Establishing and Running a District-Level RTI Leadership Team: Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Question	Action Steps
What is the purpose of the RTI Leadership Team? The RTI Leadership Team has several functions: (1) to draft and update a district RTI implementation plan, (2) to keep all schools throughout the district in compliance with good RTI practices, and (3) to identify and make available to schools the resources required to implement RTI successfully. • *Drafting a multi-year plan* that will guide the district in the implementation of RTI while using existing resources. The team's RTI Plan should encompass a three-year rollout schedule. Each year, that plan is updated to accommodate changes in district funds and resources, changes in state and federal guidelines and regulations, and new findings in RTI research. • *Supervising RTI implementation.* The RTI Leadership Team oversees that RTI is implemented in a uniform manner throughout the school district. For example, the team ensures that the same procedures and measures are used to complete universal screenings in literacy across all classrooms or schools at each elementary grade, that RTI Problem-Solving Teams in each building use a similar meeting process, and that each school observes the same decision rules in determining if a general-education student on intervention is a 'non-responder'. One caution: Be sure not to overlook 'dissident' voices when select RTI Leadership Team members. Members who may have some reservations about RTI but also possess experience and knowledge that would be valuable to the team.	☐ *Determine the team's scope and responsibilities.* At the district level, decide on what the scope, authority, and responsibilities of the RTI Leadership Team are to be. Be sure to confront potentially difficult questions such as 'Will the RTI Leadership Team's RTI recommendations be binding on individual schools or merely advisory?' ☐ *Review state guidelines that may impact your RTI Leadership Team.* Review any relevant guidelines or regulations from your state department of education to determine whether the state offers guidance on the makeup and functioning of the RTI Leadership Team or content of an RTI district plan.
Who should serve on the RTI Leadership Team? Your district should assemble a multi-disciplinary team to serve as your RTI Leadership Team. The team should include influential district administrators such as those who control resources (e.g., staff development funds; instructional budgets) or supervise staff (e.g., school psychologists, reading teachers) across the district that will participate in RTI. Additionally, the team should have representatives from school buildings to help the team to keep lines of communication open with its campuses. Finally, the membership on the team should be balanced to include representatives from important stakeholder groups (e.g., building administrators, general education teachers, etc.).	☐ *Generate a recruitment list.* Create a list of positions and/or personnel from school buildings and at the district level to be recruited for the RTI Leadership Team. Review the list to ensure that no important district department, school/ program, or stakeholder group has been overlooked.
How should RTI Leadership Team meetings be organized? Team meetings should follow a fixed schedule, with a standard set of meeting agenda items regularly brought up for team discussion: • *Regularly scheduled meetings.* The RTI Leadership Team should meet at least monthly to allow it to effectively oversee the RTI implementation process across the district—and to respond to problems or challenges as they emerge. • *Standing meeting agenda.* In addition to those topics brought up for discussion by team members, the RTI Leadership Team should establish a small set of 'standing agenda' items— key discussion topics that are revisited at each meeting. Examples of topics that might be included on a team's standing meeting agenda might include 'school-wide literacy screenings', 'resources for classroom interventions', and 'update in state RTI guidelines and regulations'.	☐ *Schedule meetings.* Create a schedule of RTI Leadership Team meetings for the full school year—and ensure that those meeting dates are shared with all team members. ☐ *Draft a standing meeting agenda.* Select topics to be put onto a standing meeting agenda for the RTI Leadership Team. Set time aside occasionally at team meetings to discuss items should be removed from or added to the agenda.

• *Subcommittees.* If the RTI Leadership Team is so large that frequent meetings are difficult to schedule and unwieldy to run, consider dividing the team's work among subcommittees (e.g., Assessment, Academic Interventions, Behavioral Interventions, District RTI Plan). Each subcommittee would meet as frequently as needed to complete its work. The full RTI Leadership Team may then meet less often (e.g., on a quarterly basis) to review and approve subcommittee recommendations.	☐ [Optional] *Develop a list of subcommittees.* Divide the duties of the full RTI Leadership Team into subcommittees. For each subcommittee, select a descriptive name, define its duties, and recruit members from the larger team.
What are structured forms of planning that can benefit the RTI Leadership Team? No RTI Leadership Team can be expected to think of all necessary steps or to avoid all possible pitfalls when implementing RTI. However, there are structured planning formats that teams can follow to increase the probability that they have considered the most important issues when preparing a district RTI Plan: • *SWOT analysis.* In the complex RTI planning process, it can be helpful to perform a SWOT ('strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats') analysis to determine those enabling and hindering forces within and outside of the school district that could affect RTI implementation. • *Stages of RTI implementation.* When introducing any significant changes to a school system, the RTI Leadership Team should think about planning for that systems change by using a four-stage process: (1) Preparation; (2) Initial Implementation; (3) Institutionalization; (4) Ongoing Development/Updating.	☐ *Conduct a SWOT analysis.* Reserve time at an RTI Leadership Team meeting to conduct a SWOT analysis. ☐ *Follow the four-stage systems change framework for all RTI initiatives.* Make it a habit when creating and updating the district RTI plan to subject each major component of the plan to the four-stage systems-change framework: (1) Preparation; (2) Initial Implementation; (3) Institutionalization; (4) Ongoing Development/Updating.
How can the RTI Leadership Team find resources to support RTI? The great majority of school districts that implement RTI will do so largely by using their existing resources. The RTI Leadership Team can help the school district to adopt an RTI model by systematically inventorying district and building resources (personnel, instructional and assessment materials, staff development funds, etc.) that can be made available to support RTI.	☐ *Conduct an inventory of RTI resources.* As one of its first acts, the RTI Leadership Team should conduct a thorough inventory of resources available to support RTI at the district level and at each school. This inventory should be updated yearly.