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A Guidebook, Based on One School's Journey in Implementing Response to Intervention

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A GUIDEBOOK, BASED ON ONE SCHOOL'S JOURNEY IN IMPLEMENTING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

A GUIDEBOOK, BASED ON

ONE SCHOOL'S JOURNEY IN IMPLEMENTING

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Many districts across the United States are considering, or have already implemented a system called Response to Intervention (RTI). This is a research-proven instructional method that will benefit many children who are challenged by the academic content. RTI uses a schoolwide structural system to support students and staff. This project documents steps taken by one school during an academic year in the form of a guidebook.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Over the past 9 years schools have been feeling the pressure to improve how kindergarten through 12th-grade education is provided. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act mandated state testing for all students, and an amendment to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), in 2004, added more information to the requirements for testing students with disabilities. All schools wanted to maintain expected performance levels and stay out of the public eye as a "failing school." Schools scrambled to understand the state standards, testing practices, and what reform efforts needed to take place to reach new goals. An emerging framework that provides an infrastructure to support the use of evidence-based practices and provides a model for instructing and intervening on behalf of all students to help improve their achievement is response to intervention (RTI).

Close your eyes and imagine a school system where all students are taught the individual skills they need to not only maintain proficiency, but to exceed proficiency at their given grade level. Imagine for a moment, a school where enrolling students are given a variety of short tests to identify strengths and weaknesses and the weaknesses are given added support and time. In this school, students are not labeled as "Title I" or "special education" to get help and support. If they need additional help, they get it. If a program, curriculum, or plan is not working, it is changed.

This is a system; not a program, curriculum, or personnel issue. The system spans each student, classroom, and environment. There is a plan to meet each need and a format to solve challenging problems. It could be labeled a problem-solving system. No teacher is left to figure it out alone and no student becomes a challenge too large to face. Everyone in this environment believes all students can learn.

Most schools have students who are at or above grade level and those who are below to seriously below grade level. The author's focus is on those students who are below to seriously below grade level. Response to Intervention can include a plan for students who are above grade level. Response to Intervention, RTI, appears to be an effective system to create a plan for those students who need additional support and instruction. RTI is based upon the President's Commission on Excellence, IDEA 2004, and the Learning Disability Association research findings.

RTI can also help schools with Special Education. Currently, special education identification uses a system called a discrepancy model. This means a student must have a gap between their ability and their current performance. So, a student may have an IQ that is too low to qualify for a learning disability to be served within Special Education because the student's performance is already close to his/her ability level. The discrepancy has developed into a "wait to fail" model because as a student gets older, without closing the achievement gap, students will show they are lower than their ability. The discrepancy model has not proven to be effective and has resulted in an over identification of students in Special Education. The following is an example of the use of the discrepancy model.

Jonny is a third-grade student who stands out to his teacher as having a problem completing his assignments. After further investigation the teacher notices Jonny cannot read third-grade words very well. After giving a reading test, the teacher discovers Jonny is reading two grades below grade level, a first-grade reading level. Jonny is referred to the building intervention team. A month passes by and the building intervention team meets for 30 minutes to discuss Jonny. Yes, it does appear he has a reading difficulty. The team decides to meet again to talk about a Special Education referral. The teacher waits another month for the multidisciplinary team to meet. At this meeting the team looks at the evidence presented and decides to test Jonny for a specific learning disability in reading. The parents of Jonny are notified and all of the special education paperwork is sent home.

The clock for Special Education begins ticking and the school psychologist has 30 days in which to test Jonny. He will need an IQ test and a reading test. The psychologist pulls Jonny out of class for several hours one day and administers all of the tests.

The multidisciplinary team is called back together with Jonny's parents to discuss the results. Three months have passed since the teacher recognized that Jonny had a problem in reading. The school psychologist pulls out all of the charts with Jonny's information at hand. He goes through every area that was tested and discusses Jonny's performance. Jonny needed a 20-point discrepancy between his performance and his ability marked on an IQ test. Jonny only had 18 points. So, he did not qualify for Special Education.

The teacher is frustrated that all this time was spent trying to figure out if there was a learning disability and none was found. He makes up his mind never to refer another student. The teacher prays that Jonny will learn something along with the other students. The parents are relieved that Jonny does not have a disability, but what do they do now? Is there a way to get Jonny help without going through Special Education? The psychologist feels bad delivering the news that the team was not expecting and hopes the teacher will figure out how to help this student on his own. The team disperses and everything returns to the way it was 3 months ago.

Without a discrepancy model, Jonny could have gotten help as soon as the teacher noticed a problem, without having to go through special education. With RTI, instead of the discrepancy model used to qualify for Special Education, Jonny would have received several interventions of service, been monitored to see the effectiveness of the interventions, and his teacher would have a variety of experts to support and discuss Jonny's progress. If continued interventions did not work after an extensive period of time, Jonny could qualify for Special Education. Further testing would be needed to determine his disability.

It is difficult to explain RTI to someone who cannot understand the complex issues that take place in a complete system change. A teacher arriving at school may do something completely different, something outside the box. But what would it take to have all the teachers in the school do something different? What about all the teachers in the school district, as well as the principals and superintendent? RTI impacts assessment, role responsibilities, scheduling, data collection, and teaching.

The author showcases one school's journey as they develop, create, and problem-solve through the integration of RTI. The philosophy behind RTI is logical and natural. This system uses data-driven decision making, with a team approach, to solve problems. Implementing the practices of RTI can be challenging, requiring both innovation and a determination to succeed.

RTI is a three-tiered model of support. In Tier 1, all students receive high-quality, standards-based curriculum within the general education classroom. In Tier 2, those students whose screening results indicate they are not making adequate progress would receive an intervention. Tier 2 interventions typically involve small-group instruction on the targeted area of deficit. In Tier 3, those students who did not make adequate progress in Tier 2 and need more instruction are given intensive intervention. Tier 3 interventions are more individually focused on a student's needs; therefore the group of students may be smaller, more time spent on specific instruction, and/or a replacement of the core curriculum.

Purpose

The author's purpose is to provide information with could be useful to a school attempting to change their practices to fit an RTI. Some information was documented, such as: training taking place, month-by-month actions taken, roles developed, and challenges along the way. It is a difficult process and schools will need a culture that is prepared to do what it takes to help students succeed. The author created a guidebook that may help other schools in their development of RTI. This guidebook is intended to

be used for a two day workshop and to completely create RTI in a school it would take more information.

Significance

The targeted population is one elementary school as it began a journey to transform into an RTI system. Elementary schools throughout the country are considering RTI as a new model to solve some of the perceived failures of Special Education as measured by AYP scores. Data will be collected and reviewed by teachers within profile meetings and grade level meetings. First person reflections take place throughout the project.

Constant problem-solving occurs as old stereotypes are challenged during this process of moving to RTI. The author explores questions and issues and how the school resolved them. There are examples of schedules and forms used.

Limitations

There is a history factor in the internal validity because the data currently taken will not be accurately comparable to prior data taken. Previous to the 08-09 school year, reading data were taken using the Developmental Reading Assessment, in grades k-5, and the Analytical Reading Inventory, in grades 3-5. During the 08-09 school year and in the current study, reading data were collected using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

This documentation is taken from a rural school in Washington with a population of 390 students kindergarten through fifth grade from the Cle Elum-Roslyn Elementary School. The poverty rate is around 30% and there is a small population of ESL students.

Definitions of Terms

Analytical Reading Inventory—A comprehensive standards-based reading assessment. It tests decoding, fluency, and comprehension.

Curriculum based measurement—An assessment that uses brief, timed measures to track student growth over time and to screen for whether students are at risk of poor academic success.

DIBELS—"A set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills." (Good & Kaminski, 2009) It is used by kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers in the United States to screen for whether students are at risk of reading difficulty, and to monitor student progress and guide instruction.

Developmental Reading Assessment—"The Developmental Reading Assessment is a set of individually administered criterion-referenced reading assessments for students in kindergarten through Grade 8. Modeled after an informal reading inventory, the DRA is intended to be administered, scored, and interpreted by classroom teachers." (Rathvon, 2006)

IDEA—a law "originally enacted by Congress in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education, just like other children. The law has been revised many times over the years. The most

recent amendments were passed by Congress in December 2004, with final regulations published in August 2006." (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2009) It authorizes formula grants to states, discretionary grants for research, and technology and training.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)—Sometimes it is also called individual education plan. "This is a legally binding document that spells out exactly what Special Education services a student will receive and why. It will include a student's classification; placement services, such as a one-on-one aide and therapies; academic and behavioral goals; a behavior plan, if needed; percentage of time that will be spent in regular education; and progress reports from teachers and therapists. The IEP is planned at an IEP meeting with all relevant parties in attendance." (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

Learning Improvement Day (LID)—"learning improvement day means a scheduled work day during the school year for certificated instructional staff funded by the state for the purpose of improving student learning and implementing education reform." (WAC 392-140-955) (Washington State Legislature, 2002)

No Child Left Behind Act—No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), often abbreviated in print as NCLB, is a United States federal law that was originally proposed by President George W. Bush in 2001. No Child Left Behind requires all public schools to administer a state-wide standardized test annually to all students. Schools which receive Title I funding must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in test scores. If a Title I school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress, then it is

put on a list of "failing schools" published in the local paper and parents are given the option to transfer to another school. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

Paraprofessionals (aide, paraeducator, parapro, para)- Paraprofessionals work in support of a teacher. They are not certified as a teacher, but they perform many duties within a school, such as recess, having a reading group, and one-on-one support for Special Education.

Read Well- " A unique, research-based reading program that combines systematic phonics, mastery-based learning, and rich content. From the beginning, children develop strong decoding skills, comprehension strategies, and sophisticated content knowledge." (Cambium Learning, 2009) This program is primarily used in grades k and 1.

RTI- A method of using academic interventions, research-based curriculum, and assessment data to provide assistance to children who are having learning difficulties

Specific learning disability—The 2004 amendments to the IDEA [Sec. 602(30)] define this term as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

WASL— "The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) was implemented in response to the state's Education Reform Law of 1993, which required that the state create an assessment system to; test all public school students across the state, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency; be administered annually in selected grades; measure performance based on the Essential

Academic Learning Requirements, the state's learning standards; report on the performance of individual students, schools and districts; serve as one basis of accountability for students, schools, and districts (for example, grade 10 students must pass the WASL tests as one condition of eligibility for earning a high school diploma)" (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2009) Although this assessment is being modified and the name may change, state testing will continue.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

IDEA 2004 specifies that, for the purpose of determining learning disability eligibility, a school district may implement a procedure that involves documentation of how a child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as part of its evaluation procedures. (Bender, 2007, p.1) This is part of a Response to Intervention, RTI, model used in schools. "Prior to this, schools were only using the discrepancy model to identify a student as LD. Research has revealed that the severe discrepancy formula as a definition for LD has poor reliability and validity when predicting student achievement." (Bender, 2007, p.3)

Most schools across the United States, in the 1990s, were using the discrepancy between intelligence and actual performance as part of their identification procedures for learning disabilities. Many researchers began questioning the use of the discrepancy model during this time. They cited four major concerns: (a) they argued that the model and studies used for justifying the discrepancy model were flawed, (b) Some cited the Matthew effect (better readers learn more about their world and therefore score higher on an IQ test.) (c) Using the discrepancy model makes it very difficult to identify students with learning disabilities in early elementary and research has shown that an intervention is more effective the earlier it is delivered. (d) Researchers have been unable to discriminate those students with low reading achievement from those with a discrepancy. (Hallahan & Mercer, 2002, p. 46) Many researchers began exploring alternatives to the discrepancy model.

This is a list of research and policy reports supporting RTI: National Institute for Child Health and Development Studies "Concluded that IQ achievement discrepancy delays services to children," National Reading Panel "Outlined major components of reading," National Research Council Panel on Minority Overrepresentation "Emphasized importance of early identification for poor and minority children and youth and made recommendations for LD eligibility criteria," National Summit on Learning Disabilities "Recommended Response to Intervention as the 'most promising' method of LD identification," and President's Commission on Special Education "Recommended a focus on results and prevention in LD eligibility determination." (Batsche, 2006)

Two studies were conducted in the 1970's by Bergan, Deno and Mirkin that became the early research to support RTI. These studies varied in their RTI procedures and those variations have evolved into the problem-solving RTI model and the standard protocol RTI approach. In Bergan's study in 1977, interventions were designed specifically for an individual student and implemented over a period of time. A team progress monitored the student's individual performance over time to make educational decisions. Also in 1977, Deno and Mirkin began with a curriculum-based measurement given to students and developed an intervention plan to remediate certain reading difficulties among students with learning disabilities. This method became know as the "standard treatment protocol." The first study was problem-solving a specific student's need and the second study was designing interventions based on scores on the curriculum based measurement. Most researchers support the standard treatment protocol as the RTI

option of choice, but schools also combine elements from the problem-solving model. (Bender, 2007, p.21)

Response to Intervention is not a one shot wonder or a quick fix. It involves social, technical, and practical considerations. "Successful implementation requires ensuring a fit with the personal views, interaction patterns, and contextual features of a school's climate." (Mellard, 2008, p.ix) RTI can serve in three ways: screening and prevention, early intervention, and disability determination. The research indicates that RTI should not solely be used in disability determination, but RTI documentation can show that the student has received appropriate and high-quality instruction in the general education classroom as well as results of interventions implemented.

"The focus in RTI on progress monitoring, early intervention, and evidence-based practices is consistent with many of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and Reading First policies." (Mellard, 2008, p.2) RTI procedures can identify and intervene for struggling students early in the educational process and reduce academic failure. Students who are identified as at risk for learning difficulties can receive appropriate interventions quickly.

RTI follows a three tier process of delivery to students. In Tier 1, all students receive high-quality standards based curriculum within the general education classroom. This is at the base of the pyramid and should be about 80% of students. In Tier 2, those students whose screening results indicate they are not making adequate progress would receive an intervention. This is the next level on the pyramid and should be about 15% of

students. Tier 2 interventions typically involve small-group instruction on the targeted area of deficit. In Tier 3, those students who did not make adequate progress in Tier 2 and need more instruction are given intensive intervention. This is the top of the pyramid and should be about 5% of students. Tier 3 interventions typically are more individually focuses to a student's needs and may be a smaller group, more time, and/or replacement of curriculum. (Callender, 2007) Students who already qualify for Special Education do not need to automatically be placed in Tier 3. These students may have specific gaps that require the instruction at a Tier 2 level.

Core Requirements of a strong RTI model include, research-based classroom instruction, universal screening of all students, progress monitoring, research-based interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3, and fidelity measures. The fidelity with which instruction and interventions are implemented is assessed and linked to continuing professional development. Fidelity means teaching a program or curriculum in the way it was intended to be taught. RTI has been used in schools for reading, math, writing, and behavior.

Need for Response to Intervention

"Schools are judged by their success in working with marginal learners who would otherwise fall through the cracks and become lost." (Wright, 2007, p.iii) Through RTI schools can intervene early with these struggling learners and have a plan to support all learners.

"RTI, when implemented according to best practices, addresses many short comings of current systems of identifying students that are at risk for learning disabilities

and providing appropriate interventions. Traditionally, schools have had two parallel systems for students: general and Special Education. Special Education, traditionally, was separate and had little alignment to the general education curriculum. RTI can help schools work more efficiently and effectively in addressing the needs of all learners." (Mellard, 2008, p.1)

"RTI can be used to meet the requirements outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for determination of specific learning disabilities. Tier 2 helps to support the disability determination that low achievement is not due to a lack of appropriate instructional experiences as described in IDEA 2004, 614 (b) (5)." (Mellard, 2008, p.7) A student who fails to respond to research based instruction and interventions should be further assessed to determine the presence of a disability. The data collected through progress monitoring, along with fidelity data to verify instruction and interventions, serve as important evidence in the overall eligibility decision-making process. (Mellard, 2008, p.7)

There are advantages for using RTI in disability determination. "There is a reduction of reliance on teachers to initiate referrals, a focus on academic skills, not presumed processing deficits; a focus on students' learning, not just current achievement; the elimination of the need for aptitude-achievement discrepancy and intelligence testing; and a reduction in false positive identification errors." (O'Connor, 2005) The IQ test will still be needed to determine a mental deficiency, but may not be needed in determining a specific learning disability.

As a school reform model, RTI is consistent with other learning organizations' models, such as professional learning communities, and the professional teaching and learning cycle. RTI aligns with what has been found in effective schools. "As an assessment framework, nearly three decades of research on curriculum-based measurement and progress monitoring have informed both research and practice. Curriculum-based measurement and routine monitoring have shown to result in higher student achievement." (Mellard, 2008, p.136)

Educators have long held the belief that instructional methods and curricula should be supported by rigorous scientific studies, the No Child Left Behind legislation requires scientific support for the reading instruction curriculum used. Teachers are now expected to understand validity studies that support the curriculum used. RTI requires the use of scientifically validated curricula. (Bender, 2007, p.36) General education teachers should consult with reading specialists, special educators, school psychologists, and/or curriculum specialists about individual student's specific problems. There are also a variety of websites that can help teachers find curriculum that is scientifically validated.

Here are some examples: (a) http://www.fcrr.org (The Florida Center for Reading Research), (b) http://reading.uoregon.edu/curricula/or_rfc_review_2.php (Summaries of the various reading programs and a synopsis of the research behind them), (c) http://www.nctm.org (The National Council of the Teachers of Mathematics), (d) http://www.k8accesscenter.org (A national technical assistance center funded by the U.S.

Department of Education's Offices of Special Education Programs), and (e) http://www.w-w-c.org (What Works Clearinghouse).

Leadership, Responsibilities, and Teaming

RTI requires a shift in the roles and responsibilities among staff. Staff must be trained on the specific components of RTI, like selecting appropriate interventions, progress monitoring, etc. It will also take a team effort among staff to coordinate efforts on implementation and training on infrastructure (to include instruction, curricular materials, assessment tools, and evaluation of data). This will be needed on an ongoing basis. Many schools also implement a professional development learning model when they begin restructuring for RTI. For example, schools may request a consultant from their adopted reading program, such as Read Well, to help set up interventions. (Mellard, 2008, p.137)

To move forward in implementing an RTI model it requires leadership. Someone needs to organize a structure for change and progress. Most often this is the building administrator, but it may be an instructional coach who works alongside the building administrator. (Callender, 2007) Strong leadership helps teachers make the necessary changes needed to carry out an RTI system.

Teaming is a strong component in an RTI process. Teachers are not isolated to fend for themselves in designing interventions for students or interpreting student scores. A support structure is established, first within a grade level team, and next within the building RTI team. In the grade level team, sometimes they work alongside a peer coach

to discuss student data and specific students of concern. The team is regularly reviewing the progress students are making as a whole and individual student performance. Teams decide what interventions are needed and are prepared to make instructional decisions. When the grade level teams are stuck in problem-solving they will seek out the building RTI team to help support questions or decisions they could not solve on their own. (Callender, 2007)

Using data for screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring

How do we know when students need an intervention? Students need an intervention when they score low on a screening assessment. Schools need to decide what the screening assessments will be and what cut scores will be used. Screening data should show the teacher what they already had suspicions about. If a teacher thought a student was a poor reader, the screening data should reflect that information. Screening is used to identify students as intensive, strategic, or benchmark. (Callender, 2007)

Intensive students have the most gaps in learning and it may be necessary to replace the core curriculum for the student at this level. For example, in a first grade classroom students may be using Read Well as their curriculum. If there is a small group of students who do not show progress in Read Well, the team may decide they need something different, like Reading Mastery. For those few students Reading Mastery would be taught to them instead of Read Well, replacing the core curriculum. (Callender, 2007) A student in the intensive level may not be able to close the achievement gap within one year, but through progress monitoring and closely monitoring the intervention plan, we will help this student achieve as much as possible. Some students in the

intensive level are already identified through Special Education, but the screening data and progress monitoring with help identify what areas should be addressed on the IEP and if the student is reaching their goal.

Strategic students have holes somewhere in their learning that need to be filled. After screening, staff need to figure out what learning gaps the student has and this is done through diagnostic assessments. Diagnostic assessments tell us specifics about what students do and don't know. Where are the gaps in learning? Is this student only struggling with short vowel sounds? When we target the area students are struggling in we can spend less time focusing on the areas they do not need to be taught again and growth will take place in less time. Students with the same specific needs can be in small focused groups for this instruction. (Callender, 2007)

Benchmark students are those students who are performing at grade level to above grade level on the screening assessments. Our goal for benchmark students is to continue to make progress consistent with where an average student should be making progress. A benchmark student can easily become a strategic student, if they do not make any progress by the next testing period. All students should be assessed three times a year. (Callender, 2007)

Benchmark students do not need to have continuous progress monitoring to know they are doing well. But, for the strategic and intensive students we need to know that the implemented interventions they are doing are working. We know they are working when a student is closing the achievement gap at an expected rate. Progress monitoring

helps teachers monitor a student's progress over time. If a student is not continuing to make growth, the intervention may need to be changed or modified. Progress monitoring is one of the keys to knowing if the interventions are working. Determining how much progress is enough can be a challenge. We can use the data to identify a problem, set a goal for a student to reach, and to monitor student progress. (Callender, 2007)

Challenges and Professional Development

Progress monitoring the interventions has its own set of challenges. (Callender, 2007) There are many reports that you can use to compare progress of a student to their peers. It is difficult to know how much progress a student can make or should be making. Schools also need data and testing that is reliable and valid.

Sometimes the problem is in administering the assessment. Did the teacher or paraprofessional start the timer on time? Was the student comfortable in the environment? There are a number of environmental factors that can skew the data.

Another problem could be the delivery of the intervention. Was the teacher or paraprofessional well trained on the curriculum or method? If the instructor is not trained well enough to deliver the program the way it was intended to be delivered, there is a problem with the fidelity of the program. (Callender, 2007) Was the student taught the curricular materials in the correct fashion, according to the instructor's teaching manual, which would thereby allow the student to learn the content? Was the lesson given in the appropriate amount of time or was it too short?

Some schools seem to overlook discussions on effective teaching methods. This is a component needed in an RTI system. One of the benefits for effective teaching is drop-out prevention. Effective instructional design and delivery as a focus for keeping students with disabilities in school appears to be a strategy for dropout prevention. Students with disabilities are twice as likely to drop out of school as their nondisabled peers in general education (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). "Since the early 1980s, educators have learned a great deal about the attributes of instruction that result in efficient and motivated learning. These attributes are supported by solid research evidence and have received wide dissemination through various outlets. Yet in many classrooms, effective teaching practices are not routinely used, leading to academic failure and ultimately disengaged and disinterested students who drop out of school." (Bost & Riccomini, 2006)

There are many challenges when you look at the structure in an RTI school. (Callender, 2007) Who will be delivering interventions? Who is creating the schedule of services for students? What interventions do we have available? Who is sharing the information about students with parents? What professional development do we need? When will informal intervention observations take place? Who is on the building RTI team? There will always be structural questions in a school when developing and RTI system.

Questions about benchmark tests: What tests will we use? When will these tests be given? Who is creating this schedule? How will the data be collected for teachers to

use? How will we communicate the data to each other and reach decisions on interventions and which students will be receiving them? What if a teacher has a larger percentage of students at the intensive level?

One of the ongoing challenges seems to be that each school is unique with its own culture and set of values. No two schools approach RTI in the same fashion or can expect the same result. As schools establish what is to be done and how, set procedures for evaluation, define patterns of conduct, recognize and reward, and schedule and organize, they not only reflect a set of assumptions but promote the perceptions of why the student is there. (Maehr & Midgley, 1996, p. 214) This is a schools culture along with the expectations of teachers and administrators. Developing RTI in your school is ongoing process that takes into account the differences that make your school unique, but all staff must believe that all students are capable of learning. There are guidelines that help schools, but it is not a simple journey. It is easier if Response to Intervention becomes a dominate initiative of the school and it is clear to staff that RTI will be used as a framework when planning group or individual student interventions. (Callender, 2007)

There is some information out that will assist schools using evidence-based implementation strategies to ensure their practices are delivered with fidelity and the use is sustained. "The science of implementation and sustainability has received a lot of attention, especially with the growing realization that training practitioners in the use of evidence-based practices is not enough and that effective professional development and effective implementation strategies must be in place if real school improvement is to be

achieved with new practices." (Danielson, Doolittle & Bradley, 2007) It is important to understand the paradigm shift to RTI and how to sustain this new system.

Concerns with RTI

In some cases RTI is being presented as a narrow and constricted model instead of the flexible and variable set of principles that it is. For example, Fuchs and Fuchs (2005) describe a two-tiered model of RTI but there is little emphasis in their writing that RTI can look different in different locations. Brown-Childsey and Steege (2005) describe another application of RTI, but they do not make clear that RTI may be implemented differently in different settings.

Schools need to understand the principles behind RTI, even though the features look different in different literature. It is important that schools take the time to understand what the essential features of RTI are and what they look like in implementation.

Summary

Response to Intervention takes research on struggling learners and compiles it into a usable system for schools. The process takes time to set up structures, routines, and leadership. RTI can meet the needs of all learners. Schools are searching for ways to achieve adequately yearly progress with increasingly demanding educational standards, RTI can offer "best practice" instruction for all students. One of the biggest advantages of changing to RTI is an increased understanding of the academic skills of all students in a class. The more we know and understand individual students, the more we can meet their needs. (Callender, 2007)

Even though RTI was approved in 2004 as eligibility determination criteria, it is not a new concept. It seems very similar to pre-referral interventions that were tried by teachers and teams. The problem with pre-referral interventions is that it was on an individual basis without the support of the entire school and some teachers did not understand the definition of "intervention." (Bender, 2007, p.97) The interventions and following through with interventions can be difficult. A system was not in place to follow-through, train, and support.

Transforming a school system into an RTI model takes dedication, leadership, and working as a team. Change will not happen without a conscience effort. (Callender, 2007) The RTI team in a building would need to decide how the system would look in their school, what interventions they may already have available, what could be used as assessment tools, and what timeline they would like to use to get started.

There are still questions regarding RTI activities and Special Education. This reflects the fact that RTI is a new model, one that is experiencing rapid change and growth. There are several studies taking place trying to catch up with the demand. (Wright 13) IDEA 2004 is silent about the exact criteria school districts may use in establishing a SLD. It is suggested that districts use established approached for using RTI data to identify SLD.

Most research on RTI covers early literacy in young children. One study is on the Exemplary Model of Early Reading Growth and Excellence, or EMERGE. It is a partnership between the Social Development Commission (SDC) Head Start of

Milwaukee, the Head Start-Day Care Partner Program of Milwaukee, and the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and Madison. The EMERGE program is an Early Reading First project funded through the U.S. Department of Education (2005-2008). Through a combination of classroom practices grounded in empirical research, a multitier intervention, and high-quality professional development, EMERGE is designed to help children from low-income families acquire early literacy skills to prepare them for later success in school. (Gettinger, and Stoiber) In the study it was difficult to create a comparison group because the children moved in and out of groups and Tiers. The study did find that with emphasis on early intervention and scientifically based early literacy instruction students did show significant growth, which supports the use of an RTI system.

According to Daly and colleagues (Daly, Martens, Barnett, Witt, & Olson, 2007), "selecting, organizing, and delivering intervention programs to meet the needs of all students requiring assistance may be one of the most formidable challenges faced by schools." (Daly, Martens, Barnett, Witt, & Olson, 2007, p.562) Nevertheless, the logic model of RTI is based on the tenet that all students will receive evidence-based instruction from which they can benefit.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Need for the Project

Many school districts have been looking for models of RTI implementation. This project is a guidebook from school developing an RTI system. RTI is a more proactive and preventative approach in dealing with and understanding student skills than the previous methods used by schools. It is more than just identifying students with disabilities. It is a way to ensure better academic outcomes for all students. There is a focus on prevention, early intervention, and proactive action in order to provide students with adequate instruction before they show deficits in their skills. In preventing academic deficits, schools must ensure students have an appropriate match between their skills, curriculum, and instruction. If students are struggling, they are provided additional instruction that better suits their needs. (Barnes & Harlacher, 2008)

Procedures for the Project

The school has had a small committee working on RTI during the past two years, while attending RTI training by Wayne Callender. He has been supporting and coaching schools implementing RTI for several years. He began his work in RTI as a school psychologist in a district in Kansas more than ten years ago. Then he moved to Idaho and worked with the state to establish procedures for RTI across the state. Now, he is helping Washington schools implement RTI.

The school recruited the help of Steve Hirsch from WSU to coach them through RTI processes. He spoke to the staff about the fundamentals of Response to Intervention in Spring 08 and helped the building RTI team, set up profile meetings to discuss student data, and create interventions in Fall 2008.

The district began planning implementation in the elementary school in October 2007. The author began documenting the process in June 2008 and tracked procedures during the 2008-2009 school year. The author followed a month by month plan, documenting school-wide challenges, individual questions, procedures, new changes, and questions we were unable to solve at the time.

At the core of RTI, you will find dedicated individuals trying to break a trail in what feels like uncharted territory. Some team members find the process overwhelming and others use their untapped problem-solving skills.

Planned Implementation

RTI has been implemented in the Cle Elum-Roslyn Elementary school in Cle Elum, WA, during the 08-09 school year and is in the beginning stages at the middle school. There is a plan to begin an RTI team in the high school next school year. An RTI team was created in 07-08 for the elementary school and the team began training during 07-08. This guide was developed after two years of training and one full year of implementation. Not only will this guide help other schools in their process to develop an RTI system, but it may help lay the foundation for RTI at the high school. The

documentation of process will also help the elementary school reflect on the challenges they were faced with and celebrate their successes.

RTI is a rapidly evolving topic and it is important to understand research implications, school models, and continuous improvement efforts. Through this process of documentation and research the author hopes the school will modify and improve the current RTI system in place. (Callender, 2007)

The goal of RTI is to improve student outcomes for all students. The author documents some assessment information taken in the fall and spring across the elementary school to see how many students improved their reading scores based on DIBELS assessments.

CHAPTER FOUR

Project

A GUIDEBOOK, BASED ON ONE SCHOOL'S JOURNEY IN IMPLEMENTING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

This guidebook is organized into five parts:

1. Overview of RTI
2. The School-Wide Approach Combined with The Problem-Solving Model
3. Structure and Organization
4. Professional Development
5. Assessment

Overview of RTI

RTI is a system: not a program, curriculum, or personnel issue. The system spans each student, classroom, and environment. There is a plan to meet each need and a format to solve challenging problems. A problem-solving system could be a good label for RTI. No teacher is left to figure out how to deal with a struggling student alone and no student becomes a challenge too large to face. Everyone involved or committed to an RTI environment believes all students can learn.

The philosophy behind RTI is logical and natural. This system uses data-driven decision making, with a team approach, to solve problems. Implementing the practices of RTI can be challenging, requiring both innovation and a determination to succeed.

RTI is a three-tiered model of support. In Tier 1, all students receive high-quality, standards-based curriculum within the general education classroom. Tier 1 should be about 80% of students. Most students should grow and learn in the regular classroom with the core curriculum. For some schools, 80% is a goal, and not how the school began in the RTI process. In Tier 2, those students whose screening results indicate they are not making adequate progress would receive an intervention. Tier 2 interventions typically involve small-group instruction on the targeted area of deficit. Tier 2 should be about 15% of students. In Tier 3, those students who did not make adequate progress in Tier 2 and need more instruction are given intensive intervention. Tier 3 interventions are more individually focused on a student's needs; therefore the group of students may be smaller, have more time spent on specific instruction, and/or a replacement of the core curriculum. Tier 3 should be about 5% of students. (Callender, 2007)

The organization of the Tiers and what will take place in each tier requires a team commitment and school wide organization. In the school-wide approach to RTI intervention plans are created for students with similar needs. In the problem-solving model, individual plans are added or modified for students whose needs cannot be met within the current system. Schools can choose to adopt components of each model.

RTI is considered a proactive and preventative approach to teaching and learning. Schools are not waiting for students to fail. (Callender, 2007) They screen students early and identify them as low risk, some risk, or at risk for future failure. This is done three times a year to make sure all students are appropriately placed and those students who need an intervention are given one. (Callender, 2007) Many schools use a triangulation

system to identify students. That means they use three data sources, like DIBELS data, WASL data, and teacher feedback to identify a student who needs an intervention.

After a student is identified as needing an intervention, further diagnostic testing takes place to ensure that the instruction is matched to the student's needs. Diagnostic testing also prevents us from giving a child more of what they already know.

There must be a tracking or data base system in place, that monitors students testing & intervention information. This is where an assessment system comes in to RTI. Schools might want to keep track of the data to show if a whole group of students is continuing to make little progress and needs a new intervention. It will also show what interventions have already been tried with a particular student or if a student is ready to be removed from an intervention.

How are decisions made about intervention needs, schedule changes, and who is doing testing? This requires structure and organization within the district and the building.

Teaching new instructional material and new assessments require more professional development. We want to be certain students are being taught the material the way it was intended to be taught. This is called teaching with fidelity. Teachers need to have some type of training to make sure they are teaching the material in the correct way. The material must also be proven to be effective as an intervention. This means the curriculum has gone through extensive research and has been found to be highly effective at increasing student skills.

Assessment is another key component to RTI. Without assessment we would not know if students needed an intervention, where we would place students, or if our interventions were making progress. Schools should choose assessments that they can rely on as being valid.

"The focus in RTI on progress monitoring, early intervention, and evidence-based practices is consistent with many of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and Reading First policies." (Mellard, 2008, p.2) RTI procedures can identify and intervene for struggling students early in the educational process and reduce academic failure. Students who are identified as at risk for learning difficulties can receive appropriate interventions quickly.

My Reflection: In Cle Elum-Roslyn Elementary, we began by establishing an RTI team to attend trainings on RTI by Wayne Callender. During the first year of RTI, we worked on a plan for half the year, before we created any schedule or used any interventions. During the first year 07-08, we only began with kindergarten and first grade and only in reading. This seemed much more manageable. We also had a chance to work out some of the difficulties before trying the entire system school-wide. RTI reading was school-wide during the entire 08-09 school year. There is a plan to include math during the 09-10 school year.

Attached you will find:

1. What is RTI? Handout (This was used to share information about RTI with parents and other staff members.) p.34

2. Instructional Group Descriptions (This was used during the first parent conference for teachers to explain what RTI group their child is in and used again later as a reminder about different group choices.) p.37
3. Response to Intervention Power Point Presentation (This was used to share information about RTI with the school board, Central Washington University, and Kiwanis.) p.43
4. Example of Reading Intervention Recommendation (This was one of the other school models we looked at for examples.) p.44

What is RTI? Handout

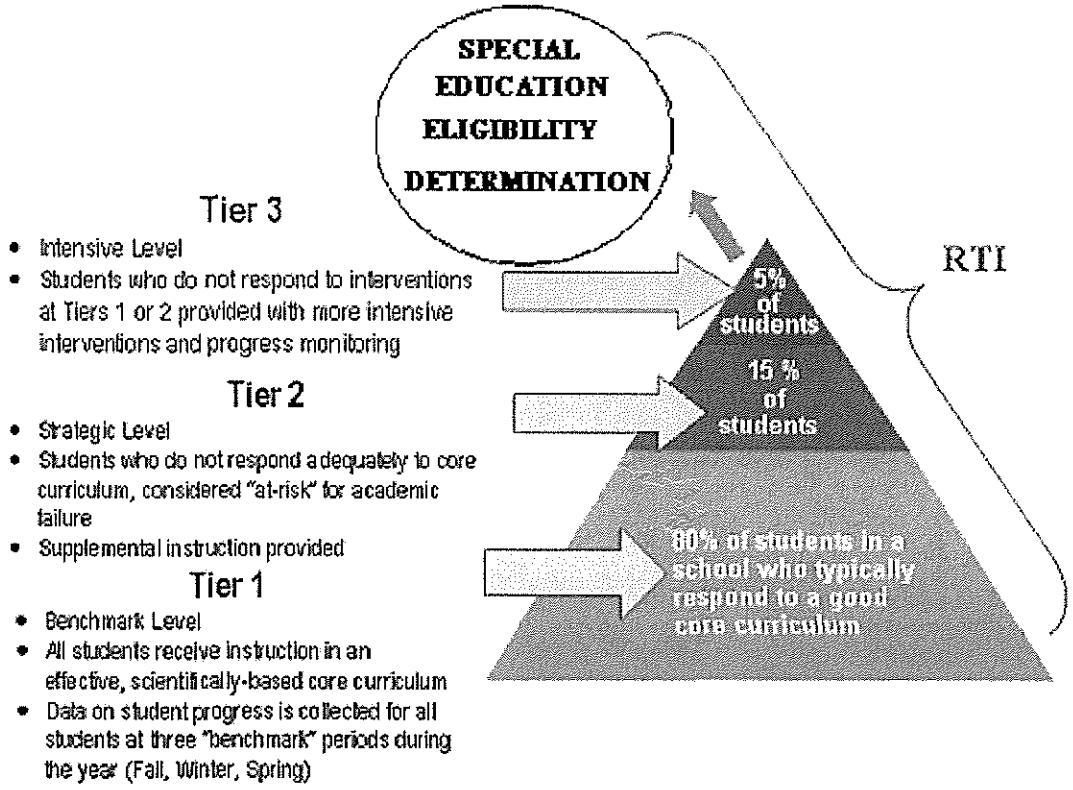
Response to Intervention, or RTI, is the practice of:

(1) providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs;

(2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to;

(3) make important educational decisions (NASDSE, 2005).

RTI uses a three-tiered model of prevention across *all* students in a school, general education *and* special education students. If you could place all of the students in your school into a triangle, the three-tiered model of prevention will look like this:



Tier 1: Benchmark Level

- All students receive instruction in scientifically supported core curriculum

- Typically, about 80% of students in a school will respond to a high-quality core curriculum and will make adequate progress throughout the year
- Progress of all students is monitored at three points in time, or "Benchmarks", during the Fall, Winter, and Spring of each school year
- Benchmark data indicate students who may not be responding adequately to the core curriculum and who are in need of additional instruction

Tier 2: Strategic Level

- Students who do not respond adequately to the core curriculum
- Smaller group of students – Approximately 15% of the students in a school
- Considered "at-risk"
- Provided supplemental instruction/intervention (in addition to the core curriculum), which takes place about 2-3 times per week and often in small group formats
- Student progress monitored more frequently: 1 to 2 times per month
- Most students at this level will make sufficient progress given this supplemental instruction and are "returned" to the Benchmark level

Tier 3: Intensive Level

- Students who do not respond adequately to core curriculum *and* strategic level interventions
- Approximately 5% of the students in a school
- Considered in need of intensive intervention
- Provided high-quality, research-based interventions on a daily basis; individually or in small groups
- May use an individualized problem-solving model to derive instruction
- Student progress monitored more frequently: 1 to 2 times per week
- Changes are made to the student's intervention based upon his/her data and progress toward a specified goal
- Students who make adequate progress at this level are returned to Strategic or Benchmark level

Special Education Eligibility

- Students who do not adequately respond to several well implemented Intensive level interventions are considered for evaluation for Special Education

Necessary Components for RTI

- Administrative support of RTI

- A core instructional curriculum that is research based
- Progress Monitoring measurement tools that reflect general outcome measurement of skills
- Grade-based teams that meet regularly to review the progress monitoring data and make educational decisions based on the data
- Decision rules that are applied to the data that indicate when intervention/instruction should be changed, when students should be moved between tiers, and other factors related to promoting student achievement
- A system for monitoring the integrity of implementation of the interventions and instructional programs – are the interventions being implemented the way they were intended?

RTI Instructional Group Descriptions

These are the instructional groups currently used at Cle Elum-Roslyn Elementary school. Ask the classroom teacher which group your child may be served in.

Road to the Code
Lexia Reading
Second dose letter/Read Well
Second dose of Read Well One
Read Well Homework
Read Well One
Read Well Plus
Read Naturally
Early Success
Handwriting Without Tears
Reading Mastery

Road to the Code

Road to the Code is a successful, 11-week program for teaching phonemic awareness and letter sound correspondence. Developmentally sequenced, each of the 44 15-20-minute lessons features three activities — Say-It-and-Move-It, Letter Name and Sound Instruction, and Phonological Awareness Practice — that give students repeated opportunities to practice and enhance their beginning reading and spelling abilities. **Road to the Code** is backed by more than 10 years of study in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms.

Detailed scripted instructions and reproducible materials — such as Alphabet Picture and Sound Bingo cards — make this program easy for teachers to use. Teachers have the flexibility to work with students individually or in small groups and may adjust the amount of time it takes for a student to complete the program. With these proven phonological awareness activities, educators can confidently intervene before children have a chance to fail.

This group is recommended for kindergarteners who need phonemic awareness instruction. (http://www.learningstore.org/we1098b.html)

Lexia Reading

"High quality instruction and the opportunity to practice essential reading skills such as phonological awareness, sight word recognition, sound-symbol correspondence and word-attack skills, help students develop a foundation for reading success. *Lexia Reading* is designed to support classroom instruction by providing children with individualized independent practice with basic reading skills." (Lexia, 2009)

Lexia has directions available in both Spanish and English. This group is recommended for students who may need help in phonemic awareness, phonics, and/or spelling. There is a home connection for families with internet access at home. Students can continue to move ahead with what they were working on at school. If you would like to use this option and have a student in this group, please contact Pearl McKenzie, Title I Teacher. (http://www.lexialearning.com)

Second dose letter/Read Well

This is designed for kindergarten students who are struggling with letters and/or sounds and need an additional dose in letters and/or the Read Well curriculum. The instructor of this group coordinates with the classroom teacher to follow-up on the lesson that was taught in class.

Second dose of Read Well One

This is designed for first grade students who are identified as "at risk" in sounds and/or the Read Well One curriculum. These students get an additional dose of the daily instruction that took place in the general class with additional practice. The instructor of this group coordinates with the classroom teacher to follow-up on the lesson that was taught in class.

Read Well Homework

This is designed for students in kindergarten or first grade who have a difficult time completing their Read Well homework at home. Students sit in a small group with one instructor and complete their homework stories.

Read Well One

***"Read Well*® is the primary reading curriculum that adjusts to the needs of each student and builds the foundation necessary for sustained reading success.**

With multiple entry points into the *Read Well* curriculum, each student is assessed and placed into the small group that matches his or her skill level. Ongoing assessment and progress monitoring inform instruction. Daily instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension builds the foundation necessary for students to become lifelong readers.

Read Well® 1 shifts the focus from whole class activities to individualized small group instruction. Students practice story reading, learn vocabulary, develop decoding skills, improve comprehension, master test-taking skills, and increase fluency scores. Regular assessment and group adjustment ensure that students are successful in mastering all skills taught." (Cambium Learning, 2009) (www.sopriswest.com/readwell/)

Read Well Plus

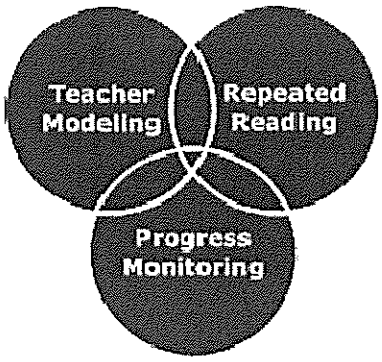
***"Read Well®* is the primary reading curriculum that adjusts to the needs of each student and builds the foundation necessary for sustained reading success.**

With multiple entry points into the *Read Well* curriculum, each student is assessed and placed into the small group that matches his or her skill level. Ongoing assessment and progress monitoring inform instruction. Daily instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension builds the foundation necessary for students to become lifelong readers.

Read Well 2 continues to build the foundational skills that are essential to reading more sophisticated narrative and expository text selections with 25 small group units. The last five units (*Read Well 2 Plus*) accelerate students beyond a second grade reading level. Instruction focuses on low-frequency letter/sound associations, word parts, and multisyllabic word fluency. Students simultaneously expand vocabulary, content knowledge, and comprehension skills." (Cambium Learning, 2009) (www.sopriswest.com/readwell/)

Read Naturally

"Read Naturally has helped thousands of students become better readers using a unique strategy that combines teacher modeling, repeated reading, and assessment and progress monitoring. Read Naturally's programs provide a safe, structured, motivating learning environment that encourages reading on a regular basis." (Read Naturally, 2009)



Elements of the Read Naturally Strategy

We use the computer based Read Naturally program. Students independently, with teacher support, work on a variety of tasks, such as: key words, writing a prediction, cold timing for fluency, practicing to reach a goal, comprehension assessment, writing a retell, and taking a test with the teacher to see if they reached their goal. This group is recommended for students who need to work on fluency and comprehension skills. (www.readnaturally.com)

Early Success

Reading Intervention for EARLY SUCCESS is a research-based reading intervention program for students in grades 1and 2 who need extra support to become proficient, grade-level readers. It is a small group model (5-7 students) that provides 30 minutes of daily instruction that is in addition to the core reading/language arts program. The daily lesson plan provides explicit, direct instruction in a three part lesson plan: Rereading for Fluency, Reading the Books of the Week and Working with Words/Writing Sentences.

EARLY SUCCESS is based on 12 years of classroom research (Early Intervention in Reading or EIR) conducted by Dr. Barbara Taylor of the University of Minnesota. EARLY SUCCESS develops reading fluency within a meaning based context. It is aligned with the 5 critical areas of reading instruction as outlined in the **Reading First criteria of the No Child Left Behind Legislation.**
(http://www.eduplace.com/intervention/readintervention/prod_overview/index.html)

Handwriting without tears

The developmentally based, flexible, and engaging Handwriting Without Tears program is the easiest, most effective way for children to develop good handwriting skills. It has been used successfully by more than 10 million children.

HWT's intuitive workbooks, engaging hands-on materials, and lively music inspire active learning. Handwriting Without Tears® is a proven success in making legible and fluent handwriting an easy and automatic skill for *all* students.

This group is recommended for students with poor handwriting habits and students who need further support in developing writing skills. (www.hwtears.com)

Reading Mastery

This program is used for students in Tier 3, when they are having little to not success with the core curriculum taught in the classroom. It is designed as a reading intervention program to provide direct instruction. The program begins by teaching phonemic awareness and sound-letter correspondence and progresses to word and passage reading, vocabulary development, comprehension, and building oral reading fluency. (http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/sra/readingmastery.htm)

Response to Intervention PowerPoint Presentation

Traditional Paths for the Struggling Student:

- The student receives additional assistance (tutoring, additional instruction, extra help)
- The student is referred for a special education evaluation
- The student continues to struggle and the teachers do the best they can

President's Commission on Special Education

- 60% of all students in special education are those with specific learning disabilities
- Few students in special ed. ever close the gap, even fewer exit out
- Placement in special education is a life altering event

Wayne Callender

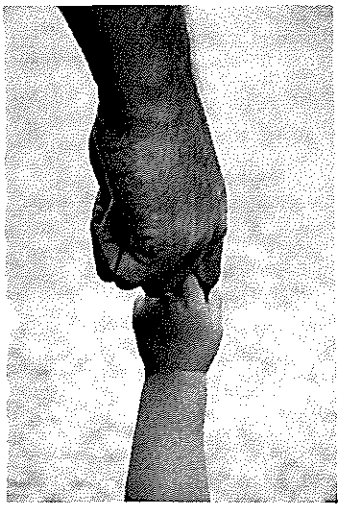
Why RTI?????

- We need a new system for helping students close the achievement gap
- Reduce the number of students placed in special education through research-based interventions
- Eliminate the "wait to fail system"
- Allow all students to access the help they need

Wayne Callender

RTI.....

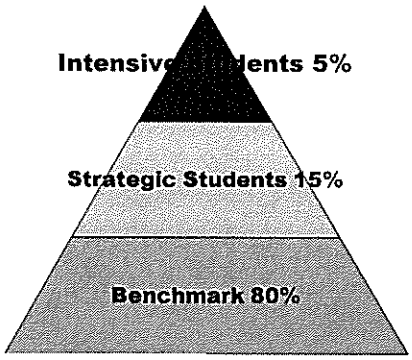
- Is about improving student outcomes
- Provides support to teachers and parents
- Allows for intervention immediately
- Focuses on alterable academic and behavioral skills and evaluates progress
- Seeks to solve problems rather than create placements
- Requires student assistance teams to know more about learning and effective teaching than psychology



An RTI School. . .

- Has a school-wide plan for addressing student needs; planned according to Benchmark, Strategic, and Intensive, at each grade level.
- Maximizes the use of regular and special education resources for the benefit of all students
- Uses assessment for the purposes of grouping students and informing instruction.
- Adopts interventions and instructional practices that are based in scientific research.

3 Tier System of Support



What Intervention

Benchmark – will do fine
- with a good core
- program (75 – 80%)

Strategic – will need
- supplemental and
- reinforcement programs
- to hit targets (15%)

Intensive – will need an
- intensive program that
- accelerates learning in
- key skill areas (5%)

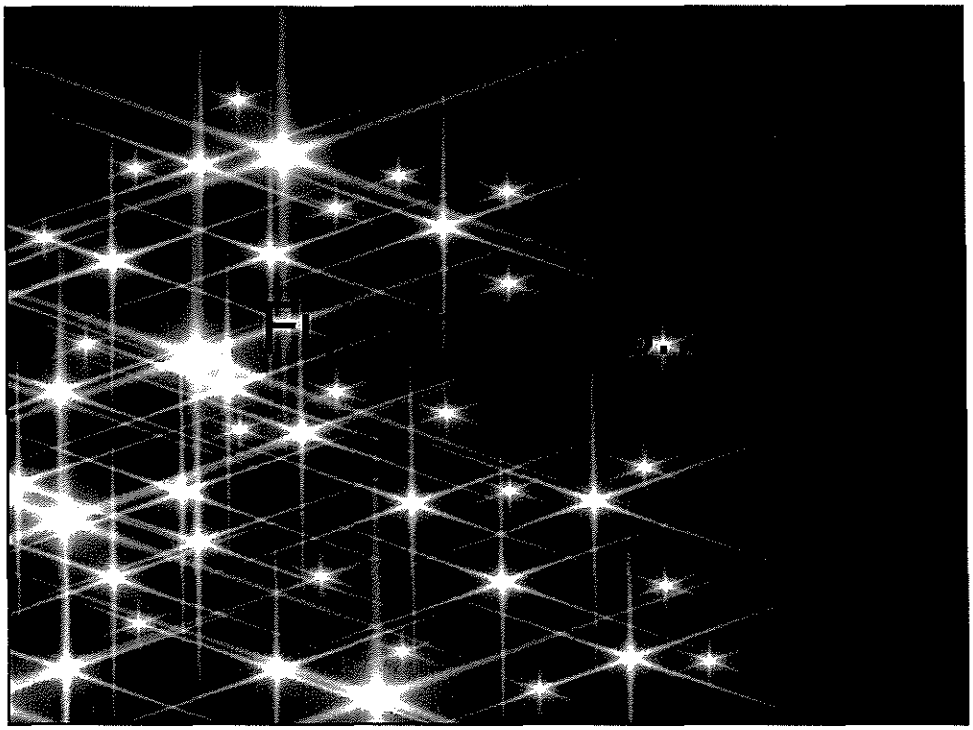
Cle Elum-Roslyn Elementary

07-08
- Created an Elementary RTI Team
- Elementary implemented RTI Reading K-1
- Purchased Materials
- Outlined a master plan to implement the following year
- Adopted DIBELS as a universal screener for reading

- 08-09
- Elementary implemented RTI in Reading K-5
- Testing team, profile meeting, progress monitoring
- Purchased more material
- Screen and Progress Monitor with DIBELS
- Developing in our implementation and communication
- Plan for RTI math in January
- Elementary receiving training on Positive Behavior Intervention Support

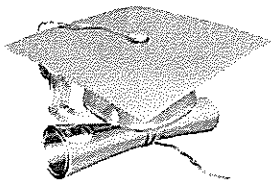
Walter Strom Middle School

- 08-09
- Middle school created an RTI team
- Middle school began RTI training
- Middle school is working toward a master plan of implementation for Math and Good Standing



Quality in Education

"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives." ***Willa A. Foster***



Example of Reading Intervention Recommendation from Battle Ground School District

State Sample from Battle Ground School District

Reading Intervention Recommendation

(Bergeson, 2006)

	Intensive Intervention Instructional emphasis on oral language development, phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding and motivation.	**Strategic Intervention** Instructional emphasis on phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, motivation and cognition.	**Benchmark Instruction** Instructional emphasis on fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, motivation, cognition and knowledge.	**Advanced Instruction** Instructional emphasis on vocabulary, comprehension, motivation, cognition and knowledge.
K-2	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**
Delivery	The delivery is determined by building teams. Some buildings are using a "walk-to- read" model, while other buildings have Reading Specialists.	Delivery is determined by building teams. Some buildings are using a "walk-to- read" model, while other buildings have Reading Specialists	Delivery is determined by building teams.	Delivery is determined by building teams.
Assess	DIBELS and Running Records Fall, Winter, Spring			
3-4	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**
Delivery	The delivery is determined by building teams. Some buildings are using a "walk-to- read" model, while other buildings have Reading Specialists	Delivery is determined by building teams. Some buildings are using a "walk-to- read" model, while other buildings have Reading Specialists	Delivery is determined by building teams.	Delivery is determined by building teams
Assess	DIBELS and a Reading Inventory TBD Fall, Winter, Spring			
5	**High Point Basics Read Naturally**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**
6-8	**High Point Basics Read Naturally**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**
Delivery	The delivery is determined by building teams. Some buildings are using a "walk-to- read" model, while other buildings have Reading Specialists. 90 min. in lieu of benchmark instruction.	The delivery is determined by building teams. Some buildings are using a "walk-to- read" model, while other buildings have Reading Specialists.	The delivery is determined by building teams.	The delivery is determined by building teams.
Assess	Read Naturally Fluency Monitor and Gates McGinnie (vocabulary and comprehension) Fall and Spring 6th and 7th Grade WASL Scores			
9	**Read 180 Program**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**	**Core Instructional Materials**
Delivery	Students reading below the 6th grade level are placed in the Read 180 Program (110 minute, 2 period block, 15 students per block.)	Reciprocal Reading for all classes, Read Naturally and Rewards reading programs are recommended for students reading between 6th - 7th grade	Reciprocal Reading for all classes	Reciprocal Reading for all classes
Assess	Read Naturally Fluency Monitor and Gates McGinitie (vocabulary and comprehension) Fall and Spring 7th Grade WASL Scores			
Note	Special Ed, ELL and Title I LAP students are integrated into the Reading Intervention Recommendations. The reading programs and assessments listed are recommended for ALL students.			

The school-wide approach combined with problem-solving

There are fantastic teachers that give assessments to students, group them accordingly, and give them more instruction if students do not understand a concept. The problem is that not all students have this type of classroom. It requires that we step out of our comfort zone of what we are used to and accept that all students can learn and these are all our children.

Every time I bring up these two statements I get an automatic, "of course we think this." But, I believe actions speak louder than words. Do you challenge the low performing students with material at their instructional level or do you give them something too difficult and write "failed" on their paper? Without the right support students will fail and we are showing that we think these students cannot learn, at least not the way we think they should learn. Wouldn't it be better to try to continually match instruction to what a student can do and keep building on it? Find out what a student can do and they will be able to learn.

The school-wide approach combined with problem-solving is the heart of RTI. Believing in students, creating a system of support for both teachers and students, and discussing how the RTI system fits in your school will keep the RTI beat going. Problems will occur along the way and this is when the problem-solving component steps in to work with a team of people. Include parents in the discussion, and track progress. Sometimes we will come up with a new situation where it will require an intervention that is not currently available in our RTI system. There has to be a team, ready to discuss this problem and what could be added or moved within the system.

One of the first steps in RTI is to determine the characteristics of Tier 1, or what is taking place for most students. Schools want to make sure teachers are using effective instruction with outstanding standards-based curriculum that can adequately teach most students and ensure that students can make one year of growth in one year's time. We don't want only a half year of growth across one year, because we will have even more students that need interventions. People making curriculum decisions need to be aware of the impact curriculum will have on student outcomes.

When the team does decide on an intervention for a particular student, they may want to be aware that it may not work right away. It can be difficult to match students and interventions. This is one of the reasons we need to monitor progress along the way. When the data shows that an intervention is not working it is still important to focus on a solution and not the problem. It can easier to get together and theorize why a student is doing what they are doing as a complaint. For example, "look at his home life, no wonder he can't read better." If the conversations go this way, there is no solution. We didn't define what the problem is and we didn't come up with a manageable solution. We need to think of the solutions we can deliver. In the solution, we need to make sure we have a clear expectation for the intervention. Don't set your sights too high. Some solutions may take on a type of shared ownership. For very low achieving students, it may take an intervention with a Special Education teacher, follow-up with a paraprofessional, and support in the general education classroom. Schools are in this all together and should try to make decisions as a team.

My Reflection: Change is difficult. It is easier to dream, to discuss, and to form a plan then to actually do. I think in doing there always seems to be room for failure, but this does not mean it is not worth the effort. In Cle Elum-Roslyn Elementary we did not have 80% of students in Tier 1 in September. Each grade level was unique and the RTI team took that into consideration as plans were created for how RTI would look in each grade level.

Attached you will find:

1. Example RTI Schedule (used for all staff to see groupings, times, instructors. This was updated very often. There were at least 20 drafts made during the year.) p.47
2. March RTI Meeting (notes taken from one of the RTI team meetings in March) p.49

Example RTI Schedule

RTI Response to Intervention (Gen. Ed., Title I, Special Ed., ESL)

Para 1 (6)	Para 2 (6.0)	Para 3 (5)	Teacher 1
7:45-8:15 (30) Recess **8:15-8:45 Handwriting without tears 2/3** **(Resource Library)** [Students] **8:45-9:10** **Handwriting without tears 1** **(Resource Library)** [Students] 9:10-10:15 K Reading 10:15-10:25 Break 10:25-11:05 1st Grade Reading	**8:15-845 Read Naturally 4 5 (R.101)** [Students] 8:45-8:55 Break **8:55-9:10 _____** 9:10-9:45 M-Th Kindergarten Reading 9:50-10:20 (30) Recess 10:25-11:15 1st Grade Reading **11:45-12:15 Intermediate lunch & recess**	8:00-8:15 (15) Recess **8:15-8:45 Read Well One 2 (Rm.OR)** [Students] **8:45-9:10 Kindergarten (Mrs. _____ Classroom)** 9:10-9:55 Kinder Reading 9:55-10:25 (30) Recess *10:30-11:00 Middle School 7-8, Corrective Math, Division* [Students]	**8:15-9:00 Read Well Plus 4 [M-TH]** [Students] **8:45-9:10 Read Naturally 2** [Students] **9:10-9:35 Read Naturally 2** [Students] **9:35-9:55 Read Naturally 3 2**[Students]
11:05-11:45 Lunch	12:15-12:55 Lunch	11:00-11:40 Lunch	**Lexia 3** [students]
11:45-12:15 Intermediate lunch & recess **12:15-1:00 Primary lunch & recess**	**1:05-1:15 RTI Grade 1 Letter Sounds** [Students] **1:15-1:48 Read Well Plus 3 (R.101)** [Students] **1:15-1:48 Lexia Reading** [Students] *1:50-2:10 Middle School, ESL Content Focus, check in*	11:40-1:00 (80) Opportunity Room 1:00-1:10 Break *1:10-1:40 Middle School Math Corrective Math, Subtraction, 6th Grade* [Students]	**9:55-10:15 Lexia 1** [Students] **Reading Mastery K** [students] **10:20-10:50 Lexia 3** [Students] **11-11:30 Lexia 5 2** [Students] Read Naturally 2 4 [Students]

1:10-1:30 Handwriting w/out Tears K M-T [Students] **W-F** [Students] **1:30-2:00 Corrective Reading Comprehension** [Students] 1:50-1:05 Read Naturally 4 [Students] **2:05-2:20 Read Well 1** [Students]	with Mrs. ____ **2:12-2:35 Read Naturally 4** [Students] 2:35-3:10 _____		12:30-1:00 Middle School

Kindergarten- Orange, First Grade- Yellow, Second Grade- Green. Third Grade- Blue, Fourth Grade- Purple, Fifth Grade- Red

March RTI Meeting

RTI Meeting

March 11, 2009 (3:00-3:30)

Present: ____, _____, _____, _____, _____

New team members: _____ and _____

Grade level teams
- We want teachers to feel in control of what is taking place in RTI and comfortable making decisions about their students
- Maybe each member of RTI could sit with grade level teams during and R&D day to discuss interventions, data, problem-solving, etc.
- The idea for Tuesday teaming was to get some of this done. Some grades are not meeting very often. We need more time.

R&D Time
- The R&D days for the building are already in place for the rest of the year
- There is little flexibility for the R&D days

Not discussed during the meeting, but on the agenda. . .
* Research study- A girl who is getting her masters in Psychology at CWU will be coming up to study our DIBELS data
* Google Docs- This will be a great way to share teaming information and how to access schedules, data, etc. - What information do teachers need to use this?
* On Thursday morning a math video with be broadcasted. Anyone interested in watching?
* Our next meeting on March 25 may have to be moved a little

To do Tasks:
- _____, _____, and _____ will be working on making data charts for classrooms (they need to get together and work out the details)
- How can we find more time for RTI with the building?
- _____ will send out notes for meetings

Structure and Organization

The structure and organization become the spine of your RTI model. It is important to find time to create a building RTI team to map out what RTI will look like in your school. What tests will be used for screening? Who will help teachers interpret these results and link them to interventions? When will this take place? When will teachers get a chance to look at progress monitoring results and make decisions about interventions that are working or not working? It helps to define the roles and responsibilities people will have in the school when it comes to RTI. The building administrator should be an active member on the team and support data-based decision making.

The RTI team will want to meet often to discuss ongoing decision making for the building and discuss problems and solutions. The team also should plan for organizing and implementing decisions around curriculum, instruction, and use of resources based on student performance data at all levels. Eventually, school policies need to be created and brought before the school board to use RTI data as a determining criteria for Special Education. Someone (or a few people) needs to create and monitor the schedule of student interventions. For this data to be useful, an ongoing organization system needs to be created.

Many staff may have new roles & responsibilities in RTI. This needs to be clearly defined and laid out. Who will motivate and engage staff in the process? Who will be monitoring the student data and creating a schedule? Who will be observing the fidelity of the interventions? Who can fit in time to do the observations? Someone needs

to organize the interventions and create a schedule for testing students. All of this information should be followed-up with the building RTI team or grade level teams.

Most people have heard the phrase "data based decision making" and it can be amazing how little time and training is set aside for this task. In my school we devoted at least three times a year to interpreting student data and linking this to interventions as a team. We called these meetings profile meetings.

My Reflection: I think you need to find people who are naturally good at organizing to help with the structure. At our school it made everything easier that I took on a lot of the leadership responsibilities for RTI as the Title I/LAP Coordinator. With a lot of responsibility, I had to learn what my limitations were and when to go back to the RTI team with information.

Attached you will find:

1. RTI Testing Schedule and Profile Meeting Schedule (I mapped this out for staff three times a year and modified the schedule with feedback. This helped everyone know what was taking place when.) p.52
2. Progress for Trimester Two (I created this to hand out with report cards for parents.) p.53
3. Ten Considerations for Problem Solving Teams (This helped give our team guidelines.) p.55
4. Instructional Group Observation Form (This is a helpful guide to follow while doing an observation for RTI.) p.56

RTI Testing Schedule and Profile Meeting Schedule

RTI Testing & Profile Meetings (End of Year)

May 11-14 Testing DIBELS- In Special Projects Room (Remember to bring a book for each student & the testing books)
May 26 (Staff meeting to focus on RTI and review data)
Profile Meetings 5/27-6/1 (One floater sub)

CLASSES/TEACHERS

Monday (5/11)	Tuesday (5/12)	Wednesday (5/13)	Thursday (5/14)
8:15-8:45 _____ 4 8:45-9:15 _____ 3 9:15-9:45 _____ 2 (Recess 9:55-10:25) 10:30-11:00 _____ 1 (L & Recess 11:20-1:00) 1:00-1:30 _____ K/1 1:30-2:00 _____ K	8:15-8:45 _____ 4 8:45-9:15 _____ 3 9:15-9:45 _____ 2 (Recess 9:55-10:25) 10:30-11:00 _____1 (L & Recess 11:20-1:00) 1:00-1:30 _____ K 1:30-2:00 _____ 5	8:15-8:45 _____ 4 8:45-9:15 _____ 3 9:15-9:45 _____ 2 (Recess 9:55-10:25) 10:30-11:00 _____ 1 (L & Recess 11:20-1:00) 1:00-1:30 _____ K	8:15-8:45 _____ 5 10:10-10:40 _____ 5

TESTERS- Need Paras for M- (Th morning)

Monday (5/11)	Tuesday (5/12)	Wednesday (5/13)	Thursday (5/14)
8:15-9:45 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para (Recess 9:55-10:25) 10:30-11:00 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para (L & Recess 11:20-1:00) 1:00-2:00 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para	8:15-9:45 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para (Recess 9:55-10:25) 10:30-11:00 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para (L & Recess 11:20-1:00) 1:00-2:00 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para	8:15-9:45 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para (Recess 9:55-10:25) 10:30-11:00 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para (L & Recess 11:20-1:00) 1:00-2:00 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para	8:15-8:45 Sped Para Principal Sped Director Title I Para Title I Para Title I Teacher Class Teacher OR- Para

PROFILE MEETINGS- Need one floater sub W-F & Mon.
Team- Classroom Teacher, Counselor, Special Education Teacher, Principal, Title I Teacher
(May 27-June 1)

Wednesday (5/27)	Thursday (5/28)	Friday (5/29)	Monday (6/1)
8-9 _____ 4	8-9 _____ 4	8-9 _____ 4	8-9 _____2
9-10 _____ K	9-10 _____ K	9-10 _____ K	9-10 _____2
10-11 _____3	10-11 _____ 3	10-11 _____3	10-11 _____ K/1
11-12 _____1	11-12 _____1	11-12 _____1	11-12 _____2
(11:20-11:50)3-5 (12:30-1:00)K-2	(11:20-11:50)3-5 (12:30-1:00)K-2	(11:20-11:50)3-5 (12:30-1:00)K-2	(11:20-11:50)3-5 (12:30-1:00)K-2
1-2 _____ 5	1-2 _____5	1-2 _____5	

Goals for the profile meeting:
- Determine Tier III students and needs for the fall
- Summer school?

Progress for Trimester Two

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Winter 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian of _____,

As you are already aware, your son/daughter has been receiving additional targeted instruction through the RTI System-wide model. Several options are included in service delivery of RTI. There are replacement options, for intensive students, that need a different structure to achieve academic success. There are in class instructional strategies, for students who have small, or short-term, instructional needs. There are also targeted intervention groups, for students who have a gap in learning and need to accelerate their academic growth in Reading and Writing. The box, or boxes, checked below are the programs your son/daughter is currently receiving.

- ☐ Kindergarten RTI (Letter Naming)
- ☐ Kindergarten RTI (Phonemes/Sounds)
- ☐ Lexia Reading
- ☐ Second dose of Read Well One
- ☐ Read Well Homework
- ☐ Read Well One
- ☐ Read Well Plus
- ☐ Read Naturally
- ☐ Early Success
- ☐ Corrective Reading
- ☐ Corrective Math
- ☐ Handwriting Without Tears
- ☐ Progress Monitoring with DIBELS without an in-class intervention
- ☐ Other: _____

A team of people, which may include the classroom teacher, principal, Title I teacher, counselor, and special education teacher, decide which intervention would be the best choice for an individual student, based on assessment data. This data is analyzed a minimum of three times a year on all students. Those students who need additional instruction are also given progress monitoring assessments, at least one time

per month. This helps the team determine if the intervention is the best fit for an individual student. The team also determines when a student receives the intervention. You will be notified when a change has been made in the intervention by the classroom teacher.

For reading, we are using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy) data, for progress monitoring, to determine if students are making adequate progress. An individual DIBELS report may be attached to this letter from the classroom teacher, showing how much progress your child is making. Additional feedback reports may be attached to this letter, explaining progress of an individual group. If no feedback report is attached, your child may be in a group that a feedback report is not available. Please contact the classroom teacher or _____, with any questions or concerns.

(Callender, 2007)

TEN CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING TEAMS

1. The team should determine a regular place and time to meet.

2. Members of the team are clearly identified along with attendance expectations.

3. Roles are assigned to team members:
   A) Recorder
   B) Timekeeper
   C) Facilitator
   D) Process for determining case managers to individual students

4. Establish team norms -expectations for problem solving meetings; consider:
   * Task oriented
   * Student focused, problem oriented
   * Stay within specified time frame for meeting
   * Brainstorming rules
   * Regular attendance
   * Complete assigned responsibilities regarding interventions, data collection, etc.

5. What process will the team follow for accepting and prioritizing "Requests for Problem Solving"?

6. What criteria is used to determine when to gather additional information? What procedures will be used?

7. How will information obtained from various sources (e.g. parent interview, etc.) be evaluated and incorporated into the problem solving process?

8. How will the team manage information about students involved in the problem solving process?

9. Establish a procedure for review and follow-up for students in the problem solving process.

10. How will the team determine if its problem solving process is effective? How will the team revise and re-energize itself over time?

Instructional Group Observation Form

Instructional Group:_____

Academic Subject:_____ **Grade Level:**_____ **Date:**_____

1. Is the schedule/pacing map being followed?_____
2. Is the teacher presenting instruction with fidelity as specified by the program being used?_____
3. Is instructional time adequate?
4. Is the size of the group appropriate?
5. Are all the children in instructional settings attentive and highly engaged?
6. Are all children responding in a manner that indicated that they are learning the content?
7. Does the instructor know which students are and are not firm and making corrections immediately when children do not respond correctly?
8. Are children who are doing independent work highly engaged in meaningful work and successful on the work that they are doing?

Adapted from: Jerry Silbert

(Callender, 2007)

Professional Development

If structure and organization are the spine of RTI, let's call professional development the brain. Often teachers have jumped into using new curriculum with no training, no support, and not knowing completely what they doing. Sometimes it works, after fumbling through it, but sometimes we find out we were teaching the material wrong. Every time I am trained on new material or retrained on old material, I find a better way to do something.

Before more discussion on material training we should talk about RTI training. There are usually three phases in implementing RTI in a school. Phase one is pre-implementation preparations. This typically takes half a year to one year. Schools need to look at their current infrastructure relative to leadership, teaming, curriculum, screening and professional development. Phase two is effective Tier 1 instruction through the core curriculum. This should not take as long as phase one because you may already have this in place. Phase three is effective Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions. Each staff member involved needs continuing professional development in each phase. (Bergeson, 2006)

If we want highly skilled instructors that have high expectations, there must be available training. Oftentimes schools do a great job training teachers once on the core material, but what about the interventions for our low performing students. Yes, training for staff is essential. I have also learned that assessment procedures should be modeled, demonstrated, taught, observed, and re-taught. We do not want poor assessment data from not training the testers to the level we should have. Imagine what would happen if

one tester does it accurately and one does not. Hopefully, we would discover this quickly and the repercussions for students would be minimal. These are two suggestions that may help you: 1) Always ask your testers to sign off on the test they were giving a student. Initialing in the corner is easy. This way you can track down who gave the test. 2) If a teacher discovers an error with a student's test, find your most trained tester to regive the test. This is much simpler and less time consuming than any other way to solve this problem.

In the larger scale, what professional development will superintendents and building administrators need? Hopefully, by the time RTI planning is occurring all administrators have had some training on RTI. This will help the initiative become a core component of a school's structure.

Many staff are used in a variety of interventions for RTI and professional development will help ensure that staff are teaching the material in the correct format. Professional development should be linked to what you are actually going to be doing, so there is no need to create a long list of professional development options.

My Reflection: In our school we began with training on RTI by Wayne Callender. This was important for us to create our structure and guidelines before moving ahead with other professional development. We also hired Steve Hirsch, a physiologist from WSU to help implement profile meetings and some of our intervention criteria. To begin discussions on RTI with staff, the Special Education Director in the Cle Elum-Roslyn School District began handing out articles on RTI and offering free coffee to anyone who would like to discuss them.

Attached you will find:

1. District and School RTI Readiness Checklist (We used this several times to see where we were in implementation.) p.60
2. Response to Intervention: What and Why? (This was an article used for discussions with the Special Education Director) p.65
3. Three Tiers of Intervention (This was an article used for discussion with the Special Education Director) p.73

District and School RTI Readiness Checklist

(Bergeson, 2006)

Appendix I – District and School RTI Readiness Checklist****

This checklist is a self-evaluation tool provided to assist districts and schools in examining its readiness to adopt RTI practices. The checklist is intended to be completed by a team of district or building level leaders. It includes five indicators to ensure successful implementation of RTI systems.

District Name: _____ Date: _____
School Name: _____

Staff Completing the Checklist:

_____ _____
Name/Title Name/Title

_____ _____
Name/Title Name/Title

_____ _____
Name/Title Name/Title

Leadership	Established	Willing to Implement	No
District level and building level support at the highest levels, including agreement to adopt a RTI model and allocate required resources (general education, special education and other programs)			
Understanding of and commitment to a long term change process (3 or more years)			
Long term commitment of resources among general education, special education Title, ELL and other programs (staff, time and materials) for screening, assessment, and interventions			
District leadership team with basic knowledge of the research relative to RTI and the desire to learn more			
Expertise at the district level and building level with respect to research based practices for academics and behavior			

Narrative: For "Established" items documented in the space below include specific information related to the involvement of the School Board, Central Office Administrators, and Principals. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Narrative: For "Willing to Implement" items, describe current conditions that would support change in each area. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Teaming	Established	Willing to Implement	No
Commitment to collaborative teaming (general education, special education and other programs) at both the district and school levels			
Principal leadership and staff (general education, special education and other programs) willing to participate at each school			
Willingness for general education, special education, and other programs to work together at both the district and school levels			
Commitment from all team members to making student decisions through problem solving			
Focus on student outcomes vs. eligibility (team's main purpose is not special education referral)			

Narrative: For "Established" items documented in the space below include specific information related to teaming structures currently in place at the district and school levels and specific initiatives that involve collaboration between general education, special education and compensatory programs. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Narrative: For "Willing to Implement" items, describe current conditions that would support change in each area. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Curriculum	Established	Willing to Implement	No
Use of a research-validated core reading program (as outlined in the OSPI K-12 Reading Model); core math program; writing program and behavior at each elementary or secondary school identified as RTI ready with 80% success rate			
Use of or ability to acquire supplemental intervention materials			
A range of research-based instructional interventions for any student at risk of not reaching potential, including those identified as gifted/talented or those already experiencing academic failure (systematic model in place such as 3 tiered approach, pyramid of interventions, etc.)			
System in place to evaluate research-based interventions as to integrity/fidelity of implementation			
Capacity to provide ongoing training and support to ensure fidelity of implementation			

Narrative: For "Established" items documented in the space below list the core reading, math, writing and behavior programs adopted by the district, any supplemental intervention materials currently in use, and systems in place to provide training related to their implementation. Identify each school involved. If the district and/or schools are not adopting research validated programs in reading, math, writing, or behavior explain the area in which RTI is not being adopted and how this will impact the district/school's overall approach to RTI. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Narrative: For "Willing to Implement" items, describe current conditions that would support change in each area. Include possible options for funding additional curricular materials that may be necessary. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Screening	Established	Willing to Implement	No
Universal screening system to assess strengths and challenges of all students in academic achievement, talents and behavior			
Structured data conversations occurring to inform instructional decisions			
Direct measurements of achievement and behavior (learning benchmarks) that have a documented/predictable relationship to positive student outcomes			
Progress monitoring that is systematic, documented and shared			
Data management systems in place (technology support)			

Narrative: For "Established" items in the space below describe the data collection and management system used by the district, including details about the current progress monitoring system and calendar. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Narrative: For "Willing to Implement" items, describe current conditions that would support change in each area. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

Ongoing Professional Development (Addresses relevant areas essential to effective implementation of RTI and improved student outcomes)	Established	Willing to Implement	No
Across all staff/roles			
Involves families			
Includes follow-up (e.g., coaching, professional dialogue, peer feedback, etc.)			

Professional development addresses relevant areas such as:

Collaborative decision-making (e.g., professional learning communities)			
Effective use of data, including that gathered through ongoing progress monitoring, in making educational decisions			
Collaborative delivery of instruction/interventions			
Research-based instructional practices, including supporting materials and tools			
What constitutes "interventions" versus "accommodations and modifications"			
Prescriptive and varied assessment techniques (targeted assessments, CBMs, error analysis, etc.)			
Progress monitoring techniques			
Parent engagement strategies			
Other:			

Narrative: For "Established" items in the space below describe the current professional development system and calendar. (Use additional pages as necessary.)
Narrative: For "Willing to Implement" items, describe current conditions that would support change in each area. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: *What & Why?*

Neither a fad nor a program, but rather the practice of using data to match instruction and intervention to changing student need

BY JUDY ELLIOTT

Everyone is talking about response to intervention. But what is RTI, really, and why should we care? After all isn't this just another new education reform that sounds like a good idea but will soon fade from the scene?

Response to intervention is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying student response data to important education decisions.

This approach is not about placing the problems within the student, but rather examining the student's response to instruction and/or intervention. In essence, RTI expands the practice of looking at students' risk of learning and behavioral failure beyond the student and takes into consideration a host of factors. Effective implementation of RTI requires leadership, collaborative planning and implementation by professionals across the education system.

RTI as a framework or model should be applied to decisions for general, remedial and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by student performance data that is close to the classroom.

Today in public education, we are faced with more diversity and challenges than ever before. Too often, fields within education work in isolation — from our English language learners and gifted students to our special education students. We hear about "special ed" and we hear about "general ed," but it is really about "every ed." With scarce resources available, both fiscal and human capital, we need to align our education system to meet the learning needs of everyone in the education system.

The No Child Left Behind Act has brought the issues of student learning and accountability for that learning front and center. Education systems must necessarily account for the learning of "every ed." However, national and local data continue to show achievement gaps for students of color and those with disabilities. We know more about what works in instruction than ever before; yet we still have gaps in student learning and achievement.

Those continuing gaps beg these questions: Is robust, effective instruction taking place in our classrooms? Are we differentiating instruction based on students' talents and needs? Are we working from the model of one size fits all? Are we providing tiered or increasingly intense interventions for students who, based on data, show they need more strategic and intensive academic and behavioral instruction?

In the school systems where I've worked — Long Beach, Calif., Unified School District, the Portland, Ore., Public Schools and most recently Los Angeles Unified School

District — we began our journey by looking at data, examining core instruction and identifying interventions, both systemically and at the school site. We moved toward building a system of instruction that provided more time and increasingly intense interventions for students who were struggling. RTI provides the vehicle to examine an entire system of student learning at the district, classroom and individual student performance levels.

Access Issues

One major challenge in improving the outcomes of our students involves providing access to what services and support they need to succeed. That is, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach and moving toward differentiation based on talent and need. However, the historical silo structures of our schools have gotten in the way of systemically making this happen for all students.

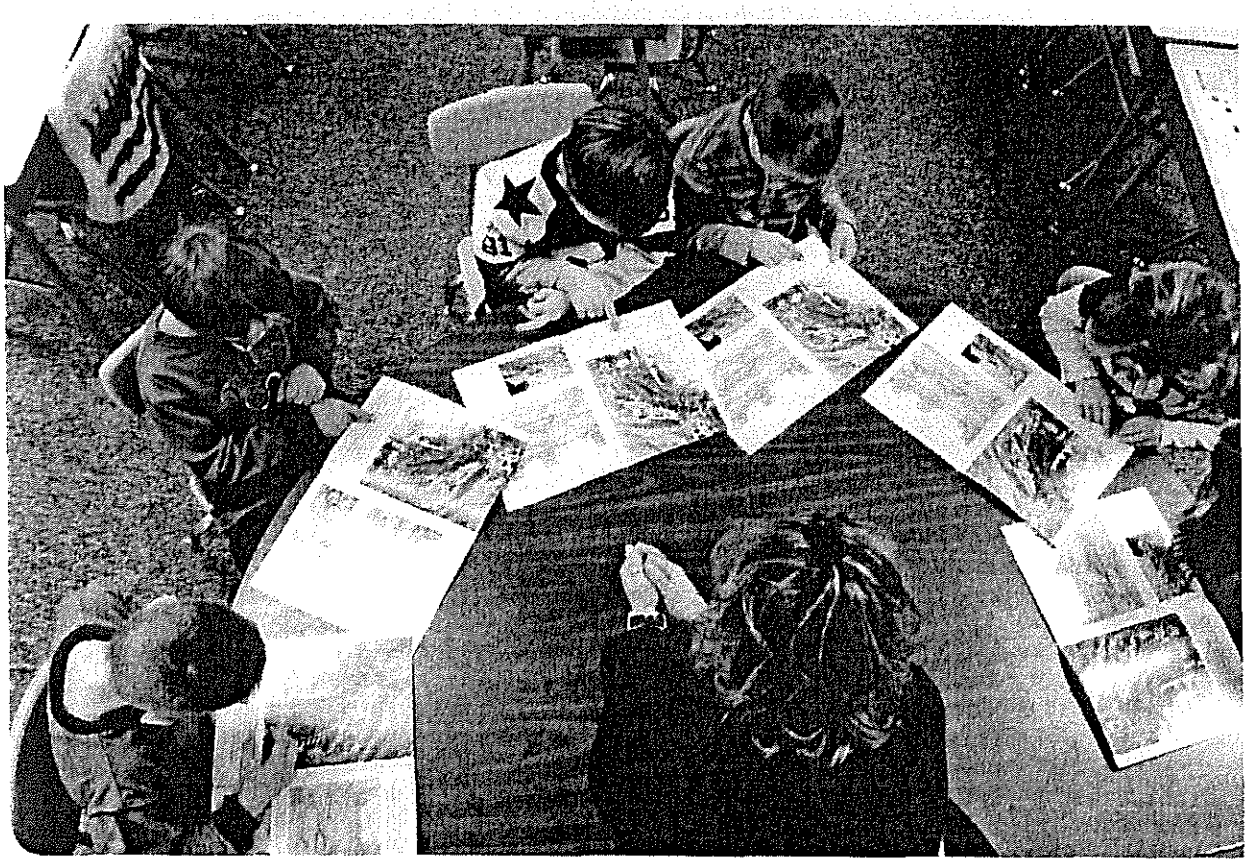
In most school districts, resources are organized by categorical programs or funding stream — Title I, English language learners, talented and gifted, special education, etc. Unfortunately, knowing that a student qualifies for Title I tells us nothing about that student's specific learning needs. In most cases, when a student does not progress at the expected rate, she or he is placed under the microscope. In other words, the psychopathology is within the student, and often the student is referred for special education testing.

Seldom does an evaluation of the student's classroom learning environment take place to examine what factors may be related to the reported lack of progress. Without a comprehensive evaluation of students within the context of the instructional environment, it is often difficult to reliably and validly indicate the true cause of poor student progress. It is imperative we include an analysis of variables directly related to academic success such as academic engaged time, opportunities to respond, teacher presentation style, teacher-student monitoring procedures, academic learning time and teacher expectations, to name just a few. Effective instruction is at the heart of RTI.

The systemic work of leadership involved in implementing RTI cannot be underestimated. First and foremost, it requires creating a culture and deep belief that all students can learn irrespective of disability, race, primary language and/or socioeconomic status.

Second, it requires the vision and intentional message that instructional reform efforts and resources must be aligned to ensure growth in student achievement and

A teacher at Lynnville-Sully Elementary School in Sully, Iowa, guides students through a reading lesson.

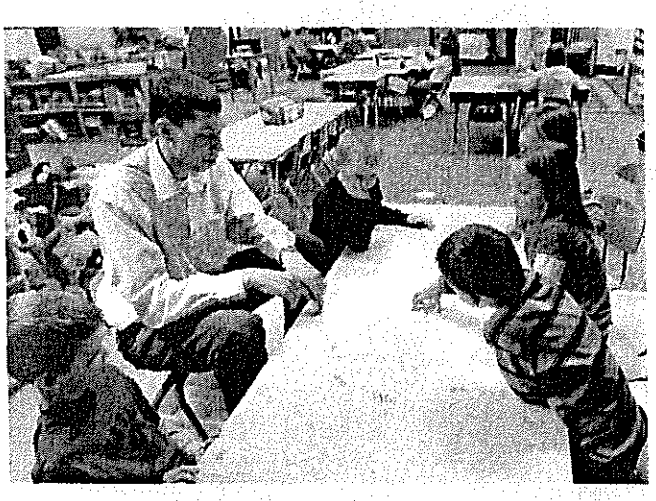


that the delivery of quality professional development, for both teachers and administrators, is systemic. RTI does not require more resources per se, but rather a reallocation and examination of current practices that are working and discontinuing those that are not.

Third, it requires the knowledge, appreciation and continual use of data in making instructional and programmatic changes that are second nature to all consumers in the system — administrators, teachers, parents and the community.

Core Principles

The core principles on which RTI is based are supported both by research and common sense. Research provides the evidence demonstrating the general effectiveness of RTI practices. Common sense keeps our attention focused on what is most important: student learning.



A reading teacher at Lynnville-Sully Elementary School in Sully, Iowa, which uses response to intervention.

▶ **BELIEVE THAT WE CAN EFFECTIVELY TEACH ALL CHILDREN.** All RTI practices are founded on the assumption and belief that all children can learn. The corollary is that it is our responsibility to identify the curricular, instructional and environmental conditions that enable learning. We then must determine the means and systems to provide those resources.

▶ **INTERVENE EARLY.** It is best to intervene early with learning and behavior, when problems and concerns are relatively small. Early intervention does not mean K-5, but rather preK-12. Early intervention programs are established at elementary and secondary levels for students who are not being successful, either academically or behaviorally.

▶ **USE A MULTITIERED MODEL OF SERVICE DELIVERY.** To achieve high rates of student success for all students, instruction in the schools must be differentiated in both nature and intensity. To efficiently differentiate instruction for all students, tiered models of intervention are used in RTI systems.

▶ **USE A PROBLEM-SOLVING METHOD TO MAKE DECISIONS WITHIN A MULTITIERED MODEL.** At its core, this method requires answering four interrelated questions: (1) Is there a problem and what is it? (2) Why is it happening? (3) What are we going to do about it? and (4) Did our intervention work? The problem-solving method can be applied to all students in a preK-12 system, including small groups and individual students.

In Long Beach schools, the problem-solving model is the first step used at the student-success-team or building-team level. From here, interventions, either behavioral, or instructional, are prioritized and put in place in the classroom. Ongoing progress monitoring is done to ensure interventions are robustly implemented.

At the district level, the problem-solving method enables central-office personnel to look at data and ascertain whether in fact a school district program, instructional methodology, intervention and/or professional development is working for the students it is intended to help. Use of data is key.

Three Components

Implementation of RTI requires three essential components: (1) multiple tiers of intervention, (2) a problem-solving method and (3) an integrated data collection/assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery.

RTI uses a three-tiered model to allocate resources where they are most effective. For the sake of illustration, RTI can be thought of as a pyramid with three levels of interventions. Embedded in each tier is a set of unique support structures and instruction that help teachers implement evidence-based curricula and instructional practices at levels of fidelity designed to improve a student's achievement. Ongoing assessment within each tier is essential to determine a student's proficiency on critical academic and/or behavioral skills. This assessment or progress monitoring is used to inform instruction at each tier and to identify in a timely fashion the increasingly intense level of instruction a student needs.

The base of the pyramid, or Tier 1, represents core instruction all students should have equitable access to. Typically, we want 75-85 percent of students successfully learning the core curriculum.

Tier 2 of the pyramid, also known as strategic interventions, is for about 10-15 percent of students who need targeted instruction, or what I call "an extra scoop" of instruction, to learn successfully. Strategic instruction is provided to students who display poor response to group instructional procedures used in Tier 1. Tier 2 instruction is in addition to the Tier 1 core instruction.

Tier 3 of the pyramid, also known as intensive instruction, is for an estimated 5-10 percent of students who need intensive, individual and/or small-group instruction that is highly targeted. Tier 3 typically includes use of a

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different program or instruction from Tier 1 or 2 because those data show students are not making progress given previously tried interventions.

A note of caution: Tier 3 is not simply special education. Rather, it is where interventions are tailored to likely include long-term intensive instruction that may or may not include special education services. For example, a student whose diminished performance is the result of lack of instruction may need to be provided ongoing, intensive instruction delivered in more substantial blocks of time to help him or her catch up to peers. Another example might include a student whose performance problems are directly related to limited English proficiency. Again, the student may need a longer-term set of interventions that do not include special education.

In both Long Beach and the Portland Public Schools, we started by examining the success of students in core instruction. If you find when looking at your data that 50 percent of students are not at proficiency in Tier 1, or core instruction, you do not simply put these students in Tier 2 interventions. You must go back and examine the instruction in your core. If you have high rates of students referred for special education or in special education, you must look at core instruction and ask: Is it the instruction or is it the student?

Problem Solving

A second essential component of RTI is the use of the problem-solving method. The problem-solving model provides educators a consistent step-by-step process to identify problems, develop interventions and evaluate the effectiveness of those interventions. Clearly, a consistent method to solve problems must be available to teachers and other staff to understand why some students are not responding to the academic and/or behavior instruction.

It is important to ensure all factors (curriculum, effective instruction, school and classroom environment) have been examined prior to assuming that student factors or disability are responsible for student performance. The

Guiding RTI System Implementation: The Oregon Experience

BY DAVID L. PUTNAM JR.

Three years of running a response to intervention project in Oregon has taught us much about what factors affect successes and disappointments.

From our work with some two dozen school districts in the Oregon Response to Intervention Project, we can see that implementation at the school level depends on several system factors. Primarily, these include school-based factors such as the initial collective skill and knowledge in a district, the degree to which the foundations of a multi-tiered instructional model and data-based decision making are in place and the educational belief system of the stakeholders. In addition, context factors such as district size and setting make a difference.

The variable with the single greatest impact, however, and one that can override everything else is focused and sustained leadership from building- and district-level administrators.

Lending Credibility

Some leadership tasks cut across roles. Administrators at all levels must clearly articulate a vision of what the change process will involve. Because RTI implementation often requires significant changes for staff, administrators should clarify the

David Putnam

expectations with well-defined *non-negotiables* as well as areas of flexibility.

For example, implementing a research-based core curriculum is a critical feature and administrators must hold fast to the expectation this will be carried out consistently by teachers and with fidelity. Administrators can be flexible about how this is accomplished and teachers can help determine the process.

Articulating a clear vision and plan for implementation is an important first step that must be followed by sustained focus on student outcomes and support for RTI. A school or district easily can become fragmented with multiple initiatives and teachers may feel the current initiative is just one more in a series of passing fads.

In our own district in a suburb of Portland, Ore., the superintendent's involvement has had a significant impact. He communicates the importance of placing student achievement at the top of the district's priorities when he meets with teachers, parents and leadership groups. He has taken the time to develop a deep understanding of response to intervention and can meaningfully describe what it takes to implement a multitiered system of instructional delivery. This lends credibility to his message and amplifies its impact.

The superintendent's deep involvement is equally apparent when he speaks to school districts that we support as part of the statewide response to intervention project. Often educators are stunned to find a superintendent meeting with them to address the importance of RTI, and they are inspired by this involvement. The importance of a consistent message across levels of district leadership cannot be overstated.

Make or Break

Without question, the leadership provided — or not provided — by building administrators can make or break an RTI initiative. Principals are at the pivotal point of contact between a great idea and the functional changes in how business is done in a school. For RTI to be successful, principals must operate as real-time, contributing members of the RTI team. They need to be directly involved with orchestrating assessment efforts, supervising the fidelity of instructional practices and coordinating group and individual interven-

problem-solving process occurs within each tier of the pyramid.

The third essential component of RTI is the use of an integrated data-collection/assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of the pyramid. This component helps determine a student's response to instruction and intervention. The overarching format for these assessments is curriculum-based assessment. These procedures have a 30-year history and have been used across curriculum areas and grade levels.

These assessments share several characteristics. They

- directly assess the specific skills embodied in state and local academic standards;
- are sensitive to small increments of growth over time;
- can be administered efficiently over short periods;
- may be repeatedly administered using multiple forms;
- are readily summarized in teacher-friendly ways;
- can be used to make comparisons across students;
- can be used to monitor an individual student's progress over time; and
- have direct relevance to the development of instructional strategies that address the student's area of need.

Curriculum-based measurements or formative assessments are administered frequently and are more closely aligned to day-to-day instruction. They help teachers answer two key questions: What to teach and how to teach. State assessments that students take regularly are not sensitive to daily instruction and serve an entirely different purpose. That is, they set out to determine, for example, how all 4th graders or 10th graders are performing on a large scale across a state.

Secondary Levels

Some think that because there is little research at the middle or high school levels that RTI is not valid in the secondary level. This is not so. The principles and components of RTI are the same at all grade levels.

The challenge in secondary schools involves identifying with how far administrative will, collaboration and creative problem solving can go. We have witnessed significant and rapid system development in a large urban/suburban district that's confronted with all the challenges that large districts typically face.

The key to the success in this case is a well-organized and highly skilled central-office leadership team that has worked closely with building principals to maintain a consistent and concerted focus. The district RTI leadership team meets regularly to review procedures and coordinate implementation. Professional development has been consistent and sustained. Principals serve as team leaders within most elementary schools, and teachers report feeling informed and supported.

In reflecting upon her district's journey at a conference last year, the director of student services recalled a discussion she had with a parent regarding the newly minted RTI system and the emphasis on identifying struggling learners and providing interventions as early as possible.

"That sounds great," the parent responded. "But what did you do before RTI? Don't tell me you just waited until they failed before they got services."

What could she say?

tions. They must be integral members of the school RTI team, providing guidance and allocating resources as needed. The impact of principal involvement can be contrasted in two schools that we work with.

At the elementary school in one rural school district, the principal leads the developing RTI process. There is a strong commitment to the concept that academic failure is not an option. Professional development regarding the core reading curriculum has been strong and ongoing and there is a clear expectation that the curriculum will be implemented with fidelity. The principal monitors instruction. Community funds support a reading coach and other resources.

The effects on student achievement have been significant. The percentage of students meeting DIBELS benchmark scores has increased dramatically in the three years since implementation, especially in the primary grades.

The principal in a second district supports the RTI initiative at a broad level, but is not nearly as involved operationally. As one might expect, implementation is struggling to gain traction.

The difference in the two districts largely relates to the degree of oversight and instructional guidance provided to all staff, from general to special education. RTI is often mistakenly viewed as a special education initiative, when really it is an "every ed" effort with the core infrastructure components residing in general education. As such, principals must truly function as instructional leaders to coordinate all aspects of teaching and learning.

Size Impacts

District size is a dimension that can present challenges at either end of the continuum. At one extreme, tiny school districts often are limited in resources. Their small size results in failing to meet thresholds that would make them eligible for certain supports or resources, or give efficiencies of shared expertise or hard resources across the district. However, in the words of one successful school leader who serves as principal of three schools and director of curriculum, assessment and Title I in a 325-student district in the heart of the Willamette Valley: "It doesn't take a lot of money or resources. You just have to take a step back and look at the way you do things and be willing to do things differently."

This school leader has infused this attitude into her small staff, who are excited by their accomplishments. The district has implemented a new reading core curriculum, systematized universal screening and progress monitoring and organized reading intervention groups in the two short years it has participated in the statewide project. The district has established a well-organized RTI team that works collaboratively to review student performance data regularly and make instructional decisions. A clear sense of collective ownership of all students prevails.

At the other end of the continuum, large districts benefit from shared resources but face the challenge and complexity of coordinating procedures, training and programs across many schools. Here, too, we have been impressed

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ing the multiple measures or universal screens you will use to decide which students need more intensive instruction or intervention.

Typically, students at the secondary level are deficient in basic skills that get in the way of learning higher-level skills. In Long Beach, multiple measures include scores on state assessments, grades (although subjective), literacy screens and pre-assessments in core curriculum materials being used in English language arts, district-developed quarterly and end-of-course exams in algebra, grade 8 math or English language development. The use of multiple measures depend on what your target is (e.g., literacy, mathematics, English learners).

At the secondary level, the creation of the master schedule is key.The challenge is creating the schedule to provide Tier 2 and 3 interventions for students while still allowing students to earn credit toward graduation. It is doable when the priority is set on providing tiered intervention classes for students who, according to multiple measures, show the need for additional targeted instruction. You cannot do more or catch up students using the same time structures.

Typically, middle and high school master schedules include double blocks of time to provide additional Tier 2 and 3 interventions for students. So, for instance, students may be enrolled in Algebra 1 and have a second dose or block of perhaps a developmental math program. Likewise, students will be enrolled in English language arts with a second block of a reading intervention, thus increasing the time and intensity of instruction.

Starting Point

Generally, schools do not have the resources to provide supplemental and intensive instruction to more than 20 percent of students. Therefore, core instruction must be effective for 75-85 percent of students and must be developed and implemented to achieve that goal. Core instruction must be responsive to the needs of all students.

So the first step in the implementation of RTI is to evaluate the effectiveness of core instruction and to problem solve how to improve it if it is less than effective. Districts and schools should evaluate existing practices and resources to determine the approach that will best help establish needed core, strategic and intensive interventions.

A key indicator of a school and a district implementing RTI is that they have an instruction/intervention resource map identifying all of the academic and behavior instruction/interventions available to students at the core, supplemental and intensive levels.

One key component of this resource map is the degree to which the interventions in Tiers 2 and 3 are integrated with core instruction in Tier 1. Receiving instruction in Tier 2 or Tier 3 is not a life sentence. Students must be able to fluidly move between tiers as the data show they are ready.

In a traditional system, remedial and special education services are less integrated with core instruction than in an RTI model. There is a qualitative difference between establishing interventions and ensuring that the interventions are linked and integrated with core instruction.

A note of caution: Do not bite off more than you can chew. Implementing with integrity is most important. There is no "RTI in a Box." Districts and schools must move through three phases — development of a consensus of need, establishment of the infrastructure and implementation of practice.

Take the time to develop consensus of RTI as the framework and foundation that will enable the district and school to systematically meet the needs of all students. Giving staff the tools (professional development, intervention support and documentation, data, technology to display and interpret the data) to successfully implement RTI is necessary before you attempt to implement RTI systemically. (See related story, page 14.)

Field Lessons

As school district leaders, we must identify, consolidate, supplement and integrate resources from diverse funding sources to produce the infrastructure necessary to support the implementation of RTI. This includes ongoing and sustained capacity building, both skill and knowl-

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Long Beach's Pivotal Turn Around RTI

In the Long Beach, Calif., Unified School District, this tiered approach to intervention was pivotal to transforming student achievement across the district.

Long Beach Unified School District is the state's third largest urban school district with more than 90,000 students, 84 percent of whom are minority and 68 percent of whom qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and where over 46 languages are spoken. RTI has proven a successful model to increase the achievement of all students.

In 2003, the Long Beach Unified School District won the highly prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education and was a finalist again in 2007.

The use of the tiered approach to intervention was intentionally started with high school students whose outcome data showed to be failing at a high rate. Some lacked basic skills needed for higher-level learning.

Starting with a universal screen though which all 8th graders are assessed for skills on various measures, the district tiers students into the appropriate levels of instruction they need. The movement among all three tiers is fluid. Students are assessed and their progress monitored, allowing them to move among tiers where their instructional and behavioral needs are best met.

This approach was so successful in the high schools that it soon was implemented with all 5th graders moving into middle school. For students in grades other than 5th and 8th, each grade level uses a tiered approach to intervention in helping teachers make data-based decisions to drive instruction. As a result, Long Beach has been able to maintain high levels of student achievement for all learners, including special education students. And the school system has moved closer to erasing the achievement gap that exists among groups of students where this gap traditionally exists.

—Judy Elliott

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edge, from the board room to the classroom. This is not about adding another initiative. It is about keeping what works and replacing what doesn't with effective data-based instructional practices.

We must work to develop a single integrated system to connect general, remedial and special education that results in a seamless system of instruction, intervention and data-based student outcomes.

This approach has allowed the Long Beach Unified School District to erase the achievement gap, while providing special education services to only about 7.5 percent of its students.

Judy Elliott has worked in central administration in Portland, Ore., and Long Beach, Calif.

Additionally, as district leaders we must establish timelines and defined responsibilities at the district and school site levels, to ensure the successful implementation of RTI across the preK-12 system. This includes providing intentional time to collaborate. And, as with the implementation of any reform, we must build in regular fidelity checks for all components of the system, both at the district and school-site levels.

Professional development must be integrated across English language learners and compensatory, gifted, general and special education. As Portland Public Schools continues its journey on establishing RTI systemically, it has moved from separate professional development by categorical program to a totally integrated system of training. Teachers from all programs learn about instruction together, providing the opportunity to create a common understanding and common language on which instructional reform can take place.

Finally, as a part of any change process, expect and pro-actively manage resistance. Resistance to change suggests a loss of some sort. Our work in building consensus for RTI needs to identify what that sense of loss is. Personnel have much at stake. The shift to a culture of ongoing use of data at the classroom and building levels, on top of state assessments, can be intimidating to faculty and principals. The use of data is not meant to be punitive but rather to allow for a laser-like focus on the use of personnel, existing resources and delivery of professional development.

In all my years in education one thing I've learned is for certain: Administrators, teachers and parents share a common yearning — to help students who are struggling. Once people see that data are a tool to provide tailored interventions for students and support for classroom instruction, trust is built, collegial relationships are forged and the realization emerges that we are in this for the betterment of all students. ■

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Additional Resources

Judy Elliott, who has worked in special education and other central-office roles in Long Beach, Calif., and Portland, Ore., recommends these resources for school leaders interested in learning more about response to intervention:

Books/Reports

- *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation* by George Batsch et.al., available from National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, Va., *www.nasdse.org* or 703-519-3800
- *Response to Intervention Blueprints: District Level Edition* by Judy L. Elliott and Diane Morrison, available from National Association of State Directors of Special Education
- *Response to Intervention Blueprints: School Building Level Edition* by Sharon Kearns and David Tilly, available from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, *www.nasde.org*.

Websites/Articles

- "Create Your Implementation Blueprint: Introduction" by Susan L. Hall, *www.rtinetwork.org/GetStarted/Develop/ar/Create-Your-Implementation-Blueprint*
- "Developing a Plan" by George Batsche, *www.rtinetwork.org/GetStarted/Develop/ar/DevelopingPlan*
- National Online RTI Forum 2008, *www.connectlive.com/events/rtinetwork060908*
- RTI Action Network, *www.rtinetwork.org*, particularly "What is RTI?"
- "RTI and Math Instruction" by Amanda VanDerHeyden, *www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/Why/ar/RTIandMath/1*
- "Response to Intervention in Secondary Schools: Is It on Your Radar Screen?" by Barbara J. Ehren, *www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/Why/ar/RadarScreen*
- "School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Response to Intervention" by George Sugai, *www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/Behavior/ar/SchoolwideBehavior*
- "Tiered Instruction and Intervention in a Response-to-Intervention Model" by Edward S. Shapiro, *www.rtinetwork.org/Essential/TieredInstruction/ar/ServiceDelivery/1*
- "Why Adopt an RTI Model?" by David P. Prasse, *www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/Why/ar/WhyRTI*

Three Tiers of Intervention (Tilly, 2008)

Three Tiers of Intervention

Central Iowa schools adopt a hands-on process for matching student instruction to needs

BY W. DAVID TILLY, SHANNON HARKEN, WENDY ROBINSON AND SHARON KURNS

As education leaders, we all have similar aspirations: We want our teachers to be effective; we want our students to excel; and we want our schools to be known for high levels of student achievement. Achieving these goals requires high-quality instruction, assessments to determine whether instruction is working and effective interventions for students who need something more.

Many instructional practices, assessments and interventions are known to be effective. How does a school select those that are the best match for the students and their unique needs? How does a school use its resources to provide additional instruction for students who are not successful in typical instruction? How does a school make decisions about the changing needs of students?

Response to intervention helps principals and teachers answer these questions by providing a framework for organizing instruction in schools using research-validated procedures and decision-making structures. The framework includes periodic assessments to determine which students need help and whether what is being done for them is effective, differentiated instruction and ongoing data-based decision making.

RTI doesn't tell you what to think. It tells you what to think about.

At Heartland Area Education Agency 11, an intermediate education agency in central Iowa, we have been implementing RTI concepts agencywide for 18 years. Heartland schools are in various stages of implementation, many following the three-phased process of building consensus, building the infrastructure and then fully implementing RTI. Each phase has essential components and predictable challenges.

Building Consensus

Let's face it: Educators are hands-on people — they want to know how to implement effective instructional strategies to improve student achievement and often are less interested in the theory underlying the practice. Unfortunately, new school initiatives sometimes falter because school leaders do not invest sufficient time and energy early in the process to ensure faculty and staff understand the changes being proposed and why those changes are a good thing. As a result, several years after the initiative is launched, there is little to no evidence of our efforts.

When developing the RTI framework, we spend time providing information, rationale and the opportunity for educators to question, challenge and discuss RTI before it is launched. Through these interactions, educators build consensus, which leads to buy-in.

Some of the activities Heartland schools use to build consensus around response to intervention are:

▶ Revisit what we consider the essential outcomes in our system. Review data

about the degree to which these outcomes are being accomplished.

- Examine staff members' belief systems about what children can learn and the strategies that will best teach them.
- Examine the historical assumptions underlying our assessment and instruction system and the degree to which these are supported by research. Also, examine what research says are the most effective practices that yield maximum student achievement.
- Study the underlying core principles and practices associated with RTI implementation.
- Examine a three-tiered model of how RTI is structured in school buildings and what it takes to support implementation.
- Gauge staff members' commitment to make these changes.

Perhaps the most important component of consensus building is involving staff in ongoing conversations about the principles of teaching and learning. Jan Haugen, principal of Pleasantville Elementary School, describes his building's most effective consensus-building tool for implementing RTI (which in Iowa is called instructional decision making, or IDM): "To build consensus in our building, we posted, in the lounge for everyone to see, a list of our IDM accomplishments and challenges for implementing a program like IDM in our building. It stimulated a lot of interest from the very beginning as our team studied it."

The school's accomplishments included general and special education resources working together to provide a variety of instructional supports; involving students in flexible instructional groups that change as student needs change; and more frequently reviewing student performance data to assist in decision making.

False Notions

The challenges associated with consensus building are predictable. One challenge stems from the fact some teachers and administrators make assumptions about teaching and learning based on inaccurate prior knowledge. Committing to RTI is committing to use research-based instruction and assessment.

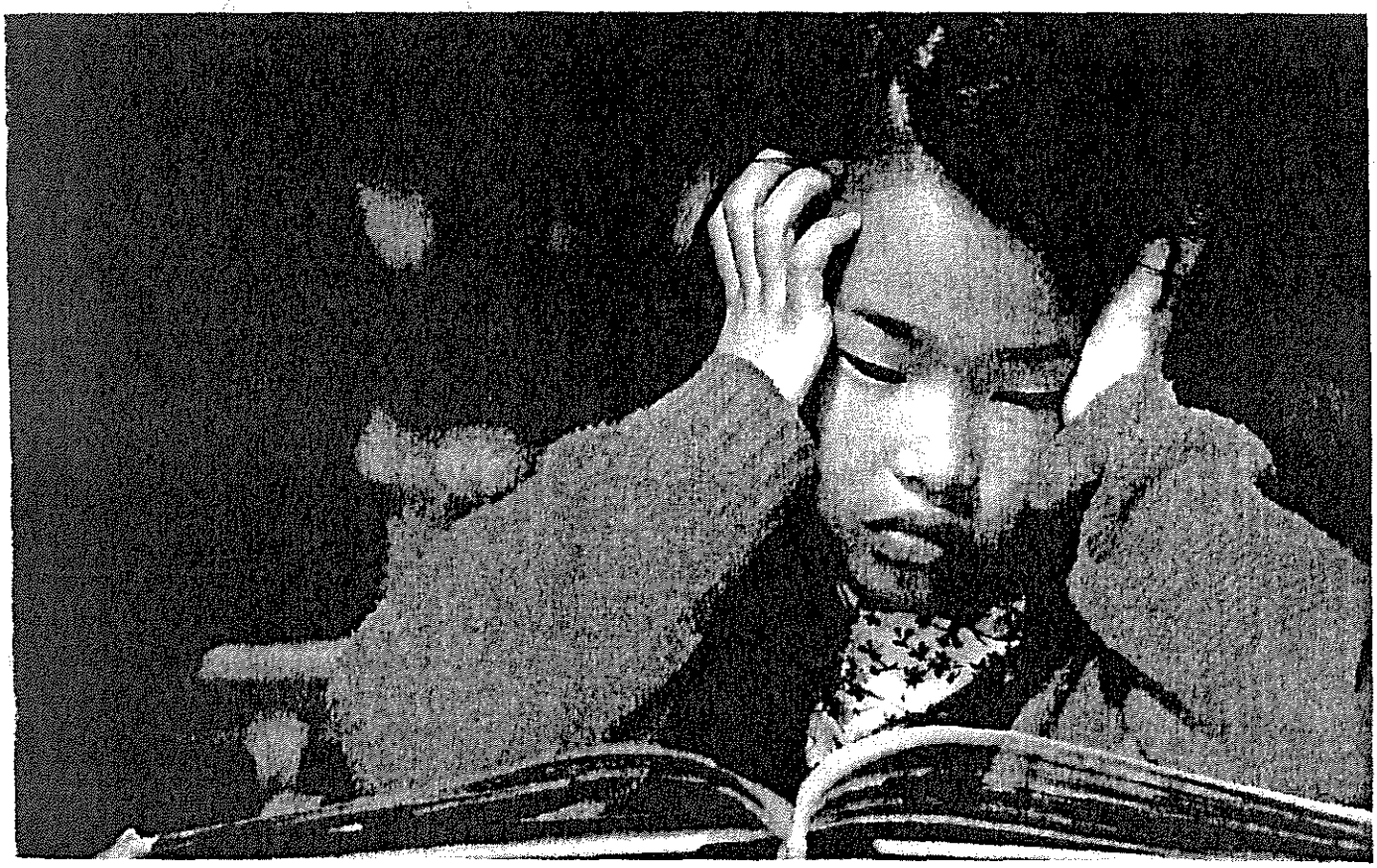
Many of the things we accepted as truths in our preservice programs turned out to be false, such as:

- The need to know students' IQs to know how to teach them;
- Special education placement will predictably accelerate a student's learning; and
- A student's label or disability type tells us what instruction to provide.

A second challenge to consensus building is that teachers often are not up to date about what works best for students who are struggling to learn. We all have our bag of tricks. We all know some things, but none of us knows everything. Teachers not only need to become aware of new technique, but they must master them. For example, they need to know and be able to teach the stages of word learning and how to coach decoding strategies in connected text.

To build consensus, teachers must not only be knowledgeable about current practices, they must be willing to share their knowledge with each other.

A final challenge associated with consensus building is understanding that RTI is not an "add-on" to the system. RTI is a fundamental restructuring of resources and services within a school to better meet the



needs of all students. It is a systems-change initiative that takes several years to implement fully.

A school must devote a significant amount of professional development time to RTI during the first two or three years. Then, when RTI becomes a way of life, schools' subsequent professional development offerings are based on student achievement data and are integrated into the RTI initiative.

Building Infrastructure

One of the most important things we realized when we began working to implement RTI in Heartland was that our approach to school improvement needed to evolve. Historically, when major initiatives from the federal government or the state rolled out, specific practices or strategies were brought to teachers. In essence, we brought answers.

When this happened, getting practices implemented was challenging because teachers did not have input into the change, so they did not always own the change. These changes rarely are deep or lasting.

The approach with RTI is different. In our revised approach, we don't try to provide all the answers, though we try to ensure the right questions are being asked. We are confident in the RTI framework and the research-based practices it contains. We are confident in the expertise and decision-making ability of the teachers and administrators in our schools. As such, we now implement a new approach to bringing RTI into our schools. This approach is based on questions, rather than answers. (See related story, below.)

We use current practices in the school as building blocks for the RTI infrastructure. All schools have some of the required components in place, so the challenge is to identify those that are in place, build those that are not and make them work together in a seamless way.

To address the questions, the school must establish a leadership team made up of individuals with specific roles and skills. The team may include the building administrator, someone with curriculum and instruction expertise, someone with expertise in data analysis and someone who can facilitate meetings and professional development. Grade-level representation on the leadership team also is necessary.

The importance of leadership teams cannot be underestimated. Nancy Moorhead, principal at Jordan Creek Elementary School in West Des Moines, says, "Our leadership team is comprised of representatives at each grade level, special education, talented and gifted and specials teachers. Through this broad representation we were able to share our vision and implement strategies to use data and student work to make instructional decisions and to develop successful interventions."

" ... teachers must not only be knowledgeable about current practices, they must be willing to share their knowledge with each other."

Once the leadership team is established, the next step is to identify practices that must be modified, adopted or created. That is done through a needs assessment or inventory of current practice. The needs assessment process is keyed to the structures that need to be in place in schools to support RTI and the skills and processes that must work together for it to be successful.

The team then begins the process of answering the 10 questions. As the leadership team tackles a question, members use research-validated tools and strategies to help answer the question, thus tailoring application of RTI to their school. By taking this approach, we ensure each school is staying true to the research-based principles that support RTI, and we are confident the implementation fits the needs and preferences of the students, teachers and leaders in that specific school.

Team Challenges

Several important issues arise as the school leadership team works through this process. These issues include determining the following:

- Which specific assessments will be used for universal screening of all students, for diagnostic assessments for students who need it and for formative assessment (monitoring student learning over time)?
- Specifically how to expand options for supplemental and intensive instruction within the building. (Supplemental instruction is provided in addition to

Questions to Guide RTI's Use

Our approach for developing a response to intervention framework at the Heartland Area Education Agency in Iowa is based on 10 related questions.

These questions are drawn from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education's publication "Response to Intervention Blueprint for Implementation" (available at *www.nasdse.org*). The principles of the framework are embedded within the questions, so school leadership teams that work through the questions with rigor will in fact be implementing RTI.

1. **Is our core program sufficient?**
2. **If the core program is not sufficient, what led to this?**
3. **How will the needs identified in the core program be addressed?**
4. **How will the sufficiency and effectiveness of the core program be monitored over time?**
5. **Have improvements to the core program been effective?**
6. **For which students is the core instruction sufficient or not sufficient? Why or why not?**
7. **What specific supplemental and intensive instruction is needed?**
8. **How will specific supplemental and intensive instruction be delivered?**
9. **How will the effectiveness of supplemental and intensive instruction be monitored?**
10. **How will you determine which students need to move to a different level of instruction?**

—David Tilly

typical or core instruction for students. Intensive instruction is also additional instruction, but for those students with the most significant needs.)

- What new structures will need to be created to provide this additional instruction and how will it be provided?
- How will professional development be provided to develop skills in data-based decision making, improve effective teaching strategies and better differentiate instruction for students?
- Are changes warranted in the way that resources from special programs are delivered, such as special education and Title 1?

Schools encounter a range of challenges at this stage. Some challenges have to do with what Yale Professor of Psychology Seymour Sarason calls "existing regularities" — things that we do a particular way because that's the way we've always done them. Some challenges have to do with new skills that need to be learned and the lack of time and energy available to learn and implement them with fidelity. Some challenges are related to non-data-based philosophies and the challenge of those who are not willing to be persuaded by data.

School leaders face specific challenges, such as presenting a clear, well-communicated vision for garnering public support from the central office, school board and parents. Then there are operational challenges to be met, including revising the master schedule in the building to accommodate new and differentiated instructional options for students and setting out a multiyear implementation and professional development plan.

Mark Timmerman, principal at Earlham Elementary School, summarizes the power of his building's plan by stating, "Our staff feels there is truly a strategic plan that will be supported with professional development. Our professional development has been 'flavor of the month' for too long, with little evidence to show that it has helped teachers and almost no evidence that student learning has improved."

Since beginning implementation of instructional decision making, professional development planning at Earlham Elementary School has been far more focused on student performance data and subsequently on the skills that teachers need to meet the needs of the students.

David Tilly (left) works with colleagues at the Heartland Area Education Agency 11 in Johnston, Iowa.

Data Days

Full implementation involves institutionalizing and refining the changes identified in the first two phases. At Heartland, implementation includes establishing rules for moving students among instructional options, which helps teachers in the decision-making process. We frequently collect progress-monitoring data for all students with supplemental and intensive learning needs, and teachers use those data to help guide instruction.

We establish a schedule for reviewing all student data three times a year. We call these "Data Days." All of these processes require support, encouragement and leadership from the building principal.

One challenge in the implementation phase of RTI is evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional options we provide our students. Are all children benefitting from their instruction? Are they all making adequate progress? If not, why not? What will we do about it?

Districts are using research-based benchmarks to determine whether students are meeting critical targets on time. If students are not progressing at desired rates, further changes in instruction should occur. Further diagnostic assessments will be needed to determine instructional needs so an instructional match can be made.

Other challenges include maintaining a focus on student learning over the long term and attending to logistical issues such as scheduling, ensuring instructional planning time for teachers and carving out time to implement everything that is necessary to keep all students on positive learning trajectories.

With the challenges, however, come benefits. Jolene Comer, elementary/middle school principal in the Lynnville-Sully Community School District in Sully, Iowa, summarizes the benefits of her schools' use of instructional decision making as "increased student achievement! We've seen our students grow in reading fluency and comprehension during the past two years."

Comer also has seen increased teacher collaboration and use of data. "Teachers don't just look at data anymore," she says. "They understand it, talk about it with their peers, and use it to better serve students. We work together to find answers to problems and to strengthen areas of success."

Since implementing instructional decision making, Sully Elementary has seen the percentage of its 3rd graders considered fluent readers rise from 39 percent to 79 percent. Their 5th graders went from 56 percent to 80 percent fluent.

Self-Corrections

RTI does not give school leaders all the answers. It does, however, provide a validated framework to support school improvement and drive effective instruction that truly benefits all students in the school. It is a self-correcting system that is data-based and can become the foundation for ongoing instructional improvement.

Administrators who successfully lead implementation of an RTI model can wake up every morning knowing the odds will be in their favor that students will receive the instruction that is best matched to their needs. Isn't that why most of us went into education in the first place? ■

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Assessment

Assessment is the eyes of RTI: where you can see what needs to take place, how the pieces come together, and how effective your interventions have been. Pieces of assessment are also found in the other components of RTI, but I think assessment is so important for success that it needs its own category.

The RTI team should consider what assessments should be used for what purposes. There are four basic types of assessments used in RTI. Sometimes you will be able to find one assessment that fits multiple needs. The four assessments are: Screening assessments (to determine who is at or below standard), Diagnostic assessments (to match instructional needs or what needs to be taught), Progress Monitoring assessments (given often, to determine if a student is improving over time), and Outcome based measurement assessments (to determine if a student has improved, based on one time).

It is important that assessment is linked to instruction. If a student is shown to be below standard what will be the next step or plan? Who will be delivering the instruction? How often will we be monitoring the instruction to see if it is working?

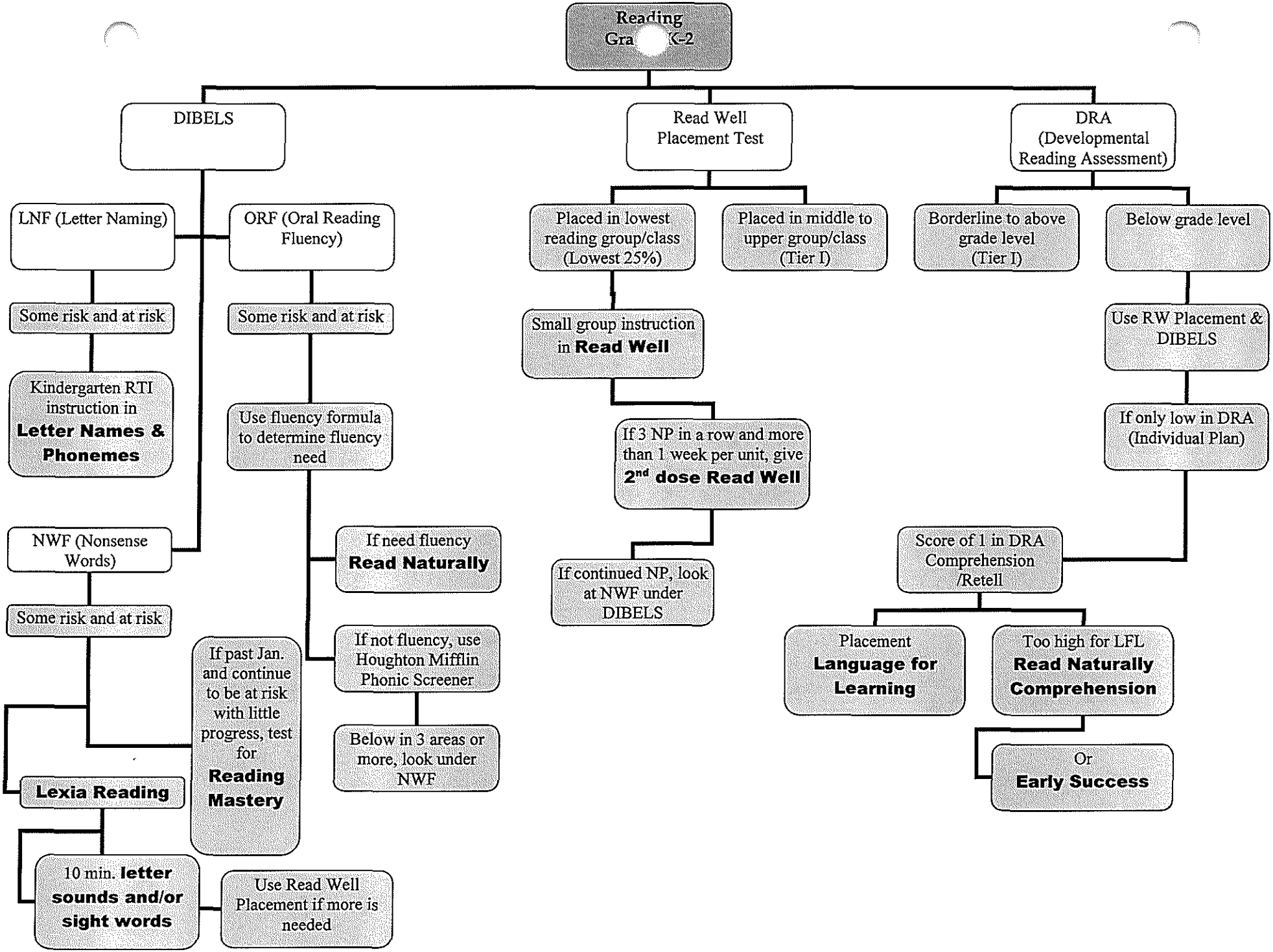
Once data has been disseminated for student needs we also need to review how effective our interventions at each tier have been and what the effectiveness of the program has been.

My Reflection: In my building it took some time to choose the assessments, train testers, organize the material, create the schedule, do the testing, and harness the data in a usable manner. It was important for us to feel like we had some flexibility to do it wrong a few times before we got it right.

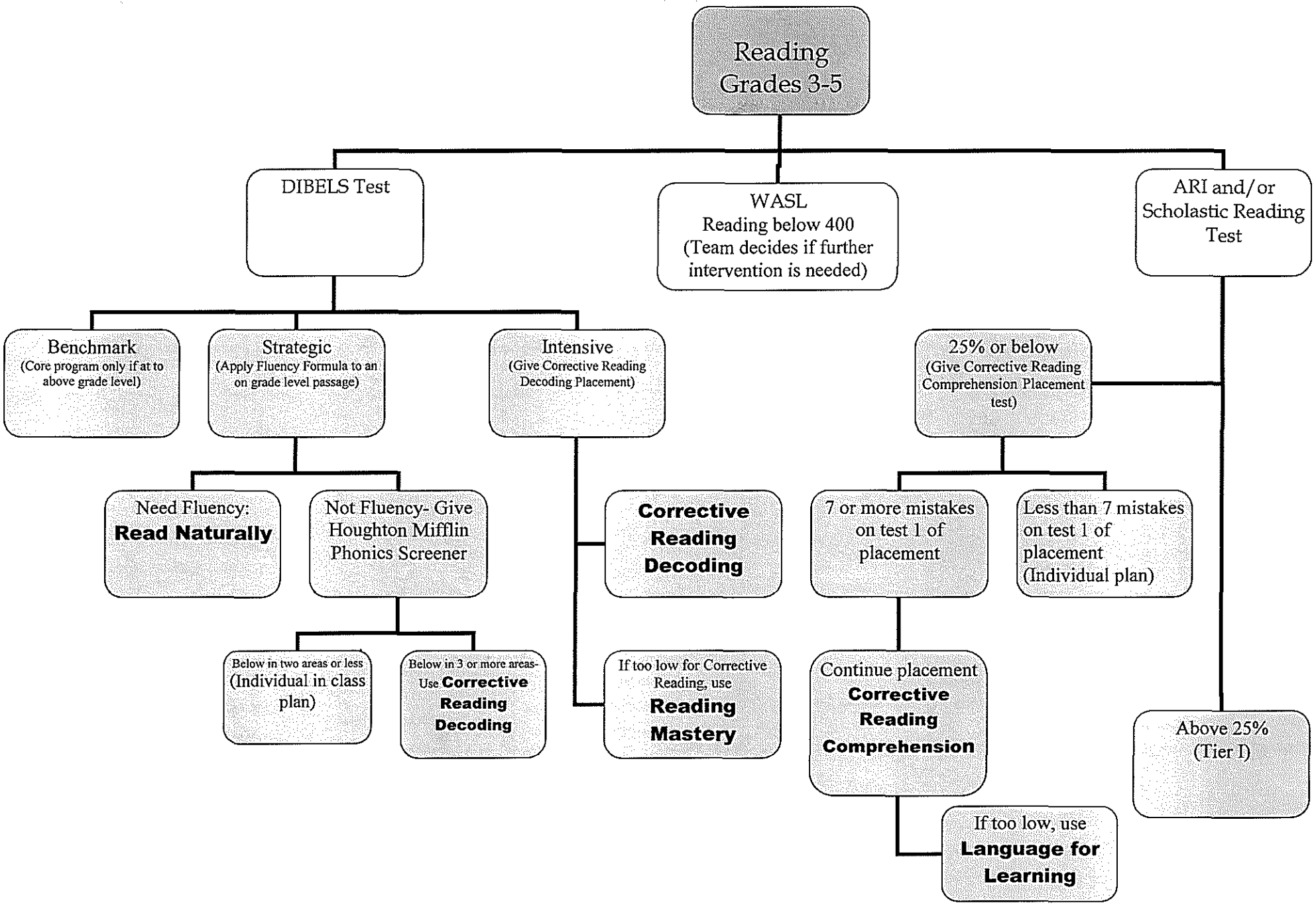
Attached you will find:

1. RTI Flow Chart, Reading K-2 (This was used to help everyone see the link between assessments and interventions. It also helped give us a guide.) p.78
2. RTI Flow Chart, Reading 3-5 (This was used to help everyone see the link between assessments and interventions. It also helped give us a guide.) p.79
3. RTI Placement Card (This card was used to track individual scores on students and make instructional decisions in teams.) p.80

RTI Flow Chart, Reading K-2


Reading
Gra K-2
DIBELS
Read Well
Placement Test
DRA
(Developmental
Reading Assessment)
LNF (Letter Naming)
ORF (Oral Reading
Fluency)
Placed in lowest
reading group/class
(Lowest 25%)
Placed in middle to
upper group/class
(Tier I)
Borderline to above
grade level
(Tier I)
Below grade level
Some risk and at risk
Some risk and at risk
Small group instruction
in Read Well
Use RW Placement &
DIBELS
Kindergarten RTI
instruction in
Letter Names &
Phonemes
Use fluency formula
to determine fluency
need
If 3 NP in a row and more
than 1 week per unit, give
2nd dose Read Well
If only low in DRA
(Individual Plan)
NWF (Nonsense
Words)
If need fluency
Read Naturally
If continued NP, look
at NWF under
DIBELS
Score of 1 in DRA
Comprehension
/Retell
Some risk and at risk
If past Jan.
and continue
to be at risk
with little
progress, test
for
Reading
Mastery
If not fluency, use
Houghton Mifflin
Phonic Screener
Placement
Language for
Learning
Too high for LFL
Read Naturally
Comprehension
Below in 3 areas or
more, look under
NWF
Lexia Reading
Or
Early Success
10 min. letter
sounds and/or
sight words
Use Read Well
Placement if more is
needed

RTI Flow Chart, Reading 3-5


Reading
Grades 3-5
DIBELS Test
WASL
Reading below 400
(Team decides if further intervention is needed)
ARI and/or
Scholastic Reading
Test
Benchmark
(Core program only if at to above grade level)
Strategic
(Apply Fluency Formula to an on grade level passage)
Intensive
(Give Corrective Reading Decoding Placement)
25% or below
(Give Corrective Reading Comprehension Placement test)
Need Fluency:
Read Naturally
Not Fluency- Give Houghton Mifflin Phonics Screener
Corrective Reading Decoding
7 or more mistakes on test 1 of placement
Less than 7 mistakes on test 1 of placement
(Individual plan)
Below in two areas or less
(Individual in class plan)
Below in 3 or more areas-
Use Corrective Reading Decoding
If too low for Corrective Reading, use
Reading Mastery
Continue placement
Corrective Reading Comprehension
Above 25%
(Tier I)
If too low, use
Language for Learning

RTI Placement Card

RTI Decisions 2008-09

Name _____ Grade __

Teacher _____

Benchmark Data

	F	(Progress Monitoring)	W	(Progress Monitoring)	SP
DIBELS (WPM)					
MAZE (# Correct)					
MATH (CD)					

Diagnostic Testing

(Read Well Placement, Reading Mastery Placement, Phonics Screener, Corrective Reading Placement, Language for Learning, DRA, ARI)

Test	Date	Results

Intervention Progress (Progress/No Progress) (P/NP)

Program	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
Program	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE

Other:

RTI Decisions 2008-09

Name _____ Grade __

Teacher _____

Benchmark Data

	F	(Progress Monitoring)	W	(Progress Monitoring)	SP
DIBELS (WPM)					
MAZE (# Correct)					
MATH (CD)					

Diagnostic Testing

(Read Well Placement, Reading Mastery Placement, Phonics Screener, Corrective Reading Placement, Language for Learning, DRA, ARI)

Test	Date	Results

Intervention Progress (Progress/No Progress) (P/NP)

Program	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
Program	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE

Other:

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary

Response to Intervention is a method of service delivery schools can use to improve academic outcomes for all students, as well as improve the identification of students with disabilities. A preventative and proactive problem-solving approach, along with a focus on providing an instructional match to each student's needs using effective practices, are the core principles of RTI. From those five principles, schools may differ in how they design and utilize the key features of RTI (multiple tiers, protocol, assessment systems, and evidence-based instruction). (Barnes & Harlacher, 2008)

It is difficult to accurately record all the changes, meetings, and tasks taking place while one is in motion. Some of the details may have been lost, but the essence of the RTI process has been recorded in the form of this guidebook. In our school, there was an ebb and flow to maintaining direction in RTI. Sometimes the RTI group, or school, seemed ready to move forward in the next step, and other times the amount of other activities taking place in the school made RTI seem like it was on the back burner for a later time. By the end of the year, all staff felt the need to continue to move forward in RTI and they had ideas for beginning RTI in math for the following year.

This guidebook was created to give schools a tool to help them understand more about RTI and resources to use. Care was taken to provide the core principles of RTI in the guidebook. Response to Intervention (RTI) maximizes resources and research in a school system to increase student achievement and reduce behavior problems. Change takes time, persistence, courage, problem solving, and the support of everyone involved.

If this change impacts even a few students that would have fallen through the cracks in the old system, then it is worth the effort and time.

It is difficult to make change happen in a school. Some pockets of staff felt the need to hold on to the old tests and ways of teaching remedial students. One of the nice things about designing a professional development model based off a flexible initiative is that teachers felt supported, their concerns were met with understanding, and change did not take place before they were ready. A drawback of this approach is that a complete transformation to RTI will take a few years, not just one.

Recommendations

- RTI is not a quick-fix, but a long term solution. It is helpful to document, record, and celebrate successes along the way.
- Schools are built on the premise of what is best for the child. RTI is a better system to improve student learning.
- Schools should begin a movement toward RTI by first researching the principles needed in RTI. Next, a committee needs to be created where members discuss the reason for moving to RTI, where to begin, and if the culture of the school is ready for RTI.
- There must be administrative support for this initiative to be successful.
- An expert to help schools through the process and/or training will help schools know and understand the next step in their journey.
- If there is no additional money, no expert, and no training there is still value in practicing the principles of RTI.

- At the core of RTI there is research-based classroom instruction, universal screening of all students, progress monitoring, research-based interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3, and fidelity measures.
- This can be done on a small scale in one classroom, even though this is not the typical model described by RTI.

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