

Academy of Public Relations

FINAL REPORT



New York City Department of Education External School Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of Academy of Public Relations conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as in need of improvement/corrective action/restructuring under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

About Academy of Public Relations

Academy of Public Relations (X298) is a voice and technology-themed middle school located in Community School District 7, in the Bronx. Academy of Public Relations is colocated within the former I.S. 184 building along with I.S. 296, Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School and P.S. X017. The school serves approximately 225 students in Grades 6–8 and is open to students who are residents of District 7, with a limited unscreened enrollment process giving priority to students who demonstrate interest by signing in at one or several of the following events: information sessions, school tours, open house, or the middle school fair.

In 2009–10, Academy of Public Relations did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) for all students and the following subgroups: Hispanic or Latino, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. In 2010–11, Academy of Public Relations' state accountability status was designated as "School in Need of Improvement (Year 1)."¹ Because of this designation, the school participated in the ESCA.

Audit Process at Academy of Public Relations

The ESCA approach utilized at the middle school level examines five topic areas: student engagement, curriculum and instruction, academic interventions and supports, professional learning and collaboration, and support for transitioning students. Data were collected at the school level through teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of documents submitted by Academy of Public Relations. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

¹ <https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/64/AOR-2010-321000010254.pdf>. Accessed on March 3, 2011.

These reports were presented to the school at a co-interpretationSM meeting on May 19, 2011. During this meeting, 13 stakeholders from the Academy of Public Relations community read the reports. Through a facilitated and collaborative group process, they identified individual findings, then developed and prioritized key findings that emerged from information in the reports.

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings are considered as a group, and the recommended strategies are those that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance at Academy of Public Relations.

The Appendix provides a school improvement planning calendar inclusive of all four recommendations.

Key Findings

Critical Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, co-interpretation participants determined a set of key findings. These key findings are detailed in this section.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

There is inconsistency in the development, implementation, and analysis of assessment data to inform instruction.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by information from interviews and teacher survey results. According to interview respondents, the school administers common assessments in core subjects to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction. This response is supported by teacher survey results showing that nearly all teachers use self-created and formative, periodic assessments to inform instruction a few times per semester or more. However, survey results also showed that teacher-created assessments are the type of assessment used most frequently, with 56 percent of teachers using teacher or classroom-created assessments daily or almost daily. These results evidence that only half of teachers use self-created assessments with the same frequency, and fewer use formative, periodic assessments with the same frequency. Further, interviews and documents provided by the school did not describe specific performance benchmarks that the school monitors to track and identify students at risk of academic failure.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

Classroom instruction lacks consistent, active student participation and teacher engagement and motivation.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by information from classroom observations, teacher survey results, school interviews, and review of documents submitted by the school. During classroom observations conducted as part of the ESCA, students were observed passively participating and paying attention for all or most of the 20-minute observation, rather than taking an active role by asking or answering questions or sharing ideas and opinions. Teachers rarely engaged in conversations with students, and students did not seek out opportunities to interact with one another. In more than half of classrooms observed, teachers remained distant and were rarely in physical proximity to students. In 27 percent of observed classrooms, there was a notable lack of enthusiasm and enjoyment. In nearly all observed classrooms (90 percent), the lesson was structured by the teacher and was at the teacher's pace, without regard to student understanding.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

There is a lack of communication among school staff regarding a schoolwide behavior plan and tools in place to manage behavior.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by information from teacher survey results. Less than half of the staff agreed that there is a behavior plan in place. Further, most teachers (65 percent) feel that they do not have influence over the setting of school behavior standards. Forty-four percent of surveyed teachers reported that strategies for managing behavior are inconsistent throughout the school.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

There is currently not a clearly communicated academic intervention services (AIS) system in place that: 1) identifies students needing services, 2) provides services in a timely manner, 3) monitors students' progress when receiving services, 4) monitors overall program effectiveness.

Critical Key Finding 4 is supported by information from teacher survey results, school interviews, and review of documents submitted by the school. Documents provided no evidence regarding the criteria used to identify students for supplemental educational services (SES), ANA, and the Success Program, or how students' academic progress is monitored in those programs. A significant percentage of teachers feel that the school is minimally likely to systemically identify students in need of services (44 percent), provide services soon after students are identified (60 percent), or provide supports that are effective (37 percent). Interviews and documents provided by the school did not describe the specific performance benchmarks that the school monitors to track and identify students at risk of academic failure. A school staff member indicated that there could always be more intervention services. The interviewee believes that programs are only as effective as the teachers teaching them.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

The ESCA process can help Academy of Public Relations gain a clear picture of current conditions in the school beyond AYP status. It provides four focused areas that will positively impact the school learning community and help school staff focus on issues that will move them toward exiting School in Need of Improvement (SINI) status. Most schools already are overwhelmed with change. They do not need new initiatives; they need an approach that consolidates existing initiatives and makes it easier for people within the school community to work together toward common ends. These research-based recommendations provide Academy of Public Relations with a foundation to build upon that will help move the school out of SINI status.

THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants at the co-interpretation identified and prioritized data use, positive behavior expectations, student engagement, and supporting at-risk students as areas of focus. These priorities were supported by data collected by Learning Point Associates and presented to the participants during the co-interpretation.

With these issues in mind and using relevant research, Learning Point Associates auditors developed the following four recommendations for Academy of Public Relations:

1. Develop and implement clear expectations and support for the schoolwide use of student achievement data for planning and delivering instruction.
2. Initiate a schoolwide process for increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment.
3. Develop and implement a common set of positive behavior expectations and a system for acknowledging and supporting appropriate behavior.
4. Develop and implement a schoolwide system to identify students' specific learning needs using assessment data, provide multitiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to address student needs.

These recommendations were developed and chosen for Academy of Public Relations based on the research base and evidence-based priorities created through the co-interpretation process. Each recommendation provides a review of research, online resources for additional information, specific actions the school may consider during its action-planning process, and real-life implementation examples. All works cited, as well as suggestions for further reading, appear in the References section at the end of this report.

Please note that the order in which these recommendations are presented does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Systematic Use of Data to Inform Instruction

Provide clear expectations and support for the schoolwide use of student achievement data for planning and delivering instruction.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Student assessment data are an essential tool in measuring the effectiveness of instruction; teachers can use these data to ensure the success of all students.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Hamilton et al., 2009) includes the following school-level recommendations regarding data use to improve instruction:

- “Establish a clear vision for schoolwide data use.”
- “Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school.”
- “Make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement.” (p. 9)

Clear Vision for Schoolwide Data Use. Learning Point Associates and Educational Service Agency Alliance of the Midwest (2006) emphasize the need to do the following:

Make sure all staff members understand what their core responsibilities are and what their obligations are for learning to do that work better. Understanding this will make a big difference in how staff will seek, manipulate, present, and use data. (p. 21)

The principal and school leaders also should set the example of using data regularly. A study of the effects of leadership practices on student achievement by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) shows “the extent to which the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student achievement” to be one of the 21 leadership responsibilities significantly associated with student achievement (p. 12). Cotton (1988) agrees, “The careful monitoring of student progress is shown in the literature to be one of the major factors differentiating effective schools and teachers from ineffective ones” (p. 1).

Supports That Foster a Data-Driven Culture Within the School. Cultivating a culture of reflection and continuous improvement will help teachers feel comfortable using data. Young’s (2008) case studies identify “four dimensions of trust” that suggest how culture may or may not support teachers using the data system. To the degree that teachers think in terms of these four dimensions, they will be more likely to utilize a data system:

- “Other teachers have high standards.”
- “Other teachers won’t think I’m incompetent.”
- “Others will participate/reciprocate in response to my engagement.”
- “Problems I raise will be seen as collective problems.” (p. 99)

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Children First Intensive
(Website)

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/childrenfirst/>

Doing What Works: Providing
Research-Based Education
Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

*Using Student Achievement
Data to Support
Instructional Decision
Making* (Publication)

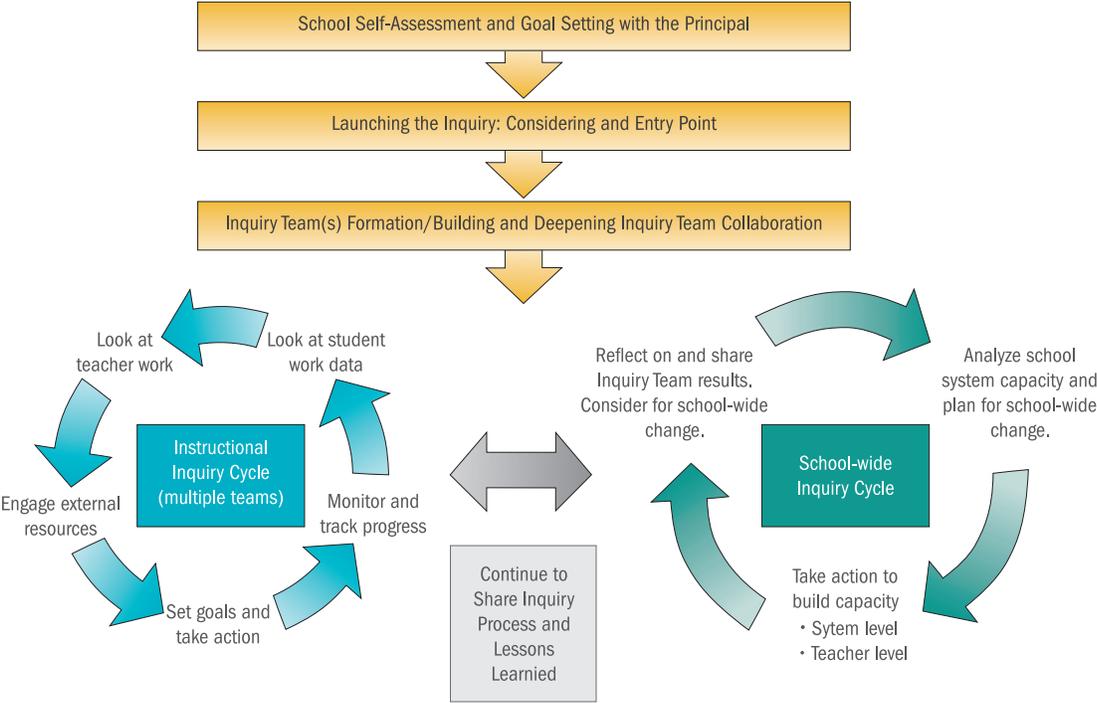
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dddm_pg_092909.pdf

Time also is an important factor in professional support. Teacher respondents cited in a U.S. Department of Education report on data use most often cited “lack of time to examine and reflect on data [as] the greatest barrier to data-driven decision making” (Means, Padilla, & Gallagher, 2010, p. 87).

Finally, “teachers need to learn how to obtain and manage data, ask good questions, accurately analyze data, and apply data results appropriately and ethically” (Lachat & Smith, 2005, p. 336). Through professional development and coaching, the school can support teachers in meeting these goals.

Data as Part of an Ongoing Cycle of Instructional Improvement. The NYCDOE Children First Intensive professional development plan established school-level inquiry teams at each school to support student achievement. NYCDOE uses the following graphic (see Figure 1) to illustrate the ongoing process of collaborative inquiry.

Figure 1. Collaborative Inquiry Process



Source: New York City Department of Education (2011)

NYCDOE (2011) defines *collaborative inquiry* as “a sustained process of investigation and action by a group of educators that empowers teachers to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap. Collaborative inquiry can look very different in different contexts, but there are some common threads across all teams, mainly that teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their collective work through the lens of student work and data.”

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- 1. Create a school culture of reflection and continuous improvement.** School leaders play an important role in creating a school culture of reflection and continuous improvement.
 - Assign teachers to grade-level and/or subject-specific collaborative inquiry teams, if they do not already exist, to analyze schoolwide data and grade-level/subject-specific data.
 - Identify how the work of collaborative inquiry teams will align with the schoolwide goals developed as part of the collaborative inquiry cycle, and as required for the Comprehensive Education Plan.
 - Set aside time for collaborative data analysis. This analysis can take place during existing teacher collaboration time or could be done through inquiry teams.
 - Develop a standard data analysis protocol and schedule.
 - Provide resources to support teacher collaboration on data analysis, such as tracking sheets and/or a data coach.

- 2. Set clear expectations for data use.** Establish clear expectations regarding teacher use of data.
 - Establish a yearly, schoolwide schedule for assessments and screening procedures (e.g., three times each year).
 - Identify assessment instrument(s) that will be used to track student achievement. Screening instruments should be valid, reliable, and aligned with grade-level curriculum based on learning standards (e.g., state assessments, Acuity predictive assessments, or instructionally targeted assessments) or subject-specific and researched-based assessments (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery, Qualitative Reading Inventory, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills).
 - Ensure that assessment results are shared with teachers in a timely way and that teachers have access to assessment results, if assessment results are not readily available on the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS).
 - Describe how the school, teams, and individual teachers will be expected to use data (e.g., set goals, align resources, modify scope and sequence, identify students for tutoring, target students in lesson plans).
 - Provide professional development as needed on topics such as data analysis, item analysis, and instructional strategies.

- 3. Provide training on instructional strategies and differentiation.** “Just having student data is not sufficient if teachers do not have ideas about how to teach differently based on student performance” (Means et al., 2010, p. 87).
 - Provide professional development on instructional strategies and differentiation to give teachers a wealth of instructional options that they can call on to meet student needs.
 - Adjust classroom instruction based on student progress. The IES Practice Guide *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Hamilton et

al., 2009) identifies the following changes to instruction that teachers can make to improve student achievement:

- “Prioritizing instructional time;
- Targeting additional individual instruction for students who are struggling with particular topics;
- More easily identifying individual students’ strengths and instructional interventions that can help students continue to progress;
- Gauging the instructional effectiveness of classroom lessons;
- Refining instructional methods; and
- Examining schoolwide data to consider whether and how to adapt the curriculum based on information about students’ strengths and weaknesses.” (p. 5)

4. Monitor progress. Track implementation of schoolwide data use policies to ensure that they are being implemented consistently and to provide teachers with continuous feedback and appropriate support.

- Establish a system of multiple methods for ensuring that teacher teams have what they need to engage in regular data analysis to inform instruction. This system could include inquiry team data logs, teacher reflection sheets on instructional strategies, and/or reports from the data coach.
- Consider implementing classroom walk-throughs by administrators, a lead teacher, or the data coach to see how data analysis and professional development are impacting classroom practice and to identify the best ways to support teachers moving forward. The intention of this process is formative teacher feedback to improve instruction—not to penalize teachers; thus, the school may wish to work collaboratively with its instructional staff to develop a related classroom walk-through protocol. By building in feedback loops, the school can ensure that effective decisions are being made, based on data. As Learning Point Associates and the Educational Service Agency Alliance of the Midwest (2006) state:

Data make change visible. Data provide an empirical lens that magnifies objective detail while distancing us from personality. Data can confirm if there is change or not. The smaller, the tighter, the more frequent the feedback loops that the data system supports, the more staff can make decisions, the more frequently decisions can be made, and the more likely that the decisions made will be better ones. (p. 5)

Shotwell Middle School

Shotwell Middle School, located in Houston, Texas, serves 1,200 students in Grades 7 and 8. Approximately 78 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The school has had success in using data systemically to inform instruction.

Administration and staff [at Shotwell Middle School] regularly collaborate in using data to support instructional decision making and assess program effectiveness. The administrative team provides leadership and clarifies expectations for data use, and core subject skills specialists support teachers in the process....

Data from six-week benchmark assessments are maintained in the districtwide data warehouse system, where teachers can access reports and analyze data during their departmental common planning time....

Skills specialists provide extensive support to teachers in using data and planning instruction. They meet with teachers weekly to analyze data, provide expert guidance and resources for lesson planning and instruction, and help to determine appropriate instructional strategies. The school engages in a clearly articulated reteach/retest policy in which teachers gather by department for an item-by-item test analysis. Based on the number of students who are missing objectives, the teachers identify areas of concern and steps for reteaching....

Administrators and skills specialists also use data to find areas of improvement for teachers. Using a standard format, teachers enter their lesson plans into a districtwide data warehouse system. Here, administrators and specialists can review the lesson plans and assess the instructional strategies planned. The school also uses a standard format for entering comments from observations of lessons. Based on alignment among lesson plans, observations, and student data, administrators and specialists can help teachers adjust their instructional strategies...

Staff conducts universal screening for Response to Intervention (RTI) to address three areas: the district's population of English language learners and students from low-income families, the state's high rate of dropout, and student migration. Screening results for RTI are entered into a database that creates reports indicating where students score in relation to grade-level averages. These data are then examined in conjunction with results on benchmark assessments and [the Texas state test]. Students who achieve below the average ranges are provided interventions with classroom, special education, and/or RTI teachers through a pullout program or small-group instruction in the classroom. Each week, the RTI teacher conducts progress monitoring to determine ongoing student progress and continued areas of need. When students exit the pullout program, they complete the Exit Survey and Reflection. This survey asks students about which assignments helped them master the content, why these assignments were helpful, how challenging the assignments were, and how the pullout program could be improved. Teachers review these surveys and make appropriate changes to the program.

Description excerpted from the Doing What Works website at http://dww.ed.gov/media/DDI/DDDM/TopicLevel/case_shotwell_revised.pdf. This information is in the public domain.

Recommendation 2: Student Engagement

Initiate a schoolwide process for increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment. The aim is to improve student attendance, enhance participation, reduce boredom, end negative behaviors and the associated classroom management issues, and increase student achievement in academic and social skills.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Student engagement provides an essential foundation for increasing achievement levels. “Educators must work to build engagement levels if they hope to support students in meeting higher standards” (Learning Point Associates, 2005, p. 2).

Literature about middle school reform acknowledges the importance of an academically challenging and supportive environment to engage young adolescent learners. Student motivation, a meaningful curriculum, and student choice also are important factors for engaging middle-level learners (Caskey & Anfara, 2007; Learning Point Associates, 2005; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995).

In a report on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which was taken by 42,754 students, Yazzie-Mintz (2010, pp. 2–3) describes a spectrum of student disengagement—from temporary boredom to dropping out—and attributes this disengagement to the following: uninteresting and irrelevant material, work being too challenging or not challenging enough, no interaction with the teacher, not liking the school or the teacher, not seeing value in the assigned work, adults at the school not caring about the student, safety and bullying concerns, schoolwork not connecting to real world or real work, feeling little connection with any adult at the school, teacher favoritism, ineffective instruction or instructional methods, feeling unheard and not responded to or respected, and feelings of frustration and disconnection.

When students feel marginalized or alienated at school, they lose interest and become disengaged. Yazzie-Mintz (2010, p. 17) concludes that there are considerable gaps not only in academic achievement but also in student engagement. He suggests the integration of engagement data with academic data as a useful tool for school planning and decision making.

Factors that would increase student engagement, according to the surveyed students (Yazzie-Mintz, pp. 18–23), are as follows: supportive and nurturing schools; increased individualization; classes that are more fun as well as interactive, experiential, and relevant; a schoolwide belief in relationships, respect, and responsibility; coaching and modeling for the staff of good student engagement practices; reflection on and response to student ideas; adult understanding of student skills, strengths, and interests and having these qualities inform instruction; experiential learning and interdisciplinary studies; and opportunities for students to work together on finding solutions to real-world problems and issues.

Students need to build a sense of self-efficacy (Alvermann, 2003) in an inclusive environment in which they can achieve competence. They should be engaged in authentic and personally meaningful work, using a culturally relevant curriculum with an appropriate level of difficulty and challenge—one that requires problem solving (Voke, 2002). In addition, Gordon (2006)

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Center for Mental Health in
Schools (Website)

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Collaborative for Academic,
Social, and Emotional
Learning (Website)

<http://www.casel.org>

Illinois Learning Standards
for Social/Emotional
Learning (Website)

http://isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm

Morningside Center
for Teaching Social
Responsibility (Website)

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org>

suggests the recognition and leveraging of individual student strengths and recalls a typical student response from the 2005 Gallup Youth Survey (pp. 77–80):

“My teacher understood the way that I learned and worked. I was never criticized for my ideas or feelings, but I was met with questions and ideas that could change the way I looked at something.” —Jessica, 17, Waverly, IA (p. 77)

A rubric titled the “Partnership Guide for Culturally Responsive Teaching” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000, pp. 185–187) offers a list of engagement activities (establishing inclusion, developing a positive attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence) and assessment tools. The Executive Summary of *Engaging Schools* (Committee on Increasing High School Students’ Engagement and Motivation to Learn, 2003) provides 10 recommendations for reaching “the goals of meaningful engagement and genuine improvements in achievement” for high school students (pp. 4–9). Easton (2008) discusses engaging struggling high school students by using experiential learning; essential questions; and a whole-child perspective in curriculum development, instructional strategies, professional development, and teacher evaluations. “If there is a secret to motivation in the classroom,” says Gordon (2006, p. 80), “it lies in the interaction between the teacher and the student.”

“There is a growing consensus that whatever else is done, schools must also become places where it is easier for students and teachers to know one another well and for students to connect to the school and its purposes, says Sergiovanni (2006, p. 58). “Schools in other words must be caring and learning communities.”

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: WHOLE-SCHOOL PRACTICES

Incorporating student engagement practices should be part of the annual school improvement process. Whole-school practices such as building a safe and supportive school environment are part of this process. Students can learn effectively only in environments where they feel safe and supported and where their teachers have high expectations for their learning. Implementation of a schoolwide positive behavior plan that is based on prosocial values, social competencies, incentives, and positive peer relationships will lay the foundation for classroom-level work and must occur before the classroom work can begin.

The following guidelines were developed by the Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) for implementation of effective student engagement strategies across whole schools at the building level:

1. Create a positive school culture.

Teachers and staff must recognize students as individuals by acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of the student population. The school must find ways to connect students to school (through clubs, sports, student council, and other activities) so they develop a sense of belonging. The school should provide transition programs and practices at different stages of schooling that will minimize anxiety, increase resilience, and ensure that students develop a readiness to enter their new environment and make successful transitions between year levels.

2. Encourage student participation.

Giving students a voice is not simply about the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions; it also is about having the power to influence change. Incorporating meaningful involvement of students means validating and authorizing them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences throughout education to improve the school.

3. Proactively engage with parents/caretakers.

Keys to successful partnerships with parents/caretakers and families include strong two-way communication, volunteer opportunities, curricula-related collaborations, shared decision making, community-based partnerships, and efficacy building.

4. Implement preventive and early interventions.

The school needs to determine how it will intervene when students exhibit disengaged behaviors—specifically poor attendance and antisocial behaviors. Prevention strategies should target the whole school and should be designed to reduce any risk factors that may contribute to attendance or behavioral issues.

5. Respond to individual students.

The school should have a process in place to identify and respond to individual students who require additional assistance and support. It is imperative to coordinate early intervention and prevention strategies that utilize internal as well as external support services in order to identify and address the barriers to learning that individual students may be facing.

Schools also can implement major changes to their structures that can make it easier to develop positive learning relationships, including small learning communities, alternative scheduling, team teaching, teaching continuity, school-based enterprises, and professional learning communities.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Keeping middle school students focused and engaged in the classroom is quite a challenge amid the entire complex changes—physical, intellectual, emotional, and social—that they experience during this phase of their lives. Youth ages 11 to 13 years (a period sometimes called the “tween” years) are characterized by a growing desire to think and act independently while at the same time caring deeply about being accepted by peers and being part of a group (Caskey & Anfara, 2007).

1. Relate lessons to students’ lives.

A relevant curriculum relates content to the daily lives, concerns, experiences, and pertinent social issues of the learners. Teachers can gain insight into student concerns by taking periodic interest inventories, through informal conversations, and from classroom dialogue (Learning Point Associates, 2005). These issues and topics then can be incorporated into units, lesson plans, and further classroom discussions.

2. Make the learning authentic.

Newmann et al. (1995) advocate for authentic instructional practices to engage learners and offer three criteria for authentic instructional practices: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond the school.

The first criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate the construction of knowledge by acknowledging students' existing understanding and experience. Identifying students' preconceptions and initial understanding is critical to the learning process. "If students' preconceptions are not addressed directly, they often memorize content (e.g., formulas in physics), yet still use their experience-based preconceptions to act in the world" (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, p. 5).

The second criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate disciplined inquiry through structured activities; the inquiry process is critical to the construction of knowledge (Marzano, 2003; Newmann et al., 1995). This process consists of building on the learner's prior knowledge to develop a deeper understanding, integrating new information, and using the knowledge in new ways.

The third criterion for authentic instructional practices is value beyond school (Newmann et al., 1995). This criterion may entail connecting content to personal or public issues as well as the demonstration of understanding to an audience beyond the school. Examples of such activities include writing persuasive letters to the city council to advocate for a skate park, interviewing community elders for an oral history project, or communicating the impact of a development project using scientific concepts.

3. Give students choices.

Finally, providing choice in middle-level classrooms will engage learners. Providing opportunities for students to select a topic or text acknowledges young adolescents' need to exercise more decision-making power. Giving students ownership in their learning process increases motivation and keeps interest levels high. Students who have a strong interest in a specific subject may wish to pursue an independent project. These projects may be used as a differentiated way to explore the curriculum. (See "Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom" on the following page.)

Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom

Following are some suggestions for showing regard for adolescent perspectives. These ideas are based on the work of Smutny, Walker, and Meckstroth (1997) and Tomlinson (1999).

- Independent projects will extend learning beyond the curriculum in the textbook and develop enthusiasm, commitment, and academic skills in addition to allowing students to develop deeper relationships with subject matter.
- Brainstorming with...children on what kinds of projects they could do may also generate ideas teachers may never have thought of on their own” (Smutny, 2000, p. 7).
- Surveying students’ interests in the beginning of the school year will give teachers direction in planning activities that will “get students on board” from the start.
- Surveying again at key points during the year will inform teachers of new interests that develop as their students grow.
- Interest centers are designed to motivate students’ exploration of topics in which they have a particular interest. They are usually comprised of objects that students can explore, such as shells, leaves, maps, or projects, and are centered around broad topics. Students can choose from the menu and note their choices accordingly. Teachers decide how many items on the menu (minimum) that each student is required to complete. This is adjusted to meet instructional needs on an individual basis.

Examples of Student Engagement

The National Center for School Engagement (2007) compiled the following examples of student engagement best practices from school districts across the United States:

Factor in Math Fun: In Oswego, New York, a Factoring Fan Club was created for 9th-grade math students to get them excited about factoring, to keep it fresh in their minds, and to be “good” at factoring. *Source:* Oswego School District, Oswego, NY

Celebrate Pi Day on 3/14: This event was created to help students enjoy math by offering a fun-filled day honoring pi. Events included a pie eating contest, measuring the diameter and circumference of round objects to calculate pi, and other games related to circles. *Source:* Independence School District, Independence, VA

Mobilize Community: Community Now! is an asset-based community development tool of the Connection Institute. It uses asset-based language and planning to bring the community together to discover what values the community shares as a whole. It then works to mobilize community members around its assets and shares values to become proactive in its planning rather than reactive. *Source:* Kittery Children’s Leadership Council, Kittery, ME

Collaborate With Higher Education: In Mesquite, Texas, a local college delivers 3.5 hours of continuing education courses (“Educational Opportunities”) to truant students and their families. The curriculum includes the negative consequences associated with poor school attendance and the positive consequences associated with scholastic achievement. Discussion of transition from high school to college is discussed and a tour of the college is provided. *Source:* Dallas Independent School District, TX

Offer Incentives: As a reward, a lunch-time soccer game is organized for students with good attendance by school staff. *Source:* Summit School District, Frisco, CO

Support Positive Behavior: Jacksonville School District adapted the principles of *Got Fish?* (a book to build business morale) for the classroom. Principles include: being there, play, choosing your behavior, and make their day. Students are recognized when observed “living” each of the principles. *Source:* Jacksonville School District, Jacksonville, FL

Create Student-Generated Classroom Rules: In Eugene, Oregon, students create a list of classroom rules to be followed. Each student signs off on the rules and is held accountable by fellow students. In addition, they developed their own “honor roll”, in which students are recognized for doing their best, following directions, and not talking out more than three times per day. *Source:* Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR

Facilitate Positive Student-Teacher Connections: Some schools in Oregon encourage students to sign up for a one-on-one lunch with their teacher during school time. The teacher uses this time to get to know the student and offers them encouragement and praise. Children and youth benefit when their teachers demonstrate that they care about student well-being in addition to academic success. *Source:* Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR

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Recommendation 3: Schoolwide Behavior Management System

Develop and implement a schoolwide positive behavior policy and system with clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. The policy and related system should include concise social expectations and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences—including a clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges.

LINK TO RESEARCH

One of the greatest obstacles within urban schools is the large number of students whose behavior interferes with their achievement or the achievement of others. Often these students have behaved in a manner that disrupts the educational climate of the classroom and the school. One key element for changing this pattern is the implementation of a schoolwide behavior program that is developed with the input and support of parents and staff.

“Effective schoolwide behavior programs have clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. Students need a secure, orderly environment that promotes their personal well-being and supports learning. Rules should also be fair and stress the students’ responsibility to the school community, their parents, and themselves. All students in the school need to be aware of the rules, the reasons for the rules, and the consequences for breaking the rules. Effective discipline programs are based on praise and encouragement for positive behavior and clear, consistent consequences for misbehavior” (Chicago Public Schools, Office of Specialized Services, 1998).

“Effective schools build and maintain a positive ‘social culture.’ Successful students are safe (don’t hurt themselves or others), respectful (follow adult requests and get along with their peers), and responsible (arrive to class on time and complete assignments). These foundational skills are essential for a safe and orderly school environment. In addition, members of a positive social culture use ‘higher order’ skills, such as (a) impulse control, (b) anger management, (c) conflict resolution, (d) empathy, and (e) drug and alcohol use resistance and prevention. Research studies consistently show that schools that establish a positive social culture also achieve the best academic gains” (Sprague, 2011).

“Positive behavior interventions, used correctly by teachers, administrators, and parents, encourage or strengthen desirable behavior and reduce inappropriate behavior. Positive interventions have a greater likelihood of enabling a student to change his/her behavior in a way that does not interrupt learning. Effective interventions encourage praise and recognition of positive behavior, and demand clear and consistent responses to misbehavior. Children and youth tend to respond to positive techniques. In some cases, however, more restrictive interventions may be necessary to control and change extremely inappropriate and aggressive behavior” (Chicago Public Schools, Office of Specialized Services, 1998, p. 1).

Schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is based on lessons learned from more than 7,000 schools currently implementing successful changes in their school environment. SWPBS evolved from valid research in the field of special education. SWPBS is not a curriculum, intervention, or practice but a decision-making framework that guides selection,

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Alcott Middle School
Behavior Expectations and
Related Teaching Materials
(Website)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/alcott_mid.aspx

“Discovering School-Wide
PBS: Moving Towards
a Positive Future” from
Florida’s Positive Behavior
Support Project (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/pbs_video-discovering_swpbs.aspx

Washington Elementary
School Example (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/wash_elem.aspx

integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important academic outcomes for all students (Office of Special Education Programs, 2011a).

Researchers have only recently begun to study the effects of schoolwide behavior management systems and what it takes to implement these systems effectively. While it is too early to offer “recipes for success,” the work of key researchers and their school-based colleagues are providing some encouraging developments. While there are many different schoolwide systems of behavioral support, most have certain features in common. The emphasis is on consistency—both throughout the building and across classrooms. The entire school staff is expected to adopt strategies that will be uniformly implemented. As a result, professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership are necessary in order for this innovation to take hold. The school-based models featured in the Quick Links on the previous page have been selected to show how different features of a schoolwide behavior management system can be implemented in urban, suburban, and rural locations. These schools understand that change is incremental and are approaching implementation of their schoolwide systems slowly and over an extended period.

Common Features of Schoolwide Behavior Management Systems

- Total staff commitment to managing behavior, whatever approach is taken
- Clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules
- Consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors
- An instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies

(The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 1997)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Incorporate key guiding principles of student behavior management.

The Office of Special Education Program’s Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has established the following SWPBS guiding principles:

- Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports.
 - A well-articulated schoolwide behavior policy/student code that includes positive expectations, minor and major infractions, etc., must first be in place. Clarity around expectations for staff’s handling of in-class behaviors is important here. Authentic faculty feedback and participation are important throughout the policy- and system-development processes.
- Use data to make decisions and solve problems.
 - Data on both minor and major behavior incidents should be collected, tracked, analyzed, and utilized in decision making by the team and faculty at least on a monthly basis. Data should be presented in a user-friendly format.

- Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior.
 - This includes posting three to five positively stated overarching schoolwide social expectations around the school, particularly in problematic areas.
- Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors.
 - Students should be introduced to/taught the schoolwide expectations, rules for specific settings, reward/consequence system, and related interventions/supports. Staff should be trained on how to present expectations to students. Ongoing communication and collaboration with families and the community are very important.
- Implement evidence-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability.
 - Interventions should be multitiered, increasing in levels of intensity, and inclusive of evidence-based programs or strategies. The primary level (all students) is the overall behavior management plan. The secondary level (some students) is for a targeted group or focused on individual plans for those who did not respond to the first level. The tertiary level (few students) includes highly individualized plans for students who did not respond to the first two levels.
- Screen universally and monitor student performance and progress continuously.
 - There should be a plan for collecting data to evaluate SWPBS outcomes, wherein data are collected as scheduled and used to evaluate effectiveness for future adjustments.

2. Build a team.

Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (2005) outlines a SWPBS process that provides a systematic structure and formalized procedures that can be implemented during the summer. The initial steps are to establish and get all staff to buy in. Establishing a schoolwide leadership team or behavior support team supports this goal. If possible, fold SWPBS into the roles and responsibilities of an established team, rather than developing yet another group. Members of the team should include administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, or dean), counselors, social workers, regular education teachers, special education teachers, members with behavior expertise, and a coach/district representative. It is vital that administration supports the process, takes an active role, and attends most meetings.

3. Determine school capacity.

It is important to assess and develop the school's capacity to implement a comprehensive program. Key questions include:

- What are the schoolwide social expectations, routines, etc.?
- Who at the school has the unique disposition necessary to both firmly hold students accountable and support them as they attempt to adjust with fidelity?
- What are the procedural expectations of teachers for managing in-class behaviors?
- What manageable recourse do teachers have for extremely disruptive or disrespectful instances of behavior "in the moment" (e.g., immediate referrals to a dean/counselor/administration, in-school "timeout room," criteria for reentry)?

- What is the specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of interventions and supports?
- What is the specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of consequences for patterns of disruptive in-class behavior?
- How will the efficacy of chosen interventions and supports be monitored and adjusted as needed in a data-driven manner? Who is responsible for this?
- What are the mechanisms for notifying and collaborating with students' parents/guardians in the process early and often? Who is responsible for this (i.e., teachers, counselors, social workers, deans, administrators)?
- What are the thresholds for more severe consequences/privilege losses for patterns or disruptive behaviors?
- What outside resources are available to support students and families struggling with issues that are affecting students' behavior but well outside of the school's capacity to address?
- What privileges and incentives (e.g., extracurriculars, athletics, field trips, social activities) are currently in place that can serve as leverage? Do more need to be identified or developed?
- How are students who actively exhibit established desirable social behaviors formally recognized? Perhaps most importantly, how are students who are actively attempting to make sustained social adjustments formally recognized and supported (without stigmatizing)?

Positive Behavior Support in the Classroom

- Arrange classroom to minimize crowding and distraction.
- Provide explicit classroom routines and directions that are linked to schoolwide routines and directions.
- Post three to five positively stated expectations. Teach and reinforce them.
- Provide frequent acknowledgement of appropriate behaviors.
- Give students multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction.
- Actively supervise classes during instruction.
- Ignore or provide quick, direct, explicit reprimands/redirections in response to inappropriate behavior.
- Incorporate multiple strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior (points, praise) linked to schoolwide strategies.
- Provide specific feedback in response to social and academic errors, and give correct responses.

Source: *Classroom management: Self-assessment revised*, by Brandi Simonsen, Sarah Fairbanks, Amy Briesch, and George Sugai, available online at http://www.pbis.org/pbis_resource_detail_page.aspx?Type=4&PBIS_ResourceID=174. This document was published in 2006 by the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports at the University of Connecticut.

Jonesboro Middle School

Jonesboro Middle School (JMS), in the center of Clayton County, Georgia, has a population of 558 students and a 65 percent poverty rate. JMS is a model demonstration school for the state of Georgia's Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support efforts.

In 2003, JMS was one of several middle schools in Clayton County that received a stipend to send a team of staff members to a three-day training on a schoolwide PBIS effort that Georgia calls Effective Behavioral and Instructional Supports (EBIS). The team that JMS sent included the assistant principal in charge of data and discipline, representative core teachers from each grade level, representative special education teachers, representative staff members, and a parent representative. The JMS team learned how to develop capacity by successfully implementing the following characteristics of EBIS:

- Using data-based decision making
- Developing a simple set of behavioral expectations
- Teaching behavioral expectations
- Acknowledging appropriate behavior

Like hundreds of schools across the United States and Canada, JMS has found that implementing SWPBS can have many benefits. The JMS team developed three simple rules, or behavioral expectations, for their school. Once they were developed, the team took the expectations to the entire staff for approval. The staff settled on the following set of behavioral expectations:

1. Be respectful of self, others, and property.
2. Be responsible and prepared at all times.
3. Be ready to follow directions and procedures.

To acknowledge students' good behavior, the team decided on a "gotcha" reward that could be brought to the office to be traded for a small prize, such as ice cream at lunch. They introduced the gotchas to the teachers and instructed them on how to use them. They made sure that the entire staff understood these were not to be given out to every child in their class; rather, the staff was to monitor nonclassroom areas looking for good examples of "Doing it the Jonesboro Way" and giving a gotcha for a specific exemplar. This is why unsuspecting students who picked up trash on the school grounds were surprised by the assistant principal jumping out of the bushes or coming out from around a tree to give them a gotcha for picking up litter and respecting property. Students in the cafeteria are quick to assist someone who drops a tray because they never know when someone will be watching to give them a gotcha for respecting their neighbor.

Prior to implementing EBIS, JMS dealt with 1,252 office discipline referrals (ODRs) per year. In the first year of EBIS implementation, they only dealt with 674 ODRs. Assuming the average ODR takes approximately 15 minutes, this is a savings of 8,670 minutes. This is equivalent to 145 hours, or almost 21 days. That is a month more contact time that the staff had to spend instructing and interacting positively with their students.

Reprinted from *Jonesboro Middle School Case*, Office of Special Education Programs, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2011b), available online at http://www.pbis.org/school/primary_level/case_examples.aspx. This document is in the public domain.

Recommendation 4: Systemic Academic Interventions and Supports

Develop and implement a schoolwide system to identify students' specific learning needs using assessment data, provide multitiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to address student needs.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Academic intervention services (AIS) is defined by New York State Education Department (2008) as “additional instruction which supplements the instruction provided in the general curriculum” for “students who are at risk of not achieving the state learning standards in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and/or science, or who are at risk of not gaining the knowledge and skills needed to meet or exceed designated performance levels on state assessments.” Across the state of New York, school leaders are searching for ways to enhance the current AIS programs in their schools to be able to identify students earlier, provide services to all students who require them, and measure student outcomes (Killeen & Sipple, 2004). Many schools begin to implement RTI after determining that their current structures and processes are not meeting their students' academic needs.

The incorporation of an RTI model into established interventions has been found to improve student academic progress; specifically, it has been found to increase the number of children who demonstrate proficiency on state accountability tests (Heartland Area Education Agency 11, 2004).

According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (Prewitt & Mellard, 2010), RTI is a model of academic supports that “integrates assessment and intervention within a multilevel prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems.” These goals are accomplished through the identification of students at risk for poor learning outcomes, provision of evidence-based interventions, regular monitoring of student progress, and regularly adjusting the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness.

In a national study conducted by the National Center on Response to Intervention (Prewitt & Mellard, 2010), middle schools across 28 states, including New York, participated in a study to identify current RTI practices, identify key factors of successful implementation, and identify RTI practices linked to positive student learning outcomes. Schools involved in the study chose RTI to (1) close the student achievement gaps, (2) meet AYP every year with every subgroup, or (3) address undesirable and disruptive student behaviors.

According to Prewitt and Mellard (2010), models of a responsive academic intervention program include a data-driven decision making model that includes:

- The use of a schoolwide (universal) screening assessment to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes
- Multitiered intervention programs and strategies that increase in levels of intensity
- Frequent and ongoing progress monitoring to determine student progress and determine program efficacy

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing Research-Based Education Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

National Center on Response to Intervention: *What Is RTI?* (Web page)

<http://www.rti4success.org/whatisrti/>

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities: *Tiered Service-Delivery Model* (Web page)

http://www.nrclld.org/rti_practices/tiers.html

New York State Response to Intervention Technical Assistance Center (Website)

<http://www.nysrti.org>

- A team structure to organize and analyze student performance using progress monitoring data

Although research indicates minimum components for successful implementation of responsive intervention programs, no specific model of RTI, intervention program or strategy, or progress monitoring tool is endorsed by Learning Point Associates. Instead, schools are encouraged to consider these research-based recommendations to make specific decisions regarding the structure and design of intervention programs that will best meet the needs of their situation.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Schools face a number of challenges when selecting a strategy for implementing academic interventions. Local regulations; contracts; and resources such as time, funding, and personnel all play a major role. Schools must make the determination, based on individualized circumstances, of what will ultimately work best. The most effective programs are those that are launched with clear leadership, built from careful planning, and supported with schoolwide awareness and professional development prior to full implementation.

1. Identify a team of school staff members who will lead the rollout of the intervention.

This leadership team may vary according to the school's demographics. Some schools choose to include teachers who work with subpopulations (e.g., English language learners and students with disabilities), and other schools include teachers who teach in the content areas in which RTI is being implemented (e.g., ELA teachers from each grade, literacy coach, and reading specialist). Network resources and coaches also should be considered.

2. Conduct careful planning to ensure the rollout's success.

School leadership defines the intervention infrastructure, scheduling, resources, funding, staffing, screening and progress monitoring assessments, intervention programs, tools, and strategies. This process includes developing explicit plans, processes, and procedures prior to implementation. Following is a checklist of topics to cover:

Data-Based Decision Making

- Establish a team structure, routines, and procedures for making decisions.
- Set explicit decision rules to decide when students will move in, out, or within interventions.
- Develop record-keeping systems that communicate student progress to stakeholders (e.g., student, parent, teachers, AIS coordinator).

Assessments and Screenings

- Establish a yearly, schoolwide schedule for assessments and screening procedures (e.g., three times each year).

- Identify screening instrument(s) that will be used to identify students for interventions. Screening instruments should be valid and reliable and aligned with grade-level curriculum based on learning standards (e.g., state assessments, Acuity predictive assessments, or instructionally targeted assessments) or subject-specific and research-based assessments (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery, Qualitative Reading Inventory, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills).
- Establish participation criteria, select benchmarks or cutpoints at which risk is determined, and identify students who fail to meet benchmarks or fall below specified cutpoints.
- Create multitiered “entry points,” and establish multiple benchmarks to “slice the pie,” allowing students to receive targeted interventions that vary in levels of intensity (e.g., students 0 percent to 40 percent and 41 percent to 65 percent, or Level 1 and Level 2 on state assessments).

Tiered Intervention Programs

- Select evidence-based intervention programs and/or strategies to use with students who fall in various ranges based on the screening tool used.
- Determine the service delivery method (e.g., pullout small-group instruction, afterschool instruction, Saturday program) and duration and frequency of service.
- Ensure that services and programs are tiered and increase in levels of intensity, which match the increasing needs of students.

Progress Monitoring

- Determine assessments to be used. Assessments can be both formal (e.g., AIMSweb, Acuity predictive assessments, or instructionally targeted assessments) and informal (e.g., checklist, running records).
- Establish a benchmark for performance (e.g., >40 percent and >65 percent). These benchmarks determine when students will move within, through, and out of intervention tiers.
- Establish a timeline for progress monitoring. Monitoring may occur as frequently as every two weeks.

3. Create an awareness of the intervention, and provide adequate professional development to ensure that everyone is on board.

Many schools follow a “train the trainers” model in which selected staff members attend training and turnkey that training to other staff. Depending on which teachers and staff will be providing interventions, training also may be schoolwide. A critical component of the RTI implementation process is to ensure that stakeholders are clear about what is being implemented and why it is being implemented. School leaders must establish and communicate the goals and expected outcomes of adopting an RTI model while providing ongoing training and sufficient time for staff to fully understand the components and structures of a new intervention model. Successful implementation relies heavily on the ability of teachers and school leaders to implement RTI with fidelity.

Opportunities for AIS-related professional development should be embedded into the school's annual professional development plan. Careful planning is essential when rolling out professional learning opportunities in the area of AIS.

4. Put the intervention plan into action.

Recommendations for implementation include “start small.” (See “Starting Small.”) This approach might include starting in one grade, one content area, or one classroom; or it could begin by focusing on one or two components of RTI. This decision should be what makes the most sense for the school based on existing resources, tools, and structures. At this phase, adjustments and adaptations are an ongoing part of the process.

Starting Small

Two approaches for “starting small” with an academic intervention program are to start with one essential component or to start with one small group.

Starting With One Essential Component: Build a model with a focus on one component at a time (e.g., screening, then data-based decision making, then progress monitoring, then intervention levels). Create a timeline for the implementation of each component, and align training for school staff with each phase of implementation.

Example: A middle school in the Midwest began the implementation of its RTI program by first focusing on reading programs and strategies for students identified as being at risk. A second tier of interventions and progress monitoring was rolled out later in the year.

Starting With One Small Group: Implement the intervention program with a small pilot group. With this approach, it is best to investigate which components worked well and which need to be refined before scaling up to other classes, grades, or content areas.

Example: A Pennsylvania school implemented RTI in a small number of classrooms during the first year to determine what worked and what did not work. The school's interventions team focused on creating a balance between moving too slowly (which they felt would minimize the impact of RTI and decrease staff buy-in) and moving too quickly (which might overwhelm teachers and students).

Adapted from *Response to Intervention Practices in Middle Schools*, a 2011 presentation by Daryl F. Mellard and Sarah L. Prewett, available online at http://www.rti4success.org/ppt/WBNR_April2011.ppt. This document was produced by the National Center on Response to Intervention and is in the public domain.

School A's Intervention Program

School A is a middle school serving a total of 870 students in Grades 6–8. Approximately 50 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 22 percent are English language learners, and 11 percent are students with disabilities. In the 2005–06 school year, only 50 percent of the students at each grade level were proficient on state examinations and approximately 16 percent of students at each grade level were “far below” grade level.

In response to comprehensive school improvement efforts, the school implemented a three-tiered RTI model in reading. At the end of the 2006–07 school year, more than 80 percent of students in all grades passed the state ELA test. Following is an outline of the intervention program developed by School A in response to student performance and learning initiatives.

TIER I

Intervention Program or Strategy

- Holt Reinhart and daily fluency instruction; general education classroom

Length of Instruction/Intensity

- 5 days per week for 72 minutes per day

Screening Tools

- Grade-level fluency passages, district writing prompts, Scholastic Reading Inventory, curriculum-based assessments administered three times each year

Data-Based Decision-Making Process

- RTI team (principal, related service provider, grade-level teachers) reviews scores in monthly grade-level meetings.
- Students who are two grade levels behind are placed into the next tier of interventions; students who are three grade levels behind are placed into the third tier of interventions.

TIER II

Intervention Program or Strategy

- *REWARDS, Read Naturally, Soar to Success*

Length of Instruction / Intensity

- 3 days per week for 72 minutes each day

Screening Tools

- Curriculum-based assessments administered three times each year

Data-Based Decision-Making Process

- Students are assigned to the programs based on identified skill deficit (comprehension, decoding, fluency).
- Students move between tiers based on progress monitoring scores.

TIER III

Intervention Program or Strategy

- *Language!, Read 180, High Point*

Length of Instruction/Intensity

- Daily for 144 minutes

Screening Tools

- Same as Tier II

Data-Based Decision-Making Process

- Students exit this tier after progressing within two grade levels of expectations (into Tier II).

Adapted from pages 58–59 of *Implementing Response to Intervention: Practices and Perspectives From Five Schools—Frequently Asked Questions*, by Kathryn Klinger Tackett, Greg Roberts, Scott Baker, and Nancy Scammacca, available online at <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Implementing%20RTI%20Practices%20%26%20Perspectives%20of%205%20Schools.pdf>
This report was published in 2009 by the Center on Instruction and is in the public domain.

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Appendix. The Path to Success: School Improvement Planning Calendar

Educational researchers find that successful schools focus their improvement efforts on a few key areas. The school improvement planning calendar will help Academy of Public Relations develop and implement four key areas of focus that, if implemented with fidelity, will lead to whole-school improvement. As with all school improvement processes, Academy of Public Relations should ensure it has the support of its stakeholders (people who have an interest in the school, including students, parents, administrators, teachers, other school staff and volunteers, local residents and businesses, community organizations, and corporate partners) and the school leadership team.

During school year 2011–12, the school may wish to utilize this improvement calendar as a guide to the specific action steps that should be taken each quarter to apply the recommendations outlined in this report.

	SUMMER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
Systemic Use of Data to Inform Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign teachers to grade-level and/or subject-specific inquiry teams. Identify how the work of the inquiry teams is linked to schoolwide goals. Develop a standard data analysis protocol and schedule. Establish a yearly schoolwide schedule for assessment and screening procedures. Identify assessment instrument(s) to track student achievement. Establish a system of multiple methods to ensure teacher teams are able to engage in data analysis to inform instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide resources to support teacher collaboration on data analysis, such as tracking sheets and/or data coach. Share assessment results with teachers in a timely fashion and ensure teachers have access to assessment results. Adjust classroom instruction based on student progress. Observe classrooms for impact of data analysis and PD and provide feedback. Describe how school teams will be expected to use data. Provide PD on data analysis, item analysis, and instructional strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide resources to support teacher collaboration on data analysis, such as tracking sheets and/or data coach. Share assessment results with teachers in a timely fashion and ensure teachers have access to assessment results. Adjust classroom instruction based on student progress. Observe classrooms for impact of data analysis and PD and provide feedback. Provide PD on data analysis, item analysis, and instructional strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide resources to support teacher collaboration on data analysis, such as tracking sheets and/or data coach. Share assessment results with teachers in a timely fashion and ensure teachers have access to assessment results. Adjust classroom instruction based on student progress. Observe classrooms for impact of data analysis and PD and provide feedback. Revisit PD on data analysis, item analysis, and instructional strategies for 2012–13. 	
Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide transitions programs that minimize anxiety, increase resilience, and ensure students develop readiness to enter their new environment. Establish process to identify and respond to individual students who require additional assistance and support (SWPBS). Implement preventive and early interventions (SWPBS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with parents/caretakers with two-way communication, volunteer opportunities, curricula-related collaborations, shared decision-making, etc. Encourage student participation—giving students a voice in the school/ classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with parents/caretakers. Encourage student participation—giving students a voice in the school/ classroom. Review process to identify and respond to individual students who require additional assistance and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with parents/caretakers. Encourage student participation—giving students a voice in the school/ classroom. Review and/or revise transitions programs that ensure student readiness for their new environment in 2012–13 based on attendance data, student academic data, behavioral data, and student surveys. Review and/or revise process to identify and respond to individual students requiring additional assistance and support in 2012–13. 	
Schoolwide Behavior Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop (SWPBS) a continuum of scientifically based behavior interventions and supports. Arrange environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior. Provide professional development (PD) to staff on SWPBS and on how to teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach (all) and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors. Implement (all) evidence-based behavior management practices with fidelity and accountability. Observe (administrators) classroom for PBIS and provide feedback. Monitor (SWPBS) data for program effectiveness and make adjustments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach (all) and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors. Implement (all) evidence-based behavior management practices with fidelity and accountability. Observe (administrators) classroom for PBIS and provide feedback. Monitor (SWPBS) data for program effectiveness and make adjustments. Use data to make decisions and solve problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach (all) and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors. Implement (all) evidence-based behavior management practices with fidelity and accountability. Observe (administrators) classroom for PBIS and provide feedback. Monitor (SWPBS) data for program effectiveness and make adjustments for 2012–13. Use data to make decisions and solve problems. 	
Systemic Academic Interventions and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a team structure, routines, and procedures for making decisions. Select evidence-based intervention programs and strategies for each tier. Determine assessments to be used (formal and informal). Establish a progress monitoring timeline. Set explicit rules to decide when students will move in, out, or within interventions. Identify screening instrument(s) for identifying students for interventions (using data). Establish participation criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a schoolwide schedule for assessments and screening (using data). Develop record-keeping system for student progress that includes communication to stakeholders. Establish a benchmark for performance. Create multitiered “entry points.” Determine method for delivery of service, duration, and frequency of service. Communicate academic interventions and support (AIS) program to stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents, AIS coordinator). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review student assessment data (formal/informal) to make student placement decisions. Communicate student progress to stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review student assessment data (formal/informal) to make student placement decisions. Communicate student progress to stakeholders. Review and/or revise intervention services to determine program effectiveness. Survey students and parents to determine the level of satisfaction with programs and engagement with AIS. 	

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