RTI in Middle Schools

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February 9, 2010

Supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Cooperative agreement #H32E070004.

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What do we mean by RTI?

Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems.

With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.
Agenda

❖ Provide an overview of research methods
❖ Description of what RTI looks like in middle schools
❖ Describe how RTI works in a middle school setting
Research Studies of RTI at the Secondary Level

- No experimental studies investigating an RTI framework of commonly associated components
  - Screening
  - Student progress monitoring
  - Tiered level of services
  - Data-based decision making
- Descriptive studies of a few high schools
- *Webinar on High School RTI this Thursday, February 11, 2010*
Intended Outcomes

❖ Our outcomes are multi-faceted
  ❖ Describe current implementation practices
  ❖ Identify key factors in successful implementation at the middle school level
  ❖ Identify exemplary practices linked to student outcome data
  ❖ Identify exemplary practices
Research Participants

- Participants are middle schools implementing a full model of RTI:
  - universal school-wide screening
  - progress monitoring
  - tiered levels of interventions
  - fidelity of implementation
- The 42 middle schools represent the following states:
  - Alaska
  - Arizona
  - California
  - Colorado
  - Connecticut
  - Georgia
  - Illinois
  - Iowa
  - Maryland
  - Minnesota
  - Missouri
  - Montana
  - New York
  - North Dakota
  - South Carolina
  - Utah
  - Virginia
  - Washington
Methods

Phase 1-Scouting
Identify schools implementing RTI through self-nomination, peer-nomination, publications, conferences, RTI Summit participation (December 2007), and Internet searches

Phase 2-Screening
Initial contact with individual school officials.
1) Describe the project
2) Solicit participation
3) Inquire about RTI components in place

Phase 3-Describe Practices
One-hour phone interviews covering RTI implementation, universal screening, progress monitoring, and tiered interventions.

Phase 4-Student Data Interviews
Follow-up phone interview to gather quantitative information on student data and outcome measures from RTI components (universal screening, progress monitoring, tiered interventions, and fidelity of implementation).

Phase 5-Onsite Visit
Final in-depth interview and observation. We review indices of fidelity, identification procedures for SLD, and professional development activities.

Phase 6-Workgroup
Convene workgroup of sites with exemplar practice.

N = 85
N = 42
N = 30
N = 12
N = 6
N = 5
What did we find?

- The participating schools have been implementing RTI from less than 1 year to 6 years.
- Methods of implementation varied by school.
- Schools generally started incrementally with one classroom or one component.
- Emphasis on building the culture by engaging students and staff in the RTI process and the data.
  - Systemic leadership is essential.
Screening Practices 
(n = 30)

Schools have screening practices throughout grades and content areas.

- The majority (17/30) of schools screen 3 times each year.

- Screening tools varied school by school; 17 of 30 used multiple screening measures (e.g., oral reading fluency and Jamestown reading passages with comprehension questions).

- The most common screening tools for reading and math were:
  - AIMSweb, MAP (NWEA), CBMs, state assessment results
Progress Monitoring Practices (n = 30)

- Progress monitoring practices are very diverse and challenging.
  - Most respondents use multiple measures for each content area (21 of 30). AIMSweb is the most commonly used tool (17 of 30).
  - Most schools do not progress monitor in the primary level of prevention (general education).
  - The secondary level of intervention progress monitoring ranges from weekly to monthly.
  - The tertiary level of intervention progress monitoring ranges from daily to twice a month.
Data-based Decision Making

- Common sources of data to make student intervention level placement decisions are:
  - Screening scores
  - State assessment scores
  - Formative (progress monitoring) assessments
  - Classroom performance
  - Failure to respond to previous interventions
  - Teacher referrals
  - Attendance records
  - Office discipline referrals

- Decisions are often made in a team meeting
Intervention Delivery

Schools are innovative with their schedules, time and staff.

- Struggling students received interventions within one week to 1 month after identification.
- The student-teacher ratio was frequently:
  - Secondary – 10-15:1
  - Tertiary – 4-5:1
- Most schools include special education students throughout all levels of intervention, while a few consider special education their highest tier (tier 3 or 4).
Primary Prevention
General Education

- Improving their general education is pivotal to success
- Engaging students in their learning – every student knows their objectives and lessons each day
- Teachers and staff share a common culture of “they learned it” not “I taught it”
- All classes are standardized (Mr. X’s 6th grade math is the same as Ms. Y’s 6th grade math)
Secondary Interventions (N=30)

- **Schedule:** Secondary interventions often occur during electives or an already existing “flex” class period.
- **Delivery:** General education teachers most frequently (9 of 30) teach the secondary level, but some schools report a combination of general educators, special educators, and specialists.
- **Frequency:** 14 of 30 said students receive Tier 2 interventions daily. 11 of 30 said students receive Tier 2 interventions 2x-3x per week.
- **Duration:** Times ranged from 15 to 180 minutes; mode is 60 minutes (10 of 30).
Tertiary Interventions (N=30)

- **Schedule:** Most tertiary classes occur in place of core (general education) and elective classes.
- **Delivery:** Special educators (16 of 30) are the most common teachers for tertiary intervention.
- **Frequency:** Most tertiary interventions occur daily.
- **Duration:** Usually classes last one class period each day. Often, length is dependent upon multiple issues (e.g., problem severity, subject, intervention method).
8 of 12 perform fidelity checks on adherence and instructional quality of instruction and assessments

Many schools reported that they are still in process of making fidelity checks a part of their standard procedures
## Example of Fidelity Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools to check for fidelity</th>
<th>Classroom observations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student progress monitoring results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checklists of procedures completed by observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checklists of prescribed intervention procedures</td>
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<td>Interviews conducted with teachers</td>
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<td>Permanent products</td>
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<td>Videos of instruction implementation</td>
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<td>Teacher to teacher observation</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Staff involved</th>
<th>Principal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School psychologist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student achievement teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers also complete fidelity checks on the principal, school psych, and student achievement teacher</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Scheduled observations (once a quarter)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Surprise” unscheduled observations (can happen weekly, or more often if a teacher is struggling)</td>
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Key Structures in Successful Schools

- Strong, cohesive, knowledgeable leadership
- Routinize methodological practices
  - E.g., have a weekly meeting to discuss student data.
- Most started small – one small group of staff members in one grade in one content area.
- Gain support of staff with data and testimony of the smaller group.
Consistent Findings

Most schools had screening in place, had a system for progress monitoring, and had at least secondary level intervention classes.

Many schools struggled with adequate staff and resources for tertiary level interventions and progress monitoring.

Most schools focus on reading, math, and behavior. Other content areas mentioned were writing, science, social studies.
“RTI = All Staff + All Kids”

- Schools reported a cultural shift in language and thinking.
  - Teachers think less about teaching content and more about ensuring the students learn.
  - All staff own all students, no more “my student” or “his student.”
  - All teachers can teach reading and math.
- Debate point: “RTI is about remediation, not prevention.”
Shared Challenges

- Guidance for data-based decision making rubrics
  - E.g., combining screening measures
- Reviewing and changing class scheduling
- Finding appropriate assessments and interventions for middle school students
- Organizing time, schedules, resources, and staff.
Testimony from Work Group

- Five school representatives met
  - RTI is possible in middle schools
  - Assess the resources already in existence, then see what else is needed
  - Innovate techniques and interventions
  - Use your data: keep what works, change what doesn’t
  - Leadership is key to putting change in motion
  - Combine professional development with coaching
Old Vail Middle School

- Located in Vail, AZ
- Middle class population
- Small % minority population
- Implement three tier RTI for 5 years
- Began in elementary schools as a district-led initiative
- Met AYP every year since RTI implementation
Screening

ALL STUDENTS
- CBM Maze and ORF
- CBM Correct Writing Sequence
- CBM Mixed Math Facts

3 times a year

RTI Leadership Team
- meets weekly-

Members: Principal, School Psychologist, Student Achievement Teacher (data manager)

Screening decision rules

Did student score above predetermined cut score?

Yes

Above cut score → remain in Tier 1
No further action

Students scoring below cut score
Additional Assessments “Can’t Do/Won’t Do”

“can’t do”
“won’t do”

No

Decision rules

PM trend lines show growth?

No

Special Education Eval
Tier 3 Intervention

Yes

Tier 2 Intervention for 15 days
Progress Monitor Daily

Decision rules

PM trend lines show growth?

No

Tier 1 Intervention for 15 days
Progress Monitor Weekly

Yes

Behavioral Intervention
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>Maze (# of correctly circled words in 2 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td>Mixed basic facts (# of digits correct in 2 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>Correct writing sequence (# of correct writing sequences in 3 minutes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Follow-up for students in bottom 16%** | 1. Can’t Do, Won’t Do assessment  
                           2. Oral Reading Fluency (# of words correct in 1 minute) |
Old Vail Middle School

Screening

- Screening is administered 3x per year by a three-person team (principal, school psychologist, and a general education teacher).

- When screening results indicate a student may be struggling, an intervention is provided in the primary level, and the student is progress monitored weekly.
Old Vail Middle School

Progress Monitoring

- Progress monitoring occurs in each tier.
  - Primary level: students receiving interventions are progress monitored weekly.
  - Secondary and tertiary levels: students are progress monitored daily.
- Progress monitoring data is used to determine tier placement.
  - Interventions are applied on a 15-day cycle. If, after 15 days, progress monitoring data show no improvement, the student is moved to a higher tier or another intervention is implemented.
Old Vail Middle School
Academic Interventions

- Primary Level Instruction
  - Synonymous with general education. At risk students receive interventions for a 15-day cycle.

| Structure       | General education
|                 | Reading, writing, and math instruction is each provided 55-70 minutes, daily
|                 | Co-teaching model with student teacher ratio 12:1
| Interventions   | 1. Standards based instruction
|                 | 2. Direct instruction from teacher
|                 | 3. After school tutoring (voluntary)
|                 | 4. Saturday school (voluntary)
| Teachers        | General education teachers
|                 | Special education teachers
Old Vail Middle School
Academic Interventions

- Secondary Level Interventions
  - Daily 35-40 minute interventions
  - Use problem-solving to determine appropriate intervention
  - Students take reteach/enrichment classes (during elective time) focused on their problem area
  - General education and special education teachers provide instruction
  - Student-teacher ratio is 2-4:1
Old Vail Middle School

Academic Interventions

- Tertiary Level Interventions
  - Special Education
  - Daily intervention of at least 45 minutes
    - Some students receive up to three class periods of intervention (140 minutes)
  - Co-teaching and elective class periods
    - Special educator works with small groups during regular class period
    - Special educator teaches elective classes on basic skills
Middle School Evaluation Study
Next Steps

- We will produce
  - A summary document of findings
  - A profile of the six schools visited
  - Topical video clips from practitioners

- Continue recruiting new middle school sites

Thank you and now your questions!

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&
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