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New Report by the National High School Center Examines Response to Intervention at the High School Level

Washington, D.C. — The National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) announced the release of a report outlining the opportunities and challenges presented by Response to Intervention (RTI) at the high school level. To date, the focus on RTI, a diagnostic tool and tiered approach consisting of customized student instruction, has been primarily on the elementary school level. Interest in the approach has increased as a result of the regulations outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), but much is still unknown about this work at the high school level.

“Meeting the Needs of Significantly Struggling Learners in High School: A Look at Approaches to Tiered Intervention,” a new report authored by Helen Duffy of the National High School Center at AIR, provides an in-depth look at the implementation and structural issues, as well as the needed support required to successfully institute RTI on the secondary school level.

Effective tiered intervention strategies depend on accurate diagnostic information and data about what is working or what is not working for students and what new adjustments need to be made in the learning environment. RTI involves close monitoring of students and therefore can serve as an effective tool in identifying learning disabilities.

“Through research and observation, we are learning more about RTI at the high school level, especially for students with learning disabilities. This practitioner-friendly report examines those issues specific to implementation at the high school level. As educators begin to develop their ‘Back to School’ blueprints, we hope this report will serve as a resource in implementing targeted and individualized instructional programs for all high school learners, with a special focus on struggling readers,” commented Joseph Harris, Director of the National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research.

The report, available free of charge on the [National High School Center Web site](#), defines two RTI models (standard treatment protocol and problem-solving approach), explores benefits and challenges faced at the high school level, shares a snapshot of implementation at the high school level, and outlines the necessary resources needed to support this work. In addition, the report outlines considerations unique to high school in regard to RTI including:

- Identifying screening and progress monitoring tools for high school level students across subject areas;
- Utilizing high school appropriate intervention models that work across subjects;
- Designing a program structure that pays careful attention to the urgency for identifying learning disabilities and other learning issues so late in the educational pipeline;
- Developing an approach for high school students that addresses the problem of inappropriate identification, particularly of English learners;
- Examining the changing roles for general and special education teachers;
- Determining universal instruction across content areas;
- Ensuring new structural supports for professional collaboration, as high schools often present a unique challenge due to traditional departmental structures;
- Offering ongoing professional development; and
- Expanding parent communication to build a common understanding of the approach.

Finally, a comprehensive listing of additional resources by other national education organizations spearheading this work is also provided.

About the National High School Center

The National High School Center (www.betterhighschools.org), established in 2005, serves as a central source of expertise on high school-related issues for the Regional Comprehensive Centers, a national network developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The National High School Center is housed at the American Institutes for Research, located in Washington, DC. Subcontractors include Learning Point Associates, MDRC, the National Center for Educational Accountability, and WestEd.

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