



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Rtl Training for School Districts

Erin Lolich • March 2010

Topic: Response to Intervention in Primary Grade Reading
Practice: Rtl Implementation

Highlights

- Erin Lolich, director of the Oregon Rtl Project, explains why an entire district needs to be on board to maintain an effective Rtl system.
- She discusses district leadership team training, which includes specific training in each of the Rtl tiers.
- District leadership teams should include a variety of district office administrators, principals, and teaching and special education staff.
- Assessment training includes the purpose of different assessments, screening and progress monitoring, and aggregating statewide assessment data and behavior data.
- Training related to learning disabilities focuses on shifting perceptions about what a learning disability is, why it's important to identify students early, and how to use intervention data.
- Lolich discusses why it's necessary for district staff to understand the stages of implementation and systems change across the school district.
- The need for districts to reallocate funding and resources to match priorities is also highlighted.

About the Interviewee

Erin Lolich is the director of the Oregon Response to Intervention (OrRTI) Project, a joint project with the Tigard-Tualatin School District. OrRTI provides intensive training and support to 32 Oregon school districts. She began her career as an elementary special education teacher. She also worked as a literacy specialist and Title I coordinator before joining the OrRTI Project full time in 2006. Her specialties include learning disabilities, early literacy, systems change, and response to intervention implementation. Lolich received her B.Ed. in special education and elementary education from Gonzaga University. She received her M.S. in educational administration from Portland State University.

Full Transcript

I am Erin Lolich. I am the director of the Oregon Response to Intervention Project, which is a partnership between the Oregon Department of Education and Tigard-Tualatin School District.

Because Rtl is a system, and in order to maintain a high level of fidelity and have a really effective system, I think an entire district needs to be on board and supporting each other. There are 32 different school districts that we work with, and we start with a district leadership team, and we begin by training that team. The team is comprised of a variety of district office administrators. Elementary principals are required to be on that team, each and every one of them within a school district, and then a number of teachers are involved, both classroom teachers and specialists. So English language learner teachers are represented, special education teachers, literacy coaches.

So the team comes together, and up front we provide typically four days of training to that team over the course of two months. We provide specific training in each one of the tiers, so Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3. And our focus initially is on reading instruction. So what should Tier 1 reading instruction look like? We would make sure that the leadership team has a common foundation and understanding. We would focus on concepts like core instruction and curriculum should meet the needs of at least 80 percent of your students; otherwise the focus really needs to be on how can we enhance our core.

When we move into Tier 2 instruction, we work with teams on matching skills and skill deficits to the proper intervention and the big idea that intervention should be in addition to core instruction. That's often a novel concept for teams, and they need a lot of training on why, why is that, and then how do we make that happen. So we dive into scheduling and master schedules in an elementary building.

From there, we move on to Tier 3 instruction, and so there we work with teams on how do you intensify an intervention or change an intervention to match a student's needs and then take teams through the problem-solving process. If a student continues to struggle, what are the different components we need to problem-solve our way through so that we can ensure that the student gets the very strongest intervention.

We work on assessments. We go through what are the purposes of different assessments, and then we really target screening and progress monitoring because those are the most important assessments as part of the Rtl system. We also do work around disaggregating statewide assessment data and behavior data. And then we move into learning disabilities. So shifting people's perceptions about what a learning disability is, why it's so important to identify students early, and how to use intervention data in place of standardized tests if we're going to use Rtl as an LD [learning disability] identification model, which is one of the purposes of our project.

We find that district leadership teams also need to have specific training in systems change, how to have that big-picture perspective to understand the stages of implementation and that systems change across the school district is a multiyear process and that has its starts and stops and the pieces where you need to go back and start again. Districts need help in prioritizing and then thinking about how are we going to sustain this system over the long haul.

What's most challenging about implementing Rtl is for districts to reprioritize their funding and thinking about what's the most important thing we do in our school district and how are we going to reallocate our resources to match that priority. Rtl is not a program. It's a system; it's a way of thinking. And in order for it to be an effective system, the entire school district needs to be working together to achieve the same goal. I think in Tigard-Tualatin, our huge success lies in the fact that our superintendent is really clear about the importance of reading instruction and the way we function together. And he could tell you almost as much as I could about how our Rtl system functions in our district, and so could any of our instructional assistants that implement intervention. So that alignment has really been important for us as a school district, and I see the same thing happening in many Oregon school districts that are successful in Rtl implementation: they really work together as a team at all levels and that teaming piece is really the key to successful Rtl implementation.