



Year 2 Final Report

July 31, 2011

RISS Rider A 2010-2011

Goal 1. Support and train special educators, parents, CDS staff, school administrators, and regular classroom teachers in two western Maine pilot RSU's in the development of effective Response to Intervention (RTI) systems, and disseminate RTI tools, processes, and models.

Objectives/ Strategies	Responsible	Deadline
Objective 1.1. The provider will increase the number of effective RTI systems in the two pilot site RSU's.	Heidi McGinley with RISS staff	Ongoing
1.1.1. Support classroom-level interventions in literacy and mathematics.		
1.1.2. Support schools in fully implementing RTI.		
1.1.3. Support districts in fully implementing RTI, including connecting PBIS work in RSU 10 with work in academics.		
Deliverables Objective 1.1.: On October 29, 2010, January 28, 2011, April 29, 2011, and July 31, 2011, the provider will submit reports specifying progress toward the strategies and including: i. meeting dates, ii. professional development support provided, iii. Products created.		
Objective 1.2.: The provider will increase the number of schools in the pilot RSU's using a continuous improvement model to implement and sustain Rtl systems over time.	Heidi McGinley with RISS staff	Ongoing
1.2.1. Implement the RISS Collaborative Review protocol to inform school RTI evaluation and planning.		
Deliverables Objective 1.2.: On October 29, 2010, January 28, 2011, April 29, 2011, and July 31, 2011, the provider will submit reports specifying progress toward the strategies and including: i. meeting dates, ii. professional development support provided.		
Objective 1.3. The provider will increase opportunities for collaborative work and learning among special educators, CDS staffs, administrators, and other educators in the two pilot RSU's.	Heidi McGinley with RISS staff	Ongoing
1.3.1. Continue the RISS Design Team.		
1.3.2. Identify collaborative professional development activities and coordinate professional development opportunities.		
Deliverables Objective 1.3.: On October 29, 2010, January 28, 2011, April 29, 2011, and July 31, 2011, the provider will submit reports specifying progress toward the strategies and including: i. meeting dates, ii. professional development support provided, iii. Products created.		
Objective 1.4.: The provider will increase the information available on effective school and district RTI implementation.	Heidi McGinley with RISS staff	Ongoing
1.4.1. Develop models of effective RTI implementation at the school and district levels.		
1.4.2. Disseminate RTI tools, processes, and models in appropriate modalities for audience and purpose to other Western Maine Partnership districts and statewide through the RISS web site, Department of Education and professional organization publications, and Maine professional education organizations and associations, including MADSEC, the Maine Principals Association, Maine School Management Association, regional district partnerships (the Maine Content Literacy Project and the other regional members of the Partnership of Partnerships).		

RISS Rider A 2010-2011

Goal 1. Support and train special educators, parents, CDS staff, school administrators, and regular classroom teachers in two western Maine pilot RSU's in the development of effective Response to Intervention (RTI) systems, and disseminate RTI tools, processes, and models.

Objectives/ Strategies	Responsible	Deadline
Deliverables Objective 1.4.: On October 29, 2010, January 28, 2011, April 29, 2011, and July 31, 2011, the provider will submit reports specifying progress toward the strategies and including: i. dissemination dates, ii. dissemination audiences. iii. dissemination products created.		

RISS Action Plan 2010-2011

Objective 1.1. Increase the number of effective RTI systems in the two pilot site RSU's.

1.1.1. Support classroom-level interventions in literacy and mathematics.

Tasks	Target completion date	Who	Action Status
1. Complete the interactive web-based core program/intervention framework for reading with K-8 literacy specialists in both RSU's.	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: ongoing; second quarter: ongoing; third quarter: ongoing
2. Pilot the reading framework in schools in both RSU's.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Second quarter: planning.
3. Refine the framework.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Second quarter: planning.
4. Convene K-8 mathematics specialists in the two RSU's to identify core program skills, universal screening tools, grade level benchmarks, teaching strategies, and progress monitoring assessments in mathematics in grades K-12.	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: 8/17/2010; 10/5/2010; second quarter: 11/16/10 & 1/25/11
5. Create a RISS mathematics portal to support mathematics specialists and guide core program/intervention development.	7/31/11	RISS staff	8/2010 complete
6. Complete the interactive web-based core program/intervention framework for mathematics.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Second quarter: first phase complete (intervention framework, exemplar template, teacher training); third quarter: web-based Response to ME upload page complete.
7. Train teachers and principals to use the steps of the classroom intervention cycle (reflected in the web framework design).	7/31/11	RISS staff	Begun 10/18/2010; second quarter: in reading and math teacher groups; third quarter: dissemination began; fourth quarter: teachers from each RSU described the process in math and schol groups back home, principals received complete packets describing the cycle, completed lesson plans readied for web site posting.

1.1.2. Support schools in fully implementing RTI.

1. Support the continued development of school RTI Leadership Teams.	Ongoing.	RISS staff	Begun 8/2010; ongoing
2. Work with principals and school RTI Leadership Teams to develop standard protocols and decision rules in a majority of the schools in the two RSU's.	Ongoing.	RISS staff	Ongoing; completed 7/29/11
3. Train teachers in the use of the protocols and decision rules.	Ongoing.	RISS staff	See 1.1.1. above

1.1.3. Support districts in fully implementing RTI, including connecting PBIS work in RSU 10 with work in academics.

1. Work with district RTI Leadership Teams to identify district-wide standard protocols and decision rules, including: a. student movement across tiers;	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: Continuing in RSU 10 with grades 6-12; second quarter: beginning in RSU 38; third quarter: continuing in both RSU's; fourth quarter: completed in RSU 10, in RSU 38 on a school-by-school basis.
b. Parent participation and involvement;	7/31/11	RISS staff	Completed in RSU 10
c. Levels of staff and team responsibility.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Completed in RSU 10, discussed on a school-by-school basis in RSU 38.
d. RTI as a pre-referral system.	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: Begun in RSU 10; second quarter: beginning in RSU 38; third quarter: continuing in both RSU's; fourth quarter: completed in RSU 10, documentation issues identified in RSU 38.
2. Work with district RTI Leadership Teams to map assets supporting RTI.	3/31/11	RISS staff	Third quarter: informal discussions in RSU 38; fourth quarter: completed in RSU 10 by the district.
3. Work with district RTI Leadership Teams and district A-Teams to create RTI resource development plans in each RSU.	3/31/11	RISS staff	Second quarter: beginning in RSU 10; fourth quarter: not identified as a project-related need in either RSU.
4. Continue professional development and support in PBIS development in RSU 38 and connect RSU 10 PBIS work to academics.	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: Begun in RSU 38 on 10/8/2010; continuing in RSU 10; second quarter: continuing in both RSU's; Third quarter: continuing in RSU 38; planning for the next school year in RSU 10; fourth quarter: planning for 2011-12 A&B connections in RSU 10 complete, PBIS school-wide work begun in a majority of RSU 38 schools, Syntiro staff discussions about A & B connections resulted in a model that connects both.
Objective 1.2.: The provider will increase the number of schools in the pilot RSU's using a continuous improvement model to implement and sustain Rtl systems over time.			
1.2.1. Implement the RISS Collaborative Review protocol to inform school RTI evaluation and planning.			
1. Support schools in the two pilot RSU's in meeting the documentation requirements for the Collaborative Review process, including: a. Yearly use of the RISS teacher survey.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Ongoing; second quarter: four schools prepared material/documentation and participated in the collaborative review process; fourth quarter: teacher survey completed online by both RSU's.
b. Yearly use of the RISS school needs assessment.	7/31/11	RISS staff	ongoing; second quarter: determined the school needs assessment is not necessary or helpful on an annual basis; translated classroom, school, and district needs assessment items to the 7 Rtl Foundations framework as "indicators of full implementation" at each level of system (see second quarter deliverables).

c. School-level data collection to evaluate RTI effectiveness.	7/31/11	RISS staff	ongoing; second quarter: determined the school needs assessment is not necessary or helpful on an annual basis; translated classroom, school, and district needs assessment items to the 7 Rtl Foundations framework as "indicators of full implementation" at each level of system (see second quarter deliverables); third quarter: designed school-level data collection system for RSU 10; fourth quarter: RISS final evaluation data collection process included mapping Rtl systems in each school in reading, writing, math, and behavior.
2. Provide opportunities for schools to use the Collaborative Review process at three points during the school year.	7/31/11	RISS staff	ongoing; second quarter: 1/31/11 collaborative review for 4 schools, 2 from each RSU; third quarter: determined that only one review will be done this year.
Objective 1.3. The provider will increase opportunities for collaborative work and learning among special educators, CDS staffs, administrators, and other educators in the two pilot RSU's.			
1.3.1. Continue the RISS Design Team.			
1. Establish the 2010-11 Design Team meeting schedule and agendas (August, October, December, February, April, June).	Ongoing	RISS staff	Schedule established and disseminated.
1.3.2. Identify collaborative professional development activities and coordinate professional development opportunities.			
1. Convene at least 2 of the following RTI implementation study/task groups (estimated at 3 half-day sessions per group) composed of regular classroom teachers, special educators, administrators and CDS directors within the two pilot RSU's and across the Western Maine Partnership region as appropriate to the topic: a. Middle/high school Rtl design;	7/31/11	RISS staff	Planned in second quarter, schools elected not to participate; third quarter: RISS staff presented its "seamless system" process to the UMF SPOC (another western Maine IDEA professional development grant awarded in the same cycle) advisory committee, offering to establish and facilitate a wider western Maine area cohort for the same purpose. SPOC had not followed up on this discussion by the end of the third quarter; fourth quarter: provided information about "seamless system" findings and design to DOE early childhood consultant.
b. Student involvement in setting learning goals.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Second quarter: incorporated into RISS intervention framework.
c. Parent involvement and participation in RTI.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Not pursued.
2. Provide continued support to the "seamless system" study group, including: a. cross-agency/school/family visits.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Planned in second quarter, schools elected not to participate; third quarter: RISS staff presented its "seamless system" process to the UMF SPOC (another western Maine IDEA professional development grant awarded in the same cycle) advisory committee, offering to establish and facilitate a wider western Maine area cohort for the same purpose. SPOC had not followed up on this discussion by the end of the third quarter.
b. Regular "common language" meetings among pre-Kindergarten, pre-school, Kindergarten, and CDS staff.	7/31/11	RISS staff	See 1.3.2.2.

Objective 1.4.: The provider will increase the information available on effective school and district RTI implementation.			
1.4.1. Develop models of effective RTI implementation at the school and district levels.			
1. Execute contract with third party evaluator.	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: Complete
2. Develop evaluation plan.	7/31/11	RISS staff	First Quarter: Evolving; second quarter: new collaborative evaluation plan involves staff and evaluator working jointly; third quarter: "noticeable results" identified by RSU representatives will be the basis for interviews and other evaluation data collection during the fourth quarter.
3. Complete activities necessary for objective third-party evaluation.	7/31/11	RISS staff	ongoing
4. Prepare and submit required Department of Education reports.	7/31/11	RISS staff	as required
5. Translate RISS project activities, tools, and processes into model(s) of effective RTI system implementation (see all deliverables).	7/31/11	RISS staff	ongoing
6. Post tested tools and processes on the RISS web site as soon as they become available throughout the year.	7/31/11	RISS staff	ongoing; fourth quarter: completed re-design of RISS web site to disseminate project products.
1.4.2. Disseminate RTI tools, processes, and models in appropriate modalities for audience and purpose to other Western Maine Partnership districts and statewide through the RISS web site, Department of Education and professional organization publications, and Maine professional education organizations and associations, including MADSEC, the Maine Principals Association, Maine School Management Association, regional district partnerships (the Maine Content Literacy Project and the other regional members of the Partnership of Partnerships).			
1. Develop cooperative relationships with organizations and associations with a stake in effective RTI implementation, including: a. The Maine Content Literacy Project to identify effective ways to disseminate RTI tools and processes in western Maine participating districts and statewide.	7/31/11	RISS staff	See meeting planning page
b. The professional education organizations represented in the Maine Department of Education's RTI Leadership Team (MADSEC, MPA, MSMA, MPF, MEA).	7/31/11	RISS staff	See meeting planning page
c. The Partnership of Partnerships.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Ongoing
2. Disseminate RISS tools, processes, and models.	7/31/11	RISS staff	Ongoing; fourth quarter: completed re-design of RISS web site.

RISS 2010-2011 Deliverables

Objective 1.1. Increase the number of effective RTI systems in the two pilot site RSU's.

First Quarter Deliverables (10/29/10)

Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products created
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page	1. Seven foundations and indicators of implementation. 2. Classroom Intervention Cycle flowchart.

Second Quarter Deliverables (1/28/11)

Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products created
See meeting planning page Nov. - January	See meeting planning page Nov. - January	1. DRAFT Response to ME literacy intervention framework aligned with the Common Core State Standards in reading K-5 (samples attached). 2. DRAFT Response to ME reading intervention exemplar. 3. Response to ME mathematics essential standards for intervention K-8 (see www.syntiro.org/riss login page for complete work; samples attached). 4. Response to ME mathematics intervention lesson planning framework; page 1 completed for Grade 3 and Grade 5 fractions standards.

Third Quarter Deliverables (4/29/11)

Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products created
See meeting planning page for Feb. -- April.	See meeting planning page for Feb. -- April.	1. Grade 3 and grade 5 mathematics intervention exemplars created. 2. Response to ME upload web page created. 3. PBIS-academics discussion draft. 4. Multiple tiered system design drafted.

Fourth Quarter Deliverables (7/31/11)

Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products created
See meeting planning page for May-July.	See meeting planning page for May-July.	1. Quality criteria for math intervention lesson plans. 2. 12 5E intervention lesson plans, including diagnostic assessments, student self-assessments, explicit instruction, scaffolded practice and progress monitoring assessments aligned with essential common core math standards (to be posted at www.syntiro.org/riss in August 2011). 3. Math textbook series alignment matrix begun.

Objective 1.2.: Increase the number of schools in the pilot RSU's using a continuous improvement model to implement and sustain Rtl systems over time.

First Quarter Deliverables (10/29/10)

Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	
Second Quarter Deliverables (2/26/10)		
Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	
	Products: 1. Standard protocol flowchart.	
	2. Collaborative review revised protocol and 1/31/11 agenda.	
	3. Collaborative review information provided by two schools.	
Third Quarter Deliverables (4/29/11)		
Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	
See meeting planning page for Feb. -- April.	See meeting planning page.	
Fourth Quarter Deliverables (7/31/11)		
Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	
See meeting planning page for May-July.	See meeting planning page for May-July.	
Objective 1.3. Increase opportunities for collaborative work and learning among special educators, CDS staffs, administrators, and other educators in the two pilot RSU's.		
First Quarter Deliverables (10/29/10)		
Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products Created
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	
Second Quarter Deliverables (2/26/10)		
Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products Created
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	
Third Quarter Deliverables (4/29/11)		
Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products Created
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	
Fourth Quarter Deliverables (7/31/11)		

Meeting dates	Professional development support provided	Products Created
Objective 1.4. Increase the information available on effective school and district RTI implementation.		
First Quarter Deliverables (10/29/10)		
Dissemination dates	Dissemination audiences	Dissemination products
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	1. One-page description.
		2. Powerpoint.
Second Quarter Deliverables (2/26/10)		
Dissemination dates	Dissemination audiences	Dissemination products
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	1. All deliverables listed (except school collaborative review materials) are used in dissemination.
		2. MADSEC Winter Newsletter article.
		3. Revised Year 2 Evaluation Plan.
Third Quarter Deliverables (4/29/11)		
Dissemination dates	Dissemination audiences	Dissemination products
See meeting planning page for Feb. -- April.	See meeting planning page for Feb. -- April.	1. All products listed are used in dissemination.
		2. "Noticeable results" identified.
Fourth Quarter Deliverables (7/31/11)		
Dissemination dates	Dissemination audiences	Dissemination products
See meeting planning page.	See meeting planning page.	1. All products listed are used in dissemination.
		2. Re-designed RISS web page.
		3. Final evaluation report.

Key: pink items are support provided; yellow items are dissemination activities.

Meeting Dates	Group/Person	Location	Purpose	Materials	Lead	Food	Pick Up Date	Theme
5/3/2011	Ann Pike	Auburn	Math planning	5/5/11 workshop design	Heidi			
5/4/2011	Rumford ES Rtl Leaders	Rumford	Mapping Rtl reading, writing, math, behavior	7 foundations	Heidi			
5/5/2011	Moving to Math teachers from both RSU's	Farmington	Lesson plan development	handouts & web resources	Heidi	NA		numbers
5/6/2011	Corda	Phone	Academic-PBIS connections	A&B RSU 10 discussion draft	Heidi			
5/9/2011	RISC Districts	Hallowell	Partnership, dissemination	RISS dissemination materials	Heidi			
5/9/2011	RSU 10 A&B working group	Dixfield	Connecting A&B for next year	NA	Heidi			
5/10/2011	DOE Rtl Steering Committee	Augusta	Regular meeting		Heidi			
5/11/2011	Melanie Chassee	Wilton	Rtl Mapping	NA	Ann			
5/11/2011	Sue & Ann	Auburn	Math planning	Criteria for math intervention lesson plan completion	Heidi			
5/13/2011	Syntiro	Readfield	A&B connections		Kathryn			
5/16/2011	Corda	Readfield	A&B	Notes	Ann			
5/18/2011	Cheryl Gurney	Mexico	Evaluation interview	Interview protocol	Heidi			
5/18/2011	Sarah Irish	Dixfield	Noticable Results	Interview protocol	Ann			
5/19/2011	Sue Rowbotham	Hartford-Sumner ES	Evaluation interview	Interview protocol	Heidi			
5/19/2011	RSU 38 staff	Readfield	Evaluation interviews	Interview protocol	Doris Ray			
5/20/2011	RSU 38 staff	Readfield	Evaluation interviews	Interview protocol	Doris Ray			
5/23/2011	RSU 38 staff	Readfield	Evaluation interviews	Interview protocol	Doris Ray			
5/23/2011	Sue & Ann	Auburn	Math planning	math lesson plans	Heidi			
5/24/2011	Celena Ranger	Dixfield	Rtl Mapping	Interview questions	Ann			
5/25/2011	Tanya, Dirigo HS	Dixfield	Noticable Results	interview protocol	Ann			
5/26/2011	Kathy Richards	Peru	Rtl mapping	Interview questions	Ann			
5/26/2011	Dixfield Elementary	Peru	Noticable Results	interview protocol	Ann			
5/27/2011	Ryan Wilkins	Hartford-Sumner ES	Rtl mapping		Heidi			
6/1/2011	Susan Smith	Ellsworth	A&B planning	work to date	Heidi			
6/1/2011	RSU 38 Math teachers	Readfield	Math lesson development	criteria, steps	Heidi			
6/6/2011	Syntiro	Readfield	A&B connections	work to date	Kathryn			

6/8/2011	Sue and Ann	Auburn	Math lesson plan development	Work to date	Heidi			
6/14/2011	Mike Poulin	Dixfield	Rtl Mapping	Interview questions	Ann			
6/15/2011	Melanie Chasse	Wilton	Noticable Results	Interview protocol	Ann			
6/17/2011	George Reuter	Buckfield	Rtl Mapping	Interview Questions	Ann			
6/20/2011	Doris & Ann	Syntiro	Coding interview data	interview transcriptions	Doris Ray			
6/21/2011	Doris & Ann	Syntiro	Coding interview data	interview transcriptions	Doris Ray			
6/21/2011	Math teachers frm both RSU's	Readfield	Math textbook alignment	Math work to date	Sue Card			
6/24/2011	Cathy Jacobs	Readfield	Rtl mapping	Interview questions	Ann			
6/27/2011	Matt Gilbert, Mt Valley HS	Jay	Rtl Mapping	interview questions	Ann			
6/28/2011	Janie Blatt	phone	Seamless System	notes	Ann			
7/19/2011	Pia Holmes	Manchester	Rtl Mapping	interview questions	Heidi			
7/19/2011	Cheryl Hasenfus	Readfield	Rtl Mapping	interview questions	Heidi			
7/19/2011	Ann & Corda	Readfield	planning		Heidi			
7/20/2011	Carol Fritz	Readfield	Rtl Mapping	interview questions	Heidi			
7/29/2011	DOE	NA	Year 2 final report due		Heidi			



RISS Final Evaluation

July 31st, 2011

Prepared by: George S. Smith, Ph.D., Project Evaluator & Heidi McGinley, RISS Project Director

RISS Final Evaluation

George S. Smith, Ph.D., Project Evaluator and Heidi McGinley, Project Director

Project Overview

In August 2009 Syntiro received a multi-year IDEA professional development grant from the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) to provide professional development and support in Response to Intervention (RtI) system design and implementation in two Regional School Units (RSUs) – RSU 10 and RSU 38. The RtI Support System's (RISS) emphasis in Year One of the project was on literacy interventions in both districts. In Year Two mathematics and positive behavior interventions and support (PBIS, only in RSU 38) were added. In June 2011 the Maine Department of Education determined the project was ineligible for IDEA discretionary funding.

The RtI Support System (RISS) had one priority goal and four strategies:

Priority Goal (from Rider A.) Support and train special educators, parents, CDS staff, school administrators, and regular classroom teachers in two western Maine pilot RSUs in the development of effective Response to Intervention (RtI) systems, and disseminate RtI tools, processes, and models.

Strategy 1.A.1.: Increase the number of effective RtI systems in the two pilot site RSUs.

Strategy 1.A.2.: Increase the number of schools in the pilot RSUs using a continuous improvement model to implement and sustain RtI systems over time.

Strategy 1.A.3.: Increase opportunities for collaborative work and learning among special educators, CDS staffs, administrators, and other educators in the two pilot RSUs.

Strategy 1.A.4.: Increase the information available on effective school and district RtI implementation.

This report is a collaborative effort of the RISS third-party evaluator and the project director. The report summarizes the value the project added to school and district RtI system development in its two demonstration districts. It describes project results and challenges and concludes with recommendations for further work at the state level.

Project Structures

RISS was staffed by two external contractors who provided on-site support in demonstration districts, four part-time Syntiro staff members and three additional contractors who supported specific project activities. The RISS Design Team formed in Year One to advise on project activities. It included district and school administrators from both RSU's. The Design Team identified cross-district collaborative activities and evaluated the impact of project work in and across the two RSU's. The Design Team met frequently in Year One and irregularly in Year Two.

Project structures in each RSU included school RtI Leadership Teams, responsible for leadership, planning, coordination, and continuous improvement. Each RSU was also asked to create or designate a district RtI Leadership Team. In RSU 38 the administrative team served as the RtI Leadership Team. In RSU 10 three district teams formed: a district Literacy RtI Leadership Team, composed of literacy specialists, classroom teachers, and principals; a district Math RtI Leadership Team, composed primarily of classroom teachers and Title 1 specialists; and a district PBIS Leadership Team.

Project Approach

RISS was structured as a demonstration project. Its two RSU partners served as laboratories to develop RtI processes and structures that work in the daily lives of students, teachers, and schools. This approach was taken because the RtI research base is thin or non-existent in all content areas and grade spans except K-2 reading. Some RtI experts advocate resource intensive structures and processes for RtI systems that are out of reach for many Maine schools. Some seek to apply a special education approach in general education, and offer highly technical protocols to be used with all students. RtI advocates contradicted each other about both protocols and structures.

Consequently, two initial assumptions drove the project's approach. First, RISS assumed that the RtI literature describes a vision and measurable student achievement goals, but does not proscribe how those goals are achieved in K-12 RtI systems. RISS connected agreed upon RtI design elements to the extensive research available in the school improvement, student achievement, and instructional effectiveness literature in its project approach. The project used organizational development/school change methodologies in its work to: 1) create leadership structures; 2) get to the classroom level as soon as possible; 3) involve local experts and build on existing local capacity; and 4) support continuous improvement processes. A second foundational assumption was that what RISS learned and developed would be valuable to other schools and districts and the MDOE would seek to disseminate this information across the state.

Consistent with school improvement and student achievement research, four additional assumptions and two working hypotheses determined the project's approach:

1. RtI is standards-based.
2. RtI is NOT a separate program or initiative.
3. RtI IS a designed system of interconnected school and district improvement practices that increase student achievement.
4. Principals are key in RtI leadership and design.

The project's two working hypotheses arose from the lack of an accepted definition of an "effective" RtI system. The Maine Department of Education's three-tiered RtI triangle led to two hypotheses:

- The more effective the RtI system, the more likely the proportion of students who fall into each of the three RtI groups will resemble those of the model (i.e., 80%, 15%, 5%).

- Schools with more effective approaches to RtI will have fewer special education referrals than schools with less effective approaches to RtI.

In order to measure the effectiveness of an RtI system, minimal baseline practices must be present. These minimal practices include:

1. Clear student learning targets and grade level proficiency benchmarks.
2. Aligned universal screeners administered uniformly to all students at prescribed intervals.
3. Use of universal screening data to identify struggling students.
4. Identification of staff roles and responsibilities to provide additional support.
5. Time built in to the school day and week to provide additional support.
6. Progress monitoring tools available and consistently used to track student progress.
7. A functioning data collection and management process to track student progress and movement across tiers.

The minimal practices described above constitute the RtI continuous improvement cycle of *screening, support, re-assessing, determining next steps, and beginning again*. By the end of Year Two none of the RISS schools had all of these practices in place, although a majority of K-8 schools in RSU 10 had four or more of the seven practices in place.

Baseline Demographic and Assessment Information

The first RISS project year (2009-10) was also the first year of consolidation for both partner districts. RSU 10 consolidated from three previous districts in rural western Maine, and includes three K-5 elementary schools, one K-6 elementary school, two 6-8 middle schools, one 7-12 school, and three high schools. The K-12 student population of RSU 10 is about 2700 students. The distribution of economically disadvantaged students ranges from 54% to 79%.

RSU 38 also consolidated from a union of individual schools with a common superintendent to a single legal entity with a single school board. RSU 38 includes four K-5 elementary schools, one 6-8 middle school, and one high school, serving a total student population of about 1000 students. Here the distribution of economically disadvantaged students ranges from 7% to 69%. Two of the elementary schools serve fewer than 20 students per grade.

Baseline data to assess RtI implementation levels in each school were collected in August and September 2009. Data were collected in interviews with the principals of all 16 schools in both RSUs and through the administration of project developed teacher, school, and district needs assessments.

Table 1: RISS Year One Baseline Data – Principal Interviews and School Needs Assessments

	K-5 Schools (9 schools)	6-12 Schools (7 schools)
Principal’s knowledge of/training in RtI	with training/knowledge (5) without training/knowledge (4)	with training/knowledge (2) without training/knowledge (5)
Principal’s rating of the importance of RtI for reading.	High in importance (9)	High in importance in (3) low in importance (4)
Principal’s assessment of internal expertise in reading/literacy.	Expertise present (9)	Expertise present (3)
Principal’s assessment of current use of student achievement data.	Data used routinely by classroom teachers to identify student learning needs (2)	Data used routinely by classroom teachers to identify student learning needs (1)
	Data used by grade level teams to identify student learning needs (4)	Data used by grade level teams to identify student learning needs (1)
	Data analyzed by principal and provided to teachers (2)	Data analyzed by principal and provided to teachers (4)
Existing RtI Leadership Team	No existing RtI Leadership Team (9) SAT makes student referrals (5)	No existing RtI Leadership Team (7) SAT makes student referrals (3)
Existing RtI implementation plan	Schools with existing plan (1)	Schools with existing plan (1)

The district level RtI Needs Assessment yielded these results:

- Neither district had an RtI implementation plan.
- RSU 10, newly consolidated from three previously separate districts, had no written curriculum.
- RSU 38, working for the first time as a consolidated district, had a written curriculum that did not drive K-12 instruction.
- Neither district had clear decision rules for student movement across tiers.

Project Activities and Products

RISS staff spent 154 days (81 days in Year One and 73 days in Year Two) providing on-site and cross-district professional development and coaching, working with teachers and administrators to develop products and processes, and monitoring district progress in the two RSU’s.

On-site support:

- School and district RtI leadership team formation and development.
- Training for principals and other administrators in the seven foundations.
- RtI school and district needs assessment and planning.
- Connecting RtI system design with all other school and district efforts to increase student achievement.
- Coaching/co-facilitating district RtI Leadership Teams.

Cross-district support:

- Convening literacy specialists from both RSUs to: identify student learning outcomes and grade level benchmarks at each grade level in reading; identify aligned universal screeners; and identify progress monitoring assessments.
- Convening K-8 teachers to identify essential Common Core math standards and develop intervention lesson plans to address them.
- Convening principals to learn about RtI and share common problems and solutions.
- Creating cross-district study groups to explore middle-high school RtI design and seamless transitions to Kindergarten for children and families receiving pre-K services.
- Planning and data analysis in the RISS Design Team.

Products developed to support RSU's

Disparities in the RtI literature and disagreements about how to implement RtI effectively were apparent when RISS began in 2009. The project used its own continuous improvement cycle, which included formal data collection in each school about every six months. As needs and questions emerged, the project staff developed products and processes to address them, often in partnership with the educators in both districts. Schools and districts needed a clearer understanding of what effective interventions are, what specific skills interventions are designed to address, how to use assessment to identify needs and track progress, what the classroom teacher's role is in providing interventions, and how a practical and effective RtI system might look. RISS developed seventeen major products to address these needs.

- A. *Seven RtI Foundations*, a school improvement-based model to guide RtI system design:
 1. Ensure leadership, structure, coordination, and continuous improvement.
 2. Know what all students need to know and be able to do and how well.
 3. Use universal screening data.
 4. Target interventions (evidence-based strategies and programs).
 5. Track response to the intervention (progress monitoring).
 6. Strengthen the core program.
 7. Build shared responsibility for student achievement.
- B. A criterion-based document that outlines a method for evaluating and selecting Universal Screening tools.
- C. A K-8 reading RtI resource framework incorporating the literacy specialists' work.
- D. A *Common Core State Standards* intervention framework, which can become a web-based resource for teachers, specialists, and administrators. The framework organizes district-level decisions regarding:
 1. Skills essential for students to move to the next grade level.
 2. Sub-skills associated with each standard.
 3. Universal screeners to be used to measure the standard and the grade level proficiency benchmark.
 4. Appropriate diagnostic assessments to further identify student learning needs.
 5. Effective intervention teaching approaches and lesson plans.
 6. Progress monitoring tools and guidance.
- E. Identification of essential K-8 Common Core math standards (those standards which require intervention before students can move on).

- F. A research-based intervention lesson plan format and 12 model lessons aligned with the essential Common Core math standards, which include diagnostic assessments, student engagement and self-assessment activities, explicit instruction, guided practice, and progress monitoring assessments.
- G. Indicators of full implementation of the *Seven RtI Foundations* at the classroom, school, and district levels.
- H. School and district planning protocols and templates.
- I. A classroom-level teacher self-assessment.
- J. A collaborative review process that uses the *Seven Foundation* indicators to provide schools with feedback regarding their RtI implementation progress and helps them identify next steps.
- K. A vision and action plan for creating seamless transitions to elementary school for children and their families receiving pre-K services and support.
- L. A multiple tiers model for K-8 RtI.
- M. A clear definition of "intervention".
- N. Definitions of the purpose and outcomes for RtI in grades 6-12.
- O. Created a standard protocol flowchart to guide student movement across tiers and developed and tested a school RtI system mapping process.
- P. Developed a preliminary model to connect academics and behavioral tiered interventions in a single system.
- Q. Developed a middle school RtI model for reading and mathematics.

Project products and processes were disseminated through the RISS web page, in conference presentations at MADSEC, MPA, and MEA, in regional meetings, in several district administrative team meetings, in the MDOE's RtI Steering Committee, in the Maine Curriculum Leaders' Association membership, and in the Maine Content Literacy Project Steering Committee.

Project Results

Data regarding the project's results were collected in principal interviews and in individual interviews with a cross-section of project participants at the end of Year Two. Principal interviews led administrators through an RtI system mapping process from the students' perspective, tracing the processes and protocols in place for students in reading, writing, mathematics, and behavior. Individual interviews with project participants employed an abridged version of Kleiner and Roth's (1996) Learning History process to evaluate two-year impact in participating RSU's.

School and District Status

Schools in both RSU's have made notable progress in implementing RtI systems during the two years of the project. However, none yet meet the state's IDEA and Chapter 20-A general intervention requirements, and none have all the components of fully implemented intervention systems in place. Table 2 describes the current RtI implementation status of the schools in each district in each of the four areas Maine requires by the beginning of the 2011-12 school year.

Table 2. RISS RtI Mapping Data June 2011

	PBIS/Behavior	Reading	Writing	Math
1. Universal screeners (Foundation 3)	RSU 10: Office referrals are the only universal screener listed at the elementary level. Middle and high school levels are beginning PBIS. RSU 38: Four elementary schools and the middle school are beginning to identify school-wide expectations.	RSU 10: NWEA is part of all schools' universal screening process; some schools use additional tools as diagnostics. How NWEA is used to identify and respond to student learning needs varies within each grade span. RSU 38: K-5 schools use the DRA 2. NWEA is used at the middle school. K-5 schools also use NWEA, but do not see it as the primary universal screener for reading.	RSU 10: No intervention process has yet been designed. RSU 38: No intervention process has been designed.	RSU 10: All schools use NWEA, but few have developed math intervention processes based on the data. RSU 38: NWEA is administered K-8 and is one consideration in identifying students needing additional support. The middle school also uses additional diagnostics.
2. RtI Leadership and Problem Solving Teams (Foundation 1)	RSU 10: All elementary schools and one middle school identified a distinct PBIS school team. RSU 38: No formal PBIS teams exist.	RSU 10: All schools clearly stated how RtI for reading/literacy is coordinated. The processes used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions are more uniform across elementary schools than among 6-12 schools. RSU 38: All schools clearly stated how RtI for reading/literacy is coordinated. Problem solving teams are less formal in K-5 schools.	RSU 10: Not yet in place in any school, but most schools expect to use the existing RtI Leadership Team, and the current problem-solving process for writing. RSU 38: No schools reported a clear leadership or problem solving process for writing.	RSU 10: Elementary schools anticipate using the same teams currently in place for reading for math. One middle school has both a reading and a math leadership team. RSU 38: K-8 schools anticipate using the same teams currently in place for reading for math.
3. Interventions (Foundation 4)	RSU 10: The district's PBIS plan progresses to Tier 2 for elementary schools in the 2011-12 school year, and in 6-12 schools in subsequent years. RSU 38: Tier 2 interventions may begin during the 2011-12 school year at the elementary level.	RSU 10: Intervention "menus" exist in two elementary schools and one middle school, and include both programs and lesson approaches. Reading interventions are done by literacy specialists and ed. techs. in a majority of K-8 schools, although some schools are involving other staff during designated intervention blocks either during or after the school day. RSU 38: All schools expect the first interventions to take the form of differentiation in the classroom, followed by support from and referral to specialists.	Not yet in place in any schools.	RSU 10: Math interventions take place in some schools with the same emphasis and priority as in reading. RSU 38: Math interventions take place in 1 elementary school and the middle school with the same emphasis and priority as in reading.

	PBIS/Behavior	Reading	Writing	Math
4. Progress monitoring (Foundation 5)	RSU 10: This does not apply yet in elementary or middle schools. High schools already have processes in place to monitor the impact of behavioral interventions. RSU 38: Not applicable yet.	RSU 10: Progress monitoring is uneven and anecdotal in all but one school. RSU 38: In K-8 schools NWEA and DRA 2 are used as progress monitoring assessments twice yearly.	Not yet in place in any school.	RSU 10: Progress monitoring is uneven and anecdotal in all but one school. RSU 38: In K-8 schools NWEA and DRA 2 are used as progress monitoring assessments twice yearly.
5. Plans for next year (Foundations 1-7)	RSU 10: The district has a clear plan for the 2011-12 school year. RSU 38: No district plan exists; individual schools are moving at their own pace.	RSU 10: All schools have clear plans for the 2011-12 school year. One high school has extensive plans for a fully-implemented RtI process for next year. Another high school is thinking about moving to a more systematic approach. RSU 38: Plans include heavy emphasis on the core program and consistent curriculum and instruction K-5.	RSU 10: District plans include emphasis on core curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Several elementary schools plan to use the same process used for reading for writing. RSU 38: The district will emphasize core program development.	RSU 10: Several elementary schools expect to use the same intervention process they've used for reading in math. One middle school has already implemented math interventions school-wide. One high school is expanding their current response to student math needs. Another high school wants to explore ways to address student math gaps. RSU 38: District emphasis is on core math curriculum, instruction and assessment K-5. Two schools will continue to provide math interventions.

Noticeable Results

In the spring of 2011 15 representatives from the two RSU's jointly identified eleven "noticeable results" from the project. Noticeable results are impacts that are observable, measurable, and significant – effects that would clearly not have happened without the project. Interviews with a cross-section of project participants in each RSU recorded participants' feelings and experiences with each result. Interview data confirm six noticeable results:

1. More teachers understand that accountability and responsibility for differentiation begins in the classroom (Foundation 7).
2. Participants agree that RtI needs to be standards-based (Foundation 2).
3. There is increased use of data to make decisions at all system levels (individual, team, school, RSU) (Foundation 3).
4. There is increased collaboration and the development of a common language within and among RSU's (Foundation 1 and 2).
5. RSU's and schools are re-thinking their use of time, human and fiscal resources (Foundation 1).
6. RISS has developed and implemented a set of useful tools and processes (Foundations 1-7).

Interview data include less confirmation of five of the eleven noticeable results:

7. There are capacities, structures, and processes in place that promise to be sustainable (Foundation 1).
8. RISS has a working hypothesis/definition of an "effective" RTI system and its elements (Foundations 1-7).
9. RISS has provided a model – structures, processes, products – for systematic data collection and reflection on what is working and not working for students (Foundations 3 and 5).
10. RSU 10 has the beginning of a written curriculum based on essential standards identified by RISS (Foundation 6).
11. RSU meetings are being held to mesh and align our RTI A (academic) and B (behavioral) (Foundation 1).

Overall, noticeable results interview data indicate RISS mobilized, energized, and focused the RtI work and moved the two RSU's along the "RtI path". Districts made progress they can articulate and demonstrate.

Noticeable Results Findings

1. More teachers understand that accountability and responsibility for differentiation begins in the classroom.

Interviewees' responses indicate they understand they are accountable and responsible for student learning and that it begins in the classroom.

- "Because all teachers have a group and are working with kids intensively they are more aware of which kids need more development."
- "We are responsible for strategies to meet the target of 80%."
- "We have finally admitted that our students are not where they need to be."

Interviewees also agreed they are seeing more teachers engaged in differentiation.

- "The fact that we have to differentiate is in the forefront."

- “Classroom teaching begins with differentiation.”
- “All (students) can receive differentiation.”
- “We are seeing more teachers changing what they’re doing for each student.”

There’s been more talk about RtI and about reaching all students.

- “I personally feel RtI is a good thing, but that it should be every student. All students need a next step.”
- “There are lots more conversations about how to reach all students.”
- “We are sharing students and are coming to the belief that all kids are our kids.”

2. Participants agree that RtI needs to be standards-based.

Interviewees agreed with this statement, describing standards as a “framework” and as the “basis for RtI”. “We need to know what the target is that we need to get students to.” Respondents agreed that the Common Core State Standards should serve as the primary district standards for intervention. Using standards to drive intervention decisions is a new idea for some. “The support is now linked to standards. Before, help might have been with homework. Students would get help with just pieces, now it’s the standard.” This year, “we get student data and plan using the standards.”

Respondents in each RSU see that identifying and committing to common standards also leads to a common language about student learning expectations. “We needed the core standards to build a common language.” However, while there is agreement that RtI needs to be standards-based, there is uncertainty in each RSU about when and how to use the Common Core standards to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the core program.

3. There is increased use of data to make decisions at all system levels (individual, team, school, RSU).

Interviewees agreed with this statement, provided evidence and described their experiences with data use. This increased use of data may also be accompanied by changes in attitudes about the value of student learning data. “Teachers are now eager to have their kids take NWEA and eager to look at the results.” In both RSU’s it appears that data is used by:

- Individuals (e.g. teachers collect data to document student performance, use data to ascertain student skills and growth).
- Teams (e.g. who review NWEA student assessment data to determine student groupings).
- Schools (e.g. use RTI data to identify professional development needs).
- RSU’s (e.g. departments meet at the central office to talk about common curriculum).

Interviewees suggested examples of the *formative* use of data to provide direction for designing instruction and interventions. They described some of the types of data in use (e.g. universal screening, NECAP, DIBELS, NWEA, DRA) and who used it. They also described the structures (e.g. grade level teams, RtI teams) in place for using data. One interviewee said, “Now it’s like a community of sharing data.”

Interviewees report that not only is this new level of data use making student learning/growth more visible, it is also a vehicle for ensuring continuous improvement. Some provided hopeful examples of students more engaged with data as a result of talking with them about their performance and progress.

4. There is increased collaboration and the development of a common language within and among RSU's.

Increased district-level collaboration is reported in RSU 10 in both literacy and math, although participants see more collaborative work to be done, especially in literacy. RSU 38 participants describe primarily school-level collaboration on RtI related issues ("We get together [at the district level] once or twice a year"). Collaboration to address student learning needs increased at the school level in both RSU's. Problem solving and grade level teams changed over the last two years so they could more effectively address student learning needs in each school. Interviewees cited cross-district work on literacy and math, but did not feel a common language developed in literacy. Participants in both districts report a common language about RtI – what it means, how it looks, and how to implement it.

5. RSU's and schools are re-thinking their use of time, human and fiscal resources.

Both districts and all schools represented in the interview data are working to find additional time for student support. All participants in RSU 10 identified time for student interventions as a continuing topic during the 2010-11 school year, and all reported modifications in how time will be structured for both students and teachers next year. FY '12 fiscal constraints and concerns were cited by most RSU 10 respondents ("It's counter-productive to create RtI and then not have any money to do it."), but rarely mentioned by RSU 38 interviewees. Schools in both RSU's are reconfiguring how time and staff are used, looking for creative ways to provide students with the additional support they need. "We have to go back to the drawing board about how we come up with ways that work for us." "There are no more fiscal or human resources available that we haven't looked at." Several interviewees in both RSU's reported the need for additional intervention resources for students. In one school, student resources for middle school students were borrowed from the elementary schools. In another, the RtI coordinator personally purchased \$1500 of student materials.

6. There are capacities, structures, and processes in place that promise to be sustainable.

The majority of respondents agreed that there are clearly capacities, structures and processes in place as a result of RISS. For example:

- "Yes, there are structures and processes in place that RISS has helped establish and support."
- "As long as I have one more year with support to teachers it will be sustainable after next year."
- "I feel we've come a long way – I'm using a very individualized plan and goal sheet. There is progress monitoring. Lessons are more structured. Goals are more measurable...RtI and literacy are developing together."
- "There is a willingness to buy into RtI because it's not just the next bandwagon. RtI holds promise because it's using data, interventions, and extra support."

While they were able to describe – in some in detail – the particular capacities, structures, and processes that are in place or emerging, several mentioned that these were relatively new in their organizations. "We are not far enough along in the process to really confirm that things are sustainable." While those interviewed all had some of these

elements in place, and some were very encouraged about the progress they are making, the underlying tone of their comments is that sustainability is “not yet” assured or even predictable.

One person’s comments, in particular, captures the fragility of the “sustainability” situation.

I’m not sure. One of the things they told us when we had our [collaborative] review was: What you are doing is an enormous amount of work and is it sustainable? I don’t know if it’s sustainable.

I don’t think our team will wear out. But, yesterday I went home and I was so discouraged. We’re doing NWEAs right now and I was comparing scores, seeing how kids did, etc. We started with a huge number of kids 70 in math and 60 kids in reading. So I’m thinking that number is going to really shrink. And it doesn’t appear to be. That would be my hope and the goal to have this group shrink. I mean it has shrunk but I have no data yet from the incoming fifth graders. If it does, and I have low numbers, I’ll be tickled pink, but who knows?

It’s a huge amount of work and to teach intervention classes. We also talked about instead of having longer periods every other day, having shorter periods every day. That, for me as a staff teacher will be hard to sustain.

7. RISS has a working hypothesis/definition of an “effective” RTI system and its elements.

The 11 interviewees show a range of responses about this noticeable result:

- Six (6) interviewees agreed with this statement. “Definitely. It’s the definition we’ve taken on. We’ve used a lot of their terminology and literature to guide teachers,” and, “Yes. The foundations (are this definition).”
- Four (4) respondents said that they either did not know or were unsure that RISS had such a working hypothesis/definition.
- One (1) of the interviewees said, “It’s more like RISS helped us and the schools to develop a definition over time. We had to come to agreement about this before we could make progress. We used the survey and schools analysis of the data to identify the difference between what was not effective and what was effective. Not sure if RISS had this in the beginning – it’s more like it evolved over time.”

It is difficult to interpret the reasons for this range of responses. The range may simply reflect RISS’s “model development” approach and evolutionary nature. It may also be indicative of what information participants had about RISS. Or, it may be a function of a participant’s level of involvement in RISS. In any case, interviewees differed in their view of this noticeable result.

8. RISS has provided a model – structures, processes, products – for systematic data collection and reflection on what is working and not working for students.

The interview data confirm that RISS provided structures, processes, and products. However, respondents differed in their perceptions of whether or not RISS provided a model. Four (4) interviewees agreed with this noticeable result. RISS “Totally!” had a model. In addition, they added, “RISS delivered – modeling the model.” That is, “We

experienced the model and then applied skills such as the think aloud. RISS would explain, model, apply, and ask for reflection of what is working and not working for students." One interviewee said, "RISS provided a model. As far as coming up with an actual product, not sure, yet." Another reflected, "I think so. Not sure it's known to the general population." Three (3) participants did not know, were unaware, or were not sure that RISS had provided a model. Four (4) responses did not address the issue of a model, but provided multiple examples of structures, processes, or products that they had experienced in their involvement with RISS (e.g. 5 E's, surveys, data collection).

As with the Noticeable Result #7 interpreting the range of responses is problematic. Again, it may reflect RISS's "model development" approach and evolutionary nature. It may be indicative of what information participants had about RISS. Or, responses may be a function of a participant's level of involvement in RISS. In any case, interviewees differed in their view of this noticeable result.

9. RISS has developed and implemented a set of useful tools and processes.

Most interviewees identified at least one useful tool or product they attributed to RISS. Those mentioned most often were the classroom-level needs assessment survey, the 5E math intervention lesson planning model, the seven RtI foundations, and the literacy RtI framework. The identified tools and products were consistent with each respondent's participation in a particular RISS activity.

10. RSU 10 has the beginning of a written curriculum based on essential standards identified by RISS.

The interview responses from RSU 10 participants varied from "not really" to "definitely". This variance seemed to correlate to the type and amount of involvement in specific curricular activities of the RISS grant. Two of the three people interviewed who had active roles in curricular grant work felt the following about RSU 10: "We are on the threshold. This is the next step." Two others who had not been directly involved in curricular work were not sure about the status of what had been done. The work in math (undertaken in Year Two) was indicated as being more solid than in literacy (undertaken in Year One) since the math activities included alignment to the newly adopted Common Core State Standards. A question surfaced about alignment in ELA. "Are we going to look at the (ELA) common core?"

The variance in responses may also have occurred due to attention being focused on a completed written document; as reflected by comments, "It is not written. It is not finished." Concerns remain about getting the work done with fewer workshop days.

11. RSU meetings are being held to mesh and align our RTI A (academic) and B (behavioral).

RSU's see the need to align RtI A (academic) and B (behavior). While interviewees from both districts could talk about the academic side and the behavioral side of RtI, many mentioned the need to mesh or align A and B. RSU 10 has a structure in place to begin those conversations. "A and B have not been working much together. We have had different committees and there's not been much conversation between them. Common language is necessary for students, teachers, parents and employees. A and B is really one thing. We are ready for that now." An interviewee from RSU 38 responded, "We need time to figure out how "to mesh these two."

Although interviewees from RSU 10 and RSU 38 responded that work was being done or had been scheduled for both academic RtI and behavioral RtI, RSU experiences with the behavioral side of RtI vary. RSU 10 has worked on PBIS for the last two years. RSU 38 “is heavier academic but it includes behavior.”

Summary

Schools in the RISS partner districts have made substantial progress in meeting the state’s IDEA general education intervention requirements. Schools have leadership and problem solving structures in place and are broadening responsibility for interventions from specialists to all classroom teachers. Teachers are using student learning data to address student learning needs, are actively seeking effective instructional interventions, welcome the use of the Common Core State Standards as learning targets for all students, and are beginning to change classroom practices in the core curriculum. Educators in both RSU’s credit RISS with developing helpful tools and processes. Data indicates that the project’s *Seven RtI Foundations* were a helpful organizing framework for its partner districts.

Schools are aware of the need to institutionalize intervention processes and protocols and recognize there is much more to do before they are sustainable. K-8 schools have reading intervention systems in place and have begun to move to math. Neither district yet has a clear process for writing, and only RSU 10 (after two years of intensive work) is ready to build a tiered intervention system for PBIS. RSU 10 has a clear district leadership structure to continue developing tiered intervention systems and a firm understanding of the school, teacher, and student resources needed to institutionalize that system, but has limited financial resources to do so. RSU 38 emphasizes changes in the core program so fewer students need additional support, but is undertaking that process one school at a time.

Recommendations

All recommendations focus on next steps for the Maine Department of Education in supporting RtI implementation across the state.

1. *It is recommended that all MDOE staff, policy, and assistance designed to significantly increase student achievement of the Common Core State Standards and the Learning Results, including IDEA staff and those with responsibility for RtI, be connected in a single working group.* The lack of agreement among RtI experts about how to implement tiered intervention systems was also apparent among the MDOE staff charged with supporting RtI development across the state. The department’s RtI Steering Committee made some progress in identifying common messages and approaches, but did not complete the process. By the end RISS’s second year Maine districts were developing their own approaches to RtI independently of the MDOE and in the absence of information about what other districts were doing. The RISS school improvement approach shows promise in connecting all student learning efforts to common standards. RISS learned that RtI is not a special program or initiative. It is a structural change designed to marshal all state and local resources to increase student achievement of common standards.

2. *The MDOE's messages about RtI need to reflect the research about increasing student achievement.* The RtI research base is still too meager to drive K-12 design. There is only one preliminary study describing high school tiered intervention, and it does measure RtI structures at this grade span against increased student learning or graduation rates – the ultimate goals of intervention.

3. *MDOE's assistance to schools and districts should be founded on what Maine educators have already learned about effective structures and practices, and on ample opportunities for joint problem solving and joint development to meet common local needs.* Maine districts have been working on RtI for several years. Some have made significant progress in implementing tiered systems that increase student learning. Formal and informal conversations with curriculum leaders and principals outside RISS's two partner districts indicate individual schools and districts are reinventing wheels, using scarce resources to develop intervention resources by themselves, creating local modifications to data management systems so they can track student progress, and struggling with assessment use and development. RISS found insufficient instructional resources to address specific student learning needs, ineffective or non-existent progress monitoring tools in some content areas and at some grade spans, and local difficulties in using universal screeners that were not well-aligned with standards. While the project developed models and exemplars to meet each of these needs, these resources are best developed from the state level. A minimal state effort to connect practitioners will result in significant increases in the resources and expertise available to all districts.