RTI: Systems-Level Change

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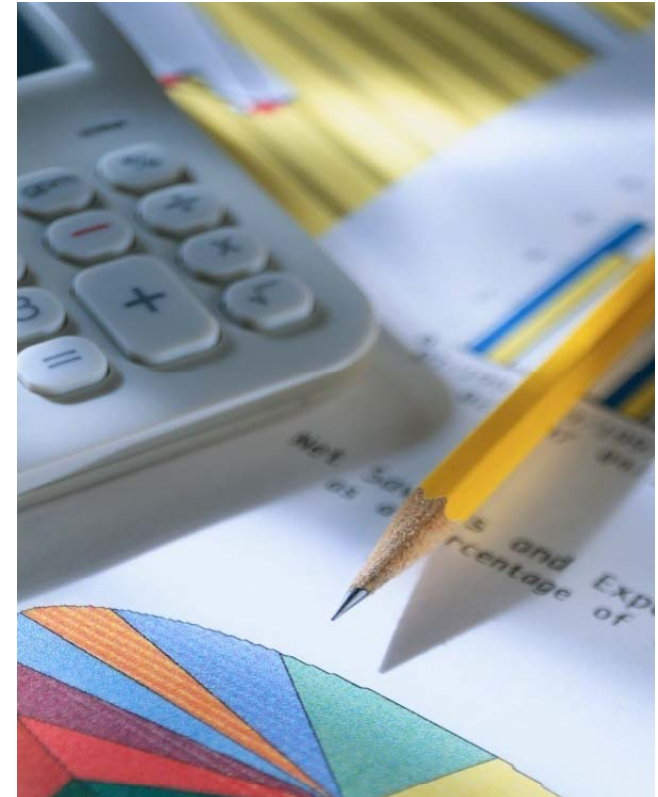
RTI: Systems-Level Change

RTI &Teacher Reluctance: What are reasons why teachers may be reluctant to support RTI in the classroom?

'Teacher Tolerance' as an Indicator of RTI Intervention Capacity

"I call the range of students whom [teachers] come to view as adequately responsive – i.e., teachable – as the tolerance; those who are perceived to be outside the tolerance are those for whom teachers seek additional resources. The term "tolerance" is used to indicate that teachers form a permissible boundary on their measurement (judgments) in the same sense as a confidence interval. In this case, the teacher actively measures the distribution of responsiveness in her class by processing information from a series of teaching trials and perceives some range of students as within the tolerance." (Gerber, 2002)

Source: Gerber, M. M. (2003). *Teachers are still the test: Limitations of response to instruction strategies for identifying children with learning disabilities*. Paper presented at the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities Responsiveness-to-Intervention Symposium, Kansas City, MO.

RTI & 'Teacher Reluctance'

The willingness of teachers to implement interventions is essential in any school to the success of the RTI model. Yet general-education teachers may not always see themselves as 'interventionists' and indeed may even resist the expectation that they will provide individualized interventions as a routine part of their classroom practice (Walker, 2004).

It should be remembered, however, that teachers' reluctance to accept elements of RTI may be based on very good reasons. Here are some common reasons that teachers might be reluctant to accept their role as RTI intervention 'first responders'…

Engaging the Reluctant Teacher: 7 Reasons Why Instructors May Resist Implementing Classroom RTI Interventions

- **Lack of Skills.** Teachers lack the skills necessary to successfully implement academic or behavioral interventions in their content-area classrooms (Fisher, 2007; Kamil et al., 2008).

- **Not My Job.** Teachers define their job as providing content-area instruction. They do not believe that providing classwide or individual academic and behavioral interventions falls within their job description (Kamil et al., 2008).

Engaging the Reluctant Teacher: 7 Reasons Why Instructors May Resist Implementing Classroom RTI Interventions(Cont.)

- **No Time.** Teachers do not believe that they have sufficient time available in classroom instruction to implement academic or behavioral interventions (Kamil et al., 2008; Walker, 2004).

- **No Payoff.** Teachers lack confidence that there will be an adequate instructional pay-off if they put classwide or individual academic or behavioral interventions into place in their content-area classroom (Kamil et al., 2008).

Engaging the Reluctant Teacher: 7 Reasons Why Instructors May Resist Implementing Classroom RTI Interventions (Cont.)

- **Loss of Classroom Control.** Teachers worry that if they depart from their standard instructional practices to adopt new classwide or individual academic or behavior intervention strategies, they may lose behavioral control of the classroom (Kamil et al., 2008).

- **'Undeserving Students'.** Teachers are unwilling to invest the required effort to provide academic or behavioral interventions for unmotivated students (Walker, 2004) because they would rather put that time into providing additional attention to well-behaved, motivated students who are 'more deserving'.

Engaging the Reluctant Teacher: 7 Reasons Why Instructors May Resist Implementing Classroom RTI Interventions (Cont.)

- **The Magic of Special Education.** Content-area teachers regard special education services as 'magic' (Martens, 1993). According to this view, interventions provided to struggling students in the general-education classroom alone will be inadequate, and only special education services have the power to truly benefit those students.

Engaging the Reluctant Teacher: Seven Reasons Why Instructors May Resist Implementing Classroom RTI Literacy Interventions

❑ **Lack of Skills.** Teachers lack the skills necessary to successfully implement academic or behavioral interventions in their content-area classrooms.

❑ **Not My Job.** Teachers define their job as providing content-area instruction. They do not believe that providing classwide or individual academic and behavioral interventions falls within their job description.

❑ **No Time.** Teachers do not believe that they have sufficient time available in classroom instruction to implement academic or behavioral interventions.

❑ **Insufficient Payoff.** Teachers lack confidence that there will be an adequate instructional pay-off if they put classwide or individual academic or behavioral interventions into place in their content-area classroom.

❑ **Loss of Classroom Control.** Teachers worry that if they depart from their standard instructional practices to adopt new classwide or individual academic or behavior intervention strategies, they may lose behavioral control of the classroom.

❑ **'Undeserving Students'.** Teachers are unwilling to invest the required effort to provide academic or behavioral interventions for unmotivated students because they would rather put that time into providing additional attention to well-behaved, motivated students who are 'more deserving'.

❑ **The Magic of Special Education.** Content-area teachers regard special education services as 'magic'. According to this view, interventions provided to struggling students in the general-education classroom alone will be inadequate, and only special education services have the power to truly benefit those students.

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RTI Training for Teachers: How can schools prepare the way for RTI through careful training & communication with teachers?

Preparing Teachers for RTI: 4 Steps

1. Offer RTI information to teachers in a series of short presentations or discussion forums.

2. Present RTI as a coordinated, schoolwide approach to address long-standing teacher concerns about struggling students.

3. Solicit teacher input when building your school's RTI model.

4. Link all significant school and district initiatives to RTI.

1. Offer RTI information to teachers in a series of short presentations or discussion forums

- A common mistake that schools make in rolling out RTI is to present their teachers with RTI information in a single, long presentation—with little opportunity for questions or discussion. Instead, schools should plan a series of RTI information-sharing sessions with teachers throughout the school year. Any large-group RTI training sessions (e.g., at faculty meetings) should be kept short, to ensure that the audience is not overwhelmed with large volumes of information. Consider using smaller instructional team or department meetings as a vehicle for follow-up presentations, discussion, and teacher questions about RTI.

1. **Offer RTI information to teachers in a series of short presentations or discussion forums**

   - ACTION STEP: *Create a year-long RTI information-sharing plan.* Determine what RTI information your school would like to present to staff, as well as the degree of faculty input and discussion needed. Then draft a year-long plan to communicate with staff about RTI. Each year, update the plan to keep faculty updated about implementation of the RTI model.

2. Present RTI as a coordinated, schoolwide approach to address long-standing teacher concerns about struggling students

- Schools should consider framing RTI as a broad, schoolwide solution to help teachers to better instruct, motivate, and manage the behaviors of struggling learners. Teachers want fewer class disruptions, more uninterrupted instructional time, higher performing students, targeted supplemental academic help for students who need it, and better communication among educators about the needs of all students. As schools make the case for RTI, they should demonstrate how it will help teachers to manage the day-to-day challenges that they face in their classrooms.

2. Present RTI as a coordinated, schoolwide approach to address long-standing teacher concerns about struggling students

- ACTION STEP: *Get feedback from teachers about their classroom concerns.* Find opportunities to engage teachers in productive discussions about what they see as the greatest challenges facing them as instructors. Note the teacher concerns that surface most often. For each teacher concern, generate ideas for how an RTI model in your school might help teachers with that issue. Craft these ideas for instructor support into 'talking points' and include them in your school's RTI presentations.

3. Solicit teacher input when building your school's RTI model

- Teachers are a valuable resource that schools should tap when implementing RTI. When schools solicit teacher questions about RTI, include teachers on planning teams to help to develop the RTI process, and treat teacher objections or concerns about RTI as helpful feedback rather than stubborn resistance, those schools send the message that teachers are full partners in the RTI planning process.

3. Solicit teacher input when building your school's RTI model

- ACTION STEP: *Include teachers on the RTI Leadership Team.* One of the best ways to ensure that teachers have input into the RTI development process is to include teacher representatives on the RTI Leadership Team, the group that oversees the district's implementation of RTI.

4. Link all significant school and district initiatives to RTI

- RTI is a comprehensive, proactive model to identify and assist struggling students. Yet teachers may erroneously perceive RTI as just another 'program' that is likely to last for only a short time and then disappear. Any RTI training for staff should make the point that RTI is not a single-self contained program but is actually an all-inclusive and flexible framework for student support that encompasses *all* existing student support programs and strategies.

4.   Link all significant school and district initiatives to RTI

- ACTION STEP: *Organized all school programs under the RTI framework.* Schools should present RTI as an elastic multi-tier problem-solving framework. First, the school lists all of its significant current programs or initiatives intended to assess or intervene with students with academic or behavioral needs. The school then assigns each of the programs or initiatives to Tier 1, 2, or 3 in the RTI framework. The message for staff is that, while specific *programs* may come and go, the overarching RTI model is both adaptable and durable-- and that much of the power of RTI rests on its potential to integrate a series of isolated programs into a larger unified and coordinated continuum of student support.

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RTI Leadership Team: What team oversees the development of RTI in a school or district—and what are that team's specific duties?

RTI Leadership Team: Command-and-Control for RTI

The RTI Leadership Team guides the overall RTI process.

The group meets periodically (e.g., monthly) on an ongoing basis to evaluate the RTI project, shape its future direction, determine what resources the project requires, and allocate those resources.

The RTI Leadership Team also ensures that a standard RTI process is followed across individual schools.

What is the Purpose of the RTI Leadership Team?

- The RTI Leadership Team has several functions: (1) to draft and update a district RTI implementation plan, (2) to keep all schools throughout the district in compliance with good RTI practices, and (3) to identify and make available to schools the resources required to implement RTI successfully. The RTI Leadership Team's duties include:

- *Drafting a multi-year plan* that will guide the district in the implementation of RTI while using existing resources. The team's RTI Plan should encompass a three-year rollout schedule.

- *Supervising RTI implementation.* The RTI Leadership Team oversees that RTI is implemented in a uniform manner throughout the school district.

- One caution: Be sure not to overlook 'dissident' voices when select RTI Leadership Team members. Members who may have some reservations about RTI but also possess experience and knowledge that would be valuable to the team.

Who Should Serve on the RTI Leadership Team?

- Your district should assemble a multi-disciplinary team to serve as your RTI Leadership Team.

- The team should include influential district administrators such as those who control resources (e.g., staff development funds; instructional budgets) or supervise staff (e.g., school psychologists, reading teachers) across the district that will participate in RTI.

- Additionally, the team should have representatives from school buildings to help the team to keep lines of communication open with its campuses.

- Finally, the membership on the team should be balanced to include representatives from important stakeholder groups (e.g., building administrators, general education teachers, etc.).

Who Should RTI Leadership Team Meetings Be Organized?

- Team meetings should follow a fixed schedule, with a standard set of meeting agenda items regularly brought up for team discussion:

- *Regularly scheduled meetings.* The RTI Leadership Team should meet at least monthly.

- *Standing meeting agenda.* In addition to those topics brought up for discussion by team members, the RTI Leadership Team should establish a small set of 'standing agenda' items— e.g., 'school-wide literacy screenings', 'resources for classroom interventions', and 'update in state RTI guidelines and regulations'.

- *Subcommittees.* If the RTI Leadership Team is so large that frequent meetings are difficult to schedule and unwieldy to run, consider dividing the team's work among subcommittees.

How Can The RTI Leadership Team Find Resources to Support RTI?

- The great majority of school districts that implement RTI will do so largely by using their existing resources.

- The RTI Leadership Team can help the school district to adopt an RTI model by systematically inventorying district and building resources (personnel, instructional and assessment materials, staff development funds, etc.) that can be made available to support RTI.

RTI Leadership Team 'Action Steps'

- *Determine the team's scope and responsibilities.* At the district level, decide on what the scope, authority, and responsibilities of the RTI Leadership Team are to be. Be sure to confront potentially difficult questions such as 'Will the RTI Leadership Team's RTI recommendations be binding on individual schools or merely advisory?'

- *Review state guidelines that may impact your RTI Leadership Team.* Review any relevant guidelines or regulations from your state department of education to determine whether the state offers guidance on the makeup and functioning of the RTI Leadership Team or content of an RTI district plan.

RTI Leadership Team 'Action Steps'

- *Generate a recruitment list.* Create a list of positions and/or personnel from school buildings and at the district level to be recruited for the RTI Leadership Team. Review the list to ensure that no important district department, school/ program, or stakeholder group has been overlooked.

- *Schedule meetings.* Create a schedule of RTI Leadership Team meetings for the full school year—and ensure that those meeting dates are shared with all team members.

- *Draft a standing meeting agenda.* Select topics to be put onto a standing meeting agenda for the RTI Leadership Team. Set time aside occasionally at team meetings to discuss items should be removed from or added to the agenda.

- [Optional] *Develop a list of subcommittees.* Divide the duties of the full RTI Leadership Team into subcommittees. For each subcommittee, select a descriptive name, define its duties, and recruit members from the larger team.

RTI Leadership Team 'Action Steps'

- *Conduct an inventory of RTI resources.* As one of its first acts, the RTI Leadership Team should conduct a thorough inventory of resources available to support RTI at the district level and at each school. This inventory should be updated yearly.

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Next Steps. What are the recommended 'next steps' for this module?

Interventions: Recommended Next Steps…

1. *Create a School- or District-Wide RTI Leadership Team.* Assemble a team in your building or district to oversee development and implementation of the RTI model.

2. *Inventory School and/or District Resources for RTI.* Use the RTI Leadership Team as a vehicle to inventory resources (e.g., funding, personnel, staff development time) and persons of influence (e.g., administrators overseeing curriculum and special education) that can be channeled to support RTI.

Interventions: Recommended Next Steps…

3. *Develop an RTI School- or District Plan.* Write 1- to 2-year plan (supervised by the RTI Leadership Team) that includes the essential RTI elements, including timelines, people involved, and goals for each.

4. *Build RTI Understanding & Support Among Teachers.* To promote teacher support for RTI, (1) map out the essential RTI information teachers will need to hear in the upcoming school year, (2) inventory the large-group and small-group opportunities to share RTI information and answer teacher questions, and (3) use that content and scheduling information to create a building RTI staff-development calendar that spans the school year.

Interventions: Recommended Next Steps…

5. *Link RTI to Other Initiatives.* Help teachers to see how their adoption of RTI (the toolkit for helping struggling learners) will help them with other school-, district-, and state initiatives (e.g., implementation of the Common Core State Standards).

Handout: Next Steps: p. 35

- In your groups, discuss the content and recommendations for 'next steps' presented in this portion of the workshop.

- Jot down any immediate next steps that you think are important to prepare to support your schools in RTI.

model, they commit to comprehensive change throughout s. This segment examines the role of the RTI Leadership the RTI model and in creating a multi-year plan to al suggestions and resources for setting up professional embrace the RTI model.

Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:

3. _____

4. _____

What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?

3. _____

4. _____

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