

Appendix 1: Project Description

Evaluation of Response to Intervention (RtI) Practices in Elementary School Reading

Forty to fifty schools will have an opportunity to participate at no cost in a large-scale national research project describing the design and implementation of mature Response to Intervention (RtI) practices in elementary school reading and –where feasible – assessing their impact on student academic outcomes such as reading achievement, grade promotion, and identification for special education services.

Response to Intervention is a multi-tiered framework designed to identify and intervene early with struggling students. Student performance is systematically monitored at each intervention tier to ascertain the need for further intervention in general education and, when needed, to determine whether students are eligible for special education.

The Evaluation of RtI Strategies in Elementary School Reading is part of the National Assessment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004, P.L. 108-446), and is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S Department of Education. The findings from this study are likely to inform the delivery of RtI in the future.

The study will address the following questions:

- 1. What are the characteristics of mature RtI implementation for elementary school reading? What is the range of practices in terms of universal screening and progress monitoring, the nature of the reading interventions provided, and school-wide coordination?**
- 2. How do these RtI practices compare with those in other, demographically comparable schools in the districts that are not considered to be mature or sophisticated implementers of RtI practices in reading in K-5?**
- 3. What are the impacts of mature RtI practices on student outcomes such as reading achievement, grade promotion, and rates of referral for evaluation for special education and eligibility determinations for special education? What are impacts for key subgroups of students?**

Benefits of Participation

Qualifying schools will:

- Showcase their RtI practices to national experts in special education, reading, and RtI.
- Receive compensation for time required to assist the study research team with scheduling visits and collecting data from student records and from school and district staff.
- Receive compensation for teachers who participate in surveys, interviews, or focus groups beyond the regular school day.
- Contribute their experiences and knowledge to building stronger RtI programs for struggling readers in elementary school.

This evaluation will focus on an in-depth description of schools using RtI practices that show promise of improving student outcomes because of their coherent and consistent use of supports to implement RtI. The evaluation seeks to study schools that have implemented RtI for at least two years at a level outside experts deem acceptable, and that have in place at least five core RtI components:

1. Universal screening (benchmarking) administered in reading at least two times a year;
2. At least three levels (tiers) of instruction, comprising a system of increasingly intensive interventions;
3. Monitoring the progress of students who do not meet benchmark;
4. Procedures for presenting data on student reading performance, evaluating student's performance using these data, and making decisions based on these data about students' response to interventions, and
5. Processes for determining eligibility of children for special education services that include data from the students' responsiveness to the intervention(s).

These components are deliberately not defined in a specific way. Instead, the study is designed to learn how these components are implemented in schools that have developed or locally adopted an RtI model and that have been implementing RtI practices for at least two years.

Site Selection Process

The study team has sought school and district nominations from researchers, practitioners, and leaders of organizations supporting RtI initiatives at the national, state and local levels. In addition to the criteria listed above, site selection will be influenced by the presence of relatively stable state or district assessment practices in grades 1-5, the nature of the school's data systems for tracking students' identification for and receipt of RtI services, and the historical time-course of RtI implementation across elementary schools in the district. Schools in the district that do not meet the above criteria *may* also be eligible for inclusion in the study as comparison schools. We will schedule a phone call with RtI leaders (e.g., principal, RtI coordinator) at nominated sites to discuss their use of RtI and student assessment practices and to gauge their interest in participating in this national study.

Participation in the site selection process and the national study is voluntary. Information gathered during the site selection process and any subsequent data collection will be used only for broadly descriptive and statistical purposes. The reports prepared for the study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district or individual. In no instances will the study team provide information that identifies participating districts or schools, district or school staff, or students to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

For Additional Information

The Evaluation of RtI Strategies in Elementary School Reading is being conducted by MDRC, SRI International, and RG Research Group. For additional information about the evaluation, please contact:

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