I.S. 254

FINAL REPORT

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

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Contents

Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of I.S. 254 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 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 I.S. 254

I.S. 254 (X254) is located in New York City, in the Bronx, in Community School District 10. The school serves approximately 458 students in Grades 6–8 and in special education classes. Here, 31 percent of the students are English language learners and 21 percent are identified as students with disabilities.

In 2009–10, I.S. 254 did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts for all students, Hispanic or Latino subgroup, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. In 2010–11, I.S. 254's state accountability status was designated as "Restructuring (Year 1)."[1] Because the school was designated as in restructuring, the school participated in the ESCA. Data collection for the audit took place from February through June of 2011.

Audit Process at I.S. 254

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 I.S. 254. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school at a co-interpretation[SM] meeting on June 7, 2011. During this meeting, 43 stakeholders from the I.S. 254 community attended the introductory portion of the co-interpretation. A smaller number stayed to 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.

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

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates has 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 I.S. 254.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, co-interpretation participants determined a set of key findings. The wording of the key findings below matches the wording developed and agreed upon by co-interpretation participants at the meeting. These key findings are detailed in this section.

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:
Some teachers struggle to differentiate or modify instruction for all learners.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by information from school interviews, teacher survey results, and review of school-submitted documents. Interviews indicated that the school has difficulty in meeting the needs of English language learners at the school. This finding also is supported through submitted curriculum documents, which did not include suggestions of instructional strategies to use for this population, nor did they include accommodations or modifications for struggling students. Teacher surveys showed one possible way that this is reflected in classroom instruction: only half (55 percent) of teachers differentiate instruction 1–2 times per week or more. Less than half of teachers (40 percent) reported modifying curricular materials for English language learners in English language arts (ELA) or mathematics.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:
There is no consistently enforced behavior policy for students. Disruptive actions by staff and/or students negatively impact student engagement.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by information from school interviews, teacher survey results, classroom observations, and review of school-submitted documents. I.S. 254 has a behavior policy that includes rewards for positive behavior, but it is unclear which specific behaviors result in which rewards and consequences. In addition, there was no indication about the types of behavior that warranted referrals or what actions were to be taken as a result of referrals. One document stated that student detention and suspensions would be handled according to the "student discipline code," but no copy of the code was provided. One document described an "honor roll" system with four levels. However, no specific indicators were given for how students are identified as being at one level or another. The levels of achievement to be included in the "honor roll" included academic and behavior requirements, but requirements were not specified.

Inconsistency in behavior implementation was evident in classrooms, where students rarely shared their ideas and opinions or volunteered to answer questions. Student engagement was generally mixed between periods of active engagement and disengaged or passive engagement. This issue also showed in student behavior, which was a distraction in 80 percent of observed classrooms. In addition, external disruptions, such as teachers entering a classroom to retrieve materials, led to interference in the learning environment in 18 percent of observed classrooms.

Teacher survey results further supported inconsistencies in behavior implementation. Only 15 percent of teachers agreed that there is a schoolwide behavior plan in place, and more than half (55 percent) report using behavior strategies that are not consistent with those used across the school. There was a wide range reported in the frequency with which behavior data are utilized, with 36 percent of teachers reporting that they look at behavior data 1–2 times a week or more, and another 36 percent of teachers reporting that they look at these data never or almost never.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

While a professional development plan is in place, the plan does not appear to be aligned to either the school's stated goals or the teachers' needs.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by information school interviews, teacher survey results, and review of school-submitted documents. Documents indicated that professional development is based on a 3-tier intervention system. Tier 1 teachers require the least intervention, Tier 2 teachers receive "quick visit" observations, and Tier 3 teachers work with Australian United States Services in Education (AUSSIE). In addition, neither documents nor interviews indicated if the school's goals were incorporated into the professional development plan. One interviewee responded that the focus of professional development was on student engagement, but it was unclear if that was for all subject areas or for one. This disconnect was further seen in the teacher surveys: roughly half the teachers (55 percent) agreed that professional development has been closely connected to the school's goals. Less than half (45 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that professional development has addressed the needs of students in their classroom.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

Instruction does not typically include high quality of feedback, high content understanding, or analysis and problem solving.

Critical Key Finding 4 is supported by information from teacher survey results and classroom observations. Classroom observations showed there was a focus on content, but there was often a lack of either depth or breadth or both. There may be brief discussions of prior lessons, but perhaps there is not a thorough review of prior knowledge or a lack of connection between previous learning and current topics. In these classrooms, teachers did not facilitate higher-order thinking. The focus on memorization of facts and procedural information was emphasized. Quality of feedback showed that teachers only sometimes scaffolded student learning and provided feedback.

Teacher survey results also suggested that tasks involving higher-order thinking skills may not be emphasized during instruction. Seventy-nine percent of teachers surveyed engaged students in answering textbook or worksheet questions 1–2 times a week or almost daily. Conversely, more than half (57 percent) of surveyed teachers reported that students work on models or simulations a few times per semester or less. Teachers (86 percent) also reported students' work on extended investigations or projects 1–2 times a month or less. Further, 29 percent of teachers reported that students record, represent, or analyze data once a week or more.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 5:

AIS and SEL programs are in place, but student progress is not monitored and programming is not evaluated for effectiveness.

Critical Key Finding 5 is supported by information from school interviews and teacher survey results. Interviewees stated that I.S. 254 has some data management systems in place for tracking students at risk of course failure or retention. However, neither interview respondents nor documents mentioned any monitoring of intervention services to determine their effectiveness in improving student achievement. Further, interviews provided contradictory responses about the adequacy of academic and behavioral intervention. One interviewee indicated there were not adequate social and emotional supports, and another stated academics suffer due to the school providing so many social and emotional supports. Teacher survey results supported a perceived lack of systemic support: 55 percent of teachers felt once students were identified for services, they may not receive those services in a timely manner.

Positive Key Findings

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:

More than half of the classrooms observed had a positive classroom climate, with displays of positive learning, environment, and positive communication.

Positive Key Finding 1 is supported by information from classroom observations. The majority of classrooms showed at least some displays of positive, respectful relationships. Students and teachers seemed happy and friendly. Although one teacher lectured, the tone was warm and calm. The teacher used affirmative and positive encouragement as students worked. Also, often in these classrooms, teachers elicited responses from students but may not have incorporated the responses into the lesson.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 2:

While only 55 percent of teachers feel that teacher collaboration is supported by the administration, there is significant evidence that collaboration occurs.

Positive Key Finding 2 is supported by information from school interviews, teacher survey results, and review of school-submitted documents. Interviews and teacher survey results showed that teachers have opportunities to collaborate, and 65 percent of teachers reported that they collaborate 1–2 times a week or more on instruction and student learning. Documents suggested at least some of this time is spent sharing lesson plans and meeting on their own as well as videotaping each other's lessons. However, just over half (55 percent) of teachers feel this collaboration is supported by the administration. Further, there is a lack of clarity regarding how consistent and systematic the collaboration is. Teacher survey results show that less than half (44 percent) of teachers responded that they agree or strongly agree that general education and special education teachers collaborate with each other.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

As detailed in the Key Findings section, participants at the I.S. 254 co-interpretation meeting prioritized some key findings that highlighted the strengths of the school (Positive Key Findings 1 and 2) and other key findings that focused on areas in which the school can improve (Critical Key Findings 1 through 5). Following is an explanation of each recommendation's focus, which is followed by the actual recommendations.

I.S. 254 should be able to leverage positive practices occurring in the school, such as those identified as positive key findings, to support the implementation of the recommendations below, which were developed to address the critical key findings. In particular, as the school seeks to improve, the established collaboration practices at the school can support teachers through implementation. The role of collaboration should be considered as part of the implementation plans related to these recommendations.

THE FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

With these issues in mind, Learning Point Associates auditors have developed the following five recommendations:

1. Develop learning activities and implement instructional strategies that differentiate instruction for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners.
2. 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.
3. Develop and implement a professional development plan that is aligned to school goals and focused on subject area content.
4. Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.
5. Develop and implement a schoolwide system to identify at-risk students using assessment data, provide multitiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to address student needs.

These five recommendations are discussed on the following pages. Each recommendation provides a review of research, online resources for additional information, specific actions the school may wish to take during its implementation process, and examples of real-life schools that have successfully implemented strategies. 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: Differentiation

Develop learning activities and implement instructional strategies that differentiate instruction for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Differentiation of instruction means tailoring instruction to meet individual needs of students. It is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that values the individual. Differentiating does not mean providing separate, unrelated activities for each student, but does mean providing interrelated activities that are based on student needs for the purpose of ensuring that all students come to a similar grasp of a skill or idea (Good, 2006). Teachers can differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment according to the readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles of their students (Tomlinson, 2003).

Qualitative and meta-analysis research indicates that students in differentiated classrooms achieve better outcomes than students in classrooms without differentiation (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Tomlinson et al., 2003). When instructional materials are differentiated to meet student needs, interests, and readiness, academic gains increase (Lou et al., 1996). Students in classrooms that are effectively differentiated have been found to have achievement gains on state tests in reading and math (Brimijoin, 2001; Tieso, 2005).

While there is no single set of strategies that constitutes differentiated instruction, Hall, Strangman, and Meyer (2011) have identified several guidelines that are noted to help educators form an understanding and develop ideas around differentiation.

- Instruction moves beyond minute details and facts, and is concept-focused and principle-driven.
- Several elements and materials are used to support instructional content.
- "Flexible grouping is consistently used."
- "Initial and on-going assessment of student readiness and growth are essential."
- Learning tasks are interesting, engaging, and challenging.
- Student products allow for "varied means of expression, alternative procedures," and provides "varying degrees of difficulty."

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

School leaders can support the effective implementation of differentiation within and across classrooms by providing time for teacher planning for differentiation and execution of plans, providing ample and suitable materials for academically diverse classrooms, and developing and otherwise ensuring access to differentiated curriculum.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

A Look At Differentiating Instruction (Publication)
http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/TheCenter_NL_Feb09.pdf

A Teacher's Guide To Differentiating Instruction (Publication)
http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/TheCenter_NL_Jan07.pdf

1. Focus on foundation.

Embed professional learning opportunities around differentiation within the school's annual professional development plan. Schools that have moved to schoolwide implementation of a differentiated approach to instruction caution that the process is both complex and not something that can be implemented quickly. The success of efforts to differentiate instruction will ultimately lie with teachers. However, some teachers will lack either the necessary knowledge or skills (Gregory, 2003). To help teachers prepare to make the change, schools should provide resources on differentiated instruction and time for teachers to discuss them. Teachers may need training in strategies—such as curriculum compacting and learning centers—that can be used to support differentiation (Protheroe, 2007)

2. Analyze student needs.

Identify which assessments will be given and how assessment data will be used for purposeful student grouping. Gaining an awareness of student knowledge and understanding is a key component of successful differentiation. Assessments can be formal or informal. These can be schoolwide, universal screening tools, content-area diagnostics, or assessments to gauge students' knowledge and familiarity with a topic prior to the start of a unit of study. Decide which assessments teachers will use to accurately measure their students' strengths, weaknesses, and interests and provide guidance for next steps in instruction. Results should be tracked and used to design instructional strategies tailored to student needs.

3. Design instruction.

Design lesson plans, including instructional strategies, learning activities, and assessments that incorporate differentiation. Once all stakeholders have a deep understanding of what differentiated instruction is and what it is not, the current structure of the curriculum and its supports or lack of supports for differentiation, and student needs, teachers should work collaboratively to design and embed instructional strategies into the curriculum that support differentiation. They should also identify opportunities to infuse different parts of the curriculum with differentiated instructional strategies.

Differentiated Instruction

One choice for differentiated instruction is tiered assignments. "Tiered assignments are designed to instruct students on essential skills that are provided at different levels of complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness. The curricular content and objective(s) are the same, but the process and/or product are varied according to the student's level of readiness" (The Access Center, 2005, p. 2). An example of this in practice in an English language arts class could occur when "students with moderate comprehension skills are asked to create a story-web. Students with advanced comprehension skills are asked to re-tell a story from the point of view of the main character" (The Access Center, 2005, p. 2). Both sets of students are working toward the objective of reading and comprehending literature at grade level.

Another structure for differentiated instruction is flexible grouping. "Students work as part of many different groups depending on the task and/or content. Sometimes students are placed in groups based on readiness, other times they are placed based on interest and/or learning profile. Groups can either be assigned by the teacher or chosen by the students. Students can be assigned purposefully to a group or assigned randomly. This strategy allows students to work with a wide variety of peers and keeps them from being labeled as advanced or struggling" (The Access Center, 2005, p. 3). In practice, "the teacher may assign groups based on readiness for phonics instruction, while allowing other students to choose their own groups for book reports, based on the book topic" (The Access Center, 2005, p. 3).

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Central Elementary School

***Closing the Achievement Gap with Curriculum Enrichment and Differentiation: One School's Story* (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008) documents how an elementary school staff approached the tasks of implementing differentiated instruction in their school.**

According to Beecher and Sweeny, Central Elementary School was considered a "failing school. Students were performing in the 30th percentile in reading, writing, and mathematics on state and district assessments.... 45 percent of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch.... [and] 30 percent of students spoke English as [a] second language" (p. 506).

After conducting a needs assessment and developing a school improvement plan, school leaders and teachers identified differentiation as a schoolwide instructional focus and embarked on a process to implement differentiation in the school.

Central Elementary School decided to develop a Social Studies unit through the use of tiered activities. The team used essential questions to "provide guidance for inclusion of higher level thinking skills in the curricular objectives that covered content, learning process, and assessment" (p. 512). The content was delivered through three tiers of activities. "Learning was differentiated according to the needs of the students through the use of texts of different reading levels" (p. 515).

Once the social studies "units were complete, teachers wrote specific lessons to include in the units" (p. 515). Teachers collaboratively planned "concurrent differentiated learning experiences for students based on a single instructional objective" (p. 517). For the school, the social studies "units represented the first round of differentiated lesson planning and instruction. Over the course of 8 years, each discipline in the regular curriculum was examined and revised to include...differentiation" (p. 517). Differentiation became a focus of all instruction.

"Teachers spent approximately four hours each month learning more about differentiation and making plans to implement differentiated instruction in their classrooms. The professional development focused on identifying students' strengths and weakness; systems to make the process of small, flexible group instruction manageable; and the development of leveled classroom libraries" (p. 522). "This comprehensive staff development program was closely monitored and adjusted as needed. Teachers were given the tools and the support to be able to successfully implement the concepts presented.... Each new concept was introduced and training, modeling, and coaching were provided. Staff development occurred during biweekly grade-level seminars, monthly staff meetings, and weekly school or district staff development sessions" (pp. 523–524).

These interventions had positive effects. "The success of the school improvement efforts was demonstrated in students' positive attitudes about school, increased engagement in learning, and improved achievement on district and state assessments. Analyses of student achievement on state tests from 1997 to 2004 showed improvement in all subject areas and in all levels of proficiency" (p. 526).

Recommendation 2: Positive Behavioral 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).

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, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

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

important academic outcomes for all students (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP] Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2011b).

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 (see 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 Behavioral 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.

Reprinted from *Schoolwide Behavioral Management Systems* by Mary K. Fitzsimmons, at http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED417515.pdf. Published in 1998 as ERIC/OSEP Digest E563.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Understand the guiding principles of student behavior management.

The OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2011b) has established the following SWPBS guiding principles:

- "Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports."

  If not already established, a well-articulated schoolwide behavior policy/student code inclusive of positive expectations, minor and major infractions, and so forth, must first be in place. Clarity around expectations for staff's handling of in-class behaviors is important in this situation. 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 on a monthly basis, at a minimum. Data should be presented in user-friendly format.

- "Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior."

  This principle includes 3–5 positively stated overarching schoolwide social expectations that are posted prominently around the schools, particularly in problematic areas.

- "Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors."

  Students should be introduced to or 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 evidenced-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 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 PBS outcomes, wherein data is collected as scheduled and used to evaluate PBIS 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 teaches, special education teachers, members with behavior expertise, and a coach/district representative. It is vital that the 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

- The classroom is arranged to "minimize crowding and distraction."
- The classroom has "explicit routines [and] directions" that are linked to schoolwide routines and direction.
- There are "3–5 positively stated expectations (or rules)" that are "posted, taught, and reinforced."
- There are frequent acknowledgments of appropriate behaviors.
- Students have "multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction."
- The teacher actively supervises class during instruction.
- Inappropriate behavior is ignored; instead, quick, direct, explicit reprimands/redirections are provided.
- Multiple strategies are in place to acknowledge appropriate behavior (points, praise) linked to schoolwide strategies.
- Specific feedback is given in response to social and academic errors and correct responses.

Adapted from *Classroom Management: Self-Assessment Revised* by Brandi Simonsen, Sarah Fairbanks, Amy Briesch, and George Sugai, available at http://www.pbis.org/pbis_resource_detail_page.aspx?Type=4&PBIS_ResourceID=174.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Jonesboro Middle School

Jonesboro Middle School, located in Clayton County, Georgia, provides a good example of a positive behavior management system.

Jonesboro Middle School (JMS) has a population of 558 students, a 65% poverty rate and sits in the center of Clayton County, Georgia. JMS is also a model demonstration school for the state of Georgia's Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support efforts. Like hundreds of schools across the United States and Canada, JMS has found that implementing School-wide Positive Behavior Support can have many benefits.

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 3-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...

The JMS team developed 3 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 the good behavior of students, the team decided on a "gotcha" system that would 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 that these were not to be given out to every child in their class; rather, the staff was to monitor the non-classroom 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. Word spread quickly of the assistant principal's penchant for positives, and the grounds have never looked lovelier. 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....

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

Adapted from the *Jonesboro Middle School Case* by the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2011a), available online at http://www.pbis.org/school/primary_level/jonesboro.aspx.

Recommendation 3: Professional Development

Develop and implement a professional development plan that is aligned to school goals and focused on subject area content.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Research has found that professional development for teachers is most effective and boosts student achievement when it is embedded in their daily work and sustained, as opposed to a one-time workshop model (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Steiner, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Effective professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration, coaching, and peer observation, which allows them to be actively involved in their own development and more frequently practice learned skills (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Additionally, professional development is most effective when it is directly connected to teacher practice and focuses on content (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). Content areas should align with school improvement needs and goals to target improvement to those areas.

By refining the process by which professional development is offered; ensuring that it is embedded, sustained and allows for active teacher participation; and focusing the development on teacher practice and content, schools can improve teacher practice and student achievement (Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Creating a professional development plan that addresses both student learning and teacher learning can be a complex task. Professional learning activities should be designed with student achievement as both the impetus and outcome. School improvement goals should be directly related to a review of student achievement data. Subsequently, teacher learning activities should be directly related to the goal of improving student outcomes. At minimum, successful schoolwide professional development plans include the following sequential steps:

1. **Analyze student data and/or conduct a needs assessment.**

   Review student learning data by using an item analysis of state test results, interim assessment results, school quality review, or ESCA report. Identify areas of low proficiency, slow learning progress, drops in proficiency between grades, and subgroup and gender differences.

2. **Select goals for student learning.**

   Identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-sensitive (SMART) learning goals for students.

3. **Select professional development goals for teacher learning.**

   Identify specific and measurable teacher learning goals, directly related to student learning goals.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality: High Quality Professional Development for All Teachers (Publication)

http://www.tqsource.org/publications/HighQualityProfessionalDevelopment.pdf

Public Impact: Professional Development for Educators (Website)

http://www.publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/professional-development-for-educators

4. **Select professional development activities to meet goals.**

   Determine what activities will best meet teachers learning needs (e.g., workshops, coaching, collaborative inquiry, intervisitation). Consider available resources (time, money, materials) and a range of professional development activities; match with the needs of adult learners.

5. **Implement the professional development activities.**

   Ensure that teachers have time and resources (e.g., research, articles, video clips, coaches, opportunities to observe master teachers) for professional development. Provide teachers with clear expectations for integration into their pedagogical practice, structures and protocols for activities, and opportunities for reflection.

6. **Evaluate the impact of professional development.**

   Develop an evaluation plan. Identify what to measure, how to measure it, and when to measure it. Create a frequent and ongoing schedule of evaluation.

7. **Modify the professional development plan.**

   Determine the impact of the professional development activity. If the activity achieves or fails to achieve its desired results, modify the plan accordingly.

For practical applications, refer to the "Sample Professional Development Plan" on the following page.

Sample Professional Development Plan

Following is a sample professional development plan adapted from Apply *What You Know: Designing Effective Professional Development* (Steiner, 2009). It indicates the specific actions taken by the district, which show alignment to school goals and a focus on subject-area content.

Analysis of Data. Data analysis revealed a "significant drop in math proficiency between 4th and 5th grade." Further review of test item analysis indicated that students did not demonstrate proficiency in fractions.

Student Learning Goals. The district determined the following goal for students: "At the end of the third quarter of fifth grade, 75% of all students will pass an end-of-unit test on fractions."

Professional Development Goals for Teachers. The district determined the following goal for teachers: "At the end of the spring semester, all fifth grade teachers will demonstrate an improved ability to teach fractions as measured by their implementation of new instructional strategies and improved student learning."

Professional Development Activities. The district determined the following professional development activities to meet its goals: "In the fall, before teachers begin the fractions unit, 5th grade math teachers at each school will meet twice a month to discuss and share new curriculum materials related to fractions and design joint interim assessments to measure student progress. Teachers will have ongoing assistance of a math instructional coach. In the summer, [the district will] review schedules to make sure fifth grade teachers have common planning time to meet. [The district will] provide lead teachers and/or principals with curriculum materials and the assistance of an instructional coach to guide implementation."

Evaluating Impact. Measures of evaluation included "(1) percentage of students meeting objectives" as measured by "student test scores on end of unit assessment" and "(2) staff knowledge" and pedagogy, measured by regular and ongoing observations conducted by the school's instructional leaders.

Designing a Long-Term Professional Development Plan

When designing and implementing long-term professional development plans, professional learning activities and goals should be rolled out throughout the school year. Following is a sample professional development plan for Paradise Valley Middle School. Based on a needs assessment conducted by the school, the percentage of black students who met or exceeded proficiency in math was as much as 20 percent lower than the percentage of white students who met or exceeded proficiency in math. In reading, that percentage was as much as 30 percent lower.

PARADISE VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Goal 1: Close the achievement gap between black and white students in reading and mathematics.

Objectives: Sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students' achievement gap in reading and mathematics will be reduced by 5% as measured by district formative assessments.

Teacher Objective: All teachers will be able to plan and implement research-based instruction in their content area as measured by principal and school improvement team classroom walk-throughs conducted in the spring.

Objective 1: All teachers will plan research-based instruction in their content areas.

Strategies/Actions	Person Responsible	Measurement of Accomplishment	Resources Needed	Due Date
Daily interdisciplinary team meetings devote at least two days a week to jointly planning research-based instruction lesson plans or units.	Team leader creates agendas to include significant time for this work.	Each team generates and submits at least four lessons or one unit each grading period.	Leveled reading materials, project-based materials, access to computer lab	Dec and June
Content-area teachers meet twice a week to study TIMSS, analyze test data to determine which mathematics objectives had not been met by a majority of students.	Team leader creates agendas and requests materials from district staff development or curriculum department.	Presentation about TIMSS and research-based instruction to other teachers during professional development time. Analysis of student learning results and lists of difficult objectives.	Disaggregated mathematics scores by objective TIMSS book and study TIMSS videotapes	January: Analysis of tests April for presentation

Objective 2: All teachers will implement research-based lessons in their classrooms.

Strategies/Actions	Person Responsible	Measurement of Accomplishment	Resources Needed	Due Date
Each team sets an implementation timeline.	Team Individual Teacher	Team members submit written debriefing of lessons. Classroom walk-through data and analysis	Debriefing protocols	

Excerpted from Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Services Cooperative. (2008). Effective professional development. In *A toolkit for quality professional development in Arkansas* (pp. 103–185). Harrison, AR: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2011, from http://www.oursc.k12.ar.us/default_images/index/pd_toolkit/pdtoolkitchapter3.pdf

Recommendation 4: Instructional Rigor

Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Instruction that pushes students to engage in higher-level thinking leads to deeper learning for students (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Pashler et al., 2007). Too often, particularly in schools where students are struggling, instruction focuses on lower-level thinking skills, basic content, and test preparation. Teachers of struggling student groups or tracks usually offer students "less exciting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drill and practice activities" than do teachers of high-performing or heterogeneous groups and classes (Cotton, 1989, p. 8). Yet this focus on basic skills does not necessarily improve student achievement.

Several research studies were completed from 1990 to 2003 "which demonstrated that students who experienced higher levels of authentic instruction and assessment showed higher achievement than students who experienced lower levels of authentic instruction and assessment" (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007, p. vii). These results included higher achievement on standardized tests (Newmann et al., 2001). It is also important to note that these results "were consistent for Grades 3–12, across different subject areas (mathematics, social studies, language arts, science), and for different students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status" (Newmann et al., 2007, p. vii).

Teachers need to provide structured opportunities and time for students to take on higher-level cognitive work (Tomlinson, 2003). In discussing the *gradual release of responsibility model,* Fisher and Frey (2008) state that "the cognitive load should shift slowly and purposefully from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility, to independent practice and application by the learner" (p. 2). This process allows students to become what Graves and Fitzgerald (2003) call "competent, independent learners" (p. 98).

There are several steps to ensure that students are being asked to complete this type of intellectually challenging work, which increases test scores and improves performance on authentic assessment measures as well. Newmann et al. (2001) define *authentically challenging intellectual work* as the "construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school" (p. 14).

Daggett (2005) agrees, stating that all students should be pushed "to achieve academic excellence, which ultimately boils down to applying rigorous knowledge to unpredictable, real-world situations, such as those that drive our rapidly changing world" (p. 5). Disciplined inquiry, which occurs in the classroom, requires that students "(1) use a prior knowledge base; (2) strive for in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness; and (3) express their ideas and findings with elaborated communication" (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 15).

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing Research-Based Education Practices Online (Website)
http://dww.ed.gov/

Organizing Instruction and Study to Improve Learning (Publication)
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20072004.pdf

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Cultivate schoolwide high expectations for students.**
   - Align instruction with the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards. According to NYCDOE (2011), schools in New York City are set to have fully adopted the P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for students to take aligned assessments during the 2014–15 school year. These standards are internationally benchmarked and rigorous; they clearly explain what students at each grade level are expected to know and be able to do. Some schools were involved in pilot programs in 2010–11.
   - Develop a shared understanding of instructional rigor through collaborative curriculum planning, design, and/or redesign. When developing or revising curriculum maps, identify opportunities for formative assessment tasks that encourage higher-level thinking for each unit of study.
   - Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assignments that ask students to perform rigorous and authentic tasks.
   - Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assessments that include rigorous and authentic summative assessment tasks.
   - Monitor implementation of expectations through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

2. **Provide professional development for teachers on instructional strategies that push students to engage in higher-order thinking.**
   - Provide ongoing professional development for teachers that describes the importance of pushing students to do higher-level thinking and provides strategies for how to do so. This training may be provided through ongoing professional development sessions and/or support of an instructional coach.
   - Create clear expectations regarding how teachers should implement this professional development in the classroom (e.g., one strategy utilized each day as reflected in lesson plans, authentic assessments at the end of each unit).
   - Identify how this professional development can be incorporated into scheduled teacher collaboration sessions.
   - Monitor implementation of professional development through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

3. **Develop examples of authentic intellectual work.**

   The following example can be used to help school leaders and teachers understand what authentic intellectual work might look like.

Examples of High-Scoring and Low Scoring Measures of Authentic Intellectual Work

The research report *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka (2001) provides examples of two sixth-grade writing assignments: one that scored high and one that scored low on measures of authentic intellectual work. The authors conclude each example with a commentary of why the assignment received the score that it did.

High Scoring Writing Assignment

Write a paper persuading someone to do something. Pick any topic that you feel strongly about, convince the reader to agree with your belief, and convince the reader to take a specific action on this belief.

Commentary

In this high scoring assignment, demands for construction of knowledge are evident because students have to select information and organize it into convincing arguments. By asking students to convince others to believe and act in a certain way, the task entails strong demands that the students support their views with reasons or other evidence, which calls for elaborated written communication. Finally, the intellectual challenge is connected to students' lives because they are to write on something they consider to be personally important.

Low Scoring Writing Assignment

Identify the parts of speech of each underlined word below. All eight parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections—are included in this exercise.

1. My room is arranged for comfort and efficiency.
2. As you enter, you will find a wooden table on the left.
3. I write and type.
4. There is a book shelf near the table.
5. On this book shelf, I keep both my pencils and paper supplies.
6. I spend many hours in this room.
7. I often read or write there during the evening...

Commentary

This assignment requires no construction of knowledge or elaborated communication, and does not pose a question or problem clearly connected to students' lives. Instead it asks students to recall one-word responses, based on memorization or definitions of parts of speech.

Further examples of authentic intellectual instruction, teachers' assignments, and student work can be found in the following source:

Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Carmichael, D. L. (2007). *Authentic instruction and assessment: Common standards for rigor and relevance in teaching academic subjects.* Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education. Retrieved June 24, 2011, from http://centerforaiw.com/sites/centerforaiw.com/files/Authentic-Instruction-Assessment-BlueBook.pdf

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Plainwell Middle School

Plainwell Middle School in Plainwell, Michigan, serves students in Grades 6–8. The school has had success in improving instructional rigor.

> In 2005, Plainwell Community Schools implemented districtwide curriculum restructuring with professional development focused on using the research-based instructional strategies outlined in Robert Marzano's *Classroom Instruction that Works* (2003).... Some of the instructional delivery techniques that were adopted as part of this professional development include the use of nonlinguistic representations of abstract concepts and the use of higher-order questions to elicit student explanations. Teachers find Marzano's strategies to be compelling, noting the evidence of a significant correlation between increased student achievement and the use of research-proven instructional techniques. This approach lays the groundwork for a shift in staff culture, moving away from the use of personal intuition to the use of empirical, quantitative data to inform decisions around teaching and learning.
>
> In 2005, social studies teachers at Plainwell Middle School decided to adopt a new curriculum aligned with Marzano's strategies.... Interactive slideshows are used as a way to actively engage students in new content learning, letting them participate in lectures by touching, interpreting, and acting out historical images and events projected onto a screen. The curriculum also supports vocabulary instruction with graphic organizers that connect definitions with visuals to help students understand and retain key terms. Some teachers...have modified the workbook graphic organizers to create their own "visual dictionaries."...
>
> Higher-order questions are also used as an instructional technique through the new curriculum. Response groups are a structure that teachers use to facilitate small group discussion on controversial topics in history. Through a series of probing questions that require critical thinking and the use of evidence, teachers elicit student explanations that require analysis and application of historical information. Finally, students match up their decisions and viewpoints with actual decisions made in history.
>
> In addition to these strategies, social studies teachers at Plainwell Middle School intentionally build review into daily lessons and assessments. Each day begins with a warm-up activity that quizzes students on a previous lesson.... When introducing a lesson, teachers also make sure to begin with a preview activity that they can refer back to when reviewing the material....
>
> Curriculum restructuring at the middle school is carefully implemented to ensure success.... First, a less-is-more approach is taken, allowing ample time for teachers to learn and practice a single strategy before moving on to another one. Also, teacher training is conducted by lead teachers...who model classroom techniques, lead guided discussions, and set periodic objectives for teams. Instead of a passive "sit-and-get" approach, teachers actively practice the strategies and report to their teams about their progress. Finally, administrators support the efforts by aligning observational classroom walk-through forms to match the professional development focus, keeping the strategies at the center of conversation about teaching.

Description excerpted from the from the *Doing What Works* website (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) at http://dww.ed.gov/media/CL/OIS/TopicLevel/case_plainwell_71508.pdf. This information is in the public domain.

Recommendation 5: Systemic Academic Interventions

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

LINK TO RESEARCH

Academic intervention services 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 were 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 multi-level 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 undesireable 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?* (Website)
http://www.rti4success.org/whatisrti/

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities: *Tiered Service-Delivery Model* (Website)
http://www.nrcld.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 school 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 success of the rollout.**

   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 researched-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 method for delivery of service (e.g., pull-out 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 tiers of interventions.
- 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 at risk. A second tier of interventions and progress monitoring were "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.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

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 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 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%2Practices%20%26%20Perspectives%20of%205%20Schools.pdf

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Additional Resources

DIFFERENTIATION

http://www.cast.org/ncac/index.cfm?i=2876 – This site contains an article by Tracy Hall, Nicole Strangman, and Anne Meyer at the National Center for Accessing the General Curriculum. The article discusses differentiation as it applies to the general education classroom.

http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/udl/diffinstruction.asp – This site offers information briefs and training modules to guide the implementation of differentiated instruction.

http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/reluctant_writer.html – This guide offers an overview of the different strategies and methods that are used to help motivate struggling writers.

http://members.shaw.ca/priscillatheroux/differentiatingstrategies.html – This site provides explanations for various differentiation strategies.

http://www.readingrockets.org/print.php?ID=154 – This site provides examples and strategies for differentiated instruction in reading.

http://www.rti4success.org – This website offers further information on monitoring fidelity of implementation.

http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r=615&g=2 – This website offers games and methods to encourage and motivate struggling writers.

http://www.webmath.com/ – This mathematics website provides assistance with solving math problems.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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INSTRUCTIONAL RIGOR

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SYSTEMIC ACADEMIC INTERVENTIONS

Center on Instruction: Implementing Response to Intervention - Practices and Perspectives from Five Schools http://www.centeroninstruction.org/implementing-response-to-intervention-practices-and-perspectives-from-five-schools—frequently-asked-questions

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring – http://studentprogress.org/

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