

Presenter Bios

Kyle Allen is a technical assistance consultant at American Institutes for Research (AIR) and a technical assistance provider for the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII). In this role, Allen supports state education agencies, school districts, and educators in implementing data-based individualization (DBI) to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and those with the most intensive learning and/or behavioral needs. He also helps design and implement tools and processes that train and support educators in evidence-based practices, multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), intervention, assessment. He has over a decade of experience as a school psychologist and previously served as the Director of Tiered Supports for Oklahoma City Public Schools, where he led district-wide efforts to implement and scale MTSS.

Sarah V. Arden is a principal researcher at AIR, where she serves as the Director for the National Center on Intensive Intervention and as Director of MTSS Strategy and Policy. In her role at AIR, Dr. Arden leads national, state, and local projects focused on implementing MTSS and tiered interventions. She has presented at national and international conferences and published numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed articles focused on DBI, development of high-quality individualized education programs (IEPs), special education service delivery, MTSS, systems change and improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Dr. Arden earned her PhD in special education from the University of Texas at Austin.

Sarah Benz is a principal researcher at AIR and the intensive technical assistance lead for NCII. In addition to her work for NCII, Dr. Benz provides technical assistance and professional development to states through the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), the principal investigator for the Texas Statewide Inclusion project, and a senior advisor for the Texas Special Populations Diagnostic project. Dr. Benz taught middle school special education for over 6 years and was a former district special education director. She received her doctoral degree in special education from the University of Texas at Austin and her master's degree in special education from Vanderbilt University.

Annie Calderon is a school psychologist in Los Angeles Unified School District's Division of Special Education, where she supports the Intensive Diagnostic Educational Centers (IDEC) program—a Tier III, word-level reading intervention designed for students with identified learning disabilities and characteristics of dyslexia. Calderon coordinates the referral and placement process by providing outreach to parents and IEP teams across the district who would likely benefit from an intensified approach to word level reading intervention. Calderon assists the IDEC leadership team in collecting and analyzing student data to support better



outcomes for IDEC students using the DBI process. She also collects and analyzes program-wide data that has demonstrated the IDEC program's effectiveness in improving reading skills for some of the district's most severely impacted students, while also leveraging that data to enhance instructional practices and support evidence-based decision-making.

Jason Harlacher is a technical assistance provider for NCII and a senior researcher at AIR. He provides technical assistance to state agencies and school districts on DBI, classroom management, data-based decision making, and implementation of MTSS. He has over 20 years of experience in education, having previously worked as a school psychologist, district-level coach, adjunct professor, and state-level technical assistance provider. He is an award-winning author; his most recent work is *MTSS Simplified: Five Principles to Support Implementation* and co-authored *Untangling Data-Based Decision Making: A Problem-Solving Model to Enhance MTSS*. He earned his Ph.D. in school psychology from the University of Oregon.

Aleksis Kincaid is the knowledge development task lead for NCII and senior researcher at AIR. He leads the review process used to evaluate the technical rigor of academic and behavior assessments and interventions that appear on the NCII Tools Charts and facilitates discussions with NCII's Technical Review Committee on updates to the Tools Charts standards based on current research in the field. Outside of his work at NCII, Dr. Kincaid leads a portfolio of work focused on research, evaluation, and technical assistance on the use of evidence-based reading instruction and intervention in schools, MTSS, and supporting youth with disabilities in typical and alternative settings. He holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Minnesota and has experience working as a school psychologist and university lecturer.

Caitlyn Majeika is a research translation and capacity-building specialist for NCII and senior researcher at AIR. In these roles, she supports research on special education and contributes technical expertise to AIR's ongoing work to evaluate the technical adequacy of universal screening, progress monitoring, and fidelity tools as well as intervention programs for use within MTSS and DBI. She has over 15 years of experience in helping schools implement sustainable practices to support student behavior. She has extensive expertise in classroom management, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and data-based decision making. Dr. Majeika holds a Ph.D. in Special Education from Vanderbilt University, is a board-certified behavior analyst, and has experience as a university professor and special educator.

Cat Merkle is a research associate for NCII. She assists with product development, Intensive Intervention Institute coordination, and state and local technical assistance. She also provides technical assistance for the CEEDAR Center and serves as Center Coordinator for the MTSS and PROGRESS Centers at AIR. Previously, Merkle worked as the MTSS Special Projects Intern for the Maine Department of Education, and as a research assistant in several labs at Colby College. She holds a bachelor's degree in education and environmental science from Colby College.



Selin Padilla is an instructional coach with the Intensive Diagnostic Educational Centers (IDEC), within Los Angeles Unified School District's Division of Special Education. In this role, Padilla supports teachers and paraprofessionals with the implementation of Tier III, word-level reading intervention for students with learning disabilities. Her primary responsibilities include developing and presenting professional development, supporting curriculum implementation, and guiding instructional teams through the NCII's DBI process. Prior to joining IDEC, Padilla taught general education teacher, special education, and special day class.

Amy Peterson is a senior researcher at AIR and the deputy director and universal technical assistance lead for NCII. In this role, she oversees the dissemination of all freely available professional learning activities and resources and supports project oversight. She also leads universal technical assistance efforts for the PROGRESS Center and NCSI. She has conducted public policy and education research, communications, and technical assistance focused on defining and refining their MTSS frameworks, implementing evidence-based practices, using data and supporting students with disabilities since 2006. During this time, she has worked across grade levels supporting early childhood efforts while at the National Association for the Education of Young Children and through early warning system implementation and dropout prevention efforts at AIR. Prior to joining AIR, she received a master's degree in education policy from George Washington University.

Karen Pina is an administrator in Los Angeles Unified School District's Division of Special Education, where she oversees the Intensive Diagnostic Educational Centers (IDEC) program—a Tier III, word-level reading intervention designed for students with identified learning disabilities and characteristics of dyslexia. Pina brings a deep understanding of intensive reading intervention, having previously served as both a teacher and instructional coach within IDEC. Across all roles, she has worked to strengthen adherence to evidence-based practices, set ambitious yet achievable data-driven goals, and maximize student progress toward reading proficiency. IDEC's strong record of student achievement has resulted in the team frequently being called upon to support other district initiatives and professional development efforts.

Jon Potter is a senior technical assistance consultant at AIR and the targeted and intensive technical assistance co-coordinator for NCII. Dr. Potter also provides technical assistance around the implementation of MTSS through the MTSS Center at AIR. He has extensive experience in data-based decision making, problem-solving, and early literacy instruction and assessment, and recently co-authored the book *Untangling Data-Based Decision Making: A Problem-Solving Model to Enhance MTSS*. He earned his PhD in school psychology from the University of Oregon and has worked as a school psychologist, an adjunct professor in special education, and a statewide RTI implementation coach.



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