



# Response to Intervention

Key Components, Training, and Implementation

# District Leadership Forum

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# 1) Executive Overview

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## Key Observations

**Key components of response to intervention (RTI) include universal screening, multi-level support systems, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making.** Contacts at profiled districts report that universal screening lays the foundation for the entire RTI framework, as it informs initial decisions about interventions and measures student progress. In general, profiled districts screen their students two to three times per year.

**Once students are assigned a tier and specific interventions, teachers and staff monitor their progress periodically to identify improved outcomes using tools that vary by grade, tier, and content.** For example, AIMSweb serves as the primary progress monitoring tool for students at **District B**. However, teachers and interventionists can use six supplemental tools, depending on a student's grade and what content area they are practicing. The frequency of progress monitoring also varies by grade and tier. Some contacts report more frequent progress monitoring better informs decisions about moving students between tiers. However, contacts at **District C** note that too much progress monitoring may interfere with core instruction time.

**Leadership teams at each school make decisions about reassigning students to different tiers based on progress monitoring data.** These teams often comprise an administrator, teachers, interventionists, psychologists, and counselors, but team composition differs by district and school.

**Data collected through progress monitoring and universal screening can help to inform and personalize core instruction.** For example, universal screening tests at **District B** reveal whether a student reads at, below, or above grade level. Teachers use these results to assign individual students or small groups of students different reading assignments or questions based on their abilities.

**Profiled districts also use progress monitoring and universal screening data to evaluate their RTI frameworks.** For example, school leaders at **District A** compare student results, as well as how many students move between tiers, against their screener's national benchmarks to determine the effectiveness of their RTI processes. Profiled districts also use the data to adjust their frameworks.

**District A and District B convened steering committees to set expectations for their RTI frameworks and determine the stages of implementation.**

Contacts reviewed external resources (e.g., RTI Action Network) and hired consultants to inform and facilitate these discussions. Most contacts decided to implement and train stakeholders on universal screening and assessments first.

**Consultants played a significant role in the initial training phases at profiled districts.** For example, **District B** hired consultants to train staff and teachers at different grade levels. The consultants first trained teachers how to interpret data from the District's universal screener and running records so they could differentiate education within the District's core curriculum. As teachers and staff develop an expertise in certain areas of the RTI framework, they increasingly are used as in-house trainers at profiled districts.

**To promote a consistent approach to RTI across the district, contacts recommend appointing a staff member at the district level to monitor and advocate for RTI.** **District A, District D, and District C** each have a district-level director or coordinator of RTI. While pushing a standard approach to RTI, contacts at

**District B** also recommend allowing for some flexibility within the framework, as resources and student needs vary by school.

## 2) Response to Intervention Framework

### RTI Fundamentals

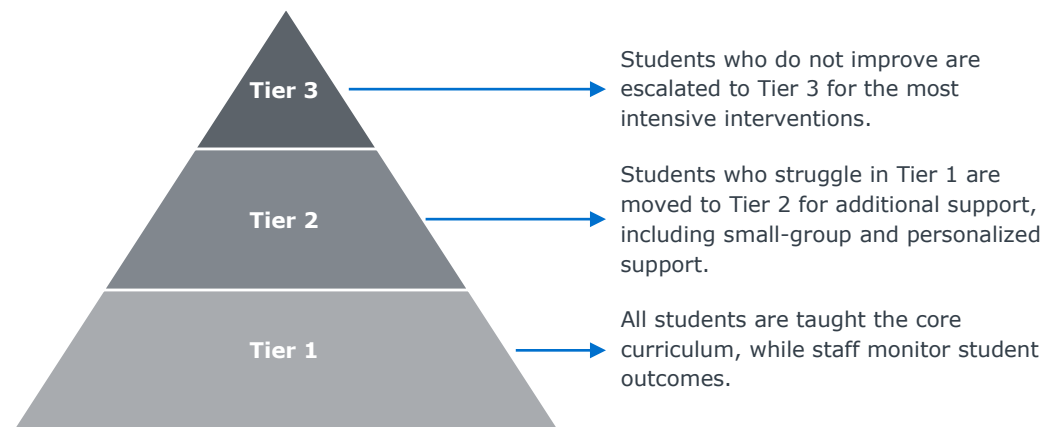
#### RTI Relies on Data to Improve Student Outcomes

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-level framework that aims to maximize student achievement through the core curriculum, periodic assessment, and interventions when necessary. RTI uses data to identify at-risk students who then receive support of varying intensity, while teachers and staff track their progress.

Students typically are transferred between three tiers depending on the level of instruction they require. They can also be in multiple tiers at once. For example, a student can be placed in Tier 2 support for reading and Tier 3 support for math at the same time.

Some RTI frameworks may contain more than three tiers. For example, school districts in Georgia, including **District C**, consider special education a fourth tier.

#### Typical RTI Tier Structure



Profiled districts use a combination of teachers and specialized staff, whose primary responsibilities include improving student outcomes, to deliver supplemental support in each tier. Some districts, like **District D**, largely rely on these specialized staff, referred to as interventionists. Others, like **District B** mostly use teachers.

#### Interventionists across *District D*

Grade Level	Number of Interventionists
High school (three schools)	One reading interventionist and a teacher who administers math interventions
Middle school (three schools)	One reading interventionist and one math interventionist
Elementary (five schools)	12 reading interventionists and 3.5 math interventionists (includes one part-time specialist)

## Universal Screening Lays Foundation for RTI Framework

To move students within RTI's multi-level system of support, districts incorporate three additional key components beyond tiered interventions in their frameworks: universal screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making.<sup>1</sup> Contacts consider universal screening a particularly critical component of their RTI frameworks. By screening all students, schools can identify those with poor learning outcomes and then triage them to the appropriate level of support.

Contacts generally conduct universal screening two or three times per year. For example, **District A** screens its students about two weeks into the school year, again in December, and a third time at the end of the school year. Similarly, students at **District B** are screened in the fall, winter, and spring.

At **District C**, staff screen pre-kindergarten students for speech and articulation abilities using a short test developed by the District. Staff also observe these students individually to evaluate their ability to follow directions and complete tasks. If pre-kindergarten students signal significant articulation issues, language deficits, or behavioral issues, staff send letters to parents/guardians seeking permission to conduct a more formal screening using the Goldman-Fristoe articulation test. Afterward, staff send a letter to parents/guardians informing them of their child's score.

At the elementary level in District C, students take screening tests three times annually, while middle school students are screened twice per year. Staff previously screened middle school students three times annually, but they reduced the frequency to limit the interruption to instruction that screening poses and because schools already have collected a wealth of data on students by the time they reach middle school.

In District C high schools, typically only students already receiving supplemental RTI support are screened. However, District leaders have decided to screen every high school student using the Reading Inventory (RI) Lexile for the first time in several years. Contacts report they made this decision in order to collect baseline data for a systemwide intervention plan they are developing to improve literacy.

### Universal Screening Tools at Profiled Districts

District	Screening Tool
District A	AIMSweb
District B	NWEA Universal Screening*
District C	DIBELS, STAR assessments, RI Lexile, Goldman-Fristoe
District D	STAR assessments

\*Contacts at **District B** plan to switch to STAR or i-Ready as the vendor for their universal screening tool because NWEA has experienced technical difficulties that have gone unfixed for several years.

1) "Essential Components of RTI," Center on Response to Intervention. Accessed February 12, 2018.

After students take a screening test, teachers and staff place them in tiers based on “cut scores” determined by the vendor. Before students are officially moved to another tier, however, some contacts follow up with diagnostic tests to corroborate the findings of the universal screener. This helps to ensure that a low score on a screening test is the result of an actual trend of poor outcomes rather than a one-time, bad-testing day for a student. Diagnostics also help teachers and staff assign specific interventions to students based on their needs.

See “Intervention Inventory” in the toolkit on page 19 for sample reading and mathematics interventions.

### **District C Staff Send Letters Informing Parents/Guardians of Interventions**

When students are assigned interventions, staff send a letter to their parents/guardians to inform them of the intervention plan. The letter includes notes from meetings during which teachers and staff recommend specific interventions. Parents/guardians also are invited to call their child’s teacher with any questions.

## Progress Monitoring

### **Progress Monitoring Tools Vary by Grade, Tier, and Content**

Once students are placed into a tier and assigned specific interventions, staff use a variety of tools to track their progress.

For example, **District B** uses AIMSweb as the primary progress monitoring tool for students in both Tier 2 and Tier 3. However, teachers and interventionists can use additional assessment methods for supplemental data in specific content areas.

### **Supplemental Progress Monitoring Tools at District B<sup>2</sup>**

Tool	Grade Level	Tier	Content Area
Eureka Assessments	K-8	All tiers	Grade-level core skills
Core Ready Performance Tasks	K-5	All tiers	Grade-level core skills
Fundations Unit Tests	K-2	All tiers	Phonological awareness, phonics
Estrellita Placement Test for LEP/ELL Students	K-2	All tiers	Bilingual reading
Running Records and Reading Inventories from various vendors and publishers	K-6	All tiers	Reading
Compass Learning	3-6	All tiers	Multiple

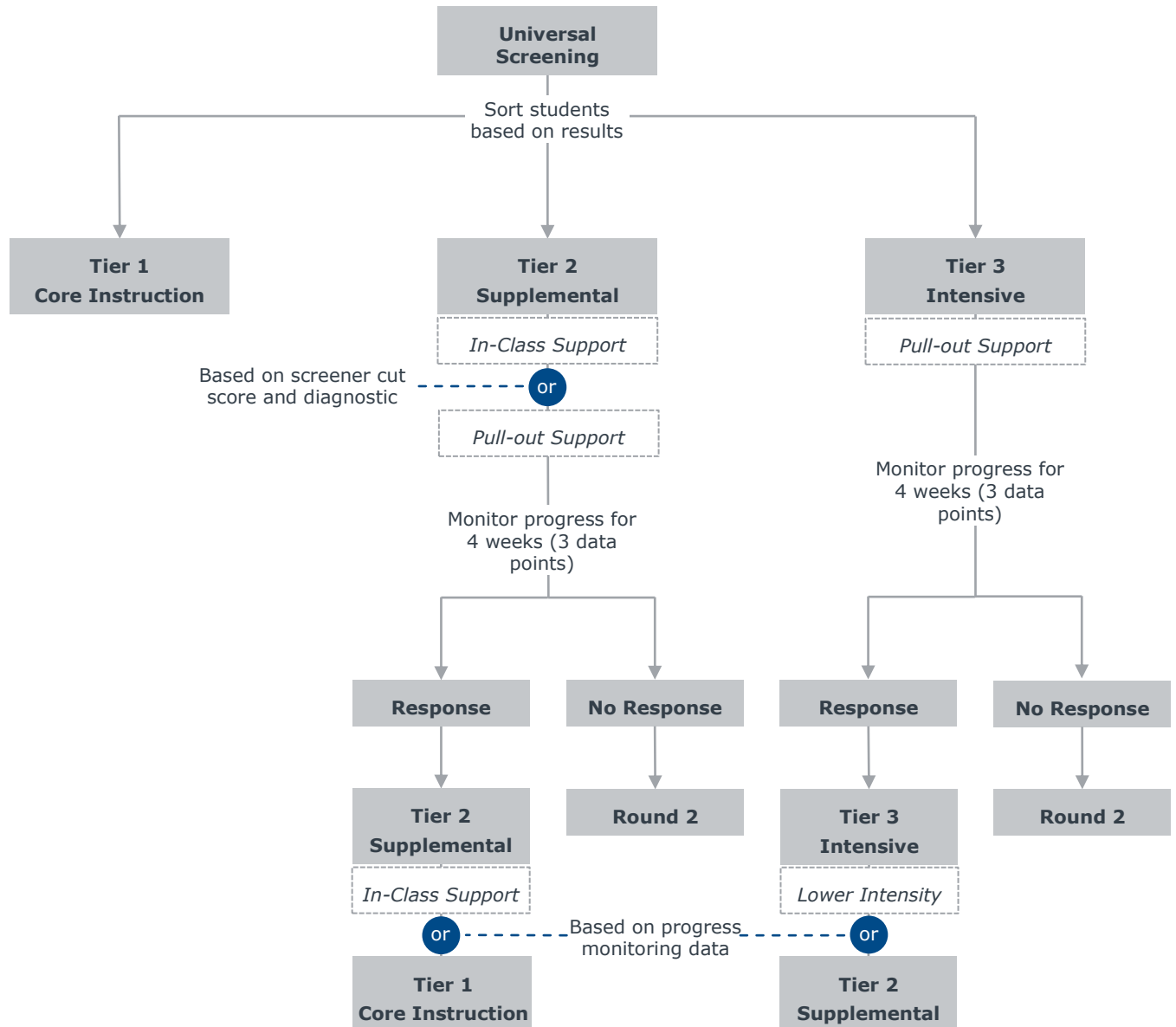
2) District B website. Accessed February 12, 2018



## Monitor Progress Frequently to Inform Decisions, but Minimize Disruption to Core Instruction

At **District B**, teachers and interventionists monitor progress for four weeks, capturing at least three data points, when students are initially placed in Tier 2 or Tier 3. After that period, staff make decisions to relocate students, reduce interventions, or keep them in their current support plan.

### Sample Flowchart for First Round of Intervention and Progress Monitoring at *District B*<sup>3</sup>



In the second round of intervention—and any additional rounds beyond it—teachers and interventionists monitor progress for five weeks, collecting two to three more data points for students in Tier 2 and three to four more data points for students in Tier 3.

3) District B website. Accessed February 12, 2018

Contacts at District B and **District D** report that more data points better inform their decisions to move students between tiers.

At District D, interventionists monitor progress on a weekly to monthly basis, depending on the tier and grade level. The District's RTI Coordinator may increase the frequency for Tier 2 students in grades 5-12 to collect more data.

### Progress Monitoring Tools and Frequency at *District D*


Progress Monitoring Tool*	Grade Level	Tier	Frequency
DIBELS	K-4	Tier 2	Bi-weekly
AIMSweb	K-12	Tier 3	Weekly
STAR assessments	5-12	Tier 2	Monthly

\*Interventionists use additional data sources (e.g., running records, observational assessments) to supplement their primary progress monitoring tools.

### Consider Adjusting Progress Monitoring Frequency by Skills Being Tested

**District C** schedules its progress monitoring based on the specific skill interventionists are testing. For example, interventionists measure reading comprehension and math reasoning monthly because the rate of improvement for these skills is typically lower than that for skills like alphabet fluency. Contacts report that testing more frequently than every month for reading comprehension and math reasoning would show very little change in performance. Instead, contacts suggest interventionists see larger returns on investment for their interventions if they give students more time to learn the skills. Contacts also report that too much progress monitoring reduces the time students spend receiving core instruction.

To track improvement, teachers and interventionists maintain progress monitoring data summaries. These records vary by grade level, but they typically include data on math, reading, writing, speech, and behavioral outcomes from the District's various assessment tools.

 See "Progress Monitoring Report" in the toolkit on page 20 for a sample progress monitoring data summary report.

# Data-Based Decisions

## Leadership Teams Make Decisions about Changes to Tier Placement

Staff at profiled districts meet periodically (i.e., every three to eight weeks) to discuss student progress and make decisions about reassigning students to different tiers. These groups always include an administrator, teachers, and a school psychologist.

### RTI Leadership Team Composition at Profiled Districts

#### RTI Teams at *District D*



**Typical membership:**

- Administrator
- Teachers
- Psychologist
- Interventionists
- Counselor
- RTI Coordinator

#### Data Review Teams at *District C*



**Typical membership\*:**

- Administrator
- Teachers
- Psychologist
- Interventionists
- Counselor

\*Parents are invited when their children are in Tier 3.

#### Problem Solving Teams at *District A*



**Typical membership:**

- Administrator
- Teachers
- Psychologist
- Resource teachers
- Teacher specialists


#### RTI Teams at *District B*



**Typical membership:**

- Administrator
- Teacher
- Psychologist
- Social worker

RTI teams primarily base their decisions about reassigning students to different tiers on progress monitoring data. When schools in **District C** hold data review meetings, all teachers who work with students being discussed attend to provide insight into the students’ performance and highlight areas for growth. Typically, a spreadsheet containing all available scores for each student is displayed to facilitate discussion. Teachers propose potential interventions based on student performance, while other staff in attendance (e.g., administrator, instructional coach, psychologist, counselor) ask questions about the student and provide feedback and suggestions. Attendees track decisions about tier and intervention changes in meeting notes.



See “Data Presentations” and “RTI Meeting Notes” in the toolkit on pages 21 and 22, respectively, for a sample data review meeting spreadsheet and meeting notes.

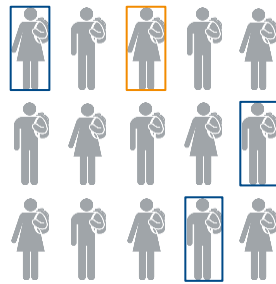
## Student Performance Data Can Inform Core Instruction

In addition to informing decisions about tier placement and intervention assignment, progress monitoring and universal screening data help some profiled districts identify areas for changes to the core curriculum.

For example, contacts at **District B** use results from their universal screening tests to personalize education for their students. With an adaptive screener (i.e., one that changes in difficulty based on a student’s real-time performance), schools can determine whether students are prepared for more complex work or are behind their

grade-level standard. Teachers use these results to assign individual students or small groups of students different reading assignments or questions based on their abilities.

### Differentiated Instruction at *District B*



□ Above reading level

□ Below reading level

In this hypothetical fourth grade class, universal screening showed that 11 students read at grade level, three students read below grade level, and one student reads above grade level.

Based on these scores, the teacher can assign each group of students a different book based on their abilities.

To accommodate differentiated instruction, District B increased the number of books in every classroom, each containing more than 1,000 books at various reading levels.

### Use Multiple Data Sources to Build Trust in Decisions

Profiled districts use multiple data sources to corroborate findings, ensuring teachers and staff are acting on accurate information within the RTI framework.

For example, teams at **District D** check whether universal screening results match performance on classroom and state assessments. Contacts at **District B** similarly look at multiple measures of performance to identify trends in outcomes. Contacts report this method allows them to determine whether a student who performs poorly on a screening test requires supplemental support, or instead has demonstrated proficiency in a skill or topic over time but performed poorly on the screening test because of one-off, external factors.

## 2) Framework Evaluation

### Measuring RTI's Impact

#### Compare Student Performance with Benchmarks and Previous Results to Evaluate RTI Processes

Profiled districts compare their universal screening results against national and state benchmarks and past student performance to measure the effectiveness of their RTI frameworks.

For example, the third round of universal screening at **District A**, which occurs at the end of the academic year, largely serves as a tool for program evaluation. Specifically, school leaders compare students' results, as well as how many students they reclassify to a lower tier, against the screener's national benchmarks to determine their performance.

Meanwhile, schools in **District D** monitor the state's report card to determine whether they are closing performance gaps.

30%

Interventionists at a middle school in **District A** successfully reclassified 30 percent of 109 sixth grade students to a lower tier after winter screening. Contacts report that percentage was high compared to the screener's national norms, signaling that their Tier 3 system is effective.

#### Program Evaluation Informs Adjustments to RTI Framework and Interventions

Administrators at **District C** host Quarterly Action Plan meetings to evaluate districtwide initiatives, including their RTI framework. During these meetings, District leaders (e.g., superintendent, director of special education, Title I director, professional learning director, director of curriculum) meet with representatives from all nine schools for about two and a half hours over a three day period. During the meetings, school staff and administrators (e.g., principal, teachers, instructional coaches) report data on school-level efforts to achieve District priorities, including data on RTI interventions.

Attendees discuss whether students are responding to particular interventions rather than how frequently they are used. This helps stakeholders avoid equating use with effectiveness. If District and school leaders determine a particular intervention is ineffective, they will remove it from their portfolio to ensure the district does not spend money on an intervention that does not work for its students.

To evaluate their framework, contacts at **District D** report District leaders plan to revisit a self-assessment rubric they initially used to inform the structure of their RTI framework. The rubric, called the School-wide Implementation Review (SIR), was developed by the Wisconsin RTI Center and is intended to help districts in the state evaluate the implementation of their RTI frameworks.<sup>4</sup>

The rubric guides discussions about RTI efficacy by encouraging district leaders to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. While the SIR was developed specifically around the Wisconsin RTI Framework, contacts report that it can help districts identify opportunities for growth within their own RTI frameworks.

4) [Wisconsin RTI Center website](#). Accessed February 12, 2018.

### 3) Training and Implementation

#### Communicating Expectations

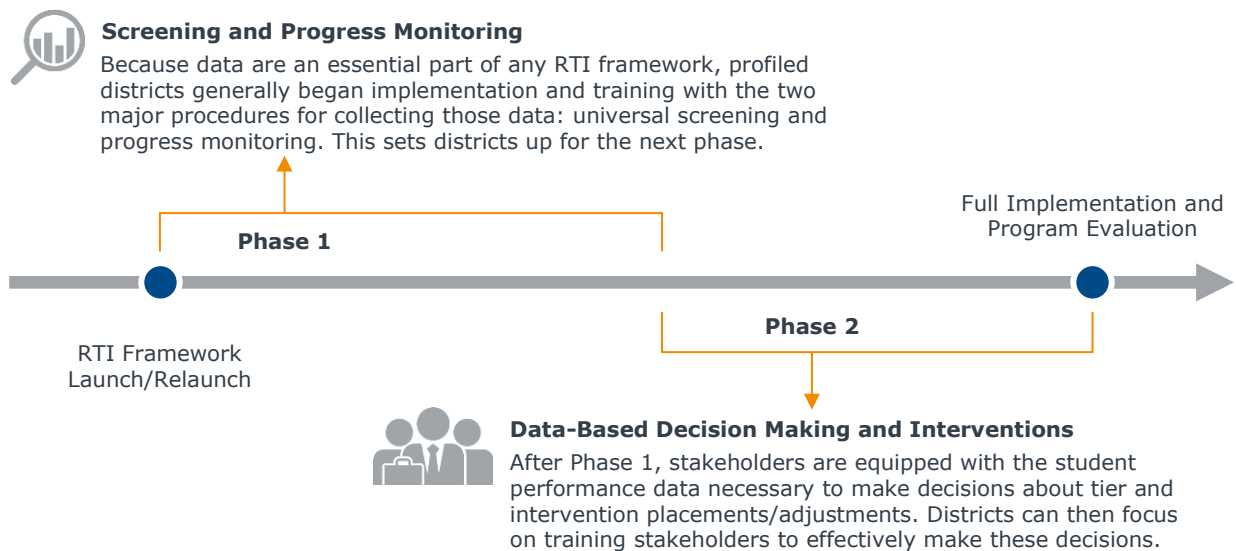
#### Form Steering Committees to Set Expectations and Determine Implementation Stages

**District A** and **District B** both convened stakeholders to develop a shared definition of RTI (i.e., what they expected the framework to accomplish). Contacts reviewed external resources (e.g., RTI Action Network) and hired consultants to inform and facilitate their discussions.

The steering committees also determined how and in what order to implement their frameworks. For example, District B started their implementation and training process with screeners and assessments because the data they provide are critical to the rest of their framework. To inform this process, a subcommittee identified every assessment tool used in the District. The larger steering committee then narrowed the number of tools used based on discussions about their effectiveness. The committee also used this planning phase as an opportunity to standardize the criteria that qualify students for each tier.

At **District D**, a leadership team comprising administrators and school psychologists used the Wisconsin RTI Center's SIR rubric to determine their stages of implementation. They ultimately decided to start with universal screening, as they also considered it foundational to their framework.

#### Implementation Phases at Profiled Districts



Regardless of the order, contacts at District B recommend districts implement and train stakeholders on one component at a time to avoid overwhelming teachers and staff with too much information.

Contacts at **District A** note that such an individual can assume responsibilities beyond RTI, but their job should include maintaining the RTI program.

## Appoint a District Level RTI Coordinator to Oversee Framework and Promote Consistent Approach

Contacts recommend appointing someone at the district level to monitor and advocate for RTI efforts to ensure teachers and staff approach RTI consistently. Among profiled districts, three have positions at the district level with RTI in their titles/job descriptions:

- **District A:** RTI Director
- **District C:** RTI Coordinator
- **District D:** RTI Coordinator

To help facilitate a consistent approach to RTI across the District, the RTI Coordinator at District D allocates resources (e.g., support staff, subject specialists) across the District based on deficiencies in support at particular schools. The coordinator allocates resources based on districtwide performance data. By directing where support goes, contacts report they can ensure schools use resources that align with the District's RTI goals.

Meanwhile, the RTI Director at District A monitors the materials (e.g., workbooks) that schools order for RTI purposes. Because the District purchases all materials for its schools and houses them in a warehouse, contacts can track orders to ensure schools have the tools they need to support students.

**District B** does not have an official "RTI Coordinator/Director," but still promotes a consistent approach to RTI across the District. Contacts at the District also recommend allowing for flexibility within the framework, as resources and student needs will vary by school.

## Initial and Ongoing Training

### Consultants Guide Training in Early Stages of Implementation and Continue to Support Districts

Contacts initially used vendors and external consultants to train their teachers and staff in RTI processes.

**District B** hired several consultants to train teachers and staff at different grade levels. First, the consultants trained teachers how to interpret data from the District's universal screener so they could differentiate education within the District's core curriculum (e.g., how to select appropriate books for a student based on their specific reading level). The consultants also trained teachers how to divide and instruct students in small groups based on universal screening results.

Similarly, **District A** hired and worked with a consultant for two years when implementing its framework. The consultant initially trained school-level teams comprising administrators, psychologists, instructional coaches, interventionists, resource teachers, and classroom teachers. Contacts at District A now use in-house trainers, as many staff members have become experts in specific areas of the RTI framework (e.g., Tier 2 reading interventions).

### Contacts Consider Professional Development Essential for All Stakeholders Involved in RTI Framework

All profiled districts provide teachers and staff opportunities for professional development related to their RTI practices. This often is delivered via job-embedded learning, trainings at the district level, and meetings with experts in the field.

**District C** leaders have presented on their data teams, high school RTI practices, a historical look at their RTI framework, and their RTI process for speech and language.

For example, the RTI Coordinator at **District C** sends interventionists to annual meetings on RTI, multi-tiered systems of support, and student support team initiatives hosted by a state-level association for student support teams. In the fall, representatives from districts across the state are invited to present their RTI practices at the first of two association meetings. Several participants are selected to present again at a second conference in the winter. After the second conference, association board members evaluate the presentations and conduct site visits at each school or district that presented to award those with the most promising practices. Contacts report that attending these conferences helps stakeholders learn how other districts are finding success within their RTI frameworks.

District C also coordinates trainings across the District when new interventions or assessments are introduced. For example, the District hosted two days of training for 30 people each day when it purchased STAR Math in the 2013-2014 academic year. Further, interventionists across the District convene three to five times annually for various professional development opportunities.

At **District B**, teachers must complete professional development and independent work relevant to their position. District leaders encourage teachers to pursue topics of personal interest, including RTI. Meanwhile, both in-house specialists and external consultants offer professional development on an as-needed basis. For example, literacy coaches may lead sessions on different core-curriculum teaching skills (e.g., guided reading, small-group instruction).



## 4) Research Methodology

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### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What are the key components of RTI?
- What tools are used to monitor student progress?
  - Do progress monitoring methods differ by tier?
- How often do districts monitor progress in each tier?
  - Are districts happy with their frequency of progress monitoring?
- How are decisions made to move students between tiers?
  - What data inform these decisions?
  - Who is involved in the decision process?
- How do districts ensure the validity of progress data?
- Do districts use screening or progress monitoring data to inform core instruction?
- What were the stages for implementing an RTI framework?
  - Do districts recommend implementing components of the framework in a particular order?
- How do district administrators and school-level coordinators coordinate RTI efforts?
- What initial training do teachers receive to deliver interventions across all tiers?
- How are teachers initially trained to interpret and act on screening and progress monitoring data?
- What external resources or experts do districts use to assist in training?
- What ongoing training is available to teachers and staff?
- Does the way districts train instructors differ by what grade level they teach?
- How do districts communicate their expectations for a standardized, district-wide approach to RTI?
  - How do districts ensure schools meet these expectations?
- How do districts measure the effectiveness of specific interventions?
- How do districts measure the effectiveness of their entire RTI framework?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries ([eab.com](http://eab.com))
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://chronicle.com>)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- "Understanding RTI: A Systems View," Wisconsin RTI Center. Accessed February 16, 2018.  
<https://wisconsinrticenter.org/educators/understanding-rti-a-systems-view.html>

## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed assistant superintendents of curriculum and instruction, RTI directors, and RTI coordinators from the following districts.

### A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

School District	Location	Approximate Enrollment (Students/Schools)
District A	Mountain West	18,600 / 21 schools
District B	Northeast	6,000 / 7 schools
District C	South	6,000 / 9 schools
District D	Midwest	7,000 / 14 schools

# Toolkit: Intervention Inventory

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The tables below list sample interventions used across profiled districts to help provide a sense of the intervention landscape. While there are a multitude of interventions available beyond those listed below, members can start with these charts to identify potential interventions for their district.

Reading Interventions		
Core Ready	Wilson Just Words	Novels, Short Stories, Poetry
ELA Modules Engage NY	Odell Units	Read-Write-Think
Wilson's Foundations	iLit	Phonics for Reading
Estrellita	Castle Learning	English – Houghton Mifflin
Reading A-Z	Learnzillion	Reading Eggs
Leveled Literacy Intervention	Writing Fundamentals	Raz Kids
Lindamood Bell VV	Handwriting Without Tears	Reading Mastery Signature Edition
Wilson Reading System	Wordly Wise	REWARDS

Mathematics Interventions
EnVisions Math
Touch Math
Mathseeds
Holt Mathematics
Castle Learning
Eureka Math
Connecting Math Concepts
Academy of Math

# Toolkit: Data Presentations

## Instructions

Equip your teachers and interventionists with this tool during data review meetings to facilitate discussion about student performance within the RTI framework. Tracking current and past scores helps stakeholders measure student progress, while comparison against national benchmarks can inform program evaluation. Update the columns based on the progress monitoring tools used at your district.

Name	Reading Assessment Score	Previous Score	National Benchmark	Writing Assessment Score	Previous Score	National Benchmark

# Toolkit: Progress Monitoring Report

## Instructions

Equip your teachers and interventionists with this tool to maintain records as they monitor student progress. Data captured in these reports can help inform decisions about reassigning interventions or tiers.

### Progress Monitoring Data Summary

#### Student Information

<b>Student</b>		<b>Grade</b>		<b>Date of Birth</b>	
<b>Teacher</b>			<b>Interventionist</b>		
<b>Tier Placement</b>	Math:	Reading:	Writing:	Speech:	Behavior:
<b>Absences</b>					
<b>Vision and Hearing</b>	Date Screened			Were both passed?	

#### Reading

Screening	Score	Benchmark
Round 1		
Round 2		
Round 3		

#### Math

Screening	Score	Benchmark
Round 1		
Round 2		
Round 3		

#### Writing

Attach data to support writing deficits (e.g., writing samples)

#### Behavior

List concerns about behavior and identify interventions that have been implemented

# Toolkit: RTI Meeting Notes

## Instructions

Equip members of school-level RTI teams with this tool during data review meetings to track changes to a student's intervention plan within the RTI framework.

### RTI Meeting Notes

Student		Grade	
Date of Birth		Teacher	

### Meeting Notes (attach Progress Monitoring Data Summary):

### Intervention Summary

Intervention	Frequency	Session Duration	Progress Monitoring Tool	Change from Previous Plan?	
				Yes	No
				Yes	No
				Yes	No
				Yes	No

### Decision Summary

Content Area	Return/Remain Tier 1	Place/Continue Tier 2	Place/Continue Tier 3	Referrals	
				SPED	504
Reading					
Math					
Writing					
Speech					
Behavior					