

Washington RTI Report of Activities and Findings

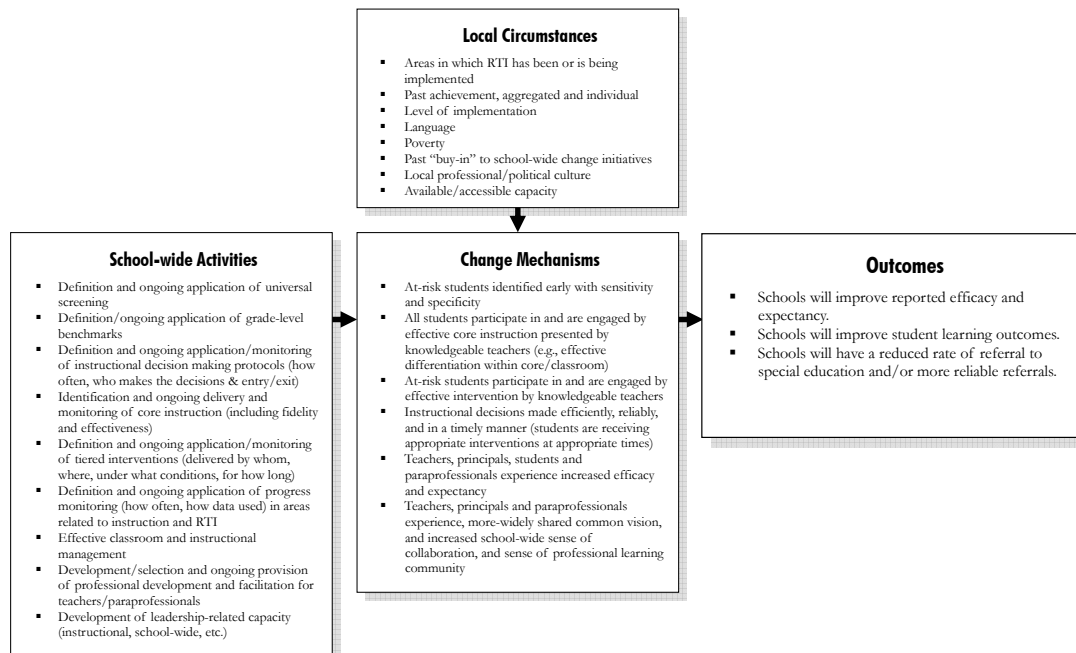
Executive Summary

The year 1 evaluation of *Improving Core Subject Instruction for All Students Pilot Project* (HB 2136) and *Re-Tooling Instruction through Response to Intervention* (RTI²) focused on developing a coherent program model, collecting survey and site visit data, and organizing student outcome data (achievement, special education referral rates, and behavior referral rates) for purposes of future comparison. The full report of those activities and their results is available from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This executive summary provides a brief synopsis of the full report.

Program Model

The Program Model (Figure 1), developed over a series of meetings with OSPI officials and a state-wide stakeholder group during the winter of 2008 and early spring of 2009, represents the norm for RTI implementation in Washington State. It is the *intended* model, and provides a basis for developing evaluation questions and identifying measures and indicators of progress.

Figure 1: Program Model



Evaluation Questions

In year 1, we focused on the following questions:

- To what extent are the *School-wide Activities* in Figure 1 implemented in funded districts?
- What *Local Circumstances* do districts and schools find challenging?
- What are the 2008-2009 levels of student outcomes in the funded and matched districts?

Evaluation Participants

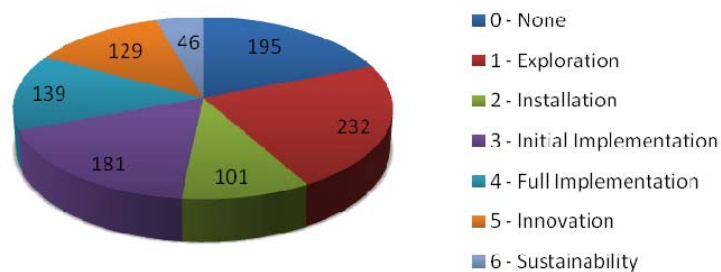
Districts funded by *Improving Core Subject Instruction for All Students Pilot Project* (HB 2136) or by *Re-tooling Instruction through Response to Intervention (RTI)*² participated in the evaluation. They included: East Valley, Hoquiam, Kiona-Benton City, Longview, Odessa, Richland, Shoreline, Stevenson-Carson, Vancouver, Walla Walla, and White River. Eleven non-funded districts, matched districts also contributed data.

Evaluation Findings to Date

To what extent are the *School-wide Activities* in Figure 1 implemented in funded districts?

- About 18% of teachers report no implementation (n=195). Another 24% (n = 232) are best described as in the process of exploring RTI and 9% are installing RTI. Approximately 30% (n=282) are implementing (initial or full). Sixteen percent (16%) report being at the innovation or sustainability levels of implementation.

Figure 2: Levels of RTI Implementation



- Based on survey data, implementation of RTI is most prominent in reading. About 60% of teachers *who report implementing RTI* are doing so in reading. Another 39% are implementing in math and almost 20% in behavior-related areas.
- Teachers' knowledge of measurement (screening and progress monitoring) is relatively low. About 50% of respondents gave at least a partial definition of screening. Forty-three percent

(43%) gave a partial or full definition of progress monitoring. A large minority of responses were either vague (21% for screening and 29% for progress monitoring) or simply not correct (20% and 11% for screening and progress monitoring, respectively).

- At the same time, survey respondents appear to be administering screening and progress monitoring measures in ways that are aligned with best practices. There may be questions concerning the quality with which the data are being used.
- The response rate for the survey was relatively low (24%), so it is difficult to know the extent to which these responses reflect the knowledge of all teachers in funded districts.

What *Local Circumstances* do districts and schools find challenging?

- A majority of respondents reported high levels of capacity for school management; 86% agreed that they have “explicit goals for what we want students to achieve (learning outcomes) at each grade level,” and 77% reported that “programs for improving student performance are coordinated” at their school.
- About 20% of respondents did not know “the fidelity criteria used (i.e., what is being looked for or at) when instruction is observed.” Whether this is due to a lack of awareness or to the absence of such criteria is not clear. It may also be that criteria exist, but have not been made explicit by those doing the observing.
- Administrator and instructional coach reports from the site visits suggest that teachers are struggling to use data effectively. Teacher focus group reports suggest that a coherent, integrated school-wide system for using data may not be in place at many schools.
- There was a reported lack of clarity on what RTI is and how it works, and a number of site visit participants had questions about the degree to which their “model” aligns with research or best practice. These concerns are common to early stages of implementation.
- A major theme of the site visits was the need for ongoing, embedded professional development. Most survey respondents reported having only 1 or 2 PD opportunities on RTI to date.

What are the 2008-2009 levels of student outcomes in the funded and matched districts?

- Data from the funded and matched districts will provide a baseline for evaluating differences in student outcomes. Ideally, the values within a matched pair would be very similar and in the majority of cases they are. The several areas of significant difference can be handled

analytically. In general, they do *not* represent a threat to the matched design. This topic is addressed more fully in the *Next Steps* section.

Next Steps

Most schools and districts funded by Improving *Core Subject Instruction for All Students Pilot Project* (HB 2136) and *Re-Tooling Instruction through Response to Intervention (RTI)*² are in the early stages of implementation. Many are in the process of learning about RTI's elements, how those elements are best implemented, and the extent to which they may have positive impacts on teacher practice and ultimately on student outcomes. Teachers appear to be confident about their instructional capacity, and they appear to see RTI as having potential. However, there is a degree of reluctance, typical of the early stages of implementation, particularly when attempting to push a relatively complex initiative on a large scale.

Our practice-related recommendations include:

- Begin or continue a working relationship with the western regional support person from the National RTI Center.
- We encourage OPSI to consider a more narrow focus (in terms of grade levels, content areas, etc.) for RTI implementation in the near term.
- We strongly encourage an investment in ongoing, targeted, and intensive professional development.
- We recommend that a more direct link with important data sources be established, if possible.

Our evaluation-related recommendations include:

- We propose that one part of the evaluation focus on estimating program effect in *a district or in schools where implementation is relatively far along*. To be manageable, this would require a very narrow focus in terms of content area, grade level, and school district. We would continue the other aspects of the evaluation as proposed, but our sense is that most, particularly at the upper levels, will continue in the early phases of implementation for the next year or two (at least), and to aggressively evaluate outcomes (i.e., at the same level that we propose for the narrow impact evaluation) in these districts and schools would be a misuse of resources.