overall, we see great improvement in many areas.

As evidenced by data from the annual surveys, the percentage of respondents reporting a “thorough knowledge of the general principles of RTI” has increased from 18 percent at the start of the project to 27 percent after the second year. During the same time period, the percentage of respondents indicating “some knowledge” of the general principles of RTI increased from 27 percent to 73 percent, and the number indicating “limited knowledge” decreased from 55 percent to 0 percent.

Growth in knowledge was seen in all areas surveyed, with the highest levels of growth seen in the degree to which survey respondents indicated “some” or “thorough” knowledge of:

- How to implement tiered interventions (from 60% to 90%)
- Monitoring strategies to ensure that interventions are provided with fidelity (from 50% to 88%)
- Strategies to monitor students’ responses to intervention in their area of need (from 60% to 78%).

At the start of the RtI² Task Force, no Ventura County districts reported they were ready to begin RtI² implementation. By the end of the 2007-2008
school year, 40 percent of the districts indicated that RtI² was being piloted in a limited number of schools within their district, and 20 percent stated that they were in the process of district-wide implementation.

We observe a lot more analysis of formative and summative test data now, with 94 percent of schools reporting they now administer benchmark tests. Also, schools more fully and widely implement RTI, including in nonacademic areas such as behavior. Survey results indicate differentiated instruction and universal access increased by 30 percent in Ventura County classrooms. The most compelling data is the increased learning that occurs in classrooms across the county. Where students receive targeted instruction and interventions based on specific data points they get higher assessment scores. Some Ventura County schools implementing the model have exited program improvement, meeting federal targets for all students and significant subgroups. Some have been recognized as California Distinguished Schools, serving as exemplars for model site visits. Leaders in these schools present at Ventura County Office of Education RtI² symposia and collaborative meetings.

A district superintendent reported, “We are excited that we are able to have a systemic change using the County model of RtI² that can better serve the students in our district.” Another district assistant superintendent stated, “We have made much progress in implementation of RtI² due to the support of Ventura County. We have developed our programs, and many of our principals and teachers have attended the symposiums and brought back ideas to their sites that have been the impetus for RtI² planning.”

We now focus on learning. As educators it is our responsibility to focus not only on what we have taught, but on measuring what our students have learned. We have a collaborative problem solving model that includes data collection and analysis, progress monitoring, implementation and evaluation. This process is supported by staff development and family involvement. The result is increased student learning.

Schools and districts engaged in RtI² can use the data collected as a student progresses through tiered interventions to inform assessment for special education assessment.

The secret to successful implementation of an RTI model is building a strong shared belief in a tiered system to support all children learning. Key to this is a strong instructional leader. The superintendent is important to support this framework, but the strong passionate principals who lead with a committed staff are the daily driving force. The principal is the first learner who looks at the recent data, attends meetings, builds the infrastructure and shows support of the model’s implementation and working as a school team. Some of the principals from model school sites are surprised when others view them as a model. They are exemplars of continuous improvement as they evaluate and refine their models. They don’t see themselves as extraordinary but as leaders who do what is right for students.
Sherry Abernethy
Consultant for Learning Disabilities/ADHD/RTI for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

How We Got Started
I am the state consultant for learning disabilities in the Exceptional Children Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. RTI has been implemented in our state very systematically. In 2000, the state conducted a fact finding mission on the effects of RTI. (In North Carolina, we use the term Responsiveness to Instruction rather than Response to Intervention.) We then piloted our problem-solving model of RTI beginning in 2004 with 5 school systems. The expansion of RTI training to the entire state began in 2006.

At this point, implementation looks different in the various districts and schools. So far 97 of the 115 school systems that have participated in state RTI Foundations training are implementing the problem-solving model. 68 schools in 3 school systems are implementing RTI to determine eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD). Currently, North Carolina allows for use of both RTI and discrepancy models to determine SLD eligibility.

What We’re Doing
One responsibility of my position is to coordinate and facilitate the 8-day foundations training in RTI that we offer. Participants in the training have included principals, curriculum specialists, literacy coaches, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and general and special education teachers. The intent of the training is to provide foundational training in the problem solving model, curriculum-based assessment, and intervention resources in reading, math and behavior. The intent is to build school system and building capacity for training school staff.

In addition, in my position, I maintain data on training participants and schools that are implementing. Additionally, I am collecting implementation data, including demographics, tiered level of support, and outcomes for students. I meet with teachers in order to help them in whatever way I can, and I also conduct regional meetings for teachers who are implementing RTI.

We are slated to give RTI training to each of our school districts. So far, we have conducted training and implemented RTI in 97 of our 115 school districts. All grades K to 12 are involved in RTI once the district staff have been trained, but implementation at the elementary level is further along.

The training we provide involves communicating key ideas about RTI—including what it is and is not—and the North Carolina RTI model, which is
a problem solving model (PSM). This model describes a 5-step process.

- Identify
  - What the student knows
  - What they should know
  - Areas to target for instruction

- Develop an intervention plan

- Implement the plan

- Monitor student progress

- Evaluate, review, and revise the plan

Over the 8 days of training, we cover 7 modules: Introduction to Problem Solving, Functional Assessment, Reading Overview and Interventions, Positive Behavioral Support Overview and Interventions, Mathematics Overview and Interventions, Case Studies, and Next Steps in RTI Implementation.

How We Did It

The state’s RTI initiative collaborates with several other initiatives, including positive behavior support (PBS), instructional consultation training (ICT), and State Improvement Project grants for reading and math. This works well because both PBS and ICT are also based on a problem solving model. This allows for fluid integration of these state initiatives.

Student progress is monitored using curriculum-based measures (CBM). This is important, because CBM informs instruction. It tells teachers if students are learning from the instruction they provide.

One of our biggest challenges has been the view that RTI is special education. Because of IDEA 2004, this initiative has been in the Exceptional Children division at the state level. However, in school systems and individual schools, this has clearly been a general education initiative. We are now developing plans for an agency-wide roll-out of RTI. This will be a collaborative effort of all divisions in our agency and will be a part of our new accountability and standards model. We are very excited that RTI is becoming an agency-wide initiative.

We’re making good progress. In November 2007, we had a 2-day celebration for RTI in Greensboro, North Carolina, and about 700 people attended. This celebration was in conjunction with PBS in our state. We offered breakout sessions on both initiatives, as well as a strand that focused on both PBS and RTI. In fact, we titled the celebration “Come Together”. This was yet another step in blending these two problem solving models.
### The Tools and Resources We Used

I use the RTI Action Network Web site to keep updated, get training information, and read articles. I always give out links to RTI Web sites during the trainings, including the RTI Action Network site.

We have used the glossary from the RTI Action Network to help build our glossary section in the RTI Guidance document we are creating. We have also used RTI Action Network as a source for CBM information and other resources, and we have also participated in RTI Action Network webinars.

I also use the Web site of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education [one of the RTI Action Network’s founding partners].

### The Tools and Resources We Developed

Our training materials are available online at [http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/development/learning/responsiveness/rti_materials](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/development/learning/responsiveness/rti_materials). We are in the final stages of developing our RTI Guidance document, and this resource will be available online as well.

### Our Results

We have had some important results from our 5 initial pilot districts. In one district in 2004, African American students were 1.70 times more likely than their peers to be referred to special education; by 2007, the gap had essentially been closed and, overall, the percentage of students with IEPs dropped a full percentage point, from 13.1 percent to 12.1 percent, in schools implementing RTI within the pilot district.

This year, we collected data on the relationship between ethnicity and gender and the various levels of our 4-tier RTI model. We are also looking at our state assessment and what students’ scores were prior to and after implementation of RTI. Our results will be available in late summer or early fall of 2009.

We are not waiting for students to fail now before they get assistance, and we are collecting data that informs teaching, including differentiating instruction. Students who would not have qualified for special education are getting help now. Before RTI, some fell behind not because of a disability but because of lack of instruction.

Schools are beginning to see the benefit of their efforts. They are experiencing a higher proficiency rate on our state summative assessment. Referral rates for consideration of special education appear to be decreasing, while placement rate for referrals is increasing. In other words, we are doing a better job of referring students for services who truly have a disability.

Schools report a change in climate. They experience a more positive attitude in the schools and an increase in collaboration and a teamwork.
There is a huge learning curve on how to collect and keep data, and it is overwhelming. The training itself is also overwhelming. Because of this, we encourage schools to look at their core program and general classroom instruction and improve those before they begin to use multiple tiers.

Also, parents are getting specific information on how their child is performing, and they can understand the data more clearly.

We have learned that schools need time to build capacity and fully implement RTI. We encourage them to assess the tools they have and layer training based on their needs. For example, some schools may decide teachers need additional reading training and will subsequently participate in a 5-day reading foundations training that our division offers. Others may assess their core instruction and then add additional instruction for all students before beginning to look at tiered level of support for students. This all takes time, and we support the 3- to 5-year timeline of RTI implementation. As we continue to provide training, we also make additions and adjustments to ensure that the training is the best we can provide and includes the latest research.
Dr. Lynn Boyer, Executive Director of the Office of Special Programs is leading the way in West Virginia for implementing RTI. When IDEA was reauthorized in 2004, the West Virginia Department of Education embraced the opportunity to make significant changes that included state-wide use of RTI for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities. We began our RTI initiative as a small project and scaled it up to a state-wide initiative in just a few years.

Unquestionably, we were assisted by West Virginia’s Reading First initiative which introduced the tiered intervention model to our state. That work paved the way for us, and we crafted our RTI framework based on the Reading First model.

We first began our state RTI initiative in 2005-2006 in 11 schools located in 9 of our 55 counties. At the end of that pilot year, we expanded the pilot to include 25 counties. We wanted to make sure that every district had an RTI or Reading First school to serve as a first-hand model.

For the last 4 years, my office has focused on state-wide implementation of RTI. My primary responsibility as the coordinator of learning disabilities is to move the state RTI initiative forward through professional development, technical assistance, and policy development. I also work with elementary literacy, which is a good fit with the RTI initiative.

We know there are many advantages to using RTI. First, we can meet students’ needs early and prevent them from needing to be referred to special education. The prevention piece is critical. But there is also an emphasis on providing quality classroom instruction, and that is very important, too. Breaking down barriers as to whom the children “belong” is a great benefit of the RTI process. We hear teachers discussing “our” students rather than “their” students. Interventionists are the best qualified teachers, whether it’s a special education teacher, a reading specialist, or a classroom teacher. Our state special education regulations support that concept by allowing special education teachers to commit unused portions of their caseloads and time to serve as interventionists within the RTI process.

We first focused on the elementary level, and we have been conducting training on RTI components since summer 2007. Our first state-wide trainings were dedicated to reading, but we’ve expanded since then by developing our models for elementary mathematics and adolescent literacy. We have put much effort into making sure that teachers and principals know the RTI framework and how to design a school environment for its success.
Our guiding principles for upcoming work are to help schools build their infrastructures, fill them with quality instruction and intervention, and confidently implement the procedures for SLD identification.

Some districts moved quickly but strategically to establish their RTI systems. They focused on Tier 1 and improved the quality of learning through an emphasis on differentiated instruction. District support was an important component for success. The early adopting districts are now working on refining Tiers 2 and 3 for reading and planning for mathematics implementation. Not all schools are moving at the same rate, but all 400+ elementary schools are working hard to establish their RTI models for reading.

I believe that we are doing something unique in West Virginia, and we are committed to the RTI process. We are positioned to make this happen across our state. Districts want to do it. No one ever challenges the need for a systematic support system for struggling learners. Although schools may be challenged at times, they really want to build strong RTI systems, and there has been little if any resistance to ensuring that all children learn.

Of course, size is in our favor. Our smaller population, as well as our 55 county school systems, allows us to do some things that would be much more difficult in a larger state. We have been able to communicate our RTI vision and messages clearly and consistently as we strive for fidelity to our framework and processes.

### How We Did It

RTI is an important initiative in West Virginia that is changing the way schools support their students, and we recognize the level of change it requires. We are one of six states that have opted to prohibit the use of the discrepancy model for identifying students with learning disabilities. In 2007, our state special education regulations were revised to include timelines for implementation of RTI for the identification of SLD: July 2009 for elementary level reading, 2010 for elementary mathematics, 2011 for middle school level, and 2012 for the high school level. So that we understood where districts were and what they needed to establish their processes, we distributed an RTI needs assessment survey to all elementary schools in the fall of 2008. The results of this survey guided the professional development and technical assistance provided this year by the RTI specialists.

Most importantly, our State Professional Development Grant (SPDG), which has a primary focus on literacy, provides funding to employ eight regional RTI specialists who work directly with counties and schools. They established communication networks in their regions and continue to provide professional development and technical assistance on all aspects of the RTI process. They are uniquely situated to guide and assist RTI implementation across the state. Without question, the field work of the RTI specialists has been invaluable to our state-wide scale up.

We also have three middle schools and three high schools designated as
demonstration schools to help us identify what the RTI framework looks like in middle and secondary settings. Funding is provided through the SPDG and includes collaboration with three West Virginia university teacher preparation programs. In districts with elementary pilot schools, RTI implementation has expanded upward to the receiving middle and high schools. However, we need to establish a model more systematically and we’re looking carefully at what’s happening in the middle and high school pilots.

In March 2009 we finalized West Virginia’s procedures for SLD eligibility determination. The guidance document, *Guidelines for Identifying Students with Specific Learning Disabilities*, assists schools in implementing RTI and making eligibility decisions and is available on the WVDE Web site, [https://wvde.state.wv.us/osp](https://wvde.state.wv.us/osp). A team of stakeholders worked with the Office of Special Programs to identify the criteria and decision making considerations for determining SLD eligibility. Professional development for special education directors, school psychologists, and diagnosticians was delivered at the regional level in March and April 2009. The training and the document were well received, and a plan has been developed to share the information with principals, student assistance teams, and others throughout the 2009-2010 school year.

Funding for the original 36 RTI pilot schools was provided through state IDEA funds. Schools participated in training on each component of RTI: 3-tier instructional model, universal screening, progress monitoring, and teaming. As we began to scale up at the elementary level in the summer of 2007, the Office of Special Programs developed and delivered regional trainings, similar in design to the pilot school training, for teams of principals and teachers. Support was provided during the school year through a series of webinars and an electronic book study that included over 900 participants, some of whom completed the work for college credit. Throughout our work in scaling up, we have appreciated the importance of the leadership component of RTI. For example, initial elementary training included specific modules for principals, and a state-wide listserv for elementary principals was used to communicate upcoming events and maintain an information system.

**The Tools and Resources We Used**

We’ve used the RTI Action Network Web site because the information is very informative. The focus is on research, but there are also practical components. Nationally known researchers and practitioners are featured and current information is also critical to our state level work. The site’s organization is practical, especially the various instructional levels and the parent piece.

The articles are excellent resources, especially the “Ask the Experts” feature. I have participated in webinars, which I think are very useful, and find the archived versions helpful.
I use the Network’s site to stay current for my own information and share applicable content with the RTI demonstration schools and the RTI specialists who then share the reliable, current information with their districts and schools. It’s not the only Web site I use, but it is one of several valuable places that we use. It’s a wonderful resource, especially for those at the state level.

Other resources used commonly in West Virginia are those provided by NASDSE, The Iris Center, RTI4Success, and NRCLD. Each of these organization’s Web sites are easily accessed and provide current information about RTI.

We established a Web page for RTI on the state department’s Web site. All training modules and materials, forms, and links to other pertinent resources are included. For example, the training module used for introducing the SLD guidance document was recently posted and includes all the materials needed to conduct the 3-hour workshop.

RTI specialists also facilitate professional learning communities within their regions. These opportunities for both district and school administrators to gather with their peers to ask questions, share information, and establish contacts have been positively received. People are enthusiastic because they learn from one another. Participants find the sessions practical as topics include scheduling for intervention and teacher collaboration, selecting assessments, grouping students for instruction, and collaborative problem solving. Next year, additional communities will form at the middle school level. Elementary participants will focus on mathematics.

I have seen very positive changes in our schools. Teachers and principals are changing their instructional delivery models to support their struggling learners. Our demonstration (pilot) schools have been transformed, and we have excellent examples of systematic, county-wide implementation. Some districts are doing truly exceptional work because they have already institutionalized the tenets of RTI.

A third-party evaluation was conducted in Year 1 of the pilot. Much of it was qualitative and focused on the implementation process. No student achievement data was collected and reviewed at that point. We are currently evaluating effects on student achievement, referrals to special education, and placement in SLD. These data will be very important for sharing with districts and planning state level support and assistance.

The 2008-2009 pilot school third graders, students whose K to 3 schooling included RTI services, took the WESTEST, our state achievement test in May. Scores will be returned in August. Throughout West Virginia’s RTI initiative, DIBELS data has informed practice and planning and anecdotal information has also been important. Benchmark assessment and progress
monitoring have been incorporated into classroom practice at the elementary level. Teachers are using data to group students and plan for intervention. Referrals for special education at the elementary level are decreasing as the tiered instruction model is implemented.

Because use of RTI for LD identification is state policy, it has made it easier for us to get schools on board. We have found that districts want to be proactive for their students and compliant with policies, and they look to the WVDE for guidance.

It is sometimes challenging to get to everyone. However, it’s very important to make sure that everyone affected by RTI—superintendents, curriculum supervisors, administrators, teachers and parents—has heard the important messages correctly. Our scaling up work will continue and, given the size of our state and the commitment to student achievement across our school districts, I’m confident that RTI will soon be firmly established.

Finally, there are no disadvantages to RTI, just the same challenges other states are working to overcome. There is no reason not to implement RTI. West Virginia’s students deserve the opportunities it provides.
III. Other Evidence of Use of RTI Action Network Resources by Practitioners

In addition to the full implementation stories, some other Web site users provided evidence that users have benefited from the RTI Action Network resources. Following are some quotes from educators who were interviewed in Fall 2008 or have submitted unsolicited complimentary emails to the Network.

From an RTI Curriculum Specialist for a Texas Regional Education Service Center

The RTI Action Network Web site has been a very useful resource. At the end of all the PowerPoint presentations I’ve given at meetings with teachers and administrators, I point them to the RTI site link and tell them to read everything they can.

I’ve had a lot of districts asking what information they should give parents about RTI, and the site offers a lot of helpful information on how school staff can communicate with parents about RTI.

The expert interviews and RTI Talks on the Web site are great. Often, I am not able to watch them live because of a meeting or the time difference, but I go back and read the transcript later.

From an Instructional Coach in Kimball, Minnesota

The RTI Action Network Web site has been a good resource for me to use. The articles are accessible, and it is easy to pass these along to teachers or principals who have questions.

From an RTI Liaison in Bennett Valley, California

I use the RTI Action Network Web site frequently. During presentations to teachers and parents, I often refer to the site and recommend they use it as a resource. I am currently pursuing my Master’s with a focus on RTI, and the RTI Action Network Web site has been invaluable to my research.

The Network’s Web site is primarily for educators, but NCLD also has a great Web site that is well suited to explain the issue to parents. I would really appreciate having a brochure on RTI available for parents to access. It would be nice to have a concrete resource that I use to explain the RTI process to parents.

From a School Psychologist and RTI Coordinator in the Flagstaff, Arizona
I am assigned to one school as the school psychologist, but another school psychologist and I manage the implementation of RTI across all 12 elementary schools in our district. I have used the RTINetwork.org site as I established RTI in my own school, and I have used the resources to develop a professional development program for the district.

Since developing expertise in RTI, other districts in our state have contacted me, and I immediately refer them to the Web site. RTINetwork.org is great for teams just beginning RTI implementation. The Web site clearly establishes the basic principles of RTI, and it then provides practical steps for beginning implementation.

The Getting Started section has been very helpful. I have also returned to the Web site now that I have a few years experience with RTI to search for specific information. I find the organization and the cross referencing the site uses help me efficiently locate the information I need.

Finally, I have also taken advantage of the podcasts and webinars offered through the site. That has allowed me to access experts in the field as well as other practitioners.

From a State-level Special Education Programs Consultant in Nevada

I get the RTI Action Network newsletter and share that with the school districts I work with. Also, I let key people in the districts know about upcoming webinars and other events. I also developed a set of resources for parents, and I used information from the RTI Action Network Web site in creating those.

From a Resource Teacher in the Riverside, California

The RTI Action Network Web site is on my favorites list. I only go to a few sites for information on how to implement RTI and what it looks like to other people. The site allows me to point to something authoritative and reinforces what I say to teachers.

I print things out for teachers and parents. Sometimes I hand it out, but I also keep a folder of things for people to look through and copy. Having this resource has been very helpful in informing teachers and parents about RTI, and I think it’s made RTI less threatening.
IV. Estimate of the Number of Students Affected by Educators’ Use of the RTI Action Network Website

Background
During Fall 2008, the evaluators conducted an online survey of RTI Action Network users. The online survey software used to develop and launch the survey was Zoomerang, available at www.zoomerang.com.

The evaluator invited 4,485 individuals on the NCLD email list to complete the survey. In addition to the initial invitation, these individuals received two reminders. A link to an alternate version of the survey was also posted on the home page of the RTI Action Network Web site so that people who were not on the email list could complete the survey.

In all, 790 individuals responded to the survey. Most respondents (753 of 790) were invited; just 37 individuals responded by clicking on the link posted on the Web site home page.

Derivation of the Estimate of Number of Students Affected
Respondents were asked to specify their role, which allowed Network staff and the evaluators to understand the positions held by respondents and their potential reach in terms of number of students affected by their work. As shown in Column 2 of Table 1, more than 40 percent of respondents are either parents (22%) or special educators (21%). Nearly one third are specialists (19%) or administrators at some level (13%). Also substantially represented are school psychologists, counselors, and social workers (6%); regular education teachers (5%); and parent educators and advocates (4%).

The percentages shown in Column 2 of Table 1 were used as the starting point for an estimate of the number of students reached. Specifically, these percentages were used to estimate the number of visitors in each role out of the total number of unique visitors through the end of June 2009, which was 252,453. The estimated number of visitors in each role is shown in Column 3. For example, based on the percentage of survey respondents, it is estimated that of the total users 22 percent (55,540) are parents, 21 percent (53,015) are special educators, and 13 percent (32,819) are administrators.

Respondents to the survey were also asked for what purposes they used the RTI Action Network Web site resources. Use was defined for survey respondents as “drawing upon the knowledge gained from the RTI Action Network Web site in planning for RTI, making decisions about implementing RTI, or communicating with other people about RTI.” Response options were: to plan for RTI implementation at the district level; to plan for RTI implementation at the building level; to provide professional development about RTI; to provide information to parents about RTI; and other.
Overall, 95 percent of respondents reported using the site’s information and resources for at least one purpose. However, that percentage varied by role, and these percentages are shown in Column 4. For example, 94 percent of parents, 92 percent of special educators, and 98 percent of administrators reported using the site for at least one purpose. In terms of number of users, it is estimated that 52,207 parents, 48,774 special educators, and 32,163 administrators had used RTI-AN resources for at least one purpose as of the end of June 2009.

The number of students potentially affected varies widely by role. Based on the information provided by RTI Action Network partners and the evaluator’s research and experience, it is estimated that parents are likely to affect 1.25 students, special educators 20 students, and administrators 250 students.

The next step in the estimate was to multiply the number of users in each role (those who are using RTI Action Network resources) by the number of students they would be expected to affect. For example, it is estimated that 65,259 students are affected by parents’ use, 975,478 are affected by special educators’ use, and 8,040,628 are affected by administrators’ use.

Administrators, along with professional developers/instructional coaches and psychologists/counselors/social workers, affected the greatest numbers of students because of the nature of the work that educators in these roles perform.

**Overall, it is estimated that the RTI Action Network’s work has had an affect on 13,833,516 students in just over 1 year** (i.e., since the launch of the Web site). It should, however, be kept in mind that users who did not respond to the survey may be different in some way than those who did respond. For example, they may be less frequent users and/or less likely to use the resources. On the other hand, the number used to estimate the number of students reached reflects the “case load” for a single school year (with the exception of parents). Over the course of several years, the work of RTI Action Network Web site users is likely to affect many more students.
## Table 1
Estimate of Number of Students Affected by the Work of the RTI Action Network through June 24, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
<th>Number in This Role of Total Visitors to RTI-AN Website</th>
<th>Percentage Who Reported at Least 1 Use of RTI-AN Resources</th>
<th>Number in This Role Who Use for At Least One Purpose</th>
<th>Estimate of Number of Students Affected by People in this role</th>
<th>Number of Students Reached Based on Estimators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>32,819</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>32,163</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>8,040,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Developer or Instructional Coach</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5,049</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5,049</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1,009,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist, Counselor, or Social Worker</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15,147</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>14,844</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,484,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Teacher: Secondary or Postsecondary</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5,049</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>4,746</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>332,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHE Faculty Member</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5,049</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5,049</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>302,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>47,966</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>46,527</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,163,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Teacher: Pre-K or Elementary</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7,574</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>7,119</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>156,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Educator</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53,015</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>48,774</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>975,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Educator or Advocate</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10,098</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10,098</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>151,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15,147</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15,147</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>151,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>55,540</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>52,207</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>65,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>252,453</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>241,724</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>13,833,516</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total Unique Visitors*  
*Estimated Visitors Using the Site for At Least One Purpose*  
*Estimated Total Number of Students Affected*
V. Results from the Pilot Survey on Online Professional Development Provided by the RTI Action Network

In April 2009, the evaluator, in collaboration with the RTI Action Network director and staff, developed and launched a brief online survey. This survey (or an adaptation of it) is to be completed by educators who participate in major online professional development events offered by the RTI Action Network. The survey was deliberately kept very brief to encourage participants to complete it and provide important and timely feedback to Network staff.

The RTI National Online Forum on April 30, 2009, served as the pilot event for what is intended to be a survey that is incorporated into all major RTI Action Network professional development activities. (An even briefer survey questionnaire was created for more informal professional development events, such as RTI Talks. Both questionnaires are included in the appendix to this report.)

In all, 45 participants visited the Zoomerang survey Web site, but just 9 of them completed the survey. Although there were 15 records in the survey database, 6 of those were entirely blank. It should also be noted that all responses occurred on the day of the forum, although the survey remains “live” with a link provided from the archived version to the survey. The tables below show the results of the pilot survey based on the limited number of responses received.

Respondent Profile

Of the 7 respondents who provided information about their positions, the positions are as follows: 1 administrator, 1 school psychologist, and 5 specialists. The specialists identified themselves as a special education curriculum specialist, a Section 504/dyslexia specialist, a program specialist for exceptional student education curriculum and compliance, an instructional support teacher/RTI developer, and a state education program specialist with monitoring responsibilities.

Two respondents worked at the school level and one worked at the state level. The remainder worked at the district level. Those working at the district or state level were asked how many schools their work affected; while the single state-level respondent reported working with over 200 schools, district-level respondents reported working with between 14 and 47 schools. Most of these state- and district-level respondents indicated that the number they reported is all or most of the schools in their state or district.

As would be expected, the state- and district-level respondents reported working with more instructional levels than did the school-based respondents. Nearly all of these respondents indicated that they work with K-5 elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Of the two respondents who worked at the school level, both worked in K-5 elementary schools, one of which also involved pre-kindergarten in RTI.

Just 6 of the 9 respondents indicated the extent to which the RTI framework is utilized in their schools and districts. Of these 6 respondents, only 1 reported use of the framework in all
elementary schools (in this particular case, 14 schools). All others reported that RTI is in the planning stages, is implemented by some teachers on a pilot basis, and/or varies widely from school to school. None of the respondents reported use of RTI in secondary schools.

**Participant Reactions**

Participants were asked to react to various aspects of the Forum on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree). In general, as shown in Table 2, respondents had extremely positive views of the Forum.

**Table 2**

**Respondents’ Reactions to Various Aspects of the April 2009 National Online Forum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The focus of the session was clear.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information shared was presented clearly.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information provided was appropriate for my position/role.</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of the information presented was new to me.</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources to which I was alerted appear useful.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time allotted was sufficient to cover the material.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of interactivity was appropriate for this type of event.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel prepared to apply the knowledge that I gained during this session.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:
- The focus of the session was clear
- The resources to which they were alerted appear useful
- The time allotted was sufficient to cover the materials
- They feel prepared to apply the knowledge gained during the session.
The only statement about the Forum with which more than one of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed was, “Much of the information presented was new to me.” In fact, on this item, nearly all participants (8 of 9) disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, based on respondents’ overall high level of satisfaction with the event, it seems that participants may not be looking for “information” so much as strategies, resources, and opportunities to network.

When asked to rate the Forum over all, 8 of the 9 respondents rated it as “excellent” or “very good.” The lowest rating, offered by just one respondent, is “good.”

![Figure 1](image)

**Overall Reaction of Respondents to the April 2009 RTI National Online Forum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments**

Participants were asked to share any comments they had about the Forum. The following are the comments made by respondents.

**Regarding Content**

- **From a Specialist:** *The Forum was a great conversation.*
- **From an Other:** *Please archive this forum. Many of my colleagues were teaching at the time and could not watch.*
- **Role Unknown:** *I wish you would make education for LD international by guiding teachers in India and other countries.*
- **From a Specialist:** *This was excellent. I missed the first eight minutes and am not sure where to access the Web sites that were mentioned. My impression was that there would be a list of the Web sites….just not sure.*

**Regarding Technical Issues**

- **From a Specialist:** *I had to keep rebooting the media player which was a nuisance.*
Figure 2

Respondents' Expectations about Sharing What They Learned with Others

- Extensively within my sphere of influence, 4
- With many close associates, 3
- With a few close associates, 2
- Not at all

Suggestions for Additional Topics

Participants were asked for their suggestions on topics they would like to see addressed in future National Online Forums. Following are their suggestions.

- From a Specialist: The topic of math and universal screening and progress monitoring
- From a Specialist: I would like to see a sample of a student's documented progress utilizing RTI tools.
- Role Unknown: More ideas on RTI and special education

Implications of the Pilot

While the pilot does provide some useful information, it also makes it clear that, in order to encourage professional development participants to respond to the survey, the survey link will need to be more prominently featured during the presentations and on the RTI Action Network Web site.

Also, since all responses were provided on the day of the event, it seems necessary to emphasize the request to complete the survey during the event itself, on the Network Web site, and in any downloadable supplementary materials.
VI. Summary

There are many educators and parents who value the RTI Action Network highly. That was apparent from the survey and interviews conducted by the evaluators in Fall 2008. It was reinforced by the willingness of many interview participants to take the time needed to work with the evaluators to produce a publishable story about their RTI experiences. In these stories, the featured educators present convincing evidence about how they are using Network resources to advance their RTI initiatives.

The number of visitors to the RTI Action Network Web site has continued to grow, with over 252,453 unique visitors from site launch to the end of June 2009—a period of just over 1 year. Given the user profile developed from the Fall 2008 survey, it is estimated that the work of the Network has impacted at least 13,833,516 students.

The pilot survey conducted for the April 2009 RTI National Online Forum provides further evidence that Web site users view these sessions as valuable and appropriate. Stronger evidence could come by increasing the number of respondents to these brief surveys. In order to boost response rates for future surveys, it is suggested that the survey be more prominently featured on the Web site and in the presentations and companion materials.
Appendix:

RTI Implementation Story Template
Pilot Survey for RTI National Online Forum
Pilot Survey for RTI Talks
### RTI Implementation Story Template

**Making a Difference in Schools Everywhere**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Content Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How We Got Started</strong></td>
<td>The impetus for RTI in the setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **What We’re Doing**            | Overview of what the school/district is doing (including number of schools, teachers and students involved)  
|                                 | **Key Informants will be asked to submit:**  
|                                 | – Photographs of RTI leaders and students. (These can be posted on the website to break up the text of the stories.)  
|                                 | – Video segments showing RTI in action. (These could be posted on YouTube or TeacherTube with a link embedded in the story.) |
| **How We Did It**               | The funding, preparation, training, staffing, and supports that have been needed to implement RTI effectively |
| **The Tools and Resources We Used** | How the school/district has used and benefited from RTI Action Network resources (including what has been of most value).  
|                                 | Also other resources, especially those of affiliated organizations (partners and advisors) that the school/district has used. |
| **The Tools and Resources We Developed** | The tools and processes that the school/district has developed to support RTI.  
|                                 | *(Key informants will be asked to submit tools they have developed for others to use or adapt.)* |
| **Our Results**                 | Perceptions: The benefits of RTI to staff, students, and families  
|                                 | Data: Student achievement, AYP, Formal studies that have been done. |
| **Some Lessons We’ve Learned**  | Lessons learned and recommendations to others |
# Pilot Survey for RTI National Online Forum

## RTI National Online Forum: Data-based Decision Making

### (April 30, 2009)

1. **Please respond to the following statements about today's session.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The focus of the session was clear.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information shared was presented clearly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information provided was appropriate for my position/role.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of the information presented was new to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources to which I was alerted appear useful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time allotted was sufficient to cover the material.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of interactivity was appropriate for this type of event.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel prepared to apply the knowledge that I gained during this session.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Overall, how do you rate this National Online Forum?**

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

3. **To what extent do you expect to share what you learned with others?**

- Extensively within my sphere of influence
- With many close associates
- With a few close associates
- Not at all
4. Please provide any comments you would like to share about this Online Forum.

5. What topics would you like to see addressed in future Online Forums?

6. Please help us determine the impact of the work of the RTI Action Network by providing some additional information about your responsibilities.
   - Yes, I would like to provide this information.
   - No, thank you.

Submit

Survey Page 2

RTI National Online Forum: Data-based Decision Making
(April 20, 2002)

7. What is your primary educational role?

8. If you responded “Specialist” or “Other” to the previous question, please provide your position title.

9. With what instructional level(s) do you work?
   - Pre-kindergarten
   - Kindergarten through 5th Grade
   - Middle School
   - High School
   - Postsecondary
   - Other, please specify

Submit

Survey Page 3
Pilot Survey for RTI National Online Forum

RTI National Online Forum: Data-based Decision Making
(April 30, 2009)

10. Do you work at the?
   - School level
   - District level
   - State level
   - Other, please specify

11. Approximately how many schools does your work affect?
   Number of Schools: 

12. Is this all or most of the schools in your district? (If you have state-level responsibilities, is this all or most of the schools in your state?)
   YES   NO
   Additional Comment:

13. To what extent is the RTI framework utilized in the schools with which you work?
   - Not at all
   - In the planning stages
   - Implemented by some teachers on a pilot basis
   - Implemented in some elementary schools
   - Implemented in all elementary schools
   - Implemented in some secondary schools
   - Implemented in all secondary schools
   - Varies widely from school to school
   - Other, please specify

Submit
Pilot Survey for RTI Talks

RTI Talk: Differentiating Reading Instruction Within the Core
(April 23, 2009)

1. Please respond to the following statements about today’s session:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information shared was presented clearly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information provided was appropriate for my position/role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of the information presented was new to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources to which I was alerted appear useful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Overall, how do you rate this RTI Talk?
   - Excellent
   - Very Good
   - Good
   - Fair
   - Poor

Submit

Survey Page 1

RTI Talk: Differentiating Reading Instruction Within the Core
(April 23, 2009)

3. To what extent do you expect to share what you learned with others?
   - Extensively within my sphere of influence
   - With many close associates
   - With a few close associates
   - Not at all

4. Please provide any comments you would like to share about this RTI Talk.
Pilot Survey for RTI Talks

5. What topics would you like to see addressed in future RTI Talks?

6. Please help us determine the impact of the work of the RTI Action Network by providing some additional information about your responsibilities.
   - Yes, I would like to provide this information.
   - No, thank you.

Submit

Survey Page 2

RTI Talk: Differentiating Reading Instruction Within the Core
(April 23, 2009)

7. What is your primary educational role?

8. If you responded "Specialist" or "Other" to the previous question, please provide your position title.

9. With what instructional level(s) do you work?
   - Pre-kindergarten
   - Kindergarten through 5th Grade
   - Middle School
   - High School
   - Postsecondary
   - Other, please specify

Submit

Survey Page 3

RTI Talk: Differentiating Reading Instruction Within the Core
(April 23, 2009)
Pilot Survey for RTI Talks

10. Do you work at the?
- School level
- District level
- State level
- Other, please specify

11. Approximately how many schools does your work affect?
Number of Schools

12. Is this an or most of the schools in your district? (If you have state-level responsibilities: is this all or most of the schools in your state?)
- YES
- NO
Additional Comment

13. To what extent is the RTI framework utilized in the schools with which you work?
- Not at all
- In the planning stages
- Implemented by some teachers on a pilot basis
- Implemented in some elementary schools
- Implemented in all elementary schools
- Implemented in some secondary schools
- Implemented in all secondary schools
- Varies widely from school to school
- Other, please specify

Submit