

House Bill 2136 Special Services Pilot Project

Report to the Legislature



Randy I. Dorn
State Superintendent of
Public Instruction

January 2011

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House Bill 2136

Special Services Pilot Project

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Executive Summary

The House Bill (HB) 2136 special services pilot project (2007–11) enabling seven districts to implement a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework was a continuation of the HB 2012 special services pilot project (2005–07). The primary goal of HB 2136 is to improve the implementation of high quality, general education research-based instructional programs in order to meet the needs of students struggling academically, while reducing the number of students inappropriately referred and placed in special education.

All participating districts (listed below) have implemented RTI in reading at the elementary level, and several have implemented RTI in reading across the district. As shown in the table below, all participating districts have increased their percentages of students meeting standard on the state assessment for third grade reading.

District	Percentage of students “meeting standard” on the state assessment for third grade reading	
	2007–08	2009–10
Hoquiam	64.6%	70.3%
Kiona-Benton	43.4%	67.3%
Odessa	89.5%	92.3%
Richland	74.8%	79.1%
East Valley (Spokane)	69.1%	74.0%
Vancouver	66.9%	67.3%
Walla Walla	56.0%	68.3%

The following table shows the change in the percentage of students eligible for special education in the participating districts (as documented on the State’s Report Card). While some have reduced their percentage of eligible students, others have fluctuated due to circumstances beyond their control. Several of these pilot districts are small and therefore are significantly affected by a few (eligible) students moving in or out of the district.

District	Percentage of students <i>eligible</i> for special education	
	2007–08	2009–10
Hoquiam	11.5%	11.5%
Kiona-Benton	16.7%	15.5%
Odessa	13.0%	13.7%
Richland	12.3%	10.8%
East Valley (Spokane)	14.2%	14.8%
Vancouver	12.0%	12.4%
Walla Walla	11.5%	13.1%

**These data may not match other data sources.*

A third-party evaluation showed that these districts were “moving forward” with:

- Using professional development to promote the RTI framework (evidence-based practices, data-based decisions, use of formative assessment, etc).
- Reaching out to parents.
- Redesigning student intervention teams.
- Providing professional development to more personnel.
- Creating/redesigning data analysis teams.
- Using data to drive instruction.
- Using data to make decisions about movement within/across tiers of instruction.
- Implementing RTI in other areas such as math and behavior.
- Creating a sense of ownership of student learning by their teachers.
- Implementing a system of tiered interventions.

Through the federal State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) focused on RTI, the Office of Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI) has provided training and technical assistance, and guidance on appropriate resources, to support the implementation of RTI for these HB 2136 districts. These districts were also included in the evaluation of RTI efforts conducted by a third party. Three of the seven districts are also recipients of funds under the federal SPDG, so they had additional resources to support their system.

The information gained from working with these sites, as well as from the evaluation process, provides a rich base on which to build our state structure for support of RTI. The research base and the federal guidance have grown phenomenally in the past two years and much more is known about how to support implementation from all levels—state educational agency (SEA), district and building. Our experience with these pilot sites has led to progress at the state level which will inevitably benefit many more districts for years to come.

OSPI has created a state-level RTI Implementation Team with representatives from various departments and the educational service districts (ESDs). This team is working on aligning efforts related to RTI across the agency and developing common language so as to create more consistency for support to districts.

Additionally, OSPI applied and was selected to receive intensive technical assistance from the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI). The NCRTI is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education. OSPI signed a multi-year Memorandum of Agreement with the NCRTI to work on five strategic goals:

- 1) Develop common language/alignment across efforts at the SEA.
- 2) Build capacity at the SEA, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and ESDs to support implementation of evidence-based practices.
- 3) Build capacity of selected demonstration districts.

- 4) Develop an effective data system for demonstration districts (that could be expanded statewide).
- 5) Develop an information dissemination system to expand RTI efforts across universities, districts and professional organizations.

The Learning Improvement section of the Special Education department at OSPI has been working with multiple universities to encourage the inclusion of RTI-related course-work in teacher preparation programs, and currently is working with University of Washington-Tacoma (UW-Tacoma) on revising its dual-track teacher preparation program to focus on RTI. We are also working with UW-Tacoma on developing a system of support (focused on RTI) for the schools who will host practicum students.

OSPI has also accepted an invitation to participate in the ***Community of Practice*** with the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center, which is funded by the OSEP at the U.S. Department of Education. Our participation in this monthly webinar will provide support for our state-level decisions about supporting the implementation of evidence-based practices.

I. Introduction

In May 2007, Governor Christine Gregoire, signed into law House Bill (HB) 2136, Improving Core Subject Instruction for All Students. This bill authorizes school districts to apply for funding based on their ability to reduce the numbers of students eligible for special education and related services. This project was previously named Special Services Pilot Project under HB 2012 in 2005. During the 2007 legislative session, this bill was renamed and expanded to include the addition of five school districts.

The primary goal of HB 2136 is to improve the implementation of high quality, general education research-based instructional programs in order to meet the needs of students struggling academically, while reducing the number of students inappropriately referred and placed in special education.

The RTI framework provides an essential structure to the educational system. The entire framework is built on data-based decision making and provides accountability from the student to the district level.

II. Process

School districts participating in this program receive state special education funding in accordance with state special education funding formulas and a **separate program appropriation from sources other than special education funds**. The separate appropriation shall be calculated as follows:

- (a) The school district's estimated state special education funding for the current year based on the school district's average percentage of students age three through twenty-one who were eligible for special education services in the 2006–07 school year as reported to OSPI.
- (b) Less the school district's actual state special education funding based on the district's current percentage of students age three through twenty-one eligible for special education services as reported to OSPI.

OSPI will adjust the factors above where legislative changes to the special education funding formula impact the funding mechanism of this program.

The required program elements below (aligned with the principles identified under RTI) were expectations of all of the pilot districts. House Bill 2136 school districts agreed to:

- (a) Implement the program as part of the school district's general education curriculum for all students.
- (b) Implement a multi-tiered service delivery system to provide scientific, research-based instruction and interventions with fidelity, addressing individual student needs in the areas of reading, written language or mathematics.
- (c) Develop and implement an assessment system to conduct universal screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic assessments to identify the reading, written language or mathematics needs of each student and to monitor student progress.

- (d) Incorporate student specific data obtained through the pilot program when conducting an evaluation to determine if the student has a disability.
- (e) Assure parents are informed of the amount and nature of student performance data that is collected and the general education services that are provided, the strategies for increasing the student’s rate of learning, and their right to make a referral for special education evaluation if they suspect the student has a disability and provide input into designed interventions.
- (f) Assure parents are provided assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals addressing student progress during instruction.
- (g) Actively engage parents as partners in the learning process.
- (h) Comply with state special education requirements.
- (i) Participate and provide staff expertise in the design and implementation of an evaluation of the program as determined by the superintendent of public instruction. Districts shall annually review and report progress, including objective measures or indicators that show the progress towards achieving the purpose and goal of the program, to OSPI.

For additional information: The National Center on Response to Intervention published *Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention* in April 2010. This document can be found at: http://www.rti4success.org/images/stories/pdfs/rtiessentialcomponents_051310.pdf.

III. Findings

All participating districts have implemented RTI in reading at the elementary level, and several have implemented RTI in reading across the district. As shown in the table below, all participating districts have increased their percentages of students meeting standard on the state assessment for third grade reading.

District	Percentage of students “meeting standard” on the state assessment for third grade reading	
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The following table shows the change in the percentage of students eligible for special education in the participating districts (as documented on the State's Report Card).

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Five of the seven districts have also begun implementing RTI in mathematics and six of the districts are implementing RTI for behavior as well. The systematic framework of using data to make decisions within a tiered instructional system is proving to impact both students and teachers.

A third-party evaluation showed that these districts were “moving forward” with:

- Using professional development to promote the RTI framework (tiered system of interventions, evidence-based practices, data-based decisions, formative assessment, etc).
- Reaching out to parents.
- Redesigning student intervention teams.
- Providing professional development to more personnel.
- Creating/redesigning data analysis teams.
- Using data to drive instruction.
- Using data to make decisions about movement within/across tiers of instruction.
- Implementing RTI in other areas such as mathematics and behavior.
- Creating a sense of ownership of student learning by their teachers.

IV. Recommendation

We recommend that the pilot project be continued. We also recommend that the evaluation results be carefully considered in the structure for support of RTI at the state level. The state-level structure for support of RTI, which includes the training and technical assistance provided by the ESDs, the teacher preparation programs at Washington universities, and the many efforts through various departments at OSPI should be fully coordinated and continuously evaluated.

V. Conclusion

Although we are still in the process of evaluation, these seven pilot districts, along with the pilot districts under the SPDG, serve as a confirmation of the validity of the RTI framework. The continued focus on implementation of evidence-based practices (Dean Fixsen’s research) from the federal level and the accountability that is built into the RTI system are changing the perceptions of

educators about what is possible. The RTI framework requires the use of data at the student, classroom, building, and district levels to inform instruction, selection of curricula and personnel, delivery of professional development, staff time and effort, etc. The focus on fidelity of implementation is a critical factor and one that should be supported at the state level.

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