DOINGWHATWORKS

Charting the Path

Tri-Community Elementary School, Pennsylvania • November 2009

Topic: Response to Intervention in Elementary-Middle Math
Practice: RtI Implementation

Highlights

- Tri-Community principal, Bobbie Lamond, discusses the evolution of the school's RtI framework, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII).
- She describes the roles of the school's reading, math, behavior, and grade-level teams in managing student data and assessing progress and planning interventions.
- She stresses the importance of collaboration between special education and teaching staff in planning interventions.
- The school's improved student performance has increased from 25% proficient to 75% proficient since the introduction of RtII.
- Lamond discusses the importance of the principal's visibility throughout the school and in classrooms, ongoing support provided to teachers and specialists, and relationship building with staff, parents, and students.

About the Site

Tri-Community Elementary School
Steelton, PA

Demographics

38% Black

37% White

19% Hispanic

5% Asian

1% Other

53% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtII) was introduced at Tri-Community Elementary School six years ago. Since then, the school has moved from lowest performing in the district to successfully meeting Adequate Yearly Progress targets. Strong leadership and a partnership with a regional technical assistance network have helped to sustain:

- Data-driven differentiation of instruction in the core curriculum and tiered interventions.
- A teaming structure that manages data, assesses progress, and plans interventions.
- Collaboration between special education and teaching staff.
- Instructional planning that consistently integrates explicit teaching strategies, continuous progress monitoring, and a focus on teaching to mastery.

Full Transcript

My name is Bobbie Lamond, and I am the principal of Tri-Community Elementary. I have been here for the past three years, and RtI [Response to Intervention] implementation was underway when I got here. It has been underway for six years.

In being the third principal in three years, the staff was very apprehensive to have a new leader because they were starting to see results. Eight teams had been developed to maintain data and facilitate the implementation process. Through the years as we have developed capacity within our teaching staff; those eight teams have been whittled down quite a bit to a much more manageable number. We have one reading team in the building, and we have a math team in the building, and we have a behavior team.

We currently have grade-level teams at each grade that manage their own data, versus a schoolwide RtI data team. The grade-level teams in their team meetings, they have one team meeting per month that they look at individual student data, develop plans for their students, and we have supports and different interventions for each of those three areas here. And then they have one meeting a month they would be looking more at general trends through the grade level, such as skill blocks and benchmarks assessments that need to be maybe stressed more in their teaching.

When a school moves to an RtI structure, the first thing that they need to think about is that the roles and responsibilities of many people will change from what's typically been done. Where that has been most

clearly demonstrated is with our special education staff. All of our learning support teachers are coteaching in the classroom with regular education teachers.

We were the lowest-performing elementary school in our district, which would be the lowest out of 13 elementary schools. Over the past six years, change has made a drastic difference in our performance, and we are now making AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress]. And our school has become a model school and one which other schools in our district and around the state use to learn from, in how to create that change and move to an RtI structure that works.

Our fifth-grade students are currently our class that has had RtI in place since they were in kindergarten. When this class came to Tri-Community as kindergarteners, there were about 25 percent of them who would be considered proficient according to our state standards. As fifth graders, they are now entering their fifth-grade year with 75 precent proficiency.

I can think of a story of a student who is in third grade now. I can recall as a kindergartener, we really struggled in that he was very low academically and we felt that it may warrant a referral to special education for even a drastic placement like a life skills class. As a third grader, he is now receiving instruction in a strategic level in both reading and math.

I think the most important thing that I do is being there as a support system for the teachers, for the students. My visibility in the classroom daily, building those relationship with staff, with students, with parents, so that I can be seen as the type of leader that you can go to with a question or with a problem or with a concern and know that there will be follow-through. The trust level that the parents have in the staff, in the teachers, in myself, that we are looking out for their students, their children—that's the structure RtI gives to a school. It's the mindset that if this intervention doesn't work, we will find a new one and we will make it happen for your child.