



Models of response to intervention in the Northwest Region states



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
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Institute of Education Sciences
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September 2009

Prepared by

Jennifer Stepanek

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Kit Peixotto

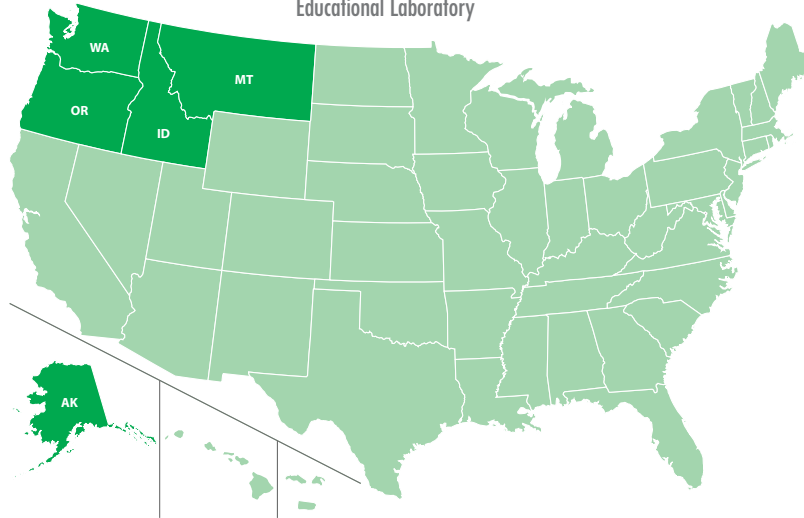
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory



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Models of response to intervention in the Northwest Region states

This report provides information on the response to intervention (RTI) models supported by state education agencies in the Northwest Region and identifies states' RTI-related resources, policies, and activities. The information will help the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center focus its technical assistance for RTI and identify areas for cross-state collaboration, while enabling states to learn from each other's experience.

This report describes state-level efforts to support implementation of response to intervention (RTI) in the Northwest Region states—Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. RTI, an approach to improving education outcomes, focuses on monitoring academic progress and using assessment data to identify struggling students, modify instruction, and provide interventions matched to students' needs on a tiered, gradually intensifying basis (Batsche et al. 2005). The tiered RTI framework requires a research-based core program of curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of most students.

RTI changes the way services and resources are organized for general education, but it also has implications for special education services (Griffiths et al. 2007). Using an RTI framework enables teachers and administrators to begin

addressing students' learning difficulties with early intervention strategies. Rather than looking for deficiency within the student, teachers and administrators focus on making changes in the student's environment by using data to implement practices that will accelerate learning.

This study was designed to address the growing interest in RTI. State-level efforts to support RTI are now common across the United States (Hoover et al. 2008). The focus on RTI supports the work of the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center (NWRCC). RTI is one of the three themes the center identified for its work in fulfilling its charge to build the capacity of the Northwest Region states to implement the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (the other two are statewide systems of support and math).

Two types of information were used to describe RTI at the state level in the Northwest Region: publicly available documents, such as RTI handbooks and manuals, and interviews with key state education agency personnel who managed the states' RTI initiatives and projects. A framework was used to guide the analysis of the documents and interview transcripts. Data were coded to identify segments of text that contained information relevant to the framework categories. The findings were organized into individual state profiles.

Because contacts were limited to one or two people per state, the study is not a comprehensive profile of RTI from multiple perspectives. Other limitations of the study are the reliance on self-reported data and the use of documents that may not reflect the most recent information about the states' efforts to support RTI.

The three research questions that guided the study and a brief summary of the findings are presented below. The first question is on context, on what the state education agencies viewed as the purpose of RTI. The two primary research questions look at the components of state education agency approaches to RTI and at state support of districts' implementation of RTI.

1. What do the Northwest Region state education agencies view as the purpose of response to intervention?

The study findings indicate that all five states in the Northwest Region were promoting RTI as a means of improving general education for all students. The states differed somewhat in their emphasis on using RTI for making decisions about students' eligibility for special education. For example, Montana described RTI as an overall system for school improvement, with the secondary aim of identifying students with specific learning disabilities. Idaho, Oregon, and Washington identified RTI as both an overall system for school improvement and a framework for identifying and evaluating students for special education. Alaska promoted RTI as an overall system for school improvement and used the term "response to instruction/intervention" instead of "response to intervention" to emphasize that RTI is for all students.

The rationales that state respondents gave for promoting and supporting RTI varied somewhat. The Alaska and Montana respondents emphasized the flexibility of the RTI framework. Because RTI does not require specific materials or programs, it lends itself to local adaptation, a key consideration for those states' diverse populations. The Montana, Oregon, and Washington respondents described RTI as a means of promoting collaboration between special education and general education, with the goal of strengthening education programs for all students. The Oregon respondent identified the additional benefit that RTI requires schools to focus on student outcomes. The Idaho respondent described RTI as a strategy for continuous improvement that helps schools and districts meet a range of needs for all students.

2. What are the key components of the Northwest Region states' approaches to response to intervention?

The states were supporting models of RTI that included many common components, reflecting practices identified in the RTI literature. All five states provided guidance on research-based curriculum and instruction, collection and analysis of assessment data, research-based interventions, fidelity, and teaming. All but Alaska included parent involvement in their RTI models.

- Alaska, Idaho, and Montana had RTI models with three tiers; Oregon and Washington had tiered models but did not specify the number of tiers.
- Alaska did not identify grade levels or subject areas for RTI. The other four states

supported RTI for PreK–12 or K–12 and for reading and math. Three states (Idaho, Oregon, and Washington) also supported RTI for writing and behavior.

- To support the core curriculum and instruction component, four states provided information and guidance through written materials and RTI web sites. Alaska supported decisions about curriculum selection through technical assistance to districts and schools.
- Three states (Alaska, Idaho, and Montana) provided access to assessment tools, but only Idaho and Montana required the use of specific tools for universal screening in RTI.
- All five states provided information to help schools select and use assessments, including sources of tools, criteria for selecting tools, and reviews of available products.
- Alaska and Washington conducted training on analyzing assessment data; Idaho, Montana, and Oregon provided technical assistance to support data analysis.
- The states provided information on interventions, ranging from general guidelines for identifying interventions to information on specific programs or strategies. All the states except Washington indicated that they also provided training or technical assistance to support schools in identifying interventions.
- The primary focus of the state education agencies was helping districts promote and monitor implementation fidelity for the main components of RTI. Three states

(Alaska, Montana, and Oregon) monitored fidelity through technical assistance providers who worked directly with the schools.

- The state education agencies varied in their guidance on teaming. Two states (Alaska and Idaho) focused on promoting collaboration and effective team processes; the other three states provided more guidance about the types of teams, membership, and responsibilities.

3. What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention?

The states were at different stages in developing initiatives to support RTI implementation. All the states provided similar forms of support, including information dissemination, training, and technical assistance. Montana, Oregon, and Washington provided ongoing support to schools and districts selected for the states' RTI initiatives.

- All five states had a designated state education agency staff member responsible for coordinating state-level RTI activities and providing support to districts and schools.
- Four states had policies based on federal regulations for using RTI to determine students' eligibility for special education; Alaska was the only state that did not have specific guidance. Washington was the only state that reported having general education policies specifically for RTI.
- The activities that the states conducted to support RTI included disseminating

materials and information, conducting training, and supporting collaboration among schools and districts.

- All five states had advisory groups to guide their RTI efforts; three states (Montana, Oregon, and Washington) partnered with regional professional development providers on RTI training.
- State education agency representatives in all five states emphasized the need for

collaboration with other programs and divisions within the organization to support RTI.

- Three states (Montana, Oregon, and Washington) were conducting evaluations of the state RTI projects that will measure student achievement outcomes; Alaska and Idaho did not have state-level evaluations.

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This report provides information on the response to intervention (RTI) models supported by state education agencies in the Northwest Region and identifies states' RTI-related resources, policies, and activities. The information will help the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center focus its technical assistance for RTI and identify areas for cross-state collaboration, while enabling states to learn from each other's experience.

WHY THIS STUDY?

Response to intervention (RTI) is a framework for providing interventions and services at increasing levels of intensity until students succeed (see box 1 for definitions of key terms). The framework helps teachers and schools provide instruction and interventions matched to student needs, monitor progress frequently to guide decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and apply data to important education decisions (Batsche et al. 2005).

RTI has been recommended as a method for determining student eligibility for special education by such federal initiatives as the report from the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (U.S. Department of Education 2002) and the Office of Special Education Programs' Learning Disabilities Initiative (Bradley and Danielson 2004). When Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, the processes involved in implementing RTI were authorized as an approved method for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. In addition, IDEA authorizes the use of funds to develop and implement coordinated, early intervention services designed to prevent the need for special education.

The accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 have created indirect incentives for schools and districts to implement RTI. Some relevant features of the law include the requirements for scientifically based curriculum, instruction and assessment practices, expanded roles for parents, and teacher training on the use of early interventions to address the needs of all students.

Predecessors of response to intervention

Although there are precedents for RTI that go back several decades, and despite its links to federal legislation and policy, the practice as a whole is a fairly new development (Burns and Ysseldyke 2005; Christ, Burns, and Ysseldyke 2005; Gresham

BOX 1

Definition of response to intervention components and of analysis framework categories

Response to intervention components and concepts

Core curriculum, instruction, or program. A core of high-quality curriculum and instruction for general education that has evidence of being effective for most students.

Decision rules. Rules used to determine when students are not responding adequately to an intervention.

Fidelity of implementation. Instructional methods, curriculum, and interventions that are used consistently, as they were intended, and according to research findings.

Intensity. Duration and frequency of instruction and teacher-to-student ratio, which can be adjusted to meet a child's academic or behavioral needs.

Intensive (or tier three) interventions. Academic and behavioral interventions characterized by increased duration and frequency of implementation for severely struggling students.

Prevention. Screening, progress monitoring, and interventions intended to address learning difficulties and prevent the need for students to receive special education services.

Primary (or tier one) interventions. Academic and behavioral interventions implemented at the school or classroom level that are preventive and proactive in addressing learning difficulties.

Problem solving model. A means of identifying how to address the needs of struggling students, generally through four stages: problem

identification, problem analysis, plan implementation, and plan evaluation.

Progress monitoring. A practice of continually assessing student performance to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and interventions.

Research-based interventions. Programs or strategies with evidence of effectiveness in addressing learning difficulties or behavioral issues.

Standard protocol intervention. Use of the same empirically validated intervention for all students with similar academic or behavioral needs.

Strategic (or tier two) interventions. Academic and behavioral interventions chosen in response to student data from among interventions documented as effective with like students under like circumstances.

Tiered model. A system of strategies, services, and interventions organized by levels of increasing intensity to address learning or behavioral needs.

Universal or schoolwide screening. Assessing student performance to determine progress against benchmarks.

Response to intervention analysis framework categories

The analysis framework categories are divided into two groups: key components of response to intervention (RTI) and states' roles in RTI.

Key components of response to intervention

Assessment. Data collection and analysis to identify students who need additional support, make decisions, and monitor progress.

Core curriculum and instruction. See above.

Fidelity measures. Tools and processes to ensure that instructional methods,

curricula, and interventions are used consistently, as they were intended, and according to research findings.

Interventions. A continuum of research-based activities implemented to address students' learning difficulties.

Parent involvement. Parent inclusion in the decisionmaking process and notification of student progress.

Teaming. Teachers, administrators, specialists, and parents collaborating on how to support students.

Tiered model. See above.

States' role in response to intervention

Activities. Strategies the state uses to support RTI, such as disseminating information or providing training.

Evaluation. Assessment of RTI implementation to assess outcomes.

Internal collaboration and coordination. Organizational structure of the state education agency and strategies for promoting collaboration across departments.

Partnerships. Collaboration among a variety of organizations to build awareness and support for RTI.

Policies. State regulations or rules that guide or support RTI implementation, including guidelines and procedures for using RTI to determine student eligibility for special education services.

Purpose. Rationale for state implementation of RTI, such as special education decisionmaking or overall school improvement.

Staff and financial resources. Funding, personnel, and other forms of direct support to districts and schools.

Source: Mellard and Johnson 2008; National Research Center on Learning Disabilities 2007; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, IDEA Partnership 2007; Batsche et al. 2005; Johnson et al. 2006; and National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 2005.

2002), and there are limitations in the research base (see appendix A for a summary of the research).

As states have responded to the IDEA regulations, they have looked for examples of large-scale programs related to RTI. Four education agencies have conducted long-term projects that have provided a source of knowledge about how to implement RTI and have served as models for many state-level initiatives (table 1).

The four models were initiated in the 1990s and can be characterized as predecessors of RTI. The projects share two common features: a problem solving process, usually implemented in four steps or stages, as described in box 1, and implementation by school-level teams with representatives from multiple disciplines. These four projects are related to RTI in that they were designed to build an infrastructure for serving struggling students in general education settings.

The current status of these projects varies, and some projects have been changed to include additional processes associated with RTI. The Heartland Area Education Agency in Iowa moved from a four-tier to a three-tier system and from a student-focused process to a school-level effort to address

student skill deficits through group interventions (Tilly 2003). The Pennsylvania Department of Education is now implementing an RTI project, which started with seven pilot schools in 2007/08 (Pennsylvania Department of Education 2008). Ohio's Intervention Based Assessment evolved into the Ohio Integrated Systems Model, which featured three tiers and included both academics and behavior (Graden, Stollar, and Poth 2007). The Ohio Department of Education was integrating the model into a broader school improvement model that covered RTI practices at the time this report was written.

These four large-scale projects, though not identified as RTI projects, included elements of RTI and are a source of information about how to implement RTI. Several articles have compiled the results of research and evaluation studies to identify potential outcomes associated with RTI (Burns, Appleton, and Stehouwer 2005; Burns and Ysseldyke 2005; Griffiths et al. 2007). However, no experimental studies have established connections between the RTI processes from these projects and the potential outcomes that have been identified.

More research and evaluation of large-scale RTI projects are needed (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 2005). One challenge is that

TABLE 1

Descriptions of large-scale problem solving projects that preceded response to intervention, 1990–93

Agency	Start date	Description
Heartland Area Education Agency (Iowa)	1990	Heartland Problem solving Model Purpose: match students' learning needs with resources available through general education and special education, if necessary (Ikeda et al. 1996)
Pennsylvania Department of Education	1990	Instructional support teams Purpose: focus schools on providing intensive instruction and services in general education to reduce the need for special education (Kovaleski and Glew 2006; Kovaleski, Tucker, and Stevens 1996)
Ohio Department of Education	1992	Intervention Based Assessment Purpose: address students' learning needs and determine eligibility for special education through a voluntary school-based initiative (McNamara and Hollinger 2003)
Minneapolis Public Schools	1993	Problem solving model Purpose: provide intervention assistance, referral, evaluation, and determination of special education eligibility for students with academic difficulties (Marston et al. 2003)

Source: Authors' summary of program descriptions based on sources cited in the descriptions.

RTI is not a single activity but an interconnected series of procedures and decisions. The research to date has investigated primarily individual components of RTI rather than the process as a whole (VanDerHeyden, Witt, and Gilbertson 2007). Another challenge is that implementation of RTI varies on key factors, such as the use of specific assessments and interventions, allocation of resources, and models of professional development. Identifying and describing these factors in the large-scale efforts to implement RTI is a necessary step for informing future research and evaluation studies.

Interest in response to intervention in the Northwest Region states

Interest in RTI has been increasing throughout the United States because of its connection to federal policy and the emerging evidence about its potential advantages. Almost all states are now either implementing or developing RTI (Hoover et al. 2008).

For the past few years interest in RTI has grown in the Northwest Region. All five Northwest Region states—Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington—have projects or initiatives to promote and support RTI. State education agencies vary in the strategies and approaches they have adopted, the ways they have been supporting RTI, and the length of time they have been doing so. They provide guidance documents, disseminate information, conduct training, and in some cases work directly with districts and schools.

Because of the common interest and efforts of the states, the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center (NWRCC) has identified RTI as a focus of its work. This report contributes to that work by gathering and synthesizing information on the RTI models that Northwest Region state education agencies are supporting. The report also identifies the RTI-related resources, policies, and activities of the state education agencies.

State education agencies vary in the strategies and approaches they have adopted, the ways they have been supporting RTI, and the length of time they have been doing so

This information will help NWRCC focus its technical assistance for RTI and identify potential areas for cross-state collaboration. The report will also enable states to learn from each other's experience with different approaches to supporting RTI. The report will also inform practitioners from institutions of higher education who are developing teacher preparation and professional development programs related to RTI and administrators and teachers who are interested in learning more about RTI in their states.

Thus, the study sought to answer three questions:

- What do the Northwest Region state education agencies view as the purpose of response to intervention?
- What are the key components of the Northwest Region states' approaches to response to intervention?
- What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention?

Box 2 and appendix B describe the study methodology.

STUDY FINDINGS

This section summarizes the findings and describes some of the commonalities and differences among the state approaches to RTI. The information is based on a descriptive analysis of the data from the state documents and interviews and should not be interpreted as an evaluative comparison of the state RTI initiatives. The complete results of this study are presented in the individual state profiles in appendix D.

The findings for the first research question are based on data from the interviews. The findings for the second and third questions are organized into topics that reflect the variables of interest for

BOX 2

Study methodology

The study uses a descriptive approach to characterize the response to intervention (RTI) models and initiatives of the Northwest Region states.

Data collection. The study relied on two sources of data: publicly available handbooks, manuals, conference materials, policy documents, and RTI web sites developed by the states (see table B2 in appendix B) and interviews with seven key state education agency personnel who managed the states' RTI initiatives and projects.

Data were collected from May–October 2008 through web-based searches of RTI initiatives and programs. Documents were selected based on their relevance and reflection of current policy and practice, as verified during interviews. Any RTI-related sections of the state education agency web sites were also included. For three states the primary source of information was a handbook or manual on RTI. For the other two states, materials such as presentations and training documents were used. Each state's special education policies and regulations were also reviewed to identify any state guidance on using RTI to determine students' eligibility for special education.

Interviewees were identified with the help of a project advisory team, which included members of the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center who worked with the states. Candidates were selected who had primary responsibility for the state's RTI efforts and long experience with RTI at the state level. Five candidates were contacted by email to explain the study and invite their participation.

Four agreed to participate and the fifth identified another person with more direct RTI responsibility. Two additional respondents were included at the request of the state education agencies.

The interviews were conducted by project staff using a standardized interview protocol with 40 open-ended questions (see appendix C). Interviews were conducted by phone and lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were digitally recorded, with the permission of respondents, and transcribed for analysis.

Because the respondents were limited to the state education agency representatives who were the most knowledgeable about RTI, the findings do not represent the entire range of knowledge and experience at the state level. To address this limitation, the data presented focus on facts about the policies and activities of the states rather than the opinions of the respondents.

Data analysis. The analysis was based on a framework derived from *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation* (Batsche et al. 2005), a report sponsored by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. That report addresses the role of state education agencies in supporting implementation of RTI and describes key components of RTI, and so it was directly related to the focus of this project. The report provided the most current synthesis of policy issues in the literature on RTI at the time the study was developed. (See table B3 in appendix B for the analysis framework.)

The analysis framework was used to align the research questions, data

collection, and data analysis. Using a framework based on an existing document helped focus the study on issues that have been identified as important by experts in the field. The RTI components and types of state-level support were used to create categories for characterizing the efforts of the states included in the study. These categories were supplemented by descriptions from the RTI literature (Johnson et al. 2006; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 2005). Brief definitions of the categories for the research questions are included in box 1.

Codes were developed for the categories and subcategories and used in a line-by-line analysis of the state documents and interview transcripts to identify segments that contained information relevant to each category. The segments were entered into a data matrix based on the research questions and variables of interest. The data in each category were then summarized and arranged in a template, which was used to organize the state profiles based on the research questions and categories of data.

To ensure the accuracy of the data and analysis, both the interview transcripts and the state profiles were sent to the seven respondents to identify any mistakes or misinterpretations.

As an additional check, sample data from a document and an interview were coded by the project advisory team. The coded data were then reviewed to assess interrater reliability and to identify any inconsistencies. Inconsistencies were resolved through discussions among team members. See appendix B for a more detailed description of the study methodology.

each question. The topics for the second research question are based on the key components of RTI, and those for the third are based on the potential areas of support that states may provide (Batsche et al. 2005). Definitions of the topics are in box 1.

To provide context for the findings that follow, table 2 summarizes the states' RTI development and implementation activities.

What do the Northwest Region state education agencies view as the purpose of response to intervention?

A report by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education identifies three

purposes of RTI (Batsche et al. 2005). One purpose is focused on general education, with RTI serving as a system within the context of the No Child Left Behind Act for implementing a tiered model of differentiated intervention on a school-wide basis. Two other purposes focus on special education—determining eligibility for special education and informing ongoing decisionmaking within special education. The five states in the Northwest Region have all promoted RTI as a general education initiative, identifying it as a means of supporting schools in providing evidence-based curricula and instruction and in making data-based decisions about how best to support student learning.

TABLE 2

Overview of state-level response to intervention development and implementation activities in the five Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Start date	Activities
Alaska	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided training related to response to intervention (RTI) focused on data-based decisionmaking. • Supported RTI through statewide system of support for schools and districts in need of improvement. • Conducted an RTI implementation survey in fall 2008 to determine how best to support implementation. • Developed a draft guidance document in January 2009.
Idaho	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially worked with pilot sites and provided technical assistance through university-based special education consultants. • Integrated RTI across a variety of state-level programs. • Conducted a survey in fall 2008 to identify professional development needs. • Currently revising state guidance and training materials.
Montana	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included 44 elementary and 11 secondary schools in state RTI project. • Provided training for school and district leadership teams. • Provided onsite technical assistance through monthly consultant visits. • Published RTI guidance document in December 2008.
Oregon	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included 29 districts in the state initiative. • Contracted with Tigard-Tualatin School District to provide training and technical assistance to the districts. • Conducted a related project, Effective Behavioral and Instructional Support Systems, that blends RTI with positive behavior support, a framework similar to RTI but focused on behavior. • Published RTI technical assistance paper in 2007.
Washington	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported implementation of tiered models in seven pilot districts funded by House Bill 2136. • Provided professional development on RTI for 55 schools from 23 districts throughout the state in partnership with regional service providers. • Published RTI handbook in 2006.

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

State education agency respondents reported differences in emphasis in their use of RTI for identifying students for special education. For example, the Montana respondent described RTI as an overall system for school improvement, with the secondary aim of identifying students with specific learning disabilities. Idaho, Oregon, and Washington respondents identified RTI as a system for school improvement and a framework for identifying and evaluating students for special education. Alaska promoted RTI as a system for school improvement and used the term “response to instruction/intervention” instead of “response to intervention” to emphasize that RTI is for all students.

The rationales that state respondents gave for promoting and supporting RTI varied to some extent. The Alaska and Montana respondents emphasized the flexibility of the RTI framework. Because RTI does not require specific materials or programs, it lends itself to local adaptation, a key consideration for those states’ diverse populations.

The Montana, Oregon, and Washington respondents described RTI as a means of promoting collaboration between special education and general education, with the goal of strengthening education programs for all students. The Oregon respondent identified the additional benefit that RTI requires schools to focus on student outcomes. The Idaho respondent described RTI as a strategy for continuous improvement that helps schools and districts to meet a range of needs for all students.

What are the key components of the Northwest Region states’ approaches to response to intervention?

This section describes the states’ approaches to guiding and supporting the key components of RTI. These key components are derived primarily from current practice and expert opinion rather than empirical evidence (Batsche et al. 2005; Johnson et al. 2006; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 2005). The components are not intended to serve as requirements or as

a research-based ideal. Rather, they are used here to organize the discussion of how RTI is typically implemented and to describe state education agency efforts in terms of current practices.

Tiered model. According to state education agency respondents, RTI models in Alaska, Idaho, and Montana had three tiers. The RTI models in Oregon and Washington did not require a specific number of tiers, although the RTI examples in documents reviewed included three. Both state education agency representatives explained that the districts were responsible for identifying and defining the model that works best for their sites.

Although the state education agencies used slightly different names for the tiers, the descriptions of the types of instruction, assessment, and interventions for the tiers were essentially the same. None of the states identified criteria or rules that determine where to place students. The districts and schools were responsible for determining how students move through the tiers.

The literature frequently presents RTI as a three-tier model. However, some organizations have developed models that include additional tiers. There has been some debate on this subject, but there is currently no substantial evidence that one model is preferred over another. As a result, the states looked to other sources to inform their decisions about the number of tiers to recommend in state models. Respondents from two states said that one reason for specifying three tiers was the need to align RTI with the work of other divisions in the agencies that also used tiered models, such as limited English proficiency procedures and Title I programs. One respondent explained that the state based its model on what other states were doing. Another said that the state had rejected the idea of including special education as a fourth tier in the

All five states have promoted RTI as a general education initiative, identifying it as a means of supporting schools in providing evidence based curricula and instruction and in making data based decisions about how best to support student learning

model in order to convey the message that special education is integrated into all three tiers.

In addition to the number of tiers, states must also decide which grade levels and subject areas to include in the RTI model. At the time this report was written, Alaska had not specifically identified grade levels or subject areas but was planning to draw on a school survey and input from the state advisory committee to develop guidance on these issues. The other four states in the region identified similar grade levels and subject areas for RTI (table 3).

Respondents from these four states indicated that RTI was implemented primarily at the elementary school level and in reading. Three respondents reported a recent move to include middle schools and high schools. One respondent speculated that the focus on the elementary school level was a result of structural issues—for example, schedules are more flexible because most teachers work with the same students all day—and the available research on RTI, which has concentrated on students in the early elementary grades (Griffiths et al. 2007).

The literature was also cited by one respondent as a reason why RTI is supported primarily in reading. The respondent explained that the use of a three-tiered model in Reading First—a federal program that focuses on using scientifically based research and proven instructional and assessment tools to support K–3 reading instruction—contributed to this focus. Two respondents indicated that schools in their states that had more

experience with RTI in reading were incorporating it into other subject areas. One respondent said that based on the results of a pilot project, the state education agency encouraged schools to start with reading before applying RTI to other content areas.

Core curriculum and instruction. All five states included core curriculum and instruction as a component of their RTI models (table 4). This is consistent with the literature on RTI, which identifies the need for a common, research-based curriculum that is effective for a majority of students. The state education agencies supported this component by providing information and guidance on curriculum and instruction. There were differences both in the types of guidance provided and in the methods used to provide it.

Montana and Oregon respondents said that the schools participating in the state RTI initiatives were required to have a research-based curriculum in place or a plan for adopting one. Both states monitored this requirement through technical assistance providers who worked directly with the schools. The other three states did not have similar requirements.

In providing guidance on establishing curriculum and instruction for RTI, one role of state education agencies was pointing to outside sources of information to help districts and schools identify curricula. Idaho, Montana, and Oregon used this strategy in state RTI handbooks and on RTI web sites. Some common sources that the states referenced were the Florida Center for Reading

TABLE 3

Features of the response to intervention models in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Number of tiers	Grade level	Subject area
Alaska	Three	None specified	None specified
Idaho	Three	K–12	Reading, writing, math, behavior
Montana	Three	K–12	Reading, math
Oregon	Multiple	PreK–12	Reading, writing, math, behavior
Washington	Multiple	PreK–12	Reading, writing, math, behavior

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

TABLE 4

Guidance for core curriculum and instruction in response to intervention models in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Curriculum	Instruction
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance on curricula to districts/schools 	Technical assistance on instruction to districts/schools
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews of curricula for reading and math • Links to external sources of information 	Links to external sources of information
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to external sources of information • Guidelines for reviewing curricula • Requirement that schools in state initiative have research-based curricula 	Guidelines for establishing evidence-based instruction
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to external sources of information • Guidelines for reviewing curricula • Requirement that districts in state initiative have research-based curricula 	Not addressed
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews of curricula for reading and math 	Not addressed

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

Research, the What Works Clearinghouse, the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading, and the Center on Instruction.

Two states conducted reviews of instructional materials that supported the curriculum component of RTI. Idaho identified scientifically based reading curricula that are aligned with state standards and identified three tiers of approved curricula and intervention programs in a recent mathematics curriculum adoption. Washington identified core curricula and interventions for reading and mathematics. Montana and Oregon have not conducted reviews, but the RTI materials from both states included guidelines and sample questions for reviewing curricula.

Alaska did not have guidelines or requirements for selecting curricula at the time this research was conducted. According to the state education agency respondent, the agency planned to provide technical assistance to help ensure that schools have core curriculum and instruction that are effective for all students.

Most of the state RTI handbooks and web sites provided more information on curricula than on

instruction (see table B2 in appendix B for a list of documents and web sites). Idaho's RTI web site provided some links to resources on research-based instruction from the What Works Clearinghouse and the Center on Instruction. However, these links were not organized into a common section that addressed instruction. Oregon's RTI handbook included only a statement that instruction should be intense, regular, and differentiated. Montana provided the most information on instruction. Its RTI handbook included an overview of a best practice teaching cycle, guidelines for explicit and systematic lessons, and strategies for providing differentiated instruction.

Assessment. The state education agencies played a variety of roles in guiding and supporting the use of assessments for RTI. Some states provided access to tools, while others focused on helping districts select appropriate assessments. All five states had training or information to support data analysis.

Three states—Alaska, Idaho, and Montana—provided assessment tools for districts and schools. Alaska is the only state that has developed its own assessment tools, the Alaska Computerized

Formative Assessments (ACFA), an online assessment tool designed to monitor students' progress against the statewide assessment. The tests are available for math and reading for grades 3–8. Idaho provided access to AIMSweb (Shinn and Garman 2006) to districts throughout the state. Montana provided access to both AIMSweb and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good and Kaminski 2005) for schools that participated in the RTI initiative. Oregon and Washington did not provide assessment tools.

According to respondents, Idaho and Montana were the only states that required schools to use

specific tools for universal screening (table 5). Schools in Idaho were required to use AIMSweb's early childhood measures and Oral Reading Fluency. Montana required the schools implementing RTI to use DIBELS or AIMSweb. Oregon required participating schools to conduct screening and progress monitoring but did not identify specific tools. According to respondents, Alaska and Washington had no assessment requirements. None of the states had requirements on the timing or frequency of assessments in RTI.

The states provided support for assessment in their RTI documents and web sites (table 6).

TABLE 5

Assessment tools provided by the Northwest Region states and their assessment requirements, 2008

State	Tools	Requirements
Alaska	AIMSweb Alaska Computerized Formative Assessments	No requirements
Idaho	AIMSweb	AIMSweb for screening (early childhood measures, Oral Reading Fluency)
Montana	AIMSweb Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills	AIMSweb or Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills for screening
Oregon	None provided	Screening and progress monitoring
Washington	None provided	No requirements

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

TABLE 6

Information and guidance for assessment provided by state education agencies in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Guidance for assessment	Guidance for data analysis
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on use of tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online tools • Trainings
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings • Technical assistance from consultants
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for selecting tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance from consultants
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about tools • Technical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings • Technical assistance from consultants • Guidance in response to intervention handbook
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about tools • Diagnostic assessment review • Recommendations for using assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

All provided information about available tools. Montana offered criteria for selecting assessments. Washington published a review of diagnostic assessment tools that included information on available products, cost of the tools, time required, and sources for more information.

Oregon was the only state that addressed data analysis in the state RTI handbook. The document included detailed descriptions and examples of the types of analyses that districts should be conducting. Districts that participated in the state initiative were required to establish a data management system and to conduct analyses that plotted and reviewed the data against expectations for typically progressing students.

Respondents from Idaho, Montana, and Oregon described opportunities for school personnel to

work directly with consultants on analyzing data. Alaska, Idaho, and Washington described training opportunities on data analysis for school and district teams. The Alaska state education agency developed an online tool that teachers can use to analyze assessment data.

Interventions. None of the states had requirements for specific intervention programs. Support from state education agencies ranged from general guidelines for identifying interventions to information on specific programs or strategies (table 7). The states did not mandate either problem solving or standard protocol approaches, although problem solving was discussed more frequently in the RTI documents.

One state strategy was to provide guidelines and recommendations for identifying or designing

TABLE 7

State education agency guidance for interventions in Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Type of guidance	Problem solving or standard protocol
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on selecting interventions Characteristics of tier two and tier three interventions Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training materials focus on problem solving
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on selecting interventions Reviews of instructional materials Consultations with content-area specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials focus on problem solving Link to resource about differences between problem solving and standard protocol
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on selecting interventions Characteristics of tier two and tier three interventions Information sources for available interventions, with specific examples Training and technical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials focus on problem solving
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on selecting interventions Information sources for available interventions, with specific examples Training and technical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials address both problem solving and standard protocol
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on selecting interventions Information sources for available interventions, with specific examples Reviews of instructional materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials address both problem solving and standard protocol

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

appropriate interventions and monitoring changes in student assessment outcomes. Alaska provided this information in RTI training materials, with descriptions of tier two and tier three interventions. Idaho provided links to resources about interventions on its RTI web site. Montana, Oregon, and Washington provided information and guidelines about interventions in their RTI handbooks. For example, Montana's handbook included descriptions of tier two and tier three interventions, and Washington's handbook provided a model intervention plan. Oregon's handbook offered examples of how interventions are intensified, pointed to examples of curricula that can be used as interventions, and outlined steps for designing an intervention.

Idaho and Washington provided information about specific intervention programs. Washington conducted reviews of supplemental materials and interventions in reading and math. Idaho's curriculum for reading and mathematics also included interventions for all three tiers.

Respondents in four of the five state education agencies described further support for identifying and using interventions, provided through training and technical assistance. Alaska covered interventions in the state's RTI training. Montana and Oregon provided both training and technical assistance to the sites that participate in the state initiatives. In Idaho content-area specialists at the state education agency consulted with districts and schools on interventions, on request. An Oregon respondent explained that an individualized approach such as technical assistance was the

most appropriate way to support identification and selection of interventions because of the importance of matching interventions with the local context. Washington did not have training or technical assistance focused on interventions at the time this report was written.

The states did not have requirements on whether to use a

problem solving model or a standard protocol model for implementing RTI (for descriptions of the two models, see appendix A). Table 7 provides an overview of how the states are addressing the two approaches in their materials. Alaska and Montana provided information about how to use a problem solving process for identifying and implementing interventions. The materials did not include information about a standard protocol approach. The materials from Idaho focused primarily on problem solving, but the RTI web site included a link to a document explaining the differences between the two approaches.

Oregon and Washington included information about both models in their materials. Oregon's handbook explained the use of validated instructional protocols, which require that schools identify sets of instructional interventions of increasing intensity. The document also included information about the problem solving model and the use of more general intervention strategies. The use of standard protocol and problem solving were both included in the handbook as a part of implementing RTI, rather than as two different approaches. The Washington document emphasized that a standard treatment approach can be used in place of or along with a problem solving approach. The handbook included materials for conducting an ICEL-RIOT process, a problem solving process developed by the Heartland Area Education Agency (2007) in Iowa that looks at four domains (instruction, curriculum, environment, and learner) using four procedures (review, interview, observe, and test).

Fidelity measures. All five states included implementation fidelity as a component of the RTI model. While states differed in how they supported fidelity and in how closely they monitored RTI implementation, all focused primarily on helping districts or schools ensure that RTI components are implemented with fidelity.

Four states provided guidance and tools to support schools in establishing and monitoring fidelity; Alaska was the exception (table 8). According to the Idaho respondent, the state was developing a

While states differed in how they supported fidelity and in how closely they monitored RTI implementation, all focused primarily on helping districts or schools ensure that RTI components are implemented with fidelity

TABLE 8

Support for response to intervention implementation fidelity in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Type of guidance and support	What is monitored
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants for monitoring fidelity • Training materials did not address fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to intervention (RTI) process
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment tool for districts and schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTI process
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools for districts and schools • Strategies for promoting and measuring fidelity • Consultants for helping schools establish fidelity measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTI process • Core instruction • Interventions • Assessment
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to outside sources of information • Sample fidelity checklist for instruction • Consultants for helping establish measures and collect data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTI process • Curriculum • Interventions
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for establishing, maintaining, and measuring fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions • Assessments

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

self-assessment tool that focused on implementation of RTI processes. Montana's RTI handbook included strategies for promoting fidelity, such as providing training, using coaches, and clarifying decisionmaking points. It also included brief descriptions of strategies for measuring fidelity. Washington's handbook addressed considerations for establishing implementation fidelity, including sufficient time allocation, adequate intervention intensity, qualified and trained staff, and sufficient materials and resources.

According to respondents in three states, consultants who worked with the districts and schools played a role in establishing fidelity measures and in monitoring implementation fidelity. In Alaska fidelity was monitored by district improvement coaches in the districts that the state education agency serves through its statewide system of support. In Montana and Oregon consultants were responsible for helping schools establish fidelity measures and for conducting fidelity checks.

Teaming. Interdisciplinary teams were included in the RTI models established by all five states. However, the prescriptiveness of the states' guidance on the teams' structure and roles varied. In Alaska

and Idaho the emphasis was primarily on promoting collaboration and effective team processes. Montana, Oregon, and Washington provided more guidance about types of teams, who should be included, and the responsibilities of team members.

Two common purposes of district and school teams were analyzing data and engaging in problem solving or standard protocol processes (table 9). The teams analyzed and interpreted student data, developed and identified interventions, and monitored implementation and student progress. An additional purpose in some states was supporting collaboration among teachers and specialists from general education, remedial or compensatory education, and special education.

Montana and Oregon established more explicit guidance about the school teams than did the other states. One respondent noted a concern that any guidelines related to teaming be flexible enough to work in small districts and schools that might have limited numbers of teachers and other staff members who play multiple roles.

In addition to providing recommendations, some states provided training or technical assistance to

TABLE 9

State support for district and school teams in Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Type of teams	Members	Purpose and suggested responsibilities
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing individual student data • Discussing interventions • Providing instructional plans • Monitoring outcomes
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specified
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-level team • Subject area team • Data team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grade-level teachers • Instructional coaches • Specialists • Administrator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring consistency in instruction • Analyzing student data • Identifying interventions • Monitoring outcomes • Identifying patterns in student data
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-level team • Group and individual team • Evaluation teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating core program • Planning initial group interventions • Planning targeted and individual interventions • Planning and conducting RTI-related assessments
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisionmaking teams (configurations change based on needs of students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Academic specialists • Special education teachers • School psychologists • Other specialists • General education staff • Paraeducators • Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing data and identifying problems • Identifying or developing interventions • Implementing plans and monitoring fidelity • Monitoring outcomes

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

support RTI teams. For example, the Washington respondent reported that the state provided training to teams in establishing processes and protocols to guide their work.

Parent involvement. Federal regulations require schools to involve parents when any process, including RTI, is used to decide on students' eligibility for special education. Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington provided support to help districts and schools establish procedures for involving parents. Idaho's RTI web site included links to information about promoting parent involvement, and the state also had a parent involvement coordinator who worked with district and school RTI and other programs. Montana's handbook included strategies

for promoting meaningful parent involvement and for communicating with parents about RTI. Alaska is the only state that did not address parent involvement in its RTI materials.

The Washington respondent noted that the state had developed materials on parent involvement in the RTI process through a partnership with the state's Parent Training Institute. There were materials specifically designed for parents, as well as materials describing how schools and districts can engage parents in the RTI process.

Additional components of RTI. Three states identified additional components that were not included in the initial version of the analysis framework. Montana,

Oregon, and Washington identified the need for schools and districts to establish both “leadership” and “professional development” for RTI.

Leadership. The leadership component conveys the need for district and school administrators to be directly involved in RTI and to build local capacity to support RTI implementation. Oregon and Washington addressed this component in materials and training provided by the state education agencies. According to the Montana respondent, leadership was also included in Montana’s RTI model, but it was not addressed in the draft RTI handbook. The RTI handbooks for Oregon and Washington described the responsibilities of the district or school leadership teams. The states distinguished between the responsibilities of a leadership team and those of the interdisciplinary teams described above. For example, Oregon’s materials defined the duties of the leadership team as providing expertise and training, obtaining and committing resources, judging the fidelity of RTI implementation, and looking toward sustainability.

The respondents in these three states (Montana, Oregon, and Washington) identified two reasons for including leadership as a component of RTI: the systemic nature of RTI and the need to use resources efficiently. According to these respondents, school administrators must be directly involved in RTI because they are responsible for generating support for RTI among parents and community members and because they have the authority to make decisions about issues such as funding and school schedules.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of leadership in RTI, the focus on district or school leadership teams also supported using resources more efficiently. Rather than provide training to all teachers, the states focused on building the capacity of leadership teams, which were expected to provide professional development at the district or school level.

Professional development. Another component that Montana, Oregon, and Washington included in their RTI models was ongoing professional development. State RTI documents call on districts

to commit time and resources for training at the local level for teachers, specialists, and other school personnel to support their implementation of RTI components.

Oregon’s handbook listed the typical professional development needs related to implementing RTI. These included topics related to instruction, such as implementation of specific intervention programs, and topics related to teaming, including conflict resolution.

Washington’s RTI manual also emphasized the need for ongoing training for teachers and administrators. It encouraged schools and districts to conduct readiness assessments to identify professional development needs in leadership, teaming, curriculum, and assessments. These readiness assessments were intended to be used by districts to gauge the overall effectiveness of the professional development provided.

All five states had a similar structure for providing personnel to support RTI. The staff member in each state who was responsible for coordinating state level RTI activities worked with schools and districts, with support from other state education agency staff members

What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts’ implementation of response to intervention?

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education report describes several potential areas of support for RTI that states may provide (Batsche et al. 2005; see box 1). The report’s recommendations are based on current practice and expert opinion. The resources, policies, and activities identified in the report are used to characterize current thinking and practices for supporting RTI at the state level.

Staff and financial resources. The resources that the state education agencies provided to support RTI included funding, personnel, and direct support for districts and schools (table 10). Direct support included consultations, technical assistance, and training. These services are provided on an ongoing basis

TABLE 10

State staff and financial resources to support implementation of response to intervention in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Types of resources
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State education agency staff member • Ongoing training and technical assistance through statewide system of support
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State education agency staff member • Direct support provided on request
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State education agency staff member • Ongoing training and technical assistance provided through state RTI project
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State education agency staff member • Ongoing training and technical assistance provided through state RTI initiatives • Direct funding provided to districts
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State education agency staff member • Ongoing training and technical assistance provided through state RTI initiatives

Source: Authors' analysis based on interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

and are frequently individualized to meet a specific school's needs. These characteristics distinguish targeted support from one-time awareness trainings.

All five states had a similar structure for providing personnel to support RTI. The staff member in each state who was responsible for coordinating state-level RTI activities worked with schools and districts, with support from other state education agency staff members. For example, in Idaho the agency's content specialists were available to consult with districts and schools on selecting curricula and interventions. In Oregon, Montana, and Washington the RTI staff members also worked with consultants who provided training and technical assistance.

There was more variation in how the states provided direct RTI support to schools and districts. Alaska provided support through the statewide system of support, with school improvement facilitators who worked with districts and schools in need of improvement. According to the Idaho respondent, at the time of the interview the state was not providing as much direct support to schools as it had in the past. The agency determined that there was not as much need for direct support because schools had already incorporated RTI into their practices and budgets.

Montana conducted an RTI project that included 44 elementary schools and 11 middle and high schools. The state education agency provided training for school and district leadership teams and supported consultants who provided monthly onsite technical assistance to schools.

The Oregon RTI initiative included 29 districts. The state contracted with two school districts to provide training and technical assistance to the districts in the group. The state also conducted a related project that blended RTI with positive behavior support, a framework that is similar to RTI but focused on behavior.

The Washington state education agency worked with seven pilot districts to implement RTI models in a program funded by the state legislature. The agency also provided professional development on RTI for 55 schools in 23 districts throughout the state in partnership with regional service providers.

Oregon was the only state that reported providing funds directly to districts, through small grants supporting RTI-related professional development. The state respondent reported that participating districts were also required to invest in RTI. According to the respondent, this strategy was

intended to help districts build sustainability for their RTI efforts.

Policies. According to state education agency documents, four of the five states in the Northwest Region had policies for determining students' eligibility for special education that reflect federal regulations under the IDEA 2004. In addition, four states provided guidance on the use of federal funds to support RTI. However, only one state respondent reported that the state had developed other types of policies related to RTI (table 11).

In all five states RTI was one option for identifying students with specific learning disabilities, but the states did not require that districts adopt RTI for this purpose. For example, Alaska respondents explained that the state had made no effort to encourage districts to change the procedures they were using. Alaska and Washington respondents reported that districts and schools were encouraged to use RTI as a means of establishing effective core curriculum and instruction before they began using RTI for decisionmaking about students' eligibility for special education.

Four states—Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington—established policies related to the use of RTI to identify students with specific learning disabilities based on the regulations under IDEA. Alaska was the only state that did not have

specific guidance on identifying students with specific learning disabilities beyond requiring districts to comply with the federal law.

Respondents in four of the five states described the state's role in monitoring the use of RTI for making decisions about students' eligibility for special education. Idaho was working to more clearly define its requirements for specific forms of documentation of RTI decisionmaking. Montana had recently developed a checklist of expectations and planned to disseminate requirements for documentation.

Oregon and Washington provided detailed information about the requirements in their RTI guidance documents. For example, Oregon's RTI handbook provided the state regulations, the links to IDEA, and additional explanatory notes. The notes outlined the need for multiple data sources when making decisions, defined the members of the decisionmaking team, and identified the types of assessments that can be used.

With the exception of Idaho, all the states provided information about the federal guidelines for using IDEA funds to support early intervention services, including RTI. Two respondents reported on this issue as a challenge for the state education agency, citing a need for clarification about how federal funds targeting different programs can be combined.

TABLE 11

State-level policies related to response to intervention in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Eligibility for special education	Other policies
Alaska	Federal regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) funds to support response to intervention (RTI)
Idaho	State policies based on federal regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Montana	State policies based on federal regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of IDEA funds to support RTI
Oregon	State policies based on federal regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of IDEA funds to support RTI
Washington	State policies based on federal regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of IDEA funds to support RTI • Funding needed to support tiered model • Sample policies for districts

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

Beyond policies based on federal regulations, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon did not have state-level policies specific to RTI. However, one respondent reported that there were many policies that indirectly supported RTI, such as Title I and content area policies.

Washington was the only state that reported the development of general education policies and procedures specific to RTI. For example, a state education agency staff member worked with the Washington State School Directors' Association to write model policies and procedures that local school boards could adapt to support RTI as a general education model. The state also convened a task force to develop recommendations for different levels of funding to match a tiered approach. These recommendations will go forward to the state legislature.

Activities. In addition to the direct support for schools and districts described in the “Staff and financial resources” section, the states had a variety of strategies for supporting RTI (table 12). These included providing materials, information, and training and supporting collaboration among

schools and districts. State activities focused primarily on using RTI as a framework for improving general education rather than as a means for making decisions about students' eligibility for special education.

All of the states disseminated information about RTI, including training materials, conference presentations, and links to external information resources. Montana, Oregon, and Washington developed handbooks that defined the states' RTI models and provided information to support implementation. Alaska developed a guidance document for RTI that was made available in January 2009, and Idaho was revising its state handbook at the time of this study. Idaho also maintained an RTI section on the Idaho Training Clearinghouse web site that provided materials on several special education topics, as well as information about upcoming training opportunities.

States also provided tools, including assessments and other tools, to support implementation. The assessment tools were described above in the section on the states' RTI models. Idaho, Montana,

TABLE 12

Types of state activities conducted to support response to intervention in the Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Materials	Trainings	Collaboration
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information:</i> training materials, conference presentations, external links • <i>Tools:</i> assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual event • State meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference presentations • District contact information
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information:</i> training materials, external links • <i>Tools:</i> assessment, implementation fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference presentations • Online forum on implementation fidelity
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information:</i> handbook, training materials, external links • <i>Tools:</i> implementation fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information:</i> handbook, training materials, external links, sample tools developed by districts • <i>Tools:</i> readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State training • Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not identified
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information:</i> handbook, training materials, external links • <i>Tools:</i> readiness, implementation fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online forum

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

and Washington provided tools to help districts and schools monitor RTI implementation. Oregon and Washington developed instruments that districts and schools could use to assess their readiness for RTI implementation.

All five state education agencies also conducted RTI training and presentations at conferences and other events. Alaska and Idaho conducted needs assessment surveys in the fall of 2008 to identify topics for state-sponsored professional development. In Montana, Oregon, and Washington these activities were provided in addition to the direct support for schools and districts in the RTI initiatives. One state respondent said that the state was striving to make RTI training more accessible to remote schools.

Alaska and Idaho supported collaboration by inviting districts to present at conferences. Alaska also identified districts that have been implementing RTI and provided information on the state web site so that other schools could contact them. Idaho and Washington provided online forums to facilitate collaboration and information sharing among schools and districts. Montana's RTI initiative included efforts to promote collaboration among schools and districts. The state's strategies were to group schools with similar needs for targeted trainings and to use regionally based consultants to identify opportunities for schools to work together.

Partnerships. Partnerships served a variety of purposes in the states' RTI efforts. Working with a range of organizations helped the states build awareness and support for RTI. Partnerships also helped ensure that stakeholders were involved in guiding the activities and decisionmaking for the states' RTI efforts.

All five states had statewide leadership or advisory groups that met regularly. The groups included representatives from a variety of groups and organization types, including institutions of higher education, parent advocates, school and district administrators, and teachers. The groups' primary responsibility was advising the state education agencies and participating in decisionmaking on state RTI efforts (table 13).

In Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Washington the advisory groups were directly involved in determining the guidance or developing materials and tools for RTI. The advisory groups in Montana and Oregon were also responsible for monitoring state RTI initiatives.

Three of the states established additional types of partnerships for RTI (table 14). Montana, Oregon, and Washington worked with regional professional development providers to offer RTI training. In Montana the state education agency collaborated with the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development to train additional schools and districts in RTI, focusing on introducing RTI and providing ongoing training to school teams. Oregon and Washington worked with the educational service districts (the states' regional service providers) to offer professional development on RTI.

Oregon was the only state that partnered with school districts to serve as models and technical assistance providers. From the beginning of the state RTI initiative, the state education agency contracted with a school district that had been using RTI for more than eight years and had a well developed system, with tools and procedures for implementing RTI. The Tigard-Tualatin School District provided training and technical assistance to the districts in the state's initiative. In 2008 the Roseburg School District was identified as an additional technical assistance provider and will serve as the Southern Oregon Regional RTI Center.

The Oregon and Washington respondents identified a need for more extensive partnerships with institutions of higher education to ensure that education professionals are entering schools with the skills they need to support or implement an RTI framework.

Working with a range of organizations helped the states build awareness and support for RTI. Partnerships also helped ensure that stateholders were involved in guiding the activities and decisionmaking for the states' RTI efforts

TABLE 13

State-level advisory groups for response to intervention in Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Name	Members	Responsibilities
Alaska	Statewide RTI Leadership Team	State education agency staff, principals, parents, Alaska Comprehensive Center, professional associations (principals, district administrators), school psychologists, special education advocates, higher education faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the state education agency • Participate in decisionmaking • Formulate response to intervention (RTI) guidance
Idaho	RTI State Leadership Group	State education agency staff, school board, parents, teachers, principals, higher education faculty, district administrators, Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the state education agency • Participate in decisionmaking • Formulate RTI guidance • Develop tools, plan events
Montana	RTI Steering Team	State education agency staff, teachers union, school administrators, teachers, higher education faculty, parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the state education agency • Participate in decisionmaking • Formulate RTI guidance • Monitor state initiative
Oregon	EBISS Steering Committee	Higher education faculty, district administrators, parents, teachers, state education agency staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the state education agency • Participate in decisionmaking • Monitor state initiative
Washington	RTI Leadership Team	Parents, higher education faculty, district representatives, educational service districts, state education agency staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the state education agency • Participate in decisionmaking • Formulate RTI guidance

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

TABLE 14

Additional state-level partnerships that support response to intervention in Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Partner	Purpose of partnership
Alaska	• None identified	• Not applicable
Idaho	• None identified	• Not applicable
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional service providers • Higher education faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training • Conduct evaluation
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional service providers • School districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training • Provide training and technical assistance
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional service providers • Institution of higher education faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training • Conduct evaluation

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

Internal collaboration and coordination. Consistent implementation of RTI requires collaboration across general, remedial, and special education programs (Batsche et al. 2005). RTI placement in the organizational structure of the state education

agency influences this type of collaboration. In three states RTI was closely connected with special education (table 15). In Montana and Washington RTI was housed in the special education program. In Oregon the RTI initiatives were located in an

TABLE 15

Organizational structure and internal collaboration of state response to intervention programs in Northwest Region states, 2008

State	Lead division or program	Collaborators
Alaska	No Child Left Behind	Special education, federal programs, statewide system of support
Idaho	School Accountability	English language learner students, gifted students, reading, math, early childhood, special education, Title I, positive behavior support
Montana	Special Education	Indian education, migrant education, Title I
Oregon	Special Education	Specific programs not named
Washington	Special Education	Reading, assessment, English language learner students, Title I, district/school improvement

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

office that included special education and other programs. In Alaska and Idaho RTI was separate from special education. In Alaska RTI was supported in the program dedicated to implementing the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. In Idaho it was included in the student achievement/school accountability program.

According to the Idaho and Washington respondents, aspects of the RTI framework were integrated into other state education agency programs. For example, a tiered model was included in Washington's Reading First program, the K–12 reading model, a dyslexia pilot project, and a high school assessment systems project.

No matter how RTI was organized within the state education agency, respondents for all five states emphasized the need for collaboration with other programs and divisions within the agency. One respondent emphasized that internal collaboration at the state level helped to convey the message that RTI involves all aspects of education. Another emphasized that collaboration was important for meeting the demands for information and training on RTI.

Some states indicated that they had successfully promoted collaboration between state education agency programs. For example, the Idaho and Washington respondents described cross-program collaboration in both directions—the RTI program included representatives from other

programs, and RTI representatives were included in the efforts of other programs.

Evaluation. According to respondents, the five Northwest Region states were at different stages in conducting RTI evaluations (table 16). Alaska and Idaho did not have a state-level evaluation of RTI at the time the report was written. Montana, Oregon, and Washington were conducting evaluations that addressed similar outcomes.

The common purpose of the state-level evaluations was to monitor RTI implementation and to measure the outcomes, specifically student achievement. The Washington respondent was the only one to indicate that the evaluation was intended to inform the agency's efforts to scale up RTI. The state education agency used evaluation data to identify key elements that support RTI implementation and then shared that information with districts and schools.

Montana was conducting an internal evaluation; Oregon and Washington were working with external evaluators. Few details were available about the evaluations, and the information that was provided came from the state education agency respondents. The evaluation plans and designs were not included in the review of RTI-related documents.

To measure districts' and schools' implementation of RTI in Montana and Oregon, respondents indicated that they were using data collection tools adapted from external sources, including fidelity

TABLE 16

State-level evaluation of response to intervention

State	Purpose	Types of data/instruments
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No state-level evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No state-level evaluation Developed tools that are available for districts and schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of response to intervention (RTI) Outcomes of state program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fidelity checklists, school staff surveys Student achievement (DIBELS, AIMSweb)
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of RTI Outcomes of state program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readiness checklists, fidelity checklists Student achievement
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of RTI Outcomes of state program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplans, readiness checklists, surveys Student achievement (universal screening tools)

Source: Authors' analysis based on state documents and interviews with state education agency respondents; see text for details.

checklists. Montana and Washington were also using instruments developed internally. For example, Montana developed an acceptability survey for teachers. Washington developed several data collection tools for implementation, including district or school workplans and surveys on the use of assessments, curricula, and teaming procedures.

The respondents from the three states that conducted evaluations reported that the state education agency collected student achievement data to measure the outcomes of the RTI programs. Montana intended to use data from DIBELS and AIMSweb. Washington collected student data from universal screening assessments. Oregon did not identify a specific assessment tool.

Although Idaho was not conducting a state-level evaluation of RTI, the respondent indicated that the state education agency was initiating efforts to build evaluation capacity at the district and school levels. An Oregon respondent also reported that building local capacity for evaluation was a concern.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had several limitations. Because contacts were limited to one or two people per state,

the study was not able to provide a comprehensive profile of RTI from multiple perspectives or to include the perspectives of individuals outside of the state education agencies. To mitigate the effects of these limitations, the study tried to identify people in each state education agency with the most extensive knowledge of the key areas of interest. But this also means that the study findings do not represent the possible range of knowledge and experience at the state level. To address this limitation, the data presented focus on facts about the policies and activities of the states rather than the opinions of the state education agency representatives.

Another limitation of the study is the potential for bias introduced by the reliance on self-reported data from the interview respondents. The state education agency representatives might have wanted to emphasize the positive aspects of their RTI efforts and to give less attention to the challenges they faced. They might also have failed to recall relevant information during the interviews. Nevertheless, the participation of the state education agency staff members was also an important strength of the study. In addition to contributing interview data, the respondents also helped to verify the data obtained from the document analysis.

The study relied heavily on publicly documented policies, procedures, and activities in each state. While the use of these documents mitigated the risk that subjective factors in the interviews might have biased the findings, the use of these documents and web sites was also a limitation of the study. These data sources might not reflect the most recent information about the states' efforts to support RTI. In addition, it was not possible to investigate how the information, guidelines, and policies described in the report are actually implemented in districts and schools.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The descriptive profiles developed for this report provide further evidence that RTI is an area of focus for all five states in the Northwest Region. The report contributes information about how RTI is being supported at the state education agency level. Several areas requiring further research emerge from this study and could inform the work of agencies like the NWRCC that are responsible for providing technical assistance to state-level practitioners.

Guidance focused on instruction

The information gathered from the state documents indicates that the states have devoted more attention to identifying and selecting evidence-based curricula than they have to instruction. State education agency respondents also identified the challenge of supporting district and school efforts to provide a core program that is effective for most students. More information is needed about how states can use research on effective instruction without prescribing specific strategies. In addition, technical assistance providers could collaborate with the states on developing information, tools, and training to help schools define, establish, and monitor effective core instruction. This work could build on resources such as the Practice Guides from the What Works Clearinghouse and the Center on Instruction.

Examples of policies needed to support response to intervention

According to respondents in all five states, state education agencies are promoting RTI as a general education initiative. Yet Washington is the only state that has explored and developed RTI policies outside of the special education regulations. In *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation*, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education recommends that states examine existing and needed policies that (Batsche et al. 2005):

- Embrace the components of RTI and their alignment with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
- Support and evaluate high-quality instruction.
- Support expansion of general education interventions for diverse learners.
- Guide the use of assessments to evaluate instruction and student progress.

More research and information are needed about policies that support large-scale implementation of RTI. In particular, studies that gather data on and analyze existing policies would help the states address this challenge.

Defining roles for higher education

Two respondents identified a desire to establish wider support and involvement from institutions of higher education to produce teachers, administrators, and specialists who are knowledgeable about the RTI framework, understand how it works, and have the skills and outlook necessary for implementation. All the states were working

Several areas requiring further research emerge from this study: guidance focused on instruction, examples of policies needed to support response to intervention, defining roles for higher education, and research on specific components and activities

Additional research on individual components of RTI would be useful in establishing a more in depth analysis of RTI at the state level

with representatives from universities, but two indicated that they had not yet established systemic involvement. Currently, there is little information about the role of institutions of higher education in supporting RTI through teacher preparation and profes-

sional development.

Research on specific components and activities

The purpose of this study was to describe state-level RTI models and activities in the Northwest Region, not to investigate how the states are conducting particular activities. Additional research on individual components of RTI would thus be useful in establishing a more in-depth analysis of RTI at the state level. For example, a depiction of

the professional development opportunities offered in the states would be useful in understanding how state education agencies are supporting RTI implementation. A detailed description of the procedures states are using to monitor implementation fidelity and to conduct evaluations of RTI projects would also contribute to the field.

The study findings also suggest other potential areas for future research. Investigations of how state guidelines and policies are implemented in schools and districts would help delineate necessary elements of state-level RTI projects. Also needed are independent studies of the impact of state efforts. There is a great deal of information about the potential benefits of RTI. More research is needed to determine whether that potential will result in positive outcomes for students and schools.

APPENDIX A

THE LITERATURE ON RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Although there are precedents for response to intervention (RTI) that go back several decades, and despite its links to federal legislation and policy, the practice of RTI is a fairly new development (Burns and Ysseldyke 2005; Christ, Burns, and Ysseldyke 2005; Gresham 2002). That means that there are limitations in the research base for RTI. The following section is an overview of information about RTI, but it is not an exhaustive review of the literature.

Rationale for response to intervention

Traditional identification and evaluation procedures for determining eligibility for special education require students to show a deficit before they are eligible to receive specialized services. The model that has been most widely used is called IQ-achievement discrepancy, which compares students' results on a norm-referenced intelligence test with their academic performance. If students are performing below the level that their IQ predicts, as assessed by the discrepancy between a norm-referenced intelligence test and a norm-referenced achievement test, they are identified as having a learning disability (Gresham 2002). In this system, many children are not tested until grade 3 and therefore are not found to be eligible to receive specialized services until they have fallen substantially behind their peers (U.S. Department of Education 2002).

In addition to delaying intensive services, there is evidence that relying on IQ-achievement discrepancy has been inadequate. For example, the tests used have been shown to be unreliable because they fail to distinguish between students with learning disabilities and low-achieving students (Gresham and Witt 1997). The IQ discrepancy method also fails to determine whether a student has access to appropriate learning experiences before attempting to identify a specific learning disability—that is, when a student does not demonstrate adequate achievement when provided

with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or state-approved grade-level standards (Johnson et al. 2006).

RTI has been identified as a promising method for addressing the problems associated with the IQ-achievement discrepancy method (Bradley, Danielson, and Hallahan 2002; U.S. Department of Education 2002). Decisions on students' eligibility for special education are based on their lack of response to research-validated instruction and interventions (Case, Speece, and Molloy 2003; VanDerHeyden, Witt, and Naquin 2003). RTI is intended to provide a systematic process for determining that students have received appropriate learning experiences (Fuchs and Fuchs 2007).

Perhaps more important, using an RTI framework establishes systematic policies and procedures for identifying and addressing students' learning difficulties with early intervention strategies. Rather than looking for deficiencies within the students, teachers and administrators focus their efforts on making changes in curriculum and instruction and on implementing practices that will accelerate learning (Johnson et al. 2006).

How response to intervention works

Because of the attention generated by the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) in 2004, RTI is often associated with special education. However, it is more accurately characterized as a system that integrates general, remedial, and special education (Griffiths et al. 2007).

RTI is typically implemented as a three-tiered system (Fuchs et al. 2003). Tier one includes the core curriculum and general classroom instruction. Universal screening assessments are used to identify students who are not learning at the expected rate for their grade level. These students receive instructional interventions in tier two. Progress monitoring assessments are used to track the results of these interventions. Students who demonstrate an accelerated rate of learning in tier two

may be moved back to tier one or may continue to receive tier two interventions. Students who do not make the expected progress receive more intensive individualized interventions in tier three. While a three-tiered model is the most common, some models have additional tiers. An additional variation is how special education fits into the tiers. In some models students may receive special education services in any tier, while in other models special education is considered to be the next step after tier three. Still other models characterize tier three as special education or as the point at which an evaluation is initiated to determine eligibility for special education.

Many schools are using RTI to address behavioral issues in addition to academic ones, based on the possibility that poor academic performance is the result of behavioral problems rather than of learning disabilities or ineffective instruction. The focus is on using proactive strategies to prevent behavior problems throughout the school and then applying strategic interventions to address issues in the classroom and with individual students (Griffiths et al. 2007).

The literature on RTI includes a common set of key components. There is consensus among professional organizations—including the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education—and expert opinion that these practices support RTI. However, they are based on current practice and the limited research available. There is not yet a body of established evidence that these components are necessary for RTI implementation or that they have an impact on student achievement. The following are the key components identified in the literature (Batsche et al. 2005; Johnson et al. 2006; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 2005):

- A tiered model.
- High-quality, scientifically based core curriculum and instruction.

- Schoolwide screening of academics and behavior and continuous progress monitoring of students.
- Implementation of appropriate research-based interventions.
- Fidelity measures of instruction and implementation.
- A collaborative approach to the development, implementation, and monitoring of interventions.
- Parent involvement in decisionmaking.

Experts have identified two common approaches to conducting RTI: the problem solving model and the standard protocol model. Both use a tiered model and rely on data from screening and progress monitoring assessments. The primary difference between the approaches is the process for identifying interventions at tier two.

The problem solving approach generally uses a four-step process to address the learning or behavior problems of individual students: problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation, and problem evaluation (Fuchs et al. 2003). A team of teachers and specialists uses these steps to develop a hypothesis about the cause of the problems and to identify evidence-based strategies or interventions to address them (Mellard and Johnson 2008). Students may receive multiple interventions, and the interventions may be adapted to an individual student's needs.

In the standard protocol approach teachers or specialists use a protocol to identify a single intervention. Interventions are standardized and have been validated by research to prevent or remediate specific skill deficits (Christ, Burns, and Ysseldyke 2005; Mellard and Johnson 2008). This model generally attempts to serve groups of students with similar problems rather than individual students (Fuchs et al. 2003).

Fuchs et al. (2003) identify the advantages and disadvantages of each. The problem solving approach requires extensive training and is vulnerable to inconsistent implementation. However, it offers more flexibility and addresses the individual needs of students. The standard protocol approach relies on the availability of validated interventions. These interventions have often been implemented by researchers rather than teachers and may not produce the same results in the classroom. The advantages of this model are that larger groups of students can be served and that implementation is potentially more consistent.

In current practice the problem solving and standard protocol models are frequently combined. For example, standard protocols are used to address common learning difficulties, while the problem solving model is used to address learning problems for which standardized interventions validated by research are not yet available. A problem solving approach may also be used to identify additional strategies or services for students who do not respond to validated interventions (Fuchs and Fuchs 2007). Another possible combined approach is to use standard protocols within the problem solving model (VanDerHeyden and Jimerson 2005).

APPENDIX B

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive design to characterize the response to intervention (RTI) approaches and initiatives of the state education agencies and to address the research questions. The report is not intended as a comparison of the states' efforts or an evaluation of the effectiveness of their activities. Nor does the report address the overall effectiveness of state-level implementation of RTI.

The study was guided by a project advisory team. The team included staff members from the Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center (NWRCC) who are knowledgeable about RTI and who work with the states in the region. Dr. Leanne Robinson, a member of the Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest Technical Working Group, also served on the team. An assistant professor at Western Washington University on a joint appointment between the Program in Instructional Technology and the Department of Special Education, she is a former elementary and special education teacher. Dr. Joe Kovalski joined the team as a consultant. He is professor of educational and school psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and was director of the state's Instructional Support Team Project. The involvement of the team members is described in more detail in the following sections.

Data sources

Documents. State documents and web sites related to RTI were used as a data source for the project. The initial list of possible document types included publicly available handbooks or manuals, project descriptions, policy guidance, conference materials and presentations, and resources for districts and schools (for example, templates, readiness checklists, data collection forms). The documents were intended primarily to identify the key components of the states' approaches to RTI, including definitions of the tiers, grade levels, subject areas, interventions, assessment tools, core curriculum and instruction, and implementation fidelity.

Interviews. The second data source was interviews with key state education agency personnel responsible for managing and supporting RTI initiatives and projects and with long-term knowledge of RTI. The respondents were identified with the help of the project advisory team.

Five potential interviewees were contacted by email to explain the purpose and scope of the study and to invite their participation. All but one agreed to be interviewed. That individual referred the researchers to another person with more direct responsibility for RTI.

For three states (Alaska, Idaho, and Montana) one person from the state education agency was interviewed. For the other two states (Oregon and Washington) two representatives from the agency were interviewed because the person with primary responsibility for RTI was new to the role, so someone with long-term experience of the state's efforts was also included. Thus, seven respondents, representing all five states in the Northwest Region, participated in the interviews. The limited number of respondents precluded the need for Office of Management and Budget clearance.

Table B1 provides an overview of how the data sources are connected to the research questions and variables of interest.

Data collection

Documents. A three-step approach was used to collect the RTI-related documents. The first step was identifying the RTI sections of the state education agency web sites and obtaining available documents. The second step was conducting a Google search with the following terms: [state education agency name] + Response to Intervention; [state education agency name] + Response to Instruction; and [state education agency name] + RTI. Finally, staff members from the Alaska Comprehensive Center and NWRCC provided assistance in identifying and obtaining documents.

TABLE B1

Research questions, data sources, and variables of interest

Research question	Data source	Sample variables of interest
Context: What do the Northwest Region states view as the purpose of response to intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with state education agency staff responsible for response to intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose
What are the key components of the Northwest Region states' approaches to response to intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-level documents state education agency interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions Descriptions Purpose
What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-level documents State education agency interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies, regulations, and guidance Resources (funding, personnel) Types of professional development Use of model or pilot sites Coordination among state education agency departments and staff Evaluation efforts Other types of support

Source: Project study plan.

Documents were selected for analysis based on their relevance to the research questions and on their reflection of current policy and practice, as established during the interviews. There was some variation in the documentation available from the states. The RTI-related sections of the state education agency web sites were included as data sources in order to describe the states' efforts to disseminate information about RTI. The web sites were reviewed regularly, to identify new sources of information.

Table B2 summarizes the documents and web sites included in the analysis. For three states the primary source of information was an RTI handbook or manual. For the two states that did not have this type of document, alternative sources of information were included, such as presentation slides and training materials. Special education policies and regulations were also reviewed to identify any state guidance about using RTI in determining students' eligibility for special education.

Document summary forms were used to keep track of the documents. The forms noted details

about the context of the document, its significance, and a summary of its contents.

Interviews. The interviews were conducted using a standardized interview protocol with open-ended questions (see appendix C). The research questions were used to develop the initial draft of the questions. The project advisory team reviewed the draft protocol and suggested modifications, which were incorporated into a final version.

The interviews were conducted over the phone and lasted approximately one hour. At the beginning of the interview respondents were reminded of the purpose of the study and of how the information from the interview was to be used. The confidentiality measures were also reviewed—respondents would not be named in the report and their identities would not be revealed to anyone outside of the project team.

With permission from the respondents all of the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed for analysis. The transcripts were sent to the respondents to ensure that the transcripts were accurate and complete.

TABLE B2

Documents and web sites included in the analysis

State	Documents	Web site
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Alaska RTI Triangle and Definitions</i> • <i>Response to Instruction/Intervention (RTI): Where is Alaska?</i> • <i>RTI District Training Handouts</i> 	www.eed.state.ak.us/nclb/RTI.html
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Idaho Special Education Manual 2007</i> 	www.sde.idaho.gov/site/rti/itcnew.idahotc.com/dnn/rTI/RTIHome/tabid/368/Default.aspx
Montana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Montana Response to Intervention: RTI Framework</i> 	www.opi.state.mt.us/RTI/Index.html
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identification of students with learning disabilities under IDEA 2004: Oregon response to intervention (December 2007)</i> • <i>Handbook: Tigard Tualatin School District EBIS / RTI Project</i> 	www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=315 www.ttsd.k12.or.us/district/student-services/orrti
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Using Response to Intervention (RTI) for Washington's Students</i> 	www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/RTI.aspx

Source: As listed in table.

Data analysis

The documents and interviews were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis process (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Mayring 2000; Tesch 1990). First, categories relevant to the research questions were identified. Then, segments of text were sorted into these categories to identify patterns in the data.

Analysis framework. The analysis was organized around a framework based on *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation* (Batsche et al. 2005), a report from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (table B3). Brief definitions of the categories for the research questions are included in box 1 of the main report.

The project advisory team reviewed an initial draft of the framework and provided feedback about the categories and variables of interest. Their suggestions were used to identify additional variables, to refine the language of the framework, and to develop a common understanding of the definitions of the categories. The advisory team also helped to ensure that the framework was relevant to RTI as it was being implemented in the five states.

Coding procedures. To streamline the process of applying the framework to the data during analysis, codes were developed for the categories and variables of interest from the analysis framework. The codes were used to identify segments of text that contained information relevant to the variables of interest, based on a line-by-line analysis of the state documents and interview transcripts. The segments were tagged to identify the variables to which they belonged. The variables were not exclusive—text segments could belong to more than one category. All documents and transcripts were reviewed multiple times.

In addition to the codes, marginal notes were used to capture reactions to the data, such as potential themes and patterns, and to record possible revisions to the coding scheme. During this process categories were added to the framework for the second research question because some of the state RTI models included additional components. Use of a different framework and instrument might result in the identification of additional categories.

The coded segments of text from the documents and interviews were entered into a data matrix,

TABLE B3
Analysis framework

Research question	Category	Subcategory
Context: What do the Northwest Region states view as the purpose of response to intervention?	Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching system/school improvement • Special education eligibility • Ongoing decisionmaking within special education
	History	
What are the key components of the Northwest Region states' approaches to response to intervention?	Tiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tiers • Definitions
	Grade levels and subject areas	
	Evidence-based curriculum and instruction	
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal screening tools • Diagnostic tools • Progress monitoring tools • Integrated data systems
	Research-based interventions	
	Fidelity measures	
	Teaming	
	Parent involvement	
	Leadership	
	Professional development	
	Additional components supported at the state level	
	What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention?	Staff and financial resources
Policy guidance/rules		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for components of response to intervention (RTI) • Evaluation of instruction • Expansion of general education interventions • Use of state and district assessments • Use of student data • Use of federal funds
• Existing		
• Needed		
Activities to support implementation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information dissemination • Professional development • Pilot sites • Collaboration between districts • Tools for districts and schools • Audiences
Partnerships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education • Field-based advisory groups • Other

(CONTINUED)

TABLE B3 (CONTINUED)

Analysis framework

Research question	Category	Subcategory
What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention? (continued)	Eligibility decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to schools and districts • Readiness • Transition to RTI
	Collaboration and coordination within the state education agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments involved • Authority to make decisions and commit resources • Responsibility for organizing and coordinating
	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators and areas of impact • Types of data collected • Support for evaluation at the district level
	Other types of support	

Source: Adapted from Batsche et al. (2005).

with a separate matrix for each state organized by research questions, categories, and variables of interest. This process allowed the text segments from different sections and different documents to be reviewed together. It also enabled detection of inconsistencies in the data. Any discrepancies were resolved with follow-up questions to the respondents.

The data coding was completed by one of the coauthors of the report. Additional measures were taken to increase the rigor of the analysis. Sample data from a document and an interview were coded independently by members of the project advisory team. The coded data were compiled and reviewed to assess interrater reliability and to identify any coding discrepancies. Only two areas of inconsistency were identified, both involving how the variables of interest were defined. The inconsistencies were resolved through discussion among the team members. This process also ensured that the framework and procedures were being applied consistently.

Development of the state profiles and the report.

Next, descriptions were developed summarizing and explaining the data in each category. When possible, document and interview data were combined to address all questions. However, some variables were addressed with data from only one source. The descriptions were used to create the state profiles. A common template was used to organize the profiles by research questions and variables of interest.

Drafts of the state profiles were sent to the state education agency respondents to identify mistakes or misinterpretations. Their feedback and corrections were incorporated into the state profiles.

The final step in developing the report was to synthesize the individual profiles. The descriptions in each category were compared across the five states to identify similarities and differences. Common descriptions were written to summarize the information. This process was also used to identify the common issues and challenges of the five states.

**APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

State		Date of interview	
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The purpose of this interview is to collect information about the response to intervention (RTI) activities in your state. The information will be used to develop a descriptive profile that will be included in an Issues & Answers publication on state-level efforts to support RTI in the Northwest Region. The report prepared for this study will not associate responses with a specific individual. We will not provide information that identifies you to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law. To ensure accuracy, I will be taping the interview and it will be transcribed for analysis. The transcript will be available for your review prior to its use in the project.

- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- Do I have your permission to tape our conversation?

Research question 1—context

Purpose	What is the purpose of RTI in your state?
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long has the state been supporting RTI? • Follow-up/probe: What, if any, previous programs might have paved the way for RTI? • How has the program changed since the beginning?

Our project is organized around two primary research questions. The three areas that these questions address are: the key components of RTI; the resources, policies, and activities that are in place to support RTI; and the challenges of supporting RTI. The interview questions that I will be asking you are organized around those two areas.

Research question 2—key components

Tiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What policies are in place related to the number of tiers? • Follow-up/probe: How are the tiers defined?
Grade levels/subject areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What grade levels are currently supported? • What subject areas are currently supported?
Research-based interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What guidance does the state provide about specific interventions? • Follow-up/probe: Are there any criteria or specifications to inform districts in selecting interventions? • How specific is the guidance?
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assessments have been identified or developed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening • Diagnostic • Progress monitoring • What specific data management systems does the state promote or support? • What technical assistance or guidance does the state provide around data analysis?
Core instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of the state in helping to ensure evidence-based core instruction and curriculum?
Fidelity measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of the state in ensuring fidelity of implementation?
Teaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What guidance or requirements are in place for teaming?
Parent involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the state address the role of parents in RTI?
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other components are included in the state’s approach to RTI?

Research question 3—state-level support

Staff and financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources are available to support the implementation of RTI? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff • Other resources • What types of support are you receiving from any of the federal technical assistance providers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional or content comprehensive centers • National or regional resource centers • Equity assistance centers • Other
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Policy guidance/ rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What state policies or rules support RTI? • What, if any, specific policies are in place to support the involvement of general education? • What additional policies or rules are needed?
Activities to support implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What materials, manuals, etc., have been developed? • What professional development is available for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers (general education, special education) • Administrators • Paraprofessionals/specialists (general education, special education) • What additional professional development is needed? • How does the state use pilot sites to support implementation? • Follow-up/probe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there additional schools and districts that are implementing RTI? • How does the state support RTI in non-pilot sites? • How does the state support collaboration between districts and schools? • What, if any, other types of activities is the state conducting?
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What roles do field-based or practitioner advisory groups play in the state’s RTI efforts? • What efforts are underway to bring in faculty from higher education?
Eligibility decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the state support the use of RTI for making eligibility decisions? • Follow-up/probe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there training for staff evaluation teams? • What is the process for moving from traditional identification practices to RTI? • Who is responsible for organizing and coordinating the RTI effort at the state level?

Collaboration and coordination within the state education agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up/probe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you coordinating efforts across those departments? • How are decisions made about who is responsible for different aspects of RTI within the SEA? • How has the state generated support for RTI across the departments of the agency? • What efforts are underway to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of RTI?
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be measured? • How is the SEA supporting evaluation at the district and school level? • Does the state provide any additional types of support?
Other	

Challenges of supporting response to intervention

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the state supporting RTI? • Follow-up/probe: What are the benefits?
Challenges or barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges in supporting the implementation of RTI? • How does the state deal with any competing agendas?
Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the concerns of teachers and administrators about RTI? • What are the concerns of parents about RTI?
Facilitating conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies are being used to address the challenges of supporting RTI? • What are the conditions in the state that facilitate support for RTI?

Closing

Final thoughts or questions	
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APPENDIX D STATE PROFILES

This appendix presents the detailed state profiles. The findings in the main report draw on these profiles. The appendix is written in the present tense (except the history sections) but reflects policies and programs at the time of the study in May–October 2008.

Alaska

History. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has been supporting some response to intervention (RTI) components since 2005. The early focus was primarily on helping districts and schools use data-based decisionmaking. In January 2007 the agency initiated its effort to support the full RTI framework at the annual winter conference.

These efforts were developed further when a team from Alaska attended the national RTI summit in December 2007. The team included representatives from special education, federal programs, assessment, and school improvement within the Department of Education and Early Development as well as from other education organizations in the state, including the Alaska Comprehensive Center, the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Parent Training Institute. This event helped the team develop a common understanding of RTI and plan support for RTI implementation in districts and schools in Alaska.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development was beginning to work more directly with districts and schools at the time of this study. The agency conducted an RTI Implementation Survey in fall 2008 to decide how best to support RTI implementation. The survey focused on respondents' familiarity with RTI, what schools and districts are doing, and what support they need. The agency will use the survey results to determine its next steps. The agency also developed a draft guidance document—*Using Response to Instruction/Intervention (RTI) for Alaska's Students*—which was made available in January 2009 but not in time for inclusion in the analysis.

Purpose of response to intervention. In Alaska RTI is implemented as a general education initiative. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development promotes RTI as a system for school improvement. Districts that plan to use RTI to help identify students with specific learning disabilities should have a fully implemented RTI system in place before including RTI for that purpose.

Alaska uses the term “response to instruction/intervention” rather than “response to intervention.” This choice is intended to emphasize that RTI is for all students.

Alaska's definition of RTI is based on the definition put forward by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. The following explanation of RTI is included in the materials developed by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (2008a):

Response to Instruction/Intervention is the practice of providing high-quality instruction to all students, providing interventions matched to student needs, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions. It provides a framework to support all students in a tri-tiered triangle model that addresses both academic instruction and behavior support (often referred to as Positive Behavior Support, or PBS).

One reason that the agency supports RTI is its flexibility. According to an agency staff member, the RTI framework does not require specific curricula or interventions but allows districts to identify what their students need.

What are the key components of Alaska's approach to response to intervention?

Tiered model. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development uses an RTI model with three tiers and includes both academics and behavior. Tier one is defined as universal instruction

and features scientifically based core instructional programs, differentiated instruction, and universal screening. Tier two is targeted instruction and includes the core program plus supplemental interventions and progress monitoring. Tier three is intensified instruction and features the core program or a replacement program, targeted supplemental interventions, and more frequent progress monitoring.

The state does not promote RTI in specific grade levels or subject areas. Results of the needs assessment survey show that most schools are implementing RTI at the elementary level, followed by middle school and high school. The main focus is on reading, but schools also report that they are implementing RTI in math, writing, and behavior.

Core curriculum and instruction. For the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development one aim of RTI is to ensure that schools have a core curriculum and instruction that are effective for all students. The agency does not have guidelines or requirements for identifying or evaluating evidence-based curricula or instruction. However, a representative describes curriculum—including curriculum alignment and curriculum mapping—as an area for future technical assistance.

Assessment. Although the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development does not require the use of particular assessments for universal screening or progress monitoring, it encourages districts to use AIMSweb or the formative assessments developed by the state. The Alaska Computerized Formative Assessments (ACFA) are online assessment tools designed to monitor students' progress relative to their progress on the statewide assessment. The tests are available for math and reading in grades 3–8. The assessment tools generate reports that enable teachers to look at the results by individual students and classrooms. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provides training for teachers on how to use the AIMSweb and ACFA assessment tools.

The agency has also been providing training for schools on data analysis. The topic has been

a focus at the annual winter conferences, and training materials are available on the RTI web site (www.eed.state.ak.us/nclb/RTI.html). A staff member explains that the newest addition to the agency's efforts is an online tool that allows teachers to analyze data and retrieve them in different ways.

Interventions. The agency does not require schools to use specific interventions. The RTI training materials provide some guidelines. The materials include suggestions for identifying appropriate instructional interventions and for monitoring the effects of interventions.

According to the materials, interventions at tier two are based on student needs identified through screening assessments. The interventions are short term, provide targeted skills instruction, and are delivered three to four times a week in small groups. Tier three interventions can be delivered in small groups or individually and are implemented daily. The instructional variables for these interventions include direct instruction, corrective feedback, and increased opportunities for practice.

The training materials available from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development include information about using a problem solving model in designing and monitoring the interventions. The materials do not include information about a standard protocol approach.

Fidelity measures. Currently, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development does not have general requirements or procedures for measuring fidelity of implementation. Fidelity is monitored by district improvement coaches in districts that are in corrective action and that are being served through the statewide system of support.

Teaming. Teacher collaboration has been a topic for training provided at the annual winter conferences. The purpose of the teacher teams is to reflect on current data, instructional strategies, programs, materials, and weaknesses and strengths in relation to teaching. The guidelines

provided in the training include using established protocols, identifying a facilitator, and using guiding questions for making decisions in each tier.

Parent involvement. The state does not have any guidelines or requirements on parent involvement specific to RTI.

What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention in Alaska?

Staff and financial resources. State RTI efforts are currently supported through school improvement funds. Components of RTI were included in the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's request for additional school improvement funds from the U.S. Department of Education. Alaska provides direct support to schools through the statewide system of support. RTI is a model that the state uses with districts in corrective action.

Policies. The state does not have any policies or regulations that specifically address RTI. It does provide guidance for schools on how Title I funds can be used to support RTI and the regulations from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 that permit the use of special education funds for early intervention services.

The state does not yet have guidance for districts on using RTI for identifying specific learning disabilities. RTI is allowed as a component of the process, but the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has not encouraged districts to change the procedures they have in place. On the needs assessment survey, 54 percent of respondents indicated that their districts are using RTI as part of the process to identify students for special education services.

Activities. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development will be developing a guidance document to support RTI implementation in Alaska. It will include the state definition of RTI,

the three-tier model, key components, roles, procedures for moving from tier to tier, and federal regulations and funding.

The results of the RTI needs assessment survey will be used to determine the types of professional development and technical assistance that the agency will provide. The results will also inform the guidance that comes from the state. The results indicated that districts and schools are interested in interventions that address academic concerns, funding sources and parameters of use for supporting RTI, interventions that address behavior concerns, and assessments for universal screening and progress monitoring.

RTI materials from annual conferences are available on the agency web site. There are slides and handouts from district training on three topics: Alaska's standards and assessments, linking data to instruction, and teacher collaboration.

One of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's strategies for promoting collaboration on RTI among districts is asking them to present at state conferences. According to an agency representative, the presentations help schools learn from each other and build on what others are doing. In addition, four districts are identified on the web site as resources available to other districts and schools in Alaska.

Partnerships. Alaska has convened a statewide leadership team that includes representatives from divisions in the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; superintendent, principal, and teacher associations; the Alaska Comprehensive Center; and parent groups. The deans of education from three branches of the University of Alaska system are also on the leadership team.

The team members are forming working groups to develop the RTI guidance from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. According to a staff member, the leadership team is helping to define RTI for Alaska and to convey a common message about RTI.

Internal collaboration and coordination. At the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development RTI is housed in the program dedicated to implementing the federal programs under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The efforts of the agency involve collaboration among special education and federal programs. Through the statewide system of support RTI is among the approaches that Alaska uses to work with districts in corrective action.

Evaluation. Alaska does not currently have a state-level evaluation for RTI.

Idaho

History. The Idaho State Department of Education started its RTI efforts in 1997 when a group of staff members visited the Heartland Area Education Agency in Iowa to learn more about their problem solving model. In 1999 the Idaho State Department of Education conducted its first RTI training for a group of Idaho schools.

Initially, the agency worked with pilot sites to support RTI implementation. As of 2008, a third of Idaho schools had received RTI training. The agency found increased interest in RTI after the IDEA 2004 regulations were released. Some other schools that have not received training through the Idaho State Department of Education are also using RTI models.

The program evolved as more schools received staff development. The model that the state used in the past was to provide training and technical assistance through special education consultants, who were based in universities in the north, southwest, and east regions of the state. Now the state is supporting a wider range of professionals because of the emphasis on general education and the effort to involve other state-level programs. In 2007 the Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction created a position within the agency dedicated to RTI.

The Idaho State Department of Education also has a project called Idaho Building Capacity to

implement a three-year, scaffolded school improvement planning and implementation process that includes elements of RTI. Coaches work with administrators and teachers on the project.

Purpose of response to intervention. According to Idaho State Department of Education staff, the state approaches RTI as an overall system for school improvement, as well as a process for making decisions about eligibility for special education. The agency's definition of RTI appears on its web site (www.sde.idaho.gov/site/rti/):

Idaho Response to Intervention (RTI) is a framework for the process of K–12 continuous improvement in providing high-quality, standards-based instruction and research-based systematic interventions for all students' academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs, in partnership with students, teachers, parents, and the community.

The agency's rationale for promoting RTI is that it provides a systematic way to address a range of student needs. An agency representative explains that the benefits of using an RTI framework are that it helps schools define a process for ensuring that all students get what they need.

What are the key components of Idaho's approach to response to intervention?

Tiered model. The state uses a three-tier model for training and in guidance and information to support RTI implementation. The three-tier model is used across other programs as well, such as the state reading model, limited English proficiency procedures, school improvement plans, and behavior intervention models.

The Idaho State Department of Education supports RTI in all grade levels. While elementary schools make the greatest use of RTI, it is becoming more widespread in middle and high schools.

The subject areas include reading, math, written language, and behavior. Schools tend to focus

first on reading. Schools that have been using RTI models for some time have begun incorporating other subject areas.

The Idaho Training Clearinghouse provides an overview of RTI, including best practice components and guiding principles (<http://itcnew.idahotc.com/dnn/rti/RTIHome/tabid/368/Default.aspx>). Some best practices identified include problem solving teams, parent involvement, functional assessment, outcome-oriented interventions, ongoing progress monitoring, and systematic data-based decisionmaking.

Core curriculum and instruction. The Idaho State Department of Education provides guidance by identifying state-approved curricula for reading and math. In the recent math curriculum adoption, the agency identified three tiers of approved curricula, as well as both core and intervention programs. In addition, the agency provides information about research-based curricula and instruction on its RTI web site.

Assessment. The Idaho State Department of Education requires that schools use AIMSweb's early childhood measures and Oral Reading Fluency as universal screening tools for K–3 reading. There are no specific requirements for other screening tools, although the agency offers some guidance. For additional screening purposes, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring, districts are encouraged to select the tools that best meet their needs. The agency also provides information about assessment tools on its RTI web site.

For data management the agency supports use of AIMSweb for the Idaho Reading Indicator, available to all schools through a state contract. Additional licenses are available for schools to support students in the RTI processes and in special education.

The agency provides schools and districts with training and consulting on data analysis. The training and services cover data collection, data

analysis, and data-based decisionmaking. Some of these services are provided through regional consultants and support teams for reading.

Interventions. Idaho's content specialists are responsible for helping schools identify appropriate interventions. They look at how well the programs meet state standards, with an emphasis on approved programs that are evidence based. The state's Positive Behavioral Support project provides guidance about interventions that focus on behavior.

The best practice components identified by the agency emphasize problem solving. There is a specific component for problem solving teams, and the problem solving process is included in the information about developing interventions. The materials do not include information about the standard protocol approach.

Fidelity measures. The state does not have a direct role in ensuring implementation fidelity. However, the Idaho State Department of Education has provided training to schools on this topic in the past. The state is developing a self-assessment tool that focuses on implementation fidelity for RTI.

Teaming. Technical assistance and guidance are available on school teaming, but Idaho does not have any requirements for teaming. According to a representative from the Idaho State Department of Education, the state recommends and supports teaming but believes that the RTI model should not be overly prescriptive in order to accommodate individual differences between schools.

Parent involvement. The Idaho State Department of Education does not require parent involvement in RTI, although the web site provides information to support schools in reaching out to parents. The agency also created a parent involvement coordinator position in 2008 to assist RTI and other programs. Instructions for using RTI to identify students with specific learning disabilities are more prescriptive, based on the IDEA 2004 regulations.

What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention in Idaho?

Staff and financial resources. The Idaho State Department of Education has an RTI coordinator dedicated to supporting RTI. The agency also provides professional development and progress-monitoring tools. According to the agency representative, districts and schools are learning how to incorporate RTI practices into their yearly budgets, lessening the need for direct financial support from the state.

Policies. Idaho's Special Education Manual 2007 details the policies for using RTI to identify specific learning disabilities (Idaho State Department of Education 2008). The manual reflects the national guidelines from the IDEA 2004. The Idaho State Department of Education provides guidance and recommendations but does not dictate specific RTI forms for documentation, though it does mandate specific forms for special education as required by law. A staff member explained that there are also many policies related to specific content areas and programs such as Title I that are indirectly related to RTI.

Activities. The state has an RTI handbook that is used for training and for guiding schools' efforts. The handbook is being revised, with input from the Center for School Improvement at Boise State University.

The state will continue to provide professional development, although the delivery model has changed. The agency conducted an online survey on RTI in fall 2008 to identify and prioritize training needs.

The Idaho State Department of Education web site includes a section on RTI (www.sde.idaho.gov/site/rti/) with information and links to support the efforts of schools and districts to implement RTI. The agency also maintains a section on RTI on the Idaho Training Clearinghouse web site that provides training materials on special education

topics and information on upcoming training opportunities (<http://itcnew.idahotc.com/dnn/rti/RTIHome/tabid/368/Default.aspx>). The agency also maintains state and regional lending libraries of hands-on resources.

The Idaho State Department of Education supports collaboration between districts at state-level conferences. Teachers and administrators also have opportunities to visit other schools and districts. An online forum, available through the Idaho Training Clearinghouse web site, enables schools and districts to interact.

Partnerships. The Idaho State Department of Education has a state leadership group that serves as an advisory board for RTI. The members represent a variety of program areas, including English language learner students, gifted and talented students, and Title I. There are also representatives from the districts, parent groups, and the Idaho Association of School Administrators.

College and university faculty members have been involved in the state's RTI efforts from the beginning. Boise State University has a state improvement grant to study teacher preparation and secondary RTI screening. Several secondary schools are involved in this project.

Internal collaboration and coordination. The state RTI program is not a part of special education or general education specifically but falls under the supervision of the deputy superintendent of student achievement and school accountability.

RTI is woven into other programs and content areas. The state RTI web site describes how a variety of other programs fit into RTI. RTI staff members participate in the activities of other programs, and representatives from other programs are included in RTI activities.

Evaluation. Idaho has no specific means of evaluating the effectiveness of RTI beyond student achievement as a whole. The Idaho State Department of Education is beginning to provide

guidance to districts and schools on how to evaluate RTI implementation and to monitor fidelity to the process. The agency is working to develop new tools and to refine others. The agency also supports schools by providing information and sources for tools and processes that have been developed in other programs and states.

Montana

History. The Montana Office of Public Instruction started working with four pilot schools in 2006 to share information about RTI. Schools worked with Margaret Beebe-Frankenburger from the University of Montana and learned from each other about research-based programs and practices. The schools that participated in the pilot sites created RTI forms and guided the development of the Montana framework. A larger steering committee of stakeholders from across the state used the information provided by the Montana RTI pilot project to develop the Montana RTI framework document.

For the 2008/09 school year the Montana Office of Public Instruction expanded the project to include an additional 44 elementary schools and 11 middle and high schools. Participating schools identify a core team of four to six people, who attend training on the essential components of RTI, with an emphasis on RTI leadership. Schools are also assigned an RTI consultant who works directly with the schools during monthly site visits.

Purpose of response to intervention. Montana promotes RTI as an overall school improvement initiative that encourages collaboration. The RTI framework describes RTI as the practice of providing high-quality instruction to all students based on individual needs (Montana Office of Public Instruction forthcoming, p. 6). The document uses the definition of RTI crafted by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (Batsche et al. 2005):

[RTI is] the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched

to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions.

The framework emphasizes that RTI is a best practice for educating all students, with the primary purpose of supporting teachers with information for guiding and improving instruction. The framework also emphasizes the need for schools and districts to adapt the model to fit local needs and circumstances (Montana Office of Public Instruction 2009, p. 2):

Due to Montana's diversity in student populations, varied resources, geographic areas, and rural, urban and suburban populations, it is expected that no two school districts or even school buildings will implement RTI in precisely the same way.

What are the key components of Montana's approach to response to intervention?

Tiered model. Montana's RTI approach has three tiers and includes both academics and behavior. Coaching and ongoing professional development for teachers are important components. Tier one is defined as core classroom instruction, tier two as strategic targeted instruction, and tier three as intensive targeted intervention. The framework document identifies essential elements for each tier, including curriculum, instructional organization, instructor, assessment, time, setting, and support.

The 4 initial pilot schools focused on grades K–6, but the expanded cohort includes 11 secondary schools. The current focus is on reading, although schools that are farther along in implementing RTI may expand to include math. A representative from the Office of Public Instruction explained that the focus on reading reflects the difficulties that schools in the initial pilot project had in trying to implement RTI for both reading and math.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction has identified eight essential components of RTI that shape the agency's work: evidence-based curriculum and instruction, ongoing assessment, collaborative teaming, data-based decisionmaking, fidelity of implementation, ongoing training and professional development, community and family involvement, and strong leadership. These components are described as "non-negotiable," but what they look like in each district and school is a local decision.

Core curriculum and instruction. The schools included in Montana's RTI project are required to have a research-based reading curriculum. Those that do not yet have this in place are required to have a plan to do so. Their progress will be monitored by the RTI consultants.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction does not require specific curricula but does provide information that schools can use to identify materials. In defining "evidence-based" curricula, the framework document identifies two possible sources of evidence: research and local evaluation. In addition to pointing schools and districts to information on promising programs and interventions, the agency identifies guidelines and questions for selecting evidence-based materials.

The framework document describes the components of effective instruction. These include an overview of a best practice teaching cycle and other instructional techniques. It also describes the need for explicit and systematic lessons and for differentiated instruction.

Assessment. The framework document identifies the types of assessments that should be used when implementing RTI: screening, benchmark, progress monitoring, diagnostic, outcome, and informal. It provides general criteria for selecting tools based on the purpose of the assessment. There are also suggested strategies for establishing and monitoring fidelity in administering assessments.

Schools that participate in the RTI project are required to provide assessment data to the state,

using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or AIMSweb. They are also encouraged to use progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments. The schools receive training and technical assistance in data analysis.

Interventions. As noted in the section on curriculum, the Montana Office of Public Instruction provides schools with links to information about interventions but does not require or identify specific programs. The framework document describes the problem solving process for developing and implementing an intervention plan: defining the problem, analyzing its causes, developing and implementing an action plan, monitoring student progress and intervention fidelity, and evaluating the effectiveness of the plan. The document does not include information about the standard protocol approach.

Fidelity measures. The RTI consultants will help schools put fidelity measures in place for both the core program and interventions and provide guidance about effective ways to monitor fidelity. In addition, the Montana Office of Public Instruction has developed some tools and identified tools from other states.

The framework document explains the need for ongoing fidelity checks, emphasizing four activities that should be monitored: the RTI process, the prevention/core/tier-one program, the interventions, and the assessments. The document also recommends strategies for promoting fidelity, such as training, use of coaches, and clarification of decisionmaking points. There are brief descriptions of strategies for measuring fidelity, including observations, behavior rating scales, self-report, products, and implementation manuals.

Teaming. The framework document recommends that schools have at least two types of teams: an RTI steering team that monitors implementation and student-level teams that make decisions at the classroom and individual student levels. The document provides suggestions for the members

of the steering team but acknowledges that these will ultimately be local decisions. Team roles are also described, such as facilitator, scribe, and timekeeper.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction works with both school- and student-level teams in the RTI project. One responsibility of the school-level teams is to take the training that they receive back to their sites and train the rest of the school staff. The configurations of the student-level teams vary with the size of the district, with some schools having multiple teams and others only one.

Parent involvement. The agency encourages schools to start early to inform parents about RTI and requires schools to involve parents along the way. The framework document outlines the need for parent involvement, with a description of the benefits to schools, students, and parents, and suggests strategies for promoting meaningful involvement. The document emphasizes the need for schools to provide written information about RTI and to inform parents about the purpose of schoolwide screening measures.

Other components. According to the Office of Public Instruction representative, Montana's RTI model includes two additional components: ongoing training and professional development, and strong leadership. These components were not included in the draft of the framework document at the time the analysis was conducted.

What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention in Montana?

Staff and financial resources. The statewide steering team is made up of stakeholders from several Office of Public Instruction divisions and from other education agencies. Montana's RTI project is funded through the state personnel development grant, currently the only funding source for the state's RTI work. The funds are used for training, consultants, and travel costs for school teams attending training.

Policies. Montana does not have any state-level policies specifically on RTI. The framework document includes guidelines from the IDEA 2004, information on use of funds, and a rationale for using RTI to identify specific learning disabilities. The Office of Public Instruction provides schools with a checklist of expectations for documenting the RTI process when it is used for making decisions about students' eligibility for special education.

Activities. The agency provides information about RTI through the Montana RTI framework document. The Office of Public Instruction web site includes training materials used in the pilot project, links to additional information, self-assessment tools, and presentations that schools can use to communicate about RTI to parents and the community.

Training provided through the Montana RTI project is available four times during the school year. The first training focuses on an overview of the eight essential RTI components and on a "next steps plan" for implementing RTI at the school. The additional training targets individual school needs, as identified in their plans. The agency anticipates identifying trainers based on the plans and then dividing teams into groups based on common training needs.

Further support is provided by consultants, who are onsite at each school one day each month. The agency provides support for the consultants, including two meetings during the school year and monthly conference calls to check in and share questions and ideas. The agency is also developing an online forum for the consultants.

The targeted training is intended to promote collaboration among districts and schools with common needs. Because the consultants work with multiple schools and are geographically based, they can identify additional opportunities for collaboration. Montana also has a number of special education co-ops that provide services to groups of small districts and help them leverage

resources. The co-ops can provide a library or database of intervention programs for all districts to access.

Partnerships. Montana's efforts are guided by a state-level RTI steering team. The members include representatives from across the Office of Public Instruction, a union representative, school administrators, teachers, university faculty, and parents. The committee holds monthly conference calls to monitor the RTI project.

The Office of Public Instruction is working directly with university faculty members to evaluate the RTI project. A faculty member also leads a higher education consortium and has brought a focus on RTI to this group.

The agency works with the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, which includes regional professional development providers and provides RTI training to schools and districts not participating in the RTI project. The focus is on introducing RTI and providing ongoing training to school teams.

Internal collaboration and coordination. As mentioned, the RTI project is guided by the RTI steering team, a broad partnership. And while special education plays a large role as the division funding the project, RTI is a collaborative effort involving additional divisions, including Title I and Indian Education.

Evaluation. Montana is conducting an internal evaluation to monitor RTI implementation and to measure outcomes. The Office of Public Instruction has developed an implementation survey to measure school climate, looking specifically at how teachers are responding to the changes required for implementing RTI. Consultants will conduct fidelity checks that monitor RTI implementation in the schools. For assessing student outcomes, participating schools have agreed to provide the Office of Public Instruction with assessment data using either DIBELS or AIMSweb.

Oregon

History. The Oregon Department of Education began its RTI initiative in fall 2005 with a three-year plan. Pleased with the plan's progress, the agency decided to continue its RTI efforts, and the 2008/09 school year marked the program's fourth year.

The primary activity of the RTI initiative is providing training and technical assistance to a cadre of school districts selected by the state. The districts must meet a set of readiness criteria to be considered for participation. The initiative started with five districts and has added a new cadre each year. Currently, 29 districts are included in Oregon's program.

From the beginning, the Oregon Department of Education contracted with the Tigard-Tualatin School District, which had been using RTI for more than eight years and had a well developed system of tools and procedures for implementing RTI, to provide training and technical assistance to other districts. The Roseburg School District, identified as an additional technical assistance provider in 2008, will serve as the Southern Oregon Regional RTI Center.

In addition to the RTI initiative, Oregon has an Effective Behavioral and Instructional Support Systems (EBISS) project that uses a model that blends RTI with positive behavior support, a framework similar to RTI but focused on behavior. Working through contractors, the agency provides technical assistance and training to leadership teams from 27 schools districts and three early childhood/early intervention programs.

Oregon has been selected to work with the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices, a technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs. The center helps states improve their capacity in organizational change and systems transformation strategies. The Oregon Department of Education's work with the center will focus on the EBISS project.

Purpose of response to intervention. The Oregon Department of Education web site's definition of

RTI emphasizes the model as a comprehensive schoolwide system of tiered instruction, as well as a framework for evaluating and identifying students suspected of having a learning disability (www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=315).

A technical assistance paper provides an overview of how RTI came to be included in the IDEA 2004 and describes what the law says about identifying students with specific learning disabilities (Oregon Department of Education 2007). It describes RTI in this way (p. 3):

In RTI, students are provided with carefully designed interventions that are research based, and their response to those interventions is carefully tracked. This information is analyzed and used as one component in determining whether a child has a learning disability.

The paper emphasizes the need for a close connection between general education and special education in implementing RTI (p. 24):

RTI models have the capacity to improve outcomes for and provide support to students who are both low achieving and [have a learning disability]. They do, however, require substantial cooperation between general and special education. They also require that procedures be used within general education to impact the general education curriculum and teacher practices. Widespread progress monitoring of all students, systematic intervening within general education, and collegial problem solving are hallmarks of RTI.

The agency sees RTI as a means of focusing schools on the most important student outcomes and of helping them eliminate programs and initiatives that diffuse efforts to meet those goals.

What are the key components of Oregon's approach to response to intervention?

Tiered model. The Oregon Department of Education does not require a specific model for

implementing RTI. The examples presented in the technical assistance paper include three tiers, but that model is not mandated by the state. The districts select the process or model that meets their needs, determining both the number of tiers and how the tiers are defined. In the sample model tier one includes universal interventions, tier two targeted group interventions, and tier three intensive individual interventions. The model includes both academics and behavior.

Oregon supports RTI use in all grade levels, K–12. The agency is also bringing early childhood into the model. The areas supported are reading, writing, math, and behavior.

The agency has identified eight system requirements for implementing RTI: leadership, teaming, research-based core reading curriculum, valid screening or identification procedures and decision rules, intervention protocols and progress monitoring, professional development, fidelity of implementation, and policy and procedures development, including special education procedures.

Core curriculum and instruction. Districts that participate in the RTI initiative are required to have a research-based core curriculum for reading. An Oregon Department of Education staff member explains that the agency provides information and technical assistance to help districts meet this readiness criterion.

The agency does not require or recommend specific curricula, but points to recommendations from other sources. In addition, the technical assistance paper provides guidelines for validating curricula and instruction. The guidelines specify that the curriculum be aligned with benchmarks; that instruction be intense, regular, and differentiated; and that at least 80 percent of students meet expectations.

The paper also suggests ways for districts to examine whether the curriculum or instruction is not meeting the needs of at least 80 percent of students. Possible areas to consider include

uninterrupted instructional time, student engagement, and sufficient time for practice.

Assessment. The districts that participate in the RTI initiative are required to have valid and reliable universal screening and progress-monitoring assessments in place. The Oregon Department of Education does not require specific assessment tools, but it does provide schools and districts with information on progress-monitoring tools that meet these criteria by linking to other national resources (for example, www.studentprogress.org).

Districts are required to establish a data collection and management system and to plot and review data against expectations for typically progressing students. The technical assistance paper includes detailed descriptions of expectations for data analysis, including examples. Additional guidance is available from the technical assistance providers from Tigard-Tualatin, who help districts identify and adopt assessment tools and conduct data analyses.

Interventions. The RTI initiative requires districts to have a continuum of interventions. While the Oregon Department of Education does not identify or recommend specific interventions, the agency does provide information and support for specific interventions through technical assistance. The state also passes on information about professional development opportunities related to specific interventions.

In addition, the technical assistance paper shows how interventions are intensified, points to examples of curricula that can be used as interventions, and outlines steps for designing an intervention. The paper explains the use of validated instructional protocols, which require that the school has identified sets of instructional interventions of increasing intensity, and the use of direct instruction and strategy instruction, which are based on more general instructional approaches. The document also includes information about the problem solving model. Standard protocols and problem solving are both included as a part of implementing

RTI, rather than as two different approaches to identifying and conducting interventions.

Fidelity measures. The technical assistance paper addresses fidelity at different levels, including fidelity of implementation for curriculum, for interventions, and for RTI components and processes. Districts are required to have a mechanism in place for assessing fidelity of implementation for the research-based curriculum.

As part of the RTI initiative Tigard-Tualatin works directly with the districts to collect data on implementation fidelity. The role of the Oregon Department of Education in ensuring fidelity is one component of the state-level evaluation.

Teaming. The technical assistance paper describes the members of the RTI teams and their responsibilities. It also offers suggestions on how to structure the teams, including organizing multiple teams to take on different responsibilities. Three types of teams are identified: grade-level teams looking at data across classrooms, group and individual teams looking at data from groups of students with similar needs or individual students, and evaluation teams conducting ongoing assessments.

The information from the Oregon Department of Education emphasizes professional development focused on collaboration and the role of a facilitator in helping staff members work together effectively. Tigard-Tualatin District provides technical assistance to districts on this key RTI component.

Parent involvement. The state requires that districts have clearly established procedures for when and how parents are involved in the RTI process. Districts that use RTI for identifying students with specific learning disabilities are further required to follow IDEA and state guidelines on parent notification and participation.

Other components. Oregon's RTI model has two additional components: leadership and professional development.

- *Leadership.* All districts are required to have an RTI leadership team, to provide expertise and training, to obtain and commit resources, to judge the fidelity of RTI implementation, and to look toward sustainability. The leadership team is also the primary audience for all RTI training conducted by the technical assistance providers.
- *Professional development.* The guidelines for the RTI initiative emphasize the need for districts to conduct ongoing professional development for teachers and other school staff members to support the key RTI components. A list of topics describing typical professional development needs includes specific intervention programs, conflict resolution, analysis and interpretation of data, and the use of fidelity checklists.

What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts' implementation of response to intervention in Oregon?

Staff and financial resources. The RTI initiative is financed with the IDEA discretionary funds, while the EBISS project is financed by a federal grant through the state personnel development grant program. The funding is used primarily for training and technical assistance to districts selected to participate and for small grants to district implementers to support RTI-related professional development.

The agency also requires an investment from the districts that participate in the initiative. To promote sustainability, it asks that districts look to the long term and consider how to fund their RTI efforts without state assistance.

Policies. The technical assistance paper provides detailed information about the Oregon regulations for using RTI to determine students' eligibility for special education. The information includes the regulations, how they are linked to the IDEA 2004, and additional explanatory notes. The paper defines the members of the decisionmaking team

and the types of assessments that can be used and specifies that decisions must be based on multiple data sources. The document also includes information about allocating special education funds for early intervention services.

The document describes the need for well defined procedures and training for teams and the challenges of using RTI for this purpose (Oregon Department of Education 2007, p. 38):

When moving to an RTI approach, a set of fluid activities (data review, intervention implementation, and analysis) are used much like we have used traditional testing instruments. These activities may be difficult for some teams to track. Individuals must conduct those activities in standardized ways, documenting their work, and using standardized decisionmaking guidelines. This prevents arbitrary decision making, and ensures students move through the system and are considered for evaluation and eligibility in a timely manner.

Activities. The Oregon Department of Education maintains a web site dedicated to RTI that includes tools and information related to the key components (www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=315). Funding from the agency also supports an additional web site, hosted by the Tigard-Tualatin District. Tools provided on the web site include a readiness checklist for districts that are considering RTI, materials about RTI that schools can use to communicate with parents, and PowerPoint presentations.

The agency provides additional information on RTI implementation through statewide conferences held several times a year. Open to all school districts, these conferences are held in different locations around the state. The agency also provides information about professional development opportunities available from other organizations and trainers.

Much of the professional development in support of RTI is conducted by the Tigard-Tualatin School

District. The overall strategy is to work with leadership teams that can then train and support other administrators and teachers in the district. According to a representative from the Oregon Department of Education, the relationship with Tigard-Tualatin has been a key to the initiative's success, and the agency has expanded the system by bringing on an additional district.

Partnerships. Oregon has an RTI advisory council and an EBISS steering committee, both of which include representatives from a variety of organizations. Members include parents, district representatives, staff from teacher standards and practices, and higher education faculty. The role of these groups is to guide the work of the two initiatives and to monitor progress.

Other partnerships to support RTI include the contract with Tigard-Tualatin to provide training and technical assistance to other districts. The agency also works with the educational service districts, which are the state's regional service providers, to provide training to constituent school districts.

Internal collaboration and coordination. The RTI initiative is housed in the Office of Student Learning and Partnerships, which includes programs such as special education and early childhood. According to a staff member, the initiative is placed here not because RTI is viewed as related primarily to special education but because the agency is a small organization that has only four divisions. The RTI staff members collaborate with other offices in the agency.

Evaluation. According to agency representatives, the Oregon Department of Education is working to make the state-level evaluation of RTI a more formal process. One step has been to hire an external evaluator. In evaluating the initiative, the agency intends to examine implementation at the district level and student outcomes. Existing tools, available from the regional resource centers and technical assistance centers, are being used to collect implementation data. Student achievement

data will be used to evaluate outcomes, although the specific measures were not identified. As part of the state-level evaluation, the agency is building capacity to conduct evaluations at the district level.

Washington

History. In 2005 the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction convened a stakeholder group to shape the state's efforts to support RTI implementation. This group helped develop the state's 2006 RTI manual, *Using Response to Intervention (RTI) for Washington's Students* (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 2006).

One of the state's first RTI-related efforts was legislation in 2003 to fund implementation of a tiered reading model (House Bill 2012). The aim was to reduce the number of students being referred to special education by providing earlier intervention services, rather than waiting for students to qualify for special education services under the severe IQ discrepancy model. The project started with two pilot districts. The legislation has now been reauthorized (House Bill 2136), with five districts added to the project and a shift from an exclusive focus on reading to the inclusion of other content areas and behavior.

In 2006 the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction started working with the state's system of regional service providers to support RTI. The state provided funding for professional development on RTI through the nine educational service providers. Each organization identified sites that were willing to pilot RTI. A total of 55 schools from 23 districts were served by the program. Through another state project, a subpopulation of the pilot sites received enhanced Reading First regional coordinator support. The coordinators worked with special education directors from the educational service providers to facilitate a systems change process focused on the schools' assessment systems. The aim was to build training capacity within the educational service providers

and to provide on-site consultation to schools on RTI implementation.

The agency is also supporting RTI through the state personnel development grant, working at the district level. Six districts were identified to participate in the initiative, with some overlap with the House Bill 2136 sites. The intention is to create demonstration sites for RTI implementation, to show RTI in action.

Purpose of response to intervention. The state's manual describes RTI as an integrated approach that encompasses general, remedial, and special education. The definition of RTI comes from the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (Johnson et al. 2006, as quoted in Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006, p. 2):

[RTI is] an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data.

The message is that RTI is a general education initiative, although the framework can be used to identify specific learning disabilities. An advantage of using an RTI framework is that it improves a school's ability to serve all students, including students who receive special education services. The agency also sees RTI as a means of increasing collaboration between special and general education.

What are the key components of Washington's approach to response to intervention?

Tiered model. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction promotes RTI as a tiered framework and does not mandate the number of tiers or how the tiers should be defined. The agency's approach is to build consensus on how to define the tiers rather than to require a specific model. However, a three-tiered model

is consistently used in examples in documents and training, and according to the agency, most schools that implement RTI use three tiers.

Washington's RTI manual describes a three-tiered RTI framework. Tier one is core instruction that is research based, differentiated, and culturally responsive. Tier two encompasses strategic interventions for students who are not achieving desired standards through the core curriculum. Tier three includes intensive interventions—which may include increased frequency and duration as well as individualized instruction—based on the results of diagnostic or targeted assessments.

The agency provides support for RTI in all grade levels, PreK–12. However, use of the framework is more established in elementary schools and less common at the middle school and high school level. The agency supports RTI in reading, math, writing, and behavior. Reading is the most common subject area, in part because an RTI framework is included in Washington's K–12 reading model and in the Reading First program. Most of the state's pilot sites chose to focus on reading, but RTI is starting to move into other subject areas as well.

An aim of the RTI manual is to share guiding principles for RTI that are based on research. The state identified seven core principals: using all available resources to teach all students, using research-based interventions and instruction, monitoring classroom performance, conducting universal screening and benchmarking, using a tiered model, engaging in data-based decision-making, and monitoring progress frequently.

Core curriculum and instruction. Washington is a local control option state, so the agency does not require schools to use specific curricula. However, the agency provides information to help schools and districts identify materials. In addition to guiding schools to external sources of information, the agency has reviewed core curricula for reading and math in grades K–12. The reviews are available on the agency web site (www.k12.wa.us).

Assessment. As with the core curriculum, schools and districts have flexibility in choosing assessment tools and materials. There are no requirements at the state level other than for participating in the statewide assessments. The RTI manual includes guidance on using assessments for the universal screening, diagnostic testing, and progress monitoring and provides a list of universal screening tools. The agency provides recommendations on frequency and timing, as well as on the characteristics of effective tools and includes links to other assessment tools on the RTI web site (www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/RTI.aspx).

In addition, the agency commissioned a review of diagnostic assessment tools that includes information on what is available, how much the tools cost, how much time they require, and how to get more information. The agency plans to develop additional resources for assessment. A potential project is to purchase statewide licenses for assessment tools, including universal screening, diagnostic testing, and progress monitoring.

Schools and districts are using a variety of assessment tools and data management systems, including AIMSweb, spreadsheets, and data collection forms. This can be burdensome when schools have three or four different databases that have to be patched together. The agency has identified a common need across the schools and districts for more training and technical assistance for data analysis.

Interventions. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction does not require schools to use specific interventions for RTI but focuses on providing information about available materials. The reviews of instructional materials in reading and math include supplemental materials and interventions in addition to curricula. The web site also provides links to additional sources of information on interventions.

The RTI manual provides guidance about selecting and designing interventions, including information on the characteristics of strategic and intensive interventions, such as duration and group

configurations. Schools and districts are encouraged to identify two or three programs for each core academic area. The agency also published a review of research-based reading interventions, which is available on its web site (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 2004).

The manual also provides guidelines and tools for using a problem solving process and a standard treatment protocol to identify, develop, implement, and evaluate interventions. The handbook included materials for conducting an ICEL-RIOT process. Developed by the Heartland Area Education Agency in Iowa, this problem solving process looks at four domains (instruction, curriculum, environment, and learner) using four procedures (review, interview, observe, and test).

Fidelity measures. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction does not play a direct role in monitoring RTI implementation fidelity. The RTI manual identifies fidelity as an important aspect of using an RTI framework. Sufficient time allocation, adequate intervention intensity, qualified and trained staff, and sufficient materials and resources are identified as strategies for achieving fidelity.

Teaming. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction includes teaming in the RTI model, but does not require specific types of teams or specific processes. According to a representative, the agency supports pilot sites in creating problem solving teams that operate using protocols and procedures. The RTI manual details the processes that teams implement for both a problem solving process and a standard treatment protocol. There are recommendations for the composition of the teams and an overview of the roles of various professionals.

Parent involvement. The state's RTI manual provides information on including parents on decisionmaking teams and identifies the need for districts and schools to provide information about RTI. There are more prescriptive requirements related to parent involvement for schools using

RTI as part of an evaluation for special education eligibility.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is also developing materials on parent involvement in the RTI process through a partnership with the state's Parent Training Institute, known as Parents Are Vital in Education (PAVE). Materials include ways for schools and districts to engage parents in the RTI process.

Other components. Washington's RTI model has two additional components—leadership and professional development.

- *Leadership.* The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is shifting its RTI focus from working with individual schools to working with district leadership teams. Six districts are receiving four days of training for central office leadership teams through the state personnel development grant. The agency will also offer targeted training for district leadership teams at its annual conference.

The change in focus is to emphasize the importance of leadership when implementing an RTI model. Even though the state recognizes schools as the units of implementation, it is making a practical shift in order to use resources more efficiently.

- *Professional development.* Washington's RTI manual emphasizes the need for districts and schools to establish ongoing training for teachers and administrators. It encourages schools and districts to conduct readiness assessments to identify professional development needs for leadership, teaming, curriculum, and assessments. These readiness assessments can then be used by districts to gauge the overall effectiveness of the professional development provided.

What resources, policies, and activities are in place at the state level to support school districts'

implementation of response to intervention in Washington?

Staff and financial resources. As described in the first section, Washington provides resources to support RTI through several initiatives. Many of these efforts provide funds directly to schools and districts.

Policies. Information about RTI is included in state regulations under "Additional Procedures for Identifying Students with Specific Learning Disabilities." The section includes detailed information on the process and state requirements. The state is more prescriptive in its requirements when districts and schools are using RTI for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction encourages districts and schools to begin using RTI as a means of strengthening the core curriculum and instruction. When the effectiveness of the core is established, the school is better prepared to use RTI for identifying students with specific learning disabilities.

An Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction staff member worked with the Washington State School Directors' Association to write the model RTI policy and procedures, which may be modified and adopted by local school boards as a general education model of effective instruction. These policies are available on the RTI web site.

The state has convened a fiscal team to look at what funding sources are available for implementing a three-tier model. Another task force met during the 2007/08 school year to develop recommendations for different levels of funding to match a tiered approach. These recommendations will go forward to the state legislature. The RTI manual includes information about how districts and schools can use federal funds to implement RTI.

Activities. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction convenes RTI-related events and conducts sessions on RTI through multiple venues. In January 2009 the agency convened

an RTI Summit for RTI teams, to assist district- and school-based teams to develop plans for implementing RTI. Agency staff members also conduct awareness-level training at such meetings as the state conferences for school psychologists and the Washington Educational Research Association.

The agency provides professional development through the educational service districts and directly to the schools and districts participating in the RTI initiatives. The state is focusing on data analysis, implementation research, problem solving processes, and parent and community involvement, among other professional development needs.

The RTI manual was developed to support RTI implementation with research-based information, guidance, examples, and tools. The information included in the manual and on the web site is described in the previous sections. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has plans to develop a “community of practice” space on the web site so that districts can interact, ask questions, and share tools and processes.

Partnerships. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction works with an RTI leadership team that includes stakeholder representatives from parent groups, higher education, districts, educational service providers, and other programs within the agency. The agency is also working with a parent advocacy group to develop an RTI toolkit for parents and is reaching out to other parent groups.

The agency recognizes a need to create meaningful partnerships with the institutes of higher education in the state. Work is currently being completed with a faculty member from Eastern Washington University to conduct an analysis of the RTI pilot sites data. According to the agency representative, connections to teacher preparation programs must also be strengthened to ensure that education professionals are entering schools with the skills they need to implement or support implementation of the RTI framework.

Internal collaboration and coordination. In the state agency RTI is housed in special education, and this program has been the driving force behind the state’s work in RTI. However, RTI has also been integrated into other departments and projects. It is included in Reading First, Washington’s K–12 reading model, a dyslexia pilot project, and a high school assessment systems project. It is also connected to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s work on English language learner students, various learning and teaching initiatives, Title I, and district and school improvement and accountability.

Because special education has been successful in partnering with other departments, RTI is no longer seen as solely a special education initiative. The special education staff has spent time talking with the other programs and divisions and making connections between the work of those programs and RTI. An effort was also made to include representatives from other programs and content area specialists in the RTI stakeholder groups.

Evaluation. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction will be working with an external evaluator to assess both the House Bill 2136 schools and districts and the state personnel development grant districts. The state is also working with a professor to do a comparison of first and second year data from the pilot schools trained by the educational service providers.

The purpose of the state-level evaluation is to monitor implementation of the RTI initiatives and to measure student outcomes. According to the agency representative, the evaluation is also a means of gathering information to refine the state’s RTI model. The agency has developed evaluation forms for collecting implementation data, including a readiness checklist, assessment matrix, curriculum matrix, problem solving questions, and workplans. To collect information on student achievement, the agency is using data from universal screening assessments conducted by the districts and schools.

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