

Implementing RtI at the Secondary Level: Why Is It Different From the Elementary Level?

What appears to be consistent at this point is that researchers and practitioners should be willing to commit to a process that will take longer to implement and assess than implementation at the primary level. (Sugai et al., 2005, p. 13)



What are the key differences that affect systems level change?

- 1) Larger student enrollment than at elementary → Large effects on discipline and organizational structure of the school.
- 2) Multiple feeder schools means students know fewer of their peers building-wide.
- 3) Teachers have curriculum specializations.
- 4) Individualized attention for students from staff is decreased.
- 5) Larger numbers of staff means less opportunities for school-wide meetings and more time working within departments or enclaves (i.e., more difficult for school-wide discussion and consistency).
- 6) Academic emphasis becomes increasingly focused on knowledge dissemination and independent skill application.
- 7) Students are expected to independently self-monitor, organize, be motivated and responsible for their own learning, and able to accommodate new personal responsibilities, e.g., driving, dating, etc.
- 8) Decrease of parent involvement.

Here's the bottom line:

This process in secondary schools can take 5-8 years, rather than the 3-5 years in elementary schools. It is logical that secondary schools will need more time for successful, school-wide implementation across all three tiers!

What does research tell us that's needed for successful systems change particularly at the secondary level?



- 1) Active involvement of students
- 2) Active and visible involvement, commitment, and leadership by administrators. Important for elementary, but paramount at the secondary level.
- 3) Start with small scale, initial implementation
- 4) Integrate "new" initiatives into already existing programs and initiatives.
- 5) Re-organize into smaller learning communities*
*For example, research suggests student group size should be no greater than 600-700 for maximum teaching effectiveness and maintenance of reasonable educational outcomes.

This is important for adult behavior

- 6) High school staff must understand that:
 - ⇒ student knowledge of and capacity to perform appropriate social/behavior skills should not be assumed,
 - ⇒ natural consequences (e.g., not graduating, not getting senior privileges) will not be sufficient for behavior change for all students,
 - ⇒ not all students are not self-motivated by academic and social success.

Implementation of RtI at the secondary level for academics behavior

have many common features. How do we know? Research and experience!



The table below summarizes the critical variables needed to ensure successful systems-level implementation for RtI at the secondary level.

Research	Experience (What we learned and did - CLHS 2003-present)
Administrator Involvement	Administrator Involvement
Student Involvement	Student Involvement
Small scale initial implementation (start with 9 th grade)	Small scale initial implementation (we're now backtracking to focus on 9 th grade)
Integrate RtI with other initiatives	Integrate other initiatives with RtI
Re-organize into smaller learning communities	Adjust the master schedule to create classes to support Tier 2 interventions for groups of "at-risk" students
Embrace that prosocial and remedial academic skills must be taught and reinforced.	Embrace that basic reading, writing, and math skills must be taught and reinforced.
Have a multi-disciplinary team (both gen ed and spec ed) that uses data for decision-making	Multi-disciplinary team (primarily gen ed) must use data and a problem-solving model to drive decision-making

How can we assess ourselves in addressing these unique challenges?

For each item ask:

How are we demonstrating this?

Are our efforts having the desired effect?

How do we know this?

If we can improve, what's the first step we take towards doing this?

Summary of Guiding Principles for the Implementation of School-wide Initiatives

1. Establish and/or consolidate a school-wide leadership team that enables efficient communication and decision making with large number of staff members.

Apply these questions to all items

How are we demonstrating this?

Are our efforts having the desired effect?

How do we know this?

If we can improve, what's the first step we take towards doing this?

2. Work within existing administrative structures.

3. Start small and prioritize time.

4. Identify naturally occurring and useful data sources & systems.

5. Increase focus on teaching and encouraging positive expectations.

6. Maximize administrator involvement.
7. Involve students and staff to greatest extent in decision-making, development, and evaluation activities.
8. Increase opportunities for feedback to students and staff.
9. Specify and focus on measurable outcome indicators.
10. Increase opportunities for academic success and competence of ALL students.
11. Create student communities that are small in size, maximize adult interactions, & enable active supervision.
12. Prioritize, model, prompt, & acknowledge factors that contribute to a positive “Sense of Community.”
13. Move the school toward three organizational goals: (a) a common vision (i.e., purpose, goal), (b) common language (e.g., communications, terminology, information), and (c) common experience (e.g., routines, actions, activities, operational structures).

What are some good resources and references?

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