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SECC RtI Funding Models Summit

By Ada Muoneke, SECC Program Associate

As states implement the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, questions on how to fund RtI initiatives are of increasing importance for decision makers. Building principals, district superintendents, and state education agencies (SEAs) are challenged with how to fund RtI in a manner that complies with funding regulations guiding various federal and state programs.

On February 25–26, 2009, SECC convened key leaders from SEAs in six southeastern states to discuss various approaches to funding RtI during a summit held in Atlanta, Georgia. Participants attended an interactive session by representatives of various offices in the U.S. Department of Education (Title I, Title III, and the Office of Special Education Programs) to gain insight into fiscal policies that support the implementation of RtI and what is allowable under specific provisions of federal law. In addition, states and local education agencies (LEAs) that have extensive practical experience with RtI implementation, such as Iowa, Oregon, and Pennsylvania, as well as experts that are nationally recognized for their work with RtI systems (e.g., National Center on Response to Intervention) discussed the fiscal aspects of RtI implementation. SEA staff also networked with colleagues who are implementing RtI in the southeast region and participated in meaningful discussions around using various funding methods to implement RtI (SECC staff and Louisiana delegates are pictured).



A Note from the Director

Welcome to the latest edition of the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) e-Bulletin in which we focus on Response to Intervention and the progress being made in each of our states on this truly promising practice. In both the evidence-based research I have read and the practical experiences I have heard from schools, districts, and states implementing RtI, I am excited to see results that demonstrate improved academic and behavioral results for children. Through this instructional model, teachers and school leaders are using data to plan instructional and behavioral strategies that meet the individual needs of learners. Education is not a “one size fits all” industry where we can apply the same instructional or behavioral strategies to all our students. Each of our students is different, and RtI provides a framework for the instructional decision-making that allows us to ensure that all students access the core curriculum while those students who need either additional support/intervention or additional enrichment are able to receive it.

It has been exciting over the past 2 years to work with each of our states on statewide initiatives to implement this evidence-based practice and to see the progress each state has made during this time. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you in the coming year on this important area of work that holds so much promise for the children.

We are pleased at SEDL to provide the services of the Southeast Comprehensive Center and look forward to our continuing work with all of you.

Sincerely,

Robin Jarvis, PhD
Director, SECC

Based on information from SECC’s evaluation and debriefing session on the summit, these important lessons were learned:

- States need assistance to ensure that LEAs have options in the ways that they spend funds to implement Rtl.
- A decision-making tool for LEAs to use when making funding decisions is essential.
- The ability to review Rtl funding frameworks of other states creates opportunities for cross-state conversations that lead to the formation of ideas that could be adapted for various contexts. Also, states’ efforts are validated, and educational leaders understand that they are not alone on this issue of how best to fund Rtl initiatives.
- Cross-divisional staff within SEAs value time to plan together on this topic. Structuring state teams to ensure that the “right” staff—fiscal management staff and program staff—participate builds internal capacity around the topic.
- Staff benefit from learning of additional resources to inform work on Rtl funding frameworks (sample

Rtl funding matrices and guidance) and how to access them (contacting SEA staff from other states, expert consultants).

- Convening SEAs around Rtl funding gives states the impetus to move forward on addressing this issue and provides the stimulus to plan next steps.
- The next areas of focus should be providing more information on Rtl models in middle and high schools as well as secondary interventions, because the coordination of different programs and funding sources makes Rtl harder to implement at the secondary levels.

To access resources from the summit such as the agenda, presentations, and podcasts of featured speakers, visit http://secc.sedl.org/events/09/rti_feb/index.html on the SECC Web site. In addition, a 2008 Texas Comprehensive Center report, [TXCC Rapid Response: States’ Responses to Intervention Funding Streams](#), details various funding sources and the states that recommend each source as a possible means of supporting Rtl initiatives at the local level (see Table 1 from the report). It also provides a list of resources that offer information on funding models and other Rtl topics.

Table 1. Summary of States’ Funding Sources for Rtl*

State	IDEA Part B Funds	Title Funds	Existing Federal & State Funding Streams	Collaborative Funding	Medicaid
Colorado	X	X	X		
Delaware	X	X	X		
Florida	X	X	X		
Idaho	X				
Illinois	X	X	X		
Indiana			X		
Kentucky			X		
Louisiana	X	X	X	X	
Nebraska	X	X	X		
Nevada			X		
New York			X		
North Dakota	X	X	X		
Oregon	X				
South Dakota	X	X	X		
Tennessee	X	X	X	X	
Vermont	X		X		
Virginia	X	X	X		
Washington	X	X	X		
West Virginia	X	X	X		X
Wisconsin	X		X		
Wyoming	X	X	X		

* Information was obtained from sources listed in the Resources section of this document. Because Rtl is a recent and rapidly evolving initiative, it is possible that some of the states highlighted in this table may have modified their policy or guidance to districts on this topic since this information was retrieved.

State Highlights and Events

Alabama

Rtl Model Promotes Well-Integrated System

By Mary Lou Meadows, SECC State Liaison

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) has spent a great deal of time and energy in preparing and implementing a Response to Intervention model in its districts and schools. The state department's model is appropriately named Response to Instruction, and Christine Spear serves as the Rtl coordinator. ALSDE details its Rtl model in a document titled *Alabama's Core Support for All Students: Standards, Resources, and Support*. This document describes the expectations and components of a well-implemented Rtl model, Alabama's tiered instructional model, and the problem-solving process.

Alabama's Rtl model refers to an instructional framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, gifted, supplemental, and special education services in providing high-quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. The framework combines core instruction, assessment, and intervention within a multitiered system to increase student achievement and reduce behavior problems. The instructional model has three tiers that focus on academic and behavioral strategies in the general education setting. The expectation is that K–12 general education teachers teach in a way that meets the varied needs of their students, utilizing ongoing assessments to identify students in need of additional instructional support as early as possible. District and school leaders are encouraged to organize school resources so that students receive instructional support in a timely manner and to use a problem-solving process to assist classroom teachers in designing and selecting strategies for improving student academic and/or behavioral performance. The objective of the process is to develop academic and behavior intervention strategies that have a high probability of success.

SECC has been instrumental in helping ALSDE develop a successful Rtl model through a number of technical assistance and professional development services that the center has provided since February 2008:

- secured consultant Dr. Joe Witt to meet with the ALSDE team during the state team planning session, during which the team made critical decisions about the state's Rtl plan of work;
- assisted with planning and developing a statewide

Rtl implementation plan and training sessions for state department of education (SDE) and LEA staff;

- convened a meeting to discuss recommendations made by the ALSDE Rtl Committee and recommended phased-in awareness training for department staff; and
- designed and conducted Rtl professional development for department staff (steering committee and LEA Support Roundtable), and secured nationally recognized Rtl consultant Dr. Amanda VanDerHeyden to work with the state.

On April 17, 2009, SECC provided Rtl training for ALSDE at the Renaissance Hotel in Montgomery, Alabama. This training was designed to further orient department staff to the Rtl support framework and determine the role of each section in supporting this model. SECC program associates Ada Muoneke and Dale Lewis were presenters along with Dr. VanDerHeyden. The outcomes for the session were for participants to

- increase knowledge of differentiated instruction and assessments in Tier 1;
- develop strategies and action steps for addressing Rtl in each section within the Instructional Services Division; and
- increase networking opportunities across sections for improved implementation of Rtl.

Georgia

Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions

*By Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools, Georgia Department of Education
Glenda Copeland, SECC State Liaison*

Response to Intervention (Rtl): The Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions is the process of aligning appropriate assessment with purposeful instruction for all students. In Georgia, Rtl is based in the general education classroom where teachers routinely implement a strong and rigorous standards-based learning environment. The tiered approach to providing layers of intervention for students needing support requires a schoolwide common understanding of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), assessment practices, and instructional pedagogy.

A major focus for the Georgia Department of Education (GDE) is working to ensure that all school districts have a common understanding of the state's Rtl model. In 2006, the state department provided the first phase of Rtl guidance for school

districts. To provide continued support and information to districts, the GDE created a guidance document in 2008. A statewide committee was convened to provide the framework for this document in support of our four-tiered model.

Rtl in Georgia is grounded in the implementation of the state curriculum, Georgia Performance Standards, for all students at Tier 1. Our content area GPS training and resources incorporate differentiation, standards-based learning, and higher order questioning support for teachers. Mathematics I (9th grade) teachers and students find support in our “Learning Village,” which houses an online intervention tool along with links to supplemental resources. Our Georgia Virtual School offers a teacher-led, drop-in course for students needing short-term mathematics support. Georgia Virtual also offers a computer-based format with modules aimed at 8th grade students demonstrating gaps in mathematics development. Professional development for teachers in reading is available through our Reading First Online Academy.

In addition, the Georgia Literacy Task Force is finalizing a statewide implementation plan that will include a deep focus on using assessment data to plan for instruction within the Tier 1 classroom. School administrators and counselors are being supported with Rtl implementation, specifically with gaining a common understanding of the Rtl process, data teams, and collaboration, through online Webinars and regional conferences. Our School Improvement Division is preparing to train state-directed schools (based on adequate yearly progress [AYP]—schools at Needs Improvement level 5 or higher) in the effective use of data teams based on the work of Doug Reeves, founder of the Leadership and Learning Center. This training will provide a solid understanding of the role of the data team at the classroom level. A focus on behavior within Positive Behavior Support (PBS) continues in the state. Currently, there are 20 school districts focusing on PBS with plans for continued growth during the 2009–2010 school year. Statewide professional organization conferences continue to highlight Rtl at the middle and high school level. Overall, the focus of support at Tier 1 has targeted establishing a common understanding of universal screening, progress monitoring, and standards-based instruction.

Tier 2 in Georgia focuses on support that is “in addition to” Tier 1 instruction. Typically, the standard protocol process is in place at this tier. Schools determine how they will provide support for identified students. Through our collaboration with the REL Southeast at SERVE Center - University of North Carolina at Greensboro (REL-SE), we are utilizing protocols to support the identification of interventions with a specific focus on the evidence supporting the interventions’ effectiveness. Statewide and regional support for the use of these protocols occurred during 2008 and 2009 and will continue during the 2009–2010 school year with a professional learning Webinar

series. Additionally, our focus on progress monitoring at Tier 2 continues. Basic progress monitoring documents are contained in the Rtl guidance, and we recognize this as an area of need for continued professional development for all districts in Georgia.

Tier 3 is our Student Support Team (SST) level of intervention and is a highly individualized, problem-solving layer of support. SST was a permanent commitment by the state of Georgia to federal district court as a result of *Marshall vs. Georgia, 1984*. The SST is a regular education, problem-solving process in every Georgia school. Its purpose is to provide support to both students and teachers with the outcome of improved student performance. During the 2009–2010 school year, Georgia will continue to focus on Tier 3 problem solving and the role of the counselor.

Tier 4 is for those few students requiring specially designed learning with intensive support. This tier includes special education, English language learners, and gifted learners. These areas continue to receive targeted support from the state department through regional training events, on-site visitation, written guidance, and online Webinars.

Recognizing that Rtl is not a program with specific funding or state board rule, GDE is working to support districts making instructional decisions based on student achievement data. Through professional learning Webinars, regional conferences, and individualized system support, GDE is supporting districts meeting the needs of our students.

As we continue to collaborate with other states and national organizations, we are confident that our current efforts at establishing a common understanding of Rtl will be the framework for building school district capacity to meet the needs of their students.

Louisiana

Statewide Plan for Rtl Implementation

By Darlene Morgan Brown, SECC State Liaison

During the 2008–2009 school year, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has worked diligently toward developing a statewide Rtl plan. In June 2008, Louisiana hosted an Rtl awareness session, which was attended by school- and district-based representatives from various regions of the state. Since that time, LDE and SECC have continued collaboration to develop an action plan to accomplish this goal.

On January 16, 2009, SECC supported LDE in hosting a statewide Rtl meeting for cabinet members and division

directors. Dr. Tessie Rose, National Response to Intervention Center liaison, presented as well as Dr. Kris Kaase, Mississippi Department of Education, and Dr. Kerry Laster, LDE. During the meeting, staff developed action steps to move the Rtl process forward.

In February, Louisiana sent a delegation of five staff members to the SECC Rtl Funding Models Summit in Atlanta. During the state planning session, the group discussed next steps and identified additional steps for implementation of the statewide Rtl plan. Immediately upon return to Louisiana, the delegation met with a small internal group of key stakeholders to discuss key issues regarding the process. LDE is now poised to employ two senior level staff whose responsibilities will be to establish a framework for Rtl in Louisiana.

Mississippi

State's Rtl Work Gains Momentum

*By Kris Kaase, PhD, Deputy Superintendent, Instructional Programs and Services, Mississippi Department of Education
Debra Meibaum, SECC State Liaison*

A collaboration among stakeholders at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Southeast Comprehensive Center, Southeast Regional Resource Center, Southeastern Equity Center, state Board of Institutions of Higher Learning, and university and school district psychologists has been working diligently over the last year and a half to provide coordinated professional development, technical assistance, and resources to support implementation of Response to Intervention. Kris Kaase, deputy superintendent for Instructional Programs and Services, challenged school district leaders at the beginning of the school year to focus on Tier 1. In support of that focus, MDE provided a series of 2-day training sessions that focused on Tier 1. The topics for the series were universal screening, effective instructional and classroom management, analyzing data, and team planning. The preliminary analysis of pre- and post-test data of participants indicated that district leaders made significant gains in their knowledge of Rtl processes as a result of the training. These data also indicated a need for MDE to support school district leaders by providing training directly to school-level leaders. In response, MDE developed an intensive 4.5-day training session for principals, *Redesigning Your School for Rtl*, which will be held in sites across the state during Summer 2009. This training will address all aspects of the Rtl process, and MDE hopes to reach about one-half of the state's principals through this offering. Initial response to the offering of this training was very positive; consequently, MDE is planning to offer additional opportunities for this training during the 2009–2010 school year.

There is growing interest and support for Rtl among Mississippi's educational stakeholders. MDE has been invited to make presentations at school administrator conferences, teacher association conferences, career/vocational educator conferences, and several other state conferences. Moreover, organizations for early childhood, teachers, and administrators have growing interest in receiving training on Rtl, which MDE is eagerly supporting. These organizations have shown a genuine desire to support the implementation of Rtl.

The collaborative work around Rtl has also spurred MDE's development of its statewide system of support (SSOS). Earlier this school year, MDE completed a self-evaluation of the system with the assistance of SECC and Center on Innovation and Improvement staff. That work helped MDE set priorities for developing the SSOS and will provide a guide as the department develops action plans for improving and developing its statewide system of support.

South Carolina

Rtl: Using Data to Guide Instruction and Interventions

By Sandra Lindsay, SECC State Liaison

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has defined its Response to Intervention framework as the practice of using data to guide high-quality instruction and behavioral interventions matched to student need. Success is aided by monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to make critical educational decisions.

In April 2008, the state department selected Pam Huxford as its Rtl coordinator. Over the past year, she has sought assistance from SECC and the National Response to Intervention Center to help the state implement Rtl principles. In addition, SCDE has formed a 35-member Rtl State Leadership Team from across departmental divisions to define and develop the Rtl framework for statewide implementation. The state leadership team convened specifically to create an Rtl guidance document to assist districts and schools in the implementation of Rtl. The document will provide an overview of Rtl practices and will explain the core components of Rtl. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional development but rather to increase a school's understanding of the various aspects of the Rtl framework. Dissemination of the document is planned for Spring 2009.

The National Response to Intervention Center provided assistance in the development of the guidance document. The state department's contact for assistance from the

center was Dr. Stacia Rush, task leader of regional and state activities, technical assistance liaison for the Mid-South Region (serving Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia). Dr. Rush helped design meeting agendas, provided resources, and facilitated each daylong process of developing the guidance document and supporting documents that address the salient components of Rtl implementation as determined by the team.

Between formal facilitated meetings, SCDE leadership team workgroups wrote drafts of assigned components, which were compiled for the subsequent meeting by the Office of Instructional Promising Practices at the department. Drafts of both the guidance document and the supporting documents were presented at the September 2008 meeting of the South Carolina Instructional Leaders Round Table for review.

SECC provided direct support for a statewide kickoff on June 9, 2009, during which the SCDE leadership team introduced the guidance documents to the larger school community in South

Carolina. The meeting was held to emphasize the importance of the implementation of Rtl practices in every school district and to provide district leadership with tools and information to assist local leaders with implementation. District teams from the state's school districts attended the meeting, with members including the district superintendent or assistant superintendent, Title I director, special education director, and a principal. Dale Lewis, SECC program associate, worked with the SCDE's Pam Huxford to facilitate successful launch of the guidance documents.

Recent educational and legislative efforts have focused on increasing the standards of achievement for South Carolina students and have encouraged the use of strong, research-based curricula at all levels of instruction. South Carolina's schools are responding by monitoring student achievement more closely and by searching for appropriate interventions to help every student achieve. The Rtl framework that is being implemented by SCDE will offer a structure for schools to raise student achievement.



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