Supporting School-Based Response to Intervention: A Practitioner’s Model

John J. Hoover and Emily Love

What are the key issues in leading school-based response to intervention (RTI) efforts? Several key components are essential to successfully implementing an RTI model in schools. RTI is an evolving practice; a school-based collaborative consultation RTI model offers a process that enables a school to apply RTI principles to its unique setting and concerns. Three schools in the Western United States implemented this RTI model with success, and their experience offers some guidelines and direction to school-level RTI team leaders in effectively implementing an RTI model.

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act specifically permitted the use of students’ responses to their instruction when identifying a learning disability, with less reliance on discrepancy between potential and achievement. To address the educational flexibility IDEA allows, states and school systems nationwide are (or have begun) transitioning away from the previous prereferral intervention model to some form of response to intervention (RTI; Zirkel & Thomas, 2010). Hoover, Baca, Wexler-Love, and Saenz (2008) found that all states are in the process of implementing some form of RTI to meet the educational needs of struggling learners; over 70% of school districts, nationally, are implementing RTI (Spectrum K12, 2009).

Although RTI models are new to many school systems, some districts in several states (e.g., Iowa, Minnesota, Florida, Idaho, Ohio, Illinois) have been using RTI models for several years with positive results in assisting struggling learners (Jimerson, Burns & VanDerHeyden, 2007). Two significant conclusions about the implementation of RTI are drawn from these programs: (a) RTI models may be successfully implemented in schools to meet the needs of struggling learners, and (b) RTI models assume different shapes and forms across different schools and school systems. These differences are due, in part, to the fact that each school system is unique and that RTI is described and characterized in numerous ways.

Key Elements to Successfully Implementing RTI Models

Several key components must be in place to successfully implement an RTI model in schools (Bender & Shores, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Vaughn, 2003). Although other aspects are associated with RTI, the following four components serve as a foundation for meeting contemporary needs of all learners.

Multitiered or Layered Instruction

Most RTI models comprise three tiers of instruction that increase in duration and intensity based on learner needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Vaughn, 2003). The tiers are critical to differentiated instruction and to the success of any RTI model:

• **Tier 1** refers to implementation of the core, general education classroom curricula.
• **Tier 2** refers to supplemental instruction to support specific needs that surface within Tier 1 instruction.
• **Tier 3** refers to highly specialized instruction that is more intensive to meet significant needs, including special education.

Between 90% and 95% of all learners are expected to be successfully educated through Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction (Yell, 2004).
Using Data-Driven Decision Making

A key aspect of any RTI model is the use of quantified data to illustrate learner progress toward achievement of curricular benchmarks. Data are gathered in one of three ways: (a) screening completed three to four times per year, (b) monthly or biweekly progress monitoring, and (c) diagnostic assessments that pinpoint specific learner needs (Hoover, 2009a). Screening occurs within Tier 1 instruction; progress monitoring may occur within any tier of instruction; diagnostic information is required to pinpoint specific instructional needs, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction. Because most students are educated within Tiers 1 and 2, instructional familiarity with schoolwide screening and classroom-based progress monitoring is essential for the success of any RTI model. Data generated from these assessments serve as the foundation for making informed instructional decisions.

Evidence-Based Practice

RTI is grounded in the implementation of high-quality education validated through research (i.e., evidence-based practice; Haager, Klingner, & Vaughn, 2007; Moran & Malott, 2004). A variety of terms may be used to describe evidence-based practice, such as evidence-based educational methods, research-based curriculum, evidence-based interventions, or research-based practices. However, Klingner and Geisler (2008) wrote that the terms “evidence-based and research-based are often used interchangeably” (p. 58) reflecting education practice validated through research. Whichever term is used to describe evidence-based practice, it includes at least two primary components of classroom instruction: (a) comprehensive curricula and (b) specific teaching interventions.

One way to assist educators to operationalize evidence-based practice in the classroom setting is to distinguish between comprehensive curricula and evidence-based interventions; the term research-based is linked to overall comprehensive content area curricula (i.e., research-based curricula) and evidence-based is linked to specific interventions (i.e., evidence-based interventions). This breakdown allows teachers to view classroom instructional needs within an RTI model from both an overall and a specific instructional perspective. That is, in some classrooms the overall comprehensive curriculum may require adjustment or change, whereas in others one specific teaching method may require change leaving the overall comprehensive research-based curriculum as is. Examples of research-based curricula include comprehensive programs such as Success for All (Success for All Foundation, 2010), Ladders to Literacy (O’Connor, Notari-Syverson, & Vadasy, 2005), and Wilson Reading System (Wilson, 1988); examples of evidence-based interventions include specific teaching methods...
such as direct instruction (Rosenshine, 1976), collaborative strategic reading (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999), and reciprocal teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Correctly distinguishing the need to adjust the overall comprehensive classroom curricula (i.e., research-based curriculum) or the need to adjust only one specific teaching method (i.e., evidence-based intervention) is essential to the successful implementation of evidence-based practice in RTI models.

RTI Evidence for Proper Special Education Placement

Within an RTI model, educators are expected to provide both Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction prior to consideration for special education. As noted previously, implementation of Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction should provide sufficient support to over 90% of all students, thereby reducing the need for more intensive special services. However, should a learner require special education, clear documentation of data reflecting lack of progress and low proficiency levels achieved in Tiers 1 and 2 provides a solid foundation for recommending a comprehensive special education evaluation.

Strengths of a School-Based RTI Process

Keeping in mind the four components needed for RTI to be successful, many school districts develop an RTI model within a site-based framework where state departments of education and school districts provide general parameters, directing individual schools to implement an RTI model in a manner consistent with their particular learners' needs (e.g., significant populations of English language learners [ELLs], current level of development of problem-solving teams, access to school interventionists to provide Tier 2 supports, etc.). In effect, unique characteristics within schools result in a dynamic process of implementing RTI (Hoover, 2009a); because RTI is an evolving practice, its use in schools also evolves as it is developed and implemented.

A central issue challenging many schools in the implementation of RTI is obtaining teacher support for and "buy-in" to accept necessary changes associated with the transition to this instructional framework. A school-based collaborative consultation RTI model under the direction of a school team leader trained in RTI facilitates and maintains school staff support in several ways:

- Critical principal/school district support is obtained and continued throughout the process.
- School RTI team identifies issues of direct relevance. The school RTI team responds directly to school-based issues rather than generic RTI concerns and issues (i.e., those typically emphasized in school- or districtwide RTI trainings).
- School team selects solutions to address RTI issues based on the school's needs.
- Specific school-based RTI issues are discussed with an outside support person who is knowledgeable about RTI and works closely with the school RTI team leader.

By working with an outside educator, school-based RTI leaders are empowered to explore various solutions to their school's RTI needs, and in turn empower school staff by providing them with options to address the school's unique needs.

Implementing the School-Based RTI Model: A Case Study

RTI Team Leaders and School Settings

At three different schools in the Western United States, three master educators faced the same responsibility: To lead and assist their school-based RTI teams and staff in addressing issues arising from implementing the general parameters of RTI and its main components, totalling approximately 2 days of professional development. The team leaders indicated that no follow-up support was provided after the trainings. The three elementary schools were suburban schools located near a larger metropolitan city with school populations ranging in size from 300 to 400 students, 25% to 60% minority students, including ELLs. In some classrooms, over 50% of ELLs had been recommended to receive Tier 2 instruction based on only one universal screening score and no consideration for progress rates, further highlighting the need for an appropriate school-based RTI model.
**RTI Qualifications of Team Leaders**

Each of the three educators had over 7 years' teaching experience and had recently completed a master's degree leading to state endorsement in special education; a primary component in the degree program was training in RTI. Their preparation included courses taught by researchers and professors actively involved with RTI at both state and national levels and attendance at national/state Council for Exceptional Children conventions and conferences. The RTI team leaders received training in the four key areas (i.e., three-tiered instruction, research-based curricula/evidence-based interventions, data-driven decision making, role of RTI in special education eligibility decision making).

This RTI training provided these three practitioners with more knowledge and skills than other educators in their schools, sufficient to have been asked by their principals to serve as their schools' RTI leaders. With the added support of an outside expert, the RTI team leaders worked directly with their school teams to identify issues and generate solutions to meet their school-based needs. In addition to their RTI leader role, two of the three practitioners had classroom teaching responsibilities and the third educator served primarily as the RTI leader for several schools in the district, one of which was a pilot RTI school site. Because the pilot school was further along in its development and implementation of RTI, the team leader from that district focused on issues and suggested solutions pertaining to that one school.

**School-Based RTI Support Process**

As previously indicated, implementing an RTI model occurs within a site-based framework where state departments of education and school districts provide general parameters for RTI, directing individual schools to implement a model in a manner consistent with their particular needs. Figure 1 illustrates the stages in the process that the school-based RTI team leaders followed in their schools. This model includes five stages specific to this project and adapted from existing collaborative consultation processes where two or more educators work together to generate solutions to identified problems (Friend & Cook, 2010; McLeskey, Rosenberg, & Westling, 2010). In this project, the outside RTI consultant and school team leaders collaborated to address the identified RTI schools’ needs.

**Stage 1: Obtain Principal Support/Training in RTI**

One outcome of the leadership team's training was that these educators possessed in-depth knowledge of and expertise in RTI, assisting them to emerge within their schools as leaders in meeting district- and state-mandated RTI implementation. The three educators participating in this site-based project had been selected by their principals as RTI leaders in their schools.

**Stage 2: Identify Outside Educator With RTI Expertise.** The first author, who served in a consultant role to the RTI team leaders, taught and worked with the participants throughout their program and thus possessed an understanding of the teacher leaders' needs in their schools and their past training/experiences. Practitioners who follow this type of site-based model for RTI implementation are encouraged to identify and use the expertise and support of an outside educator to identify contemporary solutions to their school-specific RTI needs.

**Stage 3: Lead School RTI Team Meetings/Identify RTI Issue(s).** During this stage the RTI team leaders conducted their weekly, biweekly, or monthly RTI school meetings and recorded the discussions. The leaders documented the key issue(s) identified by the school teams and any specific concerns that might present barriers to the positive implementation of RTI.

**Stage 4: Share RTI Issues With RTI Expert/Explore Solutions.** At this stage—with the support of the building principal and school RTI team members—the team leader shares the documented issue(s) with the outside expert and explores solutions to address the issue(s). The outside expert responds by sharing relevant presentations, guides, checklists, and other related materials for the team leader to use in supporting the school's RTI processes. For best results, it is essential for the outside educator to respond directly to the needs and...
issues presented by the school-based RTI leader and avoid focusing on generic RTI issues that may not be specific to the individual school setting.

Stage 5: School RTI Team Selects and Implements Solution(s). During this stage of the process the team leader brings the information and suggestions discussed with the outside educator back to the school team. The team explores the suggested solutions, discusses each idea, and decides upon the best course of action to address the RTI issue(s) at hand.

At this stage the RTI team is empowered to identify those issues and needs most relevant to the individual school setting and, in turn, is able to select and implement appropriate solutions that directly address school-based needs. Although this collaborative consultative model relies initially on support from an outside educator (i.e., Stage 2), through continued application of the stages in this model teams become more proficient at identifying and resolving their RTI needs, thereby becoming empowered to reduce over time the need for continued outside expertise. As a result, teams ultimately implement Stages 1 and 3–5 in the model drawing upon Stage 2 as necessary.

RTI School-Level Issues
Success with this type of process is a result of the direct connections between school-based RTI issues and the associated solutions cooperatively generated by the outside expert, the team leader, and the school team. Success is also directly connected to the strategies and practices that the RTI team leaders use to assist their school teams to best understand and implement RTI models. Based upon discussions and support from the expert, the school RTI team leaders in this project presented their teams with a variety of potential solutions to issues, using a variety of strategies:

- PowerPoint presentations, specifically tailored to each school’s needs, to illustrate to the school teams the suggested solutions and to further clarify the RTI needs.
- Guides/checklists to assist team members in further clarifying the need and recording efforts to meet those needs (e.g., instructional implementation fidelity checklist, guide to implementing evidence-based interventions, guide to adhering to decision rules).
- Demonstration of suggested solution(s) to allow school teams to experience on a small, targeted scale the process and procedures to follow (e.g., procedures for determining gap analysis, curriculum-based measurement [CBM] process, how to adhere to decision rules, determining rate of progress).
- Ongoing team discussions of the suggested solution(s) targeting the identified issues or how to determine discrepancies between expected and actual academic proficiency.

These types of strategies are typical methods found in school settings to address learner issues, which makes them easy to locate and implement for most RTI team leaders. However, school-based leaders have a greater chance of success with their school teams because they are directly associated with school-based identified RTI issues. Also, the combination of discussion and practical application facilitates effective collaborative consultation (Hoover, 2011; Kampwirth, 2006).

During the course of the project, six issues surfaced across the three school settings. The RTI school leaders were able to provide their school teams with strategies and possible solutions to these issues, drawing upon several sources including current literature, specific needs within the school settings, an understanding of previously attempted solutions by the school team, and the RTI leaders’ experiences with RTI in their schools.

Issue 1: Transition to the Three-Tiered RTI Model. Team leader meetings focused on the differences between services and practices within the schools’ prereferral intervention models and the contemporary RTI model (see Table 1; see also Hoover, 2011; Hoover & Patton, 2008). The RTI school leaders were able to use this information to enhance their team members’ understanding. This is an example of the type of relevant material outside educators can provide to support school RTI team leaders.

RTI school leaders emphasized to their teams that an RTI model more broadly replaces the previous prereferral intervention model, which includes but is not limited to replacing the learning disability discrepancy formula (Hoover, 2011). An in-depth understanding of the key components of an RTI model focuses the attention of educators on quality-of-instruction issues, rather than on learner deficits.

Issue 2: Tier 2 Supplemental Instruction and Progress Monitoring. The team leaders and the outside educator discussed the RTI tiers of instruction, how each is defined and conceptualized, when a learner should be provided more intensive tiers, and how instruction within each tier interacts with the others. Group meetings included PowerPoint presentations and examples of CBM to implement progress monitoring in both general education classroom and pull-out settings. Leaders had access to these presentations and could use them with their RTI school teams. Additional visuals illustrated the process and function of each tier of instruction.

Through discussions with the outside educator, the team leaders realized the importance of characterizing Tier 2 as “supplemental” to Tier 1 “core” instruction and not as a replacement or substitute for Tier 1 instruction (Burns & Gibbons, 2008). The RTI team leaders assisted their school teams in understanding that both general education classroom teachers and special education teachers have a role in Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction, and that their roles may include assisting with progress monitoring. School teams learned more about the similarities and differences between Tier 1 and 2 instruction and roles through a PowerPoint presentation, a guide identifying characteristics of each tier, and a demonstration activity where the school teams generated Tier 1 and 2 instruction ideas for the same learner.
Table 1. Differences Between Schools’ Prereferral and Response to Intervention (RTI) Models

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prereferral Model</th>
<th>RTI Model</th>
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<td>Provides struggling learners with 2 types of instruction:</td>
<td>Includes 3 instructional types: core, supplemental, and intensive.</td>
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<td>prereferral interventions and special education services.</td>
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<td>Typically, no schoolwide academic/behavioral screening.</td>
<td>Includes screening for all learners in academics and behaviors, often 3 times per year.</td>
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<td>Does not always require research-based curriculum in general education core instruction.</td>
<td>Core instruction in general education classroom must be validated through research.</td>
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<td>Primary method for identifying a learning disability is through determination of a discrepancy between intellectual capacity and actual achievement.</td>
<td>Achievement-intellectual discrepancy is deemphasized, with greater emphasis placed on actual versus expected achievement discrepancy when considering a learning disability.</td>
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<td>Norm-referenced measures assess struggling learners.</td>
<td>Curriculum-based measures assess struggling learners.</td>
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<td>Assessment decision making focuses on “intrinsic” disorders within the learner.</td>
<td>Assessment decision making focuses on “quality of instruction” for the learner.</td>
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<td>Progress of struggling learners is infrequently determined in the general education core instruction.</td>
<td>Learner progress is regularly monitored once student begins to struggle in school.</td>
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<td>At-risk and struggling learners are initially identified after they exhibit extended struggles in the classroom.</td>
<td>All learners are initially screened to identify those who show signs of struggling early in school.</td>
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<td>Learners making inadequate progress with the general education core curriculum must receive a comprehensive evaluation prior to being provided extended curricular supports.</td>
<td>Targeted supports are provided to struggling learners in the general education core instruction prior to receiving a special education comprehensive evaluation.</td>
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<td>Primary model is a “wait to fail” model.</td>
<td>Primary model is a “preventative” and early intervening model.</td>
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Issue 3: Collaborating to Integrate Tier 1 and Tier 2 Instruction. Collaboration among educators implementing different tiers of instruction for the same learner was another issue that arose for each of the school teams, particularly in the areas of general educators’ involvement with Tier 2 instruction and ongoing interactions among general education teachers and special educators providing Tier 2 supports. Some of the suggested solutions included implementing similar evidence-based interventions, periodically assisting with the ongoing progress monitoring, and providing Tier 2 supports through push-in services (i.e., services provided within the general education classroom setting).

By bringing these and related suggested solutions back to their schools, RTI leaders can ensure that selected tasks and activities implemented through Tier 2 instruction are also included, as appropriate, in Tier 1 core instruction, to maintain continuity of instruction across both tiers. Both general education teachers and those providing Tier 2 supports should assist in completing progress monitoring to ensure consistency in instruction and assessment across Tiers 1 and 2 (Burns & Gibbons, 2008; Haager & Mahdavi, 2007). General education teachers also need to be familiar with the implementation of Tier 2 instruction for struggling learners in their classrooms to promote consistency across tiers of instruction. Instructional continuity is further facilitated when educators providing Tier 2 supplemental supports are familiar with Tier 1 core instruction. Collaboration among educators in the delivery of Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction strengthens outcomes for students.

Team leaders facilitated collaboration in providing Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction in three ways:

1. Teachers planned Tier 1 and 2 instruction together.
2. Tier 2 instruction was implemented as push-in instruction in the general education classroom, allowing both educators to observe and/or implement Tiers 1 and 2 instruction for the same learner.
3. Subsequent team meetings included follow-up discussions of Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies.

Teacher leaders in this project who worked together with colleagues in a
push-in situation expressed greater understanding of coordinated Tier 1 and 2 instructional efforts.

**Issue 4: Determining the Most Appropriate Tier of Instruction.** This issue was addressed in several team meetings as it caused much confusion among RTI school teams. RTI leaders viewed PowerPoint presentations and engaged in discussions covering topics necessary to understand and employ data-based decision making:

- **Gap analysis:** Process for determining the size of the gap between expected and actual proficiency levels, with higher gaps representing the potential need for Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction.
- **Rate of progress:** Comparison between expected rate of progress and actual performance level relative to age and grade-level peers, with lower rates of progress indicating a need for Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction.
- **Cut score:** Targeted proficiency score below which a learner is considered an at-risk or struggling learner (e.g., below the 25th percentile).
- **Decision rules:** Guidelines generated by RTI school teams to interpret proficiency data, such as adherence to cut scores, determination of achievement gap analysis, and consideration of a student’s rate of progress, along with procedures to corroborate implementation of instruction with fidelity.

Specific examples and demonstrations for each of these four decision-making items helped prepare the RTI team leaders to assist their school teams in selecting the most appropriate tier of instruction. Team leaders learned what a cut score reflected and how to interpret the score relative to Tier 1 or 2 instruction, methods to determine and interpret rate of progress, the state department of education process for determining gap analysis, how to generate and adhere to decision rules, and the significance of rate of progress. The leaders, in turn, shared these items with colleagues and school teams providing both discussion and practical application of each item.

Educators who possess a working knowledge of cut scores, decision rules, rate of progress, and gap analysis are better prepared to consider the instructional needs of a suspected struggling learner once fidelity of implementation of curriculum has been corroborated (Hoover, 2011). RTI school team leaders who present and discuss these decision-making examples and illustrations with their school teams help them make more informed instructional decisions.

**Issue 5: Determining Special Education Eligibility.** RTI team meetings focused on state guidelines for identifying a learning disability. The team leaders applied the guidelines to an anonymous learner to illustrate how they might best explain the eligibility process to their school teams. The actual application of the state eligibility criteria was very helpful in clarifying what should occur in schools to accurately identify learning disabilities based on state mandates. One critical item that resurfaced in this exercise was the significance of emphasizing that Tier 2 instruction supports, rather than replaces, Tier 1 core instruction prior to special education consideration.

The state in which this project was completed is in the process of eliminating the use of the IQ-achievement discrepancy formula for identifying learning disabilities; this change has caused much confusion among educators. This confusion highlights the significance of effectively addressing Issue 4 by clarifying the basis for making decisions about the most appropriate tier of instruction, utilizing data that reflect rate of progress, cut scores, and gap analysis. In addition, ensuring that the implementation of instruction occurs with fidelity using both research-based curricula and evidence-based interventions is essential to making accurate eligibility decisions for special education for learning disabilities (Hoover, 2011).

**Issue 6: Distinguishing Learning Differences From Disabilities in Diverse Learners.** Each of the schools in this project had significant populations of ELLs who exhibited varying levels of English language development. Although each of the previous five issues pertained to all learners, RTI team leaders also expressed the need for their school teams to ensure that their RTI models met needs of ELLs by distinguishing learning differences from suspected disabilities, thereby reducing unnecessary referrals to special education. The team leaders learned the importance of recognizing that one size does not fit all—in both curriculum implementation and assessment within RTI models, as diversity continues to increase in schools and classrooms.

Discussions about how to best distinguish difference from disability included comparing behaviors typical of different stages of second-language acquisition with those indicative of various disabilities (Hoover, 2009b). For example, behaviors such as withdrawal, acting out, and extended response time are often associated with the acquisition of a second language; however, these same behaviors may also be associated with an emotional/behavioral or processing disorder. In reviewing these types of examples, team leaders could assist their teams in better understanding cultural and linguistic diverse behaviors that might be misinterpreted as a disorder. In addition, team leaders indicated that rate of progress (i.e., Issue 4) for ELLs was often not considered, relying extensively on a proficiency score (e.g., Developmental Reading Assessment 2, 2007) to determine the need for Tier 2 instruction. Approaches to addressing Issue 4, when specifically applied to ELLs, emphasize the importance of both proficiency level and rate of progress. Team leaders were able to use a PowerPoint presentation on “difference versus disability” in working with their school teams to address how RTI could meet diverse needs.

As indicated by the literature, these six issues also surface in other school systems in their efforts to develop and implement an RTI model. Table 2 provides a summary of current literature related to these six issues in the imple-
Table 2. School-Level RTI Issues and Associated Research Findings

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Findings and Suggestions</th>
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<td>Transition to the multitiered RTI model from the existing prereferral intervention model</td>
<td>There is a need to assist educators in understanding &quot;the child's needs and the resources needed to meet those needs,&quot; rather than continued emphasis on &quot;getting the child into special education&quot; (Ikeda et al., 2007, p. 262).</td>
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<td>Tier 2 supplemental instruction and how it supports Tier 1 core instruction, including progress monitoring</td>
<td>&quot;Another area that needs to be an ongoing and high priority for the successful implementation of the problem-solving model is the ownership of academic difficulties and instructional interventions by general education&quot; (Marston, Lau, &amp; Muyskens, 2007, p. 285).</td>
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<td>Collaboration to integrate Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction</td>
<td>&quot;The collaborative culture needed for effective instructional support takes careful and ongoing work&quot; (Tucker &amp; Sormson, 2007, p. 276).</td>
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<td>Basis for making decisions about the most appropriate tier of instruction</td>
<td>&quot;Teams need a decision-making framework as they work towards developing interventions and evaluation of the effectiveness of these interventions&quot; (Bollman, Silberglitt, &amp; Gibbons, 2007, p. 323).</td>
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<td>Determining special education eligibility</td>
<td>&quot;In practice, there must be a discrepancy, in this instance the discrepancy is inter-individual (i.e., between students) rather than intra-individual (i.e., within the student)&quot; (Peterson, Prasse, Shinn, &amp; Swerdlik, 2007, p. 303).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distinguishing learning differences from disabilities in diverse learners</td>
<td>&quot;Response to intervention must assist educators to better clarify linguistic and cultural appropriate behaviors to avoid the continuation of misinterpreting these behaviors as disability characteristics&quot; (Hoover, 2009b, p. 39).</td>
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Note. RTI = response to intervention.

Implications for Practitioners

Results from this project and those from related research projects provide much-needed information for practitioners to use in their efforts to lead their RTI school teams, especially given that many schools are just beginning the process of developing and implementing their RTI models. The information obtained from this project illuminates key RTI issues and challenges that are similar across school settings, and provides some guidance to practitioners in their efforts to understand and implement RTI on a schoolwide basis:

- Operating from a clear understanding of the RTI framework to be implemented in the school is important, especially as related to transitioning from the previous prereferral model to the contemporary RTI model.
- Whereas school- and districtwide RTI professional development provides a general knowledge base of understanding, ongoing supports assist school teams to more directly address RTI issues specific to their schools.
- An understanding of the interactions between Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction is essential for effective collaboration between general education classroom teachers (i.e., Tier 1 instruction) and those providing Tier 2 supplemental supports.
- School teams responsible for making RTI instructional and eligibility decisions that establish and adhere to clear decision rules where cut scores, rate of progress, and gap analysis results are taken into consideration are best positioned to make informed data-based decisions.
- A process for providing periodic and ongoing support to team leaders in their task of leading RTI implementation in their schools (see Figure 1) may be of significant benefit, as this model empowers a school staff to quickly and directly deal with their own site-based RTI issues in a timely and efficient manner.

Final Thoughts

This project provides insight into some key issues that elementary school teams may encounter as school-based RTI models are developed and implemented. However, it is a pilot study limited to three schools and as such is intended to build a foundation for future studies that explore the implementation of RTI on a broader scale (i.e., additional schools), rather than to generalize these results across many settings. The model used to provide support to the school-based RTI leaders illuminated six identifiable RTI issues in the school settings, issues that alert practitioners to some important considerations that many different schools may need to address. Practitioners who assume a similar school-based RTI leadership role may find that bringing attention to and resolving these six issues facilitate greater success. We recommend that educators who assume RTI leadership roles in their elementary schools consider the stages in the
model illustrated in Figure 1 as they seek out and receive periodic support/expertise to assist them to more quickly and directly resolve RTI issues, empower their school teams, and effectively implement a schoolwide RTI model.

References


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