Problems and Possibilities with Response to Intervention

What is RTI?

- Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs (rtinetwork.org).

The Guiding Principles of RTI

- The International Reading Association outlines guiding principles of RTI which include: instruction, responsive teaching and differentiation, assessment, collaboration, a systematic and comprehensive approach, and teacher expertise (Hourcuff, 2010).
RTI Models

- RTI models typically have a 3 (or 4) Tier approach.
- Teachers implement scientifically based interventions.
- Models often offer a standard treatment protocol.
- They may contain a problem-solving approach.
- The framework and delivery of this intervention system is left to district discretion.
- There is a large variance in the delivery of services and the development of RTI models.

A Systematic Approach

- In order to implement a successful RTI framework, there must be a well-organized, coordinated system (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).
- This comprehensive system begins with a team of intervention specialists who can make unbiased decisions.
- The first step is to determine if the universal (core) instruction is meeting the needs of all students.
- Students needing supplemental instruction and/or intervention should be placed with the most expert teachers (Dorn & Schubert, 2008).
- Interventions should be matched to core instruction.
- During an intervention, there should be more instructional time.

Intervention, Acceleration, and Remediation

**WHAT ARE THEY AND WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?**

- **Interventions** are defined as enhancements of general education curriculum, based on student performance on a variety of measures, targeted to a skill or skill set to improve outcomes, it should be short-term and explicit instruction, frequent progress monitoring should take place, and the interventions should be revised as necessary based on student performance (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).
- **Acceleration** is not a new idea, but is contrast to the idea of slowing down learning for readers who struggle by practicing remedial activities (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).
- **Remediation** is “the act of remedying” (definition provided by m-w.com).
Tier I

- Tier I is typically found in the high quality literacy curriculum that is delivered to all students (Honchell, 2010).
- This structure was designed to reduce the likelihood of disabled students with quality teaching (O’Conner, Briggs, & Forbes, 2013).
- Tier I is offered to all students.

Tier II

- When students are unable to meet the universal benchmarks or make adequate progress in accordance with the curriculum, they often receive a Tier II intervention.
- A Tier II intervention is a small group intervention that is delivered with a higher level of intensity than the core instruction (Dorn & Shubert, 2008).
- Time spent is based on student need.
- There is usually frequent progress monitoring (Honchell, 2010).

Tier III

- Tier III is usually the most intensive level of intervention.
- This intervention is typically delivered in a one-to-one setting with a specialized teacher (Honchell, 2010).
- Instruction is individualized and targeted to student needs (Honchell, 2010).
- Tier III is a next step when Tiers I and II have not been successful (O’Conner, Briggs, & Forbes, 2013).
• A few schools implement a four tier model.
• Tier IV is often special education services.
• This level of intervention or special education placement typically only happens when Tiers I, II, and III have not been successful.

Tier IV

• Poor responders typically are students who do not make adequate reading progress despite participating in an evidence-based intervention. The biggest problem with this is that it is difficult to determine adequate progress (O’Conner & Klingner, 2010).

Identification of Students

• Students have the potential for achievement.
• “Reading and writing are like driving: most will learn how, but some will be better than others” (Clay, 2007).
• Learning disabilities and low-achieving readers are not distinguishable groups in most cases.
• Inappropriate instruction leads to continued practice of unacceptable behaviors in which students learn to be disabled.
• RTI should provide educators with the opportunity to reduce the number of students with specific learning disabilities in the area of literacy (Johnston, 2011).

Learning Disabilities or Low-Achieving

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• RTI should provide educators with the opportunity to reduce the number of students with specific learning disabilities in the area of literacy (Johnston, 2011).
A standard treatment protocol is a prescribed set of interventions delivered to all students with little attention to student needs (Beecher, 2011). Often when a child has fallen below the benchmark cut-scores, a standard treatment protocol will be delivered.

A problem-solving approach to interventions is more of a recursive model that allows teachers to use flexible teaching in order to meet the diverse needs of students. There are often standard components of interventions with instructional decision-making being left to teacher discretion (Johnston, 2011).

Lipson and Wixson (2012) state that there is not one approach that is essential to student achievement. There must be careful attention to student progress with expert teaching. Teachers must not overlook the value of the processing system; reading is a complex process. Filling in the gaps is simply not enough (Clay, 2007). Johnston (2011) implies that there is a large focus on materials for student achievement, not the teacher. The expertise lies within the teacher in order to provide the most meaningful, effective instruction. A highly skilled and prepared teacher far exceeds any program (O'Connor, Briggs, & Forbes, 2015).

O’Connor and Klingner (2010) conclude that teacher skill is an unfailing predictor of responsiveness of students.
Attributes of Effective Interventions

• Attributes of successful interventions include: a well-organized system of support, coordination with the core classroom instruction, provide more instructional opportunities, and demonstrate responsive instruction (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).

• One recurring element appears to be that teachers must be clear on the learning outcomes of students regardless of the intervention (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).

Collaboration

• Classroom teachers and interventionists must have time to define common goals and outcomes of the interventions, discuss progress, and make instructional decisions.

• Schools should implement Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

• Schools improvement teams or building leadership teams should dedicate time to assessing student data, problem-solve, and distinguish the best intervention for students (Honchell, 2010).

Teacher Expertise and Programs

• Children who experience the most difficulty should be entitled to the most experienced teacher (Dorn & Schubert, 2008).

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Teacher Expertise and Programs

- Do not overlook the value of the processing system; reading is a complex process (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).
- Filling in the gaps is simply not enough (Clay, 2007).
- The expertise lies within the teacher to provide the most meaningful, effective instruction (Johnston, 2011).
- A highly-skilled and prepared teacher far exceeds any program (O'Conner, Briggs, & Forbes, 2013).
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The Problems

- The challenges we face as teachers are strained caseloads, paperwork responsibilities, and most often, scheduling conflicts (Swanson et al., 2012).
- Standard treatment options indicate that all learners benefit from the same instruction (Johnston, 2011).
- There is a constant push for student achievement and teacher accountability.
- At times we assume that the problem lies within the child, when do we challenge the integrity of the interventions being delivered? (Beecher, 2011)

The Possibilities

- With this model, it gives us the opportunity to critically analyze our teaching practices, engage in professional development, and intervene early with our most struggling learners (Swanson et al., 2012).
- We are able to successfully problem-solve and analyze data with colleagues (Swanson et al., 2012).
- There is often a feeling of acceptance among school personnel and in the school community (Swanson et al., 2012).
- There is a shared responsibility for student achievement and common goals (Swanson et al., 2012).
What is your current reality?

- Where is your school in this process?
- What can you do with what you already have?
- How can you achieve a successful model with your current reality?

What are your next steps?

- Now that you know what the experts say, what will you do when you get back to school on Monday?
- Will you share this information with your administration?
- Will you make changes in your practices?
- Lead your building to a systematic change?

References


