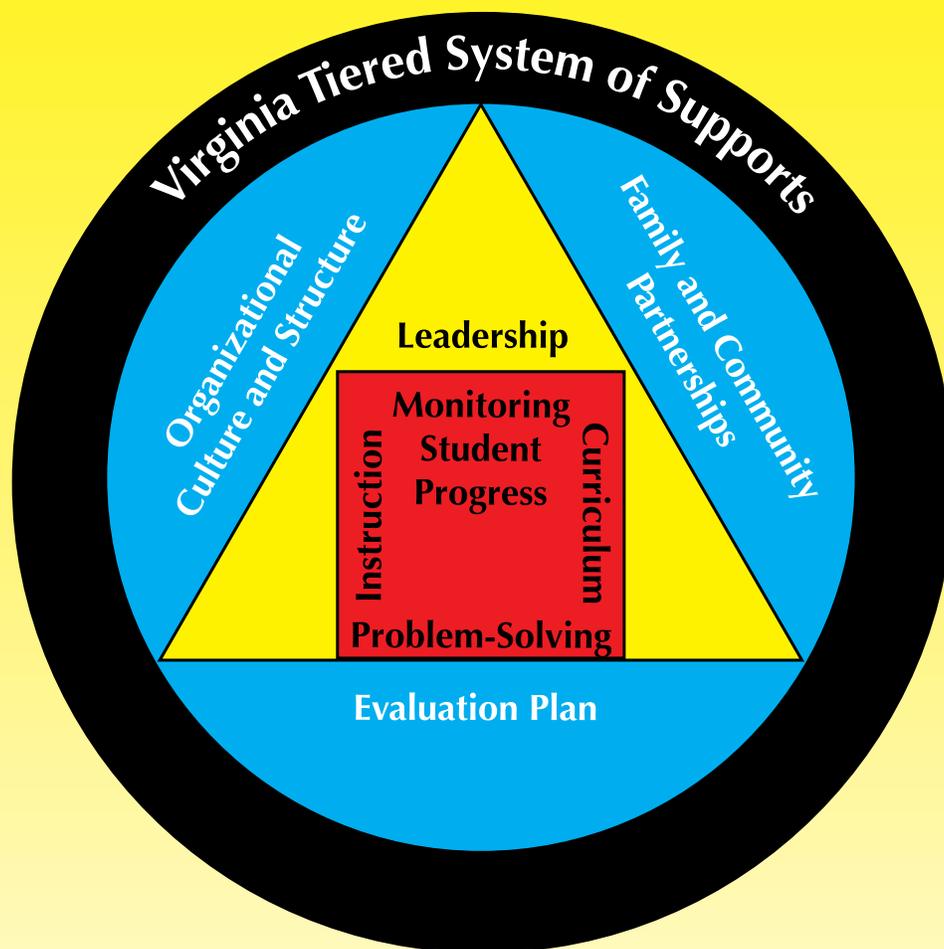


Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) A Guide for School Divisions



Virginia Department of Education
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ACRONYM LIST

BIR	Behavior Incident Reports
CLD	Council for Learning Disabilities
CBM	Curriculum-Based Measures
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
ELL	English Language Learners
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
NIRN	National Implementation Research Network
ODR	Office of Discipline Referral
PALS	Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening
PAST	Phonological Awareness Screening Test
QPS	Quick Phonics Screener
RtI	Response to Intervention
SAPSI	Self-Assessment of Problem Solving Implementation
SES	Supplemental Educational Services
SIP	School Improvement Plan
VDOE	Virginia Department of Education
VTSS	Virginia Tiered System of Support

INTRODUCTION



This guide was created by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) for the purpose of assisting school division leaders in the adoption and installation of the Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) divisionwide and to provide guidance in its installation and implementation divisionwide. The goal of this guide is to provide learning from research and educators across the nation in order to support division leadership teams in creating the structures necessary for systemwide change to improve instructional decision making and practice at the classroom, building, and division level.

As described in previous VDOE documents, there are numerous models of Response to Intervention (RtI), each with different scopes of practice for instruction, assessment, and goals. There are common practices within all models that are the defining features of an RtI model including universal screening, progress monitoring, data-driven decisions, and tiered instruction (National Center on Response to Intervention, March 2010). The approach and implementation of these defining practices are directly impacted by the goal of the RtI model to be implemented. The goal of the VTSS model is to create a divisionwide approach to systems change by improving instructional decision making at all levels, from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and the classroom through the division level. This approach must lead to the view of education as a pre-K through graduation experience where education is approached as a continuum across all schools, opposed to being separate experiences within each school.

The implementation of VTSS is the regular and consistent use of a set of practices. The Virginia Department of Education has created

a document titled *Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) Benchmarks* that provides divisions and buildings with guidance on practice. The implementation of VTSS is not one of implementing a program but is the regular and consistent use of a set of practices to guide instruction. The VTSS Benchmarks included in the appendix of this document describe the critical components of the model and indicators of practice at three levels: emerging, developing, and sustaining. The critical components of leadership, organization and school culture, monitoring student progress, problem solving, curriculum, instruction, family and community partnerships, and evaluation plan contained within the VTSS Benchmarks provide the content for this guide.

Within the professional literature there are a variety of valid, research-based approaches to RtI described, each focusing on a different primary goal. As a division leadership team, it is critical to understand that all writings labeled RtI are not the same beyond the common defining features, nor should any of the writings be dismissed summarily based solely on the model promoted. Looking beyond the label of RtI and carefully considering and reflecting on the practices included in the literature allows for the integration of best practices. The VTSS model draws from the strong research base that is reflected throughout the entire research base of RtI. It is important to understand the goal and approach of the model being discussed in the literature and the practices within each. The goal of each model varies from a narrow perspective of the identification of students with specific learning disabilities as described in IDEA 2004 (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Kavale, Kauffman, Bachmeier, & LeFever, Summer 2008) to broader perspectives of school

improvement and educational systems change (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, Annual 2008; Shores & Chester, 2008) that more closely align with the VTSS model of educational reform and systems change.

There are three typical models of RtI, including standard protocol, problem solving, and a hybrid model. In *The Two Models of RTI: Standard Protocol and Problem Solving* (Shapiro, 2009), the two primary models are discussed in detail. The third model, the hybrid model, recognizes the benefits and limitations of using a purely protocol or problem-solving model and integrates the practices from both to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. It is important to not focus on the concept of RtI as a program but to focus on the specific practices to be implemented within the VTSS model. If the focus is on program implementation opposed to the implementation of specific practices, it is more likely that the final results will be an inconsistent application of instructional practices, all of which may not align with the intended plan (Reeves, 2011). It is through careful understanding of the practices of each component of VTSS that division leadership teams will be positioned to draw from the best research available that aligns with the VTSS model. Through this careful analysis and consideration of practices, teams will be able to more effectively incorporate new research findings into their practices and decrease the likelihood of implementation drift.

At the core of the VTSS framework is problem solving. A problem-solving process using data drives the entire VTSS from the initial creation of the division VTSS plan to the daily implementation of VTSS within a building to guide instruction for students. While there are many problem-solving models that are available for use, a division should choose either a single model or two models; with one to be used with instructional issues and one to be used when addressing system issues. Regardless of the specific model chosen and the language used within the model, there are four basic steps to an effective problem-solving process with data at

each step: (1) problem identification; (2) problem analysis; (3) improvement planning; and (4) evaluation.

The problem-solving process selected by the division leadership team must be supported through initial training and ongoing professional development. Like any other new practice that staff are asked to use, the more that problem solving is used and coached, the more effective the teams will become at conducting it. The VTSS Benchmarks in the table below provide an illustration of how problem solving is used in a consistent manner at all levels within an effective and sustainable VTSS. Throughout this guide, the VTSS Benchmarks are included as a reference for leadership teams.

Beyond the purpose and approach to RtI, other critical features of the VTSS model that directly and significantly impact practices are that core curriculum is

research-based, aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning, and provided using differentiated and explicit instruction. Intervention (Tiers 2 and 3) is skill and strategy focused and provided to small groups of students in addition to core instruction, and a hybrid approach utilizing both a curricula protocol and individual problem solving is used. It is important to ensure that Tiers 2 and 3 provide instruction that is more intensive, explicit, scaffolded and focused and are not just a re-teaching of the core. These critical features of the VTSS model have direct implications on the assessment process used for instructional decision making and the curricula materials used for core

Hybrid Model

In a hybrid model, the curricula protocol is pre-identified for core and intervention including identified providers. Through the use of universal screening and diagnostic assessments/processes, students are matched to the appropriate protocol intervention based on individual student skill/strategy need. If the protocol does not have an intervention matched to the student's instructional need or if the student is not making sufficient progress, then individual student problem solving is used to make adjustments and customize the intervention to match student needs.

instruction and intervention. Each of these features is discussed in more specific detail later within this guide.

VTSS and IDEA Connections

It is important to keep in mind that VTSS is an educational reform and systems change model.

It should be designed and implemented with the intention of improving instruction for all students

within the educational systems of the division. When VTSS is implemented with fidelity, students with disabilities can benefit greatly. To better understand the connections of VTSS and IDEA, there are several critical issues related to IDEA child find and the VTSS model that division and building leadership teams must understand.

The VTSS model is a systemic reform effort to create a continuum of support that provides

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks PROBLEM SOLVING

Emerging

- Problems are identified in concrete, descriptive, and behavioral terms.
- The division leadership team uses a standard process of information and data collection to consider possible causes of student learning difficulties.
- A problem solving method has been established and conveyed to staff.
- Meeting agendas are focused on data, other extraneous information is set aside.
- There is a data-driven process for referring a student to the grade/school problem-solving team.
- The problem-solving team is comprised of core members who regularly attend, and are representative of general education, special education, and other support personnel such as the school psychologist and school counselors.

Developing

- Hypotheses about the causes and factors associated with lack of significant improvement in learning rates are developed based on multiple sources of data (such as assessments, attendance, behavior referrals, et al.).
- All hypotheses of causes of learning problems are observable and measurable, leading to matched interventions.
- Division and school teams are able to develop plans for intervention based on research for students in each tier, and plan progress monitoring based on individual needs of students.
- Results from progress monitoring data lead to formal confirmation or rejection, and changes, to hypotheses and interventions as needed.
- Intervention and action plans developed as a result of the problem analysis process are documented and include "who," "what," "by when," and "follow up."
- There is shared responsibility among general educators and specific program specialists.
- The school division has trained personnel in a problem-solving methodology at division, building, classroom, and student levels.

Sustaining VTSS

- All decisions are made using a divisionwide problem-solving process which is consistently implemented with fidelity.
- The problem-solving process is considered an essential element of professional development for all educators, administrators, and staff.
- Divisionwide decision rules (using progress monitoring data) are used to drive intervention across the tiers, including when to refer to Special Education.

effective instruction for all students within core instruction as well as intervention. The VTSS model should not be considered as synonymous with the evaluation and eligibility model of Response to Intervention (RtI) described within IDEA for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities. While data collected during the implementation of VTSS becomes an important part of the evaluation process, VTSS alone does not suffice as a comprehensive evaluation.

The VTSS model should in no way be used to deny or delay an initial evaluation under IDEA. The school must make a referral for an initial evaluation whenever it is suspected that a child may be a child with a disability to determine eligibility for special education and related services. In addition, the VTSS does not supersede or circumvent the parents' right to request an initial evaluation under IDEA at any time.

Tiers within the VTSS model describe intensity and customization of instruction. They do not: define a student (she is a Tier 2 student), describe a program (Tier 3 is special education), or describe a sequential process of steps that a student must go through (students in need of Tier 3 intensive intervention are not required to try and fail in Tier 2 supplemental intervention prior to receiving Tier 3 intensive intervention).

Implementation Research

Taking on a divisionwide change effort such as VTSS, with the focus being to create consistent and meaningful change at all levels, is not for the timid or the impatient. What division leadership teams are asking of schools crosses the knowledge bases of systems change, school culture and climate, and implementation research. Tasks included throughout this document assist division leadership teams through the larger issues of systems change and culture. However, it is important for division staff to have a broad understanding of the stages of implementation of any new large-scale effort. The National Implementation Research Network

(NIRN) has identified the following stages of implementation.

Exploration: Identifying the need for change, learning about possible interventions that may be solutions, learning about what it takes to implement the innovation effectively, developing stakeholders and champions, deciding to proceed.

Installation: Establishing the resources needed to use an innovation and resources required to implement the innovation with fidelity and good outcomes for students.

Initial Implementation: The first use of intervention practices by newly trained teachers and others working in a school and division environment that is just learning how to support the new ways of teaching (sometimes referred to as the "awkward stage").

Full Implementation: The skillful use of an innovation that is well integrated into the repertoire of teachers and routinely supported by building and division administrations.

Innovation: The advances in knowledge and skill that come from evaluated changes in how teachers and others make use of a science-based intervention.

Sustainability: Persistent and skillful support for teachers and staff who are using an innovation effectively, with each cohort of teachers achieving better results than the last. This sometimes is referred to as "regeneration" defined as "the set of procedures that allow a system to continually compare valued outcomes against current practice and modify practices to continue to achieve valued outcomes as the context changes over time." (Fixsen, Blase, Horner, & Sugai, 2009, pp. 1-2)

Approaching implementation as a reiterative process that is nurtured by leadership teams as opposed to a linear path that leads to a singular accomplishment leads to a more effective and sustainable system. For the purpose of a division leadership team, it is important to understand that implementation will be occurring at multiple stages (e.g., implementation and installation) and multiple levels (e.g., division, building, grade, classroom) simultaneously and that it fluctuates within the stages. The responsibilities of the teams throughout the system are to ensure that appropriate and sufficient support and feedback are being provided to sustain momentum and enable movement toward sustainability. To further explain this understanding of independence that is being strived for, the following section walks through the responsibilities of each group that is engaged in a divisionwide VTSS process.

The installation and implementation of VTSS is a reiterative process opposed to a sequential process that is followed step-by-step. There are tasks that the division leadership team will continuously be attending to, such as the communication plan. Others, such as the

curriculum protocol and assessment plan, must be completed during installation, at which time sequence is not significantly important, and regularly reviewed as part of the system evaluation of VTSS to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of practices and the system.

For the implementation of VTSS to be successful and sustainable, significant attention needs to be given to professional development and support of staff in using the new knowledge, skills, and behaviors. As part of this support, fidelity of each practice must be monitored. The monitoring of fidelity should not be approached as an issue of compliance or be punitive in nature. It provides the mechanism to inform leadership teams at the building and division level of the effectiveness of support that is being provided to staff.

Each of the sections of this guide will assist leadership teams in defining their respective division process for the implementation of VTSS. As work begins, do not let one section bring progress to a stop. If the team hits a piece that is going to stop the momentum, begin simultaneously working on another piece, or even section, so that progress continues.

LEADERSHIP TEAMS



The division leadership team is responsible for the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of a plan that builds the capacity across the division. It is this single divisionwide plan that allows the VTSS to achieve system change opposed to islands of excellence within each building throughout the division. Developing this plan at the division level also aids in ensuring that the VTSS effort does not experience the common errors identified by VanDerHeyden and Tilly III (2010, p. 6):

- The implementation model is too loosely defined.
- Interventions are not managed well.
- The school tries to run too many Tier 3 interventions.
- It takes too long to reach decisions.
- The results are poor or are not known.
- The implementation has lost momentum after some period of initial enthusiasm.
- Implementers feel stuck at a phase of implementation.
- Scaling has outpaced capacity for effective implementation.

Responsibilities of Division Leadership Team

The primary responsibility of the division leadership team is to establish divisionwide procedures and capacity for the implementation of VTSS. In establishing divisionwide VTSS

procedures, the division leadership team must draw upon the guidance from the Virginia Department of Education, best practices indicated by the research, and the current practices within the division. The division leadership team must have a strong understanding of the VTSS model and take the time to carefully investigate and understand the current practices within the division at all levels. The goal of the VTSS model is to create a divisionwide approach to instructional decision making at all levels from the classroom up to the division. The division leadership team's primary responsibility is to establish the procedures that will enable instructional decision making from the classroom to the division level and provide the professional development and support to building leadership teams and staff to accomplish shared responsibility for learning. The division leadership team creates, implements, and monitors the VTSS plan. This guide will assist division leadership teams in developing a plan that supports buildings in implementation and capacity building that will result in a sustainable VTSS.

This overall responsibility results in the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of a plan to build the capacity of building leadership teams and staff to implement the practices identified as gold standard in the VTSS Benchmark document. The plan, professional development tied to the plan, and the ongoing monitoring provides the division leadership team and the buildings the tools necessary to monitor for any errors and creates a structure and process that allows for collective responsibility for student achievement starting at the division level all the way down to the classroom.

Responsibilities of Building Leadership Teams

The primary responsibility of the building leadership team is to build capacity of staff within the building and to lead the implementation of the division VTSS procedures within the building. This includes using the division-identified procedures to make building-level decisions that allow for full implementation and sustainable practices based on the building's unique characteristics and needs.

Division and Building Leadership Team Membership

The initial step is to establish a division leadership team and building leadership teams within the division. It is critical that the leadership teams have membership from all areas of the educational system, and have individuals with decision-making authority. The VTSS benchmarks include indicators of sustaining implementation associated with leadership, organizational and school culture, and family and community partnerships. These primarily fall within the realm of control of division and building leadership teams.

As the leadership team is being established, attention should be given to the size of the division leadership team. If the team grows too large, it becomes difficult to manage and to make progress. If the team is too small, it becomes difficult to create buy-in from all stakeholders. The leadership team should not be seen as the people responsible for all of the work but as the coordinators of the work. Depending on the size of the division, having multiple workgroups outside headed by leadership team members that have specific tasks is an excellent way to both ensure sufficient expertise is accessible to complete the work and to aid in buy-in by having more individuals involved. As the division leadership team moves into the specific areas of plan development, some of the tasks that can be given to workgroups will be more apparent. One example could

be looking at the current practices and recommendations to the division leadership team specific to interventions that are used in the division across all groups (such as general education, special education, Title I, English language learners, and support services). Using workgroups allows the leadership team to remain relatively small, with the decision makers included while still maintaining involvement by a larger group of individuals that have direct experience and knowledge about the topic that is being discussed.

As the division leadership team is being established, consider who on the team gives voice to each of the areas below. Giving voice means that there is an individual that is perceived by the group as being in tune to its point of view, can provide perspective from that point of view, and has connections to the group to provide information and to connect to others if more in-depth information is needed.

- **Curriculum** - core curriculum used within general education and for intervention with all groups, including Title I, Special Education, and English Language Learners to teach reading, mathematics, and behavior.
- **Instruction** - instructional practices and strategies used within core and with all groups to teach reading, mathematics, and behavior.
- **Assessment** - assessments required by the state or for state reporting

Supporting Leadership Team Success

When a leadership team does not include individuals that have the authority to make decisions or have the correct expertise (such as reading, mathematics, curriculum, or student support), the team runs the risk of becoming frustrated if their "recommendations" to the decision makers are not accepted or fragmented due to lack of alignment of efforts. The frustration and lack of alignment can result in decreased momentum by the leadership team, the development of a fragmented system, and a perceived lack of legitimacy of the effort, creating lack of buy-in.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks

LEADERSHIP

Emerging

- A clearly written vision statement has been created and shared at the division and school level.
- School division leadership believes all children can learn, that resources can be organized to facilitate learning, and that through adoption of a common language and shared vision with all stakeholders is possible.
- Parents and other stakeholders in the community are included as valuable participants in the development of the VTSS processes.
- The school division mission statement has student performance as its highest priority.
- School division leadership recognizes and ensures that adequate student support services (school nurses, school psychologists, school social workers, etc.) are provided.
- A common language and understanding of terms and principles of VTSS is defined and shared with all employees.
- School Board policy and regulations reflect a commitment to individual student learning and a value of positive school climate, including competent teachers and responsiveness to each student's individuality.
- Division leadership team and school level teams are formally established.
- Leadership explores and implements ways to maximize resources to support VTSS.
- The purpose of VTSS is communicated to all staff and other stakeholders through various means, and is referenced on an ongoing basis.
- The division sets the expectation that decisions are based on data and supported by evidence.

Developing

- Leadership teams, representative of all programmatic areas (including principals) meet on a regular basis at the division and school level to review school improvement plan status, data in support of objective achievement, and to discuss next steps and the refinement of planned actions.
- As a result of collaborative planning, division and school schedules and budgets reflect implementation actions, and changes in organizational procedures, policies, and personnel.
- Ongoing communication about the VTSS rollout takes place, according to plans that address each stakeholder group, including parents.
- Goals and indicators of academic and behavioral success have been established for each of the implementation processes and have been formally communicated to all internal and external stakeholders.
- Results of professional development activities are observable in the classroom.
- The division leadership team works with the Superintendent to educate the School Board on VTSS and how it works to improve student achievement.

Sustaining VTSS

- VTSS is the organizing framework for implementation of programs and measurement of impact on student learning.
- School division written policies and comprehensive plans are clear that VTSS is expected.
- Job responsibilities, roles, and professional development expectations for delivering VTSS are reflected in documents from Human Resource Departments.
- Instruction, Administration, Operations, and Support Services are integrated for the delivery of VTSS.
- School division documents emphasize that students, parents, and community members are expected to be active participants in VTSS.
- Professional development that supports VTSS is provided across administrative, operational, instructional, and support levels.
- Communication in the school division facilitates VTSS.
- All school data are collected and analyzed in ways that facilitate the delivery of VTSS and improve student achievement.
- Professional development needs of all employees are based on data that supports VTSS.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

Emerging

- The division conducts regular needs assessments and student and staff surveys to assess climate toward improved academic performance of students.
- Adults are learners and actively participate in training that addresses expectations and skills necessary for building a positive school culture, including communication skills and effective group process.
- Initial data and information is gathered from school staff and students to assess the degree to which an environment for learning is in place, including feelings of security and trust.
- The responsibility to provide appropriate interventions for struggling learners is shared by general education, special education, specialists, and student support services.
- Areas of professional development are assessed at both the building and division level based on data.
- Coaching and support is provided to schools in the development and implementation of a VTSS.
- Students are encouraged to develop assets and are supported when struggling, as opposed to being identified by their deficits.
- The division belief that all children can learn, graduate, and achieve success beyond high school is reflected in daily practices within the school division.

Developing

- The school division ensures that a VTSS is in place to raise the academic and behavioral performance of all students.
- The school division VTSS provides evidence of closing performance gaps among the variety of student subgroups, e.g., ELLs, low SES.
- All educators, administrators, teachers and staff are trained to use the language and tools of VTSS so they can articulate and give evidence of closing performance gaps.
- The school division has a VTSS framework that allows for flexible allocation and usage of personnel and resources to support the academic and behavioral needs of children in each school building.
- Time is scheduled based on educational need.
- The division and school infrastructure supports a method for interpreting academic and behavioral data for making effective instructional decisions.
- The school division develops professional development to sustain VTSS principles and to monitor fidelity of implementation of the instructional program.
- Planning time is provided for instructional teams as evidenced by the school schedule and school division calendar.

Sustaining VTSS

- The division VTSS provides evidence that all students are achieving state standards as expected.
- The division VTSS provides evidence that achievement gaps among student sub-groups are closing.
- All personnel and community stakeholders can articulate and demonstrate commitment to raising academic standards and closing performance gaps for all students.
- All educators, administrators, and employees use VTSS as the organizational framework for “doing business.”
- The division and school staff consistently review and analyze data collaboratively as a basis for all decision making.
- Professional development in support of VTSS is ongoing and purposed for all educators, administrators, and staff, based on need.
- Evidence-based practices implemented with fidelity are the norm.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Emerging

- Parents should have enough information to conclude that VTSS is for all students and not a means to delay the provision of special education services.
- Parent comment and participation are encouraged, and the division and schools seek support from parents during a consensus building phase.

Developing

- A survey of parent satisfaction with school efforts is taken annually.
- Schools provide opportunities for parents to gain a better understanding of the VTSS framework and how it is instrumental in the process.
- Parents are active participants in their children's educational programs.
- Parents can communicate the purpose of VTSS and how it helps their children.

Sustaining VTSS

- Parents view themselves as partners and advocates in the school division's Tiered System of Supports.
- Interagency collaboration across public and private service agencies is embedded divisionwide.

requirements, requirements of programs being implemented, and of general assessment practices of learning used within the division.

- **Division and building administration from both general and special education** - including human resources addressing job responsibilities and professional development.
- **General education teachers and staff** - including allocation of resources and staff.
- **Entitlement program teachers and staff** - including allocation of resources and staff of Title I, Special Education, English Language Learners.
- **Student support services** - including mental health and school social work.
- **Families** - including families of students who receive entitlement services.
- **Local school board**

Communication

The need for effective communication with and support of stakeholders is no different for the implementation of VTSS than any other effort within the division and community. The purpose of communication is to bring everyone to a common understanding about why resources are being put into the VTSS effort, as well as what they can expect from its implementation. The overall message that is communicated about VTSS should remain consistent, such as the rationale for implementation and the vision, but the specific details that are provided should move forward just as division implementation does.

The initial momentum is likely to come from early adopters who need little more than an exciting new challenge. After the early group comes on board, the message becomes critical for consensus building and progress toward divisionwide implementation. To help in framing the initial message around the rationale and vision, the division leadership team should be able to answer the following questions.

- What is the desired future to be achieved? *[Be as specific and measurable as possible: We want to have a school where all students can read for understanding and learning in addition to performing well on tests.]*
- What is the current reality in relation to that desired future? *[Include relevant data: Currently in our division 65 percent of the students are not at benchmark for grade level reading skills.]*
- Why is it important to achieve the desired future? *[Include an analysis of options and why VTSS was chosen: We have looked at the data, and it indicates we have pockets of success throughout the division and a diversity of practice. We believe that we need to have a K-12 continuum of education that provides a consistent curriculum from kindergarten to graduation and have a single system to ensure that all students learn. For this reason, we have chosen to use the VTSS framework to guide our effort.]*
- How urgent is it that the desired future is achieved?
- Who is supporting/pushing the implementation of VTSS and the move to the desired future?
- Who is involved in the development of the division plan?

Example: Communication Plan & Team Workspace

Target Group	Primary Concern	Message	When	How/Who
Parents (Example)	Their own children	New structure in the school to ensure your child learns to read and what you should be expecting to see and hear differently from your child.	September newsletter	Newsletter by principal
Parents				
Building Principals				
General Education Staff				
Special Education Staff				
Student Services				
Title I Staff				
Staff serving				
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students				
Local School Board				

- What is the timeline for implementation?
- What will be impacted by the implementation of VTSS?
- How can people have a voice as the division moves toward implementation?
- Who should people contact if they have questions?
- What support will be provided to whom and when?
- What should they expect and when?

(adapted from Biech, 2007)

Questions such as the ones above provide the foundation for communication around the division's VTSS efforts. The specifics of who to contact with questions, what will be impacted, what to expect, and what support will be provided are likely to shift depending on the specific audience and stage of implementation.

Using the answers to the questions above and the communication plan, begin drafting the initial message that people need to hear about the division's VTSS efforts. An example of a basic communication plan is shown on the previous page. In the first column, identify the target group that needs information. In the second column, identify what their primary concern is. In the third column, identify what pieces of information from the questions above address their primary concerns. In the fourth column, identify when this information will be shared, and in the fifth column identify how and/or with whom it will be shared.

Whether in a table form like the example on page 11 or some other format, the communication plan should become a significant part of the division leadership team's work. Teams are encouraged to use it as the first and last item of each of their meetings. As an opening item to the meeting, all planned communications are reviewed to ensure they

were completed and to get feedback that may require attention. This provides an easy way to monitor implementation of the communication plan. As a closing item to the meeting, review of the plan provides the leadership team a way to review all discussions and decisions made and to consider which group, if any, needs information based on the progress made at the meeting.

Development and Monitoring of Division Implementation Plan

The implementation of the Virginia VTSS framework is a long-term commitment of division leadership. It requires planning and vision for what is to be achieved with the implementation, as well as how progress toward that success will be monitored and supported. The Virginia VTSS Benchmarks outline what it takes to create a sustainable system from the implementation plan to the role of monitoring the system and using the data to guide refinements.

The practices that are described in the benchmarks provide a broad frame of reference for the interconnectedness of the system that is established when VTSS is implemented. This guide assists the division leadership through the decisions that must be initially made to initiate implementation; however, the division leadership must provide the ongoing action to move from a developing level of implementation to a sustainable VTSS. The action of the division leadership team is driven by the problem solving process described earlier and is informed by data from all levels of the system.

The data that the division leadership team will rely on comes from data specific to student learning, as well as data about the system and staff practices. Data about student learning is discussed in detail in the section addressing the comprehensive assessment plan. In this section, the division leadership team will identify the assessments that provide staff sufficient data to inform instructional planning and to monitor effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction.

The data concerning staff practices within the division is the piece of the system that must be attended to by the division leadership. In addition to the data that is obtained as part of the ongoing professional development, there needs to be a broader measure of the practices of the Virginia VTSS framework. This is best measured through a tool completed by building leadership teams and another completed by all building staff.

The building leadership is similar to the division leadership on a smaller scale, in that it must ensure the problem-solving process is being used consistently with accurate and valid data. To do so, a building team should use a tool such as the Self-Assessment of Problem Solving Implementation (SAPSI) (Florida PS/Rtl Statewide Project, 2011). Shown is one page of the Florida PS-Rtl Implementation Assessment. The complete tool is available online from the Florida PS/Rtl Statewide Project Web site at http://www.florida-rti.org/_docs/AppendixA.pdf.

These types of monitoring tools are completed by building and division leadership teams at minimum once per year but preferably twice per year to enable monitoring of implementation progress and planning for support and improvement. The data from the chosen assessment is used by both building and division leadership teams to determine specific support that may be needed by the building, as well as to identify overall divisionwide implementation and adjustments that may be needed to the VTSS.

A ‘perception of practices’ tool should be completed once per year by all building staff to monitor the changes in instructional practices within the building and division. One example of a tool to measure changes in staff practices is the **Perception of Practices Survey** from the Florida Problem Solving/Rtl Statewide Project (Florida SP/Rtl Statewide Project, 2011). All of these tools monitor the implementation of practices aligned with the Virginia VTSS framework. The data collected is used by both

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks EVALUATION PLAN

Emerging

- Planning has taken place to identify the methods and indicators of evaluation of VTSS implementation, progress and impact.
- The evaluation plan has multiple components and includes assessing both the short- and long-term impact of VTSS implementation.

Developing

- The school division develops a plan for continuous improvement under a VTSS umbrella and leaders are able to align various other initiatives to the VTSS process.
- The school division is correcting overlap in the five year plan, School Improvement Plan, and VTSS plan.
- Evaluation of fidelity of implementation is a formal process.
- The leadership team conducts an evaluation of VTSS implementation annually and creates an action plan, including professional development needs.

Sustaining VTSS

- A continuous improvement plan is used to evaluate all components of VTSS.
- School division data demonstrate that the VTSS model has led to improved outcomes for students according to multiple measures.

building and division leadership teams to identify specific supports that may be needed within specific buildings or divisionwide by all staff, and provides a divisionwide measure of progress toward full implementation of VTSS.

PS-Rtl Implementation Assessment		
Directions: In responding to each item below, please use the following response scale:		
<p>Not Started (N) — (The activity occurs less than 24 percent of the time) In Progress (I) — (The activity occurs approximately 25 percent to 74 percent of the time) Achieved (A) — (The activity occurs approximately 75 percent to 100 percent of the time) Maintaining (M) — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75 percent to 100 percent of the time)</p>		
<p>For each item below, please write the letter of the option (N, I, A, M) that best represents your School-Based Leadership Team's response in the column labeled "Status." In the column labeled "Comments/Evidence," please write any comments, explanations, and/or evidence that are relevant to your team's response. When completing the items on the SAPSI, the team should base its responses on the grade levels being targeted for implementation by the school.</p>		
Consensus: Comprehensive Commitment and Support	Status	Comments/Evidence
1. District-level leadership provides active commitment and support (e.g., meets to review data and issues at least twice each year).	M -	
2. The school leadership provides training, support, and active involvement (e.g., principal is actively involved in School-Based Leadership Team meetings).	M -	
3. Faculty/staff support and are actively involved		

CURRICULUM

Within the VTSS benchmark, curriculum and instruction have been separated to consider each. It is understood that the interconnectedness of these two items can make it somewhat difficult to think about them separately, but it is important to ensure that both are adequately planned for within the division. Throughout this guide, the term **standards** refers to the **Virginia Standards of Learning** and any local learning standards that have been identified; **curriculum** refers to the materials

that are used to facilitate the learning of those standards both within the core and intervention; and **instruction** refers to how the standards are taught.

The Virginia VTSS model is a hybrid model of RtI, meaning it involves using both a curricula protocol and problem solving in the planning of instruction. In practice, this is operationalized by having a curricula protocol that identifies the curricula materials that are used to teach

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks CURRICULUM PLAN

Emerging

- In addition to a core academic curriculum, the school division curriculum reflects sensitivity to the social-emotional development of students.
- There is a process in place to ensure all elements of the curriculum are research-based with evidence of effectiveness.
- The curriculum and its resources have been analyzed for alignment to the **Virginia Standards of Learning** and the division objectives for student achievement in reading, mathematics, writing and behavior.
- The curriculum includes a continuum of academic and behavioral services to address the increasing intensity of needs for all students.

Developing

- The school division/school checks the alignment of their curriculum to state **Standards of Learning** annually.
- Changes in the curriculum used across the division and in specific schools are made if the curriculum does not support and contribute to student achievement of learning benchmarks.
- The curriculum has a mapping and pacing guide for each core subject area that is evidenced in/through classroom observation(s) and weekly lesson plans.
- An evaluation of the curriculum in terms of level of difficulty and rigor against learning benchmarks, and opportunity to achieve, has been made.
- The curriculum provides for intervention in such a manner that all children have access to a continuum of services.

Sustaining VTSS

- Curriculum structure is aligned to **Virginia Standards of Learning**.
- Curriculum/intervention resource decisions are made using progress monitoring data and are used with fidelity.

VTSS Benchmark	Division Decision	Building Implementation
	LOOSE	TIGHT
Curriculum structure is perfectly aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning .	The division develops a curricula protocol by identifying an evidence-based core curriculum and curricula to be used for intervention that is supported through monitoring use and providing ongoing professional development to achieve fidelity.	Buildings implement the curricula protocol developed by the division, including monitoring the implementation by classroom staff and providing ongoing support to ensure it is implemented with fidelity.
Curriculum/intervention resource decisions are made using progress monitoring data.		
Curriculum/intervention resources are used with fidelity.		

the standards at all tiers and a problem-solving process driven by data that enables teams to match students based on need to curricula materials identified in the protocol. The problem-solving process ensures that interventions are aligned to the hypothesis of the cause of the learning difficulty and to student need.

This curriculum protocol is established by the division through a process of evaluating current curricula, including core curriculum and interventions, and student data to identify which are strong and should continue to be used and which need to be replaced. A protocol is created through the selection of curricula, which provides a seamless continuum of curricula that is aligned to the **Virginia Standards of Learning** used for core instruction through intervention. From the Virginia VTSS Benchmarks document, the table below describes the progression of practices and indicators to help guide a school through creating and sustaining a VTSS specific to curriculum.

While the VTSS model provides flexibility, as it moves to the division and into the building level the decisions and model become more specific. The table below is an example of how the VTSS Benchmarks provide a flexible standard for curricula that is implemented at the building level according to division protocol.

This type of approach is necessary to allow the division to function as a single system. In the introduction, the problem of too loosely defining the RtI model was discussed, and this

is one of the critical areas where it must be well defined. Creating the curricula protocol at the division level allows for system-level evaluation and division support of staff professional development.

Core Curriculum

The primary and most critical part of the curricula protocol is the core curriculum. This is the component that every student within the division will be receiving, and it should meet the needs of a significant proportion of them. The core curriculum must have a strong evidence base and address all essential elements of the content area. For reading, this would include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000) at each grade level. Across all grade levels the staff needs to consider the core skills and knowledge identified in the **Virginia Standards of Learning** and locally what will be required of students. The curriculum should consider the materials used to teach the standards, knowledge, and strategies appropriate for the grade level and must support good quality classroom instruction that supports all students meeting or exceeding the state and local learning standards.

Curricula for Intervention (Tiers 2 and 3)

The other piece of the curricula protocol is the materials used for intervention with students who are struggling to learn. When identifying

Tiers 2 and 3 curriculum protocol, it is helpful to think of Tiers 2 and 3 interventions as describing a difference of intensity of intervention opposed to a program (e.g., Special Education, Title I, Striving Readers, Reading Specialists, and Instructional Consultation Teams). Thinking of Tiers 2 and 3 in this manner helps the discussion focus on what materials are more explicit and systematic, and makes the instruction more intensive. It is critical to not tie intervention curricula to programs and to ensure that many staff members have access and training in using them. This prevents tiers from becoming equivalent to entitlement programs (e.g., Tier 2 = Title I, Tier 3 = Special Education). When this occurs, the fluidity of the system as well as the system's ability to meet the needs of all students is undermined, since not all students who need intervention are entitlement program eligible.

Including Tiers 2 and 3 curricula materials in the curriculum protocol is critical to achieve a level of efficiency and effectiveness that is not otherwise possible. A well-defined protocol provides staff a clear expectation of evidence-based intervention and guidance to ensure appropriate match to student need. This not only increases the likelihood of student success it also decreases the time demands of each staff member who would have to individually identify appropriate curricula allowing more time for instruction.

Taking Inventory of Curricula

The initial step in creating the curricula protocol is to take inventory of the curricula that are being used for core and intervention throughout the division. Taking inventory provides the division leadership team with a list of existing curricula being used and allows for the evaluation and matching of existing resources to the curricula protocol. At the point of taking inventory, the goal is not to evaluate, but only to create a list of the curricula used/available within the division.

Once the complete list is created, the division leadership team must evaluate and select the

curricula that are appropriate for each tier of the curricula protocol and identify the instructional focus of those materials. This process of evaluating and selecting will likely result in a curricula list that is shorter than is currently used within the division. Narrowing what is used allows leadership to provide a higher quality of ongoing support and coaching to staff, resulting in greater fidelity and more effective instruction for students. Identifying the instructional focus of the materials and including this information in the protocol aids staff in matching curriculum to student need, resulting in greater student achievement. In addition to these student-specific aspects, developing a more narrow curricula protocol can also have positive impact on the system. When people are asked to make changes in their behavior they are more likely to revert to their previous behavior if provided with more options and less clear criteria (Heath & Heath, 2010). A clear curriculum protocol helps staff shift their behavior, as well as leadership. The leadership team needs to constantly monitor the implementation fidelity of all curricula and provide coaching and support to ensure correct and effective use. Intervention failure should be the exception and not the norm (VanDerHeyden & Tilly III, 2010).

Creating the Curricula Protocol

The initial curricula protocol is likely not to be the final one after a year or two of implementation. The creation should not be viewed as something that would cause the division by default to replace or purchase additional curricula. During the initial development, division leadership is encouraged to use existing curricula that has a solid research base and not to initially look into acquiring additional materials. Specifically, in consideration of the core curriculum, it is typically considered best to maintain the current curriculum unless it is not consistent across the division or if there is solid data to suggest that it is being implemented with fidelity and the desired results are not being achieved. Through the development of the protocol, gaps will be

identified, and during implementation data will indicate if any are ineffective.

The table below provides an example of a Curricula Protocol. Use this or a similar document to identify which curriculum is appropriate at each grade level for the critical components of the content area. In determining

appropriate tier determination for curriculum, keep in mind the time allotted for intervention at each tier (e.g., Tier 2 is typically 30 minutes), whether the curriculum can be used within that time frame, and whether the curriculum identified actually provides more intensive intervention.

Example: Curriculum Protocol for Reading: Grades K-2

	Tier 1 (Core)	Tier 2 (Supplemental)	Tier 3 (Intensive)
Phonemic Awareness	Scott Foresman: My Sidewalks, Earobics	Elements of Reading: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness	Wilson Foundations
Phonics	Scott Foresman: My Sidewalks, Earobics	Elements of Reading: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness	Wilson Foundations
Fluency	Scott Foresman: My Sidewalks, Read Naturally	Six-Minute Solution	Wilson Foundations
Vocabulary	Scott Foresman: My Sidewalks, Read Naturally	Elements of Reading: Vocabulary	Wilson Foundations
Comprehension	Scott Foresman: My Sidewalks, Read Naturally	Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking	Wilson Foundations
How will fidelity be monitored?	Walkthroughs using an observation form done by the building principal bi-monthly.	Intervention staff will conduct observations of others and all staff will use intervention logs.	Intervention staff will conduct observations of others and all staff will use intervention logs.

INSTRUCTION

In this guide and in the VTSS Benchmarks, curriculum and instruction have been separated to address each. **Curriculum** refers to the materials that are used to facilitate the learning of those standards both within the core and intervention and **instruction** refers to how the standards are taught. It is a combination of these two aspects that enables student learning when effectively used by a teacher.

The division leadership team needs to support staff with providing effective instruction by selecting, clarifying, and providing ongoing professional development for research-based instructional best practices for core instruction and intervention, as well as realigning division resources to support building leadership teams in creating schedules that support implementation fidelity.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks INSTRUCTION

Emerging

- Instruction is purposeful and well-planned.
- Instructional personnel are held accountable for student learning.
- A methodology for evaluating fidelity of instruction is established.
- Following professional development the school division measures the application of learning through observation of change in teaching practices and other methods.
- Professional development is individualized for teachers and leaders based on observations and student data.
- The division ensures master scheduling is flexible and driven by instructional and behavioral needs of students.

Developing

- Staff participates in discussions about the evidence-base of specific academic and behavior instructional practices for different tiers.
- Staff are trained in the use of evidence-based instructional practices for academics and behavior and share this knowledge with colleagues.
- Instructional staff select explicit instructional practices that are an appropriate match for the needs of the student academically and behaviorally.
- All staff are purposefully and intentionally assigned to students during scheduled intervention time for maximum differentiation.
- Administrators and supervisors are trained in observing for fidelity of implementation.
- The division selects and clarifies best practice in research-based instructional practices as reflected in teacher lesson plans and instructional delivery; best practices are documented through observation.

Sustaining VTSS

- Evidence-based instructional practices that are an appropriate match for the needs of the student are used with fidelity.
- All educators are evaluated for their use of evidence-based practices.
- The school division provides ongoing professional development and supervision (coaching) that assists classroom teachers in the effective use of evidence-based practices.
- Fidelity of instruction, intervention and assessment is monitored.

Instructional Practices

A quality core curriculum has a variety of instructional practices that should be present, but two critical aspects of instruction that must be present in core are explicit instruction and differentiated instruction.

Explicit Instruction is a practice in which students are told what they will learn and are provided procedural knowledge to learn. In practice, explicit instruction means that the teacher will provide three types of directions to students during learning: (1) declarative, telling the student what concept or strategy they will need to learn; (2) procedural, explaining and modeling how to use the concept or strategy; and (3) conditional explaining, when the use of the concept or strategy is appropriate (Ellis, Worthington, & Larkin, 1994; Pearson & Dole, 1987).

Explicit Instruction Resources

Video clips by Anita Archer modeling explicit instruction are available online at www.explicitinstruction.org.

Differentiated Instruction provides an organized way to proactively adjust instruction for teaching and learning that enables students to engage in learning at their individual skill level. Differentiation provides teachers a framework for adjusting instruction by: (1) content - what the student learns; (2) process - how the student learns; (3) product - how the student demonstrates learning; and (4) learning environment - the setting of the learning environment. It is important to understand and keep the focus of differentiated instruction as a practice of effective core instruction that is provided for all students. It should not be viewed as an intervention for students who are struggling to learn (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000).

In selecting and clarifying the instructional practices that are used within the division, the leadership team should be selecting specific models of the instructional practices to use.

For example, many teachers will report using differentiated instruction within their classrooms. However, when specifics are requested, a variety of practices are typically described, sometimes just an issue of terminology and others truly different practice. To ensure that instructional practices are implemented with fidelity and are consistently supported through ongoing professional development and coaching, it is critical for the division leadership team to be very specific. The importance of this specificity in relation to achieving the instructional changes is discussed in detail in ***Finding Your Leadership Focus: What Matters Most for Student Results*** by Douglas B. Reeves (2011). This issue raised by Reeves is a critical piece that must be understood, accepted, and attended to by division leadership if a true improvement in classroom instruction is to occur (Fullan, 2010).

Protected Instructional Time and Scheduling

Having quality curricula and instructional practices is important, but the school schedule must guarantee that sufficient time is provided for those to occur. The actual school schedule is developed at the building level, but the division leadership must provide direction and support to ensure that best practice is followed and is possible within the buildings. The division setting non-negotiable expectations for instruction, including not only the practices used but also the amount of time dedicated to certain aspects of instruction, is critical. The division must provide leadership and set expectations and take actions to support buildings to achieve those instructional expectations.

Core Instruction: The division leadership team should set instructional expectations specific to minutes of core instruction at each grade level. For example, few would disagree with a 90-minute protected reading block for grades K-3, but what are the expectations for the rest of the grades? What are the expectations for instruction in mathematics and behavior?

In setting these expectations, the division leadership team needs to attend to the allocation of resources that occur at the division level, particularly staffing. In situations where buildings share staff, regardless of the subject area (for example, physical education, music, art, special education, Title I), the division leadership team must ensure that priorities align with the scheduling of staff. For example, if the priority is having a 90-minute reading block but the first class put into the school schedule is physical education, then there is a mismatch between the stated priority of an uninterrupted reading block and the scheduling of staff.

Intervention: The division leadership team should set instructional expectations specific to intervention time, including the duration and frequency of Tiers 2 and 3, and the schedule reflects these expectations. For example, Tier 2 intervention is commonly 30 minutes, 3-5 days a week, and Tier 3, 60 minutes, 4-5 days a week. How should building schedules support this? Some schools schedule a 30-minute block of intervention time that ensures sufficient time for all of Tier 2 intervention and half of Tier 3 intervention without students missing any other content instruction. Other schools schedule in two 30-minute blocks of intervention to ensure time for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 without infringing on other content areas.

To support buildings in the implementation of a schedule that includes intervention, the division leadership team needs to attend to staff that are shared across buildings. The issue related to intervention and shared staff is that during scheduled intervention times, having sufficient staff in the building to support intervention groups is critical. By scheduling core instruction and intervention time as a building, it is possible to know specifically when students from each grade level are not available for intervention (i.e., during the core instruction block). It is critical that the division does not schedule shared staff who provide services to students to be in a building during intervention time unless they are providing that type of support. Additionally, specific times for when intervention will be

occurring for those students is also known. Therefore, it is just as critical to ensure that staff providing services for those students are in the building at that time. The goal is to have as many staff available during the scheduled intervention times as possible, thus enabling group size for Tiers 2 and 3 to remain at the appropriately small sizes.

Team Time: For the implementation of VTSS to be successful, instructional staff must have regularly scheduled time to meet together to review student progress and plan instruction. This has been achieved in numerous ways, sometimes in a manner which many think is impossible. To achieve this, staff planning or collaboration times may need to be adjusted so that all staff responsible for providing instruction for students at a grade level may plan together (this includes Special Education, Title I and ESOL/CLD staff). Some schools have figured out ways to achieve this by adjusting the plan times within the current schedules, adjusting the master schedule to provide for an early student release day once a week or every other week, or having substitutes, other staff, or building administrators provide portions of planned instruction to allow staff to plan future instruction.

Creating the Schedule

Core instruction time and intervention time should be built into the master schedule. The time blocked for each is determined by the building leadership team opposed to individual staff in classrooms. This allows for more effective and efficient scheduling of staff to support intervention.

Monitoring Integrity of Instruction

Two aspects that are tightly related are student success and instructional integrity (fidelity). Relying on student success alone to inform instruction and the system can result in incorrect decisions being made about system effectiveness and individual student need for intervention. Instructional integrity must be monitored and tracked at all levels of instruction from core through intervention. This means the division

leadership team must establish the expectations and provide tools and support to buildings so that instruction, including the use of curricula, is monitored for fidelity.

Instructional integrity of core instruction should ensure that curricular materials are being used correctly and that the protected instructional time is being provided as designed. This can be achieved with the use of tools provided by the publisher of the curriculum or through tools developed by the division. To support building staff in monitoring core instruction integrity, training in the use of the monitoring tools should be provided.

Instructional integrity of intervention must address three aspects: (1) ensure that curricular materials are being used correctly; (2) ensure that interventions are being provided at the frequency, duration, and group size planned; and (3) ensure that progress monitoring and instructional decisions/adjustments are being made as outlined in the progress monitoring decision rules. Fidelity of intervention programs may be monitored through the use of tools provided by the publisher or through tools developed by the division. Intervention integrity addressing frequency, duration, progress monitoring, and decision rules is best monitored through the use of a single divisionwide intervention log. Below is an example intervention log.

Intervention Log Example

Week of _____ Intervention Teacher _____

Assessment Measures: Date: _____

Names of Students in Group	FSF	LNF	PSF	NWF	ORF/R-CBM	MAZE
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

*FSF - First Sound Fluency/LNF-Letter Naming Fluency/PSF-Phoneme Segmentation Fluency/ NWF-Nonsense Word Fluency/ORF-Oral Reading Fluency

Time - Intervention Provided

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Teams Met					
Total Minutes/day:					

Instructional Focus:

Intervention/Materials:

Attendance and Observation Records:

Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F	Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F
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COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

At the core of VTSS is a problem-solving process that is driven by data. It is the creation of a comprehensive assessment system that allows for effective and sustainable implementation of VTSS. The assessment system will provide the data necessary for problem solving to be conducted throughout the division by direct instruction staff as well as building and division

leadership teams. It is only through consistent and effective assessment that accurate decisions at all levels can be made (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). When reviewing and selecting assessments, it is important to consider the purpose of each assessment and how it aligns to practices within the Virginia VTSS model.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School Division Benchmarks MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

Emerging

- The school leadership team and principals have access to and use assessment data.
- Parents and students are informed about the purpose of assessments.
- The school division has an assessment map and the explanation of the utility of each tool that is visible and easily understood.
- The division uses multiple measures with set benchmarks to raise academic and behavioral standards.
- A process is established to ensure fidelity of assessment.
- Teachers and leaders are aware of the value of frequent progress monitoring, and use this data effectively to identify students who need early intervention.
- Data from various sources are shared and analyzed, and specific plans are implemented to determine if the instructional and behavioral interventions are effective.
- The division has established criteria for assessment results and set levels of expectations for tiers.

Developing

- Classroom teachers have access to screening and frequent progress monitoring assessment data and receive structured sequential training on using assessments and interpreting results.
- School division and school teams use universal screening and formative assessment data to make decisions and to provide interventions that optimize student growth.
- School and division teams schedule staff training and fidelity checks on all assessment measures used.
- Parents and students understand the purpose of assessments and participate in self-monitoring and tracking of learning progress.
- Progress monitoring is scheduled and documented, and used to plan instruction.
- Decision rules are understood and used by all teams.

Sustaining VTSS

- Decisions about curriculum, instruction, and all specific interventions across tiers are made using student progress monitoring data.
- The school division uses a formal system of monitoring student progress that includes universal screening, formative assessment, and other diagnostic processes.

To achieve a high level of effectiveness and efficiency across the system, the division leadership team must develop a comprehensive assessment system that is implemented divisionwide in all buildings. To be able to provide all of the data necessary for decision making at all levels, the comprehensive system must include universal screening, diagnostic assessments/processes, and progress monitoring. Universal screening is conducted three times a year for the purpose of identifying students who are in need of further diagnostic assessments/processes and may be in need of intervention (e.g., PALS, DIBELS, and AIMSweb). Diagnostic assessments and diagnostic processes are formal assessments. Processes are used as a follow-up to universal screening to evaluate the discrete skill knowledge the student has and to determine the focus of intervention (e.g., QPS and PAST). Progress monitoring assessments are used for students who are receiving intervention to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and to guide decisions regarding the necessity of intervention adjustment. With any of these assessments missing at any grade level, a true VTSS cannot be implemented within a building or division.

The table below, based on the Virginia VTSS Benchmarks, shows the initial flexibility that divisions have as well as the tightening of practices that is required as it moves down to the building level.

When this ‘loose-tight’ concept is articulated, the division leadership is establishing non-negotiable practices that will be used divisionwide and articulating what flexibility the buildings have in further specifying and implementing those practices. Through the use of this loose-tight concept, the division is able to create the K-12 educational system that provides a consistent and continuous educational experience for students.

In selecting assessments for a comprehensive assessment system, it is important to understand the characteristics and uses of each type of assessment. The following table describes the characteristics and uses of each type of assessment that comprise a comprehensive assessment system for both academics and behavior. In creating a divisionwide VTSS, the division leadership team needs to create an assessment plan that is used consistently throughout the division.

Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring

As described in *Universal Screening as a Component of Response to Intervention* (Johnson & Mellard, 2009), the purpose of universal screening is to identify students who “might develop later academic or behavioral difficulties” (p. 1). In basic terms, RtI models have two approaches that either focus on

VTSS Benchmark	Division Decision	Building Implementation
LOOSE		TIGHT
<p>The school division uses a formal system of monitoring student progress that includes universal screening, formative assessment, and other diagnostic information. School and division teams schedule staff training and fidelity checks on all assessment measures used.</p> <p>Decision rules are understood and used by all teams.</p>	<p>The division creates a comprehensive assessment system that includes universal screening, diagnostic assessment/process, and progress monitoring with decision rules for each.</p> <p>The division has a system to provide ongoing professional development and monitoring fidelity of the comprehensive assessment system.</p>	<p>Buildings implement the comprehensive assessment system developed by the division, including monitoring the implementation by all staff and providing ongoing support to ensure it is implemented with fidelity.</p>

Assessment Types and Characteristics

Type of Assessment	Characteristics	Uses
Universal Screening:	At grades PK-8 for academics the universal screening assessments for reading and mathematics are curriculum-based measures (CBM) of critical early skills.	This is used to identify students who may be in need of additional support and to inform the evaluation of core curriculum effectiveness.
	At grades 9-12 for academics the universal screening is group or computer assessment that provides measures of critical knowledge and skills in the area of reading and/or mathematics.	For academics, universal screening assessments are administered three times per year.
	For behavior , universal screening consists of office discipline referral (ODR) data that includes behavior, student, location, time, and who made a referral for externalizing behaviors and a formal screening measure for internalizing and externalizing behavior.	For behavior, universal screening consisting of office discipline referrals (ODRs)/behavior incident reports (BIRs) is collected continuously throughout the year, with a formal screening measure conducted three times a year.
Progress Monitoring:	For academics , progress monitoring assessments are curriculum-based measures (CBMs) that progress monitor intervention. They are able to show small increments of change in skills that are the focus of intervention.	Progress monitoring assessments are used to ensure effectiveness of intervention and to inform instructional decisions.
	For behavior , progress monitoring assessments monitor intervention effects for individual students. Student ODR data along with individual student monitoring data (e.g., point/goal sheets) are used to determine the extent to which targeted behaviors improve as a result of intervention.	
Diagnostic Assessments:	For academics , diagnostic assessment refers to formal diagnostic assessments using standardized tests that assess skills in-depth for the essential reading and mathematics components.	Diagnostic assessments are administered when additional information is needed to allow teachers to determine the student's instructional focus.
Diagnostic Process:	For academics , the diagnostic process involves the use of informal surveys and tests to probe a student's knowledge and skills in-depth for the essential reading and mathematics components.	Diagnostic processes are used when additional information is needed to allow teachers to determine the student's instructional focus.
	For behavior , the diagnostic process involves conducting a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) in order to customize interventions that focus on the function (e.g., attention, escape) of student behavior.	With behavior, the diagnostic process is used to determine the function of behavior so that individualized, function-based interventions may be designed to meet the student's needs.

Adapted from (Kansas State Department of Education, 2011)

learning the essential skills to be successful in both school and afterwards (learning to read, do mathematics, interact appropriately) or focus on high-stakes assessments (state assessments) and learning the tested curricular standards and indicators. This distinction is critical in the selection of a universal screening assessment to ensure the assessment chosen is aligned with the goal of the system. The Virginia VTSS model uses the first approach of focusing on the essential skills that will allow students to be successful in learning the curricular standards and indicators, as well as having the skills to be successful after their formal educational experience.

Universal Screening and Early Childhood Screening

It is important to make a distinction between universal screening of essential skills within VTSS and early childhood screening for developmental delays as part of child find within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Universal screening assessments address students who may not be successful educationally if intervention is not provided. Early childhood screening for development disabilities is identifying young children who may have a disability as defined by IDEA. It is important to keep clear that universal screening and screening of young children for developmental delays are not the same.

This approach to RtI focuses on providing intervention that is focused on providing all students the skills necessary to be successful within core instruction and providing core instruction that ensures access and progress to all students, enabling them to be successful on high-stakes assessments. The use of universal screening and progress monitoring assessments, specifically CBM in the area of

academics, has a solid research base (Fuchs, Deno, & Mirkin, 1984; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Lembke & Stecker, 2007). Curriculum-based measures have been shown to be a valid and reliable universal screening assessment in considering essential skills and are also predictive of future achievement on high-stakes assessments (Nese, Park, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2011; Shinn, 1989).

The progress monitoring assessment used to monitor interventions must be able to be given frequently (e.g., once a week) and be able to show small increments of growth during that time. When using a universal screening assessment focused on essential skills and providing targeted skill and strategy interventions, it is critical to have a progress monitoring assessment matched to that approach. Typically the same CBM assessment can be used as the progress monitoring assessment for students receiving intervention (Tier 2 and Tier 3). CBM has been shown to be effective as a measure of student progress during intervention as well as having a significant positive impact on student achievement (Fuchs, Deno, & Mirkin, 1984).

Universal Screening Resource

An expanded discussion of universal screening within a Response to Intervention (RtI) system such as VTSS can be found in *Universal Screening as a Component of Response to Intervention* (Johnson & Mellard, 2009) on the Virginia Department of Education Web site.

There are two types of student progress that are typically monitored by educators, the progress the student is making within the classroom and the progress the student is making during intervention. Both of these types of progress monitoring are important but can be confusing if everyone is not clear which is being discussed. To help with consistency of implementation, it can be helpful to discuss “progress monitoring of intervention” to ensure intervention effectiveness and “progress monitoring of core” as part of classroom assessment ensuring all students are making progress in the learning standards. The primary differences between these two types of progress monitoring are frequency and what is being measured. Progress monitoring of intervention should occur weekly or biweekly, progress monitoring of core instruction typically occurs three to four times per year, measuring accomplishment of the learning standards.

Decision Rules for Universal Screening

To ensure effective and consistent use of the universal screening assessment, the division leadership team must establish decision rules addressing appropriate use. The decision rules associated with the universal screening assessment are ones related to need and intensity of intervention and need for additional diagnostic assessments.

Most universal screening assessments that are technically sound have identified decision rules based on national norms to identify students at risk as well as intensity of intervention (Tier 2 or 3) recommendations. When the assessment includes these decision rules, the division should adopt those provided by the publisher based on national data. Choosing to adjust the decision rules locally or using local norms will increase the likelihood of the misidentification of students who are at risk (Johnson & Mellard, 2009).

Decision Rules for Progress Monitoring

The division leadership team must develop decision rules related to progress monitoring of students who are receiving intervention to guide the problem-solving process. The decision rules will assist teams in making adjustments in intervention, as well as provide consistency throughout the system.

The first decision rule is frequency of progress monitoring for students who are receiving intervention (Tier 2 or 3). The typical recommendation in the professional literature is once every two to three weeks for students receiving Tier 2 intervention and weekly for students receiving Tier 3 intervention. It is important to remember that it is the intensity of intervention that determines whether the intervention is Tier 2 or 3, not the frequency of progress monitoring.

The second decision rule related to progress monitoring involves how many data points will be collected and analyzed in consideration of student progress. In the research related to this issue, recommendations vary from a three-point rule (Shinn, 1989) to a four-point rule with a minimum of six data points (Stecker & Fuchs, 2000). If the progress monitoring assessment chosen has a method identified, the division leadership team should follow that recommendation. In a situation when the publisher of the progress monitoring assessment does not have identified rules, the division leadership team should choose one for divisionwide implementation.

Diagnostic Assessments and Processes

Diagnostic assessments and processes are formal assessments or processes (e.g., error analysis) that provide information about the knowledge of specific critical early skills of a student. Their use enables intervention to be designed to focus on the individual student need. In selecting diagnostic assessments and processes, it is important to have assessments for all the essential components of the content area. However, always using a single assessment that includes all areas may not be the most efficient. For example, in the area of reading, there are assessments that cover all five of the essential components of reading that are typically more useful after the early elementary levels. When considering the early reading skills at the kindergarten and first-grade level, less time-consuming assessments that focus on single phonological awareness or phonics can be as effective.

Diagnostic Assessment Decision Rule

The decision rule associated with diagnostic assessments provides guidance to staff as to when and which diagnostic assessment or process is appropriate. With the recognition of finite instructional minutes available in the

school day, there must be a balance between assessment to inform instruction and the provision of instruction. Unfortunately there is no simple rule for how much assessment is necessary, and thinking of it as guidance to assist teams with allocating minutes between instruction and assessment can help the division leadership team understand the significance of guidance. Depending on the data provided by the selected universal screening assessment and the diagnostic assessments available, guidance should help staff understand how to move from the universal screening to the appropriate diagnostic assessment or processes to ensure both efficiency and appropriate instructional planning. As in the example of the three different diagnostic assessments for reading, there is a substantial difference in time required to administer, as well as what component of reading is assessed. Choosing the incorrect assessment could either lead to a mismatch of student need and instruction or unnecessary time spent conducting assessment.

Taking Inventory of Assessments

When creating a comprehensive assessment system, many find there is not a lack of assessments used within the system. Some of these are required, some are used very effectively, and others are just artifacts of prior practices. As a division creates a VTSS, the focus should be on effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of the system, from student learning to systematic practices. For this reason, divisions are encouraged to take inventory of all assessments currently used within the division, even if only used by specific staff (e.g., Title I,

Taking Inventory

It can be beneficial to think of this as a scavenger hunt for all assessments, rather than a search for assessments to create the comprehensive assessment system. This type of approach is likely to result in a more complete list of assessments used within the division, allowing the leadership team to make determinations about assessments that can be discontinued because they are duplicative or otherwise non-essential.

Special Education). While taking inventory, it is helpful to identify aspects of each assessment such as assessment name, administration window, grade level(s), and purpose of assessment/use of data.

Upon completing the assessment inventory, the division leadership team should review all assessments to determine purpose and technical adequacy (reliability and validity) of each assessment. Then using this information, the comprehensive assessment system can begin to be created.

Creating the Comprehensive Assessment Plan

In the creation of a comprehensive assessment plan, the division leadership team is identifying the measurement indicators for progress and success for learning divisionwide. Through the process of selection and identification of assessments, the division leadership team must pay close attention to not only technical adequacy of individual assessments but also that the assessment system as a whole provides staff necessary and sufficient data for problem solving and instructional planning. If the assessment system is incomplete, unclear, or not properly supported, the result is not just a lack of effectiveness and inefficiency, but also less effective instruction for students.

There is an example of a form on page 29 that can be used to assist in documenting the division comprehensive assessment plan. Begin filling in the assessment map that indicates by grade level the critical areas that must be assessed by the universal screening, diagnostics, and progress monitoring assessments. Using this assessment map allows teams to quickly and easily see where there are overlaps or gaps in the assessment system. While the critical skills to be assessed vary across grade levels within a content area, it is important to create a single system that provides a complete set of assessments that building staff have training and support in using and interpreting data to guide instructional decisions.

Creating the assessment map, including known dates for when state and divisionwide assessments are to be given, is important, especially for universal screening. Universal screening data must be collected divisionwide within a narrow assessment window three times per year so that data can be compiled at the division level for decision making. This aids in preventing conflicting assessment windows with other state and divisionwide assessments.

As the assessment map is finalized, teams are encouraged to also make a list of assessments that should no longer be used. Focusing on the use of appropriate assessments aligned to the instruction and the learning goals of the division not only makes it easier to provide support to staff, but helps ensure a consistent message and understanding of divisionwide expectations of learning.

Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Universal Screening Assessment

Grade(s):	Name of Assessment	Measures

Progress Monitoring Assessment for Intervention:

Name of Assessment	Measures

MOVING TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION



The vision of creating a divisionwide continuum of education that provides a seamless educational experience for all students is not one achieved overnight. It will take years of work by leadership and staff at all levels for the vision to be realized. The components covered in this guide provide the structure that allow for implementation of VTSS to begin. Stages of implementation should be revisited to provide a frame of reference for the continued effort that is required to achieve sustained implementation, with all staff skillfully using the process and practices in concert.

Through regular monitoring of the system and student progress, the VTSS system will be refined. Sustained implementation is achieved when data from both student learning and fidelity of implementation are used within a problem-solving process to guide adjustments of the system and instruction. The implementation of VTSS is not as simple as a program or an event, but is a journey. Through consistently trying to improve practices, achieving fidelity in the use of those practices, and assessing the impact on student learning, our goal of ensuring an effective education for all students can be achieved.

BENCHMARK COMPARISON



VTSS School Level Benchmarks

The division level and school level benchmarks promote successful VTSS/Response to Intervention (Rtl) implementation. They are helpful to school division leadership and principals as they begin the VTSS process in determining the progress that is being made in terms of implementation and also once full implementation has been achieved. The benchmarks are organized around the eight VTSS components which are listed below.

This document provides clear indicators of where a division is in terms of the VTSS process and what measures need to be taken to achieve the “sustaining” level of each benchmark. The division and school level benchmark components are presented together so that division leadership and school principals can easily determine what implementation steps need to be taken at each level.

The VTSS benchmarks are comprised of eight components:

- Leadership
- Organizational Culture and Structure
- Monitoring Student Progress
- Problem Solving
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Evaluation Plan

The three levels of VTSS implementation are:

- Emerging
- Developing
- Sustaining

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School **DIVISION** Benchmarks **LEADERSHIP**

Emerging

- A clearly written vision statement has been created and shared at the division and school level.
- School division leadership believes resources can be organized to facilitate learning, and through adoption of a common language and a shared vision with all stakeholders, that all children can learn.
- Parents and other stakeholders in the community are included as valuable participants in the development of the VTSS processes.
- The school division mission statement has student performance as its highest priority.
- School division leadership recognizes and ensures that adequate student support services (school nurses, school psychologists, school social workers, etc.) are provided.
- A common language and understanding of terms and principles of VTSS is defined and shared with all employees.
- School Board policy and regulations reflect a commitment to individual student learning and a value of positive school climate, including competent teachers and responsiveness to each student's individuality.
- Division leadership team and school level teams are formally established.
- Leadership explores and implements ways to maximize resources to support VTSS.
- The purpose of VTSS is communicated to all staff and other stakeholders through various means, and is referenced on an ongoing basis.
- The division sets the expectation that decisions are based on data and supported by evidence.

Developing

- Leadership teams, representative of all programmatic areas (including principals) meet on a regular basis at the division and school level to review school improvement plan status, data in support of objective achievement, and to discuss next steps and the refinement of planned actions.
- As a result of collaborative planning, division and school schedules and budgets reflect implementation actions, and changes in organizational procedures, policies, and personnel.
- Ongoing communication about the VTSS rollout takes place, according to plans that address each stakeholder group, including parents.
- Goals and indicators of academic and behavioral success have been established for each of the implementation processes and have been formally communicated to all internal and external stakeholders.
- Results of professional development activities are observable in the classroom.
- The division leadership team works with the Superintendent to educate the School Board on VTSS and how it works to improve student achievement.

Sustaining VTSS

- VTSS is the organizing framework for implementation of programs and measurement of impact on student learning.
- School division written policies and comprehensive plans are clear that VTSS is expected.
- Job responsibilities, roles, and professional development expectations for delivering VTSS are reflected in documents from Human Resource Departments.
- Instruction, Administration, Operations, and Support Services are integrated for the delivery of VTSS.
- School division documents emphasize that students, parents, and community members are expected to be active participants in VTSS.
- Professional development that supports VTSS is provided across administrative, operational, instructional, and support levels.
- Communication in the school division facilitates VTSS.
- All school data are collected and analyzed in ways that facilitate the delivery of VTSS and improve student achievement.
- Professional development needs of all employees are based on data that supports VTSS.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) SCHOOL Benchmarks LEADERSHIP

Emerging

- The VTSS School Leadership Team is formally established.
- A school mission/vision statement is in place and has been shared with stakeholders.
- School leadership and staff believe all children can learn.
- All staff members are responsible for providing tiered support for all children.
- School staff and leadership understand implementation may take three to five years.

Developing

- The VTSS School Leadership Team coordinates resources such as: master schedule, school calendar, personnel, budget, policies, professional development, and organizational procedures.
- The VTSS School Leadership Team meets on a regular basis with an agenda.
- The VTSS School Leadership Team maintains a working blueprint.
- School continuous improvement plans are in place to support the VTSS process.

Sustaining VTSS

- Gradual release of VTSS responsibilities shifts from principal to teachers.
- School leadership commits resources based on data.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School **DIVISION** Benchmarks **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE**

Emerging

- The division conducts regular needs assessments and student and staff surveys to assess climate toward improved academic performance of students.
- Adults are learners and actively participate in training that addresses expectations and skills necessary for building a positive school culture, including communication skills and effective group process.
- Initial data and information is gathered from school staff and students to assess the degree to which an environment for learning is in place, including feelings of security and trust.
- The responsibility to provide appropriate interventions for struggling learners is shared by general education, special education, specialists, and student support services.
- Areas of professional development are assessed at both the building and division level based on data.
- Coaching and support is provided to schools in the development and implementation of a VTSS.
- Students are encouraged to develop assets and are supported when struggling, as opposed to being identified by their deficits.
- The division belief that all children can learn, graduate, and achieve success beyond high school is reflected in daily practices within the school division.

Developing

- The school division ensures that a VTSS is in place to raise the academic and behavioral performance of all students.
- The school division VTSS provides evidence of closing performance gaps among the variety of student subgroups, e.g., ELLs, low SES.
- All educators, administrators, teachers and staff are trained to use the language and tools of VTSS so they can articulate and give evidence of closing performance gaps.
- The school division has a VTSS framework that allows for flexible allocation and usage of personnel and resources to support the academic and behavioral needs of children in each school building.
- Time is scheduled based on educational need.
- The division and school infrastructure supports a method for interpreting academic and behavioral data for making effective instructional decisions.
- The school division develops professional development to sustain VTSS principles and to monitor fidelity of implementation of the instructional program.
- Planning time is provided for instructional teams as evidenced by the school schedule and school division calendar.

Sustaining VTSS

- The division VTSS provides evidence that all students are achieving state standards as expected.
- The division VTSS provides evidence that achievement gaps among student sub-groups are closing.
- All personnel and community stakeholders can articulate and demonstrate commitment to raising academic standards and closing performance gaps for all students.
- All educators, administrators, and employees use VTSS as the organizational framework for “doing business.”
- The division and school staff consistently review and analyze data collaboratively as a basis for all decision making.
- Professional development in support of VTSS is ongoing and purposed for all educators, administrators, and staff, based on need.
- Evidence-based practices implemented with fidelity are the norm.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) SCHOOL Benchmarks ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

Emerging

- The basic concepts of VTSS have been communicated to staff and stakeholders through professional development activities.
- The School Leadership Team demonstrates the Division's VTSS vision and goals.
- A spirit of collaboration is fostered within the school.
- The principal monitors all instruction and challenges unsound practices.

Developing

- The school's philosophy promotes evidence of "raising the bar and closing the gap."
- The school schedule provides opportunities for interpreting academic and behavioral data to make effective instructional decisions; i.e., common planning time and staff workdays.
- The school's culture allows colleagues to challenge unsound practices.

Sustaining VTSS

- VTSS is the organizing framework for implementation of all programs and its impact upon student learning.
- All school staff articulate and demonstrate commitment to the vision and goals.
- All instructional practices and subsequent professional development within the school are evidence-based and implemented with fidelity

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School DIVISION Benchmarks MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

Emerging

- The school leadership team and principals have access to and use assessment data.
- Parents and students are informed about the purpose of assessments.
- The school division has an assessment map and the explanation of the utility of each tool that is visible and easily understood.
- The division uses multiple measures with set benchmarks to raise academic and behavioral standards.
- A process is established to ensure fidelity of assessment.
- Teachers and leaders are aware of the value of frequent progress monitoring, and use this data effectively to identify students who need early intervention.
- Data from various sources are shared and analyzed, and specific plans are implemented to determine if the instructional and behavioral interventions are effective.
- The division has established criteria for assessment results and set levels of expectations for tiers.

Developing

- Classroom teachers have access to screening and frequent progress monitoring assessment data and receive structured sequential training on using assessments and interpreting results.
- School division and school teams use universal screening and formative assessment data to make decisions and to provide interventions that optimize student growth.
- School and division teams schedule staff training and fidelity checks on all assessment measures used.
- Parents and students understand the purpose of assessments and participate in self-monitoring and tracking of learning progress.
- Progress monitoring is scheduled and documented, and used to plan instruction.
- Decision rules are understood and used by all teams.

Sustaining VTSS

- Decisions about curriculum, instruction, and all specific interventions across tiers are made using student progress monitoring data.
- The school division uses a formal system of monitoring student progress that includes universal screening, formative assessment, and other diagnostic processes.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) SCHOOL Benchmarks MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

Emerging

- The school identifies assessments and data to use and the purposes for each and the frequency of administration.
- Staff and stakeholders collaboratively learn the four assessment purposes within the VTSS framework:
 - Universal screening and benchmarking
 - Diagnostic/prescriptive assessment
 - Formative evaluation (progress monitoring)
 - Summative evaluation (outcomes)
- Teachers and leaders are aware of the value of frequent progress monitoring.

Developing

- Classroom teachers have access to assessment data and receive training on using assessments and interpreting results.
- Progress monitoring data reflect the level of learning and the rate of learning.
- There is evidence of instructional change when the level and rate of learning are not sufficiently increasing to close the gap.
- School teams schedule staff training and fidelity checks on all assessment measures used.
- Progress monitoring is scheduled and documented.
- Parents and students understand the purpose of assessments and participate in self-monitoring and tracking of learning progress.

Sustaining VTSS

- The school uses a formal system of monitoring student progress utilizing multiple measures.
- The principal and instructional staff consistently review and analyze data collaboratively as a basis for all decision making.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School **DIVISION** Benchmarks **PROBLEM SOLVING**

Emerging

- Problems are identified in concrete, descriptive, and behavioral terms.
- The division leadership team uses a standard process of information and data collection to consider possible causes of student learning difficulties.
- A problem solving method has been established and conveyed to staff.
- Meeting agendas are focused on data, other extraneous information is set aside.
- There is a data-driven process for referring a student to the grade/school problem-solving team.
- The problem-solving team is comprised of core members who regularly attend, and are representative of general education, special education, and other support personnel, such as the school psychologist and school counselors.

Developing

- Hypotheses about the causes and factors associated with lack of significant improvement in learning rates are developed based on multiple sources of data (such as assessments, attendance, behavior referrals, et al.).
- All hypotheses of causes of learning problems are observable and measurable, leading to matched interventions.
- Division and school teams are able to develop plans for intervention based on research for students in each tier, and plan progress monitoring based on individual needs of students.
- Results from progress monitoring data lead to formal confirmation or rejection, and changes, to hypotheses and interventions as needed.
- Intervention and action plans developed as a result of the problem analysis process are documented and include “who,” “what,” “by when,” and “follow up.”
- There is shared responsibility among general educators and specific program specialists.
- The school division has trained personnel in a problem-solving methodology at division, building, classroom, and student levels.

Sustaining VTSS

- All decisions are made using a divisionwide problem-solving process which is consistently implemented with fidelity.
- The problem-solving process is considered an essential element of professional development for all educators, administrators, and staff.
- Divisionwide decision rules (using progress monitoring data) are used to drive intervention across the tiers, including when to refer to Special Education.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) SCHOOL Benchmarks PROBLEM SOLVING

Emerging

- The School Leadership Team has trained staff in the division-level problem-solving process and staff members follow it.
- Meeting agendas are centered upon data and other extraneous information is set aside.
- The need for parent involvement has been established and teachers promote positive communications before discussing any child in a VTSS problem-solving meeting.
- The Problem-Solving Teams have consistent core members and include student support staff

Developing

- The school follows the division's problem-solving process and develops hypotheses based on multiple data sources such as assessments, attendance, and behavioral referrals.
- School teams are able to devise plans for intervention and progress monitoring based on individual needs of students in each tier.

Sustaining VTSS

- The problem-solving process is consistently implemented with fidelity.
- The problem-solving team continuously seeks new strategies and interventions for identified students.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School DIVISION Benchmarks CURRICULUM PLAN

Emerging

- In addition to a core academic curriculum, the school division curriculum reflects sensitivity to the social-emotional development of students.
- There is a process in place to ensure all elements of the curriculum are research-based with evidence of effectiveness.
- The curriculum and its resources have been analyzed for alignment to the **Virginia Standards of Learning** and the division objectives for student achievement in reading, mathematics, writing and behavior.
- The curriculum includes a continuum of academic and behavioral services to address the increasing intensity of needs for all students.

Developing

- The school division/school checks the alignment of their curriculum to state **Standards of Learning** annually.
- Changes in the curriculum used across the division and in specific schools are made if the curriculum does not support and contribute to student achievement of learning benchmarks.
- The curriculum has a mapping and pacing guide for each core subject area that is evidenced in/through classroom observation(s) and weekly lesson plans.
- An evaluation of the curriculum in terms of level of difficulty and rigor against learning benchmarks, and opportunity to achieve, has been made.
- The curriculum provides for intervention in such a manner that all children have access to a continuum of services.

Sustaining VTSS

- Curriculum structure is aligned to **Virginia Standards of Learning**.
- Curriculum/intervention resource decisions are made using progress monitoring data and are used with fidelity.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) SCHOOL Benchmarks CURRICULUM PLAN

Emerging

- The school uses the division's curriculum and follows the mapping and pacing guides with fidelity.
- A process is in place to ensure all elements of the curriculum are research-based with evidence of effectiveness.
- Behavioral expectations are defined by the school.
- The school examines instructional programs for reading and mathematics to identify strengths and to address weaknesses based on data.
- The school's curriculum includes a continuum of academic and behavioral services.

Developing

- Curriculum provides a continuum of services which aligns with the Virginia Standards of Learning.
- The school has identified curriculum resources to use across the tiers and staff members understand the targeted skills each resource addresses.
- The school adopts behavioral practices.

Sustaining VTSS

- Curriculum is aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) annually.
- Curriculum/intervention resource decisions are made using progress monitoring data.
- Professional development is data-driven, linked to the curriculum, and provided on new content, instructional models, and VDOE resources.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School **DIVISION** Benchmarks INSTRUCTION

Emerging

- Instruction is purposeful and well-planned.
- Instructional personnel are held accountable for student learning.
- A methodology for evaluating fidelity of instruction is established.
- Following professional development, the school division measures the application of learning through observation of change in teaching practices and other methods.
- Professional development is individualized for teachers and leaders based on observations and student data.
- The division ensures master scheduling is flexible and driven by instructional and behavioral needs of students.

Developing

- Staff participates in discussions about the evidence-base of specific academic and behavior instructional practices for different tiers.
- Staff are trained in the use of evidence-based instructional practices for academics and behavior and share this knowledge with colleagues.
- Instructional staff select explicit instructional practices that are an appropriate match for the needs of the student academically and behaviorally.
- All staff are purposefully and intentionally assigned to students during scheduled intervention time for maximum differentiation.
- Administrators and supervisors are trained in observing for fidelity of implementation.
- The division selects and clarifies best practice in research-based instructional practices as reflected in teacher lesson plans and instructional delivery; best practices are documented through observation.

Sustaining VTSS

- Evidence-based instructional practices that are an appropriate match for the needs of the student are used with fidelity.
- All educators are evaluated for their use of evidence-based practices.
- The school division provides ongoing professional development and supervision (coaching) that assists classroom teachers in the effective use of evidence-based practices.
- Fidelity of instruction, intervention and assessment is monitored.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) SCHOOL Benchmarks INSTRUCTION

Emerging

- All instructional personnel are held accountable for student learning.
- The school's master schedule is flexible enough to provide differentiated and targeted instruction.
- Staff members provide students with immediate and specific feedback.

Developing

- The school staff is trained in the use of data-based instructional practices for academics and behavior and shares this knowledge with colleagues.
- Grade level/instructional teams select explicit techniques that are an appropriate match for the needs of the students both academically and behaviorally.
- All staff is purposefully and intentionally assigned to students during scheduled intervention time for maximum differentiation.

Sustaining VTSS

- All educators are evaluated for their use of evidence-based practices.
- The school provides ongoing professional development and supervision that supports classroom teachers in the effective use of evidence-based instructional practices.
- The principal and instructional teams select and clarify best practices in research-based instruction as reflected in lesson plans, classroom delivery, and documented through observation.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School **DIVISION** Benchmarks FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Emerging

- Parents should have enough information to conclude that VTSS is for all students and not a means to delay the provision of special education services.
- Parent comment and participation are encouraged, and the division and schools seek support from parents during a consensus building phase.

Developing

- A survey of parent satisfaction with school efforts is taken annually.
- Schools provide opportunities for parents to gain a better understanding of the VTSS framework and how they are instrumental in the process.
- Parents are active participants in their children's educational programs.
- Parents can communicate the purpose of VTSS and how it helps their children.

Sustaining VTSS

- Parents view themselves as partners and advocates in the school division's Tiered System of Supports.
- Interagency collaboration across public and private service agencies is embedded divisionwide.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) **SCHOOL** Benchmarks FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Emerging

- Parents are informed and understand that VTSS implementation benefits all children.
- Parental comments and input are encouraged.
- Parents understand VTSS is not a means to delay the provision of special education services.

Developing

- Parent surveys are conducted annually and results are used as one data source in the school's continuous improvement process.
- Parents are active participants in their children's educational programs and understand the practices provided.

Sustaining VTSS

- Parents view themselves as partners and advocates in the school's Tiered System of Supports.
- The school uses community agencies to support the VTSS framework including local businesses, churches, and volunteers.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) School **DIVISION** Benchmarks EVALUATION PLAN

Emerging

- Planning has taken place to identify the methods and indicators of evaluation of VTSS implementation, progress and impact.
- The evaluation plan has multiple components and includes assessing both the short- and long-term impact of VTSS implementation.

Developing

- The school division develops a plan for continuous improvement under a VTSS umbrella and leaders are able to align various other initiatives to the VTSS process.
- The school division is correcting overlap in the five year plan, School Improvement Plan, and VTSS plan.
- Evaluation of fidelity of implementation is a formal process.
- The leadership team conducts an evaluation of VTSS implementation annually and creates an action plan, including professional development needs.

Sustaining VTSS

- A continuous improvement plan is used to evaluate all components of VTSS.
- School division data demonstrate that the VTSS model has led to improved outcomes for students according to multiple measures.

Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) **SCHOOL** Benchmarks EVALUATION PLAN

Emerging

- The school personnel realize the need for evaluation of VTSS effectiveness in order to sustain the day to day changes that impact instructional practices.
- An action plan will be developed for the continuous improvement and refinement of the VTSS process.

Developing

- The school personnel develop a plan for continuous improvement under the VTSS umbrella and are able to align all initiatives to the VTSS process.
- Evaluation of fidelity of implementation is a formal process.
- The leadership team conducts an evaluation of VTSS implementation annually and creates an action plan that includes a guide for professional development.
- Results from the structured evaluation are shared and reviewed with all stakeholders.

Sustaining VTSS

- A continuous improvement plan is used to evaluate all components of VTSS.
- Data indicate the school is successfully raising the bar and closing achievement gaps.
- Yearly learning goals are set for the school by the leadership team, utilizing student achievement data.

RESOURCES

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This annotated bibliography includes modules, presentations and other print-based resources, videos and webinars that support the implementation of the components and benchmarks included in the Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS). The resources are organized by the VTSS components. Each entry includes a link to the resource, a description, and whether the resource supports the emerging, developing, or sustaining benchmarks in that particular component.

The page number for the resources supportive of each component is listed below:

The VTSS LEADERSHIP Component	48
The VTSS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & STRUCTURE Component	49
The VTSS MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS Component	50
The VTSS PROBLEM SOLVING Component	52
The VTSS CURRICULUM Component	54
The VTSS INSTRUCTION Component	55
The VTSS FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS Component	57
The VTSS EVALUATION PLAN Component	59

NOTE: Items in quotes in the description after each link are taken from the link.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS **LEADERSHIP** Component

Modules

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 1\): An Overview](#). IRIS Center.

“This module outlines the differences between the IQ-achievement discrepancy model and the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model. It also offers a brief overview of each tier in the RTI model and explains its benefits.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmark of the Leadership component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Closing the Achievement Gap: Collaborating to Support Student Success](#). The University of Texas at Austin.

The module “focuses on how educators can collaborate to improve student outcomes and strengthen instruction for students within an RTI framework.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Presentations

IDEA Partnership. (n.d.). [Leaving No Child Behind: RTI: Educators PowerPoint and Presenter Guide](#). National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

This presentation discusses the various elements of RTI implementation, how RTI is related to student achievement and provides an example of the implementation process in a school. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Videos

Colorado Department of Education. (2009). [Response to Intervention – Meeting the Needs of All Students](#).

This video discusses the various components of RTI, how it is a paradigm shift in education, and the importance of leadership for RTI to be successful. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Educational Communication Board (2011). [Collaboration: School District of Beloit’s RTI Journey](#). Wisconsin RTI Stories.

This video, as well as the conversation guide and the bonus videos, discusses the role of implementation in the RTI implementation process of Beloit School District in Wisconsin. It is supportive of the VTSS developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District. (2009). [Oregon Response to Intervention – Team Processes and Data-Based Decision Making](#). OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the importance of collaboration and data-based decision making in RTI implementation at the elementary school level. It also highlights the role of a school RTI team. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District. (2009). [Oregon Response to Intervention – EBIS Team](#). OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the important role of collaboration and team-based decision making in RTI implementation at the secondary school level. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Webinars

Hilt-Panahon, A., & Stover, D. G. (2009, September). [Planning and First Steps for RTI](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

“This webinar provided examples of what planning is required before successfully implementing RTI, as well as the initial steps that should be taken when implementing RTI within schools.” The Web page includes a PDF version of the presentation as well as frequently asked questions on the presentation. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Leadership component.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE Component

Modules

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Closing the Achievement Gap: Collaborating to Support Student Success.](#) The University of Texas at Austin.

This module “focuses on how educators can collaborate to improve student outcomes and strengthen instruction for students within an RTI framework.” The module’s objectives include: “provide a rationale for educator collaboration to support student success” and “identify team members critical to successful collaboration.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Resources and Procedures Supporting Instructional Decision Making.](#) The University of Texas at Austin.

The module “present[s] an overview of resources that support instructional decision-making” and “discuss[es] procedures for ensuring appropriate instruction for students.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2012). [Using Data to Differentiate Intervention Instruction.](#) The University of Texas at Austin.

The module discusses “typical challenges facing middle school students who struggle with reading as well as a process for using assessment data to design targeted intervention instruction.” It also “provides an example of differentiation within an intervention class” and offers “additional resources to support educators” implementing interventions in middle school. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Presentations

IDEA Partnership. (n.d.). [Leaving No Child Behind: RTI: Educators PowerPoint and Presenter Guide.](#) National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

This presentation discusses the various elements of RTI implementation, how RTI is related to student achievement and provides an example of the implementation process in a school. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Webinars

Mellard, D. (2009, October). [Fidelity of Implementation within an RTI Framework.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar provides “background knowledge about fidelity and how it plays an integral role within the entire RTI framework at the school and classroom levels. [It also includes] examples of how to assess fidelity, and discusses resources and tools that can be used for this purpose.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Videos

Colorado Department of Education. (2009). [Response to Intervention – Meeting the Needs of All Students.](#)

This video discusses the various components of RTI, how it is a paradigm shift in education, and the importance of leadership for RTI to be successful. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Colorado Department of Education. 2009. [Response to Intervention – The Problem Solving/Consultation Process: Academic.](#)

This video discusses the various components of the problem-solving process, including data-based decision making, providing instructional coaching to teachers, and making decisions to support students. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Educational Communications Board. (2011). [Getting Started with RTI.](#) Wisconsin RTI Stories.

This video, conversation guide, and bonus video discusses the importance of schools

involving all teachers to support the successful implementation of RTI. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Johnson, E. (2010, May). [How do I get teachers and staff to buy into the RTI process?](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This “Ask the Experts” video discusses the importance of teachers buying-into the RTI process for it to be successful at the school level. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [Oregon Response to Intervention –Research-Based Curriculum and Instruction. OrRTI Project.](#)

This video discusses the importance of using data to make decisions and teacher collaboration. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Organizational Culture and Structure component.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS **MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS** Component

Modules

Holland-Coviello, R. (n.d.). [Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Reading.](#) National Center for Student Progress Monitoring.

This module discusses the use of curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) for monitoring student progress in reading at different grade levels. The webinar also discusses how to monitor progress, graph scores, set goals for students, and make decisions based on progress monitoring data. It is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmark of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Holland-Coviello, R. (n.d.). [Using Curriculum-Based Measurement for Student Progress Monitoring.](#) National Center for Student Progress Monitoring.

This module introduces curriculum-based measurement (CBM) as a form of assessment and provides “examples of CBM in several academic areas [as well as] describes the process for using CBM for monitoring student progress.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmark of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Classroom Assessment \(Part 1\): An Introduction to Monitoring Academic Achievement in the Classroom.](#)

“This module discusses how progress monitoring can affect the academic outcomes of students, and it demonstrates how to implement curriculum-based measurement with a classroom

of students.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Classroom Assessment \(Part 2\): Evaluating Reading Progress.](#)

This module discusses “how to assess reading skills at each grade level, K-6,” how to “set goals, monitor instruction, and adjust instruction based on students’ reading scores,” and “how to communicate students’ reading progress to other educational professionals and parents.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 1\): An Overview.](#) IRIS Center.

“This module outlines the differences between the IQ-achievement discrepancy model and the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model” as well as the role of data in RTI framework. “It also offers a brief overview of each tier in the RTI model and explains its benefits.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 2\): Assessment Module.](#) IRIS Center.

“This module explores in detail the assessment procedures integral to RTI. It also outlines how to use progress monitoring data to determine if a

student is meeting the established performance criteria or if more intensive intervention is needed." It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2012). [Using Data to Differentiate Instruction: A Middle School Example.](#) **The University of Texas at Austin.**

This module discusses the "typical challenges [faced by] middle school students who struggle with reading as well as a process for using assessment data to design targeted intervention instruction." It also "includes an example of differentiation within an intervention class in middle school and provides additional resources to support educators." It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. (2008). [Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Math.](#)

This module discusses the use of curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) for monitoring student progress in Mathematics at different grade levels. The webinar also discusses how to monitor progress, graph scores, set goals for students, and make decisions based on progress monitoring data. It is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmark of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Presentations

Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts & Texas Education Agency. (2011). [Response to Intervention: Intervention Instruction PD Module.](#) **Center on Instruction.**

This resource "provides educators with background and implementation knowledge on RTI. It provides information on identifying students' needs, implementing Tiers 1, 2, and 3, and strategies for providing differentiated instruction. Additional resources and examples for using an RTI framework to support reading are also provided. This package of materials includes four PowerPoints, presenter notes, participant packet, handouts packet, and additional resources packet." It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Videos

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [Universal Screening & Progress Monitoring.](#) **OrRTI Project.**

This video discusses the benefits of "frequent reliable academic measures" within the RTI framework and how the "information gathered [can] be used to direct instruction." It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [RTI Assessment - Appropriate Evaluation.](#) **OrRTI Project.**

This video discusses the importance of assessment and how "appropriate evaluation is vital to proper student placement, program evaluation and monitoring of student progress." It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Webinars

Hilt-Panahon, A., & Stover, D. G. (2009, September). [Planning and First Steps for RTI.](#) **National Center on Response to Intervention.**

"This webinar provides examples of what planning is required before successfully implementing RTI, as well as the initial steps that should be taken when implementing RTI within schools." The Web page includes a PDF version of the presentation as well as frequently asked questions on the presentation. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Hintze, J. (2007, September). [Using Student Progress Monitoring in a Response to Intervention Model.](#) **National Center for Student Progress Monitoring.**

"The webinar provides an overview of a 3-tier Response to Intervention (RTI) model. In addition, specifics about how to use Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) in reading and math are explained for identifying whether students are responding to instruction in each tier. Applying CBM decision-making to formulate effective individual intervention plans is also discussed." It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Donaldson, W. (n.d.). [The Essential Components of RTI: Progress Monitoring.](#) **National Center for Response to Intervention.**

This webinar "provides an overview of progress monitoring, why it is important and how to use progress monitoring data to make data based

decisions.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Peterson, A. (n.d.). [The Essential Components of RTI: Screening](#). National Center for Response to Intervention.

This webinar “provides an overview of universal screening, why screening is important and how to use screening data to make data based decisions.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS **PROBLEM SOLVING** Component

Modules

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 2\): Assessment Module](#). IRIS Center.

“This module explores in detail the assessment procedures integral to RTI. It also outlines how to use progress monitoring data to determine if a student is meeting the established performance criteria or if more intensive intervention is needed.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

This module discusses the “typical challenges [faced by] middle school students who struggle with reading as well as a process for using assessment data to design targeted intervention instruction.” It also “includes an example of differentiation within an intervention class in middle school and provides additional resources to support educators.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Closing the Achievement Gap: Collaborating to Support Student Success](#). The University of Texas at Austin.

This module “focuses on how educators can collaborate to improve student outcomes and strengthen instruction for students within an RTI framework.” The module’s objectives include: “provide a rationale for educator collaboration to support student success” and “identify team members critical to successful collaboration.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Resources and Procedures Supporting Instructional Decision Making](#). The University of Texas at Austin.

The module “showcases free, practical resources that support instructional decision-making. It is intended for principals, teachers, Education Service Center Personnel, and other educators interested in learning more about instructional decision making.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Resources and Procedures Supporting Instructional Decision Making](#). The University of Texas at Austin.

The module “showcases free, practical resources that support instructional decision-making. It is intended for principals, teachers, Education Service Center Personnel, and other educators interested in learning more about instructional decision making.” It is supportive of the VTSS benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Presentations

IDEA Partnership. (2008, March). [Response to Intervention in Depth](#). Center on Instruction.

“This PowerPoint and advanced presenter’s guide outlines advantages of Response to Intervention and its framework within general education, and how to use this framework as part of the Specific Learning Disability identification process. It addresses how standard treatment protocols can be used within a problem-solving model rather than treating standard protocol and problem-solving as an either-or dichotomy. It is intended both for those that are beginning to wrestle with how to implement specific learning disability (SLD) identification in an RTI framework and for those who are looking for a resource that will help them train others on RTI.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Problem Solving component

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2012). [Using Data to Differentiate Instruction: A Middle School Example](#). The University of Texas at Austin.

Videos

Colorado Department of Education. (2009). [Response to Intervention – The Problem Solving/Consultation Process: Academic.](#)

This video illustrates the various components of the problem-solving process, including data-based decision making, instructional coaches providing support to teachers, and making decisions to support students. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network. (2011). [Data-Informed Student Level Planning Meetings.](#) Pennsylvania Department of Education.

This video provides examples of different student level planning meetings and discusses the importance of using data to determine appropriate student interventions, monitoring the interventions for effectiveness, and the school division's commitment to data-based decision making. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District. (2009). [Oregon Response to Intervention – Team Processes and Data-Based Decision Making.](#) OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the importance of collaboration and data-based decision making in RTI implementation at the elementary school level. It also highlights the role of a school RTI team. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District. (2009). [Oregon Response to Intervention – EBIS Team.](#) OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the important role of collaboration and team-based decision making in RTI implementation at the secondary school level. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [RTI Assessment - Appropriate Evaluation.](#) OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the importance of assessment and how “appropriate evaluation is vital to proper student placement, program evaluation and monitoring of student progress.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Webinars

Elledge, A. (2011, February). [RTI Essential Component: Data-Based Decision Making.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar “provides an overview of the process of data-based decision making and the different types of decisions that can be made with screening and progress monitoring data in order to identify students in need of additional instruction and assessment, evaluate the effectiveness of the core curriculum, allocate resources, evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and interventions for specific populations, and identify students for special education evaluation.” The Web page includes a copy of the PowerPoint, a PDF version of the transcript, and a copy of a chat that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Hilt-Panahon, A., & Stover, D. G. (2009, September). [Planning and First Steps for RTI.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

“This webinar provides examples of what planning is required before successfully implementing RTI, as well as the initial steps that should be taken when implementing RTI within schools.” The Web page includes a PDF version of the presentation as well as frequently asked questions on the presentation. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Johnson, E. (2011, September). [Using Data to Inform Eligibility.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

In this webinar, Dr. Evelyn Johnson discusses how one state has developed a process for using RTI data to inform their special education eligibility process as well as early identification and prevention of learning difficulties. The Web page includes a copy of the PowerPoint, a PDF version of the transcript, and a PDF of a chat that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Lembke, E. (n.d.) [Interventions in an RTI Model.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar discusses “primary, secondary and tertiary interventions within an RTI framework” as well as the importance of using data to select interventions for students. The Web page includes a PDF version of the presentation, a PDF of additional handouts related to the webinar, and a PDF of a chat that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS CURRICULUM Component

Modules

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Accessing the General Education Curriculum: Inclusion Considerations for Students with Disabilities.](#)

This module discusses the importance of providing students with disabilities access to general education curriculum and offers examples on how to do so. It is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Content Standards: Connecting Standards-Based Curriculum to Instructional Planning.](#)

This module includes information on how to identify “methods of assessment that determine whether students have learned the standards-based curriculum” as well as “components needed to design a standards-based curriculum unit and accompanying lessons.” It is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Fidelity of Implementation: Selecting and Implementing Evidence-Based Practices and Programs.](#)

This module discusses the importance of selecting evidence-based practices and programs. It also examines actions that school personnel can take to increase the likelihood that the practice or program is implemented as it was designed. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [High-Quality Mathematics Instruction: What Teachers Should Know.](#)

“This module describes the components of high-quality mathematics instruction: a standards-based curriculum and evidence-based strategies. It also highlights several effective practices teachers can use to teach mathematics.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Universal Design for Learning: Creating a Learning Environment that Challenges and Engages All Students.](#)

“This module examines the three principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and

discusses how to apply these principles to the four curricular components (i.e., goals, instructional materials, instructional methods, and assessments).” It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 2\): Assessment Module.](#) IRIS Center.

“This module explores in detail the assessment procedures integral to RTI. It also outlines how to use progress monitoring data to determine if a student is meeting the established performance criteria or if more intensive intervention is needed.” It is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

Videos

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network. (2011). [Data-Informed Student Level Planning Meetings.](#) Pennsylvania Department of Education.

This video discusses the importance of conducting student level planning throughout the year, using data to determine appropriate student interventions, and monitoring the interventions for effectiveness. It also provides examples of different student level planning meetings. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Problem Solving component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [Oregon Response to Intervention –Research-Based Curriculum and Instruction.](#) OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the importance of using a research-based core reading curriculum at the elementary school level. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [RTI Assessment - Appropriate Evaluation.](#) OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the importance of assessment and how “appropriate evaluation is vital to proper student placement, program evaluation and monitoring of student progress.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Monitoring Student Progress component.

Tigard-Tualatin School District (2009). [Use of Core Program and Common Grade Level Standards.](#) OrRTI Project.

This video discusses the importance of using a research-based core reading curriculum at the secondary school level. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

Webinars

Elledge, A. (2011, February). [RTI Essential Component: Data-Based Decision Making.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar “provides an overview of the process of data-based decision making and the different types of decisions that can be made with screening and progress monitoring data in order to identify students in need of additional instruction and assessment, evaluate the effectiveness of the core curriculum,

allocate resources, evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and interventions for specific populations, and identify students for special education evaluation.” The Web page includes a copy of the PowerPoint, a PDF version of the transcript, and a copy of a chat that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

Lembke, E. (n.d.) [Interventions in an RTI Model.](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar discusses the importance of both using data to select interventions for students and implementing curriculum and intervention resources with fidelity. The Web page includes a PDF version of the presentation, a PDF of additional handouts related to the webinar, and a PDF of a chat that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Curriculum component.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS **INSTRUCTION** Component

Modules

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Fidelity of Implementation: Selecting and Implementing Evidence-Based Practices and Programs.](#)

This module discusses characteristics of evidence-based instructional practices and programs as well as the importance of using an evidence-based approach. The module also illustrates strategies for identifying and selecting high-quality professional development activities. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Instruction component.

IRIS Center. (n.d.). [Using Instructional Strategies to Enhance Student Learning](#)

“This module features the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model, which outlines the six steps required to effectively implement any instructional strategy and emphasizes the time and effort required to do so.” It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 3\): Reading Instruction.](#) IRIS Center.

This module discusses the importance of

research-validated instruction as well as the five components of effective reading instruction. It also “illustrates different research-based reading strategies that may be used with the Response-to-Intervention model to improve reading skills.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

IRIS Center & Tennessee State Personnel Development Grant. (n.d.). [High Quality Math Instruction.](#) IRIS Center.

This module discusses components of high-quality math instruction, including evidence-based instructional strategies and a standards-based curriculum. “It also highlights several effective practices teachers can use to teach mathematics.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Differentiated Instruction – Key to Student Success.](#) The University of Texas at Austin.

This module discusses “differentiated instruction within an RTI framework” and provides examples on how educators can differentiate instruction in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. It also discusses the use of observation to support teachers in

differentiating instruction. The module's Web page includes links to these tools as well as to supplemental video resources. It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Presentations

Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts & Texas Education Agency. (2011). [Response to Intervention: Intervention Instruction PD Module.](#) **Center on Instruction.**

This resource "provides educators with background and implementation knowledge on RTI. It provides information on identifying students' needs, implementing Tiers 1, 2, and 3, and strategies for providing differentiated instruction. Additional resources and examples for using an RTI framework to support reading are also provided. This package of materials includes four PowerPoints, presenter notes, participant packet, handouts packet, and additional resources packet." It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Videos

Educational Communications Board. (2011). [High Quality Instruction.](#) **Wisconsin RTI Center.**

This video illustrates what Sherman Middle School in Wisconsin considers to ensure high quality instruction throughout the school. The link to the video also includes a "Conversation Starter" so that educators can use lessons learned from the video to discuss instruction in their school. This video is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Fuchs., D. (2010, March). [We hear a lot about fidelity of implementation when talking about RTI. What does this really mean?](#) **National Center on Response to Intervention.**

This "Ask the Experts" video discusses the meaning of "fidelity of implementation" and how it relates to a response to implementation framework. This video is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Gandhi, A. (2011, November). [How do I know if the RTI tools and interventions I am using are evidence-based?](#) **National Center on Response to Intervention.**

This "Ask the Experts" video discusses the meaning of the term "evidence-based practice"

and provides suggestions on how to identify evidence-based interventions within an RTI framework. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Jolly, A. (2011, August). [Professional Learning Teams: Teaming to improve the quality of instruction.](#) **Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network.**

This video of a professional development session in Pennsylvania discusses the various components of developing a successful professional learning team (PLT). The link to the video also includes PDFs of the presentation slides and transcript as well as links to tools and handouts with additional information on setting up and facilitating a PLT. This video is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Webinars

Foorman, B. & Miller, D. H. (2011, October). [Improving Instruction through the Use of Data Part II: How to Use Your Data to Inform Literacy Instruction.](#) **Center on Instruction.**

This webinar provides information "on using data to make decisions to improve literacy instruction in the core intervention program and to provide targeted instruction for short-term intervention and intensive interventions." The Center for Instruction Web site provides a link to both the webinar and question and answer sessions that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Hilt-Panahon, A. & Gischlar, K. (n.d.). [RTI Implementation: Developing Effective Schedules at the Elementary Level.](#) **National Center on Response to Intervention.**

This webinar offers "recommendations for efficient, effective, and sustainable schedules [and addresses] issues related to the development of effective schedules for the implementation of RTI at the elementary level, including the scheduling of core instruction, intervention time, team meetings, and planning. Teachers, administrators, and technical assistance providers seeking more information about developing effective schedules for the implementation of RTI at the elementary level will find this webinar beneficial." It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Knight, J., Petterson, H., & Roderick-Landward, A. (n.d.). [RTI and Instructional Coaching: An Overview](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar introduces instructional coaching and the activities that instructional coaches use to “facilitate teachers’ learning [of] new teaching practices, including the implementation of RTI.” The webinar discusses “the components of coaching...; the partnership principles that represent the theoretical framework for this approach to coaching; and the value of coaching within an RTI framework.” The webinar is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Lembke, E. (n.d.). [Interventions in an RTI Model](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar discusses “primary, secondary and tertiary interventions within an RTI framework” as well as the importance of using data to select interventions for students. The Web page includes a PDF version of the presentation, a PDF of additional handouts related to the webinar, and a PDF of a chat that occurred after the webinar. It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Mellard, D. (2009, October). [Fidelity of Implementation within a Response to Intervention Framework](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar “provide[s] background knowledge about fidelity and how it plays an integral role within the entire RTI framework at the school and classroom levels” and discusses the role of coaching and other practices in ensuring fidelity of implementation. The webinar also discusses examples of tools that can be used to assess fidelity of implementation. The webinar link also includes links to these tools. This webinar is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Prewett, S. (2011, August). [RTI Scheduling Process for Middle Schools](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar provides information “about creating a workable schedule for faculty, staff, and students when establishing RTI and provides examples of how some schools have modified their existing school schedules.” The link to the webinar includes a link to questions that were responded to in a live online chat. The webinar is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Instruction component.

Resources Supportive of the VTSS **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS** Component

Modules

Wisconsin RTI Center. (n.d.). [Response to Intervention and Family Engagement Module](#).

This module “provides an overview of how [RTI] is defined in Wisconsin and research based practices that can be used to involve families in RTI at their school.” The Web page of the module also includes various follow-up activities that focus on various topics, including: cultural diversity, differentiated instruction, behavior, assessment, and types of family involvement. The intended audience for both the module and the activities are parents, educators, and administrators. The module and follow-up activities are supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 5\): A Closer Look at Tier 3 Interventions](#). IRIS Center.

This module discusses the “importance of maintaining good communication with parents throughout the RTI process” as well as the importance of understanding cultural diversity. The module also “describes which students will receive Tier 3 intervention..., components of Tier 3 reading interventions, and students’ response to this individualized intervention.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Print-Based Resources

Illinois Aspire. (2009, December). [Parent's Frequently Asked Questions on Response to Intervention.](#) Illinois Aspire.

This document provides educators with examples of questions that parents frequently have regarding RTI implementation. Educators could therefore use these questions as a guide to ensure that parents understand what RTI is. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Reschly, A. L. (2008). [Schools, Families, and Response to Intervention.](#) RTI Action Network.

This article “highlight[s] the necessity and promise of including families and family-school partnerships” in RTI. Dr. Reschly argues that “RTI is an opportunity to bring about meaningful change in family–school relationships, allowing for the creation of engaged partnerships between educators and families through collaborative, structured problem-solving efforts.” This article is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Reschly, A. L. (2008). [Engaging Families in Early Childhood Education.](#) RTI Action Network.

This article discusses the importance of engaging parents as well as providing suggestions for educators on how to facilitate parental engagement and create parent-educator partnerships. It is supportive of the VTSS developing and sustaining benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Videos

Jennings, D. (2008). [Engaging Families in Response to Intervention.](#) RTI Action Network.

This video provides educators a parent’s perspective of questions parents may have regarding RTI implementation as well as provides suggestions to educators on how to include parents in the RTI implementation process. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Webinars

Harvard Family Research Project. (2010, August). [Data Driven: Making Student and School Data Accessible and Meaningful to Families.](#)

This webinar “[looks] at practical examples of how districts and schools are using data to engage families in their children’s education [and introduces] tools that enable practitioners, districts, and schools to incorporate data into their own family engagement strategies.” The Web page also includes “articles [that]are grouped into three categories: (1) perspectives that offer lessons learned from family and community use of data, (2) program examples that illustrate what it takes to make data actionable for families, and (3) tools that help everyone understand how data can be analyzed.” The webinar is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Woodruff, D. & Jennings, D. (2012, March). [RTI & Family Engagement: A Construct for Intentionality](#) National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar discusses “research related to parent involvement in the RTI process [and provides] a general overview of research related to family engagement, a construct for developing strategies for intentional family engagement when implementing RTI.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Family and Community Partnerships component.

Resources Supportive of the **EVALUATION PLAN** Component

Modules

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI: Considerations for School Leaders](#). IRIS Center.

This module provides information about ways to build support for RTI, factors that should be addressed when implementing RTI, and methods of collecting data and evaluating the effectiveness of the RTI approach. It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

IRIS Center, Tennessee State Improvement Grant, & Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). [RTI \(Part 4\): Putting It All Together](#). IRIS Center.

This module discusses “the fundamental elements that support successful RTI implementation” and provides educators with an understanding of “how to coordinate assessment procedures and high-quality reading instruction within the RTI approach” as well as “other factors that influence effective implementation of RTI.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2011). [Monitoring Campus RTI Implementation Using the Response to Intervention – Data Management Tool \(RTI-DMT\) Module](#). The University of Texas at Austin.

This module gives an example of a tool that can be used to evaluate the progress of RTI implementation. [The Response to Intervention Data Management Tool](#) “gives [district] leaders the ‘big picture’ of how well the needs of at-risk students are being met over time.” This module is supportive of the VTSS sustaining benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

Print-Based Resources

Batsche, G. (2008). [Evaluating and Refining Implementation](#). RTI Action Network.

This article offers guiding questions to ask in evaluating RTI implementation “to determine “the degree to which the logistics of the [implementation] plan have been delivered” and discusses the role of the school-based leadership team in evaluating RTI implementation. It is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

Algozzine, B., Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Barrett, S., Dickey, C. R., Eber, L. Kincaid, D., et al. (2010). [Evaluation Blueprint for School Wide Positive Behavior Support](#). National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support.

The Evaluation Blueprint for School Wide Positive Behavior Support “provides those involved in developing Evaluation Plans and Evaluation Reports with a framework for (a) addressing evaluation questions that may be most useful; (b) selecting evaluation measures and measurement schedules that practically meet the needs of local decision-makers; and (c) using evaluation information for active decision-making at the school, district, region, and state levels.” It is supportive of the VTSS emerging, developing, and sustaining benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

Webinars

Elledge, A. (2011, October). [RTI Integrity Framework: A Tool for Monitoring and Evaluating RTI Implementation](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar discusses the National Center on Response to Intervention’s RTI Essential Components Integrity Rubric and its RTI Essential Components Integrity Worksheet, which are “for use by individuals responsible for monitoring the school-level fidelity of [RTI] implementation.” The webinar also describes how these tools can be used “and gives examples from schools and districts who have utilized the tools to measure their fidelity to RTI.” The Web page of the webinar includes a PDF version of the RTI Integrity Rubric and Worksheet as well as the question and answer log from the live chat that occurred after the webinar. The webinar is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

Mellard, D. (2009, October). [Monitoring Fidelity in RTI](#). National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar discusses how fidelity “plays an integral role within the entire RTI framework at the school and classroom levels” and provides examples of resources and tools that can be used to assess fidelity. The webinar’s Web page also includes samples of the tools discussed in

the webinar and answers to frequently asked questions related to monitoring fidelity in RTI. The webinar is supportive of the VTSS emerging and developing benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

Zumeta, R. & Jacobsen, M. (2012, February). [We're "Doing" RTI – A Closer Look at Implementation.](#)

National Center on Response to Intervention.

This webinar provides an example of how White River School District in Washington State evaluated their RTI implementation progress using the National Center on Response to Intervention [RTI Integrity Rubric](#). In addition to discussing the challenges and successes of evaluating pilot sites across Washington, it “also details specifics of the implementation journey of the White River School” District. The webinar is supportive of the VTSS developing benchmarks of the Evaluation Plan component.

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