

School District

RtI Organizational Assessment Report

Prepared by the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council



Organizational Assessment Outline

1. Assessment Components
 - a. Survey data
 - i. Demographic Data
 1. Current role
 2. Number of years in education
 3. Time in current position
 4. Highest degree earned
 5. Level(s) at which one works
 - ii. Beliefs – 10 Questions
 - iii. Practices – 29 Questions
 - b. Focus Group Interviews
 - c. Data
2. Assessment Report
 - a. Overview
 - b. Rubric
 - i. Not Implementing
 - ii. Consensus Building
 - iii. Infrastructure Building
 - iv. Implementation
 - v. Sustainability
 - c. System Foundations
 - i. Vision/Leadership
 - ii. Data-based Decision-making
 - iii. Goals
 - iv. Resource Allocation
 - d. Building Level Assessment – Continuous School Improvement Building Blocks
 - i. Leadership
 - ii. Assessment
 - iii. Curriculum
 - iv. Instruction
 - v. Interventions
 - vi. Individual Problem-solving
 - vii. Resource Allocation
 - e. Other Data Included
 - i. Beliefs
 1. Colored Chart [Depicts strong consensus, nearing consensus, low consensus, poor consensus]
 2. Table – Disaggregated survey data
 - ii. Practices
 1. Colored Chart [Depicts strong consensus, nearing consensus, low consensus, poor consensus]
 2. Table – Disaggregated survey data
 - f. Survey

Overview

The Midwest Instructional Leadership Council was contracted by the [Company] to perform an organizational assessment of Response to Intervention (RtI) implementation for the [Company]. The organizational assessment conducted by the Midwest Instructional leadership Council (hereafter miLc) focused on the status of RtI implementation in [Company] by analyzing three main sources of data: 1) a survey assessment completed by building and district staff, 2) focus group interviews of building-level RtI Leadership teams, and 3) a general analysis of available student outcome data.

The framework for the evaluation rubric and for the broader report emanates from a variety of sources. These sources include a review of research on effective schools; the district and building level Blueprints for Implementation of Response to Intervention developed by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE); the Innovations Configuration Matrix (ICM) for the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports developed by the Kansas Department of Education; and, the report titled: *Beyond Islands of Excellence; What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools* developed by the Learning First Alliance. Additional resources that guide the work of miLc include: *Implementing the Findings of Research: Bridging the Gap Between Knowledge and Practice* (2008) authored by Wallace, Blasé, Fixsen, and Naaom and *District Leadership that Works: Striking the Right Balance* (2009) authored by Marzano and Waters, *Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action* (2005) authored by Michael Fullan.

Research and theoretical information sources beyond those related to specific RtI implementation are included in the system evaluation framework used for this report. The miLc conceptualization considers RtI as a critical, but subordinate framework that supports an overarching model of “continuous school improvement”. It should be noted that this miLc analysis is built upon the assumption that continuous school improvement requires significant educational reform that includes systems-level change and fundamental transformation in the way we think about student learning and delivery of instruction. Therefore, the miLc framework does not consider RtI as a program or initiative focused solely on improving outcomes for lower performing students (or those in special education programs), but rather as a set of guiding principles and questions that drive broad school improvement efforts. RtI concepts are referenced in this report as they inform broad systemic school improvements at the district and building levels. The foundation of these reforms depends upon the incorporation of scientific principles into the educational enterprise.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council believes that the purpose of a response to intervention model of educational service delivery or any model of continuous school improvement has as its primary goal improving and increasing educational outcomes for all students. That is, high performing districts and schools “recognize that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction... which interventions are effective in achieving this – coaching classroom practices, moving teacher training to the classroom, developing stronger school leaders, and enabling teachers to learn from each other – and have found ways to deliver these interventions throughout their school system” (McKinsey and Company, 2007; cited in *District Leadership that Works: Striking the Right Balance* (2009) authored by Marzano and Waters (page 21). It is clear that leadership matters and that effective leadership can positively influence outcomes for all students.

Marzano and Waters (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of leadership behaviors at the district level that positively influence student outcomes. These specific leadership behaviors are congruent with response to intervention as a model of educational service delivery and models of continuous school improvement. The specific leadership actions in which district leadership should engage as identified by Marzano and Waters (2009) are as follows:

1. Ensure collaborative goal setting.
2. Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction.
3. Creating board alignment with and supportive of district goals.
4. Monitoring achievement and instructional goals.
5. Allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction.

The focus of the organizational assessment and the constructs of response to intervention as a model of educational service delivery for all students and models of continuous school improvement focuses not only on the beliefs and skills needed by professionals and paraprofessionals, but also on two other important constructs. These constructs are a) changing school [and district] culture and sustainability of implementation efforts.

The Hay Group (2004) studied “school cultures that learn” defined culture as the things that people agree and true and agree that are right. The hat Group (2004) identified traits that exist in “high-value-added schools” and contrasting traits in “low-value-added” cultures.

The top six traits identified by the Hay Group (2004) in “high-value-added” schools we as follows:

- Measuring and monitoring targets and results
- A hunger for improvement – high hopes and expectations
- Raising capability – helping people learn – laying foundations for later success
- Focusing on value added – holding hope for every child – every gain a victory
- Promoting excellence – pushing the boundaries for achievement – world class
- Making sacrifices to put students first
- Working together – learning from each other [came in a close seventh]

Indicators or traits of “low-value-added” cultures including the following top traits:





- Measuring and monitoring targets and test results
- Warmth, humor – repartee – feet on the ground
- Recognizing personal circumstances – making allowances – toleration – it’s the effort that counts
- Keeping up with initiatives – doing what is required – following policy
- Creating a pleasant and collegial working environment
- Working together – learning from each other – sharing resources and ideas – investing in others




This evaluation framework and system analysis focuses broadly on organizational performance in the implementation of continuous school improvement efforts (of which response to intervention is an essential component). Data provided in this report is intended to serve as a guide analogous to a GPS device that is used to ascertain current location relative to a desired destination. As such, it is intended to provide information about the district’s current status relative to a model of effective educational system practices. To this end, the report provides an overview evaluation of how the larger system is functioning to support innovation and reform at the individual buildings, grades and classrooms; as well as a reflection on how effectively the system uses data to meet broad system goals for increasing student achievement. This report is intended to provide a view of organizational functioning from 30,000 feet, if you will.

Ratings contained in the report are founded in the constructs of consensus, infrastructure, and implementation as developed by George Batsche and David Tilly and outlined in the aforementioned NASDE Blueprints. In addition to these three constructs, the organizational report has two additional categories – not implementing and sustainability. In essence, the organizational report contains a categorical ranking [not implementing, consensus building, infrastructure, implementation, and sustainability] and a numerical ranking indicating where along the continuum in a given category a given district and/or school is at the time of the evaluation.

It is important to note that the categorical rankings are static in nature as they reflect our impressions based on the data collected at the time of the assessment. They represent where we believe the district and/or school needs to begin of focus its efforts. In reality, the constructs are fluid in nature and districts and schools attend to all the constructs, but require an objective lens as where to place primary focus. Stated differently, although the assessment may indicate that a district or schools is at the “consensus” stage it does not mean that the district and/or school should only focus its effort on consensus. It means that the primary focus should be on consensus and that attention should also be paid to infrastructure, implementation, and sustainability.

The analysis is informed by data that were gathered from building staff and review of building-level student outcome data that were collected specifically to assess critical elements system performance documented in educational research. The areas evaluated are those delineated in the research literature to be critical for producing improved student outcomes in schools that faced substantial contextual challenges such as poverty and limited resources. The areas assessed are as follows:

-  Vision, data, and goals as they connect and translate to their specific building context from the district vision and goals.
-  Leadership
-  Curriculum
-  Instruction

-  Interventions
-  Decision-making
-  Resource allocation

As mentioned above, the miLc system assessment framework uses the constructs of “consensus building”, “infrastructure development”, “implementation” and “sustainability” to represent locations on the continuum (the “map”) of school improvement/RtI scale-up actions as outlined in the Response to Intervention Blueprints developed by NASDSE. Ratings range across this continuum from low levels of implementation to high levels of implementation. Although school staff can and do address multiple elements on the continuum simultaneously, the ratings provided in this report identify the stage at which the raters perceive the district needs to focus in order to accomplish effective and sustainable school improvement actions going forward.

Data provided in this report by miLc are not intended to be final or definitive, but rather to provide an outside perspective on the status of school improvement efforts relative to a set of standards based upon research evidence of the most effective educational practices. This analysis is intended to generate questions and professional dialogue in the district and buildings on important questions related to the state of implementation of response to intervention as a model of educational service delivery for all students.

A final consideration in this report is alignment with core principles of a response to intervention system of educational delivery for all students. Core RtI Principles used for this report emanate from the NASDSE booklet: *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation*. The core principles of response to intervention as outlined in this resource are as follows:

1. We can effectively teach all children
2. Intervene early
3. Use a multi-tier model of service delivery
4. Use a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tier model
5. Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction to the extent available
6. Monitor student progress to inform instruction
7. Use data to make decisions. A data-based decision regarding student response to intervention is central to RtI practice.
8. Use assessment for three different purposes
 - a. Screening
 - b. Diagnostics
 - c. Progress monitoring

The information in the report that follows provides an overview from the perspective of miLc staff on the current state of response to intervention implementation across the buildings in this district. It is hoped that the district leadership will use this data to solidify and extend practices that are consistent and congruent with “best practices” as are defined in the miLc system analysis framework by replacing practices that are inconsistent with the framework.

Component Rating Scale and Rubric Definitions

The following rubric describes the manner in which miLc assessed response to intervention implementation in the Brainerd Public Schools at the system (district level) and at the building level. As mentioned in the introduction to this report, data used in developing the ratings and subsequent narratives derived from survey data, student outcome data, and focus group interviews at the building level.

Categorical Rating	Not Implementing	Consensus Building	Infrastructure Building	Implementation	Sustainability
Quantitative Rating	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12	13 14 15
Rating Description	There is little or no evidence that this component of the model is being addressed in a deliberate and substantial way in the organization. There may be related initiatives and/or products developed in this area but these are not of sufficient strength/intensity/focus to impact long term student outcomes	Evidence suggest that the organization is beginning to address this component of the model, but there is not yet a critical mass (80%+) of staff who support and understand this component to sustain a scale-up effort in this area	Evidence suggests that 80% of staff understand this component and are committed to scale-up efforts. However, basic knowledge, skills and resources necessary for effective implementation have not been widely established. There may be emerging examples or groups that are implementing this component, but this is not widespread	Evidence suggests that a critical mass of staff understand and is committed to full implementation in this area. Staff has the necessary knowledge, skills, and support in place to sustain implementation beyond pilot projects. A specific and deliberate plan for scale-up is in place and is widely being rolled out.	Scale-up plans have been implemented for a substantial period of time and supports have been institutionalized to the degree that the scale-up actions are now well established routines. The focus is now on incorporating a plan for ensuring that new staff is provided necessary training and support to continue and extend work in this area.
Action Type Needed	Staff need to be provided information about this component and be given structured opportunities to consider the need to incorporate this into improvement actions	Staff needs convincing evidence that scaling up in this area is necessary to improve outcomes of importance. They need examples of effectiveness and feasibility as well as opportunities to contribute to ideas for contextualizing this element to meet the local circumstances and develop a sense of ownership	Staff needs specific plans and resource commitments that are adequate to achieve effective foundational skills and routines. Strategies for piloting and building capacity throughout the system need to be established, deliberately deployed and monitored	Staff needs external and internal coaching and feedback to guide and refine implementation efforts. Celebrations and recognition of successful implementation efforts are critical to maintaining efforts.	Staff needs information that confirms implementation success and direct evidence of value added through implementation. Specific information about critical skills and necessary routines for sustainability need to be developed and translated into plans for sustainability

RtI, Problem-solving, and Systems Change

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