

District-Level Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) Positions

Context

During the 2018 Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed legislation that added a component to the BEP funding formula for RTI² interventionists and included \$13.4 million in the FY19 budget to fund these positions at a ratio of 1:2750 students, with each district receiving a minimum of one interventionist. While districts are not required to hire an interventionist, the intent of the legislation is to support RTI² staffing in all Tennessee districts. RTI² experts across the country indicate that in order for implementation to be successfully sustained, it needs to be implemented from the district level.¹ To do so means having staff designated at the district level to build local capacity. This document provides information on the potential roles and responsibilities, specific skill sets needed, and benefits of these district-level positions, including voices from districts that have already implemented a similar position.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of a district RTI² position may vary based on district strengths, needs, resources, and priorities. Key roles and responsibilities may include the following:

- Create procedures and protocols that provide consistency in RTI² implementation across the district.
- Provide professional learning, technical assistance, and coaching for district and school RTI² leadership (i.e., school-level RTI² support teams).
- Align RTI² work with the district improvement plan.
- Coordinate and develop resources (i.e., time, materials, personnel) related to RTI² implementation.
- Collaborate with district-level curriculum and instruction and special education staff to align guidance and connect work.
- Develop and manage fidelity monitoring procedures.
- Build parent understanding of the RTI² framework and their role in supporting student success.

¹ Sparks, S. D. (2016, December/January). Can This Initiative Be Sustained? Michigan's experiences exemplify the challenges facing states as they scale up multitiered systems of supports. *Education Week Special Report: Response to Intervention 2.0*, 5-7.

Considerations for Selecting District RTI² Personnel

Credentials

Districts are responsible for determining the credentials required for these positions. The department recommends a minimum credential of a teaching license or school service personnel license. When selecting candidates appropriate for these positions, it is important to examine the skill sets they have in conjunction with their credentials. Some districts have found it advantageous for these individuals to have administrative licenses as well.

Skill Set

The following are ideal skills for potential RTI² personnel:

- Strong interpersonal skills to effectively work with district and building leaders, school RTI² teams, and school staff
- Understanding of various assessment types (universal screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring) and their purpose
- Knowledge of effective intervention practices across content and grade levels
- Strong data analysis and problem solving skills
- Understanding of available resources and an ability to identify building and district needs
- Facilitation and leadership skills for leading meetings and professional learning
- Coaching skills to guide the district and school RTI² teams in improving implementation and building sustainable practices

District RTI² Personnel...

Shouldn't:

Should:

Analyze data by themselves and tell schools what they need to work on	Collaboratively look at school data and model using data to make instructional decisions at Tier I, II, and III
Facilitate school-level RTI ² meetings	Coordinate the district-level RTI ² leadership team, including facilitation of quarterly district data team meetings
Provide intervention full time	Provide professional learning and resource sharing opportunities for district interventionists
Coordinate all district assessments	Oversee universal screening procedures

Benefits

Building the Capacity of Building-level RTI² Leadership

Research from the department identified strong building leadership for RTI² as a factor impacting student academic growth ([view here](#)). A district position would ensure every school in a district has leaders equipped to be successful with RTI² implementation.

Providing Consistency for a Complex Framework

Strong school leadership is not enough to sustain the long-term work needed to effectively implement the RTI² framework. Support and leadership at the district level are essential in building local capacity¹

Decreasing Demands on Other District Staff

District leadership for RTI² implementation often falls on individuals who wear many hats, making it challenging to truly develop capacity. A district lead for RTI² would free those individuals to focus on other important initiatives while also providing the focus and attention RTI² implementation needs.

Alignment and Integration of RTI² Implementation with District Goals

Districts have multiple initiatives and priorities that often cause RTI² implementation to feel like an additional task. Since RTI² is the teaching and learning framework for all students, district staff allotted to RTI² can collaborate with district and building staff to ensure connection to the district improvement plan is clear.

Maximizing Resources

Successful RTI² implementation requires in-depth knowledge of the resources available in and outside of a district. Having positions at the district level allows for optimal use of these resources to sustain RTI² implementation.

Voices from the Field

Several districts across the state have already invested in district-level RTI² positions. People from these districts shared with the department the benefits they have seen from having these positions.

- “Communication with interventionists is imperative and spreading the same message to everyone is even more important. By having one person as the RTI² coordinator, all communication is streamlined, and we feel our schools are trying to do the same work and process.” – Special Education Director
- “In order for interventionists and RTI² coaches to be effective, you have to have a person that works with them daily. That person is able to provide explicit training around roles and responsibilities of an interventionist or RTI coach, as well as model the expectations of what school RTI coaches are to be doing.” – Assistant Director, Curriculum and Instruction
- “They are able to work with new principals on schedules and creating school-based plans.” – Coordinator, Federal Programs and RTI

- “Having a district person as one contact for everyone has helped the interventionists know who to go to.” – Special Education Director

Next Steps

The department is determining internal and external training opportunities for district RTI² personnel over the next few months and the coming year. The following are recommendations for next steps districts can take to guide their decision making.

- Assess current district RTI² leadership, and determine if new RTI² personnel will improve implementation.
- If districts determine the need for RTI² personnel, identify the number of personnel needed, and develop job descriptions and hiring timelines.
- Reach out to districts that currently have district RTI² personnel to discuss their experiences and the logistics of developing and hiring for these positions.
- To determine potential additional funding sources for salaried positions, please contact your regional fiscal consultant or Maryanne.Durski@tn.gov.

With additional questions about RTI² district positions, please reach out to Karen.Jensen@tn.gov.