

## Building Implementation Capacity for RTI

December 10, 2012 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

### About this Talk

THE TALK HAS CONCLUDED.

SCROLL BELOW FOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Join **Linda Wernikoff**, **Michelle Duda**, and **Sally Helton** during our next RTI Talk as they answer your questions about "Building Implementation Capacity for RTI? at the state, district, and local levels. They will provide specific strategies that lead to sustainable and high fidelity implementation of effective literacy programs. The presenters will share their experiences implementing the Active Implementation Frameworks and scaling up successful innovations resulting in positive student outcomes.

Read more about [Linda Wernikoff](#), [Michelle Duda](#), and [Sally Helton](#).

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### Transcript

#### **Q** *Jeanette Miller*

I have a school with close to 1000 students, mostly ELL students. There are 60 teachers approx., most are classroom teachers. Classrooms are over sized and there are not enough adult bodies that can support Rtl. There are only 4 paraprofessionals in the school. ELL teachers (2) are part time providers of ESL services and now provide interventions as well. How can this school that has a large incoming Chinese population function or implement Rtl properly, with a small staff and no funds? This is a conundrum. The number of school staff, does not match the number of students with crucial academic needs. What do you suggest? I am the Rtl point at our network and additional support should come from additional sources.

#### **A** *Linda Wernikoff, M.A.*

At first, implementing RTI can feel overwhelming. Start slow and develop a school action plan. Create time for discussion with all stakeholders to build consensus on changes needed (identify the greatest need such as literacy, behavior, etc) and set clear expectations. You may want to begin by assessing your current core general education instruction provided to all students. If you are finding that 20-30% of students require Tier 2 Strategic Intervention, then with effective evidence-based core general education instruction you may be able to reduce the number of students requiring Tier 2 Strategic Intervention to 10-15%. A tool you may find helpful for evaluating your programs is "Hexagon Tool" developed by the National Implementation Research Network. It can be downloaded at [www.scalingup.org](http://www.scalingup.org) As part of your planning you may also want to identify ways that classroom teachers can provide additional supports for students by having teachers increase the intensity, duration and/or frequency of specific instruction for identified

**A** students.

**Q** **Brian Davidson**

How do we keep the momentum for change going after the initial roll out? We've been implementing RtI for a few years, but struggle to maintain the commitment to the process.

**A** **Michelle A. Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D**

?Get Started, then Get Better? Thanks for this very important question Brian. Congradulations to you and your team for your commitment to your students. It is important to recognize that implementation of the RtI framework with fidelity is hard work for all involved. The benefit however, is that you are probably seeing improvements in student outcomes (the primary goal of RtI). Beginning any new evidence-based program or practice takes time. As the new ways of work are being operationally defined, there are a lot of system change issues that need to be addressed, information needs to be shared, new skills are developed, and new structures are put in place to support teachers. This usually occurs in addition to several programs or practices currently being implemented. The main idea is to learn from what you have tried and to make adjustments with feedback from those that are implementing the new processes and protocols. From an Implementation Science perspective, we refer to this as Usability Testing which falls within the Improvement Cycles of the NIRN Active Frameworks. I would also encourage you and your team to reflect on your communication protocols with all of your stakeholders. How are different stakeholders (i.e. families, students, staff, leadership teams, community, board, etc.) kept up to date on progress of RtI implementation and related processes? What formats (i.e. newsletters, data synthesis, regular meetings) are the most effective to share success and problem-solve challenges or barriers that may get in the way? Are we seeing the outcomes we intended? Are we celebrating our successes? A couple of resources from the State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center that may help structure some of those conversations are as follow: [The Improvement Cycle Analysis Worksheet](#) and the [Linking Communication Protocol Worksheet](#). Although the example used provides the State level team as an example, it applies at any level of the system. I would suggest identifying those teams and levels in advance. Another potential challenge, is that folks do not give new programs enough time to take hold before determining if they are helpful or not. A possible contributing factor could be that all of those system change components may not be transparent or folks may feel they are further along in the implementation process and are frustrated they are not seeing results. A tool may that may help you and your team identify which stage your school or district is currently in for each of the core components is the [Stages of Implementation Analysis](#) form. This tool will help you and your team match the areas to focus on. Hope this helps. Keep us posted.

**Q** **Laura Sumners**

What is the best way that we can support classroom teachers so they "buy in" to the concept of RTI?

**A** **Linda Wernikoff, M.A.**

**A** I will start with a favorite quote: "A leader must strike a delicate balance so that people feel the need to change without feeling overwhelmed by the change" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1999). Here are some strategies that you may find helpful:

- Ensure there is a communication plan in place that clearly describes the RTI process being implemented and the reason for the change;
- Actively seek input from staff; Hear their concerns and respond;
- Put in place professional development and coaching for teachers to support them in the implementation of new programs or processes;
- Model a "we're in this together" attitude;
- Provide frequent reminders of why RTI is important;
- Celebrate successes along the way!

**Q** **Bob**  
What is a reasonable timeline for fully implementing RTI?

**A** **Michelle A. Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D**  
The work of Implementation to sustain Rtl or any evidence-base practice is never done. Over time, the depth of knowledge and experience of staff improves, systems become more efficient, new practices emerge, and new ways of work get embedded into policies and proceduces across multiple levels. Some indication that you observe when a school or district has evolved to the full implementation stage of Rtl is when the components are fully embedded within the school culture, there is a common language and new behaviors across all staff, policies and systems are aligned to support high fidelity implementation, and improved student outcomes are reliably and consistently observed. A key idea from your question is the notation that Implementation does take time. According to an extensive review of the literature (Fixsen et al, 2005, 2010), moving towards Full Implementation typically takes 2-4 years. It is not uncommon for folks to feel rushed to move from the decision to adopt Rtl to begin using Rtl frameworks in the classroom as soon as possible. However, in order to ensure the all of the Rtl components can be implemented with fidelity and sustained over time, there are several decisions, adjustments, and changes that need to occur within the system and new behaviors for all staff needs to occur. Understanding there are several key activities that occur across the Four Stages of Implementation will help set the pace for the work and create developmentally appropriate expectations for the tasks at hand. The four stages of Implementation are: Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation and Full Implementation. A tool may that may help you and your team learn more about the Stages of Implementation and which ?Stage of Implementation? your school or district is currently in for each of the core components is the [Stages of Implementation Analysis](#) tool. This tool can also be an effective way to inform leadership and other stakeholders on the status of the progress being made to move towards Full Implementation. To learn more about the Stages of Implementation; please visit the [State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center](#). Thanks for the great question.



**Jenny**

How can we change our schedule next year to assist our teachers in finding time for interventions? Any ideas or out of the box scheduling that you have heard of that really worked?



**Linda Wernikoff, M.A.**

As Michael Altshuler stated " The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot." I would suggest you start by looking at how to maximize the effectiveness of the time you have now. The National Center on Time & Learning has terrific tools available to assist you. They have a variety of ways to measure how your school uses time currently, methods for improving school routines, and classroom routines to maximize academic and support time.



**Randy Pine**

If a Tier 2 student fails to show targeted progress within the designated weeks, is the goal modified or does the student become Tier 3? Likewise, does an unsuccessful Tier 3 student become a CSE referral or have the goal simplified for additional weeks? If the goal is simplified, and additional weeks to RTI are added, is it serving the RTI principles if the student is then in the RTI process for an entire school year thereby delaying an evaluation?



**Sally Helton, M.S.**

Response to Intervention serves three purposes:

1. To review school-wide behavior and academic data in order to evaluate the effectiveness of core programs.
2. To screen and identify students needing additional academic and/or behavior support.
3. To plan, implement and modify interventions for these students.

Depending on each student's response to intervention, a formal referral for special education evaluation may result. It is important that this process be systematic and that there are clear guidelines for determining how students move from one tier to another. In Tigard-Tualatin School District (TTSD) we have protocols that outline the district-approved, research-based core curriculum and interventions along with the amount of time each day that the student must receive each. It also describes the process for moving through interventions. This amount of time can vary between districts, but must assure compliance with Child Find and therefore shouldn't take a year and shouldn't be delayed by changing goals. In TTSD, each grade level team convenes at least every 6 weeks to evaluate the progress of students involved in interventions. The goal is the grade level benchmark. If the student fails to make adequate progress during three 6-week periods, then a referral to Special Education is initiated. See [TTSD's EBIS Handbook](#) for more details about this process.



**Anne Doody**

How do we create the mindshift required to implement RTI when sometimes it is members of

**Q** leadership, rather than the teachers, who cannot shift their thinking?

**A** **Linda Wernikoff, M.A.**

It is important to build a shared vision around student achievement and the need for change in practices. A good exercise is analyzing the school data to determine student need, the prevalence of the need, targeted areas that need to be addressed, and whether there are currently programs and practices in place to address the needs. The National Implementation Network has a [Stages of Implementation Analysis tool](#) that you may find helpful. Focusing the school on goals for student achievement and fostering the acceptance of group goals can be very helpful in getting everyone on board.

**Q** **Marilyn Reynolds**

What is the best way to provide literacy interventions to ELL's while taking in to consideration their level of second language acquisition?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

The Center on Instruction has a guide to [Language and Reading Interventions for ELLS and ELLS with Disabilities](#) that lists six explicit recommendations for providing literacy interventions to English Language Learners (ELLs) in an RTI System. These are

1. Provide instruction within an RTI model
2. Explicit, intensive interventions should be closely matched to student difficulties
3. Early literacy interventions should focus on a combination of skills
4. Peer-assisted learning is an effective intervention strategy for ELLs identified with a disability in the early grades
5. Instruction for at-risk ELLs and ELLs with language or learning disabilities should build vocabulary and background knowledge
6. Instruction and interventions used with older ELLs who have learning disabilities should use cognitive strategies.

All students, including ELLs benefit from explicit instruction and increased opportunities to respond. This should take place in the core for all students. Sentence frames help ELLs (and other students) with framing questions and answers and can increase participation of ELLs in instruction. A method that has been effective in many districts is preteaching part of the core as a Tier 2 intervention.

**Q** **Zar Saporito**

How do we implement RTI in our school when we have so many students who are at the below and far below status?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

RTI is built upon the foundation of a research-based core curriculum delivered with fidelity. If at least 80% of students in your school are not at benchmark, then this is the place to start. The Exploration stage of implementation involves assessing needs, examining innovations and

**A** implementation, and coming to consensus around what will be implemented. Your school might begin by implementing a solid core curriculum and ensuring it is delivered with fidelity for the amount of time specified (often 90 minutes per day for reading). If this is done well, then you will have fewer students below or far below and at that point can begin implementing interventions.

**Q** **Shanda Morgan**

We often have new teachers join existing intervention teams. How do you rapidly familiarize them with established intervention implementations?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

It helps if there are a select few interventions to choose from at each grade level. That way all teachers can be trained in all of the interventions at the beginning of each year. If new people are hired or change positions during the year and will be providing interventions, a school or district-level coach could provide the needed training. Again this is one of the questions that should be asked during the Exploration Stage of implementation. Without a systematic process and coaching, it is difficult to implement interventions with fidelity.

**Q** **Kathy Parsons**

Who should be implementing interventions? We don't have enough money to hire additional staff, so we're going to have to use our existing resources. How do you determine who should participate?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

These are all great questions that should be talked about during the Exploration Stage of Implementation when considering how to implement an RTI system. Budgets are tight in education and it takes creative thinking at times to solve these problems. By increasing the number of students in each class by one, a school could save enough to be able to provide a half-time Literacy Coordinator who could coordinate, train, and supervise Instructional Assistants in providing reading interventions for students. It is important for districts and schools to take time to determine a method that will work for them, which often includes shifting resources and repurposing jobs. Whoever provides the interventions, it's important that they be trained and that observations are done to ensure the program is being taught with fidelity.

**Q** **Bev Smyth**

What strategies do you recommend to get teachers to actively participate in RTI on a daily basis?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

The most important thing that teachers can do in the RTI process is to ensure that the core program is taught with fidelity using effective instructional strategies. If this is done well then at least 80% of students should be at benchmark. This can be a real shift in thinking for some schools and districts and takes time to implement. Implementation drivers (see [Key Components Drive](#)

**A** *Successful Implementation* for examples) are critical components in facilitating this shift. It takes strong leaders who believe in the process as well as training and coaching of teachers to get it started. This includes fidelity checks to ensure it is happening. Once in place, it is important to review the data and celebrate improvements with the teachers. Once they see that teaching this way makes a difference for students, it becomes much easier to ensure that it happens.

**Q** *Carola Petterson*

How can the school administrator be sure that the teachers are maintaining fidelity to the Core Reading Program?

**A** *Linda Wernikoff, M.A.*

An essential component of implementing any evidence-based program is to measure the degree to which the program is being used as intended by teachers and other staff. Many programs have fidelity checklists that can be used for teachers to self-assess their fidelity and that allow administrators to measure fidelity of implementation. If a checklist is not available, then you will need to select a method for assessing fidelity ensuring that it is research-based and practical. The process for measuring fidelity should be transparent to all and inform changes that may be needed, such as the need for additional professional development or coaching for teachers. To improve fidelity of instruction, some schools have found that creating structures for teachers to collaborate has proven successful. Building on teacher strengths with some teachers co-teaching or modeling lessons can assist other teachers. It is critical that teachers are provided the time to learn a new program and supported during the process.

**Q** *Carola Petterson*

What should we do if we feel that the fidelity of instruction was compromised in one of the tiers of intervention?

**A** *Sally Helton, M.S.*

It's important to look at progress of cohorts, as well as individuals, in the RTI process for this reason. If the majority of students didn't make progress in that tier, and a research-based intervention used, then it's likely it wasn't delivered with fidelity. At that point the students may need to repeat that intervention. Implementation Drivers help to ensure that teachers receive training in the programs they are going to use, that they receive coaching to ensure they are implementing the program as intended, and that fidelity assessments are done on a regular basis.

**Q** *Carola Petterson*

How can the school administrator be sure that the teachers are maintaining fidelity to the Core Reading Program?

**A** *Michelle A. Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D*

## **A** Instructional Leadership vs Management

School administrators play a key role for ensuring staff are supported in their abilities to maintain fidelity to the Core Reading Program. In schools that are maintaining high levels of fidelity to a program or practice, there is a clear (and observable) culture of support for staff learning and everyone (staff, families, bus drivers, etc.) feels accountable for the outcomes all students. A role the administrator can play is to ensure this culture is being created and data are used as opportunities to celebrate success. In many of these instances, school administrators pull together an Implementation Team. The team is selected for the expertise they bring (not all members need to have expertise in literacy) and meet regularly to review data and feedback from teachers or other key stakeholders. Decisions are made based on those data and the processes are transparent. Assuming that there is a good fidelity measure, administrators can do a walk-through and directly observe the activities in the classroom. It is important to note that these observations should not be tied to teacher evaluations and the data collected should be shared back with the teachers being observed. The conversations around these data should be focused on what is getting in the way of high-fidelity implementation and what are the components that are working. This will help the administrator understand if some of the challenges are technical in nature (i.e. more coaching support needed) or adaptive (i.e. program conflicts with another reading program the teacher values). This level of trust may take some time and opportunities to establish that rapport, but it's well worth the effort. To learn more about adaptive and technical leadership please see the work of Heifetz and Laurie. Heifetz, R.A. and Laurie, D.L. (2001, December). The work of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 79(11), pp. 131-140.

## **A** *Sally Helton, M.S.*

I am assuming that teachers were involved in the selection process and received training and coaching when implementing the curriculum. Once that has taken place, there are many ways to ensure that fidelity to the core is happening. Administrators need to be explicit in their expectation that the core is to be taught for the amount of time specified. Administrators need to develop a schedule that provides for the required amount of time. They should then do regular walk-throughs with an observation tool to do fidelity checks. Also by having teachers work together in grade-level teams to plan instruction and review data, it is more likely that teachers will maintain fidelity. Another method would be to have teachers submit their lesson plans to the administrator regularly.

## **Q** *Kathryn Minaya*

How can we improve family involvement in the RTI process so that family members feel that they are a valued part of the team?

## **A** *Linda Wernikoff, M.A.*

It is important to create a clear communication plan about RTI for all stakeholders including parents. The communication should explain the process, the need for the process and the expectations and goals. Many schools review the RTI process at a parent curriculum night. It is also good practice (and in some States required) to send a letter home to parents when a student has been identified as requiring additional support through the RTI process. Parents should be informed



**A** about the area of need and the type of intervention being provided. Parents should also receive regular updates on student progress, typically as part of the regular report card cycle or at parent teacher conferences. In addition, some interventions include home support packages or include goals that parents can address at home.

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

?When families and schools work together, student outcomes are enhanced? (Reschly 2010). Read more about family involvement in Amy Reschly's article [Schools, Families, and Response to Intervention](#). Creating a climate of partnership between schools and parents is the first step. Good communication is the key. This can be done in newsletters, conferences, and over the phone. Having a system in place makes it easier to ensure that this takes place. This should begin at the back to school nights in the beginning of the year with teachers providing an overview of what students will be learning during the year. Weekly newsletters from teachers and schools help keep parents up to date on what's happening in school and what parents can do at home to support their children's learning. If a student is in need of an intervention, it's important for the teacher to make a personal connection with parents to let them know what is happening and why as well as what they can do at home. During this conversation, it's important to get input from the parents as to what they are seeing at home. Each time the intervention is changed, this connection needs to take place with parents being provided progress-monitoring data all along in the process. If the student fails to make adequate progress during the Tier 2 interventions, then problem-solving needs to take place. The problem-solving team, including the teacher, the parents, and other involved persons such as the school counselor or intervention teacher use information from a developmental history, thorough file-review, and progress monitoring data to determine the most effective intervention to use during the last intervention period prior to referral to special education.

**Q** **Melba**

How can we convey the message that effective and sustainable intervention will not occur without setting aside and keeping time for intervention daily and without fidelity to the program being used for intervention?

**A** **Michelle A. Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D**

?Starting with the End in Mind?

This is a very critical question Melba. In an effort to be brief there are two key ideas and tools I would like to share with you. The first is the importance of the Selection process of evidence-based programs (EPB) and understanding the core components. When programs are selected (or may be mandated) it is important for someone or a team of folks to help crosswalk the fit within the current system and look for areas that duplication of effort may be occurring. If time is taken to link the program features and practices to the features of RtI, then it will help you and your team understand and communicate the functions of why RtI was selected. (See [The Hexagon Tool](#) as a resource.) The other advantage of this process is that it helps leadership identify what needs to be ?taken off an individual's plate?. We cannot keep adding on to individuals responsibilities if we

**A** want to ensure sustainability and improved outcomes for students.

Finally, in order to ensure teachers and other classroom staff are fully supported to implement the core component of RtI with high fidelity and can sustain these best practices is through the use of Implementation Teams. Some of the functions of an Implementation are listed above, but in general, Implementation Teams are typically made up of 3-5 individuals who have the **time (FTE)** and expertise to focus on Implementation Capacity development. They are accountable for removing barriers that may get in the way of supporting staff competence, creating the infrastructure to engage in this work and have the authority to make key decisions to the processes. The research is also compelling in support of the need for an Implementation Team. It can take about 17 years for only 14% of practices to be adopted (Balas & Boren, 2000) as compared to taking 3 years for 80% of sites to achieve high fidelity implementation and sustain those levels for six or more years (Fixsen, Blase, Timbers, & Wolf, 2001).

To learn more about Implementation Teams and their functions, check out [WHO Does the Work of Scaling Up](#)

Balas EA, Boren SA. (2000). Yearbook of Medical Informatics: Managing Clinical Knowledge for Health Care Improvement. Stuttgart, Germany: SchattauerVerlagsgesellschaftmbH. Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Timbers, G. D., & Wolf, M. M. (2001).

In search of program implementation see: 792 replications of the Teaching-Family Model. In G. A. Bernfeld, D. P. Farrington & A. W. Leschied (Eds.), Offender rehabilitation in practice: Implementing and evaluating effective programs (pp. 149-166). London: Wiley.

**Q** **Matt**

Due to school budgets and other factors, we cannot implement change at all levels. How do we make small but effective changes within an already established system?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

The basis of all RTI is a strong core curriculum. This means not only a research-based curriculum, but also research-based instruction. The smallest change that should make the most impact would be to ensure that all teachers use good teaching strategies within a positive classroom environment, sheltering instruction, making it explicit, and giving student's multiple opportunities to respond. Make sure the instruction is delivered at their instructional level. This should be happening in the interventions as well.

**Q** **anonymous**

Why should we undertake Response to Intervention? With budget cuts, isn't it unsupportable and going away soon?

**A** *Linda Wernikoff, M.A.*

The goal for all schools and educators is to improve the academic outcomes of all students to assist them in being successful in college or in a career. RTI integrates high quality teaching and assessment in a systematic manner so that students who are not successful can be given the opportunity to succeed with the use of other evidence-based practices that have not been tried previously. It also provides a process to use data to make informed decisions about student need. Current school staff can implement RTI?it does not require additional staff or new funding. Rather, we can reallocate staff and resources to support the new way of supporting students through the RTI process.

**Q** *Ally*

How often do you recommend that children are assessed during progress monitoring? Are there specific literacy interventions and assessment tools that you would recommend?

**A** *Linda Wernikoff, M.A.*

It is difficult to recommend specific literacy interventions and assessment tools as they need to be carefully matched to the profile of the students to be served. You want to ensure you select interventions that "fit" the needs of your students and that are feasible to be implemented in your situation. The National Implementation Research Network tool entitled "The Hexagon Tool: An EBP/EII Discussion and Exploration Tool" assists schools/districts to evaluate programs that are being considered for implementation. Some general tips to keep in mind when implementing RTI are to ?have a tool that will be used to screen students to determine students that need additional support, once an intervention is selected; monitor student progress frequently using a standard benchmark (such as DIBELS or AIMSweb); and in addition to reviewing classroom performance and conducting program assessments, use these data to drive instructional decisions including changes in the intensity, duration and/or frequency of the intervention.

**Q** *Veronica Duffy*

RTI for English Language Learners. Can we develop a unique plan for them within the district?

**A** *Linda Wernikoff, M.A.*

You can but it may not be necessary. The overall RTI framework and process including screening students, providing targeted research-based interventions, regular progress monitoring, and making data based decisions about instructional modifications needed should be the same for all students. The interventions needed to address the specific needs of English Language Learners will differ. So the "How" of RTI should be the same the "What" which is the intervention will differ. You may find the book "Response to Intervention Principles and Strategies for Effective Practice" by Rachel Brown-Chidsey and Mark W. Steege helpful.

**Q** *Cara*

**Q** How can school psychologists work with interventionists to improve fidelity of implementation?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

School psychologists are trained in the important of implementation fidelity, assessment, and behavior. Different districts and schools use their expertise in different ways. They could be used to do structured observations in intervention classes to make sure that the curriculum is delivered with fidelity. Another important role they play is to help interventionists with effective classroom management strategies. Without these practices, even the best intervention programs won't make a difference because the students won't be attending to the instruction.

**Q** **Jennifer S Ray**  
Where do you see the greatest struggle in RTI implementation?

**A** **Michelle A. Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D**

There are many struggles (and successes) when trying to move from science to practice in an effort to improve academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes for students. A challenge we all face is the Implementation Gap:

- What is adopted is not used with fidelity and good outcomes are not observed
- What is used with fidelity is not sustained for a useful period of time
- What is used with fidelity is not used on a scale sufficient to broadly impact student outcomes

To prevent or minimize the Implementation gaps listed above it is important to pay attention to the formula for success: "What" (the effective practices) X "How" (effective implementation) X "Where" (supportive context) = Positive outcomes for students. When only 1 part of the equation is understood and utilized there is less likelihood of achieving the successful outcomes for students.

**Q** **Jeff**  
Where can we find forms or checklists that will make life easier for classroom teachers when collecting data, without having to recreate the wheel?

**A** **Linda Wernikoff, M.A.**

Great question! It really depends on what data teachers are collecting. Many progress monitoring tools that can be purchased include forms to collect data manually or on-line. Having the ability to collect data on-line eliminates the burden of collecting and storing and retrieving lots of paper. It is important that data is easily accessible so that it can be used during planning or data review meetings to make instructional decisions. You can also find some helpful tools on the [State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center](#) website.

**Q** **R. Crawford**

**Q** How does RTI work in a Preschool setting? Can it be used?

**A** **Linda Wernikoff, M.A.**

Yes RTI is applicable in a preschool setting. The RTI process must be tailored to the developmental levels of preschool students. For more information on RTI for Preschool you can visit the following websites:

[Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute: Recognition and Response](#)

[RTI Action Network: RTI in Pre-Kindergarten](#)

[Center for RTI in Early Childhood](#)

**Q** **Ella Sitten**

Is RTI commonly implemented at the middle school and high school level? Many new special ed students registering at our high school are reading at the elementary level.

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**

Implementation of RTI is more difficult at the secondary level, but is being done effectively in many places. The fundamentals are the same with universal screening, research-based interventions, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making. If the district has effective instruction and interventions at the elementary grades, it is rare to find students eligible for special education due to a learning disability at this level, although it does happen. It is critical at the secondary level that literacy be taught in all core classes, ensuring that teachers are trained in the effective practices. (See the [IES Practice Guide](#) for more details). For more about RTI in secondary schools read:

[Response to Intervention for Literacy in Secondary Schools.](#)

**Q** **James Uhry**

Can you suggest strategies to help schools sustain change over time?

**A** **Michelle A. Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D**

"Moving from Ghost Systems to Host Systems"

Preparing for sustainability begins when a team identifies needs for students and makes the decision to adopt an evidence-based program or practice that addresses those needs. When thinking about sustainability, it is important to think about impacts and supports needed from 1 level above (district) and 1 level below (classroom) and five years out. As you are making decisions, adaptations and learning from the data, it is essential to document those decisions and share with key stakeholders across the system. Another tip is to think about all of the key personnel in your school and determine who would replace them if they retired? Do they have an understudy? Is your

**A** current system person dependent vs system dependent? A resource to help you create a transparent and sustainable infrastructure is to review the Implementation Driver assessment. In that tool you will find "implementation best practices" that will help you think through the current strengths and where some components need some attention. [The Implementation Driver tool](#) can be used as an assessment and action planning tool. Hope this helps.

**Q** **Carrie**  
How do I get "buy in" from the middle school level. They see RTI as elementary only and refuse to see the possibilities and look at the road blocks at the middle school level.

**A** **Linda Wernikoff, M.A.**  
I would begin by building a shared vision around student achievement. Improving student outcomes is a goal at all levels, elementary, middle and high school. I would also frame a clear message about what RTI is and the goals. Actively seek input from staff and hear their concerns and respond. Be transparent about the change that will be needed and the supports and structures that will be put in place to assist them in implementation. A strategy that has been successful is creating an "Implementation Team" comprised of 3-5 people that can lead this effort in the school. Look for the informal leaders that can champion the change.

**Q** **Lhing Twist**  
What do I do when the students refuse to apply the four steps to word exercise solving. They can read well but do not show comprehension in how to connect the situational exercise with the math concept. I am repeating the procedures over and over, am I doing the right thing?

**A** **Sally Helton, M.S.**  
Not knowing the specific program, I can't give feedback on that. What I do know is that if students refuse to apply the strategies being taught, it is important to determine why. Do you have access to coaching? If so, a coach could come and help problem solve. Are you providing lots of reinforcement when students do follow the procedures. Are their other teachers who are having more success? If so, could you observe in that classroom to try to figure out why it's different there?

### Related Reading from RTINetwork.org:

- [Implementation: The missing link between research and practice](#), by Dean L. Fixsen, Sandra F. Naoom, Karen Blase & Frances Wallace, from *The APSAC Advisor*
- *Implementation: The Missing Link Between Research and Practice* (Brief), by Dean L. Fixsen and Karen Blase, from the *NIRN Implementation Brief*
- [Implementing Response to Intervention ? Tigard High School, Portland, Oregon](#)
- [Developing a Plan](#), by George Batsche

- [Create Your Implementation Blueprint: Introduction](#), by Susan L. Hall

### **Additional Resources**

#### **To learn more about Implementation Science and the work of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)**

- [National Implementation Research Network \(NIRN\)](#)
- Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). [Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature](#). Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).

#### **To learn more about the application of Implementation Science in Education and the Center for State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP)**

- [State Implementation of Scaling-up Evidence-based Practices \(SISEP\) Center Resources](#)
- Duda, M. A., & Fixsen, D. (2012). Feature Article. [The four "things" you need to know before implementing evidence-based practices](#). Savage Controversies. Newsletter of the Association for Behavior Analysis International, Evidence Based Practice SIG, 5(2).
- Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Horner, R., & Sugai, G. (2009, February). [Intensive technical assistance. Scaling Up Brief #2](#). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG, SISEP.

#### **To learn more about the application of Implementation Science in Oregon**

- [Oregon RTI Resources](#)
- [Tigard Tualatin School District EBIS Resources](#)