



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Creating a Building-Level Team

Durham Elementary School, Oregon • March 2010

Topic: Response to Intervention in Primary Grade Reading  
Practice: Universal Screening

### Highlights

- Joyce Woods, principal at Durham Elementary, talking about the most important factors to consider when creating a schoolwide leadership team, such as including a range of staff and expertise
- Team composition, member roles, meeting schedule, and the type of support provided to classroom teachers by the team
- The role that classroom teachers play in grade-level team meetings and student reviews
- The team's responsibility for data collection, interpretation, and meeting presentation
- How the team prepares to move a child into a Tier 3 intervention, including completion of an educational history by the principal and a developmental history by the school psychologist
- The importance of using data and seeing results in a Response to Intervention system
- The need for schoolwide staff communication and collaboration

## About the Site

### Durham Elementary School

Tigard, OR

#### Demographics

58% White

29% Hispanic

13% Other

45% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

15% English Language Learners

A strong building-level leadership team is a foundational component of Durham Elementary School's RtI framework. The team guides staff in implementing a continuum of schoolwide instructional and positive behavior support by:

- Monitoring students receiving small-group and individual interventions.
- Collecting and interpreting data for presentation at student review and intervention planning meetings.
- Helping staff understand and use assessment data, including screening, progress monitoring, and state- and school-level data.
- Including classroom teachers in grade-level meetings and student reviews.
- Planning and implementing schoolwide supports.
- Supporting communication and collaboration.
- Overseeing RtI fidelity and referrals to special education.

## Full Transcript

My name is Joyce Woods, and I am the principal at Durham Elementary School, in Tigard, Oregon. We are part of the Tigard-Tualatin School District.

When a school is thinking about creating a leadership team for the RtI process, it's really important to keep in mind that you need a variety of perspectives on that team. So, for example, on our team, I am there. We have our literacy specialist who can talk about our core reading program and the different interventions that we use for each tier. We have our school psychologist and counselor, who can bring to that team expertise in the area of behavior and other kinds of disabilities, perhaps, that might impact children's progress academically. We also include a learning specialist who, at our school, is a special education teacher. And we include a teacher of English language learners.

When we have our team meetings where we have grade-level teams, that core team, that leadership team

is enhanced by classroom teachers from each grade level. Three times a year, we pull together the entire team and we review how is the whole system working and are we getting all the data that we need so that we can answer the important questions we have about kids. On a weekly basis, that leadership team is paired down to myself, the literacy specialist, and the school psychologist; we take responsibility for gathering and presenting the data so that classroom teachers just have to show up and bring their expertise with them.

When we are moving to the third-tier interventions with a child, it is really important that many members of the team are involved. My role as principal is I complete an intensive, really thorough file review for each child. And we have a template we use to capture the child's educational history and we can look for patterns, and that helps us in problem solving. I do that, and then our school psychologist does a developmental history; it's an interview with the parent. We then have sort of a subteam sit-down with the file review and the developmental history, and that subteam includes the school psychologist, myself, the literacy specialist, and the child's classroom teacher. Once the team comes up with the plan, then it is typically the literacy specialist that coordinates that intervention with the involvement of the child's reading teacher and the school counselor.

One of the biggest challenges for us in creating this team—and we did really revise the way our team worked about two and a half years ago—so one of the biggest challenges was that we were doing something different. The old model was a system where teachers would get together and do a lot of thinking by processing and talking it through, but rarely using data and rarely actually getting to a resolution or a plan for how to deal with the problem. So our big challenge has been focusing so much on data, which we do, left some teachers feeling unheard, I think. So we have had to build into our system a way for them to still do that processing and that sort of just sharing of very heartfelt concerns at the same time that we focus on the data.

I think one of the things that has really helped us support and maintain our system of RtI has been the fact that teachers have seen really good results for children. When teachers see that a system is working for children, then they are willing to be on board. Also the fact that the leadership team that we have at Durham really understands where we are headed with this; they really understand the technical aspects of data collection and analysis, but they are able to share that and explain that to teachers in a way that is very user-friendly and is child-focused. So that's a pretty important combination; that technical and sort of the human and child-focused balance has worked really well for us.

In terms of moving forward with our leadership team at Durham, I think the most important thing is for me as a leader to continue to support each of those team members in their professional development. I have wonderful people, but even wonderful people can start to feel sort of stale or stymied, so as a principal I need to really encourage them and support them as they continue to learn and grow in their expertise, which includes the technical stuff like what are the best ways to teach reading or what are the best ways to support children's behavior, but also in that kind of human, what's the best way to have those hard

conversations with staff members. We are constantly looking for ways to improve our process, and we really do modify it and streamline it. We just keep making it work better and better. I don't think we will ever feel like we are done.