HSTII: An Introduction to High School Response to Intervention – Webinar Transcript
February 11, 2010

Ayse Ikizler: We are fortunate to have Lou Danielson, Greg Roberts, and Jenny Scala with us today.

Dr. Lou Danielson is a Managing Director at the American Institutes for Research and serves as a Senior Advisor to the National Center for Response to Intervention and as the Director of Research for the National High School Center. He is a leader in special education who has been involved in programs that improve results for students with disabilities for three decades, and brings an unparalleled and unique depth of knowledge in both special education policy and research. His education career spans several roles including secondary school science and math teacher, school psychologist, and teaching at the university level. Until recently, he held leadership roles in the Office for Special Education Programs and was responsible for the discretionary grants program, including technical assistance and dissemination, personnel preparation, technology, parent training priorities, and state improvement grants. He has served in numerous research and policy roles and has been involved in school reform activities.

Dr. Greg Roberts is the Associate Director of the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk and Director of the Vaughn Gross Center, both at the University of Texas–Austin. He is Principal Investigator and Director of the Special Education Strand of the Center on Instruction and Principal Investigator for the Texas Reading First Initiative and the Dissemination Core of the Texas Center for Learning Disabilities. Recent projects have included state-level evaluations of the Hawaii, Oregon, and Alabama Reading First Initiatives. He was also the evaluator of PiHanaNaMamo, a project funded by the Office of Special Education Programs supporting native Hawaiian high school students in special education, and is currently evaluating Washington's implementation of response to intervention. Prior to earning his PhD in educational psychology, Dr. Roberts taught primary-aged children with emotional disabilities as well as first and sixth grades.

Ms. Jenny Scala, a Research Analyst at the American Institutes for Research, has worked in the field of education for almost ten years. Her experiences include tutoring middle and high school students, conducting trainings for volunteers working in Boston Public Schools, working with families and community organizations, and providing technical assistance to state education agency staff. At the state level, she has worked with a number of state agency staff on topics including adolescent literacy, supporting underperforming districts and schools, high school improvement, and response to intervention. Ms. Scala currently serves as a technical assistance liaison for the National High School Center and for the National Center on Response to Intervention.

We are very fortunate that Lou Danielson, Greg Roberts, and Jenny Scala are sharing their expertise with us today. Now I will turn the presentation over to Lou.

Slide 1: An Introduction to High School Response to Intervention

Lou Danielson: Good afternoon. You know who we are, so we thought we might take a moment here to find out who you are. We've got a poll that we would like you to respond to. Just take a few minutes to respond.

Slide 2: Poll: Our Audience Today

Lou Danielson: We'll take just a few minutes as people respond to the poll. Thank you. It looks like we have a large representation at the district level and some representation spread across TA providers, SEA staff, high school administrators, and high school teachers, with a very substantial other category.

Slide 3: Session Agenda

Lou Danielson: We would like to take a moment to briefly review the session agenda for today. We're going to take time and provide an overview of the work we've been doing with the High School Tiered Interventions Initiative. We're going to talk a little bit about some ongoing research that's going on at the high school level looking at RTI. The bulk of the presentation will be spent discussing some of the significant context factors at the high school level that are critical as we think about implementing RTI at the high school level. In addition, as we talk about each of these, we'll talk about in the sites that we've visited. Some of the variations across sites, the way in which RTI has been implemented in some of the schools, and some of the contextual variations in context—we saw how that might connect well to the big picture. Then we'll close with a brief discussion of our future plans for webinars and some of our next steps with this High School Tiered Intervention Initiative.

Slide 4: Session Objectives

Lou Danielson: Our session objectives this afternoon are to discuss key components of the RTI framework and their applications at the high school level, to identify and discuss the key contextual implementation factors that influence implementation of RTI at the high school level, and to provide real-life examples of how some high schools are addressing these high school-specific issues.

Slide 5: High School Tiered Interventions Initiative (HSTII)

Lou Danielson: We will take a moment to talk about this initiative. As is, I think, evident by whom the presenters are, this work reflects a collaboration among three national TA centers. The

Center on Instruction (particularly the Special Education Strand of that center), the National Center on Response to Intervention, and the National High School Center. In addition, we have a Technical Advisory Group of national RTI experts that represents a cross-section of researchers and state and local level administrators as well. The goal of the work is to enhance the understanding of how tiered models are emerging at the high school level. As we began this work about a year ago, the big question that we had in mind when we started was—as we heard of an increasing interest at the high school level in implementing RTI and knowing that there some folks out there already doing it. Our interest was really in trying to find out what it looked like at the high school level. Did it look like it did at the elementary level? Giving the complexity of high schools, we thought that it might be quite different. So, that was our broad goal as we began this work.

Slide 6: HSTII Approach

Lou Danielson: So how do we proceed? We began by identifying high schools that were implementing tiered interventions based on recommendations from the Regional Comprehensive Centers, funded by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the Department of Education. We asked them if they could identify high schools that would be good exemplars of what RTI might look at the high school level. We received many nominations. We ended up contacting 51 high schools. We interviewed 20 of these high schools; we interviewed many administrators at those 20 high schools. At that point, we convened a Technical Advisory Group for discussions on how we might proceed at that point. As a result, we went on site with eight high schools and conducted site visits. The number of site visits were limited by the resources that we had available for this work, but what we wanted to ensure in the site visits we did that we got some diversity in a number of dimensions. Geographic diversity—that sites came from across the country from multiple states—diversity in the size of the high school, diversity in the percent of high poverty kids that were going to the school, diversity in approach as well. Our goal was to get a sense of how RTI was sprouting up at the high school level around the country. We really wanted to get a sense of the range of what might be out there. We thought this was the best way to do it.

Slide 7: Essential Components of RTI Framework Applied to High School

Lou Danielson: Before we get too far into our presentation, we wanted to spend some time talking about the essential components of the RTI framework. At the beginning, we were wondering what RTI might look at the high school. You begin to realize this as you begin to talk to some sites and ask, “Is this really what RTI looks like?” And that forced us to then think, “What are the essential components of RTI?” I think in some ways, it led us to step back a bit. For most of us, our notion of RTI was really based on research and development work that primarily happened at the elementary level. We recognized and believed that a lot of thinking of RTI from that perspective, for many reasons, wasn't applicable necessarily at the high school level. So, we ended up talking about these five features or components. I will walk through each

of these and talk about them in a somewhat more general way than we've sometimes thought about them at the elementary school level.

1. One essential component of RTI is attention to Tier I for instruction. In some cases, people think of Tier I instruction as a school-wide emphasis. I think that's the case in the work on Positive Behavior Supports; that Tier I is focused on a whole school approach to managing behavior. In some cases, Tier I could mean beefing up the attention to literacy in core academic subjects, but I think the critical feature of Tier I is that there's attention to ensuring that we think about what happens for all kids. The consequences of failing to do that is that you potentially have the risk of having lots of kids that need Tier I, that they need more intensive services, if you don't attend to what you are doing for all kids in Tier I. Clearly, that is a critical feature. I think the way that one might think of that will play out differently depending on what the focus of RTI is in a high school.

2. Universal screening, the point really is to identify kids early that are at risk. Again, this could play out somewhat differently, depending on what it is that a school is doing. If a school is focused, for example, on dropout prevention, they might screen for factors that could put kids at risk, which could include academic achievement, attendance, achieving at a rate where they're passing courses. It’s not an essential component but one of the other things that is a key feature of RTI at the elementary and secondary level is this focus of getting to kids early, that is trying to identify risks as early as possible. Another feature is that the things that we do are evidence-based. Typically, whether it's Tier I instruction, universal screening, or progress monitoring tools, we would look for things that are evidence-based. That represents a big challenge at the high school level because there is relatively little research to support a great deal that we do. There's a particular challenge on the extent to which the practices and the tools that we use are evidence-based. I think Greg will talk a bit more about some of the ongoing research.

3. Ongoing progress monitoring. This will depend on what it is that you are doing. In some schools that we've seen that are focused on homework, progress monitoring might simply be charting the extent to which kids are completing homework assignments, particularly the kids that are at risk. Typically, they're things that are measured weekly or biweekly. If the focus is on literacy or reading, it may involve then some measures that are used like oral reading fluency. It will depend on what it is, the nature of what you are focused on in your intervention.

4. The other thing of course are tiered interventions. This plays out in a variety of ways. Some sites have only two tiers, the core instruction and one more tier. More often, we hear people talking about three tiers, but we know there are some sites that have four, five, or even six tiers. The important point when we think of tiers is that the one common characteristic of these tiers is that they increase in intensity as you move across the tiers. A secondary level intervention might typically involve small group instruction. Often the most intensive interventions involve individualized interventions and may involve what

we call the problem solving approach. It's a trial and error. You try interventions, chart progress, and if kids respond, you keep doing it. If kids don't respond, you try something else.

5. Last, and in some ways what is perhaps the center and what I think is an essential, defining characteristic of RTI, is data-based decision making. This data comes from the screening and progress monitoring. But it's really the student's response to the intervention that is measured using your progress monitoring tool that is the basis of the decision-making that you make about whether you are successful with an intervention or whether you need to do something different or something more intensive. Often that decision-making takes place in schools in a group with teams of folks that are organized by content areas or by grade.

I think we felt it was worth spending a little bit of time on this. It may be the case that almost everyone on the phone is familiar with RTI. We felt it was worth spending a little bit of time on. The framework at the high school level fits a bit more flexibly than at the elementary level, keeping in mind though that we believe that each of these components need to be evident to some extent before we can characterize an innovation as being RTI. At this point, I will hand it to Greg.

Slide 8: Other Investigations of Tiered Interventions or RTI at the HS Level

Greg Roberts: Thank you, Lou. Lou made the point there is not a lot of research in the areas that we would think about as being RTI at the high school level, and that's true. That's one of the motivating reasons for the project that you are hearing about today; it's that there are states and school districts out there that are moving forward with RTI at the high school level. Many of you on the phone here today are probably a part of one or more of those groups. As TA providers, we felt it was incumbent on us to have some basis, provide guidance, or at least being a part of the discussion. In the absence of what we might call rigorous research, we have been looking to participate with folks like yourselves in schools and districts to better understand what the challenges are. What are the issues? What are the contextual factors that matter? All of that said, we would be remiss if we didn't mention the ongoing, more formal types of research efforts that are out there. I just want to hit upon these briefly. If you have questions about details, I think there will be a mechanism by which you can contact us, and I can send you some additional content.

There are several ongoing efforts funded at the federal, national level in the following areas that I know of. This may not be an all-inclusive list. Within the instructional area in reading literacy, there is a large multisite study funded by National Institutes of Health that is looking at effective instruction at the upper middle school and high school levels within an RTI framework. They're looking primarily at students who are at risk or are struggling. What do we need instructionally to support those kids? The sites include the University of Texas, the University of Houston, Florida State, and Johns Hopkins, and there are several others that are a part of that research.

In math, there's quite a bit of work at the upper middle school and also at the secondary high school level, and that's with Vanderbilt University. Much like the work in literacy, the idea here is what can be done here instructionally to support students in high school at Tiers II and III. Again, there are the contextual constraints at the high school settings.

Content areas. There's a research and development center that's been funded by IES for the last three to four years, it's called Project Create. Their work has been focused on RTI in science and social studies and also for students who are English Language Learners. Project Create has quite a bit that is available on a website of instruction within content areas for older kids, particularly those who are ELL.

Progress Monitoring, the LD Centers, the NIH-funded centers are also working on developing reliable knowledge measures of progress in reading for older students. In math, it's the same, at Vanderbilt. Instruction generally gets defined broadly. In an RTI model, it goes without saying that includes collecting data on a regular basis using reliable and valid measures. It's not surprising that the groups who are doing the instruction pieces are also doing work related to monitoring progress.

Writing, progress monitoring, there's a group at the University of Minnesota, the Progress Monitoring Center, with Chris Espin. They've been doing work for several years now, work related to measuring progress in writing for older students.

Content areas, in terms of progress monitoring, my only knowledge of work in that there's quite a bit happening within states at the state level and attempts to develop reliable measures that reflect content learning. Since that content learning often varies from state to state, those measures also tend to vary from state to state. I think that's probably why it tends to be something that is happening more locally rather than nationally.

That third primary bullet, these all have to do with the kind of the elements of RTI that Lou talked about on the prior slide. There is research—formal, more rigorous research in these areas. There's a need, I think—I'm guessing that many of you would agree—for research on implementing and managing tiered infrastructure. By that, I mean getting RTI up and going and making it work in high school settings. We think it is partly a matter of doing these different components well, but that's only part of it. It's certainly necessary, but it may or may not be sufficient. Part of what we're talking about here today gets at this issue, meaningful factors for implementation. We also understand, recognize, and encourage more formal types of inquiry around these important questions.

Slide 9: Site Characteristics Summary: General Demographics

Greg Roberts: What have been doing and where is it that we've been doing this? We've been working in four regions. We started with 50+ schools and worked down to eight schools. Three

of those are in the Midwest, one in the Northeast, two in the Southeast, and two in the West. This is not a representative sample, but we did see some value in trying to represent, when possible, different types of schools. In addition to the geography of it, there are schools as small as 450 students. We have a school with almost 3,500 students. A nice distribution there. In terms of SES, we have a range. We have schools that are on the low end of that range, and we have schools with as many as 75% of students who are receiving free and reduced lunch.

Slide 10: Site Characteristics Summary: Student Demographics

Greg Roberts: Within schools, ethnicity-wise, we have again quite a range—African American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and White/Caucasian. You can see those there. We also have a range in terms of primary language/ELL students as well.

Slide 11: Site Characteristics Summary: School Information

Greg Roberts: In terms of scheduling within the schools, we have three schools that use a block schedule approach. We have four that are more traditional; they have six to eight periods daily. We have one school that has developed a hybrid of the two. So, it reflects both a blocking type of scheduling approach, but also features some of a more traditional, period-based approach. All schools are using three- or four-tiered intervention models. All schools implement tiered interventions to improve student achievement. The distinction there is using tiered intervention to identify students as either LD or some comparable condition. It doesn't mean they are not using RTI or tiered intervention for that purpose, but the primary purpose is to improve achievement of all students. The length of implementation ranges from one to eight years, which was by design. Most schools are focused on 9th and 10th graders.

Slide 12: Factors that Support Implementation of the Essential Components

Greg Roberts: Just a little bit about what we found. Jenny's going to go into this in much more detail. We think there are four basic factors that support implementation. None of these will come as a surprise. One is leadership; it's difficult to define, difficult to measure. We know it, you know it when you see it. It's an essential element of being successful in terms of RTI. Having providers for intervention, Jenny will talk about how schools are handling that. There's a need for creativity, innovation, and it's not an easy issue. It's a challenge, but it's also a factor that is essential to being successful. Professional development and coaching and evaluation are also essential.

Slide 13: HS Implementation Challenges

Greg Roberts: When we started we wanted it to be, "What is that works?" We do have some information that we think reflects best practices, but we also began to realize we could think about a lot of the information that we were collecting in terms of what schools or districts are

finding challenging. What are the questions that they don't have answers for or the tasks that they don't have routines around? What is it that's tough or difficult about doing RTI in high schools? Turns out it's a long list. But the highlights of that include the following. Again, none of these will be a surprise to you.

One is building capacity, getting staff to buy in. Getting staff up to speed both in terms of what they know about RTI, but also being able to do what it is they need to do to make RTI work. Then the idea of just ongoing problem-solving with RTI is in a lot of ways added to that basic level, a framework for solving problems. When thought of in those ways, I think it empowers educators to identify problems and engage in that process of problem-solving.

Scheduling, it's also kind of a capacity issue. Being able to schedule time for intervention, being able to keep those schedules organized and keep kids sort of served within those schedules is a huge challenge. It's huge in elementary schools; it's even quadruply so in high schools, given the more complicated schedules that are difficult compared to elementary schools. Then also finding time for analyzing student data and planning accordingly. Remember that one of the key components as Lou said was data-based decision-making. There needs to be time set aside to engage in those components.

Slide 14: HS Implementation Challenges

Greg Roberts: Accessing adequate and appropriate resources, fiscal and human resources. Getting back to the tools question, how do you know what assessments are reliable and valid? How do you know what interventions are effective and useful? What is working for schools like yours or comparable to yours? There is some research coming out that will provide an additional perspective. In the interim, the best that one can do is to look around, find schools that are working, and find out what they're doing to make RTI happen.

Fidelity is a huge issue. The first question is, "Fidelity to what?" You have fidelity at the model level and fidelity at the level of interventions. There is quite a bit of good work coming out of several national centers looking at fidelity. Dean Fixsen at the University of North Carolina and Rob Horner at the University of Oregon, they have been doing a lot of collaborative work around fidelity. There's been work around the idea of fidelity as it results to, or within the context of, scaling up an intervention like RTI. I refer you to them for additional details there. At this point, I'm supposed to turn it back over to Ayse.

Slide 15: Question & Answer

Ayse Ikizler: We were going to have some time for questions and answers at this point, but we have decided to move the question and answer period to the end of the session, in the interest of time so we can get the presentation through. Please keep submitting your questions through the Q&A box on your screen. I will pass it along to Jenny at this point.

Jenny Scala: Back to Greg.

Ayse Ikizler: Back to Greg. Sorry about that.

Slide 16: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS

Greg Roberts: The contextual factors slide for RTI in high school, these are the factors that we think are surfacing across the different schools and our conversations with those schools. One is focus, the second is culture, instructional organization, staff roles, student involvement, graduation requirements, stakeholder engagement, implementation and alignment, instruction and assessment resources. These are factors that we think would have an impact on how you do RTI, depending on where you may differ as a school or district in these areas. If your culture is one of adopting or embracing innovation, RTI implementation may look very different from a situation where innovation is something that is less of a focus. Jenny at this point will pick up there and take us through a more detailed discussion.

Slide 17: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Focus

Jenny Scala: Great, thank you. If folks are having a hard time hearing me, put that into the Q&A box and the people here will make sure that I speak louder. As Greg said, we will go through and talk about the contextual factors. What I want to do is first give a brief explanation about each factor and the implications specific to high schools. That list was pretty general as Greg said, and probably not very surprising. There are some specific aspects that are specific to the high schools that I want to talk about. On the screen, you will see some with the slides. Let's go back one slide. We will see a list of guiding questions. I won't talk specifically about those; you can print out the slides and have those. We think these questions will be useful for you wherever your role is—school, districts, state staff—to think about as you begin to implement an RTI framework in high schools. After each factor, I will talk about how we saw that factor in our site visits that we had. I just want to remind folks that we will be talking about examples, not exemplars. So, we are going to be reporting exactly how we saw things in the schools we visited. They're just examples. They're not exemplars. We also acknowledge that there is some overlap between these factors. We broke them out in a way that makes sense in terms of really moving the conversation forward about what we think schools and staff people at the district and state levels need to think about as they begin this implementation. But we do acknowledge that there can be or is some overlap between the two.

The first one is focus. Each school really needs to determine explicitly what the purpose, scope, and focus for their RTI framework is going to be. There's no standard application of the framework at the high school level. Schools need look at their data to figure out what they want to focus on and how it makes sense for them to begin working on that. Unlike implementing RTI in the elementary schools, the high schools may not always include all students or all content areas. One of the schools that we talked to was focusing first on students who needed to retake the state assessment. Their approach would not include all students. As schools determined the

focus of their framework, we really suggest and encourage folks to look at the initiatives, programs, practices that are currently in place to see what could support their focus and/or their implementation of the framework. So how did we see the focus developing in the site visits?

Slide 18: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Focus

Jenny Scala: All sites identified improving student achievement as the primary goal of what was going on and what they were trying to achieve. But from there the schools looked at their specific data and identified strategies to use based on what the data said about how they were going to get to improving student achievement. So one school did a general reflection of looking at various data points and noticed there were a lot of students receiving Ds and Fs on their report cards. They noticed a large number of students receiving multiple Ds and Fs. That was where the school started to focus on in terms of improving student achievement. Another school, looking at their data, noticed there was a concern around the growing number of student tardies they were receiving. Over a course of a specific time period, this number was really rising. It was a concern around estimated learning time that was lost. It was also a concern because there was also a drain on resources in terms of the processing of students, and the school thought that it was something they wanted to focus on. There was just a lot of tardies, and they wanted to first focus their attention on that.

Slide 19: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Culture

Jenny Scala: We will talk on the next factor, culture. School culture plays an integral role in all schools. It can influence the beliefs and behaviors of what is acceptable within the school. We know this is also just as important in high schools. Adapting a tiered framework at the high school level may require a significant shift in the school's culture, given a comparison to your traditional way of thinking about high schools. For example, when you implement a tiered intervention, staff may need to collaborate in new ways. Looking at how to regularly examine data together based on what the data is saying, making instructional changes and how to make those changes. Overall, one of the examples that could happen in terms of needing a culture shift would be agreeing that the success of all students is the responsibility of all staff. We know that could be something that is a factor for all schools as their implementing their tiered framework.

Slide 20: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Culture

Jenny Scala: We were only at the schools for one day. We didn't ask for people to give us information or explicitly state what they thought the culture of their school was. We don't want to categorize what they said their culture was. Instead, what I want to share is a few things that we think will provide insight into how schools view their own culture. In one school, when we were in a meeting with the administrator, they explained that the RTI framework appealed to them because they described a synergy between their current beliefs and the RTI language. What we thought was striking was that it was an interesting phrase, the synergy part. We then had a focus group with the teachers. Without using the same language, they were conveying the same

idea about how the RTI language helped them have a more understanding, a better way of doing what they were currently doing to provide a holistic framework to move the work they had already started forward. That was one school. Another school really talked about the importance that they valued on their small learning communities they had established. They were one of the larger schools and they were using learning communities to facilitate learning connections among smaller numbers of students. Also, the staff commented that they were able to facilitate connections between staff and students that they attributed to the smaller learning community. That helped to move things forward with their tiered framework.

Slide 21: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Instructional Organization

Jenny Scala: The next one is instructional organization, and I like to think of this as the school schedule. As people are thinking about RTI and tiered interventions, people immediately jump to a schedule that allows flexibility in terms of scheduling and delivering interventions for students. While that's important, we also think it's just as necessary to make sure that the school schedule allows time for teachers to collaborate in terms of discussing data, talking about different instructional practices, and making sure that time for teachers exists to collaborate in discussions around data. As Greg said, we visited schools using block, traditional, and hybrid schedules, and each of those different schedules enabled different strategies for delivering interventions within the classroom. I'll give more specifics about what that actually looked like in a second. We also think it's important to consider not only the master schedule in terms of how to do it during the day, but also the school calendar over the school year. That's an important thing that we heard from folks we were visiting. Just a few other considerations as you are thinking about your schedule. Students will need access to tiered supports, and along with that, you need to make sure that you allow flexibility for movement between tiers for students. Implementing the RTI framework is not tracking, so you want to make sure that there is knowledge around that, that it's not taking place, and that you are allowing students to have that movement where needed. With the teachers, you want to make sure there's time for collaboration and time for teachers to discuss data.

Slide 22: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Instructional Organization

Jenny Scala: Examples. We're getting a lot of questions from the field about what does this actually look like in schools in terms of finding time within the school day. One of the things we heard from almost of the sites is that someone was responsible for the master schedule. That's a given. However, this person was generally a principal, a vice principal, or an assistant principal, trying to keep aware of the complications and the solutions. They had a big picture view of the master schedule as well as the creative solutions of how to make it work. There is always someone in the school that was really taking on the role of what we're calling master scheduler.

For schools on block schedules, those schools had a 90-minute seminar time every other day. That's where the most of the additional supports that were not happening in the core class were

happening, during that seminar time. That looked like different things in different schools. This is also going to link back to the focus of what your focus is around the tiered interventions. Some schools had a system where students would check-in in one room and they would go work in a different physical space. Working in small groups with teachers, they could pull students from across the school for activities during this seminar time. Other schools did it slightly differently, but variations of using that seminar time for the additional interventions.

For schools with traditional six to eight period days, we saw this work coming through in two ways in what we would call guided study halls. Rather than going to a room for a period where they would work independently on whatever or read whatever magazine they had that day, they were using this time to really allow and facilitate additional content support and reteaching methods. One school had created a larger study hall room, so it was a larger space with more students, and there were three content area teachers there that were there and able to provide support in the three content areas during that time period. The teachers also were able to access students' work, typically using some sort of database or internet service that was linked to the school; the other teachers could leave notes about what a student needed to focus on that week or that day, or what they might be struggling with a certain type of concept. The other use of the study halls were more small group focused. There was a smaller group of students providing that small group time to get additional support on the particular content. Elective times. Some schools were deciding that students would lose electives to get additional supports. We would say that all of our schools had figured out a way so students received core content in all 4 subject areas, but were having to lose some of their elective classes and were getting additional supports during the electives.

Slide 23: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Staff Roles

Jenny Scala: Alright, staff roles. High school teachers more often associate themselves as teachers of content and not always equipped or know how to teach struggling students, students with disabilities, or English language learners. This gets back to the culture discussion, it gets back to a lot of different things, but that’s generally how high school teachers identify. We also acknowledge that high schools need to determine what staff is best qualified to deliver interventions and how to train teachers to deliver high quality instruction in all levels. This is important because it's not just about who will teach the additional interventions, but it's also about making sure that high quality instruction is happening in all classes. We know these decisions will depend on the focus of the framework. You will hear that we keep coming back to the focus of the framework and the available staff.

Slide 24: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Staff Roles

Jenny Scala: What did it look like? There were co-teaching classes, classes that were co-taught. There was someone that had expertise in the content and someone that had expertise in making content accessible to students. In most schools, this was a special education teacher, but that wasn’t the case for all schools. One of the schools we talked to a focus group; the special

education teachers were discussing the changes in their roles since the implementation of the tiered intervention framework. Their role is more of a consultant now. They would be invited to department meetings or go in as a coach to help model and make sure that the students are learning, make curriculum more accessible, rather than having the more traditional model of having the special education teachers doing their own thing. They thought that was a unique way of having their roles change as more students were being served in the core and secondary levels or support. All of the schools had some sort of a data team. Those members were some combination of the roles that you see on the screen. All of our sites had both a special education teacher or staff person with a lot of knowledge base on special education and a content person involved in the data team.

Slide 25: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Student Involvement

Jenny Scala: Student involvement. In high schools, we think it's really important to make sure that you are actively engaging the students in the process and have them feel involved in the process of their educational experience rather than it just happening to them. We think where appropriate and with assistance, high school students can be involved in voicing their opinions around different interventions and what strategies work best for them as well as being able to monitor their progress.

Slide 26: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Student Involvement

Jenny Scala: One school we visited had what we're calling the student centered problem solving approach. There's a collaborative decision making process that occurred, and the student was involved in terms of determining what was working and what wasn't, what strategies worked well for the student, what the student felt they needed more assistance with. The student was at the meeting, they were asked for their opinion, and their opinion was valued. They were initially sought to come up with some of the first solutions of what they thought would work. The student was in the meetings throughout the course of the process; it wasn't just this initial meeting. So the students were definitely involved in the process at this particular school. Most of our schools had some sort of way of involving the students in tracking the data. Some students were involved in terms of being responsible for tracking the class progress. This wasn't student specific progress because it was publicly displayed. A lot of schools had notebooks or file folders for students where their responsibility was to track their own progress as they were doing their work.

Slide 27: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Graduation Requirements

Jenny Scala: One factor that is specific to the high school level that you're not going to see at the elementary school level are graduation requirements. The goal of high school is really to have students graduate and be successfully prepared for post-secondary education and careers. How these interventions are credited on transcripts in terms of if they're getting credits that are eligible for graduation or not, and then in terms of thinking about it from a post-secondary

viewpoint of how these interventions will label them is something that folks should consider as you do this work.

Slide 28: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Graduation Requirements

Jenny Scala: In terms of our site visits, we didn't actually ask how classes were specifically labeled on the transcript, so I can't speak to that. In terms of how students were receiving credits, it goes to where the supports were provided. If they were provided during a guided study hall time, those were considered study halls; students were not receiving credit. In those classes that might have been considered as replacing an elective, students were receiving elective credits for that.

Slide 29: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Stakeholder Engagement

Jenny Scala: We know that high schools frequently engage a variety of external stakeholders, and that can include parents, family members, community and business partners, tutors, volunteers. All of these stakeholders support both the instructional as well as the extracurricular activities that are going on in the high school. Additionally, some students receive wraparound services from social service agencies in the community. We think all of the stakeholders can provide valuable support for a school's RTI framework. What's really important though is that you consider how to communicate the framework—the purpose of it, the focus of it—to the stakeholders, and are able to involve them in the design and the implementation so they understand and know how the work they are doing is building on the framework and ultimately the success of the student. As well, if a school has existing services, we think it's important to look at how the services are aligned and coordinated. For example, any specific services for at-risk students or students with disabilities. And to take the time to figure out if there's any implications for the framework based on these existing services.

Slide 30: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Stakeholder Engagement

Jenny Scala: What does this look like in the sites we saw? Parents were invited to the problem solving meetings at a lot of the schools that we went to. I will talk about building upon the existing initiatives in the next section. In terms of providing training and support for these internal stakeholders and external stakeholders, it's really important to think about how to share the information in multiple formats in a manner that all can understand. A lot of the schools had specific sections on the school website that explained their tiered intervention framework and their focus and some of the details of what that looked like for a student in terms of the interventions. They also communicated information through newsletters. Some of the schools shared information on open house night. Others were considering bringing information and adding it into parent-teacher conferences since they were getting a higher attendance rate for those parent-teacher conferences, and try to bring that in there as well.

Slide 31: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Implementation and Alignment

Jenny Scala: Implementation and alignment. Obviously, schools have multiple initiatives being implemented at the same time, and there are things to consider in terms of school-wide programs, grade-specific initiatives, and at the high school level, department-specific initiatives. We encourage schools to take the time to align these efforts so they can support and accelerate the implementation of the tiered framework rather than not taking the time and skipping that step. We know that can be a lot of hard work, but we think it's important to take the time to do that. We also think it might be useful to create a plan specifically that addresses implementation for the schools, and to have that be a multi-year plan. If the focus of the school is starting with a specific group or a smaller population, the plan should think about addressing aspects of how to expand the focus and the scope of the work over time.

Slide 32: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Implementation and Alignment

The schools that we visited had a lot of different initiatives going on, not surprisingly. In terms of coordinating these initiatives, we saw and visited schools that first started their tiered intervention focusing on an academic aspect and then brought in a positive behavior intervention and support framework because they wanted to address behavioral concerns that they saw at the school. Another school started first with behavioral, and then when they were able to create school wide expectations based around behavior, they then incorporated and grew the framework to address academic concerns that the school had based on their data. Another school was able to leverage their existing AVID and Check and Connect programs. All of the schools were leveraging some sort of initiative that they thought was really integral to the success of their overall tiered framework.

All of the schools talked about the need to leverage staff roles. They appropriately chose someone to lead the overall framework based on the focus of the framework for the school and what they were doing. For instance, some schools where the literacy was the prime push, they made sure that the literacy coach had time to be really involved in that process and was linked based to the data conversation and driving it. For a school that was focusing on the positive behavior side, their school psychologist was leveraging their role and took on some of the responsibility. The school that focused on tardies, they brought in their security staff to play an important role. Since they had so many students that were having tardies, they asked their security staff to sweep the halls five minutes prior to the bells were ringing to get students moving to classes, and that had a significant impact in reducing the number of tardies they had. Obviously, you can leverage counselors and other staff that you have. These schools were being creative about how they were using staff.

Staff also talked about the need to prioritize. Professional development is an obvious one. The staff and administration, once the focus was determined, tried to make sure that the professional

development that followed really helped support the focus of the framework and really make sure that people kept getting the message, "Here's the focus of the framework and here's how we're supporting and moving the framework into being in place."

Time, not surprisingly, staff talked about the need to be creative about time. One of the things that was done at one school is they were able to figure out a way to start a weekly late start where the teachers were there, but students came a few hours late. While no students were on campus, teachers used that time to have data teams. They would have a few teams that would meet in different time periods knowing that the way the school had organized it, teachers were involved in more than one data team. It could have been organized by grade or content level, sometimes by both. They were able to look at their school calendar and making adjustments as needed in order to make sure that the timing existed for teachers to collaborate.

Almost all of the schools talked about using staff meetings differently. Several of the schools mentioned that a lot of the administrative duties that were previously dominating the staff meeting were being done in other formats, like email, so meeting time could be designated to data team meetings or additional professional development for teachers. In terms of classroom space, one of the sites knew they needed more space for small group work. They were able to negotiate times so that the conference room, which was usually used for parents and meetings, could become a venue for small group instruction for students. They shifted the purpose of that room from a conference room to a room for small group instruction.

Slide 33: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Instruction and Assessment Resources

Jenny Scala: The last contextual factor unique to the high school when implementing an RTI framework is important and a big one. It's instruction and assessment resources. Right now, there's little research on the efficacy core supplemental intensive instruction with struggling learners in grades 9 to 12. We know that. Greg went over some of the research that is going on, and hopefully we'll have more research coming from that. Not only are we limited in terms of the research around instruction, but we're lacking valid screening and progress monitoring measures for high school students. We know that is kind of the status right now. That's what's going on. We know that's the case. We know that's something that people need to think of in terms of as they are choosing measures, that they're valid, reliable, and geared toward the purpose that will match the focus that the school has selected.

Slide 34: Contextual Factors Unique to RTI in HS: Site Visit Examples of Instruction and Assessment Resources

We get a lot of questions from folks around what exact assessment resources that schools are using, the tools and measures. In terms of providing time for people to look at data, we know this is an important aspect for changing the instruction. There were several schools that were engaged in some sort of professional or teacher learning communities. These often met weekly. These

were focused not only on student data, but they also followed up closely with the changes around instruction. As a team, they would discuss if a specific content should be re-taught and who would do it based on who felt the most comfortable, different teaching styles—this information was shared— and making sure that teachers were able to grow and learn new teaching styles. A lot of this information was shared during teacher learning communities. That was a really important aspect.

In terms of looking at how schools were determining their interventions and data sources, a lot of schools were first using data from 8th grade assessments as a universal screener, and would determine a cut score or a point where if a student scored below that point, they were automatically flagged for additional screening. The additional screening tools they used would be specific to the focus. What you're choosing to focus on is going to drive how the framework is laid out, but the more nuts and bolts, in terms of what you use for your additional interventions and your assessment measures, will help to drive that. There were several schools that talked about how fortunate they were if their feeder middle schools were using an RTI model or tiered framework model. That helped them tremendously. They were able to pull student data, but what interventions had been successful with certain students. One school specifically selected their intervention program based on what the students had received in the middle school. They didn't want to be repetitive and use the same interventions. Several schools talked about wanting to avoid duplication of the interventions that were used previously.

Those are the nine contextual factors that we think are unique to implementing RTI in high schools. I will turn it back to our moderator to go through the Question & Answer session. She is now handing me a long list. I think we will start to go through the questions.

Slide 35: Question & Answer

Ayse Ikizler: I will read some of the questions that we've gotten. Some have been similar, but some are really different. We really appreciate you submitting your questions through the Q&A tab on your screen.

What are most schools using for progress monitoring in various subject areas?

Jenny Scala: I'm looking at the folks here in the room to see who wants to take the initial stab.

Tessie Rose: This is Tessie Rose, and I haven't been formally introduced, but I'm from the National Center on Response to Intervention. The Center has been reviewing progress monitoring tools for literacy and math, which are available on the website (www.rti4success.org). The issue about progress monitoring really comes down to what Lou was talking about—what is the intended outcome of your model? If graduation is what you are trying to improve, then your progress monitoring tool is going to be predictive of graduation. We have seen schools use attendance rate, class failure or the number of Fs, the number of credits, homework assignments and how often they're turned in. In terms of the content area, for

example, science or social studies or math, you really have to determine what is your outcome. Are you progress monitoring to see if they're going to pass the class or to see do they have the content knowledge that is in there? A lot of schools are using PLCs to develop their own progress monitoring tools related to content areas. PLCs are professional learning communities.

Ayse Ikizler: There was another question that we received via email before the session started.

Are there any recommendations or sample schedules for high schools, giving suggestions of how to implement during the school day?

Jenny Scala: This is Jenny. I had given an overview. The most common types of schedules that are seen in high schools are the block and traditional schedules. With the block schedules, what we're seeing for high schools is they are using the seminar time. They are coming up with some type of way to use that 90-minute block period. They will come up with a way of using that period to do that. Because it's a longer time period, I believe in all the schools, students were doing more than one thing during that time. It's not like they would just have 90 minutes of one specific intervention per se. They were using that time in different ways, whether it's students that needed to work on different content areas or doing some independent work or small group work. That's your block schedule. For a traditional day, they were using study halls as one place, and then having students do elective classes that were additional interventions.

Ayse Ikizler: Thanks, Jenny.

Have you considered the use of screening for early warning in RTI?

Jenny Scala: This is Jenny. I will take the initial response here. This is really going to depend on your focus in terms of how you are framing your overall model. To a certain extent, that's the driving factor for it. It's hard to give a general response to that. I will see if anyone else wants to add to that. I'm assuming they're talking about early warning systems for dropping out.

Lou Danielson: I saw a question about the Early Warning System that the National High School Center developed. To me that's an example of a screening system that one could use if your focus was on that dimension.

Jenny Scala: When I was talking about aligning your current initiatives, that would be another one. If you already have that in place, that's a great way to build off that. I think it's one of those things that can really help move the framework and implementation forward.

Ayse Ikizler: Was there anybody else that wanted to add to that response?

Jenny Scala: I think we're looking for another question here.

Ayse Ikizler: We have a lot coming in. We appreciate that. We are looking for the most commonly asked.

Ayse Ikizler: This was an interesting one.

How do you avoid "stigma" in regard to moving through tiers, especially with adolescents and the importance of peer approval? The person who is asking noted it might be not as much of an issue at the elementary school level, so they're wondering how it looks at the high school level.

Jenny Scala: That's a really good question. I will take the first response on this. Again depending on the focus, one of the schools that we visited had a teacher who was talking about how she was now in charge of providing remedial instruction on the content area that they were focused on. Other teachers asked that specific question. The teacher said there was an initial reaction of, "I don't want to do this," but they re-screened the students and had the students help do the scoring process. Once that had taken place and students realized that they saw and had evidence that they were struggling, they realized it was in their benefit to get this information. A few of the schools talked about this initial resistance toward it. But providing the students the opportunity to re-screen and then having them involved in the process of the scoring of it. In general, I believe the schools had said the students that were really struggling knew it, and several of the students were happy they were getting the support that they needed that they hadn't been getting up to this point in time.

Lou Danielson: I think that Jenny makes a good point about getting kids involved early in the identification that the student is an at-risk student is important. But there's steps the schools can take to minimize the stigma. I think that it's possible if we create things that are called RTI classes or referring to them as RTI kids—RTI is a pretty neutral word to start off, but we can turn it into something that can stigmatize kids if we're not careful about how we use it. I think it has something to do with how we organize services and how we talk about the things that we're doing. My first reaction is there's nothing more stigmatizing than to be failing in school because usually it's not a secret to anyone. I think there are ways that we can do this. A lot of it has to do with the conversations we have about these young adults, that we include them in the discussions that we're having—both about whether they're an at-risk student as well as the supports and interventions that we might deliver—and get their input of the delivery of those supports.

Ayse Ikizler: Thanks, Lou.

Ayse Ikizler: There's another question coming in. I also want to say we're getting a lot of questions right now. A lot of them we won't be able to get to. If we don't get to your question, please note it in the evaluation. That will also be posted to the websites.

Besides PBS, what other behavioral interventions are typically used in the high school level?

Jenny Scala: This is Jenny. I feel like I am hogging the responses. Throw things at me if needed. We see a lot of schools using PBIS. If they're not doing that, what we saw was more focus on just setting expectations around behavior. It's something that we want to look more into in terms of the behavioral side, and that's something that we're planning in the future. I would encourage you to go to PBIS's website in the meantime, which is www.pbis.org. That would be my response to that question.

Lou Danielson: I can follow-up just briefly. Which Check and Connect is something that I've thought of as a dropout prevention strategy, I think in some cases, some people are also using it as a behavioral intervention. I think that's another example of something that people are using.

Ayse Ikizler: Thanks, Lou.

Was the focus at the high school developed at the school or district level?

Jenny Scala: That's a good question, and we saw both. Some of the schools had a district initiative that the school was implementing. So the district had set the focus, and the high school itself had looked at their data closely and then determined how to move forward given the district focus. In some of the schools, it was the high school themselves that created the focus after looking at their data.

Tessie Rose: This is Tessie. Some schools were using state guidance. The state had recommended the use of RTI at the secondary level, and they, in a sense, became early adopters, trying it out. A lot of the schools that we saw were in the initial implementation phase and were working out a lot of the kinks, but will help many of you in your future implementation.

Ayse Ikizler: Great. Thanks a lot Tessie and Jenny.

Ayse Ikizler: This question is related to what we observed at the schools.

Were there any standard protocols in place or did all the schools use an individual problem-solving model?

Jenny Scala: We saw both. We saw some schools using a standard protocol model. Some were using problem solving models.

Ayse Ikizler: Does anybody else have anything to add to that? Alright.

What comprehensive student data management systems are effective schools using?

Ayse Ikizler: I think we can respond by saying what we saw the schools using. I don't know how much outcome data we have to specifically say they were effective.

Tessie Rose: That is true. We did not evaluate schools, we want to make that clear. We went in and looked at what schools were using. Many of the schools were using data systems that were already created for their districts, that being used in their elementary schools. Some of them were also using published data systems, such as AIMSweb. Some were using a very rudimentary system with Excel spreadsheets and things they had created on their own.

Ayse Ikizler: Thanks a lot.

Jenny Scala: Do we have time for one more?

Ayse Ikizler: We have about five minutes left.

Jenny Scala: Alright.

Ayse Ikizler: We will have to wrap up the Question & Answer session. We will get to your questions after the webinar, and they will be posted on the website.

Slide 36: Tentative Topics for Future Webinars

Lou Danielson: This is Lou again. I will mention a few of the topics for future webinars. One we've talked about is a webinar on progress monitoring where we focus on progress monitoring at the high school level. Another is to talk about scheduling and some of the challenges, and we'd focus on how schools are addressing these issues. Lastly, we've talked about social-behavioral outcomes that would include PBIS and other tiered intervention approaches. We would be very interested in hearing from all of you about topics that you would be interested in. If you could just respond in the evaluation, or you could respond where you respond with your questions, to let us know what would be of interest to you. We're in the process of scheduling these now, and hope that during March we would have another webinar. Stay tuned. You should hear from us soon in terms of our next webinar.

Slide 37: For More Information

Lou Danielson: Our last slide. Here is information on the three websites of the three collaborating organizations where you can go for additional information. We've talked about some of the things you can find on these sites. I think you will find all of these websites to be very useful, and I encourage you to visit these. As the work progresses on this initiative, there will be additional information on our sites as well as additional work.

Ayse Ikizler: We would like to thank Lou Danielson, Greg Roberts, and Jenny Scala as well as Tessie Rose for sharing their presentation and expertise with us today.

If you would like to print a copy of the PowerPoint slides from today's presentation, you may do so by clicking on the small printer icon at the bottom right-hand side of your screen. This will allow you to print to PDF. The slides will also be available on the websites of the National Center on Response to Intervention, the National High School Center, and the Center on Instruction.

We will have future webinars where we can go into more depth. Please do continue to check your inboxes for that.

We would appreciate your feedback about today's session. Please take a few minutes to complete the webinar evaluation that you see on the screen. We value your feedback, and ultimately your suggestions will assist us in making decisions for our future webinars. If you have additional questions about the implementation of tiered interventions and RTI in high school, please insert comments on the follow-up evaluation.

Once again, thank you for participating today!