RTI in Middle Schools – Webinar Transcript
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Susan Caceres: We are fortunate to have Dr. Daryl Mellard and Sara Prewett with us today. Dr. Mellard is a co-principal investigator for the National Center on Response to Intervention and also is the Director of the Division in Adult Studies at the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas.

Previously he had similar roles with the OSEP-funded National Research Center on Learning Disabilities. Dr. Mellard co-authored a Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Response to Intervention. His other research activities focus on adolescent and adult reading literacy and transition of students into post-secondary studies.

Sara Prewett is a Program Associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and works with the National Center on Response to Intervention. Sara works with the multiyear nationwide evaluation study of RTI practices in middle school settings. We are very fortunate they are sharing their expertise with us today. So let me turn it over to them.

Slide 1: RTI in Middle Schools

Daryl Mellard: Thank you Susan. Well, welcome folks and if you are in Kansas today you'd be enjoying another beautiful day. Well it's not quite beautiful, those snow flurries but, you know, we had such a great trip to Texas yesterday. Our big Monday trip so today we're just kind of all glowing. We hope that you are having a great day wherever you are too. In the course of our presentation today we'll offer that review of our national perspective on middle school implementation on RTI.

Slide 2: University of Kansas NCRTI Project Staff

As we go along we've included some of the answers to emailed questions that we previously received so we hope to get to those and then allow time remaining at the end for addressing other questions that you might be sending to us.

So Sara and I weren't the only ones working on this study of middle school RTI. Numerous other staff at KU were part of that effort, as well, including several of our graduate research assistants from the school psychology program.

Slide 3: What do we mean by RTI?

As we begin thinking about RTI we want to focus a little bit on a couple of key concepts. First, important in that is how RTI doesn't have just one model. As we review our middle school study, that becomes apparent as well but, rather, RTI offers a framework in which school staffs

can integrate assessment and intervention procedures, if you will, within that multilevel prevention system.

The integration piece of assessment results, whether that's in screening or progress monitoring, is one of those critical elements because we use that information then in looking at possible interventions and judging the effectiveness of those interventions with the students.

One of the challenges, and we'll review multiple challenges evidenced in the schools as we go along, was that important element of integration of those results. That posed a significant challenge to our school staffs.

Slide 4: Agenda

When we think a little bit about the agenda for today's webinar we'll provide an overview of our research methods, figuring that most folks aren't too interested in the how but more about what those findings indicated about middle school implementation and then go to a more specific example of how RTI worked within a particular middle school setting.

Slide 5: Research Studies of RTI at the Secondary Level

We know from our review of the literature that we have no experimental studies of an RTI framework in a secondary setting or multiple settings, that is, we can't point to a body of literature that talks about screening and progress monitoring and those multilevel tiers or the decision making framework.

So we wanted to begin describing that landscape of implementation through a series of descriptive studies that is very similar to work that's been done in describing implementation in a high school setting.

We want to remind you that on Thursday, the Center will also be hosting a webinar on high school implementation of RTI. Several of us participated with staff from the National High School Center and the Center on Instruction in those descriptive studies.

Slide 6: Intended Outcomes

When we began our research project about the description of middle school implementation of RTI, we identified multiple outcomes that we hoped we would be able to achieve.

And central to that, again, was painting a picture of the current landscape, that is, what does RTI look like within those settings and then what seemed to be some of the key factors that support that implementation in those settings. If we can get some handle on some of those key factors we get a better sense of what we might be able to replicate.

And then, from those settings, talk about some specific exemplary practices primarily around the screening, the progress monitoring, and how the tiered levels of services were developed,

implemented and sustained - again the integration piece is a significant challenge within that middle school setting - and then be able to identify some specific settings that illustrate those exemplary practices.

Slide 7: Research Participants

That part of the method of this study of middle schools was to cast a broad net if you will – we kind of went trolling in the waters of middle schools to identify those settings in which they have a full model implemented. And by full model we meant that they were conducting school wide screening, that students' progress was monitored on a consistent, objective basis, that students moved through multiple tiers of intervention, and that we had some assessment of the fidelity with which those interventions were being delivered.

Just a little bit of an aside: when we looked at the elementary school implementation of RTI we could see many practices that we thought were effective. But as we studied those more carefully we had a greater deal of difficulty making a distinction among those practices that were being implemented effectively or those that, well, the school staff might say they did implement. But, you know, the level of implementation, the consistency with which those practices were being implemented became a larger question as we kind of dove beneath the surface.

As we went trolling for those middle schools, we identified 42 during last year, during the academic year; looking across, I think we had 18 states in those settings as well.

Slide 8: Methods

So, the method of identifying the model practices: we put those 42 middle schools through a series of phases, as you can see. The larger set was identifying who said that they were implementing RTI and for that we had about 85 schools. And then as we began screening, we lost half of those because in a sense they did not have the full model in place or were lacking some of the data to describe that more fully-implemented model.

As we went further or deeper into their implementation, again, more of those sites or those 42 sites dropped out. We went to 30 where we were able to conduct phone interviews regarding their implementation of screening and progress monitoring and tiered interventions.

Then, at that point, you see there was a significant drop again. Better than half of those schools dropped out in part because of – I want to try to say this -- maybe it just wasn't well enough described so that we could give an accurate description to audiences such as yourselves about the practice. So that became a key element. That is, could we look at the practice and describe it sufficiently so that someone would know how to replicate it, for example.

And then we went to the next level involving those 12 schools saying well what do the student data tell us? What's the quality of student outcomes in those settings?

And then as we looked more carefully at the student data, we realized that really we had six where we wanted to make site visits and again take a more careful in-depth look at their implementation.

So largely what we'll be describing today are practices from those 30 schools. But when it comes down to who was exemplary, it's much closer to that group of six about whom we're going to say, yes, those practices make sense to us. We want to look more carefully at those or describe those for you.

So roughly that was the last year's effort at taking those 85 schools through our multiple steps of screening.

Slide 9: Methods

(Skipped)

Slide 10: What did we find?

Sara will now get to the meat of what were the important findings from those multiple schools.

Sara Prewett: Thank you Daryl for doing such a great job describing what we did and making it sound so easy.

Most of the schools we talked to followed the sixth to eighth grade model. We had a question before we even started about what grades we would be looking at, and we really were seeing grades six through eight for the most part.

And as you can see at the first bullet on the slide, we were talking with schools that were in different places in their implementation process -- from less than a year and just beginning, all the way up to six years, schools that have had a chance to put the practices in place.

Those schools were all over the map in terms of how they were implementing RTI, how they were putting these components in place. What we generally found is that most of the time they started with one classroom - so just reading in sixth grade, or they started with just one component – so putting in screening, for example, and would go from there.

What everybody talked about a lot was this emphasis on building the culture. So a key piece is talking to your staff, getting your staff onboard, having everybody understand what RTI is and what all of the components are that you want to put in place and engaging the students in that process.

The students should also be having this conversation around data collection and understanding what it is that's happening in their schools. So if a student is found to be at risk from your screening process and is being put into an intervention classroom, that student should understand why and then understand his or her own progress monitoring data. So having the students and

staff engaged in the whole process provides the systemic leadership that is essential and creates buy-in for your school.

Slide 11: Screening Practices

I'm going to talk specifically now about some of the things we found with those key components that Daryl mentioned. We focused on screening, progress monitoring, tiered interventions, database decision making, and fidelity practices when we were talking with these schools. And I know that many of you are very interested in how these pieces are being put in place in middle schools.

Screening practices are often the first thing that schools put in place and it might be the easiest because it's fairly straightforward. You do need to find a tool that will work for your school and for the component or the content areas that you want to put in place. But it's usually the thing that schools find the easiest to establish. Schools emphasize that the screening data is an essential piece because without it they don't even know how to begin identifying students who need interventions. So it becomes a foundational component.

And as you'll see on the second bullet, the majority of our schools were screening three times each year so they looked at their calendar at the beginning of the year and found a time, a week in September, a week in January, and a week in May that worked for them to screen all the students in their school.

The screening measures, the actual tools that they used, really varied by school. You can see a couple of common ones. A lot of people are using AIMSweb, MAP, CBMs (curriculum-based measures) and state assessments. But even more so, a lot of people are using multiple measures. So they're not just using AIMSweb or an oral reading fluency measure, but they're using that in combination with comprehension questions from other tools. They're gathering multiple data points to really see where their students are struggling.

Slide 12: Progress Monitoring Practices

So once schools have screening practices in place, the next set of data that they need to really be collecting is this progress monitoring piece that Daryl discussed. While schools said that screening is essential they also were talking about how they couldn't live without the progress monitoring data because if they don't have the data from progress monitoring they don't know whether or not the interventions they put into place are working.

Even though progress monitoring is one of the most important pieces it was also one of the most varied pieces or components, and it was one of the most challenging for schools because again they needed measures that worked and worked well and measured what they wanted to measure.

Most schools don't monitor progress at all in the primary level of prevention - general education - although a few do and we'll talk about that in a little bit. In the secondary level of intervention, everybody is pretty much monitoring progress to some degree either weekly all the way up to

monthly although I don't think there was a consensus at all about how often was the best. And then with the tertiary level it ranged from daily to twice a month.

So we are seeing that as you step up intensity you're stepping up the frequency of progress monitoring. And Daryl has something he'd like to say about this.

Daryl Mellard: Well, you know, it becomes a challenge for us to judge the efficacy of an intervention if we're waiting to progress monitor on a monthly basis. That's too much intervention being delivered without the feedback as to its effectiveness. We need to have better indicators of whether or not that intervention is going to be working for students on a more frequent basis.

And particularly if we move to a behavioral intervention with students with severe persistent behavioral difficulties, for example a self injurious issue or the potential of injuries to others. We need a high frequency of progress monitoring there to know whether or not we're intervening successfully or not. So the range of practices that Sara described certainly poses some challenges with that implementation.

Sara Prewett: And really I think the range is indicative of the fact that people are struggling to know for themselves what is the best for their school and their schedule and their time and their staff and their resources.

So this was one of the components I think that all schools are still tweaking even if they have something in place. They're constantly looking at it and trying to make sure that it's what they need to have. So it's something that schools really need to take a hard look at.

Daryl Mellard: And remember this is with the 30 schools, not our exemplary practices.

Sara Prewett: Right.

Daryl Mellard: ... because certainly as we moved into the more exemplary practices there was a higher frequency of progress monitoring.

Slide 13: Data-based Decision Making

Sara Prewett: So as schools are collecting all of this data, what do they do with it?

They are making decisions about where some students should be placed. And how do you make those decisions? This was something we heard about from a lot of different administrators: now that they've got all these numbers, how do they use them? It's very promising that most schools decided that they can't place the decision making process on one person or one staff. They need to do it in a group setting.

So most of the time, we see that school staff members are meeting weekly or biweekly or monthly to make sure that they're constantly looking at the data that they're collecting. So

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placement decisions: if your screening assessments indicate that you have 20 students that really need some reading intervention, this team meeting will be a place that your RTI Leadership Team can make the decisions on where best to put these students.

A lot of times, as you see from the list of the common sources, people aren't just looking at the screening scores but they are looking at an entire list of different things. They're also looking at grades. And they're looking at failure to respond to prior interventions. And they're also looking at some of the state assessment scores. So when you're talking about a student in these team settings, they're looking at a whole range of data rather than just one piece.

Slide 14: Intervention Delivery

So once that decision has been made to place somebody into an intervention of some kind, the schools have to have a system put into place. This is another rather difficult area that we've seen the schools struggling with because they do need to be innovative with their schedule, their time, their staff, and their resources.

What we're finding is that they are being incredibly innovative and finding ways to make it happen. One of the really promising findings that we discovered is that students who are at risk receive interventions within one week to one month after identification from a screener. So they're getting those interventions really quickly.

And at the secondary level they have a very small class size, 10 to 15, and in the tertiary level, it's even smaller, 4 to 5 students per teacher.

And most middle schools include their special education students throughout all levels of their intervention. There are a few who consider special ed their highest tier, Tier 3 or Tier 4. But for the most part those special ed students are receiving services throughout all interventions. So if they actually could benefit from a secondary level intervention they get that service.

Slide 15: Primary Prevention / General Education

When we're speaking about interventions I think it's very easy to skip general education entirely and focus on how you put in secondary or tertiary level interventions. But especially with those six schools that we thought were particularly exemplary, we found that they really focused on making sure that their general education curriculum is the best that they can possibly make it. They said, "This is pivotal, this is key. If you want to be able to serve those numbers of secondary and tertiary students, you have to make sure that you are reaching everybody you can in your general education setting."

And in fact one of our schools said that they knew they had a math problem, a general education math problem. So they put all of their resources first into solving that problem and then worried about putting secondary interventions in place.

Another thing that we saw across the board was that these schools really engage their students in their learning. And while that sounds very commonsensical (of course we do that!), what we were actually seeing when we were observing was that every student knows their objectives. They know exactly what it is that they're supposed to be learning. It's written on the board. They can repeat it back to you. They're very involved in their goals and objectives and what it is that they are doing and how they make those connections across their classes.

Another key piece is that there's this common culture that every staff person embraces: every student and every teacher is responsible for every student's learning. And it's less of 'well I'm a science teacher and I taught the lesson; they should have gotten it' and more 'I'm going to teach them. I'm going to make sure that they got it.'

And finally, one of the things that we've heard, particularly from that person who told me that they had a math problem, was now they make sure that all of their math classes are standardized so all of the sixth grade math classes are teaching the exact same thing at the exact same time. There isn't a discrepancy if a student moves from one class to another; students will be receiving the same lessons.

Slide 16: Secondary Interventions

So -- secondary interventions -- and I think this is where people are incredibly interested to know what we found. We found that the key pieces that we want to talk about and that we think are difficult for people to put in place are the schedules, the delivery, the frequency and the duration. For the most part with secondary interventions, people are scheduling those classes during elective time or already existing flex time. So during elective time kids are getting taken out of choir or band to be put into the math intervention. And some schools already have this flex period where everybody is some place but it's a little bit more flexible. So they can use that time for an intervention.

Most of the time general education teachers are teaching the secondary interventions. Sometimes they are using a combination of general ed and special ed. Most classes are being taught daily, and they're being taught for a class period. The duration ranges from 15 to 80 minutes. But what that means is that most of these are actually a class period long.

Now we actually got a question in advance about what interventions people are using. And are there any good reading interventions to use? Well I don't think we can promote any specific intervention but we can point you to the What Works Clearinghouse and the ...

Daryl Mellard: ... Best Evidence Encyclopedia.

Sara Prewett: ... so you can do some research on what might fit your school. And what I can also tell you is that schools are reaching deep into their toolboxes to find what they can to provide these interventions.

So schools are using a variety of tools and programs; for example, some are using strategic learning models, writing labs, and programs like Language!, Read Naturally, Soar to Success, and Let's Read, among others. And then others are trying to increase the intensity by doing things like re-teaching the core material and using smaller class sizes, differentiating the instruction, using different instructors, using different strategies and things like peer tutoring.

So it's really diverse. I think what schools are doing when they're really finding a good method is they are already looking at what exists in their toolbox and figuring out what the students need and then are able to structure their classes around those things.

Slide 17: Tertiary Interventions

So when we get to tertiary level interventions, it gets a little bit more complicated for schools to schedule these. These are really pretty small groups with most schools having to individualize the instruction for these two or three kids. They're occurring most often in place of core classes. As one principal told me: "You know, if they can't read then they're not going to understand what's going on in social studies so I'd rather take them out of social studies to make sure that they're getting the reading instruction they need."

Other schools do have the option of taking at-risk students out of elective classes but that usually means that the most at-risk students are missing two elective classes and are in reading three times a day. So it seems that some schools are deciding that that's not their best method. Most of the time special educators are the teachers providing the tertiary level of intervention, although some schools actually have hired RTI interventionists to deliver this instruction.

The tertiary interventions occur daily for the most part and they're usually about a class period long. And a lot of times these schools are adding - they're having the tertiary kids in a secondary class and a tertiary class so they are getting those three periods a day of reading or math.

Some of the resources that they're using to provide these tertiary interventions are things that middle schools already have for their special ed classes. They're using programs like Corrective Reading and Connecting Math. They're using Key Math. They're using Wilson. So they're using the same kinds of tools that they were already using for their special education classes.

And again most of the time they're taking every resource that they already have and letting all the teachers know, all the staff know, what it is that they have in their toolbox of resources and figuring out what works best for which students. So this is very individualized instruction.

Slide 18: Fidelity

And now I'm going to let Daryl talk about fidelity for a little while. Okay, just a few minutes.

Daryl Mellard: All right, so when we move into the discussion about fidelity of implementation or treatment integrity, you note that we're really only talking about performance in 8 of our 12 schools. The other schools may have something on fidelity. Again, because the other components

were not as well developed or implemented, we didn't take time trying to understand what their practices were around fidelity.

In eight of our schools they looked at fidelity from the elements of adherence and instructional quality, meaning is the instruction, is the curriculum appropriate and being delivered as intended. And then are the assessments, the screening and the progress monitoring being delivered as intended? Are the standardized procedures being followed?

So most of our schools in this group indicated that this is an area in which they need to do more work.

Slide 19: Example of Fidelity Procedure

It's a growing area. And it's complicated in part because we don't have good conceptual models around fidelity though, if you haven't seen the most recent issue of School Psych Review, that issue included several articles around treatment integrity, instructional fidelity, and may be informative to you as well.

So we have conceptual frameworks that we need to develop. And assessment instruments of fidelity are also incomplete and aren't always user friendly in that. And then again the bigger issue is about culture. We really need to develop a point of view that assessing fidelity is important for looking at the effectiveness of our programs and not being stuck on it as just an element of personnel evaluation.

One of our middle schools, Old Vail Middle School in Arizona, used these procedures to look at their degree of fidelity. And you'll see a mix of methods on this list from observations to student products, for example. You see a mix of staff who are involved in this. And you'll see, again, variation in what the focus is.

So they're developing a broad framework around fidelity of implementation. And I think that's reflected in the mix of methods and staff who are being involved in this. That's a wise way to go we believe. You also see variation in the frequency with which those fidelity measures are being completed.

Two critical elements: be sure that the school has an opportunity not only to collect the fidelity measures but to provide feedback to the instructor. We know it isn't so much just getting the data, but being able to give feedback to the instructor and then being able to support the instructor in the area in which fidelity may not be optimal. Of course figuring out what's optimal is another decision point for the team.

But we've got to be able to give support to the teachers; otherwise, it just looks punitive. You know it's like, well you didn't do this; you didn't give the feedback; you didn't adhere to the curriculum guide and so on. And we've got to be able to support the instructional staff and provide constructive feedback to be solid in their implementation as well.

Slide 20: Key Structures in Successful Schools

When we looked at the key structures within our successful schools, these come through, this list of four bullets.

And notice how the importance of the culture, or the social interaction, is reflected in this list. You know that systemic leadership, as Sara noted earlier, is critical so that everyone's on board or at least understands the direction, the intent of the RTI framework. That's more complicated than any one of our components for implementation. It's much more complicated than putting a screening measure in practice. Getting everybody to buy-in to using screening data to make decisions is more difficult.

Those successful schools routinized, if you will, some of their practices so that they have their RTI practices as part of their agenda. This is what we do. This is how we conduct business. We have these weekly meetings. We gather these data in making decisions. That's the point about having a culture, a supported culture, and having that use of the RTI framework for making decisions. This is the agenda for our school.

Most started small. Most of those schools started small with a few staff members in one grade or one content area. Curiously, when we did this work with elementary schools they had the same pattern of starting small with the staff who were interested. But uniformly they said they wished they had started broad, that is, not trying to grow from a few folks to the whole school but rather to get folks on board at the very beginning. So it's an interesting contrast. Maybe these middle school staff at some point would say, oh we should have started with everyone, at least in some way, as well.

And then being able to gain support of the staff about using the data: you know, there are two points of view. Do you want to wow everyone with testimony and the student data to convince them to come on board or should we just make the arguments upfront and try to deal with it from a philosophical point of view. Our sense is you need to have a blend of both. Be sure that everybody gets engaged.

Slide 21: Consistent Findings

Some of the consistent findings across the 30 schools -- again, remember we started with 85 and we whittled that down to 42 and then 30 -- so for those 30 schools these were generally consistent and in some ways differentiated the 30 and the more exemplary or the schools with more exemplary practices when we went on down to 12 and 6.

But these schools have screening in place. They had some kind of progress monitoring system and at least some sense about a secondary level intervention. Again, as Sara indicated, they provided those interventions within their structure of classes, their class schedule. Many of the schools struggled with identifying or developing the staff's skills and identifying the resources for that tertiary level of intervention.

And that's a significant question I believe for all of us. How do we address the needs of our learners who are least responsive to our otherwise proven interventions? That's a significant challenge.

The schools focused on reading, math and behavior. And occasionally we saw some evidence about working in writing and then content areas such as science and social studies. But literacy, numeracy, reading literacy and numeracy work, were significant areas.

Slide 22: "RTI = All Staff + All Kids"

And we should also mention how important the work of the TA Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is. Their center is, you know, central to the work around RTI. And some folks found that focusing on behavior first was an easier way to get staff on board rather than the discussion about academics. And we can leave it to you to imagine why that might be as well.

So RTI has multiple components and we've reviewed some of those with you. But again what became the greatest challenge was to change the thinking. The staff reported the change in culture: 'how we interacted; how we thought about students became critical for us'.
And I think that's illustrated in the points made on this slide. The point for debate is are we talking about remediation or prevention. And certainly a prevention issue is preventing dropout as well.

Slide 23: Shared Challenges

So the schools have numerous challenges. Some of those involved establishing rubrics such as integrating screening measures. Sara reported how schools would use multiple screening measures or multiple progress monitoring measures. Well how do you weigh those multiple scores; which do you consider to be most accurate? Those are challenges that the schools confronted.

Fundamentally they said we have to get a hold of our schedule. We realized we had many false starts but once we decided that setting aside time for secondary and tertiary level interventions was the most fundamental decision that we made for intervening, life became a whole lot easier.

But 'easier' - that's a relative term, too, you know. Maybe we can look at the amount of snow in Kansas and can say oh there's quite a bit but nothing compared to the East Coast either. So there is that notion of variation. As we look ahead we know that finding appropriate assessments and interventions will continue to be a challenge as will be taking advantage of the resources that are available.

Slide 24: Testimony from Work Group

In early December we met with representatives of five of our six sites with exemplary practices. They made a number of confirmatory statements: it is possible for schools to implement RTI; it

was very important for us to look at the resources that were available to us within our school and make better use of what was available to us because of no additional funding for implementation.

Other statements: To consider innovations and how do we use those better? Well that was an innovation. But then use the student data to help us make decisions about what's working and what isn't. Leadership does not reside with the building administrator but is shared. It's systemic. We have to have our Leadership Team onboard to be able to make this work. And to bring staff along, yes, we need professional development. But we need ongoing coaching to make that work as well.

Slide 25: Old Vail Middle School

Sara is going to walk you through more about Old Vail Middle School, one of our sites where we feel like there's a good exemplary set of practices.

Sara Prewett: Thank you Daryl. Old Vail is located in Vail, Arizona. I think he mentioned that a little bit earlier. It's near Tucson so you can think warm thoughts as you're thinking about Old Vail. They're a pretty middle class population. But what's exciting about them is that they have been implementing for the past five years. So they've been doing this. This is now part of their everyday procedure.

It began as a district-led initiative in their elementary schools. And the principal of Old Vail was an elementary school principal when RTI began there so she has the advanced knowledge. When she went to the middle school, she was able to help facilitate that implementation at the middle level. And what's really exciting about this is they have met AYP every year since RTI implementation so if you want some student outcome data, there it is.

Slide 26: [Flow Chart]

We're going to kind of talk through this really quickly. I've put up a quick flow chart for those of you who are visual learners. And this is their basic process. It looks a little bit complex. You see that they screen all of their students. That data goes to the RTI Leadership Team.

There are decision rules that are in place. General ed students who score above the cut score don't need any further action. If they didn't they get an additional set of assessments – 'can't do, won't do', which is a behavioral assessment. And if it's simply a 'won't do', they have the set of behavioral interventions for those students. If those students scoring below the cut scores are 'a can't do', they stay in Tier 1 but they get some additional interventions and their progress is monitored weekly.

So in Tier 1 they have these sets of interventions that are things like peer tutoring and direct instruction. If the progress monitoring data show that those students in Tier 1 interventions didn't respond, they're given Tier 2 interventions.

For Tier 2 interventions, kids are progress monitored daily. If those data show that they did respond, they can either be put back in general education or they continue with Tier 2 until they're to the level of mastery, in which case they go back to general ed or if they really are not responding to any of the interventions they can get a special education evaluation and go to Tier 3.

So in Old Vail, Tier 3 is synonymous with special ed, and they do use the RTI data as one piece of data during that special education evaluation.

Slide 27: Old Vail Middle School – Screening

So we're not going to leave it at that. We'll give you a little bit more information about Old Vail. For their reading screener they're using Maze, which is the number of correctly circled words in two minutes. For math they're using a mixed basic fact CBM. And for writing it's correct writing sequence CBM.

If students score below the cut score, they'll get the 'can't do, won't do' assessment and they'll do an oral reading fluency assessment.

Slide 28: Old Vail Middle School - Screening

They do these screeners three times a year by a three person team. It's a set time so all students in September, January and May are screened within the same week. And then when the screening results indicate that a student is struggling, the intervention is implemented and then the student is progressed monitored.

Slide 29: Old Vail Middle School - Progress Monitoring

What's really exciting about Old Vail is that they are progress monitoring in the primary level, in Tier 1. The students receiving interventions are not automatically put into the secondary level. They have a chance to go ahead and reach mastery prior to receiving tiered interventions. And of course they have a system in place to move at-risk students into the secondary interventions pretty quickly if indeed they need that level of intervention, if the progress monitoring data show that they aren't responding to those primary level interventions.

They also have in place daily progress monitoring. So they have all of those data points to track very closely how those students are doing with their interventions so they can move them quickly into programs that they need.

Slide 30: Old Vail Middle School - Academic Interventions

With the primary level of instruction, here's a graph that explains what it is that they're doing. Reading, writing and math are provided extensively each day for quite a bit of time. They are using a co-teaching model with both general educators and special educators teaching the

students so the special education students are receiving a lot of the same instruction in the primary level classes.

Slide 31: Old Vail Middle School - Academic Interventions

Their secondary level interventions are a class period long. They're using problem solving to determine which students need which interventions. So they are actually focused on each student's problem area when they're teaching.

And as you notice at the very bottom bullet, the student teacher ratio is pretty small for their secondary level interventions. And this is just something that their structure allows them to do. So even though this is Tier 2 they're able to get intensive and specific instruction at the secondary level.

Slide 32: Old Vail Middle School - Academic Interventions

As I mentioned when we were looking at the flow chart, their tertiary level is special ed. Those students receive at least 45 minutes a day but sometimes it's up to three class periods of intervention which is 140 minutes of instruction in their problem area. And these are very specific interventions for those students.

Slide 33: Middle School Evaluation Study Next Steps

So what are our next steps? I know I raced through the Old Vail description. We're quickly running out of time. But I wanted to give you that description just so you can know that this is actually working well in a school setting.

And what we want to do next to help all of you is to produce some documents. And what I really want you to notice is the third bullet under what we're going to produce. We have some topical video clips from these practitioners that we hope to have finished by the end of this month and on the rti4success web site. These practitioners are our principals who are putting RTI in place in these middle schools and they're talking about how they did it. It's really well worth your time. Daryl and I can talk all we want about what we saw but I think when you hear it from their mouths, that's what's powerful.

And we're going to get some more documents out for schools to use to help them with this process. And we do hope to have a lot of things at your fingertips in the next few months. And another thing for you to look for: one of our colleagues, Evelyn Johnson, who, with Lori Smith and Monica Harris, has just produced very recently the book *How RTI Works in Secondary Schools*. Lori Smith is the principal of one of our schools. So it's very exciting to see that she has written about her practices.

Slide 34: Thank You / Questions

So that is the end of our talk. And we have a lot of questions that we had hoped to get to so we're going to try to answer a couple before we're done with our time.

Daryl Mellard: So the first question seems to ask if the primary function of RTI is different at the middle school level; maybe that's in comparison to elementary schools?

So here we're less concerned about predicting who is at risk, which is the function in a primary school setting. For example, we might say, we have a history of students who have not been successful and now how do we intervene and monitor the effectiveness. But the prediction question shifts from academic maybe to who would we predict is at risk for dropping out. So again that would be a distinction between elementary schools versus middle schools.

Are there different standard protocols or approaches to help educators analyze multiple sources of data in determining student needs?

Well we would encourage you to only assess with instruments for which you know how you can use those results. Recognizing that there are state assessments that you have to complete as well, look for an integration of those results with what you're doing. Given the variation, we have no standard protocol for that integration but trust that you will be monitoring students' performance and making some judgments about the accuracy of those measures that you're using. We realize that the more promixal those measures are to what's being instructed within the classroom the better off you will be.

Can participants get flow charts or other information about Old Vail?

Well that's part of the material that will be posted.

Sara Prewett: Yes. That will be on the web site, I think pretty quickly after our talk today. So you will have access to all of these slides, and we are putting out a lot of materials based on all of this information that will be more in-depth for everybody. So I would say keep checking back this spring and we'll be putting up these materials for you.

Daryl Mellard: Well the other part is those video clips that Sara mentioned - those are great. They're much better than listening to us. And they're identified by topic and guidance questions.

Sara Prewett: So we have a question on how are student behaviors addressed during intervention time. For example some states are resistant to the interventions because they aren't getting a grade for it anyway.

And we have talked a lot with practitioners about integrating both PBIS and RTI at the same time. And so a lot of people are doing both. I mean they're putting in all of the PBIS structures. So it's just becoming a culture in their school that these are the expectations and this is how it

looks in our classrooms and this is how it looks in the hallway and this is how it looks in the gym and in the intervention classes.

But the other finding that was reiterated over and over again was that once you're teaching to the level of the student's learning ability and needs, those behaviors dropped off dramatically without any behavior interventions. So it was something that anecdotally we were hearing over and over again that without an actual behavioral intervention the behaviors were ending anyway.

Susan Caceres: I think that's all the time we have for questions.

Sara Prewett: Okay.

Susan Caceres: We have a lot more questions that are unanswered and we want to let everybody know that we will be getting replies to them – and they will posted on the web site so please check back later for answers.

We'd like to thank Dr. Daryl Mellard and Sara Prewett for sharing their presentation today. If you would like to print a copy of the PowerPoint slides from today's presentation you may do so by clicking on the small printer icon at the bottom right hand side of your screen. This will allow you to print to PDF.

The slides will also be available on the National Center on Response to Intervention's web site. More information is available at www.rti4success.org. If you have any additional questions about RTI in middle schools please email them to us at rtiwebinars@air.org and we will send replies directly back to you.

We hope that you will join us for our next webinar, "RTI Initiatives: Use of Coaching" which will be presented by Dr. Jim Knight on March the 3rd, 2010 at 2:00 Eastern Time.

We'd appreciate your feedback about today's session. Please take a few minutes to complete the webinar evaluation that you see on the screen. We value your feedback, and ultimately your suggestions will assist us in making decisions for future webinars. Once again thank you for participating today.