

**Summary and Analysis of Stakeholder Input**  
**Wyoming Department of Education Stakeholder Input Meeting**  
**Response to Intervention**  
**Riverton**  
**May 20-21, 2009**

## **Overview**

The Special Programs Unit (Unit) of the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) is in the process of designing an improvement initiative that will integrate two existing improvement initiatives currently sponsored by the Unit. The new initiative, Wyoming System of Instructional Supports (WySIS) will implement a tiered intervention or Response-to-Intervention (RtI) framework using both behavioral and academic interventions and instructional practices. As part of the design for this initiative, the Unit hosted a Stakeholder Input event in Riverton, May 20-21, 2009. The purpose of this event was to support stakeholder input toward the identification of issues and recommendations that must be considered as part of the design and implementation of the WySIS.

This summary of this Stakeholder Input event provides information on the process, stakeholder input clustered into 6 themes, the big ideas or categories of concerns, issues and recommendations captured throughout the process, and evaluation data as provided by the participants.

## **Stakeholder Evaluation of the Event**

Participants in the Stakeholder Input event were provided the opportunity to evaluate both purpose and process (including the facility where the event was held). The purpose of the meeting included 5 elements, each evaluated individually by the participants. These included:

- Developing a shared understanding of the importance of “perspective” and how it influences system ability to achieve change.
- Development a shared understanding of RtI as a system of academic and behavioral interventions.
- Begin exploration of the relationship between RtI and School Improvement.
- Identification of essential/key features of a Wyoming Toolkit for RtI.
- Understanding stakeholder perspectives of a statewide approach to RtI (Wyoming System of Instruction Support – WySIS).

In addition, participants evaluated the meeting process, including the meeting location and facility. The process measures included:

- The facilitated meeting process contributed to all stakeholder perspectives being honored and heard.
- The structured dialogue process created opportunities to learn from other stakeholders.

Each of these purpose and process measures was evaluated on a scale of 1-10, with ten being the highest score. Average scores were computed for each measure; all stakeholder evaluation comments were recorded as well. The final results are presented in table format in the appendix to this summary report.

### Evaluation Response

Overall evaluation responses were very high; the five elements of the meeting purpose were rated from 7.694 to 8.735. The meeting process elements were rated at 8.327 and 8.777; the facility and location were rated at 7.416.

Participants were very pleased with the design of the stakeholder input process as well as the facilitation of the process; they noted, in particular, the responsive adjustments to the process and agenda throughout the event. Participants were very interested in "next steps" and in continuing the work.

Consistency in perspectives regarding RtI and the WySIS was noted throughout participant comments. Collectively, these stakeholders are anxious to see continued progress in the development of strategies and resources to move the initiative forward.

### **Stakeholder Input: Six Themes**

Six themes were used in creating a stakeholder observation log; participants were provided the opportunity to review and reflect on the collective and individual input, discussion and synthesis across the two days. A summary of these themes and reflections are captured as follows (source comments are collected in the Observation Logs and are included in the Appendix to this report).

#### Are there common thoughts/perspectives/ideas regarding RtI that should be noted?

The participants tended to agree that the focus on student level data for instructional and behavioral decisions is a central and vital element of RtI and that most practitioners believe this and are using student data. The concern expressed consistently was that fidelity in the application of student data to inform instructional and behavioral interventions was lacking. This concern was linked to a constant theme in stakeholder comments regarding the importance of and urgency for training, guidance documents, and implementation guidelines. There was an equal focus on accessibility to such training, guidance, and implementation tools by varied stakeholders, including parents. Further, there was recognition that schools have varied needs and that any training, guidance, and other strategies or tools would need to reflect the range of needs across schools. The notion of "fluidity" was

used in reference to resources, access to support for schools, and interventions across tiers for children.

Are there distinctive thoughts/perspective/ideas regarding RtI that are important to pay attention to?

Participants identified funding and the Piccus-Odden report as important variables for consideration, as well as the potential role (and role definition) for Instructional Facilitators in Wyoming. Other concerns included the need to replace rumor with facts, and to achieve shared meaning across the current "lingo" of RtI. These issues were linked to the recurrent focus on the development of training, guidance documents, and other tools of implementation. Embedded in these concerns were the issues of communication and collaboration, including communication with families with an emphasis on cultural sensitivity; other targeted foci for communication efforts were across other initiatives, especially general education initiatives. In particular, the requirements for ELL were identified as an example of considerations to be targeted in the design of a framework for RtI: there was the stated concern that requirements for ELL do not "easily fit" into an RtI model. Another concern expressed was the lack of standardized criteria for "success-failure for kids" in RtI and the perception that variation across districts is wide. Finally, the recurrent notion of fluidity and flexibility in the delivery of training and guidance was expressed.

Do you see any patterns that might indicate important leverage points that if used might advance RtI across WY?

Leverage points were identified by the participants in a variety of categories. These included existing policies, practices, parallel initiatives, constituent groups, and the recurring issues and opportunities around communication, collaboration, professional development, technical assistance, and guidance documents.

Senate File 71, the potential fit for Instructional Facilitators and School Improvement were highlighted in participant observations for leverage points. The relative "speed" at which existing learning about and referencing of RtI was noted as both a challenge and an opportunity for leveraging. There was a sense of momentum underway regarding RtI as a framework for supporting the success of all children that was articulated by participants in a variety of ways.

A number of constituent groups were identified as critical to consider in the leveraging strategy. These include the preschool community, Instructional Facilitators, school improvement personnel, ELL personnel, parents and advocates. Leveraging strategies were tied to communication plans and systems; the variety of existing "venues" or communication was noted.

Finally, the development of professional development, technical assistance and guidance tools and strategies was once again identified as a key underpinning of the implementation of WySIS.

Are there consistent messages that could be used to assist in developing or enhancing a statewide RtI framework?

The messages identified by participants were consistent and clear throughout the observations, and can be summarized as follows:

- WySIS can be an effective process for continuous school improvement
- WySIS represents essential and good teaching practice
- WySIS captures the heart and intent of effective practice: it is for all students
- One system can be used to meet the needs of all students
- This system incorporates the best of education research using data-driven instructional decisions and differentiated instruction
- The outcomes of an RtI framework related to a “win” for all students

Concerns were stated regarding overcoming messages already “out there,” or soon to be out there. These included:

- RtI is only for special education
- WySIS may just be seen as a new name for an existing special education initiative

The challenge to create a culture of honest communication in the messaging to all constituencies was noted; whether it is messaging for parents, practitioners, the legislature, or central office, communication planning was seen as a critical component for implementation of WySIS.

What important opportunities do you see across all of this work that should be capitalized upon?

Multiple perspectives and multiple constituencies were seen as opportunities to be utilized and capitalized upon. The notion of tapping into the strengths of all, and using multiple group or constituency representation, as represented by the stakeholders/participants of this event, was stressed. The notion of peer-to-peer messaging and communication was identified as a key opportunity. Several of the participants stressed “use us!”

Senate File 70 was identified as an opportunity as was the possibility of influencing legislation while or before it is written. In addition, the opportunity to further define the role of Instructional Facilitators was a repeated concept across the observation logs for several of the “theme” questions.

Using current success stories was also seen as an opportunity to promote the relevance and effectiveness of an RtI framework. This was seen as an opportunity to showcase not only student success but cost effectiveness as

well. The notion of re-thinking and re-tooling across existing initiatives, and building upon collaborative potential was stressed.

### What considerations or advice might you give to WDE Special Programs Unit regarding RtI?

Participants were thoughtful and earnest in the considerations or advice provided in the Observation Logs. This advice is integrated into the “**big ideas**” from the collected comments across all themes and is captured as follows.

#### **Separate RtI (WySIS) as a System from SLD Eligibility**

Participants consistently viewed the elements of the WySIS as “good” instruction; they noted that many practices across districts were conducive to the core elements (the use of student performance data for instructional decision-making, for example). The need to hold to rigorous application of the components of RtI was expressed across themes. This “fidelity” was seen as tied to the integration of existing efforts and the ultimate impact of WySIS.

Caution and concerns were also identified. These included:

- developing and maintaining rigorous standards for SLD eligibility and developing a state document to address these standards
- working within the WDE to build a shared vision
- addressing needs of central administration to develop support for the vision

#### **Define and Develop Technical Assistance (TA), Guidance, Training and Professional development (PD) for WySIS**

Another repeating recommendation across themes was the need to define and refine technical assistance, guidance documents, training and professional development. Participants were eager to see specific tools developed and implemented.

Advice included building upon existing practices but also addressing the need across districts to know how to identify effective interventions and implement with fidelity. This concern was tied to both the vision for WySIS as well as the use of RtI for SLD identification.

#### **Develop a Marketing and Communication Plan - Define Constituencies, Messages and Messengers**

Closely tied to the need to develop a shared vision across the WDE and at the district level, as well as the need to develop TA and PD, was the focus on marketing and communication. Messaging that aligns with a shared vision, that develops common language through TA and PD, and that is delivered to various constituencies by credible messengers was implied throughout stakeholder comments and reflections.

The participants offered to become messengers to their respective constituencies and stressed the need to have a collaborative and targeted approach to building the vision through meaningful communication.

### **Integrate and Build Upon Existing Systems – School Improvement, ELL, Preschool, Instructional Facilitators, and Senate File 70**

As part of the “build” for WySIS, the need to integrate existing elements and systems was another repetitive recommendation across themes. The potential integration of the role and function of Instructional Facilitators was mentioned throughout, as was the need to leverage the focus on funding mechanisms and current discussions around Senate File 70.

There was also a consistent identification of the need to include Preschool and ELL in the development of the shared vision, in the design of communication plans, and implementation strategies, including TA and PD. Further, School Improvement was also consistently identified as a system through which integration is critical; this was seen as a critical leverage point, as were funding discussions, and shared visioning.

### **Collaboration Across All Efforts**

Participants were consistent, throughout the input process and in all comments, regarding the need for intentional collaboration. The experience of the Riverton Stakeholder Input process was highly valued, judged to be highly effective, and viewed as a metaphor for the continuing work. The Riverton Stakeholders were eager to be included in moving the work ahead through their participation in communication, marketing, and other development strategies. Individual recommendations included the charge to utilize the strengths of this group to “help you” move ahead.

The need to identify critical constituencies and include them has been articulated throughout. The need to continue with the initial collaboration of the Riverton event is the starting point.

## Summary Notes and Recommendations to the WDE Special Programs Unit

The value of stakeholder input cannot be understated. The Riverton event was part of a discovery process; the opportunity to leverage the involvement and excitement of the participants of the Riverton event is best taken sooner rather than later. The elements involved in this opportunity include:

1. Develop a follow-up plan
2. Implement the follow-up plan
3. Report to and include the stakeholder group regularly

Developing a follow-up plan would include responding to the recommendations from the Riverton event. This includes creating action plans around the Big Ideas which actually begins the design process toward implementation.

Keeping the Riverton Stakeholder group involved not only implements one of the Big Ideas, but also builds trust and credibility for the WDE Special Programs Unit.

## APPENDIX

Summary Data: Evaluation  
 Wyoming Department of Education Stakeholder Input Meeting  
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MEETING PURPOSE Respondents	Average Rating (Low-High=1-10)	Range	# of
1. Developing a shared understanding of the importance of "perspective" and how it influences system ability to achieve change.	8.735	7.5 - 10	17
2. Development of a shared understanding of RtI as a system of Academic and Behavioral interventions.	7.941	5 - 10	17
3. Begin exploration of the relationship between RtI and School Improvement.	8.029	6.5 - 10	17
4. Identification of essential/key features of a Wyoming Toolkit for RtI.	7.694	3 - 10	18
5. Understanding stakeholder perspectives of a statewide approach to RtI (Wyoming System of Instruction Support -WYSIS)	8.333	6 - 10	18

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MEETING PROCESS Respondents & FACILITY	Average Rating (Low-High=1-10)	Range	# of
6. The facilitated meeting process contributed to all stakeholder perspectives being honored and heard.	8.327	5 - 10	18
7. The structured dialogue process created opportunities to learn from other stakeholders.	8.777	7 - 10	18
8. Meeting location and facility.	7.416	3 - 10	18

## WDE Riverton May 2009 Stakeholder Meeting

### WHAT WORKED WELL?

- Beth did a wonderful job of reading her audience and making appropriate changes.
- Discussion – Good leadership of discussion organization.
- Listening to others and being with others that support what needs to happen.
- Responsive to shift in needs of group.
- Change in agenda on Thursday.
- The importance of perspective looking back and looking forward.
- Adjusting the agenda to meet the needs and direction.
- Weds afternoon process – very good. Beth kept us moving and alert.
- Shifting the agenda.
- Adjustments made for second day were excellent.
- Input from All.
- I like the facilitator style – guiding us to make conclusions.
- I believe working as groups with a specific task worked well. The discussions were thought provoking.
- Beth, of course, the honoring and validation of everyone's position and perspective; the use of post-its to allow everyone to have opportunity to speak – also kept everyone engaged (she made sure everyone participated – no slackers). Organizing big thoughts – chunking.
- The format for people providing input. Sticky notes.
- Great group of folks. I'm excited to see how this journey continues – I'm very happy to be part of the process.

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WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED?

- It seemed that we were not clear of our task on the 1<sup>st</sup> day. I don't know why. Somehow expectations need clarified.
- More time – some understanding of what the meeting was going to involve.
- Provided before the meeting some of what had already happened (looking back). Suggested reading, articles, research on RtI/PBS.
- Room – maybe hold in Casper.
- Thursday afternoon the process seemed to drag. I didn't like how that post-it process went.
- Explanation of the current situation first, i.e., where are we, what has taken place, what do we need to build on.
- The meeting was not what I expected as the level of understanding of RtI/WySIS is very high and I thought we would go to the next level. Obviously, this was recognized due to the adjustments made for the second day.
- More group consensus in some sections, not all.
- Some people were "silent partners" – No one speaks 3 times until everyone speaks once, etc. I really don't have an answer for this but I would have liked to hear from some folks more.
- The way we generated thoughts on sticky notes. I did not think was very helpful.
- The open "U" format of room was confining – perhaps pods or round table – hard to move around to talk with others.
- More time to do this.
- Would like to see another parent &/or advocate added on the mix. Also would like to see "RtI unsupportive schools" involved.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Thanks for letting me be a part.
- Thank you.
- Thanks for adjusting the agenda today!! Good leadership.
- Beth is an excellent facilitator.
- I think it is reinforcing to see how much consistency there is in understanding what RtI is and a shared acceptance that it includes both academics and behavior. Of course, it is a select group.
- I will be anxious to see what results from our work.
- So, where does the time and energy put forth go from here?
- Overall, I see a lot accomplished. But more needs to be done.
- At this point not sure what the next steps for this groups is – maybe we will find out before we leave – originally the plan was to meet 2x per year. Is that enough – can we have updates using WEN.
- How will this group engage or work together at the Teton Institute?
- Thank you for inviting me – I very much appreciate the timely responses of WDE staff when I or my staff have had education questions.