

The Impacts of a Systematic Response to Intervention

California State University at Channel Islands

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Masters of Arts

By
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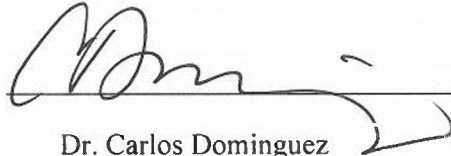
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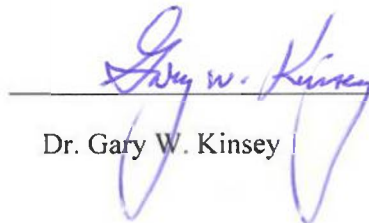
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The Impacts of a Systematic Response to Intervention
Title of Item

The design and implementation of a systematic approach
3 to 5 keywords or phrases to describe the item to intervention

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to study how a systematic approach to intervention impacts students who have been identified as not meeting reading benchmarks and/or identified as at-risk in the area of reading. This action research project examined how an individual school designed a systematic procedure used by a team of teachers to gather quantitative data to address the effectiveness of a systematic approach to intervention and determine its impact on student achievement. Universal Assessments were administered to identify students not meeting grade level benchmarks in the area of reading. Teachers worked in a collective and collaborative manner to develop specific targeted instructional plans based on each individual student's need. Student progress was monitored in an ongoing timely manner and data was analyzed to determine appropriate actions of interventions and support for each struggling student. Implementing a systematic approach to intervention had positive impacts on students struggling in the areas of reading in grades kindergarten through sixth. In a period of three months, there was a 42% decrease in the number of students identified as not meeting reading benchmarks and/or identified as at-risk in the area of reading. Students demonstrated adequate growth in the area of reading, met reading intervention goals, and achieved success on specific individual SMART goals. The results of this project demonstrated how creating a framework and intervention system that monitored student learning on a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessments and providing a plan for struggling students had a positive impact on student achievement in the area of reading.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of the Problem	6
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework	14
Chapter 3: Process of Development	26
Chapter 4: Implementation	36
Chapter 5: Impact	46
Chapter 6: Next Steps	56
References	59
Appendix A: 3 Year Implementation Plan	61
Appendix B: IPT Form	64

Chapter 1

Statement of Problem

According to the President's Commission of Excellence in Special Education (2002), eighty percent of students who are identified as having specific learning disabilities were because the students were reading several levels below grade level. Approximately 10 percent of special education students in the United States fall into the categories of either sensory impaired or physically and neurologically disabled. The remaining 90 percent of students in special education are categorized as having developmental disabilities such as specific learning disabilities (SLD), speech and language impairment, emotional disturbance, or developmental delays. Research shows almost half of the students identified as eligible for special education fall into the category of specific learning disability (President's Commission of Excellence in Special Education, 2002). The number of students identified as SLD has grown by more than 300 percent in the last quarter century (DuFour, DeFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010). For the past thirty years, schools have used the discrepancy model to determine whether children qualified for special education services. Within the last decade there has been much critique about the discrepancy model and its effectiveness in accurately identifying students with learning disabilities.

The discrepancy model measures how far a student has fallen behind his or her peers in the area of reading and/or math. Under the discrepancy model, a child must fall behind by a year, a year and a half, or even two years, to qualify for special education (Bradley, Danielson, & Hallahan, 2002). The discrepancy model has been considered a "wait-to-fail" model based on the fact that it requires schools to demonstrate a discrepancy between the child's actual achievement

and his or her ability to learn, as determined by a formal administration or measures of intelligence, typically an IQ test. The discrepancy model waits for children to fail before providing services instead of a model based on prevention and intervention (DuFour et al., 2010). Based on this sense of “allowing students to fail,” the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education enacted into law the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in December of 2004. Under IDEIA, schools are now required to implement a systematic response to intervention (RtI) to meet the needs of all students (DuFour et al., 2010).

Over the last several years, all 50 states have progressed with the development and implementation of response-to-intervention (RtI) models. According to the research conducted by Dufour and colleagues (2010), the National Center on Response to Intervention states the purpose of RtI is to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, identify students with learning or behavioral problems, and ensure that they receive appropriate instruction and related supports. They go on to say, the response to intervention should include three levels, or tiers. In the first tier, all students have access to research-based instruction in the core academic curriculum and the classroom teacher on a timely and frequent basis monitors the learning of each student. Student performance is monitored through a process of universal screening through formal and informal assessments. In the second tier, students who are not successful in the first tier are given additional time and targeted support in their specific area of need. If students continue to struggle, they continue to the third tier where they receive the most intensive interventions. As a result, students should not be considered for special education until there is evidence that the RtI tiers had not resolved their issues (DuFour et al., 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project was to develop a systematic approach to identifying and monitoring the progress of students who are not meeting reading benchmarks and/or have been identified as at-risk in the area of reading for elementary age students. It was also the goal of this project to determine if a systematic approach to intervention would help close the achievement gap and decrease the number of elementary students not meeting reading benchmarks by the end of the school year.

Research Questions

The purpose of this project was to determine if a systematic approach to intervention would help close the achievement gap and decrease the number of students assessed for learning disabilities in a K-6 setting.

1. How may a systematic approach to intervention decrease the number of students identified to be assessed for learning disabilities?
2. When student learning is monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessment, how may the number of students not meeting reading benchmarks in the beginning of the school year be impacted by the end of the school year?

Significance

Oak Grove Elementary School, located in southern California, transitioned from the use of the discrepancy model to the use of the Response to Intervention (RtI) model when identifying students for learning disabilities. For the past two years, Oak Grove Elementary moved toward

implementing the RtI model but had struggled due to the fact that there was no systematic approach in place. Oak Grove's Student Study Team (SST) process mirrored the "wait-to-fail" approach of the discrepancy model. Typically, teachers brought the names of struggling students to the SST and students were placed on a "watch list." From there, the SST offered suggestions and possible strategies teachers could implement with struggling students but no data was collected and monitored to check the progress of students. Throughout the year, teachers decided when they would come back to the SST to discuss and review their concerns about struggling students. Year after year, the same students were brought to SST and remained on the watch list with no evidence of growth or support. Oak Grove's system was based on an individualistic and random approach that lacked a plan for monitoring and responding to struggling students' needs in a timely manner. In the 2013-2014 school year, Oak Grove started the year with 42 students on the watch list and ended the school year with the same 42 students on the watch list. The model had no signs of success or significant impact for the students of Oak Grove.

Based on the lack of success, Oak Grove's SST identified a significant need for a systematic approach to intervention. The members of the team worked with the site administrator to develop an Intervention Progress Team (IPT) comprised of general education teachers, special education teachers, a psychologist, and a Specialized Academic Instructor to work collaboratively on developing and designing a systematic response to intervention. The goal of this project was to take a close look at the essential components of RtI and other systematic approaches that have been proven effective in supporting student literacy and closing the achievement gap. The goal was to create a model where the entire staff has a collective responsibility to ensure student learning is monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessments and providing a plan for struggling students (DuFour et al., 2010).

Setting

The research project focused on kindergarten through sixth grade students at Oak Grove Elementary School in the Hidden Hills Unified School District, located in Southern California. There are 429 students enrolled at Oak Grove in grades K-6. Oak Grove is reflective of a typical elementary school in Hidden Hills. Oak Grove's enrollment includes 14.9% who receive special education services, 12.6% English learners, and 35.4% of the students are enrolled in the Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program. A further disaggregation of the student population is described in Table 1 on the following page.

The school was facing the challenge of transitioning from the use of the discrepancy model to the use of the RtI model when identifying students with learning disabilities and implementing a systematic approach to intervention. Creating a framework and intervention system that monitored student learning on a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessments and providing a plan for struggling students may assist Oak Grove face these challenges.

Table 1 % of Students by Ethnicity/Grade Level			
Ethnic Group	%	Grade Level	#
African American	0.2%	Kindergarten	75
American Indian or		First Grade	65
Alaskan Native	0.2%	Second Grade	70
Asian	8.2%	Third Grade	59
Filipino	0.7%	Fourth Grade	70
Hawaiian or Pacific		Fifth Grade	70
Islander		Sixth Grade	20
Hispanic or Latino	33.8%		
White (not Hispanic)	52.0%		
Two or More Races	4.9%	Total Enrollment	429

Definitions of Terms

Response to Intervention (RTI): In education, response to intervention (commonly abbreviated RTI or RtI) is a method of academic intervention used in the United States to provide early, systematic assistance to children who are having difficulty learning

Student Study Team (SST): A positive school-wide early identification and early intervention process. Working as a team, the student, parent, teachers and school administrator identify the student's strengths and assets upon which an improvement plan can be designed.

Intervention Progress Team (IPT): Working as a team, teachers and school administrators assess student's academic performance through progress monitoring, to quantify a student rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

Professional Learning Community (PLC): An extended learning opportunity to foster collaborative learning among colleagues within a particular work environment or field. It is often used in schools as a way to organize teachers into working groups.

SMART Goals: A comprehensive definition for goal setting: **S** - specific, significant, stretching, **M** - measurable, meaningful, motivational, **A** - agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented, **R** - realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented, **T** - time-based, time-bound, timely, tangible, trackable.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): Specific Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia

Discrepancy Model: The IQ-achievement discrepancy model assesses whether there is a significant difference between a student's scores on a test of general intelligence (e.g., an IQ test such as the *WISC-IV*) and scores obtained on an achievement test (e.g., the *Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test*). The IQ-achievement discrepancy model is the approach traditionally used to identify children with learning disabilities.

Overview of the Methodology

The study employed an action research design of a systematic procedure used by a team of teachers to gather quantitative data to address the effectiveness of a systematic approach to intervention on students not meeting grade level reading benchmarks based on universal assessments given three times a year and progress monitored every six weeks (Cresswell, 2012). Students were given given Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Result-Orientated, Timely (SMART) goals while receiving extra instruction from the classroom teacher and in some cases an intervention specialist.

Universal assessments were administered three times a year to gather quantitative data on grade level reading benchmarks. Data was collected every six weeks to monitor the progress of individual student goals. Pre/post formative and summative assessment data was compared to measure student progress and effectiveness.

Limitations

The research took place in different classrooms on school campus. Teacher affects and classroom climates may have possibly affected the final study results. The study took place over a period of 7 months. Students leaving or dropping out of the interventions may have affected the study, results as well. Due to the fact that it was a small sample size, this study design was valid to the school site but not valid on a larger scale.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

During the 2014-2015 academic school year, Oak Grove Elementary School was in a transition phase from using the discrepancy model to using the response to intervention (RtI) model when identifying struggling students and students with learning disabilities. According to the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002), under the discrepancy model the "lack of consistently applied criteria for specific learning disabilities (SLD) makes it possible to diagnose almost any low or under achieving child as SLD" (p. 24). The commission believes that many students placed in special education were the result of poor instruction and not students with disabilities. The commission claims that eighty percent of students identified as having specific learning disability is "simply because they haven't learned how to read" (p.3). The purpose of this study was to develop a systematic response to intervention that identifies and monitors the progress of students struggling in the area of reading and decreases the number of students assessed for learning disabilities.

Response to intervention is a strategy that refers to a comprehensive school wide framework through which students at-risk for reading difficulties are identified and provided with evidence-based and data-informed instruction before they fall farther behind their peers (Denton, 2012). Research shows that long-term reading failure can be prevented when at-risk children are identified and intervention is put into place early on (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Torgesen, 2000). The goal of this study was to implement and use a systematic approach that was effective in helping struggling students close the academic achievement gap. This Literature Review focuses on the systematic structure of response to intervention and professional learning communities and

demonstrates how they tie together and create a system of interventions that are intensive and directive.

Review Procedure

A preliminary literature search through Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) using the John Spoor Broome Internet library connection for California State University, Channel Islands was conducted. The search included the keywords *Response to Intervention*, *Reading Intervention*, *Reading Difficulties*, *Emergent Literacy*, *Early Literacy*, *Identification*, *Tier 1*, and *Tier 2 interventions*. Additionally, the reference list in the articles found in the search helped to locate additional sources.

Literature Review

Identification of Students with Reading Difficulties. Based on the definition by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD), RtI can be defined as student-centered assessment models that use problem-solving and research-based methods to identify and address learning difficulties in children (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006). Risk is first assessed through universal screening assessments. Two general approaches are used for universal screening. One approach, referred by Jenkins, Hudson, and Johnson (2007) as the “direct route,” involves a one-time screening in which brief assessments are administered at the beginning of the school year, and children performing below a norm-referenced cut point or a criterion-referenced benchmark are eligible for preventative Tier 2 interventions. The second approach (Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007) involves screening for students “potentially at risk” followed by a progress monitoring period in which students have an opportunity to respond to Tier 1 instruction. Researchers have found that many children are misdiagnosed as having reading difficulties, when in fact they have had poor reading instruction opportunities at an early

age. They have found there is a need for further research on identifying optimal approaches to universal screening (Jenkins et al., 2007).

Response to Intervention. Since 2004, there has been a shift in educational policy in its proposal for response to intervention initiatives. After thirty years of using the discrepancy model to determine whether a struggling student would receive extra support through special education, a new educational policy was signed into law by President George Bush in December of 2004. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 no longer required schools to identify a severe discrepancy between academic achievement and intellectual ability to qualify a child with a specific learning disability for special education. An alternative approach for identifying students with learning disabilities has come to the forefront since the signing of IDEIA. Response to intervention (RtI) is the system that shifts the responsibility for helping all students become successful from the special education teachers and curriculum to the entire staff, including special and regular education teachers and curriculum (Buffman, Mattos, & Weber, 2009). Schools are now called upon to implement a systematic response to intervention to meet the needs of all students. RtI is a multi-tiered intervention framework where students are given evidence-based reading instruction and supplemental interventions when needed. Under RtI, schools will consider most students for special education services only after the students have not responded to a series of timely, systematic, increasingly focused, and intensive research-based interventions, which are the responsibility of regular education program (Buffman et al., 2009). This is a major shift from the “wait-to-fail” method of the discrepancy model. The response to intervention framework provides a more systematic, direct, and timely approach for struggling students.

According to Richard DuFour and Robert Marzano (2011), most schools' response to students who struggle largely depends on the randomness of the teacher whom they are assigned. While some teachers allow students to retake quizzes, contact parents to keep them informed, and give students extra time and support, there are other teachers who do not provide any extra supports or time to students. DuFour and Marzano (2011) state, "It is a brutal fact in education that there is a disconnect between a commitment to ensure all students learn and the lack of a thoughtful, coordinated, and systematic response when students do not learn" (p.173). With IDEIA, schools are called to create a more structured and timely approach to respond to students who are struggling and having difficulties. RtI represents a more effective way of educating all children. It is not a program but rather a system for meeting all students' needs that requires a more efficient use of resources, a research-based foundation, and a team approach to problem-solving on a student by student basis (Buffman et al., 2009). Due to the fact that RtI is not a program but a system, schools and districts are responsible for developing and implementing a system that takes collective responsibility and works collaboratively to ensure learning of all students. RtI systems are characterized by 1) instruction and programs matched to student needs, often in tiers of instruction that differ in frequency and intensity, and 2) frequent progress monitoring to examine student progress and to inform teachers' adjustments to instructional plans (Buffman et al., 2009).

A well-designed RtI system considers students for special education only after a student has received systemic interventions and has not shown progress. The framework is based on a tiered system of interventions that provide extra time and increasingly intensive levels of support for students who continue to struggle. The first level, Tier 1, commonly called the core level, refers to the schools initial instructional practices. Tier 1 instruction ensures all kids are receiving

research-based core programs with the use of class-wide formative data to identify emerging areas of need (Buffman et al., 2009). During this time, students must be given ample opportunities to master power standards through a review of information that was previously taught and be given a flexible combination of remediation and enrichment, based on formative assessment data.

Buffman, Mattos, and Weber (2009) suggest before schools prescribe Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions for students, classroom teachers must differentiate instruction for small groups of students in the classroom several times a week. Other research suggests that there may be a benefit of the application of evidence-based practices that are used at higher tier levels in Tier 1 (Jones, Yssel, & Grant, 2012). The researchers go on to propose nesting, or embedding, research based strategies in Tier 1 differentiated instruction program to enhance overall reading skills and scores, beginning at the most basic core level. Embedding research based strategies into Tier 1 may equip students with the needed literacy skills and prevent referrals to Tier 2. More research is needed on the effects of embedding evidence based intervention models into differentiated instruction at the Tier 1 level (Jones et al., 2012).

A highly effective Tier 1 core program is the foundation of a response to intervention model, but it is impossible for differentiated core instruction alone to meet the needs of every child. When students do not respond to Tier 1 instruction and have been systematically identified as in need of additional time and support students are placed in Tier 2 interventions, commonly called supplemental interventions. According to Buffman, Mattos, and Weber (2009), a successful Tier 1 program should meet the needs of 75% of the student body, and an effective Tier 2 supplemental intervention will meet the needs of at least 15% more (p. 89). Tier 2 interventions are typically provided by a general education teacher who provides regularly

scheduled small group instruction within the regular classroom, a reading specialist or certified teacher who delivers small group lessons within a regular classroom or setting outside of the classroom, or a paraprofessional who received training and coaching from an experienced teacher (Gilbert, Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, Bouton, Barquero, & Cho, 2013). A critical component to the intervention system is the way in which schools identify and place students into interventions. If a school does not accurately identify every student in need of intervention, determine why each student is struggling, and place each student in the proper intervention the schools efforts to design effective interventions will be unsuccessful (Buffman et al., 2009). Schools must carefully design a system that will address the identification process.

When designing a RtI system the following elements must be considered 1) who needs to be a part of the collaborative, problem solving team that will identify students in need of additional time and support, 2) how often will this team meet, 3) what criteria and data will the team need to make informed, timely, and targeted decisions about each student, and 4) how will the team monitor each student's progress (Buffman et al., 2009). Once students have been identified as needing more support, there must be a determination of what specific targeted instruction is needed. In a successful RtI system there are a variety of supplemental interventions to meet diverse needs. The more targeted the intervention the more effective it will be (Buffman et al., 2009). At the Tier 2 level, it is not only important to identify the specific targeted intervention needed but it is essential to monitor student progress frequently. Student's progress can be monitored through the use of student assessment data, universal screening, and program monitoring data. The RtI model is designed to be a fluid structure. Students have the opportunity to move in and out of tiers based on individual need. Once a student shows growth and progress on specific areas of need they may move back into Tier 1 instruction. However, when a child

does not respond to the Tier 2 interventions, he or she may need the interventions provided at Tier 3.

Students who receive Tier 1 core instruction and Tier 2 supplemental interventions and still continue to struggle will be placed in Tier 3 intensive interventions. Tier 3 interventions generally last 12-18 weeks and serve no more than 5-10% of the student population (Buffman et al., 2009). Tier 3 interventions are targeted to address very specific areas of deficiency for individual students, differing from Tier 2 interventions by the frequency of intervention, the duration, and the progress monitoring requirements (DuFour et al., 2010). Tier 3 interventions are typically conducted one-on-one or with no more than a 3:1 student-teacher ratio. At this intensive level many students require daily interventions of an hour or more and their progress should be monitored at least twice each week (Buffman et al., 2009). With monitoring student's progress frequently schools can determine if students have made enough progress to return to Tier 2, need more Tier 3 intensive instruction, or may have a need for more support offered by special education. A thoughtful, designed RtI helps ensure schools meet all students learning needs and that students who are experiencing difficulty receive systematic interventions (Buffman et al., 2009).

Professional Learning Community. Richard DuFour and Robert Marzano (2011) point out with the recent raise in academic standards, teachers and administrators are expected to meet unprecedented standards while serving an increasing number of students who historically have struggled to find success in traditional schools (p. 5). With educational gaps and high demands in education, there is a need for new strategies or structure plans to help schools improve. DuFour and Marzano (2011) state schools can only be as good as the people within them and must utilize strategies that result in more good teaching in more classrooms more of the time. They go on to

say, the best strategy for improving schools is developing the collective capacity of educators to function as members of a professional learning community (PLC). A professional learning community is a concept based on the premise that if students are to learn at higher levels, processes must be in place to ensure ongoing job-embedded learning of all adults who serve them. It is not a program, but instead an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively to achieve better results for the students they serve (DuFour et al., 2011). The PLC concept can be simplified into 3 big ideas. The first of the big ideas is that the fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure that all students learn rather than to see to it that all students are taught. The next big idea of a PLC is that helping all students learn requires a collaborative culture and a collective effort. The third, and last big idea of a PLC, is that educators must be results oriented in order to know if students are learning and to respond appropriately to their needs (DuFour et al., 2010). Implementing the big ideas of a PLC will unite educators to a shared purpose, common goal, and clear direction.

According to DuFour and Marzano (2011), the primary purpose to become a PLC is to impact and improve teaching and student learning, as well as, develop an understanding that the emphasis placed on student learning does not diminish the importance of teaching. The first big idea of a PLC is what drives the works of schools. It focuses on the fundamental purpose that all students learn rather than all students are taught. In order to bring this emphasis of learning to life, educators focus their effort on these four critical questions: 1) What is it we want all students to learn, 2) How will we know when each student has learned, 3) How will we respond when students experience difficulty in their learning, and 4) How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient? (DuFour et al., 2010). Focusing on these critical questions helps educators develop a shared vision and a purpose of learning for all. DuFour and

Marzano (2011) point out, the four critical questions establish specific, measurable goals that serve as targets and timelines that monitor progress, as well as, align the practice and procedure of a school with the fundamental purpose of learning for all students. They believe the shared purpose, clear direction, collective commitment, and specific indicators of progress bind the members and represent the very foundation of a PLC (p.8).

The primary reason to become a PLC is to impact and improve teaching. In order to help all students learn, it requires teachers to work collaboratively in a collective effort to meet the needs of each student. To bring the second big idea of a PLC to life, DuFour and Marzano (2011) believe educators must be organized into meaningful collaborative teams in which members work interdependently to achieve common goals they are held accountable for. They believe regular time for collaboration must be embedded into the routine of the school and educators are made clear on the purpose and priorities of their collaboration (p. 24). Teachers must work collaboratively to study the curriculum, agree on the priorities with the curriculum, clarify how the curriculum translates into student knowledge, establish pacing guides, and commit to one another to teach the agreed-upon curriculum (DuFour et al., 2011). In a PLC, educators are committed to helping students acquire the same skills and knowledge regardless of which teacher they are assigned. There must be a shift in focus from the assumption that “these are my kids and those are your kids” to the assumption that “these are our kids” (DuFour et al., 2010).

To become an effective PLC, educators must ensure all students learn at a high level, work collaboratively in a collective effort, and create a results orientation. Educators must constantly gather evidence of student learning and use that evidence to inform and improve their professional practice (DuFour et al., 2010). The third big idea of a PLC, emphasizes that every member of the organization works collaboratively to gather and analyze evidence of student

learning on a regular basis to inform and improve the professional practice. Each member works collaboratively to achieve SMART goals that are strategically aligned with school goals, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time bound. Evidence of student learning is used on a regular basis to identify specific needs of individual students and creates a process to respond to students by name and need as opposed to a general observation of all student achievement (DuFour et al., 2011). Collaborative teams in a PLC monitor student learning in a systematic fashion. Common assessments are given, and play an important role in monitoring student progress. Members of the team analyze the results to determine appropriate actions they can take in the classroom and to identify students who require additional support through the school's system of intervention. Common assessments provide focused data and optimize instructional effectiveness. In a PLC, there is a shift in approach to assessments by viewing them as snapshots taken at a point in time of a student's progress toward a specific goal, as opposed to, viewing assessments as an absolute measure of a student's proficiency (DuFour et al. 2011). Creating a result orientation will help schools monitor their effectiveness in helping all students learn.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002), the discrepancy model lacks consistently applied criteria and makes it possible to diagnose almost any low or underachieving child as having a specific learning disability. These findings support the need for a more systematic approach to identifying students for Special Education. The President's Commission (2002) goes on to say, that many students placed in Special Education were the result of poor instruction and not the result of a disability. They state that eighty percent of students identified as having a specific learning disability are simply

because they haven't learned how to read (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). Research also goes on to show, long-term reading failure can be prevented when at risk children are identified and interventions are put into place early (Snow et al., 1998). Since 2004, there has been a shift in educational policy in its proposal for response to intervention initiatives. Under RtI, schools will consider most students for special education services only after the students have not responded to a series of timely, systematic, increasingly focused, and intensive research-based interventions (Buffman et al., 2009). Based on the findings of the literature review, a systematic approach to intervention is necessary to support and meet the needs of all students and will impact the number of students identified to be assessed for learning disabilities.

Since 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), has called upon schools to implement a systematic response to intervention. Response to intervention is a strategy that refers to a comprehensive school wide framework through which students at risk for reading difficulties are identified and provided with evidence-based and data-informed instruction before they fall farther behind their peers (Denton, 2012). The research in this literature review reflect how RtI and PLC can be successful systems that provide a series of timely, systematic, increasingly focused, and intensive instruction and interventions within the regular education program. Both the RtI and PLC systems outline the importance of high quality initial instruction, evidence of student learning, frequent progress monitoring, taking a collective responsibility for each student's learning, and working collaboratively to ensure that learning. The findings of the literature review support the purpose for this project in developing a systematic approach to identifying and monitoring the progress of students who are not meeting

reading benchmarks and/or have been identified as at risk in the area of reading. The following chapters of the proposal outline the process that was taken to develop and implement the project.

Chapter 3

Developing a Plan

The purpose of this project was to develop a systematic approach to identifying and monitoring the progress of students who are not meeting reading benchmarks and/or have been identified as at risk in the area of reading. The goal was to create a model where the entire staff has a collective responsibility to ensure student learning is monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessments and providing a plan for struggling students (DuFour et al., 2010).

According to Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, and Wallace (2007), when developing a plan it is essential to have an implementation framework that provides a conceptual guide to utilizing effective implementation practices. Implementation is a process that occurs in stages that are purposeful and described in detail. The Stages of Implementation are Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation (Fixsen et al., 2007). This chapter will outline the process Oak Grove Elementary School used during the Exploration and Installation Stages of Implementation.

Exploration Stage

Fixsen and colleagues (2007) refer to the first stage of developing a plan as “exploration.” This stage begins with pre-contemplation. Often one, or a small group, of staff members learn about an idea or strategy at a conference or through discussions with other professionals and begin gathering information and deciding whether, or in what way, to implement it. Typically, a school begins by assembling a small team to do the early information gathering and to build buy-in. Often the team begins gathering more information by attending

workshops or conferences, reading and sharing articles and books, and possibly visiting another school that is further along in the implementation process. At this point, the team moves from information gathering to information dissemination. The focus of the dissemination stage is to provide an overview and begin building awareness among the entire staff. During the exploration stage, the team needs to determine the pacing and timing of the rollout and develop a plan that details the rollout schedule (Fixsen et al., 2007). At this point, members of the staff are in stages of learning, planning, and discussing.

In December of 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) was a new policy signed into law by President George Bush. This new policy no longer required schools to identify a severe discrepancy between academic achievement and intellectual ability to qualify a child with a specific learning disability for special education. Based on the shift in educational policy and its proposal for response to intervention initiatives, members of Oak Grove's SST attended several different conferences and workshops on RtI and the benefits of a systematic approach to intervention. Attending conferences and learning about the impacts and benefits of a systematic approach, initiated members of the SST to want to explore making a shift from using the discrepancy model to using a response to intervention model. Members of the team gathered information on RtI, researched the impacts of a systematic approach, and attended more conferences about RtI.

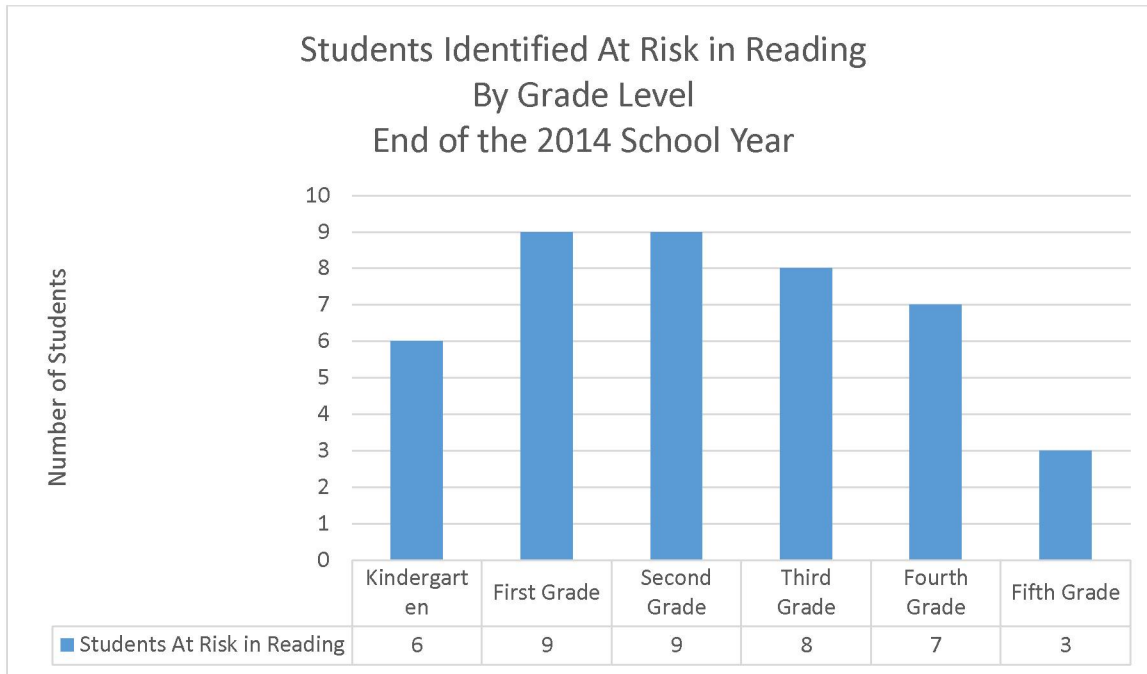
Building Support

Building support for the implementation of a new program or change initiative must first occur at the administrative level then trickle down to a majority of staff. Educators are receptive to change when they understand the need for change and they believe they possess the skills necessary or have the support for acquiring the skills necessary to implement the change (Fixsen

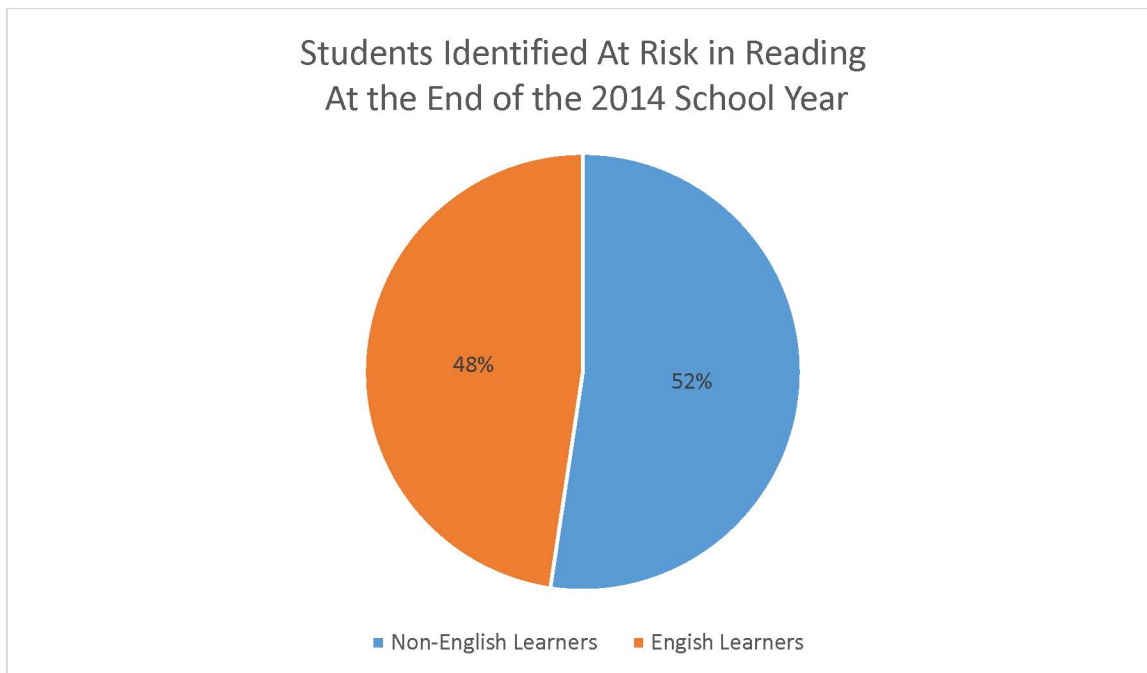
et al., 2007). Developing an understanding of a need for change depends on two key things: information dissemination and the interpretation of school-based data.

Information dissemination. The focus of the dissemination stage is to begin building awareness among the entire staff. Oak Grove's site administrator and SST members shared information with staff about the RtI model and the benefits of a systematic approach to intervention at staff, grade level, and leadership meetings over a period of three months. They determined the timing and pacing of the rollout and developed a three year implementation plan (For a review of the three year implementation plan, see Appendix A).

Needs analysis. A needs analysis allows the team to articulate the motivation for implementing a new program or change initiative. One important step is to interpret and analyze school-based data. The site administrator and SST analyzed school-wide data to determine if there was a need for a more systematic approach to intervention. In the 2013-2014 school year, 42 students were identified at the beginning of the year as not meeting grade level benchmarks in the area of reading. By the end of the year, the same 42 students were identified as not meeting grade level benchmarks in the area of reading. This data shows there was no improvement in the area of reading for these identified students and caught the attention of the SST. The following graph shows the number of students identified at risk by grade level at the end of the 2014 school year.



The SST members decided to analyze the data a little further and looked at how many students identified were English Language Learners. The following graph shows that almost half of the students identified as at risk in reading were identified as English Language Learners.



This prompted the SST members to analyze data a little further. The team looked at the most current state testing data. The data shows over the past three years Oak Grove Elementary Schools state testing scores have dropped. The team analyzed the data and realized all but one of the identified subgroups at Oak Grove have experienced severe decline in the achievement gap. The most significant decline occurred in the students with disabilities subgroup. The team realized a different approach and new strategy was needed. The following table shows the results of the significant decline in each of Oak Grove's subgroups.

API Achievement Gap Analysis

	2010-2011	2011-2012	+ or -	Achievement Gap	2012-2013	+ or -	Achievement Gap
All	891	894	3		878	-16	
Hispanic	851	853	2	-41	816	-37	-62
White	872	902	30	8	898	-4	20
Economically Disadvantaged	828	837	9	-57	816	-21	-62
English Learners	840	865	25	-29	837	-28	-41
Students with Disabilities	819	800	-19	-94	710	-90	-168

Based on the data findings, Oak Grove's SST members were determined to implement a new approach to intervention that would support all students and create a model where the entire staff has a collective responsibility to ensure student learning is monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessments and providing a plan for struggling students (Dufour et al., 2010)

Installation Stage

Based on the data analysis, Oak Grove's site administrator and SST determined there was a need for a systematic approach to intervention. The team moved forward with planning, developing a team, and designing a system. The team transitioned from the exploration stage into the installation stage of implementation. According to Fixsen and colleagues (2007), this stage is often referred to as the "start-up" stage and may take between 2 and 6 months. The installation stage begins when the decision is made to implement the plan. Schools must plan how they will accomplish the new practice without just launching into it and hoping to figure it out along the way. The function of the installation stage is to acquire the resources needed to do the work ahead. Selecting staff, identifying sources for training, assuring access to materials and equipment, and providing initial training to staff are the resources needed to be in place before the work can be done effectively (Fixsen et al., 2007). Teams must plan and design a system by making decisions about who, when, where, and what the meaning of the group will encompass. Getting buy-in and team building is a critical component of this stage. Carefully selecting the committee and ensuring involvement from the beginning helps build consensus and buy-in (Fixsen et al., 2007).

Team Building. Getting buy-in from staff members and identifying key influencers and team members is a crucial component to the beginning stages of plan development. Oak Grove's SST members decided it was critical to develop an intervention progress team (IPT) to work collaboratively to ensure the learning of all students. The site administrator and SST developed an intervention progress team (IPT) consisting of general and special education staff members, based on the research findings, that response to intervention is a movement that shifts the responsibility for helping all students become successful from the special education teachers and

curriculum to the entire staff. (Buffman et al., 2009). The team modeled the RtI framework of developing a system for meeting all students' needs that requires a more efficient use of resources, a research-based foundation, and a team approach to problem-solving on a student by student basis (Buffman et al., 2009). Staff members who served as key influencers and shared an interest in the implementation of a systematic approach to intervention were placed on the intervention progress team.

System Design. Once the members of the team were identified they worked collaboratively to design the IPT system. The team followed Buffman and colleagues (2009) system design. A critical component to the intervention system is the way in which schools identify and place students into interventions. If a school does not accurately identify every student in need of intervention, determine why each student is struggling, and place each student in the proper intervention the schools efforts to design effective interventions will be unsuccessful (Buffman et al., 2009). When designing a system the following elements must be considered 1) who needs to be a part of the collaborative, problem solving team that will identify students in need of additional time and support, 2) how often will this team meet, 3) what criteria and data will the team need to make informed, timely, and targeted decisions about each student, and 4) how will the team monitor each student's progress (Buffman et al., 2009). The way in which schools identify and place students into interventions is a critical component to the system.

In the early stages of development, the IPT met 3 times a week for the first two weeks to develop the purpose, establish the roles and responsibilities of the team members, and develop the process and procedures of the system.

Purpose. The IPT members identified the purpose of the system was to monitor and analyze the progress of students who are not meeting grade level benchmarks in the area of reading.

Roles and responsibilities of team members. Dufour and Marzano (2011) state schools can only be as good as the people within them and must utilize strategies that result in more good teaching in more classrooms more of the time. They go on to say, the best strategy for improving schools is developing the collective capacity of educators to function as members of a professional learning community (PLC). The IPT modeled the philosophy of a PLC when developing the roles and responsibilities of each team member.

Psychologist. Review student information data during the meetings. Provide information on the process of testing/ assessing students for learning disabilities to the teachers. Assist in developing goals for students.

Facilitator. Help a group of people understand their common objectives and assist them to plan to achieve without taking a particular position in the discussion. Help the group come to a consensus on any disagreements that preexist or emerge during the meeting. Help keep the meeting on topic and flowing smoothly.

Meeting Coordinator. Develop and maintain the calendar. Set the meeting schedule and provide copies to the team monthly. Email teachers about meeting dates and paperwork deadlines. Coordinate and review schedule with Secretarial Manager on follow up meetings.

Organizational Specialist. Provide all paperwork to the teachers (student forms and meeting forms). Bring the CUMS to the meetings. Write meeting notes.

Collaboration Specialist. Follow up with teachers to make sure they receive meeting notes, materials, and individual student goals. Provide teacher support when needed.

Communicate questions and needs between the teachers and the team. Monitor teacher progress and needs every 2-3 weeks.

Secretarial Manager. Write notes during meetings and provide a copy of the notes to all members of the team and the teachers. Write the Individual student plan. Create and maintain the IPT binder. Collaborate with meeting coordinator to verify calendar and follow up meetings.

Data Analyst. Create graphs based on data to indicate student progress on individual goals over an extended period of time. Report and provide the findings and patterns to the IPT team and teacher.

Process and procedure of the system. Once students have been identified as needing more support there must be a determination of what specific targeted instruction is needed. A thoughtful design helps ensure schools meet all students learning needs and that students who are experiencing difficulty receive systematic interventions (Buffman et al., 2009). Oak Grove's IPT members developed a process and goals that mirror the RtI system and framework. The team developed the following process:

1. Universal Assessments in the area of reading would be given school-wide three times a year.
2. Students would be monitored by the IPT if they were not meeting grade level benchmarks on the universal assessments, not meeting grade level curriculum assessments in the area of reading, and teacher and/or parents were concerned about student's progress in the area of reading.
3. IPT would analyze data to determine specific areas of need.

4. IPT would collaborate with the teacher to set six week SMART goals, determine differentiated instruction strategies that were needed, and identify the specific targeted interventions needed.
5. The IPT and classroom teacher would monitor the students' progress every six weeks, analyze data findings, set new SMART goals, and analyze the effectiveness of interventions and make changes if needed.
6. IPT would evaluate and monitor student progress over a period of time to determine the effectiveness of interventions and the system.

Conclusion

During the Exploration and Installation Stages of Implementation, teams help organizations recognize the need for change and secure the needed resources to do the work and prepare staff for the new practices (Fixsen et al., 2007). Building support for the process is essential prior to initiating any changes. It is critical to ensure all staff members understand the rationale for the process and time is given to learn about and research the area of change. In these early stages, it is important to plan, identify who will be part of the process, establish roles and responsibilities, and determine how things will be organized. Once the beginning stages of implementation are established and innovation is being used for the first time, the implementation process transitions into the Initial Stages of Implementation (Fixsen et al., 2007). Chapter four will outline the process Oak Grove Elementary School used during the Initial Stages of Implementation.

Chapter 4

Implementation

When teachers first start using new practices, it is common for errors to occur. Teachers may not be completely proficient in their new roles. Initial Implementation is where the innovation is being used for the first time. During this stage, staff are attempting to use newly learned skills. The Initial Implementation Stage is a real challenge. It is common to take between 9 and 24 months (Fixsen et al., 2007). This chapter will outline the process Oak Grove's IPT members took as they worked through the initial implementation stages to create a model that was reflective of the research and work completed by Dufour and his colleagues (2010), where the entire staff had a collective responsibility to ensure student learning was monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessments and provided a plan for struggling students.

Calendar of Implementation

May-August. Prior to the initial implementation, Oak Grove's IPT members worked through stages of development. During this time, the intervention progress team was created. Members of the team developed the process and identified the purpose of IPT. The team worked collaboratively to identify and create the roles and responsibilities of each member. They created IPT forms that would be used school-wide, as well as, created a three year implementation plan. Some members of the team attended conferences on RtI, read books researching effective RtI frameworks and structures, and shared the research and information with staff members. An outline of the steps taken May through August are as follows:

Stages of Development:

- Identify members of the intervention progress team (IPT).
- Developed the IPT process and purpose.
- Developed a 3 year plan (For a review of the IPT's 3 year plan, see Appendix A).
- Developed the IPT form that teachers use (For a review of the IPT form, see Appendix B).
- IPT members attended conferences, read books researching effective RtI frameworks and structures, and shared information with staff members.

August-September. After the beginning stages of development, Oak Grove's IPT transitioned into initial implementation. During this time the IPT identified students not meeting benchmark standards in the area of reading from the previous school years spring Universal Assessments. From there, the team met with each individual grade level. The IPT members identified which students each teacher had that did not meet reading benchmarks in the previous year, as well as, explained the new IPT process and purpose. At these grade level meetings, the IPT was able to answer specific questions teachers had, introduce the process and purpose of IPT for each individual team and teacher, and assess the readiness level of each team. Having a small collaborative group helped the IPT members identify which teachers would need more support or information to help them understand the purpose and process. The team identified several grade levels that needed more time to understand the new system. These staff members were given extra materials about RtI to read, they were shown current school-wide data to support the need for a systematic intervention, and they were given extra time to become comfortable with the new changes. An outline of the steps taken August through September are as follows:

- IPT members met and reviewed the 2013-2014 list of students identified as not meeting benchmark standards in the area of reading.

- IPT members identified each students' current teacher placement.
- IPT members met with each individual grade level.
- IPT members provided more information to teachers and supported them through the process of change.

September-October. At this stage of the initial implementation process, the IPT members felt the majority of staff had buy-in and was ready to begin the next phase. The team identified current students who were not meeting grade level benchmarks in the area of reading through Universal Assessments given school-wide. After the assessments were given and the data was collected, the IPT members met to analyze the results. Students who did not meet grade level benchmarks were identified and placed on the IPT list. The team analyzed the data further to identify the areas of concern and need for each grade level based on the assessment results. Students who scored slightly below grade level were placed on teacher monitor.

The IPT members had a meeting with each teacher to identify which students were slightly below grade level. The IPT members and the teacher collaborated and identified areas of concern for each student, then brainstormed different strategies to try in the classroom. The team agreed these students needed more time and extra practice on grade level material. Once a month, at grade level meetings, IPT members checked in with teachers to monitor student progress and provided support to teachers when needed. Based on the data analysis, the team decided it was necessary to hire a part-time intervention teacher in the area of reading fluency. By the beginning of October, students in first and second grades identified as not meeting grade level reading fluency benchmarks were placed in a ten-week intervention program. The program used was a reading fluency program called Read Naturally. For students not meeting grade level reading fluency benchmarks in third through sixth grades, they received the Read Naturally intervention

program in the classroom. The site administrator trained the classroom teachers on how to implement the Read Naturally program. An outline of the steps taken September through October are as follows:

- Universal Assessments given school-wide.
- Students not meeting grade level reading benchmarks identified and placed on the IPT list.
- IPT analyzed the Universal Assessment data to identify areas of concern and need.
- Reading Intervention teacher was hired half day for a 10 week reading intervention program during the school day.
- Students in first and second grade identified as not meeting grade level reading fluency benchmarks were placed in reading intervention taught by a reading intervention teacher.
- Site Administrator trained third through sixth grade teachers on how to implement the Read Naturally program in the classroom.
- Students in third through sixth grades identified as not meeting grade level reading fluency benchmarks were placed in reading intervention taught by the general education teacher.

October-December. The next stages of implementation focused on individual student needs and the collaboration process of IPT. In the beginning of October, the team met to collaborate and discuss the students identified as not meeting grade level standards in the area of reading. The team decided students who were placed in reading intervention would be monitored half way through the 10-week program to assess their growth and progress. The students who were not placed in reading intervention were brought to IPT on an individual basis. In mid-October, two meetings were scheduled and teachers were invited to discuss the needs of the students who

did not meet grade level benchmarks on the Universal Assessments given in September. At these meetings, the IPT collaborated with teachers and identified specific areas of concern in reading for individual students. The team and the classroom teacher developed SMART goals that would be monitored every six weeks. The team worked with the classroom teacher to identify targeted areas of instruction and effective intervention strategies to implement with each individual student. Every six weeks, the IPT scheduled meetings with the classroom teachers to analyze the data and monitor the progress of each student. During the progress monitoring meetings, the team collaborated with the classroom teachers, listened to what was working and not working, set new goals, provided supports when needed, and analyzed the data to identify any patterns.

By mid-November, the IPT analyzed the data of the students in reading intervention and identified students who were making progress and students who were not showing progress. Students who were making progress were left in reading intervention and monitored in another five weeks. The site administrator met with the intervention teacher to collaborate and discuss areas of concern for the students who were not making adequate progress. The IPT met with the teachers of the students who were not making progress in reading intervention and identified specific areas of concern. The team collaborated and set SMART goals to be monitored every 4-6 weeks based on each individual student's need. An outline of the steps taken October through December are as follows:

- In the beginning of October, the IPT met to collaborate and discuss the next steps for students who were placed on the IPT list but were not receiving reading intervention support.
- In mid-October, the IPT met and collaborated with teachers and identified specific areas of concern in reading for individual students.

- The team and the classroom teacher developed SMART goals that would be monitored every six weeks for students who were not meeting reading benchmarks.
- Every 6 weeks, the IPT scheduled meetings with the classroom teachers to analyze the data, monitor the progress of each individual student, and set new goals.
- In mid-November, the IPT analyzed the data of the students in reading intervention.
- The IPT met with the teachers of the students who were not making progress in reading intervention, identified specific areas of concern, and set SMART goals to be monitored every 4-6weeks.

December-February. At this stage of the implementation process, students had been given specific, targeted learning goals with frequent progress monitoring and data was being collected on a frequent basis. The IPT members and teachers worked together to identify areas of concern and improve in the goal setting process and data analysis. The collaborative meetings helped IPT members support teachers and share information when needed. By mid-December, the mid-year Universal Assessments were given school-wide. The team analyzed the data and identified which students were not meeting grade level benchmarks at this time. The team looked at the original 50 students who were identified as at-risk in September and compared their results in December. The team analyzed the data further to identify the success of each of the intervention supports. The IPT members continued to analyze the data further and identified which students remained below grade level from September to December. The team identified and analyzed the supports students had received.

In January, the IPT members met with teachers of students who did not meet grade level benchmark assessment in September and again in December. The team and the teacher analyzed the data collected, identified areas of concern, and set specific learning goals to monitor. In all

cases, the team found evidence of growth and made the decision to continue setting specific learning goals and monitoring progress frequently with these students. Next, the team met with teachers of the students who met the mid-year benchmarks and demonstrated progress from the beginning of the year. The team celebrated the hard work and success of these students and teachers at the IPT meeting. The IPT no longer felt the need to meet frequently and set SMART goals for these students. The individual teachers were responsible for monitoring the students' progress with grade level assignments and assessments. The IPT also met with teachers of the students who did not meet mid-year benchmarks but had not been discussed at IPT previously. The team analyzed the data and identified specific areas of concern for each student. The IPT and the teacher collaborated to set SMART goals and identify specific strategies and interventions to implement. The team met every six weeks to monitor the progress.

At the end of January, the IPT members analyzed the reading intervention data and identified students who had made growth and students who had not made growth. Students who had made growth and met mid-year grade level benchmarks were exited from the reading intervention program. Students who made growth in reading intervention, but did not meet mid-year grade level benchmarks continued in the reading intervention program. Student who did not meet mid-year benchmark assessments and were identified as struggling in the area of reading fluency were placed in the reading intervention program. The intervention teacher was hired part-time to teach another 10-week program during the school day. An outline of the steps taken December through February are as follows:

- Mid-December, the mid-year Universal Assessments were given school-wide.
- The team analyzed the data and identified which students were not meeting grade level benchmarks at this time.

- Students who were identified on the list in September and again in December were given specific SMART goals and their progress was monitored every 4-6 weeks.
- Students who were identified on the list in September but had met the mid-year benchmarks no longer needed to be on the IPT list in December.
- Students who were not identified in September but did not meet mid-year benchmark assessments were placed on the IPT list in December, the team set SMART goals, and monitored progress every six weeks.
- At the end of January, the IPT members analyzed the reading intervention data.
- Student who did not meet mid-year benchmark assessments and were identified as struggling in the area of reading fluency were placed in the reading intervention program.
- Reading intervention teacher was hired part time for ten weeks.

February-April. At this stage of implementation, the IPT members continued to develop and evaluate the process. Student progress was monitored every six weeks, teachers and the IPT members collaborated, instruction was adjusted to meet the needs of each individual student, and specific targeted strategies were put into place. The IPT members analyzed the data of students who had not made adequate progress on goals since September. In a couple of incidences, the IPT moved to the next phase and scheduled an SST meeting with the parents of the students who had not made adequate growth and addressed the areas of concern. The team decided to monitor the progress of these students more frequently and implemented more intensive one-on-one interventions. An outline of the steps taken February through April are as follows:

- IPT members evaluated the process and made changes when needed.
- The team and the classroom teacher developed SMART goals that would be monitored every six weeks for students who were not meeting reading benchmarks.

- Every six weeks, the IPT scheduled meetings with the classroom teachers to analyze the data, monitor the progress of each individual student, and set new goals.
- IPT members analyzed the data of students who had not made adequate progress on goals since September and scheduled SST meetings with parents to address the areas of concern.
- IPT members identified students in need of more intensive interventions and monitored the progress of learning every four weeks.

April-May. In the final stages of the first year of implementation, the IPT members analyzed and evaluated the data for the year. A final Universal Assessment was completed in May. The IPT members identified students who did not meet grade level benchmarks at the end of the year and compared it to the list in September and December. IPT members analyzed the SMART goals set for students throughout the year to identify learning trends and data patterns. Reading intervention data was analyzed and compared with beginning of the year, mid-year, and end of the year results. The IPT members identified any students who showed little or no growth and collaborated with the teacher and school psychologist about future steps to take. The data will be evaluated and used in the upcoming school year.

Conclusion

Implementation may not go completely smooth at first as issues emerge while teachers learn new practices. Some common issues may include; making mistakes in assessment development, misinterpreting data, confusion about how to analyze data patterns, finding time to implement and plan intervention groups, and feelings of frustration or push back may occur (Fixsen et al., 2007). Oak Grove's IPT members and staff faced many of these issues. Moving forward in year 2, the goal of the implementation process will be to transition into Full

Implementation. Full Implementation is reached when 50% or more of staff are using an effective innovation with fidelity and good outcomes (Fixsen et al., 2007).

Chapter 5

Impact

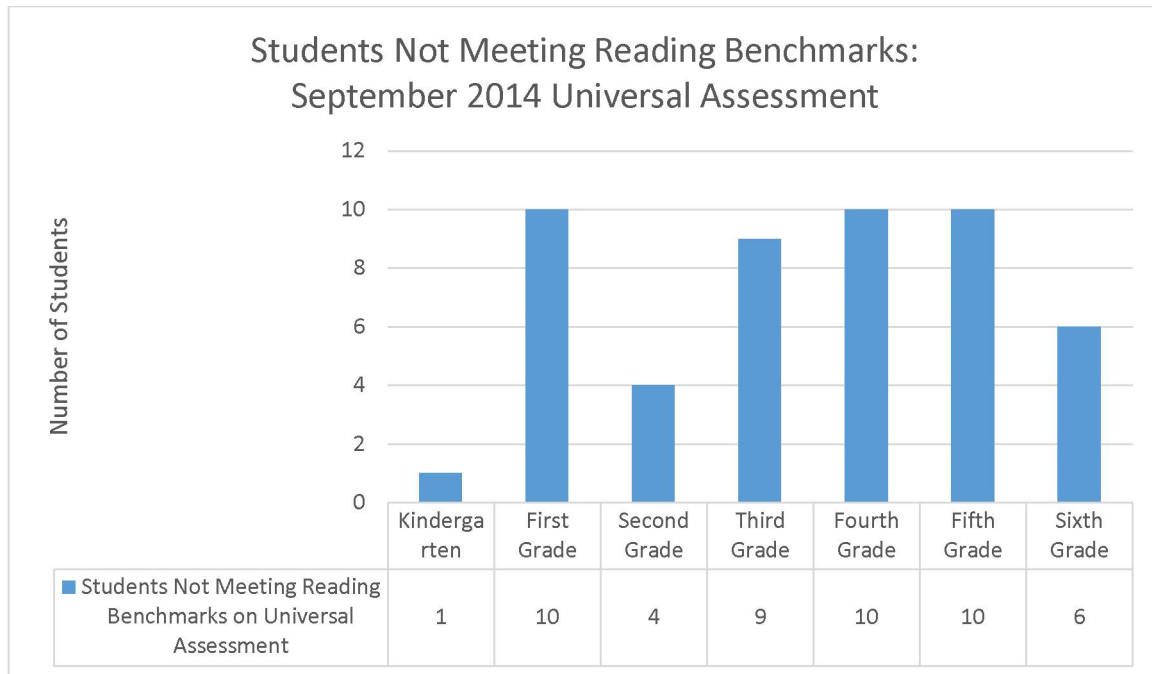
The purpose of this project was to study how a systematic approach to intervention impacted students who had been identified as not meeting reading benchmarks and/or identified as at risk in the area of reading. It was also the goal of this project to determine if a systematic approach to intervention would help close the achievement gap and decrease the number of students assessed for learning disabilities. This chapter will describe the positive impacts the implementation of a systematic approach to intervention had on students struggling in the area of reading in grades kindergarten through sixth, as well as, the impact it had on the teachers. The chapter will also address the two research questions: 1) how may a systematic approach to intervention decrease the number of students identified to be assessed for learning disabilities and 2) when student learning is monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessment, how may the number of students not meeting reading benchmarks in the beginning of the year be impacted by the end of the year?

Student Impact

Implementing a systematic approach to intervention had positive impacts on students struggling in the areas of reading in grades kindergarten through sixth. Students were closely monitored from the very beginning of the school year. A team of teachers, a school psychologist, a site administrator, and an instructional specialist worked collaboratively throughout the school year to address struggling students' needs and concerns. Students were placed in interventions, given specific, targeted instruction to meet specific areas of need, and progress was monitored in an ongoing, timely manner. In a period of three months, several students closed the achievement

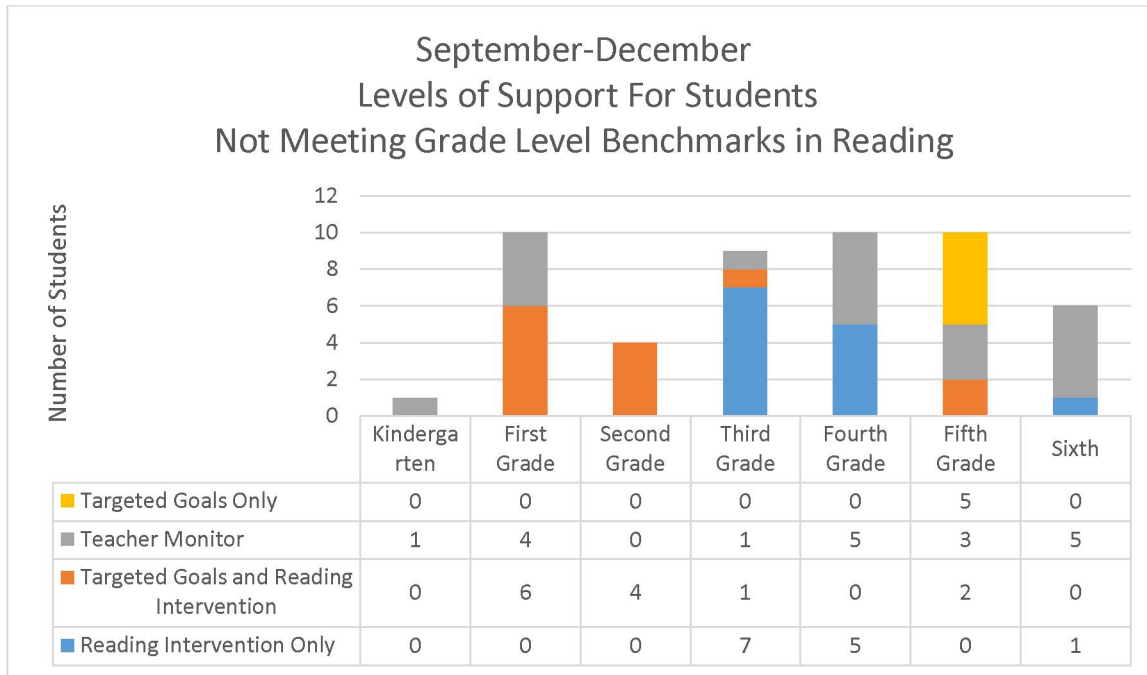
gap and met grade level benchmarks in the area of reading. Other students demonstrated adequate growth in the area of reading, met reading intervention goals, and achieved success on specific individual SMART goals. Every student who scored below grade level in the area of reading on the school-wide Universal Assessment was discussed by the IPT members and classroom teacher. A specific targeted instructional plan was designed for each child to meet their unique needs. The biggest impact of this implementation was that students' needs were no longer addressed in an individualistic, random approach. There was a collective, collaborative effort to meet the needs of all struggling students, to ensure that all students learn, and to determine appropriate action based on data analysis. The following graphs display the evidence of the positive impacts the implementation of a systematic approach to intervention had on students struggling in the area of reading in grades kindergarten through sixth.

In September, Universal Assessments were given to monitor the progress of students in the area of reading. There were a total of 50 students who scored below grade level on the Universal Assessment and were identified as at risk in reading in grades kindergarten through sixth. The following graph identifies how many students in each grade level scored below the reading benchmarks.

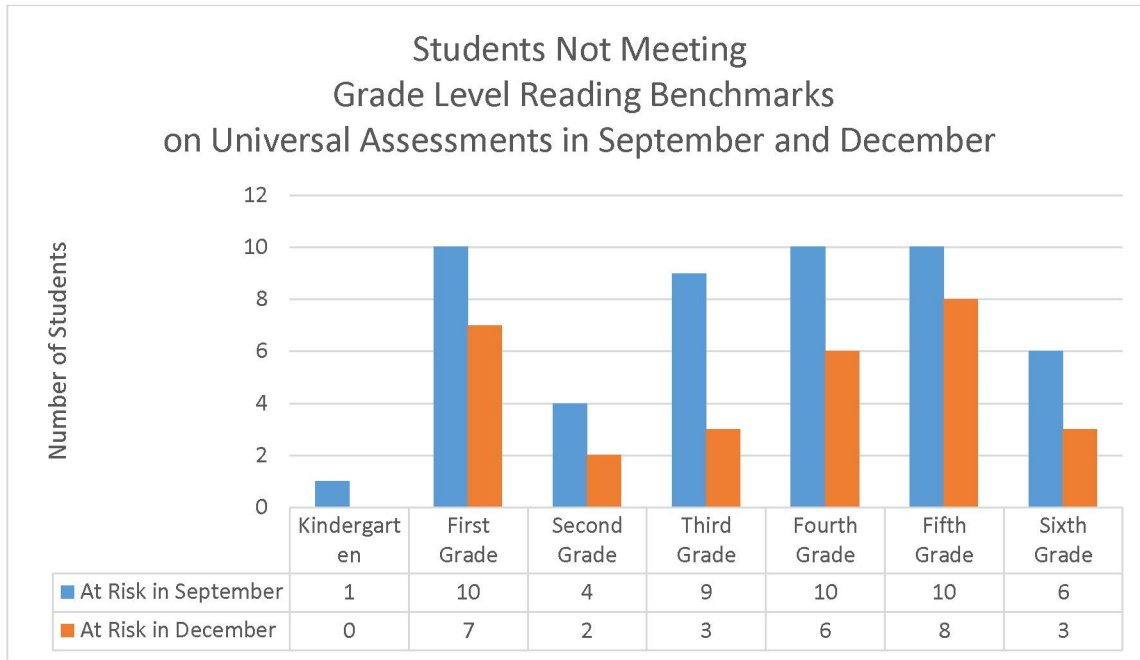


Oak Grove's IPT members analyzed the data and identified which specific students did not meet the reading benchmarks. The team collaborated with the classroom teachers and developed a specific targeted plan for each student. Some students were placed in reading intervention and were provided with 10 weeks of intervention on reading fluency. The data showed these specific students demonstrated a weakness in the area of reading fluency, but scored at grade level or close to grade level in the other areas of reading. Some students scored one or more years below grade level in several or all areas of the Universal Assessment. These students were given specific targeted SMART goals developed by the IPT members and classroom teacher. Student progress on the goals were monitored every six weeks. For students who demonstrated a weakness in reading fluency and scored one or more years below grade level on the San Diego Quick, Accelerated Reader, and/or reading fluency assessments, specific targeted SMART goals were developed and the students were placed in reading intervention. For students who scored slightly, but not significantly below grade level, the team determined these

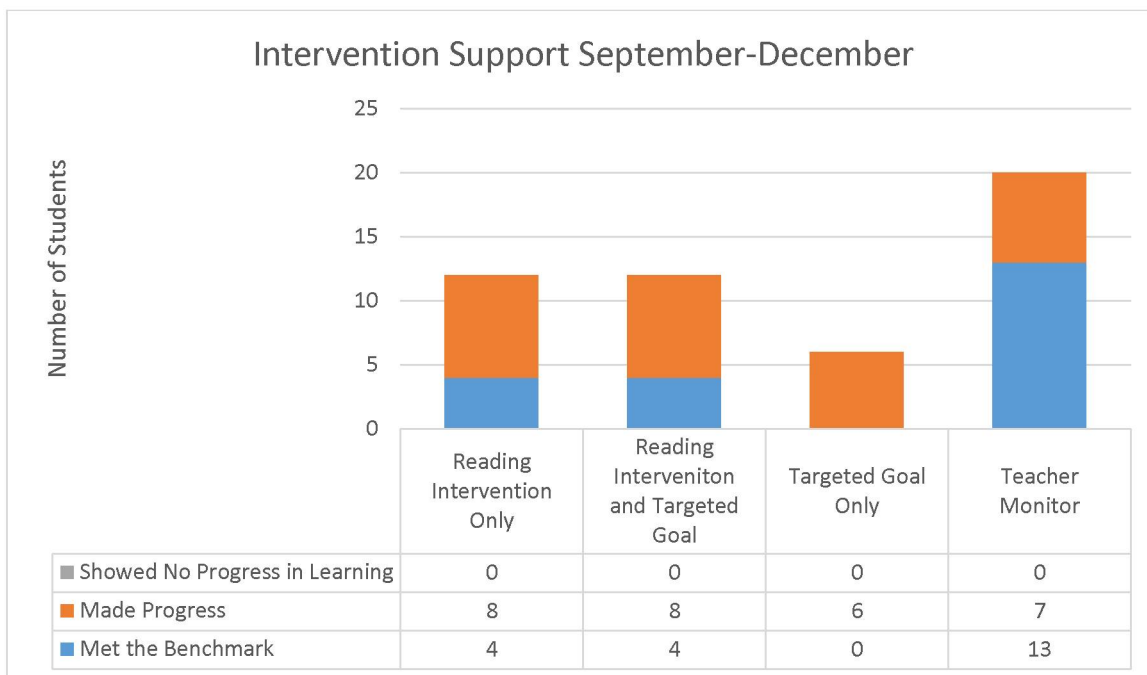
students needed time and frequent monitoring by the classroom teacher with grade level material and assessments. The IPT members followed up frequently with the intervention teacher and the classroom teachers to monitor student progress. The following graph shows a breakdown of the interventions provided by grade level.



All students who were identified as at-risk in the area of reading were monitored frequently from September through December. The IPT members and classroom teachers worked collaboratively to provide supports and monitor specific targeted learning plans. In December, Universal Assessments in the area of reading were given to all students. The IPT collected the data and analyzed the results. The team looked at the original 50 students who were identified as at-risk in September and compared their results in December. The following graph shows the results.

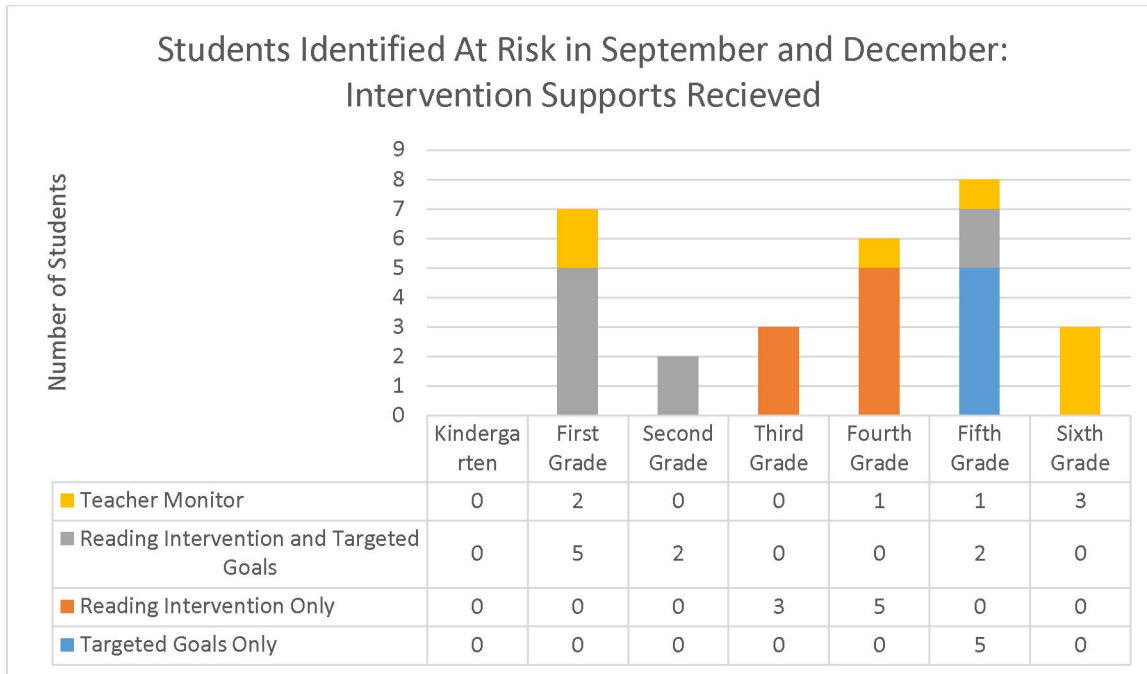


The data revealed there was a 42% decrease in the number of students scoring below grade level after given ongoing levels of intervention, while monitoring student progress in a timely manner. The team analyzed the data further to identify the success of each of the intervention supports. The following graph shows the interventions used and their results.



Based on the data, each of the interventions that were implemented supported progress in student learning. Teacher monitoring showed the most significant result in students meeting benchmarks. The students placed in this intervention support were students who were identified as slightly below grade level on the September Universal Assessments. The achievement gap was not as significant with these students as in the other intervention supports. The team conducted further analysis and analyzed the reading intervention data. The data showed that 42% of the kids in reading intervention made a gain of 30 words per minute, or more, in a ten week period and tested out of the program. These students were either moved to teacher monitor or given targeted learning goals to address other areas of concern. The remaining students continued in the intervention program for another 10 weeks. The students who were given targeted specific learning goals made progress as well. Over a period of three months, all students who were given SMART goals had met their individual targeted goal and continued to be monitored every six weeks on new goals. These students scored significantly lower than the other students on the Universal Assessments. The achievement gap is larger for this group of students so progress in meeting grade level standards will be over a longer period of time.

The IPT members continued to analyze the data further and identified which students remained below grade level from September to December. The team identified and analyzed the supports students had received. The following graph shows the students who scored below grade level in September, again in December, and the supports received during that time.



The IPT members met with the teachers of these students to analyze the data and work collaboratively to design a targeted specific learning plan for each student. Each student’s progress was monitored every 4-6 weeks depending on the specific child’s needs. Ten of the students continued in reading intervention, eight of which also had specific targeted learning goals that were monitored every six weeks. Fifteen students had specific targeted learning goals that were monitored every six weeks. The seven students who were on teacher monitor were placed in either reading intervention, or given a specific targeted learning goal depending on the individual needs. All 29 students’ progress was frequently monitored and data was analyzed by the IPT in an ongoing, timely manner. The IPT members and teachers continued to work collaboratively and design specific, targeted interventions for students who were not meeting reading benchmarks. Due to time constraints of the project, the end-of-year Universal Assessment data was not able to be collected and analyzed for report.

Teacher Impacts

DuFour and Marzano (2011) state, schools can only be as good as the people within them and they must utilize strategies that result in more good teaching in more classrooms more of the time. The biggest impact the implementation had on staff members was by developing a systematic approach to intervention teachers were able to work collaboratively to achieve better results for the students they serve in an ongoing and timely manner. Teachers no longer waited to address struggling students' needs and they worked in a collective, collaborative effort. Designing a systematic approach to intervention established a shared vision, set a clear direction, and created a collective commitment from all. The system shifted the focus of student learning and achievement from the assumption of "these are my kids" to the understanding of "these are our kids." Using data and analyzing evidence of student learning on a regular basis helped teachers to understand the learning process and to determine the appropriate actions to take with each individual student.

Under the old system of identifying students in an individualistic and random approach, teachers did not have the data to support or understand the needs of each child. Teachers and the SST did not have a system to determine when it would be necessary to assess students for learning disabilities. Based on a lack of data and teacher frustration many students were identified as needing assessment for learning disabilities. In the 2013-2014 school year, 10 students were identified as needing to be assessed for a learning disability. As of March 2015, one student had been identified as needing to be assessed for a learning disability, in the 2014-2015 school year. Designing a systematic approach to intervention and establishing a series of timely, systematic, increasingly focused, and intensive interventions gives students an

opportunity to demonstrate the ability to learn and make progress on closing the achievement gap.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to determine if a systematic approach to intervention would help close the achievement gap and decrease the number of students assessed for learning disabilities in a kindergarten through sixth grade setting. The goal of the study was to determine when student learning was monitored in a timely, ongoing basis using common methods of assessment, would the number of students not meeting reading benchmarks in the beginning of the school year decrease by the end of the school year. The data collected from this study revealed that there was a 42% decrease in the number of students scoring below grade level after given ongoing levels of intervention, while monitoring student progress in a timely manner. The data supports when monitoring student learning in a timely, ongoing basis the number of students not meeting reading benchmarks will decrease. It was also the goal of this study to determine if a systematic approach to intervention would decrease the number of students identified to be assessed for learning disabilities. Using data and analyzing evidence of student learning on a regular basis helped teachers to understand the learning process and to determine the appropriate actions to take with each individual student, which resulted in a decrease in the number of students identified as needing to be assessed for learning disabilities from ten students to one student in a period of a year. The results of the study support that developing a systematic approach that models the RtI framework of providing a tiered system of interventions that provide extra time and increasingly intensive levels of support will help in decreasing the number of students identified as needing to be assessed for learning disabilities. Overall, developing a systematic approach to intervention helped Oak Grove Elementary School

close the achievement gap, decrease the number of students not meeting reading benchmarks, and decrease the number of students identified to be assessed for learning disabilities.

Chapter 6

Next Steps

The purpose of this project was to take a close look at the essential components of RtI and PLC to develop a systematic approach to identifying and monitoring the progress of students who are not meeting grade level benchmarks and/or have been identified as at risk in the area of reading. Based on the data findings of this project, it appeared that implementing a systematic approach to intervention helped decrease the number of students identified as at risk in reading. According to research conducted by Buffman and colleagues (2009), under RtI, schools will consider most students for special education services only after the students have not responded to a series of timely, systematic, increasingly focused, and intensive interventions, which are the responsibility of the regular education program. After implementing a system, reflective of the RtI framework, the data shows a decrease in the number of students identified to be assessed for a learning disability. The initial stages of implementation have had a positive impact on Oak Grove Elementary School. In year 2 of implementation, the goal would be to continue the IPT process and focus on collaborative and collective efforts to gather and analyze evidence of student learning on a regular basis to inform and improve practice. A 2-year extension plan was created to continue the implementation of a systematic approach to intervention.

Year 1

1. Evaluate the outcomes of the initial implementation.
2. Continue the IPT process with students not meeting grade level benchmarks in reading based on Universal Assessments school-wide.

3. Professional Development for staff members on how to analyze data to inform and improve instructional practice.
4. Continue professional development on RtI and PLC.
5. Visit other schools who are successfully implementing RtI blocks of time.
6. Implement RtI blocks of time in kindergarten and first grade, while using the IPT process of implementing a PLC collaborative structure and systematic approach to intervention.
7. Kindergarten and first grade teachers use the IPT system developed during grade level collaboration time to analyze data, set specific targeted goals based on student needs, and monitor progress in an ongoing timely manner.
8. Provide collaboration time for kindergarten and first grade teachers to analyze data, set goals, and monitor the progress of students, 2 times a month for 45 minutes during the work day.

Year 2

1. Evaluate the outcomes of the previous year's implementation.
2. Continue the IPT process with students not meeting grade level benchmarks in reading based on Universal Assessments school-wide.
3. Professional development on differentiated instructional strategies and effective intervention strategies.
4. Continue professional development on how to analyze data to inform and improve instructional practice, RtI, and PLC if needed.
5. Implement RtI blocks of time in kindergarten through third grade while using the IPT process of implementing a PLC collaborative structure and systematic approach to intervention.

6. Kindergarten through third grade teachers use the IPT system developed during grade level collaboration time to analyze data, set specific targeted goals based on student needs, and monitor progress in an ongoing timely manner.
7. Provide collaboration time for kindergarten through third grade teachers to analyze data, set goals, and monitor the progress of students, 2 times a month for 45 minutes during the work day.
8. IPT members begin researching and developing intensive supports and interventions for students not responding to level one and two tiers of interventions.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the full implementation process is for the IPT to continue to collaborate with teachers, analyze data, set specific targeted learning goals for students in need, and monitor progress in an ongoing and timely manner. Over the next 2-3 years, the goal is for the IPT members to model the process and slowly phase in RtI blocks of time two grade levels at a time. The end goal is that by year three, all grade levels will implement RtI blocks of time, collaborate to analyze data, set specific targeted learning goals for students who are not meeting grade level benchmarks in reading, and monitor the progress of student learning in an ongoing frequent manner.

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Appendix A

Three Year Implementation Plan

Year 1

1. Establish Intervention Progress Team (IPT).
2. Achieve consensus and buy-in from staff members.
3. Identify level of implementation. IPT will focus on students not meeting grade level benchmarks in the area of reading based on Universal Assessments given three times a year.
4. Professional development in RtI and PLC.
5. Develop a systematic approach to intervention focusing on monitoring student progress in a frequent ongoing manner, set specific targeted learning goals for students, and analyze data to identify targeted areas of instruction.

Year 2

1. Evaluate the outcomes of the initial implementation.
2. Continue the IPT process with students not meeting grade level benchmarks in reading based on Universal Assessments school-wide.
3. Professional Development for staff members on how to analyze data to inform and improve instructional practice.
4. Continue professional development on RtI and PLC.
5. Visit other schools who are successfully implementing RtI blocks of time.
6. Implement RtI blocks of time in kindergarten and first grade, while using the IPT process of implementing a PLC collaborative structure and systematic approach to intervention.

7. Kindergarten and first grade teachers use the IPT system developed during grade level collaboration time to analyze data, set specific targeted goals based on student needs, and monitor progress in an ongoing timely manner.
8. Provide collaboration time for kindergarten and first grade teachers to analyze data, set goals, and monitor the progress of students, 2 times a month for 45 minutes during the work day.

Year 3

1. Evaluate the outcomes of the previous year's implementation.
2. Continue the IPT process with students not meeting grade level benchmarks in reading based on Universal Assessments school-wide.
3. Professional development on differentiated instructional strategies and effective intervention strategies.
4. Continue professional development on how to analyze data to inform and improve instructional practice, RtI, and PLC if needed.
5. Implement RtI blocks of time in kindergarten through third grade while using the IPT process of implementing a PLC collaborative structure and systematic approach to intervention.
6. Kindergarten through third grade teachers use the IPT system developed during grade level collaboration time to analyze data, set specific targeted goals based on student needs, and monitor progress in an ongoing timely manner.
7. Provide collaboration time for kindergarten through third grade teachers to analyze data, set goals, and monitor the progress of students, 2 times a month for 45 minutes during the work day.

8. IPT members begin researching and developing intensive supports and interventions for students not responding to level one and two tiers of interventions.

Appendix B

IPT Form

IPT Data Collection Sheet

Student: _____ Teacher/Grade Level: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Target Area: _____

Goal:

Collect data at least once per week until next IPT meeting.

Date						
Score						

Direct Instructional Strategies:

	What teacher will do to help the student reach this goal	Check when completed
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Follow Up Meeting Date	Goal Met?	Next Step

- ❖ RTI is **tiered process** of instruction designed to **identify struggling students** early- before referrals to special education- and **provide targeted instructional interventions**.
- ❖ SST/IPT **is a team** of educators convened at the request of a classroom teacher, parent, or counselor, that designs **in-class interventions** to **meet the needs** of a particular student **prior to a special education referral** or development of an IEP.