Response to Intervention: A District’s and School’s Implementation

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RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: A DISTRICT’S AND SCHOOL’S IMPLEMENTATION

by

Michelle L. Carter

A research project submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist Educational Leadership, Research and Technology Western Michigan University August 2013

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This paper demonstrates how the Response to Intervention (RTI) system was implemented in one district and school, and may serve as a model for others to follow. The RTI framework has the capacity to push participating schools to examine the quality of instruction and, more importantly, to use ongoing student assessments to determine the instruction each student needs to be academically successful. The leadership and policy literature as well as legislative and other reforms such as RTI, systematic assessment, instructional strategies, is reviewed. The results of the RTI implementation at the district and building level are shared. For example, in February of 2007, 49.8% of kindergarten students made benchmark as measured by the DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF). In January of 2008, 89% of this same group of students, now first grade students, made benchmark. Thus, an additional 40.8% of students made the benchmark after 11 months. Not all results were as promising. Early in the 2012–2013 school year, 75% of third grade students were proficient as measured by the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test, while 73% were proficient near the end. District and building observations as well as documents of the RTI implementation over a five-year period are also provided. Finally, suggestions for next steps for both the building and district are provided. Suggestions include analyzing why third grade saw a
slight decrease in ORF scores from 2012 to 2013, working more collaboratively as
district administrators to develop RTI into more of a systematic process district-wide,
continuing collaborative conversations which include benchmark and progress
monitoring meetings at the building level, and other suggestions.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my husband, Tim, for his continuous support and patience as well as the understanding of this project from my children, Lauren and Nick.

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Sue Poppink, for her support and dedication during this process. Finally, I would like to also extend a thank you to my committee members, Dr. Patricia Reeves and Dr. Julia Reynolds, for their insight and expertise with this project.

Michelle L. Carter
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................................. ii

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 1

   School Reform and Legislation ............................................................................................... 1

   Response to Intervention ........................................................................................................ 2

   Systematic Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention ......................................................... 7

   Leadership ............................................................................................................................... 8

   Problem Statement ................................................................................................................ 9

2 LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................................. 11

   Overview ............................................................................................................................ 11

   Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................ 13

   School Reform and Legislation ............................................................................................. 13

   Response to Intervention ....................................................................................................... 16

   Systematic Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention ....................................................... 23

   Leadership ............................................................................................................................ 28

3 RTI IMPLEMENTATION ........................................................................................................... 32

   The First Two Years ............................................................................................................... 32

   The Next Five Years ............................................................................................................. 46
### Table of Contents—Continued

**CHAPTER**

4. THE NEXT STEPS.................................................................................................................. 52
   - Summary of Observations............................................................................................... 52
   - The Next District Steps.................................................................................................. 53
   - The Next Building Steps............................................................................................... 54

**REFERENCES** ......................................................................................................................... 56

**APPENDICES**

A. Grandville Public Schools Response to the RTI Initiative ........................................... 64
B. K–1 Reading Materials Evaluation................................................................................... 66
C. Reading Materials Committee Meeting............................................................................ 68
D. Memorandum to Elementary Teachers........................................................................... 70
E. Memorandum to Elementary Principals ........................................................................... 72
F. Response to Intervention PowerPoint Slides .................................................................... 74
G. K–1 Early Intervention (RTI) Update for Administrators ............................................. 76
H. DIBELS Assessment Teams ............................................................................................ 78
I. DIBELS Grade Level Benchmark/Progress Monitoring Meeting Agenda .................. 80
J. DIBELS Data Review PowerPoint Slides .......................................................................... 82
K. Successful Grade Level Meetings PowerPoint Slides ..................................................... 84
L. Phonological Awareness Continuum................................................................................ 86
M. Early Intervention Meeting Agenda................................................................................ 88
N. Grandville Public Schools Progress Monitoring Grade Level Meeting .................... 90
APPENDICES

O. Intervention Resources List ................................................................. 92

P. Early Intervention Meeting Minutes ...................................................... 94

R. MEAP Comprehensive Report – ISD ....................................................... 96
LIST OF TABLES

1. K–1 DIBELS Scores, February 2007 ................................................................. 35
2. K–1 DIBELS Scores, September 2007 ........................................................... 39
3. K–1 DIBELS Scores, January 2008 ............................................................... 42
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

School Reform and Legislation

Education, particularly public education, has been a controversial topic in the United States over the past several decades. It has been under much closer scrutiny in the past few years than in any other time in our country’s history as the world has been changing at such an accelerated pace.

The challenge remains that an estimated 20 to 30% of the student population in the United States is at risk for school failure (McCook, 2006). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) was the first federal legislation to require the implementation of the theory of standards-based education reform on a nationwide basis. It is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. NCLB is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual student outcomes in education. Since the implementation of NCLB, many lawmakers, business leaders, and educators are examining ways to better prepare our students for the future.

Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) is the primary federal program that authorizes state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities. The specific language in IDEIA included three elements that integrated evidence-based practices, including
(a) a requirement for the use of scientifically based reading instruction, (b) evaluation of how well a student responds to intervention, and (c) emphasis on the role of data (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010).

NCLB and IDEIA “articulate each school’s responsibility to ensure that all students can have access to the core curriculum in the general education environment whenever possible, with appropriate support and services” (Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009). Most recently, another federal law, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided funding for states to extend and improve data-based instructional practices at the state and local levels. These three major school reforms have changed the way educational progress is viewed and understood.

School reforms have existed in one form or another throughout the history of public education. Fullan (2000) has pointed out in his work that success is sustained in educational reform by individuals who are adaptable and resilient. There must also be committed leaders within at all levels of its organization. These characteristics are easily recognized, but difficult to achieve. Fullan (2002) also pointed out that systematic, school reform cannot happen overnight. It requires a long-term approach, not a quick-fix mentality. Systematic reform also requires that reform take place with the entire system. Changing one component in a system without attending to the entire system will not result in sustainability with the reform.

Response to Intervention

The goal of past and current federal policies has been to close the achievement gaps between all students in the United States. NCLB and IDEIA opened the door for a
new general and special education initiative, Response-to-Intervention (RTI), which promotes effective instruction for all students. RTI is based on the belief that all students can learn.

According to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE, 2006), Response-to-Intervention (RTI) “is a practice of providing high quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child-response data to important educational decisions” (p. 3). RTI is a system focused on prevention of student failure, over remediation after the student has failed. It is a joint effort between all parties who serve struggling students, including general education and special education teachers. IDEIA also enabled RTI to be used as an alternative to the IQ discrepancy in making eligibility decisions in the diagnosis of students with a specific learning disability (SLD).

RTI is a system by which students move through “tiers’ of instruction to ensure they are not falling behind their peers. There are three tiers in many RTI frameworks. In Tier I, all students receive core instruction. It often needs to be adapted or differentiated to ensure growth for the at-risk students. Adapted instructional strategies involve teachers differentiating classroom instruction based on what each student needs. “Although differentiated instruction has been in the forefront of discussions and interventions in the last decade, the RTI model allows for differentiation that is data informed through progress monitoring and collaborative planning” (Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009).
Students that are not responding adequately to the core instruction (Tier I) need supplemental intervention. This is accomplished through Tier II intervention. Tier II interventions are intensive and focus on specific skill areas while provided in small groups. The instruction is explicit and is provided by a highly trained individual. Students’ progress is monitored frequently in order to determine students’ responsiveness to the instruction.

If Tier II intervention is insufficient, Tier III intervention is provided. Students in Tier III intervention need a longer duration of small group or individualized instruction in order to make progress. The instruction is systematic and slower-paced, and provides more student practice on the skill being taught. Some RTI systems consider Tier III to be a pre-special education placement tier, whereas other models do not (Bender & Shores, 2007).

In a RTI system, a team of educators utilize a standard-protocol approach, a problem-solving process, or a combination of both. A standard-protocol approach utilizes scientifically validated programs for groups of students with similar difficulties. A problem-solving process analyzes students individually so interventions can be matched to their academic deficits. The combined approach uses problem solving to analyze student data in order to determine deficit skills. Then, students with similar deficits are placed into a standard-protocol program (Hall, 2008).

This initial student data is in the form of universal/benchmark screening. This screening of all students takes place at least three times per year: early fall, early winter, and spring. Using the data, educators determine whether students are arriving at their
benchmark or grade level, or need additional intervention. Some students that need intervention will also need additional diagnostic testing to determine what their exact deficit may be. This can be accomplished with phonemic awareness screeners, phonics screeners, reading inventories, etc.

There are variations within the RTI systems that have been implemented across the country. However, there are core principles found within all RTI systems as quoted by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2006):

1. We can effectively teach all children.
2. Intervene early.
4. Use a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tier model.
5. Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction to the extent available.
6. Monitor student progress to inform instruction.
7. Use data to make decisions.
8. Use assessment for three different purposes.

The core principles provide a basic structure that assist schools with their implementation of RTI. In summary, effectively teaching all children is the driving force in any RTI system.

Prior to implementing RTI, there must be district and building-wide commitment (Hall, 2008). The staff must identify the curricular, instructional, and environmental
conditions that enable learning. It is also best to intervene early in students’ education when problems are relatively small (Hall, 2008).

“This is not a wait-to-fail model” (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Reading research documents that provide quality Tier I instruction at an early age, along with Tier II and Tier III supports as needed, enable a large percentage of students to respond. Therefore, they mitigate some of the risk for later reading difficulties (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, 2006).

Using a multi-tier model of delivery with increasing intensity ensures that there are high rates of student success for all students, as instruction in the schools is differentiated in nature and intensity. Research shows two to five tiers of instruction have been reported (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan & Young, 2003; Marston, 2005; Reschly, 2005).

Another core principle is that an overarching problem-solving process is used to make decisions within a multi-tier model. Specifically, RTI supports a clearly defined process to determine a student’s needs and to develop and evaluate appropriate interventions. The core instruction and interventions need to be researched-based and scientifically validated. This ensures that students are exposed to curriculum and teaching that has demonstrated effectiveness with students.

There are three types of assessment used in a RTI system. One is screening or benchmark assessments that are given to all students in order to identify who is not making academic gains at expected levels. Another is diagnostic assessments that are given to students who are not making expected gains as documented in screening and benchmark assessments. These assessments are administered in order to gather additional
information to determine appropriate interventions. Finally, progress monitoring assessments are provided to students receiving Tier II or Tier III interventions to determine if the academic intervention is producing the desired effects. Thus, once students are receiving instruction that is research-based and scientifically validated, their progress must be monitored. The assessments used to monitor progress need to be collected frequently and be sensitive to small changes in growth. These data can then be used to make informed instructional decisions regarding each student’s response to instruction.

**Systematic Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention**

The components that make up RTI have been used routinely for many years in the K-12 school setting, but have not been understood as part of the larger system now known as RTI. Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, and Young (2003) found that the difference in how some of the components of RTI have been used routinely for many years and an actual RTI system is that the RTI system includes assessment and instructional practices. These pieces have been integrated into a systematic, data-driven system with built-in decision stages. The belief is that all students can learn. This belief can be achieved if the appropriate instruction is provided and data are collected to determine academic progress or lack of progress (VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Barnett, 2005). This is in sharp contrast to past teaching models and assessment where students were assumed to be performing satisfactorily unless identified otherwise (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004).

Regardless of the approach chosen in the RTI system, students’ progress is monitored over a period of 6 to 10 weeks. At this time, if the progress monitoring data
show students with a minimum of three data points at or above expected levels, the student is discontinued from the RTI process. However, if the student is making gains, but at a slower pace, and there have not been adequate data points at or above the expected levels, the intervention is continued. If little or no gains have been achieved, the intervention is modified. Students that continue with the current intervention or have a modified intervention are then progress monitored for another 6 to 10 weeks with the above process repeating itself.

Leadership

A key piece to the implementation of any RTI framework is an effective leadership team. Current research extensively defines effective leadership in general and addresses the impact leadership has on school reform. “The role of the principal is to be the instructional leader who models RTI procedures and decision-making” (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005, p. 14).

In order for any initiative to have a chance for success, building principals must be involved. Their leadership is necessary to set the vision and tone in order for distributed leadership to begin. The research base on distributed leadership is still emerging, but it is known that it focuses more on the practice of leadership interactions and not as much on the actions (Spillane, 2005). As stated by Fisher and Frey (2010), for RTI “to work, it has to become accepted and institutionalized, not a special program that individual teachers can opt into or out of. It has to be hardwired into the very culture of the school” (p. 127). This leadership can take on many forms as the RTI implementation
is underway, but the magnitude of the implementation effort requires significant leadership and strategic planning (Hall, 2008).

**Problem Statement**

The process of school reforms such as RTI is much more complex than historically thought. Sustainability of reform typically involves the desire to know whether the reform lasts over time and becomes an institutionalized feature of the school (Datnow, 2005).

NCLB (2002), IDEIA (2004), and ARRA (2009) have put considerable pressure on school districts to provide evidence-based curriculum that meets the needs of all students. The laws require that students’ academic growth be monitored, documented, and modified as necessary to achieve success for all students. Although legislators have high expectations for school districts, administrators, schools, teachers, and students, they give little direction on how to accomplish these ambitious goals.

Research tells us the key to any school reform is the process. Fullan (2005) indicated that “accountability and capacity building” are key pieces to success. He stated, “Capacity building involves developing the collective ability-dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation, and resources to act together to bring about positive change” (p. 4).

There are variations with the RTI systems that have been implemented across the country. Most systems include the eight core principles, as stated above. Due to these vague specifications, it is taking longer for schools to wrap their arms around the RTI systems. In their national survey, Berkeley, Bender, Gregg Peaster, and Saunders (2009)
found that 47 of the 50 states have developed an RTI system or are in the process of creating one. Many studies over the past decade have investigated initial implementation as well as whether students have made academic gains with this model (Fuchs et al., 2003). Research also tells us that many reform movements lose their focus after the initial surge, which occurs in the first few years (Fullan, 2003). Research is limited on sustaining RTI systems. Hughes and Dexter (2011) state, “More longitudinal efficacy research is needed as well as examination of factors necessary for developing and sustaining RTI to assist educators as they consider adoption of this approach.” This specialist project will lay out how I implemented the RTI system in my district and school, and may serve as a model for others to follow.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The current educational reform movement focuses on increasing student achievement and reducing inequity so that all students can acquire the skills that will allow them to be successful. NCLB (2002), IDEIA (2004), and ARRA (2009) have a goal of improving student learning. IDEIA mentions Response to Intervention (RTI) as a way to assist in achieving these goals (Desimone, 2002). RTI is a popular initiative for targeting and enhancing the achievement of at-risk students. In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education published its highly anticipated regulations to support IDEIA. However, most interested parties were disappointed in the regulations, as minimal guidance on the purpose and procedures of RTI were made available. There is a growing consensus though among researchers and educators that RTI is meant to provide early intervention and prevention as well as better disability identification (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008).

The RTI framework has the capacity to push participating schools to examine the quality of instruction and, more importantly, the use of ongoing student assessment to determine what instruction each student needs in order to be academically successful. Students are provided with early intervention that is matched to the instructional needs of each student. Too often students are “curriculum casualties” (Fisher & Frey, 2010) or, in
other words, they are not provided with appropriate instruction to meet their needs as determined by assessments. Bender and Shores (2007) state, “RTI provides perhaps the strongest basis for differentiation of instruction, since closely monitoring the progress of struggling students allows teachers and the student to jointly focus instruction on the exact curricular skills that challenge the child” (p. 140). Classroom teachers that have witnessed success with differentiated instruction focus on who they teach, where they teach, and how they teach. The primary goal is ensuring that each teacher focuses on the processes and procedures that ensure effective learning for varied individuals (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

To examine and explore issues concerning the sustainability of a Response-to-Intervention framework, research literature is reviewed. The key literature areas include:

1. School Reform and Legislation
2. Response to Intervention
3. Systematic Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention
4. Leadership

This literature review begins with the historical components of legislation and how it has impacted school reform regarding at-risk students. Research regarding positive implications in student achievement by implementing the RTI framework are addressed. Current research about utilizing systematic assessment, instruction, and intervention, as well as the role it plays in school reform, is also reviewed. Finally, literature that focuses on leadership is reviewed.
Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this paper, several terms must be given operational definitions in order to understand the goals and methods of this paper. Specifically, the following terms must be defined: progress monitoring, sustain, success, culture, supports, and leadership. Progress monitoring enables educators to determine if a student’s academic performance is improving by using assessments that can be collected frequently and are sensitive to small changes in student progress. Success is determined by an increase in students’ achievement scores. The term sustain describes whether or not the educational organization has been able to implement a successful RTI framework as well as embrace it as part of their culture, whereas culture describes the knowledge, beliefs, and skills in each educational setting. Supports refer to the necessary staff, materials, and systems that enable the RTI framework to be successful. Finally, leadership refers to the people that are responsible to facilitate and monitor student academic growth. They are also often the gatekeepers of the financial resources.

School Reform and Legislation

The RTI framework has been gaining a great deal of national attention over the past decade. The foundation for this initiative dates back to the federal legislation and policies authorized during the 1960s. The first law that impacted the beginning of this reform was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The purpose of the law was to provide federal funds to economically disadvantaged students. The hope was to bridge the gap between the middle class and those students living in poverty.
Johnson, a former teacher, believed passionately in equity as well as the power of education to help pull people out of poverty. He was raised in a poor family and felt his success in life was due to receiving a public education. Johnson was also very familiar with how the U.S. Congress worked, having been an effective leader in the U.S. Senate. He knew how to get things done and believed education was the key to winning the War on Poverty. At this time in history, the law President Johnson signed was the most comprehensive and far-reaching public school bill in the history of the United States (Cross, 2004).

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law one of several reauthorizations of the ESEA, named the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This was a large-scale legislation designed to improve the performance of all schools. The three main principles of NCLB that support RTI were (a) using evidence-based practices, (b) monitoring student progress, and (c) implementing early reading intervention for at-risk learners (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Schools needed to use research-based interventions to meet students’ needs and monitor students’ results through data collection and analysis (Batsche et al., 2006).

Another major federal law was enacted in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), which had an impact on the special education population. It mandated that all disabled children receive a free and appropriate public education. It also required that (a) all students be provided with the least restrictive environment, (b) parents be provided due process rights, and (c) students have access to nondiscriminatory evaluation procedures. Students were to receive a full individual
evaluation prior to the school making any special education decisions. It also established the method used to identify students for special education, which is the referral process.

In 1990, this law was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The reauthorization required that every disabled student have an individualized education plan (IEP). The IEP was created to ensure that each special education student was receiving an appropriate education and was monitored. IDEA was reauthorized in 1997. The reauthorization of IDEA was viewed as an opportunity to review, strengthen, and improve IDEA to better educate children with disabilities and enable them to achieve a quality education.

IDEA was again reauthorized in 2004 and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). This reauthorization included specific language in IDEIA that integrated evidence-based practice and added the components of (a) using scientifically based reading instruction, (b) evaluating how well a student responded to intervention, and (c) emphasizing the role data played on decision making (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). IDEIA now applied to all students encountering academic difficulties with the general education curriculum, and it allowed general education to use up to 15% of special education monies to assist in interventions for all students. Thus, IDEIA encouraged the prevention and intervention to target students experiencing academic difficulties in school. In other words, IDEIA opened the door for a strategic way to combine regular progress monitoring and flexible use of research-based instructional methods, thus the emergence of the Response-to-Intervention framework.
In 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), commonly referred to as the Stimulus or Recovery Act. The primary purpose of the Act was to immediately save and create jobs. The second purpose was to provide temporary relief to programs most impacted by the recession, with education being one program.

Although NCLB (2002) and IDEIA (2004) have placed the issue of a Response-to-Intervention framework in the forefront, the systematic process for the reform was not identified in either piece of legislation. The lack of specificity has created a bit of a lag in schools implementing this model. As Senge (1990) pointed out, the reform must have a clear vision as well as statements of future benefits for the system and the people in the system in order for success to follow. This vision enables the organization to implement the reform and the people within the organization know what is expected and that they will be supported in acquiring the essential skills. If this clarity is lacking, significant stress often occurs for people in the organization (Fullan, 1991). Despite the lack of official guidance in the RTI framework, there is a growing consensus that the purpose of RTI is to provide early intervention and prevention as well as better disability identification. As both Senge and Fullan stated, vision is critical in any reform and RTI is no different.

**Response to Intervention**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is the process of implementing high-quality, research-based instructional practices based on the learners’ needs, student progress monitoring, and adjusting instruction based on students’ responses to that instruction.
(Bender & Shores, 2007). The following are the core principles found within all RTI frameworks, as referenced by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE, 2006):

1. We can effectively teach all children.
2. Intervene early.
4. Use a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tier model.
5. Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction to the extent available.
6. Monitor student progress to inform instruction.
7. Use data to make decisions.
8. Use assessment for three different purposes.

The first core component, “We can effectively teach all children,” embraces the notion that it is the educators’ responsibility to identify the curricular, instructional, and environmental conditions that enable learning. It continues with the assertion that educators then need to determine the best way to provide the necessary resources in order to effectively teach all children. This requires that schools not only look at their population as a whole, but also in sub-groups. The sub-groups will be determined by the population but often include gender, ethnicity, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners (ELL). Core instruction, regardless of how solid it may be, is often not adequate for students that fall into some of the sub-
groups. It is the educator’s responsibility to be aware of best practices that can provide additional strategies to the students most at-risk for failure.

At this point, educators are looking at differentiating within the core instruction. Differentiation is the act of an educator responding to an individual learner’s needs. The goal of differentiated instruction is to maximize each student’s growth and individual success (Tomlinson, 2008). If differentiation of the core instruction is still not adequate, students are then provided with intervention. The intervention is targeted toward the weakest academic area for the student. It is provided by a trained educator in a small group or one-on-one setting.

The second core component, “Intervene early,” builds off of the first component. Generally speaking, it is much more efficient financially and academically, as well as more successful, if intervention occurs early, when most learning problems are relatively small. Early identification of students at-risk of having learning difficulties can be accomplished through benchmark assessments or universal screening. This type of screening is reliable and administered to individuals or as a group assessment. These assessments are quick, low-cost, repeatable, and easy to administer, and are aligned to the curriculum. Benchmark screening can also be used to inform curricular and instructional decisions based on real-time data. These data can immediately be used to adjust the students’ instruction to meet their deficit areas.

The third core component is to use a multi-tier model of service delivery, as instruction in schools must be differentiated in both nature and intensity in order to teach all children. The RTI system utilizes tiers, or levels, which increase with instructional
intensity based on each student’s needs. The multi-tiers are necessary as no instructional method or strategy works for all students. Each tier is embedded with a set of unique support activities that help staff implement research-based curriculum and instructional practices at levels of fidelity that are intended to improve student achievement. Typically, according to the NASDSE (2006), a three-tier model consists of the following:

   Tier 1—Screening of all students and differentiated benchmark/core instruction for at risk students; Tier 2—Targeted short-term supplemental interventions in addition to benchmark/core instruction; Tier 3—Intensive instruction in addition to core instruction. The 3-tier framework is descriptive, not prescriptive. It describes a general process but is not designed as a prescription for what to do in a specific situation.

   Although the three-tier RTI framework appears to be the most commonly used and continues to gain support, other educators promote a four, five, or more tier framework. The number of tiers that are incorporated can often be tied to one’s beliefs on RTI’s primary purpose. Educators who see RTI’s primary purpose as disability identification want fewer tiers, and those who see the framework in terms of early intervention and prevention want more tiers (Fuchs et al., 2008).

   The fourth component is to use a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tier model. This method includes “(a) problem identification, (b) problem definition, (c) designing intervention plans, (d) implementing the intervention, and (e) problem solution” (Deno, 2002). This method is supported by research that connects effectiveness with using a clearly defined method to determine student need and evaluate
interventions. This method assists in determining whether instruction and/or interventions should be implemented with the individual student, classroom, grade, building, or district level.

Various staff members participate in the problem-solving discussion, from those who intimately know the students, to others who have extensive knowledge regarding data. Team members include, but are not limited to, the classroom teacher, instructional paraprofessionals, school psychologists, principals, etc.

The fifth core principle, “Use research-based, scientifically validated instructions/intervention,” is required in both NCLB and IDEA 2004. All students need to be exposed to curriculum and teaching that has demonstrated effectiveness for the students being served. Instruction/intervention is research-based when it involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs. Educators need to be aware of published research throughout their teaching careers. They need to be able to determine whether the experiment applied sound research methodology and whether the procedure employed in the experiment applies to their own population (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005).

There are two approaches to selecting research-based, scientifically validated interventions. First, schools can choose interventions that have proven success from an existing compilation. Second, schools can conduct their own review to identify research-based, scientifically validated interventions. It is also important to remember though that
while the instruction may be research-based, it is not a guarantee of success for each individual student.

The sixth core principle is to monitor student progress to inform instruction. Progress monitoring is about data that need to be collected frequently as well as be sensitive to small changes. The frequent data collection allows educators to determine early on, the effectiveness of instruction with the students in order to maximize the impact of the instruction and interventions. This enables educators to determine whether there are deficit areas within the curriculum and/or instruction before considering the deficit to be student-centered (McCook, 2006). Progress monitoring assessments are administered on a routine basis (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc.). They consist of multiple test formats that can be compared over time. The assessments assist in determining whether the intervention is working or if it needs to be modified.

Seventh, “Use data to make decisions” requires that ongoing data collection systems are in place. The data need to be continuously analyzed, and the results need to be used in order to make informed instructional decisions about the students. When the nature of the problem is identified, corrective action can be taken. As McCook (2006) states,

The power of the benchmark data is obvious . . . you can re-deploy resources at the beginning of a problem instead of waiting until it is too late to salvage a situation. You can target professional development to a specific need that is supported by data. (p. 22)
Without data, educators are relying solely on their observations and opinions. It is necessary that students are evaluated based on what similar-aged peers are capable of achieving. This ongoing data collection analysis and discussion allows for the most appropriate instruction to be deployed.

Finally, the eighth core principle is, “Use assessment for three different purposes.” This enables educators to get the appropriate kind of data necessary to make instructional decisions for the students. The three types of assessments used in an RTI framework include (a) screening or benchmark assessments, which are applied to all students at least three times a year to identify those not making progress at expected rates; (b) diagnostic assessments, which determine what students can and cannot do in specific areas; and (c) progress monitoring assessments, which determine whether the interventions are producing the desired effects. Educators often will argue that too much assessment exists in modern-day schools. This is true only if the purpose and type of data being collected is not understood by the educator administering the assessment.

The above core principles describe the important characteristics necessary in developing any RTI framework. The processes and procedures necessary for any school to be successful may appear easy, but the reality of getting to full implementation is rarely simple. There are many variables that affect how difficult a RTI implementation in a school can be. Implementing RTI can be complex and challenging; thus, it is critical that educators believe in the journey. RTI requires changing how resources and time are spent, how instruction is delivered, and who works with students. This may cause some angst for staff, as they may be threatened by the changes that are expected (Hall, 2008).
Systematic Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

Simply put, RTI is a framework that includes a process of implementing high-quality, scientifically validated instructional practices based on student needs, monitoring student progress, and adjusting the instruction based on the student’s response to instruction. This instruction is provided through a variety of tiers, or levels, that increase in frequency, time, and explicit teaching of the instruction that the student is provided. If a student does not make gains that are similar to peers, utilizing the tiers of instruction, the student may be determined to have a learning disability and need to be serviced through special education (Fuchs, 2003).

The concept of finding, identifying, and placing students in a special education program is no longer sufficient. The creation of a service delivery system that is more oriented around how a student responds to research-based core instruction and interventions delivered with integrity needs to be addressed. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2006) states, “RTI should be applied to decisions in general, remedial, and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction/intervention guided by child outcome data” (p. 3). This means that educators need to understand that a key piece of the research-based evidence, namely, successful academic outcomes, means not waiting for students to fail. RTI is a general education initiative that includes special education as an equal partner. All educators need to work together to screen, identify, and deliver instruction so general education and special education can become a more seamless series of services available to all students.
RTI is a service delivery system that is intended to provide an educational experience to all students. Its focus is first to deliver effective core instruction. Quality core instruction is necessary for student achievement in any subject to take place. If core instruction is not meeting a large percentage of the students’ needs, it is difficult to determine whether a struggling student truly has a disability or is a “curriculum casualty” (Fisher & Frey, 2010).

Quality core instruction begins by schools selecting and implementing evidence-based general education practices. All teachers must utilize scientifically based instructional materials that are systematically used with all students. This may appear quite simple, as the general public, as well as educators, often believe that all published material is scientifically based, but this is not always true. Educators must take the responsibility of knowing how to identify and verify evidence-based materials from the abundance of educational products continuously being marketed. This challenging task can be accomplished through professional development, field research, and expert consultation (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Once general education curriculum and/or instructional materials and strategies are chosen, the implementation of the curriculum and materials must be consistent. The fidelity of the implementation is as important as using research-based materials.

Next, for students that do not meet expected achievement levels based on testing data, additional intervention is provided. Over the past few years, there has been an abundance of intervention materials available. It is necessary that educators are able to
determine what resources can bring about the greatest student achievement gains. As the NASDSE (2006) stated about scientifically based research,

It refers to the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs. It is a critical tool in determining the relative efficacy (validity) of the numerous intervention/instructional approaches available for use at any point in time. (p. 62)

Educators need to understand this concept in order to critically review the enormous influx of commercial materials and choose the appropriate resources to intervene and address the student deficits.

In addition to choosing scientifically based resources for intervention, a variety of additional questions must be addressed. The launching of intervention in any school setting goes much smoother if the staff is comfortable with teaching in small groups and is part of a data culture. Hall (2008) states, “using formative data to inform instruction” (p. 59) sets the stage for a data culture. Formative data enable educators to determine where the students’ areas of weakness exist. Hall furthers that thought with, “If not, then teachers need more time and support to learn to use data and manage small groups” (p. 59). The professional development and time that is provided to staff in understanding the intervention component to RTI will ensure a much smoother transition.

There is also extensive research on how coaching can have a positive impact on teachers’ understanding and follow-through on providing the necessary interventions (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2010; Taylor & Moxley, 2008). Previous research documented that teachers rarely followed through with interventions
after a one-time, talk-at-you professional development session (Noell & Witt, 1999; Wickstrom, Jones, LaFleur, & Witt, 1998). Rather, investing in core skill professional development on an ongoing basis using scientifically, research-based strategies, materials, and programs builds capacity. It enables staff to have a deeper and broader understanding of the professional development topics.

Finally, student progress must be monitored frequently. The data are collected and then used to adjust and change programs and interventions as necessary. Screening and progress monitoring assessments are vital to any RTI framework. A common screening and progress monitoring tool currently used with students across the United States is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Fuchs et al., 2008).

DIBELS are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. The assessments are designed to be short measures used to regularly monitor the development of early reading skills. DIBELS were developed to measure recognized and empirically validated skills in order to provide support early and prevent the occurrence of later reading difficulties. DIBELS are comprised of measures including phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary.

DIBELS were developed using the concepts and procedures behind Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM). CBM was created by Stanley Deno and colleagues through the Institute for Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota in the 1970s–1980s (Deno & Mirkin, 1977; Deno, 1985; Deno & Fuchs, 1987). Like CBM,
DIBELS were developed to be efficient indicators of a student’s progress toward achieving general reading outcomes.

Initial research on DIBELS was conducted at the University of Oregon in the late 1980s. An ongoing series of studies on DIBELS has documented the reliability and validity of the measures as well as their sensitivity to student change. The authors of DIBELS were motivated by the desire to improve the educational outcomes for children, especially those from poor and diverse backgrounds. The latest version of the DIBELS measures, DIBELS Next, was released by Dynamic Measurement Group in May 2010 (Good & Kaminski, 2010).

These data are used to draw conclusions about students’ responsiveness and unresponsiveness to curriculum and instruction in the area of literacy. This assessment tool enables each school to determine what students are at risk for failure and also progress monitors the same students as they are receiving additional instruction and intervention to see if it is having a positive effect. Students who need special education services are those who respond well to interventions yet require major resources to sustain the progress, or those who show progress but will not be able to close the gap with their peers, no matter the intensity or frequency of the intervention.

The next key component is determining who teaches the intervention groups, when, and where. An important first step is to consider the implementation of an RTI model as an opportunity to evaluate the school’s resources, material, and staff, and to create a structure where all components are working together. This may include working collectively with staff from general education, special education, and Title I programs.
These assessment data, along with teacher observations and other classroom and/or school assessments, are used in problem-solving discussions. However, in order for these discussions to be productive, all staff members must be trained in the use of data and in the collaboration of problem solving. Once this level of knowledge is established, the data meetings are much more productive.

The first type of meeting held after each of the three yearly DIBELS benchmark assessments is typically referenced as the benchmark grade level meeting. This meeting includes analyzing district, building, grade level, and classroom data for patterns. Discussion includes areas of strengths and deficits, whether the deficits are core curriculum issues or intervention issues, moving from district to student level data analysis, and determining who needs additional intervention.

The second type of meeting held is a progress monitoring meeting. This type of meeting is usually held every 6 to 8 weeks. The purpose of this meeting is to analyze student progress monitoring data in order to determine if the intervention has been effective. If a student has a minimum of three data points above the expected achievement level, the intervention is discontinued. If the data are showing progress, but not enough, the intervention is continued. If the data are showing little or no progress, the intervention is modified. Additionally, if the intervention has included multiple modifications, a special education referral is often the next step in the process.

**Leadership**

The concept of leadership appears to date back to the days of Plato and Caesar. Theories behind leadership abound. Regardless of what theory is used to explain it,
leadership has been and still is present in the effective functioning of all complex organizations (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Research on school leadership through the mid-1980s focused on the school principal (Bridges, 1982). Conclusions from this research determined that strong principal leadership, particularly instructional leadership, is key to student achievement. The research also concluded that, due to the typical principal’s day being consumed by management activities, instructional leadership often must take the backseat (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003).

Therefore, the successful implementation of an intervention framework such as RTI relies heavily on effective leadership. The importance of the principal’s role in student achievement was documented in the research study, “How Leadership Influences Student Learning,” a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in 2004 (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). This study concluded that leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning (McCook, 2006). Quality leaders set a clear course that is understood by all stakeholders, establish high expectations, and consistently use data to track progress and performance. In order to accomplish these goals, the principal must make decisions about the building’s resources and how to utilize them to best support the most effective instruction and intervention for the students.

As instructional leaders, it is the principal’s responsibility to ensure that fidelity of implementation is embedded in the culture of the building. This fosters a community of leaders within the school which, in turn, creates the productive learning environment for
all students. If the principal attempts to delegate this role in the process, then staff receives the message that the RTI reform is a low priority to the principal. It is then counterproductive to the reform process. Principals need to demonstrate their commitment to the RTI framework by aligning their communication with the core beliefs of RTI.

Critical to the success of any reform initiative is also the sense of common purpose that leaders promote by involving others in developing and communicating a shared vision. As Fullan (2005) stated, “the focus on the short run is fatal on sustainability” (p. 23). Rather, it is critical for principals to build the capacities of the educational system’s subsystems in order to relate to each other with a focus on the shared vision. This is often referenced as “distributed leadership.” This shared vision happens only with time, hard work, devotion, and patience. Often there are considerable “growing pains” (McCook, 2006) that take place in order to ensure an effective, institutionalized reform process.

While educational leaders can choose various approaches to accomplish the task of school reform, attention to building capacity is significant to the success of the effort. Capacity building is a process that takes people from where they are to where they need to be in order to think and act in systems terms. This requires leadership to be reciprocal and evolve within a learning community. The learning needs to be continuous with participation in the learning being broad-based and skillful (Lambert, 2006). The learning community must recognize that collaboration is a key ingredient in order to be successful. The entire reform process must be taken one step at a time, and although obstacles and
frustration will exist, the learning community must not let it negatively impact the process. Most reform movements are most successful when they are implemented in phases over a period of years. It is important that the goals of the reform are not so ambitious that they are unable to be supported in the beginning. This enables true capacity building to exist in order to achieve real school reform.

Distributed leadership can help ensure that a successful RTI implementation occurs. The interactive influences of multiple members within the organization are necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Distributed leadership is more than the sharing of tasks within an organization. Deeper levels of interactions between members working toward a common purpose is of utmost importance (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2012). The emphasis on leadership practice over leadership roles is what matters (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

Leithwood and Mascall (2008) define it further: “. . . distributed leadership as illustrating everyday ways of sharing tasks in organizations and thereby minimizing the possibility of mistakes made through leadership decisions being made by individuals acting alone.” This type of leadership is opposite the leadership perspective that focuses on individualistic leadership models (Woods & Gronn, 2009).

Research (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2012) suggests that distributed leadership has positive impacts on teachers, leaders, and on education itself. It must be well managed, goal-oriented, planned, and continuously developed. Essential to the success of distributed leadership is support from diverse stakeholders. It is all about continuous growth within the organization.
CHAPTER 3

RTI IMPLEMENTATION

The First Two Years

Grandville Public Schools (GPS) is a suburban district that performs above the state and county average on most standardized assessments. The demographic continues to change in some pockets of the district’s boundaries, giving the district additional at-risk and special needs students. GPS has a history of utilizing paraprofessionals to provide additional support to students struggling in the areas of reading and math as well as other academic areas deemed necessary by the teachers. The instructional materials used for the additional support, in many cases, are provided by the classroom teacher. The teachers and paraprofessionals work diligently and are dedicated to student improvement, but the process has not been systems-based. Staff tend to work in isolation. Teachers focus on their classroom and their students. Their views tend to be very narrow in scope, rather than looking at how all stakeholders can work together (Senge, 2000). In other words, many educators have a difficult time seeing the forest through the trees. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 mentioned Response to Intervention (RTI) as an alternative to the “discrepancy model” when identifying learning disabled students for special education services. The curriculum office, of which I am a part, held a meeting to discuss the possibilities of using RTI.
I, along with several other staff members, spent the next few months reading books and articles to get as much background information on RTI as we could in order to support this district initiative. RTI is a framework that is referenced in NCLB and IDEIA as an alternative to identifying students with learning disabilities (LD). This legislation opened the door for alternative approaches, such as RTI, a model for impacting the rate of certification for the learning disabled (LD) classification for students. The RTI caveat to IDEIA legislation has even greater potential for intervening before a student fails sufficiently to be certified as LD. Perhaps the RTI framework’s greatest benefit is its utility for determining a student’s responsiveness to instruction and guiding the service delivery for that student to meet his needs (Glover & DiPerna, 2007).

The RTI premise is that a significant reduction in the number of students qualifying as learning disabled could be realized if the students who experience learning delays in reading and mathematics were served in classrooms where the teachers used a combination of close progress monitoring and adapted instructional strategies. McCook (2006) states, “Approximately 75–85 percent of the student body can be serviced successfully with the present educational service delivery model, while between 10–15 percent need additional interventions to be successful, and another 5–10 percent need intensive interventions to be successful (p. 2).”

Armed with both progress monitoring and adapted instructional strategies, teachers can identify learning difficulties as the student experiences them and respond with differentiated instructional strategies that fit that student’s learning needs. When fully implemented in all classrooms, RTI has been shown to be an assessment and
intervention model that enables schools to deliver sound instructional methods to students who historically may have fallen through the cracks. Students receive more individualized assistance on the basis of whether they respond to specific instruction using progress monitoring to measure their growth. This success has been documented at the Heartland Area Educational Agency and Minneapolis Public Schools. Both organizations were also able to document that the percentage of the student population who were identified as LD within an existing RTI model was less than 2% compared to previous estimates of LD prevalence at 5% (Lerner, 2002).

I had a dual role with the RTI initiative. Not only was I one of the lead district staff members working with the curriculum office, I also was a building principal, so I had to facilitate the implementation at both levels. One of the first steps I completed at the building level was to send a RTI “Tip-of-the-Week” out with my staff notes each Monday. This was an opportunity to slowly build awareness and a knowledge base with my building staff.

After gathering additional information on RTI and its process at the district level, it was decided the next step was to determine whether our core reading program was effective. GPS had been using the Scholastic Reading Series for approximately 10 years. It needed to be determined whether at least 80% of our students were achieving the necessary targets using this instructional material. Baseline data were collected using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). DIBELS is a quick one-minute assessment that measures specific skills that research deems predictive of future reading success. A variety of informational discussions as well as email communication
surrounded this step. It was not without conflict as this step proceeded, but the individuals involved maintained a professional tone and all opinions were respected. Many conversations centered on basing one’s decisions on real data and not just personal opinion. It was a great opportunity for professional growth for many administrators, teachers, and support staff. The DIBELS was administered to all kindergarten and first grade students in February, 2007. It was decided that our paraprofessionals would be trained on how to administer the DIBELS. One of our school psychologists provided the training; once the training occurred, each building was given the DIBELS materials and began to administer the assessment to all K–1 students. The data were then compiled. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*K–1 DIBELS Scores, February 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LNF</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWF</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORF</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon analysis of the benchmark data using DIBELS, we concluded that our core materials were not adequate, as 80% of our students were not proficient. We also noticed that there was more of an urgency with our kindergarten student data. The data led, once again, to some difficult discussions regarding best practices versus our personal
philosophy, particularly about children and play at that grade level. We began to analyze the scope and sequence of teaching early literacy, the frequency of teaching the skills, as well as the timing. Once staff became more comfortable with balancing the academic and affective needs of students as well as being provided with new strategies for instruction, we began to see an increase in student performance. We then created a district position paper called “Response to the RTI Initiative’ (Appendix A).

During this time, I, along with another individual from the curriculum office, began to research the current reading series available. Through research, we narrowed the best quality materials down to six different series. Sample kits of the materials were then requested. The six series were narrowed to three series: SRA, Houghton Mifflin, and Harcourt. Traditionally, a committee is then assembled to research and make a recommendation to the entire group. A different route was taken. All of the sample materials were set out in one location on February 12, 2008, and substitute teachers were provided for one-half day so the teachers could preview the three options. During the preview, the teachers had a ranking sheet (Appendix B) where they provided their feedback and then ranked their first, second, and third choices. The unanimous choice was STORYtown by Harcourt. It was decided that the next part of the process was to create a committee with representation from K–1 teachers to determine the next steps (Appendix C). The reading committee met on March 31, 2008, and decided that some visits would be made to Jenison Public Schools to see STORYtown being implemented. This process affirmed our choice in materials as well as helped to identify what pieces of the series needed to be purchased. The recommendation to purchase and implement the
A kindergarten STORYtown series for the 2008-09 school year was brought before the board and was approved. The recommendation included the possibility of purchasing and implementing STORYtown for first grade during the 2009-10 school year. I worked with the assistant superintendent in the negotiation with the sales representative in the purchase of STORYtown.

An area of concern that arose during multiple discussions that took place with staff during the initial implementation was a lack of understanding about the different kinds of assessments and their purposes. Many comments arose from teachers pertaining to the belief that many thought they were performing too many assessments and not having adequate time to teach the curriculum. It was only through additional discussions and the resulting testing schedule memo (Appendix D) that teachers began to see the differences in the types and purposes of the assessments. This memo was created jointly by me and another individual from the curriculum office.

Over the summer I met with an early intervention consultant from Ottawa Area Intermediate School District (ISD), Terri Metcalf, to discuss a plan of action for our district (Appendix E). It was the belief of the curriculum office that bringing an “outside expert” in was necessary to bring credibility to the RTI initiative. Terri and I decided that there would be a 2-hour training session for the principals, upon their return in August, to review RTI and the direction our district was taking with RTI, and, finally, to answer any questions the principals may have about RTI.

There was also a half-day workshop for the K–1 teachers, upon their return in August, to have the same discussions that had taken place with the principals earlier that
month (Appendix F). The second half of the day was an overview training of DIBELS by one of our psychologists. Another key event that happened during the summer was the arrival of the new STORYtown materials. Teachers had the option of picking up the materials so they could become familiar over the summer or waiting until their return in late August. Almost all of the teachers chose to pick up some of their materials to begin advanced planning, a very encouraging sign.

The teacher training with Terri Metcalf was successful! The overall response was positive and the questions were valid. Terri shared the fact that, although all staff may not agree that DIBELS was the best tool to benchmark all students, we made the right decision overall as a district. This was less a validation by Terri of our choice in tools than to emphasize the importance of establishing a direction for the district. She shared that many districts spend years arguing over issues such as what tool to use and never get to the real issue of moving forward with student achievement. The DIBELS overview training also provided teachers with a good foundation on the purpose, administration, and utility of the assessment. The principals were provided with an RTI update from me on the training sessions held by Terri regarding RTI as well as the DIBELS assessment (Appendix G).

During the teacher training, it was discussed that a better system was needed to administer the benchmark DIBELS testing in September, January, and May, as the fidelity of the test administration was put into question. I, along with a few of our lead psychologists, developed a district DIBELS testing team (Appendix H). This team was made up of the school psychologists and paraprofessionals from each of the eight
elementary buildings. This SWAT team was pulled together rather quickly, provided necessary training, and began the district assessments. The feedback upon conclusion of the first DIBELS team testing administration was very positive from fidelity to efficiency. The results from the September DIBELS testing are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*K–1 DIBELS Scores, September 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LNF</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWF</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After DIBELS assessing in September, I held my first benchmark grade level meeting in my building (Appendix I). The collaborative team included general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, the school psychologist, the district literacy coach, and me. We looked at the DIBELS’ district, building, and then classroom data. Classroom assessments and observations were also analyzed in order to triangulate the data so we could determine a plan of action for intervention. The grade level teams discussed whether the deficit areas were core instruction issues or intervention issues and planned effective instruction accordingly. Students who were not at benchmark were progress monitored every other week using the DIBELS progress monitoring assessments.
This collaborative culture evolved from the distributed leadership theory (Spillane, 2005). The team focused on interactions regarding student data versus our positional roles. Our goal was student growth and achievement.

The curriculum office brought the consultant, Terri Metcalf, back to Grandville in mid-October for additional training. The focus of this training was to teach K–1 teachers, principals, and psychologists how to read and interpret DIBELS reports. She also touched on how to determine what data indicated whether whole group or small group instruction was necessary (Appendix J). I worked with the curriculum office to create principal resource binders to provide some support as the buildings continued to roll out the RTI initiative. Upon conclusion of the training, I offered some suggestions and assistance to my principal colleagues if needed. I also shared a PowerPoint presentation with principals on suggestions for successful benchmark meetings (Appendix K).

I continued to read the latest research on RTI and share information with the elementary principals and special education director that I felt would assist in the acceptance of this initiative by staff. One article I shared from the October 2007 issue of Educational Leadership titled “Early Intervention at Every Age” (Brown-Chidsey, 2007) particularly sparked my attention. This article presented RTI in a non-technical manner and confirmed that it was a general education initiative that could be successful if general and special education worked collaboratively. Another document I shared was information provided to me at a workshop by the 95% Group called was the “Phonemic Awareness Continuum” (Appendix L). The skills in this continuum build the foundation for the next part of literacy, so I felt the document deserved particular attention. Many
principals took this document back to their teachers. Several principals reported back to me that meaningful discussions took place based on the articles and they still continue.

During November, I met with the school psychologists and the special education director to reflect on the DIBELS testing team and discuss how to get the data gathered during DIBELS testing as well as utilizing additional data to plan for Tier I/Core instruction (Appendix M). Some frustration was shared that it was felt that there was inconsistent implementation across the district. It was felt that, although a common vision was initially communicated, the initiative was not systems-based. Each building was given much latitude in determining the degree of their RTI implementation. I reminded the group that the initiative was coming from the district, but implementation was at the building level. The opportunities, as well as multiple resources, were being provided to the elementary principals and now it was up to the principals to be the instructional leaders. Our job was to provide support as requested.

I continued to drive the initiative at my building. The implementation was slightly different for me as I had a K–1 building and the other buildings were K–6 buildings. The staff buy-in was much easier for my staff as the district initiative was K–1 and that was the majority of students in my building. After 8 weeks of Tier I/Core instruction as well as Tier II intervention for those who qualified for it, we held a progress monitoring grade level meeting as a team (Appendix N). The collaborative culture driven by distributed leadership was continuing to grow. During this meeting, we triangulated and analyzed the data to determine one of four possible action steps: continue with the current interventions, gather additional diagnostic data, refer to the Student-Support-Team (SST)
if no gains were identified in the data, or discontinue the intervention if the student had three consecutive data points above the aimline on the progress monitoring data as well as other data concurring.

The DIBELS testing team began the winter benchmark assessment the last week of January. Once again, feedback from teachers and staff supported this format for assessing. Teachers did not like having some of their paraprofessional support out for the week, but they felt that the loss of support was worth the gain regarding the collection of valuable data. The results from the January DIBELS testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*K–1 DIBELS Scores, January 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LNF</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWF</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORF</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In February, the principals met again with the early intervention consultant, Terri Metcalf, to work on the next steps of the RTI initiative. First, we reviewed and analyzed the variety of reports that could be accessed via the DIBELS website. For example, in Table 1, the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) score for kindergarten shows 49.8% of the kindergarten students were established in February of 2007. In Table 3, the PSF score of first graders shows 89% of district first grade students were established in
January of 2008. The same students grew 40.8% in the area of phonemic awareness in an 11-month time period.

Terri also walked us through the types of questioning that would be productive in benchmark grade level meetings. We also spent some time reviewing teacher resources such as Susan Hall’s book, *I’ve DIBEL’d, Now What?* (2006) in order to provide strategies to the teachers to differentiate their Tier I/Core instruction based on the district and building data.

Each elementary building was encouraged to hold a benchmark grade level meeting within 2 weeks of the completion of DIBELS testing. At one of the principal meetings, I shared a tool that I received at a training that I, along with a few of our psychologists, modified to meet our district needs to guide the benchmark meetings.

I held my building benchmark meetings in 90-minute grade level blocks. The team discussed Grandville’s district data as it compared to our building data. Next, we analyzed our building data to see if we were at benchmark, and if not, we determined whether it was a core instruction issue or an intervention issue. Finally, individual student data were analyzed to determine the next steps necessary for instruction. This process was repeated for both kindergarten and first grade. The team’s confidence in data dialogues was growing (Hall, 2008).

The next step at the building level was to gather materials in order to target the deficit areas of the struggling students. As indicated by the National Reading Panel (2000), “There is no single method of teaching decoding proficiencies in young children.” So I, along with the school psychologist, spent quite a bit of time researching
activities and programs. Teachers were also encouraged to research materials and strategies. First, we began by purchasing a variety of research-based activities that focused on letter naming, phonemic awareness, and phonics (Appendix O). Next, we purchased a reading fluency intervention program called Read Naturally. We had a variety of discussions on how to organize the materials, where they would be stored, how to check them out, who could check them out, etc. I also provided training to the paraprofessionals and teachers who would execute the Tier II interventions. It was a challenging time, but much growth took place in students and staff alike.

After spring vacation, we had progress monitoring grade level meetings to determine one of three possibilities for the intervention students. Did the students’ progress monitoring data indicate it was time to discontinue the intervention, continue the intervention as is, or modify the intervention?

Once again in May, the DIBELS assessment was administered district-wide by the testing team. The results from the May DIBELS are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*K–1 DIBELS Scores, May 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LNF</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWF</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORF</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The PSF score for kindergarten students went from 59% in January to 70% in May. As a district, we were still not reaching the 80% target, but compared to the PSF score of 49.8% about 18 months ago, we were thrilled. Kindergarten teachers had embraced the fact, shared by consultant Terri Metcalf, that they needed to teach the skills and strategies earlier in the year and spend more time on each. Kindergarten teachers also needed to implement the new research-based core curriculum recently board-adopted in order to provide a high-quality literacy program. Looking at the first grade Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) scores in January, 67% of the students were considered low-risk, and that percentage grew to 70% in May. The first grade teachers were excited about the possibility of new core teaching materials the following year.

On May 30, 2008, I held an Early Intervention/RTI district meeting for principals and school psychologists so all could reflect on our first full year of district implementation (Appendix P). The elementary principals agreed that we wanted to continue district DIBELS testing teams for the 2008-09 school year, as this process was efficient and reliable. I would organize the assessment teams and schedule. The district psychologists would oversee the DIBELS testing. We also agreed that all benchmark meetings would be held within 2 weeks of DIBELS testing.

In conclusion, the first few years of Grandville’s journey, as well as my own building’s journey, into implementing a Response-to-Intervention framework was exciting, yet challenging. The district started out with a common vision of RTI and through a variety of leadership styles, building principals worked with their building teams to find a system that worked within their culture, but focused on the core principles
of RTI. My building flourished due to distributed leadership. Leadership practice was valued over leadership roles as all opinions were respected. Interactions between team members were at a deep level as we worked toward a common purpose of providing optimal instruction for each student.

The Next Five Years

Grandville Public Schools continued to implement RTI over the next 5 years at varying degrees. Although it began as a district initiative, it either quickly took roots or the initiative began to take the backseat. This was rather difficult for me as I helped lead the district charge, but my assistant superintendent directed me to offer support if asked. It was communicated to me that the seed was planted, and now it was up to the buildings to take responsibility for their own RTI system. Most buildings used a form of RTI, but not in a systematic way. Thus, we could not begin to use it for Learning Disability eligibility.

I was asked by my superintendent to change buildings at this time, so during the 2008-09 school year I moved to a preschool–6th grade building. There was one classroom of each grade level. This building had not really begun to implement RTI yet. I used the same process I utilized at my previous building to build the staff’s knowledge base regarding RTI, get to know their culture, and at the same time begin to foster a collaborative culture that based student decisions on the analysis of data. I worked diligently in fostering distributed leadership once again. I wanted all staff members to see they were equal stakeholders in this student-centered collaboration. It was an exciting process!
The first semester of the 2008-09 school year I spent observing students, teachers, support staff, parents, and the culture toward assessment, data, and learning. They were a dedicated group of people working very hard, but not really moving forward with student achievement in a systematic way. Many were utilizing best practices and/or research-based materials, but there was little communication between the stakeholders. The second semester was spent analyzing resources, both material and support staff as well as core (Tier I) instruction. Paraprofessional support was present, but each teacher chose how to use this support based on his or her own opinion. There were also some material resources available. The resources were not being used to their full capabilities. Finally, student data were then analyzed to determine where the student’s greatest needs were at that time.

At that time, my school, Central Elementary, was a building with approximately 35–40% economically disadvantaged students as well as approximately a 20–25% students-with-disabilities population due to a district LD room being housed at Central. These demographic factors needed to be taken into consideration when developing both short-term and long-term goals.

During the 2009-10 school year, in agreement with staff, I created our building schedule by making Tier II intervention time blocks a priority. We also used federal Title I dollars to purchase research-based resources in order to provide the Tier II instruction. In addition, I provided professional development to staff as needed and sent them to high quality professional development if I was unable to provide the required support. The professional development included supporting both core (Tier I) instruction and
intervention (Tier II and Tier III). We continued to use the DIBELS assessment to benchmark all students as well as hold the benchmark grade level meetings. The difference between the district RTI initiative and our building RTI initiative was that we utilized DIBELS in grades K–6, not just K–1. At Central, we also developed our own student record-keeping system in order to document student growth or lack of growth. The system included documenting the type of intervention, the materials being utilized during intervention, the duration regarding the number of days each week and the time of sessions, what would be used to progress monitor the student, and how often the progress monitoring took place. These data were then shared at benchmark and progress monitoring meetings.

The 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years brought about continuous monitoring of our building level RTI system. We added research-based strategies, resources, and programs as needed, provided additional professional development, continued benchmark grade level meetings as well as progress monitoring meetings, and strengthened our collaborative culture. Distributed leadership was in full swing as many staff members were taking over roles that I once facilitated as the lead. Early on in the RTI implementation, I had to play a much larger role. As the years progressed and the staffs’ confidence level grew, I was able to scaffold back my presence. Our conversations were rich in data and the understanding of research-based ideas and concepts. It was amazing to witness this transformation!

As a district, we created a computerized record-keeping system through our student management system. I, along with a team of three others, developed and piloted
this system during the 2010-11 school year. The second grade students were also added to the district RTI initiative. This included purchasing new STORYtown core reading materials. We also switched our DIBELS assessment during the same year to the revised, DIBELS Next version. The positive to this switch was that the assessments were modified to reflect updates with current best-practice research and then were normed. The negative was that we could not compare the old DIBELS data to the DIBELS Next data. Second grade was added to the benchmark DIBELS testing. Due to federal Title I restrictions, paraprofessionals could no longer be the members of our benchmark DIBELS team, so I was assigned the task to develop a new team. This team was comprised of retired teachers. I had the district psychologists provide DIBELS Next Training and the new team was ready to go.

The district added third grade to the RTI initiative during the 2011-12 school year. The STORYtown core reading materials were also purchased as well as adding this grade level to the benchmark DIBELS testing. The district RTI initiative now included K–3 at all buildings.

The 2012-13 school year brought about a greater sense of urgency to the district with RTI due to changes with state and national curriculum over the past 2 years as well as a much more data-driven culture locally, state-wide, and nationally. In addition, Grandville had many elementary teacher staffing changes, so this knowledge needed to be shared with these staff members. We started the year by bringing the consultant, Terri Metcalf, back to Grandville for a refresher training on DIBELS Next, analyzing data, and RTI in general. The psychologists also took a renewed role in facilitating this process,
particularly in buildings where the principals’ instructional leadership needed extra supports. Around this time, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) also renamed RTI to include the term *Multi-Tiered System of Supports* (MTSS).

At the building level, the 2012-13 year brought about additions to our research-based materials. We began to add Tier II and Tier III interventions in both math and vocabulary. The staffs’ attitudes remained positive and we were all engaged in continuous monitoring and growth of RTI/MTSS.

The results of RTI/MTSS system shows it continues to be a work in progress as evidenced by the district data below. Looking at the data in Table 5 compared to the data in Table 4, the kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) score in Table 4 had 70% of students at benchmark in 2007-08, and in 2012-13, 85% of students were at benchmark on PSF. For Analyzing Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), 59% of kindergarten students were at benchmark in 2010-11 compared to 81% in 2012-13. The growth at this level has been rising steadily.

I recently had a conversation with the assistant superintendent regarding the inconsistency with the first grade data. In February of 2007, the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) score had 79.8% of students at benchmark (see Table 1). In May of 2008, the ORF score dropped to 70%. As Table 5 shows, over the past three years, it was at 66% in 2010-11, rose to 73% in 2011-12, and dropped to 67% in 2012-13. This will be a topic of conversation at future administrative meetings.

Second and third grade have been a part of the RTI initiative for 2 to 3 years. Their data have not dropped, but remain consistent. This will also need to be addressed as
we should be seeing the scores increase with the changes in core instruction (Tier I) and intervention (Tier II and Tier III).

Table 5

*K–3 DIBELS Next 2010–2013 Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWF</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORF</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4
THE NEXT STEPS

Summary of Observations

Grandville Public Schools (GPS) has been able to increase student achievement in the area of reading over the past 7 years, in part due to its RTI/MTSS implementation. Many students who typically did not make adequate academic gains through core (Tier I) instruction in prior years were able to do so with improved core (Tier I) instruction and interventions (Tier II and III).

However, GPS will not be able to use the RTI/MTSS system district-wide as a way to meet eligibility for students with Learning Disabilities until the process is used more systematically in all elementary schools. In order for this to take place, the fidelity of implementation regarding intervention needs to be consistent. All buildings must routinely use research-based programs and strategies. The collaborative culture at benchmark and progress monitoring meetings needs to also be improved. Some buildings bring in substitute teachers so the collaborative conversations can include teachers, support staff, psychologist, principal, etc. These conversations are robust and give ample time to discuss the data at the building, classroom, and student levels in order to modify core instruction and/or intervention. Other buildings attempt to hold these meetings with multiple grades over the lunch hour. These meetings are more rushed and include more of a “reporting out” of data than a collaborative discussion. I recommend that the more
robust meetings where substitutes are brought in become an expectation across the elementary buildings in order to have a systems-based RTI/MTSS system.

The district and building level administrative leadership does not appear to be apathetic to the initiative; rather, it is my opinion that the knowledge base of some is still very superficial due to lack of urgency at some buildings as student data are still quite high when compared to surrounding districts. Historically, regardless of curriculum and resources, Grandville Public Schools tends to remain in the top third regarding student achievement when compared to other districts in our intermediate school district (see Appendix Q). This fact limits the sense of urgency needed by all stakeholders. However, regardless of these data, there will always be a population of students that need intervention (Tier II and Tier III) in addition to core instruction (Tier I).

The Next District Steps

In my opinion, in order for a more systematic RTI/MTSS system to be put into place, the building level administrators and the central office administrators need to discuss where each building is currently and where each building would like to be. A long-term goal with benchmarks on how to go about achieving that goal needs to be created at each building and at the district level. This will open the door for more collaboration and possibly encourage more distributed leadership within the administrative team as we can work together, building off each other’s strengths instead of each building working on its own. Next, I would recommend that each building evaluate its entire RTI/MTSS system, including each building’s timeline for assessments, meetings, agenda of meetings, suggested intervention resources, etc. In addition, any
major gaps that are determined need to be identified with a plan of action on how to resolve. For example, if one building is holding 15-minute benchmark meetings and another is taking an hour per grade level, a collaborative agreement needs to be determined to establish basic guidelines for suggested time as well as agenda to be discussed. Finally, each building needs to identify a growth area in order to improve its use of RTI/MTSS so GPS can move toward more of a systematic process.

**The Next Building Steps**

I have had the opportunity to implement RTI/MTSS at two buildings. The first was a preschool through first grade building with four sections of each grade level during the 2005-2008 school years. The second building was a preschool through sixth grade building with one section of each grade level. I will be entering my sixth year implementing the process in my current building, as I started this back in the 2008-09 school year. As mentioned above, there are many needed components in order to implement a successful RTI/MTSS system. My staff will continue to implement the eight core component of RTI/MTSS found within all RTI systems, as stated by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2006):

1. We can effectively teach all children.
2. Intervene early.
4. Use a problem-solving method to make decisions within a multi-tier model.
5. Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction to the extent available.
6. Monitor student progress to inform instruction.

7. Use data to make decisions.

8. Use assessment for three different purposes.

My first recommendation is to continue to sustain the collaborative culture that exists among all staff. We work very hard to keep the focus on the student, not take data personally, as well as respect the fact that we are working together to meet each student’s needs. My role as the principal is to facilitate and provide guidance where needed, but I am also a key player at the student level when we are analyzing data at benchmark or progress monitoring meetings.

My second recommendation is to continue to revise our process through continuous improvement. This can be accomplished with sustained professional development in order to stay updated on current research on MTSS as well as improved resources, strategies, assessment, etc. RTI/MTSS is a problem-solving process that needs to be continuously evaluated so students are receiving the most up-to-date academic supports.

Finally, as evidenced by cited research in this paper as well as my experience at the district and building level, it is my hope that this paper may assist other schools with their implementation of RTI/MTS.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Grandville Public Schools Response to the RTI Initiative
Grandville Public Schools
Response to the RTI Initiative

"The quality of a school as a learning community can be measured by how effectively it addresses the needs of struggling students." - Wright (2005)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Why are we considering RTI?
The Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) was signed into law by President Bush on December 3, 2004. This Federal legislation provides guidelines that schools must follow when identifying children for special education services. Currently we use a ‘discrepancy model’ to identify LD. RTI was mentioned as an alternative to the severe discrepancy model for identifying students for special education services. RTI is not a new form of eligibility criteria. Rather, it is a process that provides high quality interventions to at-risk students so that potential academic and behavioral problems are resolved before they become severe – as such, it is the exact opposite of a “wait to fail” model. At the goal of the RTI process is early identification and intervention, questions about special education eligibility do not arise until the RTI process has proven unsuccessful in resolving the child’s learning or behavior problems.

Is RTI the only option?
No, but it appears the State of Michigan has hitched their wagon to this particular model.

Is RTI used in all grades (K-12)?
Yes it can, but Grandville’s initial focus will be at grades K-3.

Is RTI a classroom, building or district model?
It can be any of these, but our recommendation is that it becomes a building model using district guidelines.

What should I do as a principal of an elementary school?
Become more knowledgeable about RTI and reading (interventions will be throughout the core). Pull together interested staff in your building to establish a Literacy Team.
Appendix B

K–1 Reading Materials Evaluation
K-1 Reading Materials Evaluation
February 12, 2008

Publisher: ___________________ Building__________

Directions: Using a five point scale with 1=Poor, 3=Average, and 5=Excellent, please answer the following questions for each series. Please remember, all series have been checked to see that they align with the state standards. We are looking at finding a series that works best for all of you. In other words, is user friendly.

1. The program adequately addresses the 'Five Big Ideas' (phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension).

2. In addition to the 'Five Big Ideas' the program adequately address areas such as: oral language, writing, listening comprehension, etc.

3. The scope & sequence is user friendly.

4. Adequate intervention activities are provided for at-risk students.

5. Adequate enrichment activities are provided for advanced students.

6. Lessons are provided for English Language Learners.

7. Instructional materials increase in difficulty as students’ skills strengthen.

8. Instruction is explicit and systematic.

9. Lessons include daily, whole group activities.

10. Lessons include daily, small group activities based on below, at, or above grade level skills.

Comments:
Appendix C

Reading Materials Committee Meeting
Guiding Questions

1. What documentation/data do we have to support a need for updated reading materials?

2. Did the program of choice, Storytown, provide instruction in the critical elements of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension?

3. What is the recommendation for the implementation schedule? Pros and cons to the options? Other options? (Y5 will use current materials)
   a. 2008-09 Kdg. Only
   b. 2009-10 Add Grade 1
   c. 2008-09 Kdg and Grade 1

4. Recommended materials for:
   a. Kdg-
   b. Grade 1-

5. Other questions
Appendix D

Memorandum to Elementary Teachers
Memorandum

To: Elementary Teachers
From: Curriculum Office

We have been working on creating a balanced assessment plan (see attached chart). MLPP has given us valuable information about student progress; however, since MLPP is primarily intended for use with struggling readers (bottom 20%), we have reduced the number of MLPP assessments to use with all students. The hope is that teachers will use as many MLPP assessments as needed with struggling readers to dig deeper. We retained a few MLPP assessments to use with all students (including those embedded in the ELA standards).

No single assessment can meet everyone’s information needs. Efforts were made to use a balanced approach to assessment by using appropriate assessments to assess student progress toward district and state standards while also providing testing data useful for the improvement of instruction.

**Purposes of Specific Assessments**

- Assessments for Curricular Standards: Formative assessments that assess standards taught and what future instruction is needed.
- DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills): The benchmark assessments are quick screening measures given to all students two or three times per year. These quick progress monitoring assessments are used for more frequent assessment of students whose performance needs to be closely monitored to ensure they are making adequate progress.
- InView Test of Cognitive Skills: Measures students’ cognitive abilities. It measures the full range of cognitive skills that are important to academic success and provides other valuable information about student aptitude such as: verbal reasoning, nonverbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning.
- MAP (Measure of Academic Progress): State-aligned, computerized, adaptive tests that accurately reflect the instructional level of each student and measure growth over time.
- MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program): Measures student achievement as compared to state standards.
- MLPP (Michigan Literacy Progress Profile): Diagnostic assessments that assist in determining appropriate instruction. Students needs will vary, thus some students will be assessed more than others.

**Purposes of Assessment (in general)**

- Screening: Assessments applied to all students three times a year to identify those students not making academic progress at expected rates.
- Progress Monitoring: Assessments used more frequently with students whose performance needs to be closely monitored to ensure they are making adequate progress.
- Diagnostic: Assessments that determine what children can and cannot do in a specific academic domain.

**Types of Assessment**

- Summative assessments (assessments “of” learning) are typically used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and services at the end of an academic year or at a pre-determined time. The goal of summative assessments is to make a judgment of student competency, after an instructional phase is complete.
- Formative assessments (assessments “for” learning) are on-going assessments, reviews, and observations in a classroom. Teachers use formative assessment to improve instructional methods and student feedback throughout the teaching and learning process.
Appendix E

Memorandum to Elementary Principals
Memorandum

To: Elementary Principals
CC: Tim Purkey
From: Curriculum Office

Re: Early Intervention (Rti) and DIBELS

Here’s a quick review of the district’s Early Intervention (Rti) initiative. Hopefully, it will help refresh our memories prior to our training next week.

Early Intervention (Rti) is made up of ‘tiers’ of instruction. Tier I includes the district’s core reading program as well as differentiated instruction by the classroom teacher. The DIBELS assessment will enable us to identify at-risk students in an efficient manner in the areas that current research has identified as being predictive of future growth in reading. It is a tool to confirm teachers’ observational data. DIBELS is a “quick & dirty” screening and that will not be used to make major decisions regarding students but to assess our curriculum (what & when) and instruction (how).

DIBELS begins as a screening/benchmark assessment which is administered three times a year (fall, winter, spring) to all students. It assists in determining whether all of the major skills are in place for a student to read on grade level by the end of third grade. We need to make sure it is being administered properly to ensure its validity.

DIBELS also offers alternative forms that can be used to progress monitor students that are receiving Tier II or Tier III intervention to see if it is effective.

Terri Metcalf, the Early Intervention Specialist from OAISD, will provide us with training and support throughout this year. We will be able to discuss the plan next week at our meeting on August 23 at 12:30 PM.
Appendix F

Response to Intervention PowerPoint Slides
Response to Intervention
Grandville Public Schools

Terri Metcalf
Early Intervention Consultant
Ottawa Area ISD
tmetcalf@oaisd.org or (616) 738-8940 ext 4112

What is RtI?

What is RtI?

- RTI versus RfI
- Early Intervention
- Three-tier model
- Problem-solving model
Appendix G

K–1 Early Intervention (RTI) Update for Administrators
K-1 Early Intervention (RtI) Update for Administrators

1. Terri Metcalf’s overview of RtI went well. There is definitely some uncertainty by staff, but the questions that staff asked Tim were very valid concerns.

2. Terri shared the following:
   - She thought the assessments memo that was sent to staff in May with district testing schedule was great.
   - She said the concerns/issues that staff raised are not outside the norm of what she has seen as a consultant across the state. In some ways she believes we are ahead of the game because we have not included staff in all of the decision making. In her experience it complicates things and makes implementation much longer if every issue needs to be discussed.
   - Her only concern was that she felt about ¼ of the total group felt that early intervention was not developmentally appropriate, but also said the irony is if we don’t focus on these early literacy skills at the appropriate time, then we are just waiting for the students to fail.

3. Next steps:
   1. Assessment teams-The teachers supported this idea. We will develop two assessment teams next week which will most likely include psychs and paras. They will administer the DIBELS to all Y5-1 students at benchmark time (Sept/Jan/May). Y5 students in mutilage and/or blended will follow the Kdg DIBELS assessment schedule.
   2. DIBELS will be administered by the testing team the second and third week of September. Terri said in most cases approximately 600 students can be assessed with DIBELS using a team of 7 people in about 4 ½ day sessions.
   3. Data will be input into the DIBELS data base which will allow us to access reports. We are not quite sure who will input this data. We’ll let you know.
   4. Terri will come back and work ½ day with Y5/K and ½ day with 1st grade to
      - Interpret reports
      - Determine grouping using data-is this a whole class issue, small group, etc.
      - What to do with small groups and/or whole groups? We’ll let you know the date.
   5. We also talked about Terri coming back later in the year to do an overview with paras on Early Intervention (RtI)

4. Other: Kdg would like to complete all of the assessments that DIBELS suggests since DIBELS is required this year to screen all K-1 students. Their feeling is if we are being required to use DIBELS, then let’s implement it the correct way. They just want to make sure we review the DIBELS implementation in the spring. We’ll confirm the DIBELS measures we will use prior to beginning testing.
Appendix H

DIBELS Assessment Teams
DIBELS Assessment Teams

Assessment Teams

Team 1
Gary Deneau
James Groeters
Paula Weber
Melinda Sheldon
Mary Elenbaas
Pegge Krepps
Sue Cope

Team 2
Jason Glarum
Andrea Morgan-Floyd
Yvonne DeVries
Elaine Schripsema
Pat Turrell
Laurie Lowry
Christy Bridle
Patti Beeker

Testing Schedule

Team 1
Monday, September 10 & Tuesday, September 11 Century Park
Thursday, September 13 East (Will not begin until 10:00 AM)
Monday, September 17 & Tuesday, September 18 Grandview

Team 2
Monday, September 10 & Tuesday, September 11 Riverbend
Monday, September 17 West
Tuesday, September 18 Central

Thursday, September 20 South (Team 1 or Team 2 TBD)

Procedures

Morning sessions will begin at 9:00 AM.
Afternoon sessions will begin at 12:45 PM.
Both sessions will end based on what works best for your building schedule.
Please designate a room with six stations including tables and two chairs as well as provide some space in between stations.
The team will work through one class at a time. There will be a runner that goes to the classes to get and return the students in groups.
We will input data and let you know how to access reports hopefully the last week of September.
Appendix I

DIBELS Grade Level Benchmark/Progress Monitoring
Meeting Agenda
DIBELS Grade Level Benchmark/Progress Monitoring Meeting Agenda

7:30-8:30 PM
Bright Beginning Room

Riverbend Meeting Norms
Honor time commitments and stay focused.
Actively listen.
Concerns are always accompanied by ideas for solutions.
Consider the perspective of others.
Challenge ideas, not people.

1. Secretary/Time Keeper
2. Norms
3. District Data-Histograms
   a. Description of data
   b. Think-Pair-Share
4. RB Data-Histograms
   a. Think-Pair-Share
5. Class Data-Class List Reports
6. Grouping
Appendix J

DIBELS Data Review PowerPoint Slides
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Data Review

Interpreting and Using DIBELSTM Data

Assess Progress Toward Outcomes DIBELS Benchmark Goals

- Initial Goal Reading: 50 words correct per minute by Winter Kindergarten
- Phonemic Segmentation: 25 words correct per minute by Spring Kindergarten
- Newcomer Word Fluency: 30 words correct with at least 15 words read by Winter First Grade

- DIBELSTM Goal Reading Fluency:
  - 60 words correct per minute by Spring First Grade
  - 70 words correct per minute by Spring Second Grade
  - 80 words correct per minute by Spring Third Grade
  - 110 words correct per minute by Spring Fourth Grade
  - 120 words correct per minute by Spring Fifth Grade
  - 125 words correct per minute by Spring Sixth Grade
Successful Grade Level Meetings
Kim St. Martin, Principal
Comstock Public Schools

Purpose
The purpose of grade level meetings is to have grade level colleagues analyze grade level, classroom, and individual student data in an effort to identify strengths, areas of weakness, and instructional strategies necessary to improve student achievement.

Types of Meetings
- Benchmark:
  - Fall, Winter, Spring
  - Summary of Effectiveness data is used during winter and spring meetings.
- Progress Monitoring: meetings that occur between the benchmark assessments

Team Members
- Principal: facilitator, person who can allocate resources
- Grade Level Teachers: provides core instruction to students, brings DIBELS data to meetings
- Reading Teacher/Reading Specialist: specializes in literacy instructional strategies, brings DIBELS reports and progress monitoring graphs for teachers
- Special Education Staff: person who specializes in intervention strategies for low performing students
- School Psychologist: data specialist & interpreter
- Title I Coordinator: participates initially until the process is solidified with the team.

Other Possible Team Members:
- Speech Pathologist
- School Counselor or Social Worker

Agendas
- Every Grade Level Meeting agenda should include the following elements:
  - Celebration
  - Critical Skills
  - Data, Data, and MORE Data
  - Adjustments (core program and/or Intervention program)
  - Planning
  - At-risk Learners

Benchmark Meetings
Purpose...
- Provide a global view of school-wide literacy program.
- Ensure critical skills are appropriately taught during appropriate times.
- Identify “gaps” in curriculum
- Action plan ways to fill the curriculum holes
- Group students according to instructional need.
Appendix L

Phonological Awareness Continuum
**Phonological Awareness Continuum**

*Simple to complex skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words in a Sentence</td>
<td>Ability to distinguish individual words in spoken sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllables</td>
<td>Ability to identify syllables in a spoken word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset-Rime/Rhyming</td>
<td>Ability to separate any sounds before the vowel sound from the rest of the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Ability to identify that a target sound is the same in different words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td>Ability to recognize that words in a set belong together and sometimes identify which one doesn't fit in the category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Ability to isolate an individual sound in a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending</td>
<td>Ability to combine phonemes to make a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmentation</td>
<td>Ability to orally break a word into individual phonemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletion</td>
<td>Ability to delete a phoneme from a word, often creating a new word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>Ability to add a sound to a new word often creating a new word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>Ability to create a new word by changing one of the phonemes of an existing word</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M

Early Intervention Meeting Agenda
Early Intervention Meeting

Agenda

In Attendance: Jason Glerum, Gary Deneau, James Grooters, Andrea Morgan-Floyd, Jessica Crampton, Michelle Carter

1. Fall DIBELS Reflections
   a. Pros
   b. Cons
   c. Changes
   d. Winter Dates

2. DIBELS Follow-ups

3. DIBELS/Other Data
   a. Classroom Application

4. Other

5.
Appendix N

Grandville Public Schools Progress Monitoring
Grade Level Meeting
1. Review Progress Monitoring Student Reports. Identify students that have three consecutive data points below the aimline or students that are hovering around the aimline.

2. Triangulate with classroom assessments and classroom observations.

3. Based on the information gained from each student, determine whether:
   a. Continue with current plan
   b. Gather additional diagnostic information
   c. Refer to SST
   d. Discontinue intervention due to successful progress
Appendix O

Intervention Resources List
## Intervention Resources List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Qty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Activities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alphabet Bingo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alphabet Treasure Hunt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alphabet Sorting Kit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alphabet Activity Wheel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alphabet Balls</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sight Words/Fluency</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read, Write &amp; Spell Sight-Word Center (Level 1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read, Write &amp; Spell Sight-Word Center (Level 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sink My Sight-Words Game (Level 1)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sink My Sight-Words Game (Level 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sight-Word Derby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sight Words Literacy Center</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Families/Fluency</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memory Match-Up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word families Literacy Center</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phonemic Awareness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrap-Around Phonemic Awareness Game</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Treasure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Treasure</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phonics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lily Pad Leap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonics Literacy Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working With Words Literacy Center</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix P

Early Intervention Meeting Minutes
Early Intervention Meeting
May 30, 2008
Minutes

In Attendance: Jason Gierun, James Grooters, Chuck Shultz, Ann DeYoung, Jean Carroll-Hamilton, Tom Trout, Dave Martini, Michelle Carter

District DIBELS Teams

- Continue the teams for 2008-09.
- Para-professional representation from all buildings.
- Training Review prior to starting the test.
- Psychologist oversee the DIBELS Teams.
- Psychologist work together to complete integrity checks.
- Proposed Schedule-Weeks of:
  - September 8, 2008
  - January 12, 2009
  - May 4, 2009

Group Thoughts for 2008-09

- Principals agreed we will hold Benchmark Grade Level Meetings within two weeks of DIBELS testing to discuss data and determine if core instruction is working and who needs intervention. We would like to meet in August to share prior agendas/ideas on how each of us ran our meetings this past year.
- Each building should share compiled district data to point out the 'big picture' before moving into their own data during the Benchmark Grade Level Meetings.
- Grade Level Meetings
  - Devote a portion of each meeting at K-1 to Early Intervention, DIBELS, Storytown
  - Grade level liaisons meet with the psychs to talk about data and liaisons could share at grade levels
- Release time for Kindergarten teachers to discuss/plan Storytime (Buildings agree to be responsible for sub costs)
- Storytown Implementation-We agreed
  - Based on the building, as much support as possible will be provided to successfully implement the program-we don't want to insert a time, because who offers the support could vary by building
  - Teachers will follow the program guidelines as intended so we can accurately determine if the core program is working
  - Principals want a 'Walk-thru chart' on what to look for in the classrooms when observing Storytown. Michelle will investigate.
- E-mail your Kdg/1st student counts for 2008-09 to Deb Ghent and she will order DIBELS materials.
- Using DIBELS in Second Grade is not required. This will not be part of the district testing team for 2008-09. If you want materials ordered, e-mail Deb Ghent. You are responsible for costs.
Appendix Q

MEAP Comprehensive Report – ISD