

# Florida RtI Update

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## The Implementation of RtI

### A national perspective

By George M. Batsche, Project Co-Director

The infusion of the Problem Solving/RtI process into the schooling of America's children and youth has expanded rapidly in school districts across the United States. The implementation of the State Transformation Team and the State Plan, the development of district RtI Plans in all school districts, the inclusion of RtI components in the K-12 Reading Plans, District Improvement Plans, Differentiated Accountability Plans, the EBD and SLD rules, and statewide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) are evidence of its impact in Florida. Two sources of information regarding RtI implementation help us to monitor the progress of implementation across the United States. Spectrum K-12 ([www.spectrumk12.org](http://www.spectrumk12.org)) and the National RtI Center ([www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)) both monitor implementation at the national level — but in different ways.

In 2007, Spectrum K-12, working collaboratively with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and state Title I directors, developed a survey to monitor the progress of implementation of RtI at the national level. Survey data have been collected for three consecutive years. A review of the most recent (2009) survey data (728 districts responding with a plus/minus 4.6% error at the 95% confidence interval) provides some insight into the growth of RtI in public schools. In 2007, 44% of school districts surveyed reported implementation of RtI at some level. In 2009, this figure grew to 71% of school districts surveyed. In 2009, 40% of school districts reported that they had either implemented RtI district-wide for more than one year or were in the process of district-wide implementation. In 2008-2009, the greatest rate of growth in the implementation of RtI was at the high school level. High schools report that they are using RtI at equal levels for academic and behavior concerns. Elementary schools report greater use in the area of reading, followed by math and behavior. Eighty-three percent (83%) of districts that had sufficient data reported a decrease in referrals for special education. In 2009, 88% of districts reported that they were using RtI for identification of students for early intervening services and supports, and 73% of the districts reported that they were using RtI as part of the process for identifying students with disabilities. The most recent survey reported that districts indicated that the three biggest obstacles to implementation were teacher training, intervention resources, and data for tracking/charting.

*In 2009, 40% of school districts reported that they had either implemented RtI district-wide for more than one year or were in the process of district-wide implementation.*

*continued on page 7*

<http://FloridaRtI.usf.edu>

# PS/RtI Pilot Districts & Schools Share Outcomes at AMM

By Clark Dorman, Project Leader

This year's Administrators Management Meeting, held September 16-18 in St. Petersburg, featured a series of presentations to size-alike groups highlighting the accomplishments of several of the pilot schools and districts included in the Florida Statewide Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project.

Members of district and school leadership teams from Monroe, Pasco, Pinellas, St. Johns, and Walton counties discussed their challenges and successes as they have undertaken the journey through development of consensus, creation and modifications of infrastructure, and the logistics of PS/RtI implementation. In all cases, improved outcomes for their students were the eventual result.

An obvious theme common to all the presenting teams was the mission to approach improvement of student performance as nonnegotiable along with the willingness to do "whatever it takes" to accomplish that. Equally evident with all teams was strong, purposeful, and determined school-based leadership who possess a "no excuses" approach to increasing student achievement.

Monroe County showcased schools with data revealing impressive math, reading, and behavioral improvements as a result of effective Tier I and Tier II implementation. Reading gains during the kindergarten year are presented in Figure 1.

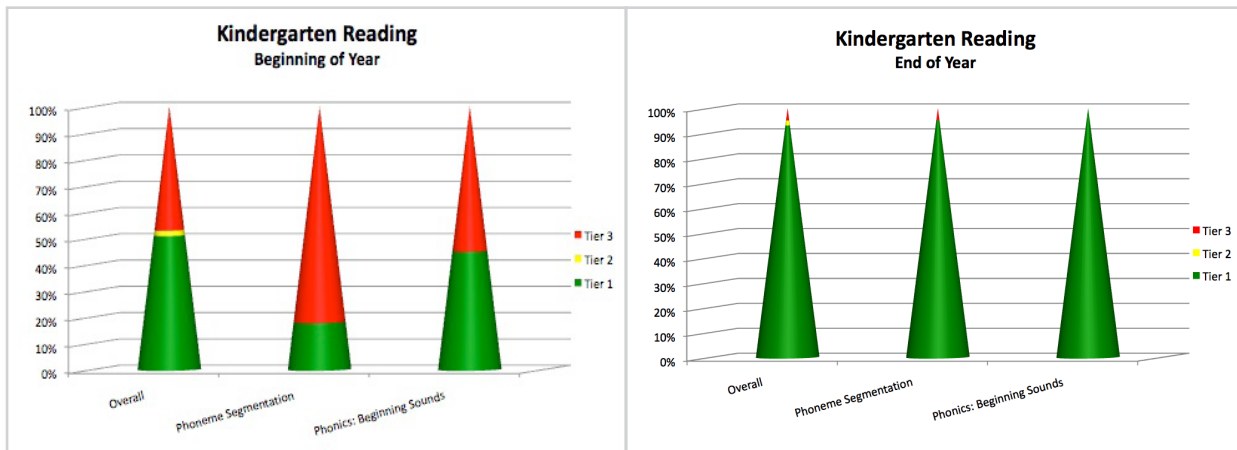


Figure 1: Monroe County Reading Gains in Kindergarten

The importance of structured teams at the district and school level who utilize data to drive instructional decision-making was the focus of Pasco County's story. They shared several success stories involving adjustments in curriculum and instruction and subsequent reading and math improvement for large groups as well as AYP subgroups. (Figures 2, 3)

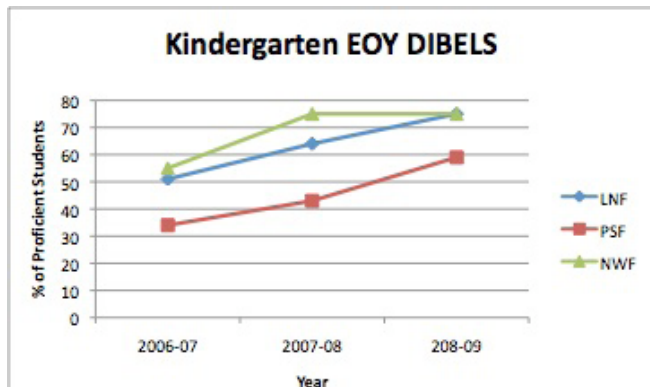


Figure 2: Pasco County Kindergarten Reading Performance 2006-09

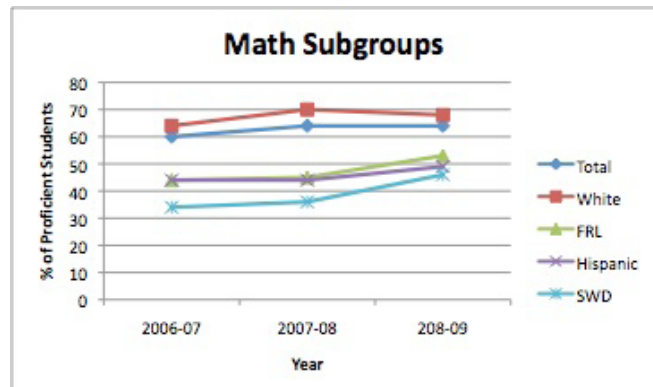


Figure 3: Pasco County Growth Rates in Math 2006-09

Schools in Pinellas County demonstrated the use data from their Self-Assessment of Problem Solving Implementation (SAPSI) to fine tune their school-based implementation as they measured increases in percentages of students making annual learning gains in reading and math. (Table 1)

Annual Learning Gains in Reading	Total
2008	57%
2009	67%
Annual Learning Gains in Math	Total
2008	58%
2009	69%

Table 1: Pinellas County Annual Learning Gains in Reading and Math

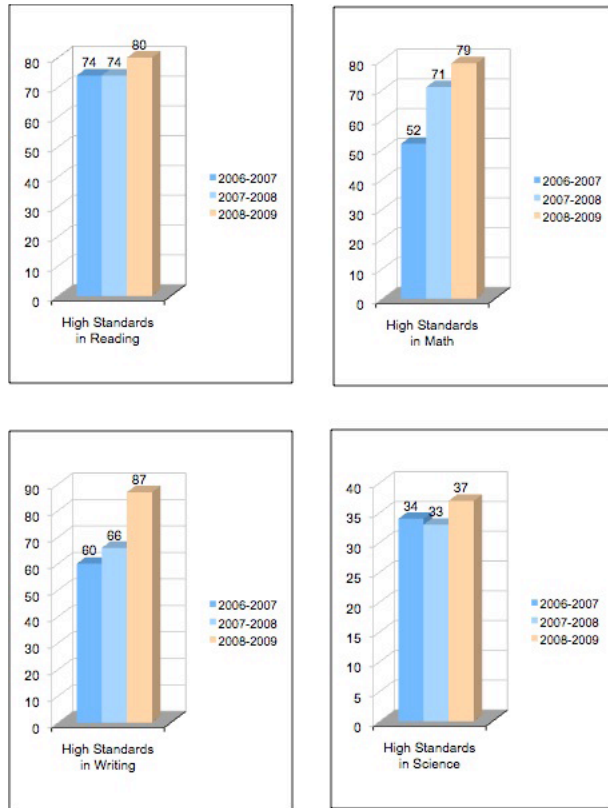


Figure 4: St. Johns County Growth in Academic Areas 2006-09

St. Johns County addressed the multiple behavior goals of increasing attendance and reducing suspensions. The data for improving academic performance in reading, math, writing, and science are presented in Figure 4.

Numbers of Students Needing Instruction/Intervention in Addition to Core						
	K	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
Oct. 8, 2008		28	30	26	33	29
Jan. 5, 2009	3	6	4	4	2	1

Table 2: Walton County Impact of Targeted Reading Comprehension Instruction on Need for Tier 2 & 3 Interventions

In Walton County, the problem-solving process was used to improve student achievement through the creative use of scheduling to increase on-time attendance (reduce tardiness) – increased academic engaged time coupled with a focus on reading comprehension resulted in significantly fewer students requiring additional interventions. (Table 2)

The presentations were universally characterized as containing practical information and strategies that are applicable in participants home districts and as being inspiring examples of what can be achieved when we, in the words of one county, “Roll up our sleeves and dig in” in the pursuit of improved student outcomes. These schools and districts are excellent examples of dedicated teams of professional educators who have set their goals high and are doing the hard work to achieve them. It is the information and data derived from these pilot districts and schools that is informing how to scale up RtI in the state of Florida – and making the process easier and more effective for all of us.

Videos and detailed handouts from the sessions can be viewed at <http://www.efdlrs.net/amm/>.



Susan Hudson, Walton County PS/RtI Coach



Rosemary Ragle, Walton County PS/RtI District Liaison



Monroe County PS/RtI Leadership Team

# Differentiated Accountability & RtI

By Rebecca Sarlo, Differentiated Accountability Response to Intervention Specialist, Region IV

Florida's Differentiated Accountability (DA) Plan marries the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability program and Florida's A++ grading program, producing one streamlined system for identifying and supporting schools that fail to meet federal and state educational performance standards. The objectives of the DA Plan are to provide targeted and school-wide assistance, direction, and monitoring for Florida's lowest performing schools, to provide targeted and/or school-wide support and intervention for schools at risk for failure in order to prevent the need for complete restructuring, and to provide transitional assistance for schools that have previously been identified as in need of improvement but have demonstrated significant improvement during the previous school year.

The DA plan utilizes a multi-tiered service delivery model within which the intensity and type of interventions vary depending on a school's grade, percent of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements met, and the number of years the school has failed to meet AYP criteria (see 2009-2010 Matrix of DA School Categories at <http://www.flbsi.org/DA/index.htm>). Lowest performing schools receive the most robust intervention plans, the most support and assistance, and are subject to the most intense monitoring. The DA plan allows the state the flexibility to require specific intervention practices and instructional strategies (see Strategies and Support for Differentiated Accountability document also at <http://www.flbsi.org/DA/index.htm>) and to provide support and assistance to schools in response to individual school needs.

Florida's DA plan was implemented in 2008 as a pilot program and initially applied only to Title I schools. During the 2008-2009 school year, 1,082 schools were identified and served through the DA system. In the Spring of 2009, House Bill 991 expanded the reach of the DA plan to include all public schools, regardless of Title I status. As a result, 2,445 schools have been identified as needing support and assistance.

## Regional Support Teams

In an effort to support districts and schools, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) established five Regional Support Teams, each of which consists of a Regional Executive Director, Instructional Specialists (reading/writing, mathematics, and science), four to nine Reading Coordina-

tors, and a Response to Intervention Specialist. Regional Teams provide direct support to schools and districts in the form of professional development, technical assistance, and instructional coaching. Specific support is provided to schools and districts in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school leadership, problem solving, school improvement planning, teacher quality, and continuous school improvement. The regional teams also work to build school and district capacity for improving student achievement by promoting school and district partnerships with professional and community organizations such as Florida's Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Project, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), Florida's Problem Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) Project, and public and private consortiums.

## Role of the Response to Intervention Specialists on the DA Regional Teams

The Response to Intervention (RtI) Specialists' role on the DA Teams is aimed at improving student achievement outcomes and supporting the attainment of the school improve-

*"The Florida Department of Education RtI Specialist and I have worked closely to ensure that the implementation plans and procedures designed by Hillsborough County's RtI task force and Area RtI Facilitators align with the state's RtI process."*

ment goals of targeted schools. RtI Specialists promote sustainability of school improvement efforts by increasing targeted schools' capacity for data analysis and problem identification, problem analysis, goal setting, development and implementation of intervention plans, and monitoring of intervention effectiveness. Ongoing professional development, technical assistance, and coaching designed to promote consensus among key stakeholders, develop and refine essential infrastructure components (e.g., data management systems, knowledge

of the problem-solving process), and support initial PS/RtI implementation efforts is provided by RtI Specialists throughout the year for school leadership teams as well as instructional staff.

In addition to their work with targeted schools, RtI Specialists promote school districts' capacity to support the school improvement goals of their schools by providing consultation, professional development, and technical assistance to district personnel responsible for school improvement, research and accountability, assessment, and RtI facilitation. Consultation and collaboration between RtI Specialists and district personnel also promotes consistent statewide PS/RtI implementation. This point is stressed by Hillsborough County RtI Facilitator Nakeba Finlayson-Rahming who wrote, "The Florida

Department of Education RtI Specialist and I have worked closely to ensure that the implementation plans and procedures designed by Hillsborough County's RtI task force and Area RtI Facilitators align with the state's RtI process."

Each RtI Specialist also participates in and supports the professional development initiatives of the DA team as a whole, including Lesson Study, Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading, and Florida's Continuous Improvement Model. Additionally, RtI Specialists participate in all aspects of the Instructional Review process including classroom observations, interviews of key stakeholders, review of school and student data, and the writing of action plans.

### **Instructional Review (IR) Process**

In the fall of 2009, all Regional Support Teams conducted Instructional Reviews (IRs) for all targeted schools within their region. The purpose of the IR process was to identify root causes of student achievement problems and develop action plans to address barriers to student academic and behavioral growth. Although the format and time frame of these IRs differed somewhat from region to region, the purpose of the IR remained the same. Feedback provided by school and district personnel who participated in the IRs regarding the IR processes and outcomes was overwhelmingly positive. Charlene Einsel, Director of DA and RtI Implementation for Pinellas County School District reported, "The Instructional Review provided by the DA Regional Team was a comprehensive way to review all of our processes. Though we knew we had gaps, the process provided the data through parents, students, and teachers to confirm what we knew but did not want to admit."

### **Region IV Instructional Review Format**

Specifically in Region IV, Instructional Reviews (IRs) were conducted over two days at targeted schools in the early fall semester in order to identify and analyze barriers to student achievement and to develop action plans to promote success for all students. Each two-day IR opened with the school's presentation of their self-study results, which included an outline of their self-identified strengths and challenges as well as their current school improvement goals.

During the two-day IR, the state Regional Team worked collaboratively with district and school representatives to identify commendations and concerns across ten instructional elements including classroom culture and environment, instructional tools and materials, lesson planning and delivery, higher order questioning and discourse, student engagement, rigorous tasks and assessments, differentiated instruction, cross-content reading and writing instruction, Florida's Con-

tinuous Improvement Model (FCIM), and school and district leadership. Information regarding the ten instructional elements was collected through multiple means, including the review of existing information and data, interviews of students, teachers, and parents, and observations of all classrooms.

### **School Self-Study**

Prior to the Instructional Reviews, schools were provided the opportunity to conduct a self-study in order to identify their own instructional strengths and areas in need of improvement. Schools were provided with a recommended structure for completing the self-study and a PowerPoint template within which they were expected to outline their self-identified instructional commendations and concerns, their initial plans to address the identified concerns, and student achievement goals outlined in their School Improvement Plan (SIP). The school self-study was included as part of the IR because it was anticipated that many of the school-identified barriers to student achievement would be the same barriers identified through review of data, observations, and interviews. Confirming the school's own analysis of barriers rather than

determining those barriers independently promoted school buy-in to the IR process and outcomes which will likely result in improved sustainability of school improvement efforts.

### **Review of Student Data**

Student data from the 2008-2009 school year were examined to determine the number and percent of students with excessive absences, significant behavior referrals, and in- and out-of-school suspensions. The data were used to estimate lost instructional time due to student absences and discipline incidents during the 2008-2009

school year. High School IRs also included a review of 2008-2009 data indicating the percent of students scoring "college ready," the percent of students enrolled in accelerated courses (i.e., Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, AICE, Industry Certification, and International Baccalaureate), the total school graduation rate, and the graduation rate of specific AYP subgroups and students considered at-risk (i.e., students who entered 9th grade with 8th grade FCAT scores of 2 or lower in both reading and mathematics). Additionally, current year data were examined in order to determine the number and percent of students who already had accrued excessive absences or significant behavior referrals. The number and percent of students enrolled in accelerated courses during the current school year were also examined. Efforts also were made to calculate the percent of the 2010 cohort who are on-track for graduation and identify those who are not on-track due to insufficient credits, GPA, or FCAT scores.

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## Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted by content specific teams which included the State Instructional Specialist (e.g., Reading Specialist), at least one district content supervisor (e.g., Secondary Reading Supervisor), and at least one school representative (e.g., Reading Coach). Each member of the observation team was charged with examining the presence or absence of specific instructional best practices. Additionally, observation teams indicated the level of student engagement (i.e., off-task, compliant/passive, active, or authentic engagement) within each classroom and the level of the instructional content being presented (e.g., below, at, or above grade level). Following the classroom observations, content teams worked collaboratively to identify commendations and concerns within each instructional element. Each commendation and concern was noted on a Post-it note and placed on the appropriate instructional element poster board under commendation or concern. Each instructional team was given a specific color of Post-it note to record their observations to assist in determining areas of need that were content specific and areas of need that were school-wide.

## Interviews

Interview teams consisting of state, district, and school personnel conducted group interviews with students, teachers, and parents. Open-ended discussion questions were utilized to encourage interviewees to include all information which they deemed important. Interviewees were asked to discuss facilitators and barriers to student achievement, attendance, and appropriate behavior. They were also asked to discuss issues and challenges which would need to be addressed in order for the school to improve. Following each interview, the interview teams collaborated to record articulated commendations and concerns. Each commendation and concern was recorded on a Post-it note and placed on the appropriate instructional element poster board under commendation or concern.

## Compilation of Instructional Review Information

After all observation and interview data were collected, cross-content teams which included state, district, and school personnel were formed to analyze and summarize commendations and concerns indicated for each instructional element. The teams worked to identify commendations and concerns which were indicated by all or most content area observations and through interview data. These commendations and concerns served as the basis for the school's Action Plan. Together, the cross-content teams developed action steps and tasks

which included the necessary professional development, technical assistance, follow-up, and implementation supports necessary to remove or lessen the impact of the instructional concern.

At the conclusion of the two day IR, the Regional Team presented a debriefing PowerPoint which included a review of the school's baseline data (e.g., attendance, discipline, college readiness, accelerated courses, and graduation rates), a summary of commendations and concerns for each instructional element, and recommendations for augmenting the school's School Improvement Plan to include the new action steps and tasks.

## Ongoing Support Provided by the DA Team

Once the initial IR visits are completed, Regional Teams participate in follow-up visits with each targeted school approximately every ten days. During these follow-up visits, Instructional Specialists provide professional development for school leadership, instructional coaches, and teachers regarding the instructional strategies indicated in the school's action plan. Follow-up modeling and coaching is provided for the school's instructional coaches and teachers within the classroom.

RtI Specialists also provide professional development and technical assistance for the school leadership team, district and school RtI facilitators, and instructional staff during site visits. Specific topics that the RtI Specialist provides support to the school include effective teaming, the problem-solving process, data management and display, intervention mapping and strategic planning, and data-based decision making. This support is well received and appreciated according to Tiffany Gay, Hendry County Florida RtI Facilitator who relayed, "Some districts are just beginning to implement RtI for the first time this year. It is an advantage to have an RtI Specialist available to guide you along the way, by teaching you the correct steps, answering your questions, and not being judgmental in any way. Without the help, it would leave me to wonder if we were doing it correctly and in the most effective manner."

The ongoing support provided by the DA Regional Team is perhaps the most powerful component of school reform efforts. The value of the continual support is clearly stated by Jodi Bell, Director of Federal Programs for Hendry County, who wrote, "From conducting a data-driven comprehensive needs assessment to providing ongoing support, the DA Team has been involved in every aspect of reform for this school.

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Additionally, they do not just ‘talk the talk,’ they are right there ‘walking the walk’ with us by providing professional development for teachers and modeling best practices with our students. They are spending hours with all of us to teach us how to really make data-driven decisions that will impact student achievement.”

### Impact of PS/RtI on Continuous School Improvement

Florida’s RtI framework and its incorporation into the DA Plan supports schools’ and districts’ development of coordinated instructional and intervention supports for all students. The RtI process requires schools to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of core instruction and provide interventions for students who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in the general education environment. The utilization of a PS/RtI framework allows schools to build a system of supports for students which both anticipates the needs of students, preventing the escalation of student achievement and behavioral problems, and allows for timely application of intervention services when preventative measures are not sufficient. The development of ongoing progress monitoring plans allows schools to make timely changes to instruction/intervention plans, maximizing the impact of available instructional time. Utilizing a PS/RtI framework also serves to streamline and align school and district initiatives by fostering communication between school teams who have formed to address specific school issues (e.g., Literacy Team, Professional Learning Communities, Child Study Team, and Discipline Committee). This increased communication helps to align initiatives and results in the most efficient application of resources.

*“I can’t imagine taking on the task of major reform at an ‘F’ school without the support we have received from our team. It would be very difficult to make changes at this school as quickly and effectively as they need to be made without the help of the DA Regional Team.”*

Supporting schools’ PS/RtI implementation significantly impacts sustainability of school improvement efforts by encouraging collective ownership of student achievement and behavioral problems and increasing buy-in to intervention plans. Rather than relying on outside entities (e.g., district and state specialists) to identify academic and behavioral problems and direct intervention planning, schools learn to identify their own academic and behavioral issues, analyze barriers to their students’ academic and behavioral growth, develop and implement effective intervention processes, and monitor the effectiveness of their intervention programs. The impact of a school’s increasing capacity to engage in a problem-solving process is made clear by Dawn Wilson, principal of Imagine Charter Elementary School in Pinellas County, who reported, “I saw a shift in the morale of my teachers when we came to the realization that we can identify our own issues and that we really do understand why the problems are happening. We feel hopeful and empowered to make the necessary changes.”

It is clear that turning around a struggling school requires an immense amount of effort from state, district, and school leadership. Long-term school reform requires a commitment from all involved parties to work together collaboratively in order to identify ineffective strategies early, to develop instructional and intervention plans, and to utilize data to monitor the effectiveness of those plans. This sentiment is shared by Jodi Bell, Director of Federal Programs in Hendry County, who writes, “I can’t imagine taking on the task of major reform at an ‘F’ school without the support we have received from our team. It would be very difficult to make changes at this school as quickly and effectively as they need to be made without the help of the DA Regional Team.”

### The Implementation of RtI: A National Perspective

*continued from page 1*

In Florida, the comprehensive statewide training in RtI by a diverse group of professionals (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE]; RtI Teaching Learning Connections [RtI TLC]; Statewide PBS; Just Read, Florida!; Florida Center for Reading Research [FCRR]; and the Statewide PS/RtI Project) is tackling the professional development barrier. This past summer, the Training of Trainers Institute facilitated the development of district-based capacity to conduct training. The intervention resources available in Florida (district-level resources and innovative programs; FCRR; Florida Center for Research in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math [FCR-STEM]; PBS; Just Read, Florida!; FLDOE Professional Development and Technical Assistance) are collectively addressing the resource needs. The Progress Monitoring & Reporting Network (PMRN), district-level databases, access to national databases (e.g., School-Wide Information System) have placed Florida in an enviable position regarding the data issue.

It is clear that the implementation of RtI is a priority in school districts across the United States. School districts throughout Florida continue to move forward with the implementation of this model. We are fortunate to have a very rich cache of resources to draw upon and dedicated professionals in our school districts who are developing and sharing effective practices that benefit all students.

# Scaling Up Problem Solving & RtI

## The Pasco County Plan

By Amelia Van Name Larson, PS/RtI District Liaison; Jeremy Blair, School Psychologist; José Castillo, School Psychologist; Rachel Powers, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instructional Services; Ruth Reilly, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; and David Scanga, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Schools

The District School Board of Pasco County (DSBPC) is the 11th largest district in Florida with over 67,000 students. The district is comprised of 82 public schools, including 45 elementary, 15 middle, 12 high schools, four educational centers, five charter schools, and a virtual school. Pasco County is the second fastest-growing county in Florida and continually has an eye for building capacity, developing infrastructure, and improving education practices to meet the growing demands of a booming population.

It is our district's vision to create a community which works together so all Pasco County students will reach their highest potential. Pasco's vision centers on similar principles as the Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Model, foremost of which is the tenet that all children can learn.

Pasco's commitment to develop highly effective schools is ongoing. In the 2006-2007 school year, the district applied for a mini-grant to pilot the Problem Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) framework in a small number of elementary schools. Participation in the PS/RtI grant has supported the DSBPC in the implementation of an integrated approach to service delivery that encompasses and connects general, remedial, and special education.

### Skilling Up

The 2007-2008 school year marked the first year of Pasco County's involvement with the Florida Problem PS/RtI Project. Seven pilot elementary schools embarked on the three-year exploration of consensus building, infrastructure development, and eventually the implementation of practices related to the PS/RtI framework. The project provided professional development, technical assistance, and training for the school-based leadership teams and district stakeholders with follow-up supports offered at the district and school levels in the form of coaching. The cohort of seven schools supported by the state grant was joined by a group of six additional elementary schools that were trained and supported internally by the district. As information, coaching, and materials were made available by the state project, Pasco County offered materials, training, and support to additional schools. By the end of 2008-2009, 17 elementary schools participated in professional development activities related to PS/RtI. We are continuing to learn from these teams in order to build the necessary infrastructure for district-wide implementation.

*"Ultimately there are two kinds of schools: learning-enriched schools and learning-impooverished schools. I've yet to see a school where the learning curves...of the adults were steep upward and those of the students were not. Teachers and students go hand in hand as learners...or they don't go at all."*

-Roland Barth, Educational Consultant, 2001

### Scaling Up

PS/RtI implementation requires a multi-year professional development commitment. Therefore, Pasco's scale-up plan takes into account the resources available to support school leadership teams as they develop the capacity for school-based implementation.

For the 2009-2010 school year, Pasco County has developed a professional development plan in an effort to continue supporting and expanding the implementation of PS/RtI. (Figure 1) As part of the scale-up plan, eight additional elementary schools and four pilot secondary schools have started the first year of professional development, which focuses on the core components of the PS/RtI framework.

The remaining schools are able to send members of the School-Based Leadership Teams to a two-day readiness cycle professional development training designed to assist stakeholders in gaining key knowledge to begin facilitating consensus activities. The eventual goal is to provide every school with relevant professional development, exposure to the core values and key components of RtI, and the scaffolding and skill development necessary to make connections with PS/RtI and the daily activities and functioning of each school.

### Building Infrastructure

The purpose of the pilot program has been to inform the DSBPC regarding the extent to which the framework helps schools evaluate and organize their resources and ultimately leads to improvements in student outcomes. To begin developing a plan to more systematically use PS/RtI in all Pasco County schools, the district created an RtI Taskforce whose job it is to determine how to best train and support schools on the implementation of the PS/RtI framework. This core team of stakeholders worked in conjunction with the state project staff to design a plan for implementation for the district.

*"By working together, we can build a coalition of stakeholders committed to the success of all students. Proud of our*

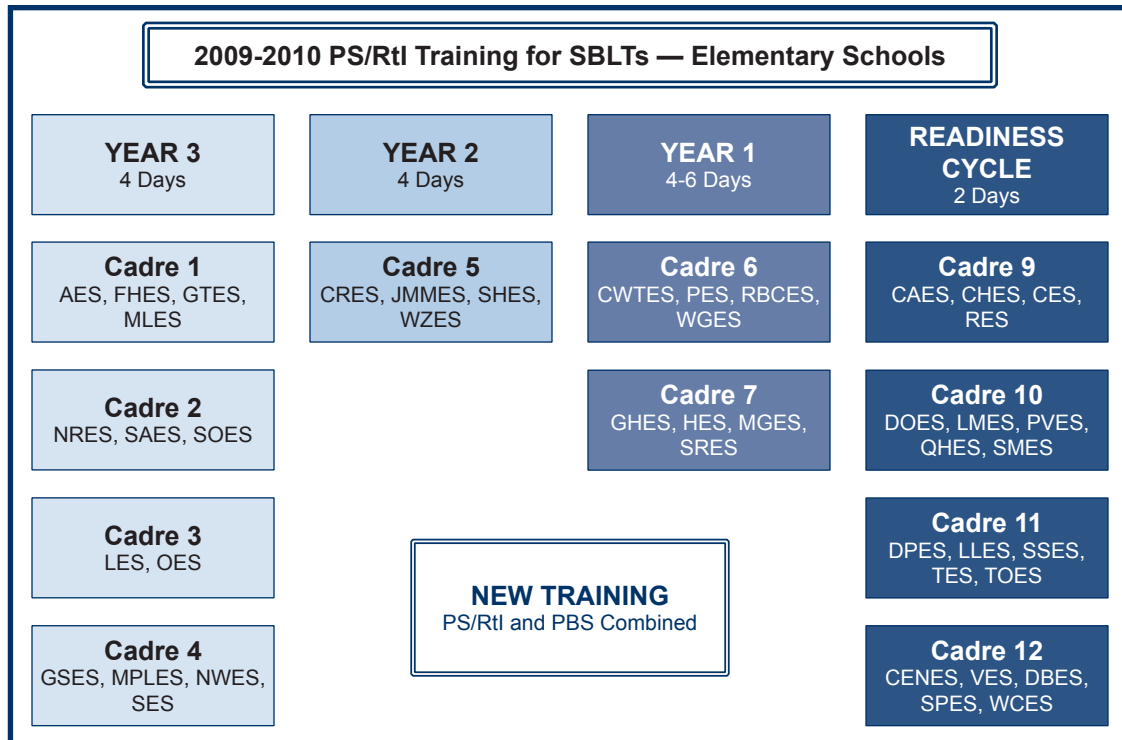


Figure 1: Example of the cohort structure and professional development sequence for elementary schools

*progress and eager to continue improvement, we strive to differentiate supports in order to meet the individual needs of each unique student. Education is an ongoing journey and we will continue to refine our processes to ensure all students receive a quality education.”*

-Heather Fiorentino, Superintendent, DSBPC

### District-Level PS/RTI Taskforce

The RtI Taskforce is comprised of district- and school-level professionals across departments and disciplines including representation from Curriculum and Instruction, Student Services, Exceptional Student Education, Staff Development, Research and Evaluation, Leadership Development, RtI coaches, school-level leadership, school board, parents, and teacher’s union. This taskforce met throughout the 2008-2009 school year and will continue to meet to facilitate the alignment of district policies, procedures, initiatives, and resources. The ultimate goal of the RtI Taskforce is to work collaboratively with educators to provide guidelines, resources, and support to schools integrating the PS/RtI framework into practice. To attain this goal, the district has developed a comprehensive plan for communication, reporting, and professional development. (Figure 2)

### District-Based Leadership

Leadership is paramount. Aside from involvement on the taskforce, the district has support from Superintendent Heather Fiorentino and active involvement from Assistant Superintendents Ruth Reilly and David Scanga, the PS/RtI District Liaison Amelia VanName Larson, as well as exter-

nal support from six full-time RtI coaches, the state project staff including Central Florida PS/RtI Regional Coordinator Brian Gaunt, and school principals who have committed time and resources to PS/RtI activities. The critical involvement of district- and school-based leadership and guidance from both the top down and bottom up allows Pasco to implement sustainable changes while making connections with other key educational initiatives.

*“There is a growing problem in large-scale reform; namely, the terms travel well, but the underlying conceptualization and thinking do not.”*

-Michael Fullan, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

### School-Based Leadership

The scaling up and implementation plan is made possible through the involvement and commitment of school-based leadership teams. Therefore, the district’s plan takes into account the resources available to support school leadership teams as they develop the capacity for school-based implementation. These teams develop implementation plans and objectives in alignment to the district implementation plan and are responsible for communicating the PS/RtI framework to school-based stakeholders. This allows for teams to adjust activities and professional development to fit their specific school culture and needs, in addition to offering the district a method for disseminating information to all staff. District coaching support is used to supplement the support available at each school.

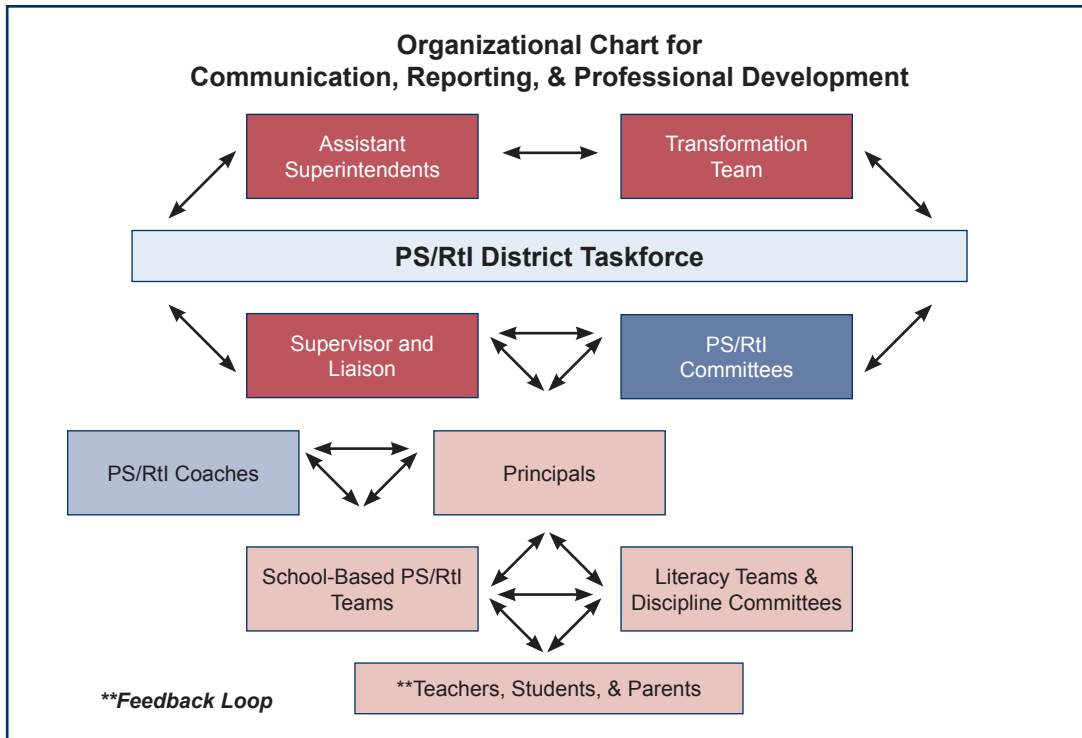


Figure 2: Organizational chart for communication, reporting, and professional development for the PS/Rtl framework in Pasco County

School-based team members learn the use of collaborative tools and strategies to establish rationale for the building level. They work to generate goals, measures, and action plans in alignment with the district plan, and aim to monitor the implementation process. These school teams also work to prioritize the needs of the school while making connections between the PS/Rtl framework and the School Improvement Plans, District Strategic Plan, professional learning communities, the K-12 reading plan, and school behavior support plans. The role and expectations for principals, coaches, and members of the school-based leadership team are clearly articulated. (Figure 3)

*“We must turn aspirations into actions. It will not be enough to run visioning workshops; the visions will have to be reflected in daily behaviors. It will not be enough to declare an intent; leaders will have to deliver results. To accomplish results, leaders engage employees hearts (emotion), minds (cognition), and feet (action).”*

-Dave Ulrich, Professor of Business, University of Michigan and Partner, RBL Group

### Moving Forward

Three years ago, our journey began by building a shared knowledge and learning by doing together. Along the way, it has been critical to reconnect with our fundamental purpose in order to clarify our priorities, give us direction, and guide our behavior. Once we defined our purpose as ensuring all students shall learn, rather than all students will be taught, we

began to truly understand and live the following foundations of RtI.

*“... begin with the idea that the purpose of the system is student achievement, acknowledge that student needs exist on a continuum rather than in typological groupings, and organize resources to make educational resources available in direct proportion to student need.”*

-David Tilly, Director, Innovation and Accountability, Heartland Area Education Agency

*“In a day and age of rapidly occurring changes, schools are confronted with challenges that require educators to actively engage in collaborative efforts so all students can reach their highest potential. Aligning resources, ensuring evidence-based practices, creating timely and systematic responses to address problems, increasing collaboration and efficiency and using evidence of student learning to make important decisions will assist the district in creating an integrated system to elevate our school improvement efforts and assist all students in meeting their individual educational goals. Together, we will reach our shared purpose to ensure high levels of learning for all students.”*

-Ruth Reilly, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, DSBPC

There is no turning back now. . . .

<p><b>Guidelines for Principals</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Put in place a school-based leadership team that is representative of the school's grade-level faculty, support staff (consisting of individuals with collective knowledge and experience in leadership, curriculum, data-based decision making, and systemic change)</li> <li>2. Attend and participate in the School-Based Leadership Team trainings and team meetings</li> <li>3. Provide for a regularly scheduled time and place for team meetings</li> <li>4. Collect, display, and use student data for decision-making purposes</li> <li>5. Use and submit required student performance and other data (e.g., surveys)</li> <li>6. Develop an annual action plan for PS/Rtl activities based on analysis of collected data (e.g. SAPSI)</li> <li>7. Ensure general education, special education, and other support personnel work together to effectuate the successful implementation of PS/Rtl</li> <li>8. Allocate required resources (e.g., designated time, staff) to facilitate professional development of teachers and other professional personnel</li> <li>9. Work with the PS/Rtl Coach and district in implementing PS/Rtl at the school site</li> <li>10. Work with parents to ensure their involvement in PS/Rtl activities</li> </ol>	<p><b>Role of PS/Rtl Coaches</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate and deliver professional development activities</li> <li>2. Communicate, plan, and get feedback from principals</li> <li>3. Mentor School-Based Leadership Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate problem solving across tiers</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Provide technical assistance in PS/Rtl process</li> <li>5. Conduct data collection and entry (surveys, needs assessment, observations, products)</li> <li>6. Perform data analysis</li> <li>7. Disseminate student outcome data</li> <li>8. Communicate with district and district taskforce</li> </ol> <p><b>PS/Rtl School-Based Leadership Team (8-10 members)</b> Attend professional development sessions and coordinate PS/Rtl implementation efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal</li> <li>• General education representation</li> <li>• Special education representation</li> <li>• Literacy Coaches</li> <li>• Student Achievement Coaches</li> <li>• Guidance Counselor</li> <li>• School Psychologist</li> <li>• School Social Worker</li> <li>• Speech-Language Pathologist</li> <li>• Technology Specialist</li> </ul>
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Figure 3: School-Based Leadership Teams: Guidelines and Membership

# Florida's RtI State Transformation Team

## An overview & update

By Heather Diamond, Florida Department of Education

Florida has established an infrastructure of support that includes partnerships organized around identified personnel and stakeholders for various purposes that ultimately support the statewide consensus building, infrastructure development, and implementation of problem solving and response to instruction/intervention (RtI). One of the most active components of Florida's infrastructure is the State Transformation Team (STT), which consists of Florida Department of Education specialists and state project personnel who meet at least monthly to analyze progress toward statewide efforts, recommend actions for improvement, and support District-Based Leadership Teams (DBLTs) to build the capacity of districts to implement evidence-based practices and to establish integrated RtI academic and behavior systems in each school. Within the past year, the STT has been a catalyst for products and events such as the RtI Parent Brochure, the revised Introductory RtI Online Course, the regional meetings for districts developing RtI Implementation Plans, and regional training of trainers for internal district capacity-building. The STT has recently identified five focus

areas to help prioritize its activities: RtI in higher education, RtI in secondary education, curriculum/instruction/assessment connections, parental and community involvement, and state-level policy issues such as policies that affect English language learners within an RtI framework. Upcoming products and events resulting from the STT collaboration include a principal leadership training; an advanced RtI online course; training packets and face-to-face trainings for parent advocacy groups, families, and community members; and model lesson videos illustrating standards-based instruction within Tier I of the Problem Solving/RtI framework in math and science.

The STT does not function in isolation. Understanding the organization of Florida's state-level infrastructure may assist districts in accessing resources and refining their own organization for engaging in a systems change process. The State Management Group (SMG) consists of state-level leaders who facilitate policy-level changes to support implementation of effective educational practice. The statewide Core Support Projects that collaborate across disciplines to assist

in this effort include the Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project (<http://floridarti.usf.edu/>), Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (<http://fpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/>), and the Response to Intervention-Teaching Learning Connections Project (<http://rtitlc.ucf.edu/>). Statewide support personnel who provide direct service to districts and schools include Project Leaders, three Regional RtI Coordinators, and five Regional Differentiated Accountability RtI Specialists. The District-Based Leadership Teams (DBLTs) consist of members with various areas of expertise and leadership who provide leadership, advisement, and training at the district level and assist schools in their implementation efforts. School-Based Leadership Teams (SBLTs) are composed of various areas of school-based expertise and leadership who develop a school implementation plan. The SBLTs will become "trainers" and "coaches" for the school staff and will be responsible for school-wide implementation. The Advisory Group

(AG), soon to be established, will consist of stakeholders from various professional organizations, interest groups, and disciplines who will provide ongoing input to the STT on various products and action items. The members will attend one annual update conference call and receive updates and requests for input as appropriate.

The STT maintains Florida's RtI website in order to provide a central, comprehensive location for Florida-specific information and resources that promote school-wide practices to ensure highest possible student achievement in both academic and behavioral pursuits. For information and resources related to Florida's RtI, visit <http://www.florida-rti.org>.

## Select Resources

*These electronic resources are also found on the Florida RtI website at <http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/>*

**Curriculum-Based Measurement Warehouse** (<http://www.interventioncentral.org/htmldocs/interventions/cbmwarehouse.php>) is a service of Intervention Central. CBM Warehouse offers resources for professional development, such as training manuals and handouts. The site includes CBM probes, recording forms, and selected interventions. A section is devoted to computer applications and printable graphs for charting CBM data. Links to other CBM sites are also included.

**Determining Instructional Level and Conducting Ongoing Progress Monitoring (PDF Download)** (<http://www.fcrr.org/assessment/pdf/OPM/OPMGuide-RevisedSep2006.pdf>) This document is the Florida Center for Reading Research's ongoing progress monitoring guide. FCRR provides guidance for determining instructional reading levels and monitoring progress using DIBELS data. The guide includes Steps and Decision Rules flowcharts for grades 1–3.

**Establishing a Data-based Decision-making System (PowerPoint Show Download)** (<http://fpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/Packaged/D-Module4Data-basedDecision-making8.7.06.pps>) This online training module is provided on Florida's Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Project's website. It is one of 13 modules designed to be completed by a school's PBS team. Content includes a rationale for and benefits of data-based decision-making systems as well as information about the type of data to collect and when to enter and analyze it.

**Response to Intervention/Data-Based Problem Solving** ([http://rtinebraska.unl.edu/video.php?file=daly\\_todd&module=1](http://rtinebraska.unl.edu/video.php?file=daly_todd&module=1)) This is a video/audio presentation by Edward Daly and Todd Glover of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The authors provide a rationale and brief overview of RtI as well as considerations for implementation. Daly and Glover include graphs to illustrate the practical use of data in each step of the problem-solving process.

**Updated Screening Tools Chart** (<http://www.rti4success.org/chart/screeningTools/screeningtoolschart.html>) This chart from the National Center on Response to Intervention represents the results of the second annual review of screening tools by the Center's Technical Review Committee. The chart provides ratings on the technical adequacy of screening tools used within an RTI context.

**What Is Curriculum-Based Measurement and What Does It Mean to My Child?** (<http://www.studentprogress.org/families.asp>) This article, by Kathleen McLane, appears on the family resources link of the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring website. The author gives parents a basic overview of curriculum-based measurement and its benefits. A link to an additional article is provided for parents seeking more detailed information about CBM.