



**The Access Center**  
Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8

# State-to-State Information Sharing Community

Meeting Summary and Resources

October 17 and 18, 2006  
Washington, DC



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## State-to-State Information Sharing Community: Meeting Summary and Resources

### Introduction

The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K–8 is charged with improving educational outcomes for elementary and middle school students with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> The Center is dedicated to building the capacity of technical assistance (TA) systems, states, districts, and schools to help students with disabilities learn from the general education curriculum.

To that end, The Access Center—in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)—has established a mechanism through which states and districts may exchange information and learn about best practices for providing access to the general education curriculum. Through The Access Center’s State-to-State Information Sharing Community (ISC), participating state representatives and state teams share experiences, identify successes and challenges, find topical resources, and problem-solve in a variety of content areas.

The State-to-State ISC representatives met for the fourth time on October 17 and 18, 2006, to continue the sharing process that was established during the past years. Participants had chosen earlier to focus this meeting on issues surrounding multi-tier models, strategies that work to improve the performance of students who are not achieving at grade level, and state experiences with integrating No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), and other federal programs. The presentations were titled “Framework for System and School Improvement,” “Integrating NCLB and IDEA: Challenges and Opportunities,” and “Multi-Tiered Intervention Models.” Representatives from California and Pennsylvania also gave presentations on current initiatives in their states.

Following the presentations, participants discussed the most effective ways to implement research-based programs, practices, and tools in the areas noted above. Meeting participants and Access Center/CCSSO staff also shared applicable tools and resources available to assist states in their efforts to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

To support and maintain the ISC’s collaborative efforts that are strengthened at each face-to-face meeting, the Access Center uses distance technology activities to sustain ongoing contact and connection among the community, such as:

- Web-based tools—including Webinars—for sharing effective practices;

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<sup>1</sup>The Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K–8 is a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs. Drawing from national legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act and IDEA 2004, the Center is designed to connect states and districts with research-based practices, tools, and materials that can help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum. The Center specializes in helping decision-makers use data to improve instruction and services for students with disabilities through a variety of technical assistance strategies, including direct assistance, Web-based services, and an information sharing community program.

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- Coordinating conference calls among state teams for information sharing, problem solving, and providing mutual support; and
  - Developing written articles, conference proceedings documents, and case studies of effective efforts to improve access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities.

Following is a summary of each presentation given during the October meeting, as well as strategies that states are using to improve access for students with disabilities, and a list of additional resources.

For more information about the October meeting, or about ISC's in general, contact Susan Skipper: 202-403-5193 or [sskipper@air.org](mailto:sskipper@air.org).

## **Information Sharing Session October 17, 2006**

**Presentation by Dr. Margaret McLaughlin  
Professor, Department of Special Education,  
University of Maryland and Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of  
Exceptional Children and Youth**

### **“System and School Improvement for Students with Disabilities”**

The overall goal of system and school improvement is to identify and implement strategies that will improve learning outcomes for each child, including those with special needs. While the school improvement movement has focused primarily on the school as the unit of improvement, IDEA focuses predominately on the individual child. The challenge has been to integrate the focus of IDEA into the whole school improvement movement approach.

The system and school improvement movement is based on several key assumptions:

- The school is the unit of improvement;
- Improvement is measured by students performance on standardized assessments;
- Performance can be reliably measured; and
- Performance goals are relevant, attainable, and measured against universal standards.

Providing the framework for school improvement efforts, these assumptions are used to develop basic improvement strategies. One basic strategy is to focus attention on improving performance on assessments through increased knowledge acquisition in core academic subjects. This concentration on core academic subjects requires that all students receive access to the same subject matter. To meet this goal, professional development opportunities should be provided to teachers that focus on content-specific instructional strategies for working with students with disabilities. By increasing teachers’ skills and behaviors, schools would positively increase their human capacity to serve this population of students. Principals, in turn, would need to be trained on how to manage these changes.

To provide a historical perspective, four distinct eras of special education were presented. The first era occurred in the 1980s and is described as the “Catch up” years. During this era, Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act) was refined. The second era occurred during the early 1990s and was described as the “Solidifying” years. This era depicted a time when interactions

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between special and general education students were de-emphasized and not considered to be important for the academic development of students with disabilities. In fact, there was a conscious effort to create separate educational systems for general and special education students. In the mid-1990s, a complete paradigm shift occurred that resulted in the third era, the “Inclusion” years. During this era, there was a huge push by the system to insist that students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are not only kept on track with students in the general education classroom but, in many cases, also taught in classrooms with general education students. The instantaneous pace of the shift to inclusion left many general education teachers feeling a loss of control over their curriculum and pedagogy. Similarly, many special education teachers felt an equal loss of control. Many special education teachers were untrained in curriculum theory and broad content areas and thus, had difficulty implementing effective methods to ensure that inclusion and state-level assessment efforts were met with success. The present era, the “NCLB” years, followed the “Inclusion” years. This era began in 2001 and continues to be defined by high stakes accountability. NCLB mandates require special education teachers and principals to be accountable for the academic opportunities they provide to students, including students with disabilities. A heightened focus on accountability has resulted in a shift to more academic content on IEPs instead of therapeutic programs. IEPs are necessary improvement plans for individual students that schools can use to demonstrate evidence of accountability.

**What have we learned?** Reliable school-level data has been difficult if not impossible to obtain. Most of these schools do not have quantifiable school-level performance data because of fluctuations in the size of this subpopulation of students. We also know that school-level performance of students with disabilities tends to mirror that of other subpopulations. **As subgroups’ achievement scores go up, the gap in overall performance may not be closing. This therefore necessitates a shift to a focus on overall school improvement.**

**What do we see inside good schools?** Some schools consistently achieve better than expected results for students with disabilities. Special education teachers are curriculum savvy and very flexible in how they interact with the general education environment in good schools.

Furthermore, in good schools:

- Accountability results in increased access to standards-based curriculum;
- Curriculum is linked to standards and teachers know the curriculum;
- General education teachers know what and how to teach;
- Special education teachers have strong instructional abilities;
- A shared language is reflected in the way teachers talk about students with IEPs;
- Teachers have a strong sense of collective responsibility to the school and student performance;
- Collaboration occurs around what and how the intended curriculum is taught;
- Informal, flexible communication problem-solving strategies are used; and

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- Leadership is shared.

**What are some implications for improvement initiatives?** Even though the unit of improvement is the child, there still needs to be an organizing framework that emphasizes the role of the school. In addition, flexible models for resource allocation need to be in place. In small districts, some human resources may need to reside at the local education agency (LEA) and be deployed (i.e., contacted) to schools as needed. However, in larger districts, each school may need to obtain full time staff to manage and support improvement initiatives. Professional development is also important to ensure that staff is trained to implement the improvement initiative effectively. Professional development also helps to build organizational and teacher capacity.

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## Facilitated Discussion

### 1. How do you scale up successful schools to successful districts?

#### California

California mentioned that it is important to build leadership instead of leaders. Oftentimes, initiatives fail because a charismatic leader leaves the initiative and there is not enough leadership infrastructure in place to carry on the initiative without the leader (not so personality driven). California also emphasized the importance of teacher collaboration for scaling up successful schools to successful districts. State representatives further mentioned that the money/funding are in the intervention. They also mentioned that planning/collaborating time can become time for complaining and venting frustrations. A strategy to prevent this from happening would be to have a clear agenda, with well identified topics and action items. The state of California is currently rolling out District Assisted Intervention Teams, a district change pilot program.

#### Kansas

Kansas mentioned that formal processes cannot substitute for habit and attitude change. They added that you have to encourage schools and districts to use their data to evaluate their choices.

#### Louisiana

Louisiana shared its own experience with the issue and mentioned that it has good structures, documents, and tools but very little professional development and shared decision making. To address these issues, the strategy teams are being formed within professional peer groups for school improvement with clear agendas. For its own experience with this process, Louisiana has found that there must be someone within the group (or a site liaison) that pushes the group and ensures that the group makes decisions about strategies based on their data so that they own the process. Louisiana also shared that it wants to put more emphasis on the district level because it has been so difficult to scale up high performing schools.

#### Iowa

Iowa is using Response to Intervention (RTI) as a model for all students (even gifted and talented). The state is making a conscious effort not to slip into a deficit model. From experience, Iowa has found that it is getting more buy-in through (a) a less-compliance oriented school certification process and (b) being more TA oriented.

## Information Sharing Session October 17, 2006

Presentation by Tolani A. Adeboye  
Senior Associate, Special Education  
Council of Chief State School Officers

### “Integrating NCLB and IDEA: Challenges and Opportunities”

Implementation of IDEA has been complicated in the environment created by NCLB. There are inherent tensions between the two pieces of legislation due to their differing prioritizations of aspects of the education process. Yet IDEA and NCLB share a common spirit of ensuring academic success for all children, so there are synergies to be discovered and exploited. Organizing to meet this challenge at the state level is a key concern for chief state school officers and their staffs. It is important to stay opportunity and solution-oriented.

NCLB–IDEA integration is important to the special education community because NCLB has emerged as a powerful influence on how states, districts, and schools do business. The specter of sanctions has been a strong incentive to education professionals on all levels to focus on meeting NCLB targets. Often the failure to meet those targets is rooted in the poor assessment performance of students in special populations—most notably special education. Additionally the NCLB and IDEA laws are becoming more intertwined. In the most recent reauthorization of IDEA, there were specific references to NCLB on assessment issues. There is a need to detangle these references and the regulations on flexibility so that clear guidelines can be delivered to those on the ground level. One of the key challenges in NCLB–IDEA integration is the differing legislative focuses of each law. IDEA is primarily a civil rights legislation with specific guidelines on processes for individual students and their families. On the other hand, NCLB offers broad goals for student academic success.

The upcoming reauthorization of NCLB presents an opportunity for the Chief State School Officers and their staffs to help shape the legislation in such a way that fosters greater integration with IDEA. Although the current authorization expires in 2006, a new version of the law is unlikely to be finalized before 2009 when a new president assumes office. During the intervening years, chiefs and their staffs can constructively engage federal policymakers on sticking points in the current legislation by identifying specific provisions that are especially challenging and developing alternatives that honor the spirit of accountability that is the hallmark of NCLB. One possible topic for discussion is the potential for harmonization between the state performance plans required under IDEA and the accountability workbooks required under NCLB. Through CCSSO, the state voice is already being heard. CCSSO just issued its call to action, *ESEA Reauthorization Policy Statement*, which, although it does not mention special education specifically, does state support for

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“accountability systems that value growth” and “promoting data-informed decision making, differentiated instruction, and a range of pathways and programs to best meet the needs of each individual student.”

Within the state education agency, significant integration gains can be realized if staff is successful in breaking down human and financial resource silos. Policy discussions across program offices—special education, Title I, school improvement, curriculum, and data management—can stimulate creative problem solving and help avoid duplication of effort and waste. For such discussions to take place, there has to be buy-in from a core group of staff. Leadership from program office heads, deputies, and chiefs is essential. Establishing incentives and developing accountability checks for cross-division collaboration is important, but eliminating barriers to collaboration is even more important. Even with the most productive collaborations among existing staff, new personnel with broad skill sets may also be needed. In other conversations relating to increasing efficiency at the state education agency (SEA) level, senior SEA staff have reported to CCSSO that they often find themselves needing or wanting to hire personnel who not only have a strong grip on program issues but who are also skilled in data collection and analysis and who understand data systems. Such workers are very hard to find, and when they can be identified, SEAs often find that they lack an accurate job description (with appropriate salary considerations) that could be used to make the hire. So while there is a human resource issue, there are also some organizational issues that can be readily addressed. Financial resources also tend to be in silos. In fact, staff organization tends to follow funding streams. There needs to be some thought and work on creative public finance that allows state, local, and school leaders to sustainably fund key initiatives and comprehensive reform. External legal advice can be sought by the state leaders to ensure that there is compliance with federal accounting standards as well as effective use of available resources.

Developing leadership at all levels of the educational enterprise supports NCLB–IDEA integration. Organization and collaboration at the state level sends powerful signals to districts and through them to schools. SEAs must model forward-looking behaviors with regard to collaborative work, effective financial strategies, and data-informed decision making. The state also has a role in offering meaningful professional development for district leaders and providing TA to districts on identifying effective professional development providers for school-based personnel. Clearly defining and then acting on the appropriate state role in professional development of school leaders is a challenge of IDEA–NCLB integration. Many of the decisions that have the deepest impacts are made at the building and classroom levels. The same principles of collaborative work across roles—curriculum supervision, general education teacher, special education teacher, parents and families, counseling—are the keys to effective integration in schools. So principal and teacher leadership is critical. In particular, more work needs to be done to establish teacher learning communities that really work in increasing teacher knowledge, providing support, changing practices, and promoting policy awareness. Teachers need to be empowered to make sense of the policy environment. They must know the “why” of all the policies that are touching their professional lives and how those policies evolve to truly commit to their implementation. States have to figure out how they can be most helpful to districts and schools without being overly intrusive in their decision-making processes.

Effectively integrating the implementations of IDEA and NCLB can be summed up as the deployment of systems that are student-focused yet standards-based. Many states had made great strides in developing standards before NCLB. In the NCLB era, states have done good work aligning those standards to state assessments. Next steps include refining the standards, aligning instruction to standards, and creating opportunities for richer assessments of student progress. In

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many cases, state standards lay out broad goals. There needs to be movement toward supplying attainable learning objectives. Teachers need more guidance on using class time and classroom resources to deploy a flexible curriculum that is aligned with the standards. And the current energy around interim benchmark assessments and “in-the-moment” formative assessments should be cultivated and formalized. These steps will support individual student learning and allow for appropriate acknowledgment of growth. RTI is another tool for creating a student-focused environment within a standards framework. RTI calls for the use of increasingly intense and scientifically-based interventions to address underlying learning and prior knowledge challenges. RTI has been much talked of lately, and many schools and districts are moving forward with widescale implementation. More research and products are needed, particularly in mathematics and at the secondary school level. Most of that work will be done by the research community, but through interactions with the TA centers, regional laboratories, and research centers, states can signal that formalizing RTI is high priority.

Finally, at the heart of any effort to improve efficiency in program implementation are timely access to and appropriate use of information. It is critical that states improve the quality of data available on student achievement, demographic characteristics, program participation, and growth. The federal government has been quick to recognize this from both a compliance perspective and a process improvement perspective. Two federally funded initiatives that have been developed to assist states in improving data quality are the Education Data Exchange Network (EDEN) and the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) Longitudinal Data Systems grants. EDEN is a project that has been launched by the US Department of Education to build a common data portal for the submission of compliance and performance data across program areas. EDEN staff has worked closely with federal program offices to break down silos at that level and create opportunities to submit program compliance data fully through EDEN—eliminating duplicate collections. Data from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has been used in early experiment in this process. Now the U.S. Department of Education is working to assist states with implementing data quality checks on submitted data and is preparing to launch *EDFacts*—a public reporting and analysis tool that will be populated with EDEN data. In 2005, the Institute for Education Sciences (IES), a part of the U.S. Department of Education, awarded 14 multimillion dollar grants to assist states in building and deploying longitudinal data systems that will be able to track the individual students throughout their K–12 educational careers including their demographic characteristics, program participation, and assessment performance. Such state data systems will enable policymakers and program officers to make much more informed decisions because it will be easier to track how interventions affect performance for children in a variety of subgroups. Complementary data systems at the local and school levels and the skills to access and interpret the data that these systems provide are critical components that states and districts must work together to develop. Parents, teachers, principals, district leaders, and state program officers all need to be able to conceptualize and express their key questions, link those questions to data elements captured in various data systems, access the necessary data with respect for student privacy, draw accurate inferences from the data, have access to tools that enable response to those inferences, and possess skill in the use of those tools. Creating this culture of data use and data quality is a massive undertaking, but such a culture will form the foundation for real progress in increasing the learning of all students and improving student outcomes.

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## Facilitated Discussion

Question: Data managers come to me at the state level and ask what data do you need? What do I tell them?

First, you must be able to conceptualize the policy questions you are trying to answer, and then you work with the data managers to find out if your state collects data elements that will answer that question. If not, that may suggest a hole in the state's data requirements. Right now, many states are focused on compliance data and not enough on performance data. You need to bring the technological side and the program side together. The technological side can give you whatever you need but it does not have the programmatic understanding to identify in the data systems what is most useful.

**Information Sharing Session  
October 17, 2006  
State Presentation**

**Presentation by Silvia DeRuvo and Diane Youtsey  
WestEd, California Comprehensive Center and Association of California  
School Administrators**

**“California’s Plan for Support to Program Improvement Districts and Schools:  
A Focus on Special Populations”**

California presented on three areas of emphasis, which included RTI, support for failing schools and districts, and the changing face of special education in California.

**Response to Intervention**

In partnership with several professional associations, parent groups, and comprehensive centers, the California Department of Education (CDE) is working to provide learning opportunities for districts around RTI. Consultants were hired to offer Webcasts around a variety of topics:

- Why RTI?
- What is RTI?
- Administrative issues in RTI
- Instruction in RTI systems
- RTI: Getting Started

The Webcasts and related materials were also made available on the Web (<http://www4.scoe.net/rti>). These activities generate significant interest in RTI among a group of education stakeholders. So CDE and its partner organizations organized a very well attended RTI summit in spring 2006. The Access Center provided support for the summit. The summit participants already possessed basic RTI knowledge from viewing the Webcasts. The summit added to their knowledge by presenting the foundational research on RTI as well as national perspectives. Districts and schools that were already implementing RTI had an opportunity to showcase their work and share their challenges and successes.

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The primary outcome of the summit is a white paper on RTI and its implementation that is currently in the final stages of development. Partner organizations are in the process of reviewing the white paper and giving their final approvals. The white paper will be publicly available once it is released. It contains several recommendations to CDE and reflects the voices of a wide range of education stakeholders. The most critical recommendation is that personnel at all levels need support for the implementation of RTI. Financial support for the summit was gathered as planning occurred. There was no designated source of money to support this effort.

An additional resource is *The Special Edge*, a newsletter put out by CalSTAT, a California TA provider, on behalf of CDE. Back issues of *The Special Edge* can be found on the Web at <http://www.calstat.org/specialEdgeOld.html>; and there is a recent issue that addresses math RTI.

### **Support for Failing Schools and Districts**

Another initiative underway is the California's Plan for Support to Program Improvement Districts and Schools: A Focus on Special Populations. This support program is being implemented in schools in need of improvement. The goal is to provide schools and districts with tools they can use to bring about significant change. One-hundred and fifty-four districts were identified as program improvement districts in 2005. The support program is a joint venture between the CDE and the comprehensive centers.

When a school enters program improvement status, the use of three tools becomes required.

- Academic Performance Survey (APS)
- Educational Benefit Site Review
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Self-Assessment Site Tool

The APS is used by schools to determine if they have sufficiently attended to the nine essential educational program components, as laid out by CDE. These components are as follows:

- Instructional program
- Instructional time
- School principal's instructional leadership training
- Credentialed teachers and teacher professional development
- Student achievement monitoring
- Ongoing instructional assistance and support for teachers
- Monthly collaboration by grade level for teachers
- Lesson pacing guide

- Fiscal support

In the APS there are several questions under each component that allow the school staff to evaluate their performance in each area and to target weak points. For example, questions under components 1 and 2 query student access to materials and amount of instructional time per content area. Under component 4, all teachers are to receive training in English/language arts and math through a State Board of Education authorized provider as well as ongoing professional development. As part of component 5, a school is supposed to implement curriculum-embedded assessments.

The Educational Benefit Site Review gives the school an outside perspective on the delivery of educational programs. The LRE Self-Assessment Site Tool is the tool that most directly addresses school failure as it relates to the performance of special education students. Given the assumption that students in the LRE will experience the greatest academic growth, the LRE tool allows schools to evaluate themselves on providing access to the general education curriculum.

The LRE tool and other tools, including district level tools, are available online at <http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/204>. Dona Meinders of WestEd can be contacted for tool training at [dmeinde@wested.org](mailto:dmeinde@wested.org). A standards-based instruction Webinar has also been developed by WestEd and can be accessed at <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/wested/view/e/851>. For more information on the Webinar, contact Silvia L. DeRuvo at 916-492-4010 or [sderuvo@wested.org](mailto:sderuvo@wested.org).

## The Changing Face of Special Education in California

Traditionally, special education in California was delivered through two methods—Resource Specialist Program (RSP) and Special Day Class (SDC). Students with mild to moderate disabilities spent most of their day in general education classes as part of the RSP. A resource specialist would work with students in class or pull them out as necessary. They were assessed by taking the grade-level California Standards Test with or without accommodations. Students with moderate to severe disabilities were served through SDC—outside of the general education classroom—and spent most of the day receiving special education services. Students with severe disabilities were served through SDC and took alternate assessments because they were usually significantly cognitively impaired.

Now, most special education students are fully integrated into the general education classroom, although they may be pulled out for certain subject areas. Moving forward, special education will become a “service” and not a “place.” Services are tiered in a way that fits neatly with the RTI model. All students are assessed and placed in multiple tiers of increasing intensity of service. Instruction is differentiated throughout all the tiers. In tier 1, all students receive core instruction. In tier 2, students receive *strategic* interventions to address areas of challenge, and they receive supplemental instruction. In tier 3, students no longer participate in the core curriculum but receive *intensive* interventions. These students are usually more than 2 years below grade level, and a state board-adopted intervention program is used with fidelity to get them back on grade level.

The performance goals need to be consistent for all students based on state standards. IEPs must reflect standards; accommodations should be used to scaffold standards; and assistive technologies should be used to support access to standards. As students move up through tiers, they receive more

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intensive, small group intervention. The hope is that they will move back down through the tiers as they receive the instruction they need and become re-integrated in the general education setting.

Scheduling is a major challenge with this new model because all students are placed in the core curriculum. Students are placed with others in the same age group. All students participate in at least bimonthly assessments to evaluate the success of interventions and establish benchmarks. The master schedule does not create separate general education and special education classrooms. This leaves time for special education teachers to provide support to students in the general education setting or pull students out as necessary. Five strategies are being explored to make this model work:

- Double-block time for strategic and intensive interventions
- Budgeting for additional teachers
- Scheduling more semester courses as opposed to year-long courses
- Developing and implementing a co-teaching model
- Reducing class size in intensive classes by adding new teachers

## Information Sharing Session October 18, 2006

Presentation by **Dr. Daryl Mellard**  
Principal Investigator, National Research Center on Learning Disabilities

### “Multi-Tiered Intervention Models”

Dr. Mellard explained that there are three uses of RTI:

- Prevention (kindergarten and 1st grade)
- Intervention for students with achievement or behavior problems
- Components of learning disability (LD) determination

There are several geneses to RTI. Some believe it developed from schoolwide reform. Others believe the roots of RTI are attributable to the application of public health procedures to education. For example, in public health, there are procedures for prediction, inoculation, and tiered intervention. However, some believe RTI came from the need for different disability determination procedures. Regarding using RTI for disability determination, Dr. Mellard indicated that there had been no cross-validation study of LD determination or study comparing RTI with the typical disability determination procedures.

According to Dr. Mellard, approximately 80% of students respond to tier 1 services, based on scientifically based instructional programs and practices with differentiated curriculum. Twenty percent of students receive more intensive interventions, with 15% of students receiving tier 2 and 5% of students receiving tier 3 services. Tiers 2 and 3 are increasingly intense, scientifically based interventions. Within each tier, there should be explicit rules for assessing student progress (e.g. duration, frequency of intervention, and group size).

With tier 1, the general education teacher assumes an active role in students' assessment through curriculum screening and progress monitoring. Effective instruction must focus on the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension). With tier 2, the school staff implements the interventions rather than the classroom teacher. Tier 2 instruction occurs in small groups. The group size varies but typically ranges from 1–10 students. Dr. Mellard indicated the optimal group size is three students. The instruction occurs in 30- to 60-minute sessions for 10–12 weeks. The other important characteristics of tier 2 intervention are the use of scripted programming with immediate corrective feedback,

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whereby the student masters the content before moving on. Dr. Mellard stressed the need for establishing explicit decision-making rules regarding when and how many times to collect data.

Regarding research on RTI, Dr. Mellard said that most studies have concentrated on reading, especially among primary age students. He also said there have been a few studies at the middle school level, but at this time there have been no studies at the high school level.

Dr. Mellard noted that there is a significant correlation between phonological processing, alphabetic knowledge, general language ability, and print concepts to later reading acquisition. Despite this, Dr. Mellard explained that predicting which kindergarten children are at risk for developing a reading disability based on these measures has proven problematic. Some have estimated that the false positives occur about 20–60% of the time, and false negatives range from 10–50%. A screening process is needed to accurately identify who enters the RTI process to minimize the false negatives and maximize the true positives. A perfect screening process would result in 100% accurate identification of “true positives” (i.e., those who will develop a reading disability or those who will go into tier 2 interventions) and “true negatives” (i.e., those who will not develop a reading disability).

Dr. Mellard indicated that a combination of first grade screening battery of phonemic awareness, rapid naming, oral language, initial word identification, and 5-week word identification fluency slope with decision rules may have the potential to push reading disabilities risk designation to a level of accuracy sufficient for RTI. Dr. Mellard felt that it was possible to get the right students in tier 2. He also indicated it was important for schools planning to implement the RTI approach for LD identification to put considerable thought into designing an effective system for designating the risk pool that enters tier 2 intervention.

Progress monitoring is needed with RTI to answer the question of whether the student is benefiting from instruction. There are different views regarding how many data points are needed. Heartland, a school district in Iowa, recommends monitoring progress 1–3 times a week with four data points. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education recommends 2 times a week with six to eight data points. Compton, Fuchs, and Fuchs<sup>2</sup> recommend more data points, because having more data points improves the accuracy of projecting how students will respond to the intervention.

When students are not responding to tier 2 after a set period of time, students are moved to tier 3. Dr. Mellard mentioned that some models allow more than one intervention at tier 2, but the important consideration is to have explicit decision rules to follow to determine when to change the intervention. If tier 3 is going to be special education, then it must be unique from the other tiers. To be effective, it should be highly individualized, intensive instruction that is conducted individually or in small groups of up to three students for sufficient duration. Dr. Mellard also recommended a curriculum that has evidence of efficacy.

Dr. Mellard mentioned that most districts using RTI use it as a schoolwide approach to general education reform that is available to all students. In this manner, RTI is like the public health tier model. Most research on RTI is based on intervention and not on LD determination. As noted earlier, most of the research is based on primary age students.

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<sup>2</sup> Compton, D., Fuchs, L. & Fuchs, D., Sept 29, 2005, NRCLD Topical Forum, KCMO.

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Dr. Mellard indicated that the specificity and intensity in the following areas is what distinguishes each tier:

- Size of instructional group
- Immediacy of corrective feedback
- Mastery requirements of content
- Amount of time on difficult activities
- Number of response opportunities
- Number of transitions among contents or classes
- Focus of curricular goals
- Duration of the intervention (in weeks)
- Frequency with which the intervention is delivered in a day or week
- Amount of time focusing on the intervention (in minutes)
- Instructor's skill level

Another way to distinguish between the tiers is the explicitness of the instruction. Dr. Mellard described the teacher interaction at tier 1 as:

- Cue
- Do
- Review

He mentioned that advanced organizers are often used at tier 1. At tier 2, teachers have the student watch, share, and practice. In tier 3, teachers do the following:

- Pretest
- Describe
- Model
- Practice with quality feedback
- Posttest and reflect

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- Generalize, transfer, and apply

In other words, the instructional strategies used in tier 3 are very explicit.

Dr. Mellard indicated that there are several links between early intervening services (EIS) and RTI. He provided the following comparisons between the two:

- EIS and RTI emphasize scientifically based interventions, not “home grown” strategies.
- EIS is mandated for districts with disproportionate representation of students in disability groups or minorities with disabilities.
- Under EIS, the LEA must annually report on students served; RTI does not have such a provision.
- EIS is not linked with LD determination procedures; RTI is.
- RTI is conceptualized schoolwide; EIS is focused on support services.

Dr. Mellard mentioned that some problems can occur when implementing RTI. Some of these include:

- Mismatch with staff members’ personal theory or sense of role
- Lack of staff “chemistry” or needed interaction patterns
- Low-quality interventions that are not based on research
- Lack of fidelity of implementation (e.g., no checklists or outside monitoring)
- Insufficient intervention “dosage” (time, frequency, duration, knowledgeable teachers)
- Inappropriate target of progress monitoring
- Limited reading research on students in grades K–3; few findings on math and students in grades 4–12
- Inconsistent professional development (staff transition in/out of schools, training opportunities)
- Insufficient evidence for LD determination

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## Facilitated Discussion

### Pennsylvania

The Bureau of Special Education started doing statewide RTI training 1 year ago. The Bureau identified seven pilot school districts to participate in a 3-tier model pilot. There was a criterion for the districts to apply, based on the use of a scientifically based curriculum and the use of progress monitoring. There are two districts from the western region of the state, two from the eastern region, and three from the central region. Districts that are part of the pilot range from urban to rural. Part of this pilot project was to work with principals and provide TA to the schools. Districts that are part of the pilot have noticed people's roles changing, including Title I staff and librarians. With this pilot project, one district has made Adequate Yearly Progress. They have seen grade-level teams working together to review student-level data and make decisions. Results are beginning to be seen, with nearly all of the benchmarks for kindergarten being met. As soon as results were apparent, staff attitudes in schools started to change.

### Louisiana

Louisiana has established a literacy pilot project. There was an application process, with each applicant being scored against a rubric. The districts had to commit 5 years to this effort. The schools receive training and TA directed at both principals and teachers. The schools also receive a full-time literacy coach.

### Kansas

There are districts in the state doing RTI, but it is not a statewide initiative. The state has good partnerships with its universities. The state has a comprehensive special education manual, which outlines the RTI process, and districts use it. The state has integrated RTI with Reading First, by making attempts to scale up Reading First. They used state monies to provide training to non-Reading First grant schools or those schools that are not part of Reading First and did not make Adequate Yearly Progress. Title I teachers, special education teachers, and teachers of English as a second language are now included in the training sessions. The training is also available online through videos.

### Alabama

Alabama is a Reading First state and has been able to get \$11 million from the legislature to hire additional coaches, because the state was able to show how effective the coaches were. Schools hire the reading coaches, and they work out of 11 training centers throughout the state. There have been significant improvements in reading.

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## Iowa

Iowa had done a significant amount of training on RTI with intermediary units for many years. RTI is considered a service available to every student, including the gifted and talented, at any time. There are 20 sites that are part of the pilot project.

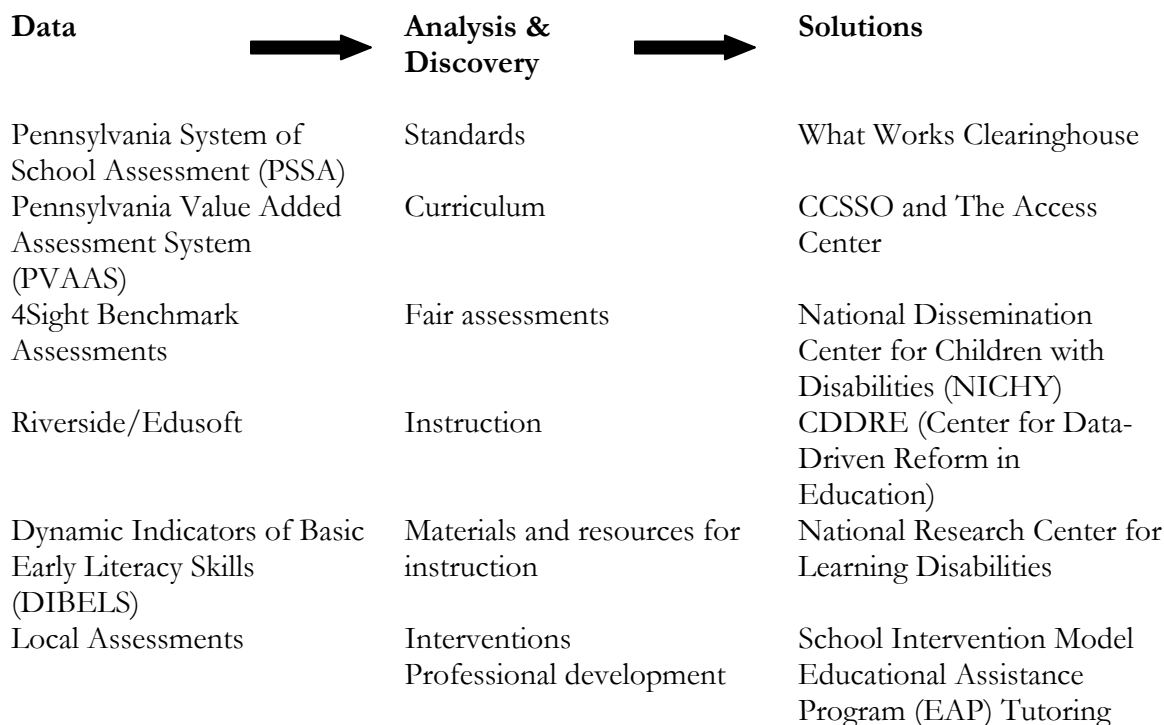
**Information Sharing Session  
October 18, 2006  
State Presentation**

**Presentation by Britt Britton  
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)**

**“Pennsylvania’s Data-Informed Decision-Making Framework”**

The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is the TA arm of the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Bureau of Special Education and has three offices across the state of Pennsylvania. PaTTAN serves as the point of contact for intermediate units that service school districts but also provides some direct TA to districts.

**PaTTAN’s Data-Informed Decision-Making Framework**



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PaTTAN works with multiple sources of data. To best streamline assessment, PaTTAN makes decisions on which data to use, how to read the data, and how data sources support one another. PaTTAN supports districts by offering to help them read all the data they collect at the school and classroom levels. By doing so, PaTTAN aims to help educators transition from using data only for accountability to using data for continuous improvement.

Proficiency expectations increase every year due to NCLB legislation. Pennsylvania needs to raise its proficiency levels in math 11% per year to reach its proficiency target by 2014. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's goals include closing the achievement gap, tackling disproportionality, bringing every student to the proficient level or above in reading and math, and establishing successful prevention and intervention via proven research-validated and evidence-based practices. EAP Tutoring provided \$66 million in state funding for the 2006–07 school year to use for implementing research-based practices and interventions for students at the strategic and intensive level of need. State standards should drive decisions to ensure that all students succeed. Benchmarks help determine what is working; educators must check the “pulse” to see if students are learning and understanding the content standards. For students performing on grade level, benchmarking can be used to monitor progress, but it cannot be used as a form of progress monitoring for students performing below grade level.

#### **4Sight Benchmark Assessments**

4Sight Benchmark Assessments are Pennsylvania's reading and math benchmark assessments for grades 3–11. Pennsylvania has been using 4Sight for 2 years. The assessment is similar to the PSSA in design and in the type of data it provides. 4Sight Benchmark Assessments are aligned and correlated to the PSSAs and are very closely tied to standards and high-stakes assessments. They are aligned to assessment anchors, which clearly define standards and break them down.

The same modifications and exemptions that are used for the PSSA for students with disabilities are used for the 4Sight Benchmarks. 4Sight can be taken on paper or online. The assessment is administered for a 60-minute time period, which is not as long as the time needed to take the PSSA but long enough to allow teachers to use the data to figure out where they need to intervene with some students. This fits in with ongoing progress monitoring but doesn't replace it. Districts still use student progress monitoring in addition to 4Sight for students at risk.

Districts pay the developer for this assessment tool, but PaTTAN supplements the cost. Districts are taught how to score their own tests locally so they have access to results quickly. Professional development, supported by PaTTAN, is provided for districts and schools using 4Sight; district teams are trained on how to administer the tool, how to retrieve the data, and how to use the data. PaTTAN highlights the districts that are thriving with this new tool.

Three hundred and twenty districts in Pennsylvania now use 4Sight Benchmark Assessments, which allows PaTTAN and the state's Department of Education to have discussions based on the same data, because the same test is administered across the districts. This helps illustrate what is working and where instructional changes should be made. 4Sight Benchmarks help to identify students in need of additional help. In addition, this tool assists districts in the evaluation of their curriculum and programs and helps guide professional development needs. Two initiatives are involved in 4Sight: CDDRE (in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education) and EAP Tutoring.

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The keys to a results-driven culture consist of teams of teachers and administrators whom share a common vision and goal, collect data on student performance, analyze data, and meet regularly to interpret data to inform instructional decisions to improve student achievement. Teachers in Pennsylvania are approaching their districts' superintendents and asking for access to PSSA data. This demonstrates the shift that is occurring as education becomes more data-driven.

## Additional Resources

### **The National Forum for Education Statistics**

<http://nces.ed.gov/forum>

The National Forum for Education Statistics, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, has published a guide on creating a culture of data quality. Another Forum taskforce is completing work on a complementary data quality curriculum. The chair of that task force is from Iowa, and in summer 2006, he organized and held a statewide data quality and data use professional development seminar. The training was across several days, and sessions were geared toward different data users and collectors—teachers, school leadership, district staff, and state program officers. The curriculum will be free and publicly available and should be released by February 2007.

### **Research Institute on Progress Monitoring**

<http://www.progressmonitoring.org>

The Research Institute on Progress Monitoring, funded by OSEP, is developing a system of progress monitoring to evaluate effects of individualized instruction on access to and progress within the general education curriculum.

### **National Center on Student Progress Monitoring**

<http://www.studentprogress.org>

The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, funded by OSEP, is a national TA and dissemination center dedicated to the implementation of scientifically based student progress monitoring for grades K–5.

### **SharedWork.org**

<http://www.sharedwork.org>

This Web site is designed to support and encourage group sharing. Group members can share and collaborate on documents, chat privately in smaller groups, and share experiences. When The Access Center's contract ends in September 2007, the State Information Sharing Community group could continue their work together through the use of this Web site.

For further followup on the NCLB–IDEA Integration, please visit the CCSSO Web site at [http://www.ccsso.org/projects/idea\\_partnership](http://www.ccsso.org/projects/idea_partnership). Interested parties should contact Tolani Adeboye at [TolaniA@ccsso.org](mailto:TolaniA@ccsso.org)

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# Appendix



## **The Access Center and CCSSO Present: Fourth Annual State-to-State Information Sharing Community Meeting**

**Agenda for October 17, 2006**

**At the American Institutes for Research  
1000 Thomas Jefferson St., NW, Washington DC**

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**8:00–8:30**—Registration & Breakfast

**8:30–9:00**—Welcome and Introduction by Jane Hauser, OSEP Project Officer, Nancy Safer of the Access Center and Introduction of Access Center & CCSSO Staff

**9:00–10:30**—Framework for System and School Improvement for Students with Disabilities by Dr. Margaret McLaughlin, University of Maryland

**10:30–10:45**—Break

**10:45–12:00**—Facilitated State Sharing of System and School Improvement for Students with Disabilities

**12:00–1:00**—Lunch

**1:00–2:15**—Greetings from Lois Adams-Rodgers from CCSSO and Overview of Challenges and Practices of Integrating NCLB and IDEA by Tolani Adeboye of CCSSO and Facilitated State Sharing

**2:15–2:30**—Break

**2:30–4:00**—State Presentations—California

**4:00–4:15**—Wrap-Up

## State-to-State Information Sharing Community Meeting

October 18, 2006

### Agenda

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**8:00–8:30**—Breakfast

**8:30–9:00**—Welcome and Overview of Day 1 by Susan Skipper of The Access Center

**9:00–10:30**—Reading Multi-Tier Models by Dr. Daryl Mellard of the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities

**10:30–10:45**—Break

**10:45–12:00**—Facilitated State Sharing Regarding Multi-tier Models

**12:00–1:00**—Lunch

**1:00–1:45**—State Presentation—Pennsylvania

**1:45–2:30**—General Facilitated State Sharing

**2:30–2:45**—Next Steps, Wrap-Up, and Certificates

## State-to-State Information Sharing Community

### Meeting Attendees October 17–18, 2006 Washington, DC

STATE	NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFORMATION	E-MAIL
Alabama	Marla Davis Holbrook	Education Administrator	Alabama Department of Education, Instructional Services, Special Education Services Section	3316 Gordon Persons Building P.O. Box 302101 Montgomery, AL 36130–2101 334–242–8114	marlah@alsde.edu
California	Silvia DeRuvo	Special Education Resources Development Specialist	WestEd, California Comprehensive Center	1107 9th Street, 4th Floor Sacramento, CA 95814 916–492–4010	sderuvo@wested.org
California	Jill Larson	Consultant	California Department of Education	1430 North Street Sacramento, CA 95814 916–323–7192	jl Larson@cde.ca.gov
California	Diane K. Youtsey	Placer County Office of Education and Technical Assistance Provider	Association of California School Administrators	523 Aspen Meadows Way Lincoln, CA 95648 916–645–4609	dkyconsult@starstream.net
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Iowa	Kara Krohn	Education Program Consultant	Iowa Department of Education	Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319 515- 281-7145	Kara.Krohn@iowa.gov

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Pennsylvania	Britt Britton	Educational Consultant	Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network	6340 Flank Drive Harrisburg, PA 17112 717-541-4960	bbritton@pattan.net
Pennsylvania	Kerri L. McCarthy	Assistant Director	Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network	6340 Flank Drive Harrisburg, PA 17112 717-541-4960	kmccarthy@pattan.net
OSEP	Jane Hauser	Project Officer	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs	Potomac Center Plaza 550 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 202-245-7373	Jane.Hauser@ED.gov

## List of Presenters

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