Tier 3 Instruction Within a Response to Intervention Framework

"The biggest advantage is [helping] kids as soon as they show signs of trouble...[if] I know that based on research [and] experience that this program helps...let's start it."

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Contents

Purpose

This booklet details how Pflugerville Independent School District (PISD) has implemented Tier 3 instruction within a response to intervention (RtI) framework. A description of the critical components of RtI is followed by a description of reading and math instruction observed in PISD Tier 3 groups. Teachers' descriptions of benefits and challenges of RtI implementation are presented, as well as the RtI director's reflections on successfully leading PISD toward full implementation of RtI.

What Is RtI?

RtI is a multidisciplinary process designed to systematically improve instruction (Cummings, Atkins, Allison, & Cole, 2008). It emphasizes the examination of school practices and learner characteristics and the implementation of instructional and curricular changes (Stepanek & Peixotto, 2009). In addition, RtI facilitates improved identification of students with learning disabilities (LD) and students struggling to meet grade-level expectations (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2008). RtI also has been associated with student achievement gains and enhanced professional partnerships.

What Are the Critical Components of RtI?

Tiered Instruction

The core of RtI is a tiered system of increasingly intensive interventions directed at increasingly smaller groups of students (Fuchs et al., 2007). Early, effective intervention is provided through evidence-based practices and precisely delivered curricula. Each successive tier provides students with greater academic support (Smith, Fien, Basaraba, & Travers, 2009). Although the number of tiers is not the most salient feature of RtI, most models of RtI consist of three to five tiers (Fuchs et al., 2007). In this booklet, we describe a three-tiered approach.

Tier 1
Tier 1 is the core, general education curriculum (Stewart, Benner, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2007), which in Texas corresponds to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). If all students have access to highly qualified teachers, powerful learning strategies, and an evidence-based curriculum in Tier 1, it is expected that the majority of academic needs will be met (TEA, 2008). By maintaining strong Tier 1 instruction, schools can rule out the lack of access to high-quality instruction as a source of learning difficulties. However, even the highest-quality general instruction is not the best match for all students. Therefore, students' performance is assessed in Tier 1 to identify those who perform below acceptable levels. These students may require additional instruction in Tier 2.

Tier 2

Tier 2 interventions supplement Tier 1 instruction for the 10%–15% of students (on average) who do not make effective progress in Tier 1 (Stewart et al., 2007). Through the use of small, homogeneous groups of 5–10 students (TEA, 2008), teachers provide instruction closely aligned to students' needs (Swanson & Vaughn, in press). The two most common ways to provide Tier 2 instruction are the problem-solving and standard-protocol approaches (Vaughn & Denton, 2008). The standard-protocol approach has been shown to be highly effective (TEA, 2008). In this approach, educators choose from a small number of interventions that have proved effective in remediating academic difficulties (Stepanek & Peixotto, 2009). The standard protocols selected can vary from district to district (TEA, 2008). In the problem-solving approach, school personnel take the following actions (Bransford & Stein, 1984; Vaughn & Denton, 2008):

1. Observe or record student performance to identify problems

2. Formulate academic goals

3. Design and implement an intervention plan

4. Monitor student progress toward the goal (and thus the effectiveness of the intervention)

Tier 3

Tier 3 instruction is designed for the 5%–10% of students (on average) who do not make effective progress in Tier 2 (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009). Instruction is highly focused (Stewart et al., 2007) in Tier 3, and progress monitoring occurs weekly (TEA, 2008). Some schools equate Tier 3 instruction with special education services. However, other schools consider special education services to be provided through a fourth tier of support. Tier 3 instruction is unique in that a problem-solving approach is employed to design an intervention individualized to the unique instructional needs of a very small group (three to five students; TEA, 2008).

Data-Based Decision Making

Data-based decision making is a primary strength of RtI. Instruction informed by data is the foundation of a tiered system of academic support. School teams take into account a variety of student-performance outcomes when making decisions regarding instructional delivery and curriculum (Swanson & Vaughn, in press). It is therefore critical that schools provide their staff members with extensive training in data compilation, analysis, and use (Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at The University of Texas at Austin, 2005).

Universal Screening

Using assessments that can be completed quickly (Swanson & Vaughn, in press), schools screen all students to identify those in need of additional support (Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007). Regularly scheduled screenings assess grade-level expectations and performance outcomes (Swanson & Vaughn, in press). In addition, screening can be used to select students for frequent progress monitoring.
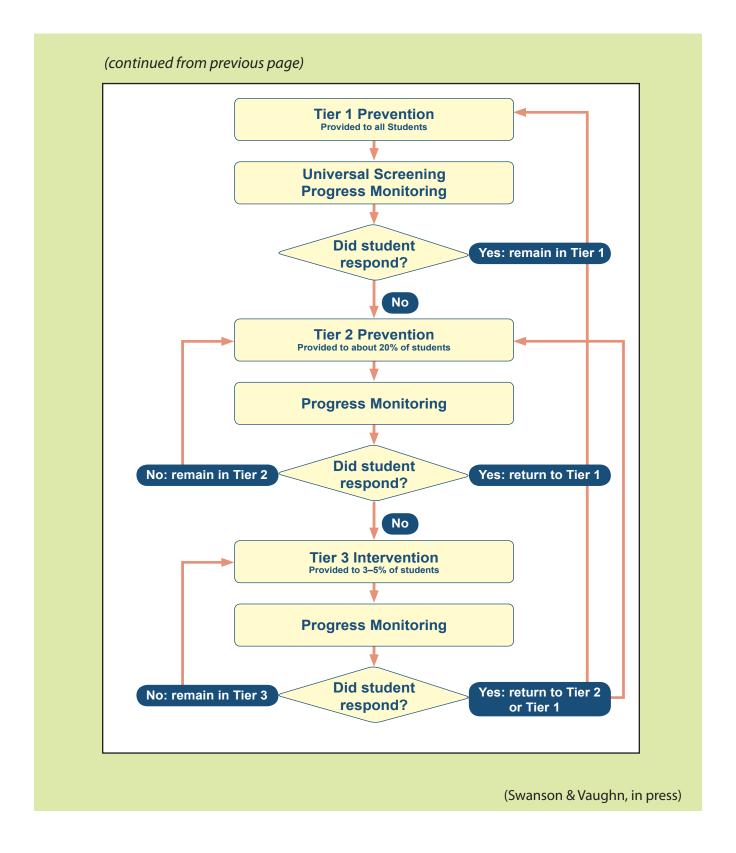
Progress Monitoring

Frequent progress monitoring can improve teaching and student learning. In RtI, performance data from curriculum-based measures and criterion-referenced tests inform instructional and curricular changes. These changes are made when students perform below acceptable levels (Barton & Stepanek, 2009). When a high percentage of students in a classroom perform below grade-level expectations, modeling or consultation can be used to improve classroom instruction (Swanson & Vaughn, in press).

Case Study: Data-Based Decision Making in Action

Teachers at Simpson Elementary School used the flowchart on the following page to assist the site-based team in making instructional decisions based on data.

Caroline is a third-grade student at Simpson Elementary School. When Caroline's teacher, Mrs. Swanson, administered the universal screening measure, Caroline's score was far below the benchmark. In response, Mrs. Swanson administered weekly progress-monitoring and curriculum-based measures during the next few weeks. Caroline continued to perform below the benchmark. During the site-based-team meeting, Mrs. Swanson presented Caroline's data. The team decided to provide Caroline with Tier 2 instruction in addition to the Tier 1 instruction she was already receiving. Caroline's progress continued to be monitored weekly. After 10 weeks of Tier 2 instruction, her performance was above the benchmark. Caroline returned to Tier 1 only.

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Tier 1 Prevention
Provided to all Students

↓

Universal Screening
Progress Monitoring

↓

Did student respond? → Yes: remain in Tier 1

No ↓

Tier 2 Prevention
Provided to about 20% of students

↓

Progress Monitoring

↓

No: remain in Tier 2 ← **Did student respond?** → Yes: return to Tier 1

No ↓

Tier 3 Intervention
Provided to 3–5% of students

↓

Progress Monitoring

↓

No: remain in Tier 3 ← **Did student respond?** → Yes: return to Tier 2 or Tier 1

(Swanson & Vaughn, in press)
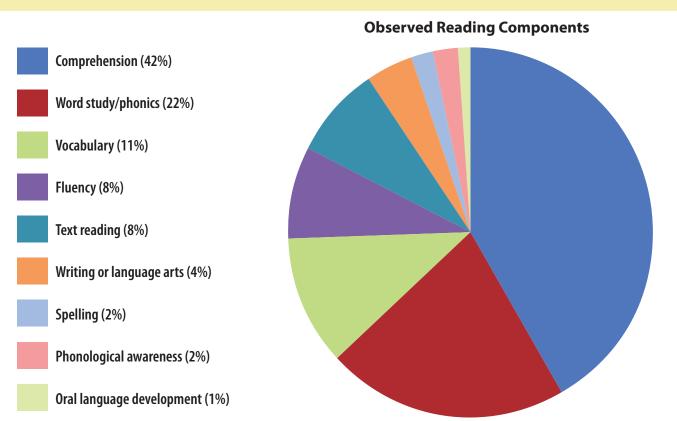
Critical Features of Instruction in Tier 3

In 2008, we asked PISD to identify 15–20 teachers who provided Tier 3 mathematics and reading instruction to students in third, fourth, and fifth grades. Over the next 2 academic years, we shadowed each teacher for 5 instructional days and took copious notes about the instruction he or she provided; the observations were then coded by instructional category. As expected, 95% of the reading instruction and 97% of the mathematics instruction we observed was Tier 3 instruction.

Keep in mind the following points when reading the descriptions of reading and mathematics instruction provided in these 17 classrooms:

- The instruction was designed for third- through fifth-grade students.

- Almost all students were identified as having a learning disability.

- All instruction was provided in small groups of eight or fewer students.

Reading

5,684 minutes of instruction observed
149 class periods observed

Observed Reading Components

- Comprehension (42%)
- Word study/phonics (22%)
- Vocabulary (11%)
- Fluency (8%)
- Text reading (8%)
- Writing or language arts (4%)
- Spelling (2%)
- Phonological awareness (2%)
- Oral language development (1%)

Comprehension

The largest portion of observed instructional time, 41%, was comprehension activities. The most common activity was reading comprehension monitoring, in which teachers asked questions after student reading, followed by comprehension strategy use and instruction.

Word Study/Phonics

In word study, students use letter-sound correspondences, structural analysis, syllabication, and semantic cues to read words. Word study comprised 21% of the observed instruction. The most commonly observed word study activities had students apply letter-sound correspondences to reading, writing, and spelling. Half of all word study practice consisted of students reading connected text in basals, trade books, and decodable texts.

Case Study: Word Study/Phonics in Action

Ms. Carlson teaches a group of four students within a Tier 3 setting. All four students struggle with applying phonics skills when trying to read connected text. On the following page is a sample of the instruction Ms. Carlson provided during one observation.

Time Allocated	Component	Description of Instruction
2 minutes	Phonemic awareness	Ms. Carlson provides a word and students say each sound, putting up one finger for each sound. Ms. Carlson has students practice six words. **The word is *fan*. Stretch *fan*. /f/** (students hold up their first finger); **/a/** (students hold up their second finger); **/n/** (students hold up their third finger).
2 minutes	Letter-sound correspondence	Ms. Carlson introduces the new sound /ch/ and reviews previously learned sounds. Ms. Carlson writes 10 letters and letter combinations on the board. <table><tr><td>a</td><td>sh</td><td>m</td><td>ch</td><td>ou</td></tr><tr><td>ch</td><td>p</td><td>au</td><td>w</td><td>b</td></tr></table> **Let's say the letter names and sounds we know and look at our new sound, /ch/.** Ms. Carlson points to the letters, one at a time. Students say each letter sound quickly. She quickly reteaches sounds that are difficult for students.

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Time Allocated	Component	Description of Instruction
5 minutes	Word reading	Students read words in isolation that contain new and previously learned letters and sounds. Ms. Carlson models how to read each word. She points to each letter, saying each sound. Then, she reads the whole word. Students segment and blend a series of words. Then, students reread to build fluency. <table><tr><td>fox</td><td>shop</td><td>farm</td><td>chart</td><td>found</td></tr><tr><td>chip</td><td>pop</td><td>audio</td><td>wander</td><td>bold</td></tr></table> **These are words that contain the sounds we have already learned and our new sound, /ch/. Listen while I read the first word. /f/ /o/ /x/,** *fox.* **Your turn to read.** If a student makes an error, the teacher models how to segment and blend the word and then has students repeat.
6 minutes	Sentence reading	Ms. Carlson leads students in a choral reading of sentences that contain words with newly and previously learned letter-sound correspondences. The following is the observed error-correction procedure: **Stop. That word is** *shop.* **Say** *shop.* **Say the sounds in the word: /sh/ /o/ /p/.** *Shop.* **Read the sentence again.**
10 minutes	Text reading and fluency	Ms. Carlson leads students in a preview of a text by discussing illustrations and headings. She also introduces six vocabulary words that will be read in the text. Ms. Carlson choral reads the text with her students. The text contains words with newly and previously learned letter-sound correspondences. Ms. Carlson has students reread chosen sentences to improve reading fluency.

Vocabulary

We observed several types of vocabulary instruction, comprising 11% of the total observation time. Most of the time, teachers told or had students practice definitions. However, almost a quarter of vocabulary instructional time was context clue instruction and use. An additional quarter of the time was teaching students morphology. The remainder of the vocabulary instruction observed comprised small amounts of providing examples and nonexamples, using dictionaries, and discussing to promote deep understanding of words.

Fluency

Fluency instruction comprised 8% of the observed instructional time. We coded several types of fluency activities, including letter- or sound-naming fluency, word-reading fluency, and repeated reading of text. The most often observed type of fluency instruction was repeated reading of connected text.

Text Reading

We recorded the amount of text reading that was not otherwise coded as comprehension or fluency. Students spent 8% of observed instructional time engaged in text reading activities, such as supported oral reading, choral reading, independent silent reading, independent oral reading, or teacher read-alouds. The type of text reading activity most often observed was independent silent reading.

Writing/Language Arts

Writing activities comprised 4% of observed instructional time; one of the most common activities observed was independent writing. A small proportion of time was devoted to handwriting and grammar instruction.

Spelling

For our observation purposes, spelling instruction was defined as "students learning to remember and reproduce conventional spelling (e.g., spelling lists and lessons)." This differs from word study/phonics in that the students' task is to write or orally spell words in response to dictated words. This type of instruction comprised 2% of the total observed instructional time.
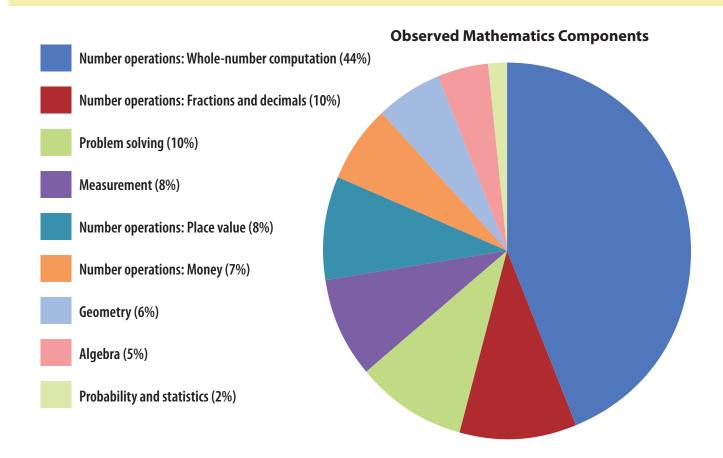
Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness, the understanding that individual words are made up sequences of separate sounds, comprised 2% of the observed instructional activities. Teachers mostly engaged in blending and segmenting sentences and syllables, blending and segmenting phonemes, and isolation tasks (e.g., asking students for the first sound in *cat*).

Oral Language Development

Defined as "listening and speaking to communicate meaning," this component included discussions among teachers and students about words, books, songs, or relevant topics. We did not include in this component students' incidental remarks about an assignment. Oral language development comprised less than 1% of the observed instructional time.

Mathematics

4,523 minutes of instruction observed
101 class periods observed

Observed Mathematics Components

- Number operations: Whole-number computation (44%)
- Number operations: Fractions and decimals (10%)
- Problem solving (10%)
- Measurement (8%)
- Number operations: Place value (8%)
- Number operations: Money (7%)
- Geometry (6%)
- Algebra (5%)
- Probability and statistics (2%)

Number Operations: Whole-Number Computation

This category includes conceptual development of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; addition facts and related subtraction facts; addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division fact fluency; and multiplication and division of whole numbers. This category was the most often observed, representing 44% of the total observed instructional time. The most common activity within whole-number computation was multiplication and division of whole numbers, followed by conceptual development of multiplication and division, addition and subtraction of whole numbers, and multiplication and division fluency.

Number Operations: Fractions and Decimals

Instruction related to fractions and decimals comprised 10% of all observed mathematics instruction. The most common activity was conceptual development of fractions and fraction equivalence, followed by comparing fractions and decimals, and then addition and subtraction of decimal amounts.

Problem Solving

Students were engaged in problem-solving activities for 9.5% of the observed instructional time. We defined problem-solving instruction as including "solving problems that incorporate understanding the problem, making a plan, carrying out the plan, and evaluating the solution for reasonableness."

Measurement

Measurement instruction comprised almost 9% of all mathematics instruction observed. Teachers focused mostly on linear measurement, followed by time and area. In fact, instruction related to calculating the area of a space comprised only 25 minutes, or 0.5% of the total observed mathematics instructional time.

Number Operations: Place Value

We defined this category as "an understanding of numbers, ways of representing numbers, and relationships among numbers." Almost 9% of all observed mathematics instruction was dedicated to place value.

Number Operations: Money

Almost 7% of observed mathematics instruction focused on identifying, adding, and subtracting monetary amounts.

Geometry

Almost 6% of observed mathematics instruction focused on geometry, with most instruction being related to properties of three-dimensional shapes, followed by properties of two-dimensional shapes and, finally, attributes of shapes.

Algebra

We coded two types of algebra instruction—number patterns and related facts. Algebra instruction comprised only 4.5% of all mathematics instruction observed. The most commonly observed type of algebra instruction focused on the understanding of number patterns.

Probability and Statistics

Activities related to probability and statistics comprised 1.6% of observed mathematics instruction. Students identified the probability of an event occurring; drew conclusions from graphs; and identified the mean, median, and mode of a set of numbers. Students also used data to describe events as more or less likely. No instruction was observed that focused on collecting and sorting data or creating graphs.

Perceived Benefits and Challenges to RtI

In the spring of 2009, we invited teachers to participate in a focus group. We asked these teachers to share their roles within the RtI model at their school, perceived benefits of the RtI model, and perceived challenges to successfully providing Tier 3 instruction. In the spring of 2010, we met with each teacher individually for a follow-up interview that focused on the teacher's experience at his or her individual school. A summary of the teachers' comments is presented below.

Perceived Benefits

The most often cited benefit of the RtI framework was the ability to meet the needs all students as the needs arise, instead of waiting until students are assigned a label that allows access to specialized services. Many teachers characterized RtI as a proactive model that provides instructional support to even the youngest students on campus.

> *"[The intervention teacher] is very proactive with helping the little ones that… need extra attention. They eat breakfast with her and stay and work on the alphabet or [other skills]…There are also two other interventionists and a teaching assistant that work with [the younger students]."*

> *"The biggest advantage is [helping] those kids as soon as they show signs of trouble…[if] I know that based on research [and] experience that this program helps…let's start it."*

Teachers also reported that providing services to students who previously did not qualify under the traditional discrepancy model was a benefit of the RtI model. Teachers said that with an RtI framework in place, there was an instructional support system for students, based primarily on their areas of academic need.

> *"The kids that previously would not qualify for special ed. but were slower learners…we can look at that and say, 'Tier I didn't work, Tier II didn't work, Tier III is kind of [working], but they are still struggling.' There is not any discrepancy, but we've proven that this child needs extra services. So we are, for the first time this year…able to get kids special services and protection without the discrepancy qualification."*

Finally, many of the special education teachers said they appreciated and enjoyed the increased cooperation and collaboration with other faculty members in the RtI model.

> *"We utilize the student support team, where [a group of teachers] discuss the child—where they are and where they need to move toward—and we are a team of individuals who intervene. Some of us are special education [teachers] and some of us are general education [teachers], and based on the need of the child and the availability of those specialists, we [assign] children to those interventions as soon as possible."*

Perceived Challenges

Teachers spoke a great deal about logistics being one of the most common, ongoing challenges of implementing an RtI framework on their campus. Teachers reported that scheduling Tier 3 groups based on student need while accommodating the general education classroom schedule presented a unique challenge.

> *"We are kind of limited with the scheduling of the regular class and not having [students] miss things that they need to be in the class for. So it kind of limits us—sometimes you may be forced to...group some [students who have] a wider variety of needs."*

> *"In theory, [Tier 2] is supposed to be on top of [Tier 1], but sometimes, in terms of the instructional minutes of the day...[Tier 2] is a replacement of [Tier 1]. But ideally, we try to make sure that in-class gen. ed. language arts reading time is sacred. We don't play with that. [Students] are in there for that, and we find some other minutes during the day to plug in [intervention]."*

Teachers also said that several activities conducted in support of the RtI framework increased paperwork requirements and consumed instructional time. For example, teachers said, universal screening and progress monitoring presented challenges related to materials management.

> *"The paperwork for the kids who are not entitled—in that case, it is a form on our campus...you have to identify at each tier level the intensity, what you did, when you started, things like that. I know, based on this year, I have to be more proactive next year, so that as soon as I get a kid in Tier 2, to get that form and write the date down because they always ask, 'When did you start working?' I don't know, maybe about October."*

> *"Just implementing or doing the [Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment], you have to get the probe, the booklet. You have to copy the booklets...I get so lost in the paperwork: 'I just had it here. Where did it go?' You know? You just have to make sure that you have everything that you need readily available to you."*

In addition, although the teachers said they understand that progress-monitoring data should inform instruction, actually operationalizing the use of data was difficult for many teachers.

> *"In a perfect world, [progress monitoring would] drive the instruction. Unfortunately, we don't [do that]. To be honest, we don't have enough time to go back through every individual. We have great intentions. We do know common mistakes that they make, but that is my goal for next year: to [use progress monitoring] more, not just to use appropriate grouping or bumping them up or down a level, but to really look at those certain blends that this person should be getting and may need to be assigned a couple of extra activities."*

A frequently cited challenge to implementing mathematics instruction within an RtI framework was access to an evidence-based curriculum that could be used within a standard protocol method of Tier 2 service delivery. In addition, teachers voiced a need for universal screening and progress-monitoring assessment tools that could be used schoolwide to standardize assessment procedures and streamline instructional decision making.

> *"Can we talk to the state leaders? One of my biggest concerns is math resources: resources for teaching math and progress monitoring."*

> *"We are always looking around, adapting the general ed. curriculum, which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't. So it seems like our district is investing the money and getting new curriculum. We did pilot [a math curriculum] and they liked it on a few campuses, so they got it for everybody…We said, 'Gosh, we really need more resources in math,' and they did a pilot and zow, they are going to try to get it to everyone. And the next thing may be writing. A lot of people have been talking about writing, so it's kind of a transition…modernizing the special ed. curriculum to make it more appropriate."*

What Can Administrators Do to Promote the RtI Framework?

In the spring of 2009, Rhanda Schrank, the director of RtI at PISD, participated in an interview to share her experience in leading a districtwide RtI effort. During this hourlong interview, the director shared details regarding her vision for RtI implementation and the support her team provides to fulfill that vision.

Q: *What guiding principles shape RtI in your district?*

A: We really focus on four core principles here: the problem solving component, the research base component, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making. Everything we do falls into one of those principles. RtI is a change in philosophy. RtI is not a "thing" and it's not a "thing" that is going away. Even if we called it something else, these four core principles will be present. Our vision is to see these four principles implemented at every single level.

Q: *How do you track your district's RtI implementation progress?*

A: We applied a change model—everything from awareness to renewal—to our four core principles at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and created a tracking document (see below). Every few months, our team asks the question, "Where do we stand with each principle?" If the component is assigned an "X," we know we are at 90% mastery. An "O" represents between 20% and 90%, which is a huge range, but at least we know our foot is on the ground there. And then obviously, if it is blank, we don't even have 20% going. It's not very scientific, but at least it informs our progress.

Pflugerville ISD RtI Implementation Tracking Sheet

RtI Principle	Awareness	Preparation	Practice and Implementation	Mastery and Integration	Renewal
Analysis of schoolwide academic and behavioral data via universal screening systems at all levels					
Primary English language arts (ELA) data analysis	X	X	X	O	
Intermediate ELA data analysis	X	X	X	O	
Middle school (MS) ELA data analysis	X	O			
High school (HS) ELA data analysis	X	O			
Primary math data analysis	X	X	X	O	
Intermediate math data analysis	X	X	X	O	
MS math data analysis	X	O			
HS math data analysis	X	O			

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RtI Principle	Awareness	Preparation	Practice and Implementation	Mastery and Integration	Renewal
Elementary positive behavior supports	X	X	O	O	
MS positive behavior supports	X	O			
HS positive behavior supports	X	O			
Implementation of research-based strategies and tiered interventions with fidelity and documentation					
Viable and aligned curriculum	X	X	X		
Research-based instructional strategies	X	X	O		
Elementary 3-tiered ELA model with interventions	X	X	X	X	X
Elementary 3-tiered math model with interventions	X	O			
MS 3-tiered ELA model with interventions	X	O			
MS 3-tiered math model with interventions	X	X	X		
HS 3-tiered ELA model with interventions	O	O			
HS 3-tiered math model with interventions	O	O			
Elementary 3-tiered behavior model with interventions	X	O	O		
MS 3-tiered behavior model with interventions	X	O			
HS 3-tiered behavior model with interventions	X	O			
Problem-Solving Support Teams analyze interventions and progress of individual students					
Elementary Problem-Solving Support Teams (PSST) development	X	X	X	O	
Secondary PSST development	X	X	O		
PSST documentation	X	X	X	O	O

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RtI Principle	Awareness	Preparation	Practice and Implementation	Mastery and Integration	Renewal
Ongoing progress monitoring maintained throughout the process					
Elementary ELA progress monitoring	X	X	X	O	
Elementary math progress monitoring	X	X	O		
Secondary ELA progress monitoring	X	O	O		
Secondary math progress monitoring	X	O	O		
Elementary behavior progress monitoring	X	O			
Secondary behavior progress monitoring	X	O			

X = 90% mastery or better

O = 20%–90% mastery

Orange shading = areas of expected gain

Q: *What training opportunities have you provided campus-level administrators?*

A: I train them on activities they can take back to their campus and implement with their teachers. For example, we started hearing inappropriate jargon, so we conducted a vocabulary activity. There are some statistical terms that are used when we talk about student data—"trajectory lines," etc. I also help principals connect with a lot of the items on our RtI progress chart. I help them understand what components they already have in place and which ones are goals for future attainment. There is no way I can promise that every teacher in this district understands that they are part of the RtI process, but we are working toward that goal through principal training.

Q: *At the secondary level, what are the greatest needs related to RtI?*

A: Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions need to be more systematic at the secondary level. We are working with administration to begin defining what intervention looks like at the secondary level.

Q: *How have you encouraged teachers to embrace the change that comes along with implementing an RtI framework?*

A: I always sell RtI as a philosophy. If you consider RtI a mandate, you are going to have a tough time with it. Our philosophy here, and I put it on every PowerPoint presentation, is to meet 100% of the students' needs 100% of the time. There is a lot of fear with change— I call it evolving.

Q: *What roles do special education teachers fill in the RtI model?*

A: We really treat all interventionists (dyslexia specialists, [English language learner]-certified teachers, and special educators) as one unit. We remind them, "You are here to serve your campus as an interventionist." The campus looks at their campuswide data, looks at who needs services based not on a label, but based on data. Now, of course, we are going to take [individualized education plans] into consideration, and when we decide how we serve students, more than likely, special education teachers' groups will be made up of mostly special education students. Still, special education teachers can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction. They are heavily involved in the problem-solving process, so they are very aware of their students' needs.

Q: *How do you select curricula for use at the Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels?*

A: Our goal is to be very selective in our purchases and then make sure it is implemented in the way it should be. We provide a lot of follow-up coaching and a lot of time to implement. We don't do 1-day rollouts here. Often, we pilot things first, which is what we did last year with the math curriculum. We got it into a couple of teachers' hands and had them pilot it the whole year, and they gave us their feedback. They told us in what situations it worked well and how to optimize implementation in other situations. Now, we already have some buy-in. This is important because we know that the following year, we will have some teachers say, "I don't want to use that curriculum." But now—because some of their colleagues piloted the curriculum—they are more accepting of the product.

Q: *How do district leaders support your work in implementing RtI?*

A: The superintendent asks for updates on our progress. He has been a fabulous proponent of this from his first step, which makes all the difference in the world.

Q: *What effect has implementation of the RtI framework had on district-level administration?*

A: We have really tried to blend the departments up here. One of our pushes came on as our director of English as a second language/bilingual services wanted to bring the [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)] model to our district, which is great. They included me in planning the training, so we are infusing SIOP practices into all Tier 1 instruction because all students could benefit from these great instructional strategies. So I would say definitely at the district level, we are all working together—much more closely than we were 3 years ago, which is neat. We are just much more aligned and we have a vision together rather than three separate visions.

Resources to Help Your School Get Started With RtI

The following websites focus on RtI implementation, reading instruction, mathematics instruction, and progress monitoring.

RtI Implementation

Building Capacity for RtI Implementation Project
http://buildingrti.utexas.org
Provided by The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk and TEA, this site offers a variety of resources, including explanations of key concepts and practices associated with RtI. In addition, media from various RtI conference presentations can be accessed. Examples of three-tiered reading models and a section devoted to parent resources also are available. The site also contains tools to support school implementation efforts.

State Education Resource Center
http://ctserc.org/s
Provided in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education, this site provides information on a number of resources related to RtI, effective school practices, and special education. A section titled "Best Practices in Education" provides information on topics such as family involvement, leadership, assessment, and professional development. Following the "Projects and Initiatives" link and then the "Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)" link takes the user to a number of RtI resources. These resources include a list of suggested readings, information for caregivers, and tools for Tier 1 instruction. In addition, mathematics instruction and interventions are areas of focus.

Intervention Central
http://interventioncentral.org
Jim Wright, an RtI consultant and trainer, created this website, which provides links to publications and products related to RtI. A section titled "Academic Interventions" has links to resources on reading comprehension, reading fluency, mathematics instruction, writing instruction, and study and organizational skills. Another section is devoted to behavior management and positive behavioral supports.

National Center on Response to Intervention
www.rti4success.org/index.php
In collaboration with the University of Kansas, Vanderbilt University, the American Institutes for Research, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the National Center on Response to Intervention provides a wealth of practical information on RtI implementation. In the "Ask the Expert" feature, one can find videos of leaders in the field answering questions related to RtI practices. Training materials, videos, and a newsletter can also be found.

Reading

Florida Center for Reading Research

www.fcrr.org

This site provides teaching resources for prekindergarten through grade 12. One section contains materials to support K–5 reading instruction. Another section offers suggested readings, and links to presentations, reports, and publications. Information on Florida's RtI model and a technical paper can be found, as can information on differentiated instruction and interventions.

National Institute for Literacy

www.nifl.gov

This site contains links to publications for school-based personnel and parents, to assessment measures, to additional organizations related to reading instruction, and to the Literacy Research Initiative, which has a collection of studies of adult and adolescent literacy instruction. The site also contains information on components of effective reading instruction and assessment.

Mathematics

What Works Clearinghouse: Elementary School Math

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topic.aspx?tid=04

Provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, this site is a collection of intervention research related to K–5 mathematics instruction. The user can select which grade or combination of grades to search for research summaries of specific mathematics curricula. In addition, each program is rated, based on effect on student learning and the strength of the evidence reported.

Illuminations

http://illuminations.nctm.org

Created by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), Illuminations is a resource for teaching prekindergarten through grade 12 mathematics. The website currently has 553 lesson plans as well as an extensive collection of web-based activities. Lessons can be searched according to NCTM standard and grade level. Standards are defined and an extensive collection of links to additional mathematics resources is present. A web-based tool allows practitioners to create number lines, grids, spinners, and tessellations.

Math Tools

www.mathforum.org/mathtools

Created by The Math Forum @ Drexel, this site is devoted to the application of technology to mathematics instruction. Content spans prekindergarten to grade 12. In addition to a collection of online instructional tools and lesson plans, a variety of discussion boards are included. A help section is divided into elementary, middle school, high school, and college content areas. The website was developed with a grant through the National Science Foundation.

Progress Monitoring

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring
www.studentprogress.org
Provided by OSEP and Vanderbilt University, this site provides a variety of online training, resources, and tools related to progress monitoring. Topics include accountability, adequate yearly progress, and data-based decision making. In addition, resources related to reading, mathematics, and writing can be found. A section is devoted to providing information to families on progress monitoring and curriculum-based measurement.

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