



National Center  
on Response to  
Intervention

## Summary of Question and Answer Session: Tiered Interventions and Instruction and Interventions—Experiences of the Vale (AZ) and Mahtomedi (MN) Districts

1. At the early primary level, how did you decide what skills or areas would be the focus of your intervention?

We began with reading at the primary level due to a concern about performance at that level. We had reading coaches using the traditional pull-out reading model and they were not seeing the results that they had hoped for in student gains.

2. Did all intervention sessions follow a specific lesson format to be sure of fidelity of implementation?

The Orton Gillingham lessons were followed in the same format to ensure fidelity but as we advanced we looked at the gains and, if the students were making appropriate progress, the instruction was assumed to be effective.

3. I notice that you started with K-2 one year and the next year added 3-5. How long did you research and plan before the K-2 implementation in 2004?

We began the research the year before on the RtI process but had envisioned this model of instruction for several years prior to implementation. We partnered with a neighboring district as we researched the possibilities. Our state also had six pilot sites which shared information with us. We began with just the K-2 as an organizational strategy but when the parents and teachers began to see the results, we were encouraged to bring this process more quickly to the intermediate level.

4. What changes were necessary for your teachers in that first year?

Changes! Lots were necessary. A new way of approaching scheduling, time spent with students on direct instruction, new strategies and professional development for teachers, teaming and conflict resolution in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), coaching in data analysis, students belong to all, not just special education teachers. This really requires a TEAM effort!

5. What successes have you had with behavior interventions at the early elementary level (K-gr.2).

We have really grown in the area of behavior interventions and prevention for our students over the past three years. We think it is crucial to have a strong Tier One program in place such as Responsive Classroom (we use this at the elementary levels) and Choice Theory and Restitution at the secondary level. Our district has also participated in the PBIS (Positive Behavior and Intervention Support) training through the state department.

6. What Tier 2 interventions would you recommend for math?

For math interventions we use Yearly Progress Pro at Tier 2 to measure the areas of concern for each child. This also provides resources for the identified strategy areas. We will be training our teachers in Cognitively Guided Instruction strategies to assist them in identifying skills deficits.



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7. What is the Souday System?

The Souday system is a phonetic based reading system similar to Orton Gillingham but it can be taught to a small group rather than one to two students with Orton Gillingham.

8. What is the universal screening you are using for math?

The universal screening tool we use for math is the NWEA testing process and we are still looking at tools for writing.

9. How has your Intervention Assistance Program changed since the implementation of RTI?

Our team looks at data more regularly, we work as a whole team- not just special education teachers, we suggest and evaluate specific strategies, teachers receive assistance more readily, when something doesn't work, we try, try again with new strategies. There is MUCH more support and collaboration between teachers.

10. How have you addressed early intervention for Kindergarten students?

We offer full day for all students with special education needs. For our half day students, we extended the day to provide more time for our literacy blocks. Students overlap and are there for an additional 45 minute each day. The Kindergarten team is committed to looking at data on a regular basis.

11. What do you plan to do to sustain RTI considering the current economic times?

We have changed our systems and are committed to early intervention. We consider our reading and math specialists to be considered critical positions. We also continue to write grants and look for all additional funding possibilities.

12. Have you found any resistance by teachers to the use of CBM (Curriculum Based Measurement) for either screening or progress monitoring?

Yes, at first, but having your leadership discuss the merits and need for this ahead of time is helpful. We also have trained our proctors and made the process seamless and efficient for students. We estimate that this process only take 20 minutes max per classroom. (3X a year)

13. Is each teacher at the elementary level doing his/her own interventions for tiers 2 and 3, or do you have a grade-level wide program, such as a Walk2Learn model?

We use a building wide literacy block approach. Each grade level has 90 minutes of instruction. Students are grouped according to needs. We've chosen core strategies and curriculum for each level. The problem solving team looks at the needs for each student.

14. How is your RTI model funded? Do you have Title I School-wide served buildings?

Our buildings are not Title One. We fund this using allocation from the state and district resources.

15. How many students were involved in the RTI process in your school district?

All kids are part of this process, but we estimate our Tier 2 and 3 to be about 20% of the total population.

16. Was attendance and discipline included as part of the evaluation process?

Yes. We use the SWIS behavior data through our PBIS program.

17. Has the use of RTI process changed your staffing as far as special education or Academic Intervention Services (AIS)?

We have the same amount of Special Education teachers but they focus on specific areas of student need. Some teachers went back for more training in reading instruction others in math and writing. We have been able to decrease the number of paraprofessionals needed because the students are being taught at their skill level and we have seen less behavioral issues.

18. What CBM and screening instruments are you using at the elementary level, particularly with grades 3, 4, and 5?

We use CBM developed by the University of Minnesota and AIMS Web. In addition, we also use our state comprehensive assessments and NWEA.

## National Center on Response to Intervention

If you have comments and questions about this workgroup and its activities, please visit our website [www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org) or contact The National Center on Response to Intervention at [rticenter@air.org](mailto:rticenter@air.org).

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