Response to Intervention: Right on Track

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Abstract:

The purpose of response to intervention, or RTI, is founded on the premise that, with data-based decision making and evidence- based practices, children who otherwise may have been identified with a mild educational disability will receive early instructional intervention and thus have the opportunity to remain with their peers in general education settings. For RTI to be successful, educational professionals need to have the core building blocks for implementation. A comprehensive RTI plan integrates academic interventions with behavioral supports to catch struggling learners early. Identification models that include RTI may lead to better achievement and behavior outcomes for all students. Presented here are ideas and resources that teachers can use as interventions for planning for RTI at all levels. The intent is that that these practices will assist in providing informed decisions to address the needs of all student learners.

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Abstract

The purpose of response to intervention, or RTI, is founded on the premise that, with data-based decision making and evidence- based practices, children who otherwise may have been identified with a mild educational disability will receive early instructional intervention and thus have the opportunity to remain with their peers in general education settings. For RTI to be successful, educational professionals need to have the core building blocks for implementation. A comprehensive RTI plan integrates academic interventions with behavioral supports to catch struggling learners early. Identification models that include RTI may lead to better achievement and behavior outcomes for all students. Presented here are ideas and resources that teachers can use as interventions for planning for RTI at all levels. The intent is that that these practices will assist in providing informed decisions to address the needs of all student learners.

Response to Intervention (RTI): Right on Track

Significant changes in the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act of 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005) includes a model of prevention, effective instruction, and intervention referred to as *response to intervention (RTI)* (Hawkins, Kroger, Musti-Roa, Barnett &Ward, 2008; Mellard & McKnight, 2008). The purpose of RTI is founded on the premises that with data-based decision making and evidence-based practices many children, who otherwise may have been identified with a disability, will now have the opportunity to be served in typical educational environments. Overall, RTI has the potential for keeping a class together by promoting instruction in the least restrictive environment. Identification models that include RTI may lead to better achievement and behavior outcomes for all students (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004).

For RTI to be successful, educational professionals need to have the core building blocks for implementation. Ideally, a comprehensive RTI plan integrates academic interventions with behavior support services to catch struggling learners early. Because there are several models of RTI

implementation that school systems may choose, just getting started can be a challenge (CEC, 2008). Therefore, it is essential that educators have knowledge of the services available to identify students at-risk for academic failure. Herein are constructive ways to prepare professionals for the levels of RTI as they address the needs of their students. These interventions are not exclusive. On the contrary, RTI practices are voluminous and look different across varied school settings. However, among these ideas are interventions that teachers may as planning tools for future development of RTI implementation.

Primary Level

RTI typically includes three to four "tiers" of instruction, with more intensive help provided if a child does not respond at each tier. At its primary level (Tier 1), RTI consists of academic services and behavior modifications that are designed for the general education population. Services at this level can be thought of as the "front-line" in the prevention of difficulties because the primary focus is to apply early strategies and related interventions to eradicate the targeted problem (Mellard & McKnight, 2008). Basically, during Tier 1 instruction, a team such as an Instructional Support Team or Child Study Team (Hale, 2008) will design instructional benchmarks for the student who is not achieving at a level commensurate to his peers. Adoption of school-wide interventions at this level may range from utilizing parent and community partnerships or using scientific curriculum and strong evidence of effective instruction. Examples are as follows:

Differentiated Instruction (DI). The key to a differentiated classroom is that all students are included in the learning experience based on their individual learning styles. Unlike the traditional classroom setting, teachers who incorporate DI guarantee that each student is equally important to the daily learning process. For example, through activities such as *peer teaching* and *co-operative learning*, students have the opportunity to become active learners, decision makers, and problem solvers. Differentiated classrooms do not require unique lesson plans but challenges children of all ability levels.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL). As with DI, UDL classrooms offer students with diverse strengths and abilities and their teachers multiple and flexible opportunities to make curricular goals accessible (Hitchcock, 2001). The function of UDL is not to modify or add-on to a pre-existing lesson but rather to transform instruction from the outset in order to broaden the definition of the learners who are expected to succeed in the general education environment (Pisha & Coyne, 2001). UDL can support teachers as they anticipate a wide range of learning styles and abilities in the classroom. As such, they can be prepared to adapt instruction that will most effectively meet all students' needs.

Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI). Classrooms that practice CRI foster a climate of caring,

value, and respect of to promote student performance. Educators are able to use a student's cultural and societal context as a vehicle for learning, rather than deficits (Klump & McNeir, 2005). In other words, culturally responsive classrooms are able to make real-life connections based on children life experiences. Activities can include developing and literacy skills across curriculums, as well as learning from and about culture, language, and learning styles (Lipka, 2002.)

Additional behavioral interventions at the primary level include using:

Positive Behavioral Support system (PBS). This school-wide approach focuses on proactive and preventive, rather than aversive and punitive, behavioral techniques (Sugai & Horner, 2001). Interventions are designed not only to decrease problem behaviors, but also to improve the quality of life for students exhibiting those behaviors. This is accomplished through increasingly intensive supports and data-based decision making. School faculties develop school-wide management plans, incorporate these plans into the daily workings of the school, and provide a framework for reinforcing compliance. Students are taught what behaviors are expected and held accountable and rewarded for meeting expectations (Kern & Manz, 2004).

Positive classroom management. Positive classroom management includes behavior management processes and interventions to enhance the likelihood that children will develop effective behaviors that are personally fulfilling, productive, and socially acceptable (Salend, 2008). Interventions could include creating a token-economy, setting clear daily social and instructional goals instruction or a combination of the two (Cheney, 2008). Needless to say, as interventions are implemented, on-going screenings should be conducted to make informed, data-based decisions about the student's progress. Throughout the intervention implementation, it is the general educator's responsibility to collect the data relating to student performance. Regular progress monitoring is imperative to make sure that the student is achieving expected levels. Educational markers that are helpful in charting student progress include using universal screenings such as curriculum based measurements and web-based achievement systems.

Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM). One tool teachers can use to assess academic skills, and develop meaningful target instruction. Student data is gathered and compared against benchmarks within curricular and instructional processes. An Internet source to assist with CBM can be found at http://www/interventioncentral.org/

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIEBLS). DIEBLS is an achievement system essential for monitoring early literacy skills. Many students who are struggling readers can benefit from the data that

result from implementing DIEBLS.

Precision Teaching (PT). PT utilizes fluency measures charted on a standard celebration chart for improving academic and social behaviors. An Internet source to assist with PT is http://www.precionteachingresource.net/

Assessment Intervention Monitoring System (AIMS). AIMS provides a web-based formative achievement system that facilitates continuous student performance. AIMS benchmarks and monitors essential skill areas in short periods of time. An Internet source to assist with AIMS can be found at http://www.aimsweb.com.

Naturally, if the intervention is working, progress monitoring of student performance will indicate successful implementation for the student. However, if the student is non-respondent to the intervention, the approach should change and progress monitoring should continue until the child improves. This approach does not rely on diagnosing the child, but focuses on whether the child has a "skill deficit" or a "performance deficit," and provides help until the child's skill level improves (Hale, 2008).

Secondary Level

Secondary services (Tier 2) are distinctive in that they are designed for targeted, researched interventions and modifications for the student who is not responsive to the school- wide preventions at the primary level (NCDPI, 2008). Service delivery options must focus on a systematic approach to providing and meeting the needs of the student. Thus, specific interventions to address the struggling learner can be used. At the secondary level, the problem- solving model has known to be effective for children struggling academically and behaviorally.

When using a problem-solving model decisions are made individually for students by a team of professionals who consider the needs of each child and develop strategies based on those specific needs. When using a problem-solving model decisions are made individually for students by a team of professionals who consider the needs of each child and develop strategies based on those specific needs. The problem-solving mode includes four steps (Hale, 2008). These basic steps in the problem-solving model (a) define the problem, (b) plan an intervention, (c) implement the plan, and (d) evaluate the student's progress. In addition, self-management and self-monitoring procedures, behavioral contracts, (Gresham, 2005) in conjunction with a positive classroom management and effective discipline plans could be applied for academic and behavior. The child may also receive supplemental support in addition to core instruction. For example, provide services in small groups within the regular classroom setting through flexible grouping for small group instruction and focused academic help

sessions (Torgesen, 2004). Specific interventions used at this level require the educator to use research-based interventions tailored to the student needs. Table 1 provides additional web resources based on research-based interventions. <Insert Table 1 here>

Tertiary Level

The tertiary level (Level 3) is reserved for more intensive assessments and interventions. Individualized instruction on modified instruction beyond the secondary level is required for the student to access the general education curriculum (NCDPI, 2008). Optimal practices at this level include instruction tailored to the individual needs or skill deficits. Interventions at this level require longer and more frequent sessions to inductively determine progress. Instructional contents and programs at level three may require the educator to create short-term interventions targeted to those students demonstrating need, set goals and generalization methods to promote skills for typical educational environments (Hawkins et al., 2008), and design individualized interventions such as one-on-one tutoring and individualized instruction. In conjunction, the use of wrap-around services may be required. Wrap-around services are community-based approaches that provide comprehensive, integrated services available through links with families and community resources within the school (Walker & Schutte, 2004). Direct services may include physical and mental health assessments, vision and hearing screenings, and group counseling. As always, progress monitoring should be used to determine student response to interventions at all tiers. Frequent monitoring and documentation based on problem-solving, data, and functional hypothesis should be used to adjust both school-wide and specific-tailored interventions.

The Fourth Level

Consequently, there is a fourth tier associated with RTI but it is often synonymous with special education services. Obviously, if the student is non-respondent to all three tiers, a referral for special education instruction may be required. After a comprehensive evaluation, an individualized education program team must convent to determine special education disability, placement, and service delivery (NCDPI, 2008).

With emphasis on early intervention with struggling students, RTI should be considered in light of the need for more individualized, evidence-based instructional practices for children with learning needs. It is hoped that these practices will assist in providing informed decisions to address the needs of all student learners.

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Table 1

Web Resources for Evidence-based Interventions

Web Resource	
http://core.ecu/psyc/rileytilman/rileytilman.html	Links to an Evidence Based Intervention Manual. The manual contains specific on how to implement academic and research-base interventions.
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_g_resources/programsandpractices.asp	Note “Strategies to Improve Access to the General Education Curriculum”.
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/universal_design.asp	Contains Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies
http://www.education- world.com/a_curr/virtualwkshp/virtual wkshp006.shtml	Examples of differentiated curriculum

http://www.k8accesscenter.org/trainin g_resources/default.asp
Extensive information on accessible curricula, teacher training and other resources for inclusive practices

http://research.nichcy.org
Contains a comprehensive research to practice
database.

http://serge.ccsso.org Special education resources for general educators.
Contains academic and behavior interventions general educators can use in the classroom.

http://www.interventioncentral.org
A comprehensive site for RTI resources; includes academic and behavior interventions.

http://www.circleofinclusion.org
Inclusive practices for students ages birth through eight.

http:// www.newhorizons.org./strategies/front _strategies.html
Contains some of the most widely implemented strategies to help all students to succeed. Also includes information from experts in the field, books, websites, and other resources.

http://www.free-reading.net The Free Reading website.
Free Reading is a high- quality, open-source free reading intervention program
for grades K-3.

http://reading.uoregon.edu/
Big Ideas in reading.

http://www.readingrockets.org/
Resources to help target reading problems and teacher/parent resources

http://www.centeroninstruction.org

A collection of scientifically based research and information on K-12 instruction.

http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/

Clearinghouse of information for validated interventions.

http://www.ed.gov/Math/silver.html

Information on how to improve mathematics education in the middle grades.

http://chilgtrends.org/lifecourse/progra ms_ages.htm

Contains information about programs and practices to help emotional and behavioral skill development.

http://serc.gws.uky.edu/pbis/

A behavioral tutorial for parents and teachers.

http://www.usu.edu/teachall/text/behavior/LRBI.htm

Least restrictive environment behavior interventions.

http://www.shawpsych.com/teachingtools.htm

Intervention ideas for planning and organization.