

Models of response to intervention in the Northwest Region states



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
EDUCATION EVALUATION
AND **REGIONAL ASSISTANCE**

Institute of Education Sciences

U.S. Department of Education



Models of response to intervention in the Northwest Region states

Summary

September 2009

Prepared by

**Jennifer Stepanek
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory**

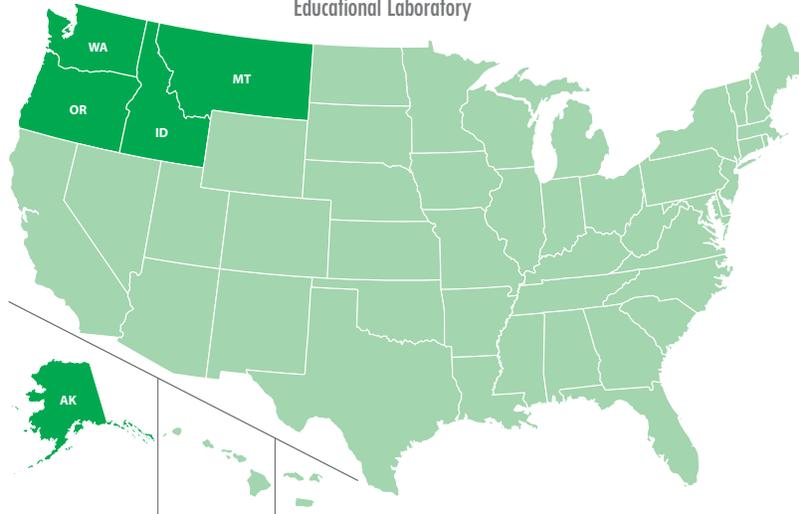
**Kit Peixotto
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory**



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
EDUCATION EVALUATION
AND **REGIONAL ASSISTANCE**

Institute of Education Sciences

U.S. Department of Education



Issues & Answers is an ongoing series of reports from short-term Fast Response Projects conducted by the regional educational laboratories on current education issues of importance at local, state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth. All Issues & Answers reports meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research.

September 2009

This report was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED-06-CO-0016 by Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest administered by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

This report is in the public domain. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, it should be cited as:

Stepanek, J., and Peixotto, K. (2009). *Models of response to intervention in the Northwest Region states* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2009–No. 079). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved from www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

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.

September 2009