

Charles R Greenwood Brief Comments:

Panel #1 “Realizing the potential of RTI- How comprehensive is implementation?”

Good Morning: I was asked to respond by discussing the implementation of RTI in early childhood settings. Within the time allotted, let be provide a brief summary.

- Compared to K-12, the early childhood “system” presents unique challenges to RTI program designers because it is not unified, but rather it is a collection of programs. Some are supported by federal, some by state policies, and others by foundations and grassroots community activities. There is not universal access and those early childhood programs available to families vary widely within localities and across states.
- Currently RTI -- in a systems context -- appears to work best in serving all children in
 - Pre-K programs that are aligned with K-12 schools, and
 - Early Head Start and Head Start programs collaborating with IDEA early intervention and early childhood special education programs.

So, How Well Does RTI Fit Early Childhood?

- Early childhood programs are firmly behind the RTI ideas of finding and serving children as early as possible.
- Individualization is embraced and has a long history in the early intervention and early childhood special education sectors of the system. While noted in policy, individualization is not yet universally accepted in the Head Start and Pre-K early education sectors, where one-size fits all remains too common.
- Support for the concept of “intentional” teaching of young children (as opposed to child-directed learning that has been a mainstay in early

childhood) is a new and growing precept that provides a basis for Multi-Tier Systems of Support.

Our Annual National Surveys Indicate that Implementation is just beginning!

(Linan, Carta, & Greenwood, 2010, June; Linan, Greenwood, & Carta, 2009, June).

- If I can have Figure 1 please. These data show how State Directors and Coordinators reported the levels of RTI implementation occurring in their state in the last two years.
- As you see, results indicate an uptick in the percentage of state directors reporting that *Professional Development Has Begun in their State* – in Purple – increasing from 16% in 2009 up to 23% in 2010.
- Regarding *Some Programs have Begun to Implement RTI* – in Green, the increase was from 21% to 30%. Along with these increases -- we see a decline by about half, from 43% to 24%, in the second lowest implementation rating level that was -- *Preliminary Discussions are Ongoing* – in Red.
- The number of respondents reporting *No Implementation* - in Blue - was stable at about 15%.
- Only Kentucky and Georgia reported that early childhood RTI was Fully Implemented in 2010.

What Challenges are Reported and Supports Needed for Promoting RTI Implementation?

If I can have Table 1 please.

- As can be seen, State directors/coordinators surveyed reported that they face:
 - (a) insufficiently trained personnel,
 - (b) lack of resources to develop the RTI infrastructure,
 - (c) lack of Tier 2 and 3 intervention strategies,

- (d) lack of knowledge to create an RTI model, and
- (e) lack of evidence-based Tier 1 instruction, among others including lack of administrative support and screening/progress monitoring measures (Linas et al. (2010) (see Table 1).

So, Given this Bad News, What has been Accomplished in Early Childhood?

- We have Frameworks: Recognition and Response and the Teaching Pyramid, for example, are increasing well known in early childhood and implemented. These models are supported by technical assistance grants in the case of the Teach Pyramid; and foundation grants and IES research funding in the case of R&R.
- We have Annual Meetings: The Center on Response to Intervention in Early Childhood sponsors an annual RTI in summit attended by ~200 interested early childhood leaders. The RTI network consists of nearly 1000 members. Presentations from the last two years can be accessed online (at http://www.crtiec.org/rti_summit/index.shtml)
- We have evidence-based practices and ongoing Research: Strong evidence supports the language and early literacy skills that should be taught in preschool, for example. Researchers and developers funded by the IES are working to generate on RTI models, measurement, Tier 2 and 3 interventions, and evidence of effectiveness.
- We have Professional Policy Development: The Division of Early Childhood, in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Childhood, and Head Start are working on a joint RTI statement
- We have Federal Policy Development: The Office of Special Education programs issued a clarification on RTI with respected to children's rights to referral and evaluation for special education services. Assistant Secretary

Alexa Posney (2010) confirmed that a parent or educator has the right to request an initial evaluation to determine if a child has a delay or disability and the existence of an RTI process does not weaken that right.

- “RTI does not replace early childhood special education and its procedural safeguards.”
- “If a district has implemented RTI, it does not mean that students cannot be referred for special education evaluations.”
- We have Informational Resources: The RTI Action Network has their Pre-K page containing basic information on early childhood RTI including the Roadmap to RTI, information parent involvement, among other topics <http://www.rtinetwork.org/pre-k>

What does an Exemplary State-based Early Childhood Program Look Like?

- Some for the first RTI implementations have occurred in Early Reading First and state Pre-K programs. For example, the Valley View District - Early Childhood Center in Romeoville, IL directed by Donna Nylander - covers early academics and behavior domains (Nylander, 2009, October).
- The RTI components in the program include locally collected data on academic and behavioral progress for use in instructional decision making. Combined with these data there are three hierarchical levels of support, Tiers 1, 2, and 3.
- An evidence-based core curriculum with a scope and sequence of skills is used to serve ALL children in the program. The Tier 1 teaching approach at Valley View is “intentional”, that is, intended to directly teach specific skills. Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) is used to support behavioral progress.

- *The Building Leadership team* coordinates: Curriculum evaluation and selection, Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies, Parent Involvement, and Data Analysis/Interpretation
- *Effectiveness*. The number of children in Tier 2 and 3 instruction was reported to have declined at each of three successive time points from Fall, Middle to Spring. And, progressively more children were being served in Tier 1 at over the school year.
- *Lessons Learned*. Lessons learned at the Valley View Early Childhood Center were following:
 - It was challenging to find evidence-based curriculum combined with developmentally appropriate practices. DAP in early childhood ???
 - We understood from the beginning that RTI was for all children not just SPED.
 - We were proactive about explaining RTI to parents and families, and in interpreting children's Tier 2 and 3 results from the data collected.
 - We used consultants to provide onsite coaching, as well as workshops for staff to promote our implementation of RTI practices.

Summary and Conclusion

Regarding the key question: **How comprehensive is RTI being implemented?** The answer in early childhood today is - that implementation is not yet comprehensive, but it has begun, and it's progressing. This status is reflected in the accomplishments just mentioned in terms of concept, frameworks, evidence-based practices, research and development, policies, and resources. Exemplary programs exist, and growing, but they are the exception. Much more is needed; leadership is needed, policy is needed - if states and programs are to overcome the challenges they face reaching comprehensive implementation. Thank you!

References

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- Linan, M. W., Greenwood, C. R., & Carta, J. J. (2009, June). *Taking a snapshot of early childhood response to intervention across the states*. Paper presented at the Fourth Annual IES Research Conference, Washington, DC, Washington, D.C. .
- Nylander, D. (2009, October). Navigating through RTI with a compass and a lifeboat. *Early Childhood RTI Summit*. Retrieved from http://www.crtiec.org/rti_summit/documents/NylanderNavigatingthroughRTIwithaCompass-NMSummit10-09.pdf
- Posney, A. (2010). *OSEP policy letter regarding RTI in Head Start*, Retrieved November 19, 2010 online at <http://nectac.org/~pdfs/idea/letters/Brekken-RTIHeadStart-6-2-10.pdf>. Washington DC: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, U. S. Department of Education.

National Progress Implementing Preschool RTI

PreK and Part C State Directors

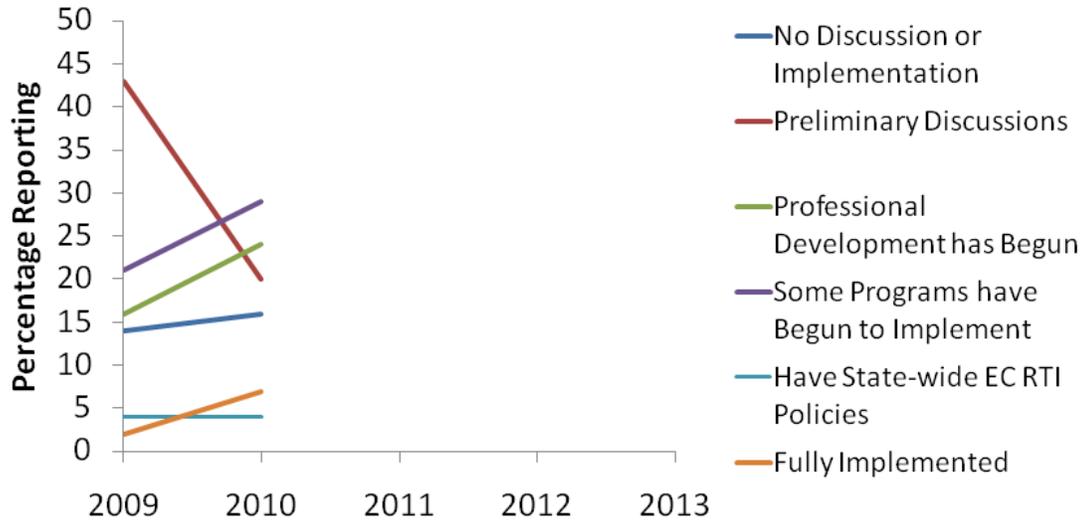


Table 1. 2010 RTI Challenges Reported by State Early Childhood Directors/Coordinators .

Please rate each of the following potential challenges to early childhood programs that wish to begin implementing RTI models.

Challenges	Little/No Challenge	Some Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	Rating Average	Response Count
Insufficient trained personnel to implement RTI	3	10	14	20	3.09	47
Lack of resources to develop the infrastructure.	3	12	12	20	3.04	47
Lack of Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention strategies.	3	10	16	18	3.04	47
Lack of knowledge in how to create an RTI model.	3	8	21	15	3.02	47
Lack of evidence-based Tier 1 programs.	5	19	13	10	2.60	47
Lack of administrative support and leadership.	5	18	16	8	2.57	47
Lack of progress monitoring measures.	9	14	18	6	2.45	47
Difficulty in establishing collaborative relationships	8	22	11	6	2.32	47
Other (please specify)						6
Answered Question						47
Skipped Question						5

Note. Rating differential: 1 = Little/No Challenge, 2 = Some Challenge, 3 = Moderate Challenge, 4 = Significant Challenge