

2013 Minnesota Response to Intervention Implementation Survey

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Education is supporting schools and districts that are committed to closing the “achievement gap” through the implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI) also known as Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)*. Both RtI and MTSS refer to a framework that provides schools with an integrated system of high quality, standards-based instruction and interventions that are matched students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. The RtI/MTSS framework relies on multiple tiers of instruction that work together as a “safety net” to prevent school failure.

The critical features of the framework include screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making for instruction and movement of students within the multi-tiered system. Effective implementation of the RtI/MTSS framework requires that Teachers use data obtained through systematic problem-solving processes to make decisions about student movement between tiers and to make improvements to instruction and delivery. In a multi-tiered system, all students receive evidence-based instruction and gain access to state standards, during core instruction, supplemental interventions and specially designed instruction.

Successful implementation of the RtI framework requires a multi-year commitment from district and school leadership. Effective implementation of practices requires the careful design and integration and planning of initiatives, policies, programs, professional development, and practices to ensure coherence and high quality results. For this reason, Wilder Research was commissioned to conduct a statewide survey to determine the level of RtI implementation among Minnesota's schools.

The 75-item survey examined four areas of implementation for all students (core

instruction/Tier 1) and students in need of interventions (supplemental intervention/Tiers 2 and 3):

- Leadership and organizational structures
- Curriculum and instruction
- Assessment
- Collaboration among staff

Participants were asked to rate a set of activities that correspond to RtI/MTSS implementation stages to determine how far their school/district had come in the implementation process. They rated these activities as “not in place,” “exploring,” “partial implementation,” and “full implementation.” Additional open item responses were added for schools to identify barriers to RtI implementation.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS OUT OF ALL SCHOOLS

Grade Level	Participants	Total	Percent
Elementary/ K-12	385	825	47%
Middle School	77	206	37%
High School	163	355	46%
Charter	85	163	52%

**MTSS and RtI are viewed as similar concepts by the Minnesota Legislature and Department of Education; however, since 2012, education leaders have witnessed a systematic use of the term MTSS over RtI to represent the framework.*

The survey was completed in March/April of 2013 by 710 of 1500 schools (a 46 percent response rate), including elementary, middle, high schools, and charter schools. The survey will be conducted annually for the next several years to inform changes in statewide implementation of RtI/MTSS and guide stakeholders in providing technical assistance and supports.

Higher and lower levels of implementation

In general, results of the statewide survey show that most participating schools have implemented at least some of the critical reading features of RtI or MTSS. The results from the survey indicate there are the complexities to implementing a multi-component framework. Due to variations in implementation across items, the survey is inconclusive as to how many schools are fully-implementing all the components of the RtI/MTSS framework.

Data suggest that instructional leaders at the school and district level need technical assistance that focuses on operational and change management. While this report provides global findings across the four categories of implementation, there are themes that can be drawn from across the categories that impact how technical assistance should be approached from one grade level building to the next as well as across the regions.

The survey indicated strengths and challenges in implementing RtI/MTSS as well as both unexpected needs and predictable areas for which to make improvements.

We found three unexpected, but positive findings:

- The rate of response was higher than expected, 46 percent or 710 of 1500 participants. All grades and all corners of the state including charter schools are represented.
- A mix of single raters and teams completed the survey. Responses on the part of teams showed higher ratings of implementation than those who were completed by a single rater.
- Given the opportunity to provide additional information about challenges in implementing RtI/MTSS, the top responses were not about challenges with time and money. Primarily issues focused on training and staffing. Secondly, concerns over scheduling students into intervention times without adversely impacting opportunities to engage with core instruction. Thirdly, concerns over access to valid and reliable assessment data.

The data also indicate very predictable and normal areas of challenges to implementation across systems, such as a discrepancy in moving from holding a vision of RtI to operationally defining and leading staff in implementing all the components with fidelity. Another challenge is the difference in how schools install and manage the critical features across elementary, middle, high and charter schools. A third predictable challenge is that administrative supports and accountability for clarifying and installing the features of RtI /MTSS requires the most support in moving to greater levels of implementation.

The top three issues that constrain effective implementation are:

- Effective collaboration structures among staff across the tiers
- Effective communication about interventions and student progress with parents.
- Operationally defined communication, administrative routines, and accountability structures that facilitate fuller implementation.

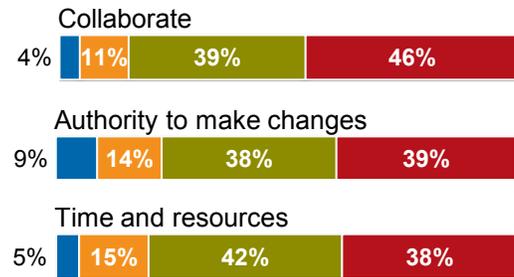
Adding to the complexity of a multi-component framework, comes the finding that self-rating does not always provide a valid picture of reality. Additional open item responses allowed respondents to provide more detail about their implementation efforts as well as challenges. One question in particular asked respondents to list the assessment tools they use to screen students. Based on responses by some respondents who provided the names of the measures they use indicate that some schools are not using them for their intended purpose. Some of the measures are not valid and reliable for screening of reading. The extent to which schools are fully implementing the use of valid and reliable assessment measures to screen students is an outstanding question.

The next several pages provide specific examples of organizational structures and supports that need to be developed as well as the complexity in creating a picture of state-wide implementation.

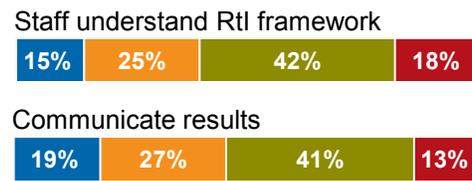
Leadership and organizational structures.

Critical to implementation are organizational structures that support staff in implementing practices with fidelity. Approximately 40 to 50 percent of schools report fully:

- implementing a model of collaboration around student data and instruction that is built into school expectations, schedules, and calendar.
- providing school leadership teams with the authority to make structural changes, change schedules, and allocate resources to best meet the needs of students.
- committing adequate time and resources to support ongoing professional learning for all school staff.



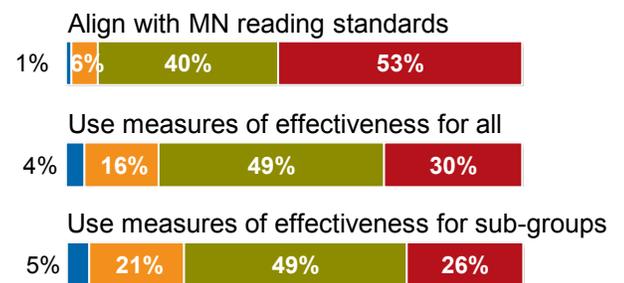
Opportunities for additional technical assistance and support in moving schools to higher levels of implementation include supporting schools in educating all staff on how the Rtl framework is represented in the school (including implications for curricula, assessment, and organization) and communicating results regularly to multiple stakeholder audiences.



Curriculum and instruction.

While over 50 percent of schools indicated that they participate in ongoing work to align core curricula with the Minnesota reading standards, only 30 percent indicated that they use multiple measures to review the overall effectiveness of core curricula and instruction, and adjust their instructional practices accordingly. Fewer than 30 percent of schools indicated that they have applied these same practices to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction for sub-groups of students. When the data is

disaggregated by grade level, the number of elementary schools reporting that staff are knowledgeable about and implement the principles of effective instruction, including research-based practices in reading/literacy is double that of high schools.



- Not in place: No action occurring on this area
- Exploring: Identifying needs and exploring; increasing awareness; connecting to current vision; building consensus to act; creating common definitions and expectations; building infrastructure
- Partial implementation: Putting plans into action; making adjustments; providing clarity and feedback; monitoring and support
- Full implementation: Deepening understanding; refining practices; documenting practices for future sustainability; monitoring fidelity

Implementation of evidence-based practices for Tiers 2/3 supports.

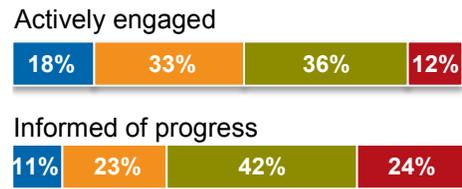
Nearly 40 percent of schools provide an evidence-based intervention for students not meeting grade-level expectations. The expectation that the interventions being delivered are matched to student needs based on multiple data points shows slightly higher levels of implementation. This would suggest that when interventions are available; they are matched to student needs.

Ratings are at about 40 percent for evidence-based interventions that are delivered as intended or with fidelity.



Engaging parents of students receiving Tier 2/3 supports.

Parents/guardians of students who receive supplemental interventions are provided reports on their child’s interventions, goals, and progress toward their goals fully 29 percent of the schools significant differences between elementary (36 percent), middle (29 percent), and high school (12 percent). Rates of implementation in engaging parents as active team members at each step of problem solving is significantly lower with full implementation reaching only 12 percent across all respondents. Meaningfully engaging parents in the process and in informing them of their child’s ongoing progress presents as a significant opportunity for technical assistance.



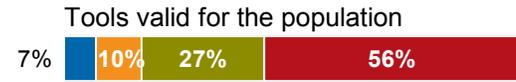
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Assessment.

Reported assessment results illustrate the complexity in making systemic changes across the grades. Over half of respondents (82 percent of elementary schools and 31 percent of high schools) indicated that all students are screened multiple times per year using valid and reliable screening measures for reading. As mentioned previously, the veracity of these ratings is in

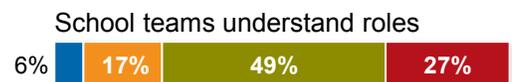
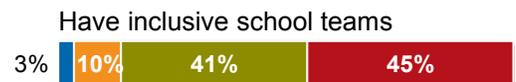
question. The attention to whether these assessments are valid and reliable for the population the school serves remains unchanged for high schools at 31 percent; however, the number drops from 82 to 69 percent of elementary schools fully implementing valid and reliable assessment tools and procedures. The variation in degree of implementation between elementary and high schools shows up again with respect to timely access to data for decision making. While overall 54 percent of schools report having timely access to data for decision making, only 29 percent of high schools reported having timely access to data.

Just under half of the schools report using valid and reliable diagnostic assessments that provides in-depth information about students who receive supplemental and intensive interventions. Instructional staff need professional development in communicating to parents or guardians the purpose and value of the assessments used as well as their limitations.



Collaboration among staff.

According to the survey, grade-level teams, problem-solving teams, or other school teams responsible for implementation are viewed as having the primary mission and responsibility of supporting success for all students. However, staff lack a common understanding of the purpose and unique role of each school team. Similarly, schools lack a consistent process to guide grade-level team discussions and decisions about supplemental interventions.



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The survey also asked schools to identify barriers to RtI implementation. According to the 392 schools that responded to this question, the most frequently cited problems were:

- Lack of training or professional development opportunities (21 percent)
- Lack of support or buy-in from staff (20 percent)
- Lack the staffing capacity necessary to fully implement RtI (18 percent)
- Difficulty in scheduling students for interventions or to coordinate multiple interventions (16 percent)
- Need for better/common assessment tools (11 percent)
- Lack of time in general (10 percent)
- Difficulty in scheduling meetings for the RtI team (9 percent)
- Difficulty collecting and managing data (5 percent)

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For more information

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