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Setting the Stage for RtI Implementation

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Topic: Response to Intervention in Primary Grade Reading
Practice: RtI Implementation

Highlights

- Explanation of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII); emphasis on quality instruction in Tier 1 core
- PaTTAN network role in providing capacity building to schools throughout the state
- Capacity building focused on content areas, data team meetings, types of data, protocols to identify student strengths and needs, development of instructional interventions
- Challenges: infrastructure needs, scheduling, focusing on assessment and instructional practices, organizational structure that facilitates opportunities for intervention delivery
- Focus of evaluation: tier movement, student achievement toward benchmarks, rate of improvement, referral rates to special education
- Results: greatest rate of improvement in early grades, students exceed expected targets, 72% of schools implementing RtI made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets

About the Interviewee

Joy Eichelberger currently serves with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network as director of school intervention services. In this role, she provides leadership for the statewide Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) initiative, school improvement efforts, and professional development. Her areas of expertise include RtII, leadership, effective instruction, organizational development, and data-based decision making. Dr. Eichelberger presents at local, state, and national conferences and meetings and has several professional publications to her credit. She has received numerous professional awards, her most treasured being Teacher of the Year and a Leadership Service Award for School Improvement and Response to Instruction and Intervention.

Prior to her work with the department of education, with more than 30 years of experience in public education, Dr. Eichelberger served as a teacher, building administrator, and director of special education and pupil services in two urban districts. Her professional experience also includes work at the state and national levels, including positions as a regional administrator with the Maryland State Department of Education and Director of Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Dr. Eichelberger is a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University, in Charlotte, North Carolina, The Johns Hopkins University and Morgan State University, in Baltimore, Maryland, from which she holds a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in special education, and a doctorate in educational leadership, respectively.

Full Transcript

I am Joy Eichelberger, and I work in Pennsylvania as director of intervention services for the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network and as state RtII lead.

In Pennsylvania, you might note that we refer to Response to Intervention as Response to Instruction and Intervention—very deliberate on our part. We wanted to emphasize the importance of high-quality effective instructional practice in our Tier 1 core, where all instruction is aligned to our standards and the expectation is that all students are receiving teaching based on research-based effective instructional practice. So, Rt Instruction and Intervention.

Capacity Development

Pennsylvania, I think, is unique in that through leadership from the Department of Education, the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance (PaTTAN) Network actually provides rollout in the building of capacity for schools across the Commonwealth to our RtII implementation. With the PaTTAN Network,

the Intermediate Unit Network, partnering with our schools and districts, we have been able to, first of all, identify very specifically what needs are around Response to Instruction and Intervention, and literally develop a statewide plan to address those needs.

The building of capacity has focused primarily around those content areas that we know are critical for implementing effective practices but also around how to do it: how are Data Team Meetings run, what type of data do we need to have at the table, what type of protocol and questions are necessary to identify student strengths and then analyze student data, and then develop instructional programs and instructional interventions, if you will, to address the specific needs of students.

As with any project implementation, RtII comes with its challenges. Challenges in assisting schools to address infrastructure needs, the dreaded schedule, getting schools to really focus on the design of assessment practices and instructional practices—not based on what we have typically done—and then that schooling is organized in a way so that students that require additional opportunities to learn through our Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions have a structure, that schools actually provide a structure, for intervention service delivery. Challenges that have been overcome by commitment of teachers and administrators alike in improving student achievement.

Evaluation Results

We have, for the last several years, each year conducted an evaluation study, first with our pilot sites and then last year we invited a host of schools from across the state to participate in this evaluation study. We specifically looked at tier movement of students. We specifically looked at student progress, student achievement toward benchmarks. We particularly looked at rate of improvement. And we looked very, very briefly—and this is very preliminary data—at referral rates, referrals to special education. By far, what we are finding and what we have found, is that we get the greatest rate of improvement in the earlier grades, which reinforces the notion that we need to intervene early. What we have also found is that—and our data bear this out—students are quite capable with additional intervention of not only meeting targets, the expected targets, but actually exceeding those targets. We know for students who are struggling that our goal is the acceleration of learning; that has been borne out in our data. And then finally, just this last year, some 72 percent of schools implementing RTII in our study met state AYP targets. With those kinds of outcomes, challenges seem not so insurmountable. We are seeing in Pennsylvania, first and foremost, that RTII is improving outcomes for students.