Establishing a Multi-Tier System of Supports in Secondary Schools, Part 2

January 29, 2014 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

About this Talk

THE TALK HAS CONCLUDED.

SCROLL BELOW FOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Due to popular demand, Dr. Rebecca Sarlo returns to answer more of your questions about establishing a multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) at the secondary level and provides additional tips for how school teams can work together to introduce and sustain MTSS. Dr. Sarlo will also offer examples to illustrate how an MTSS framework can improve the academic skills and postgraduation outcomes of students.

Read more about Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.

Transcript

Erika Franco
What are post graduation outcomes for students attending a school that has a well established MTSS model?

Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.
Multi-tiered support systems that effectively address student academic and engagement needs have significant impact on post-secondary outcomes for students. Incredible research conducted by Robert Balfanz and his colleagues (2012), which studied the impact of 9th grade course failures, attendance, and suspension in Florida demonstrates the impact of effective multi-tiered supports on graduation and post-secondary enrollment. Consider the following graphs, which represent some of the researcher?s most powerful findings:

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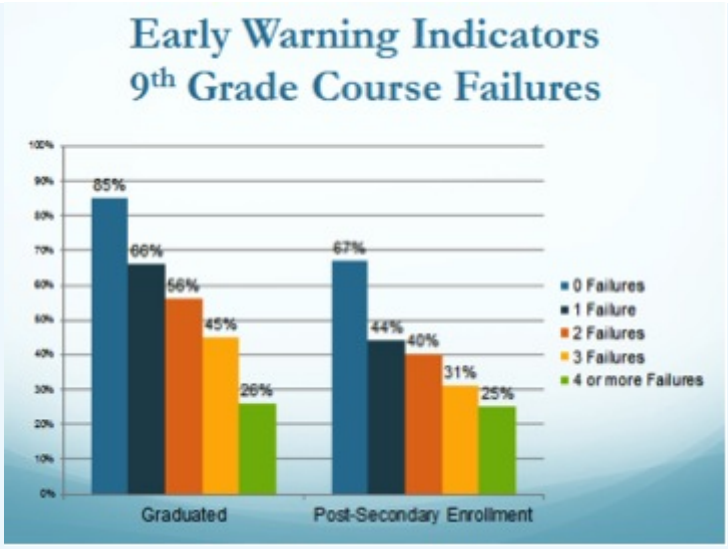

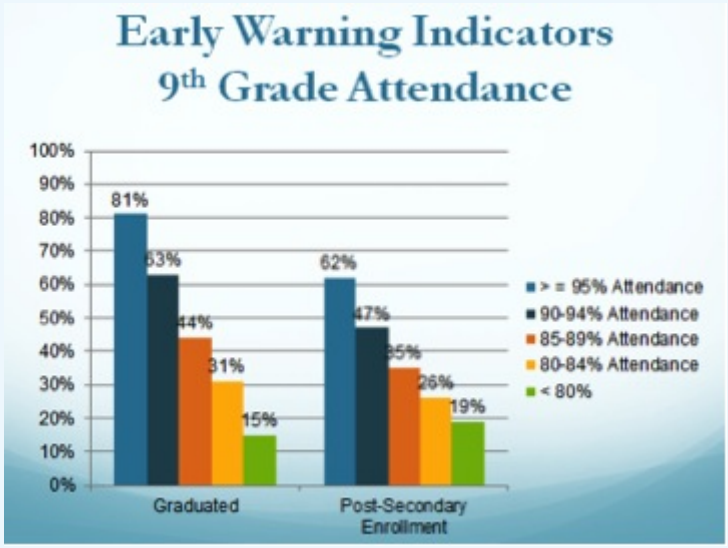

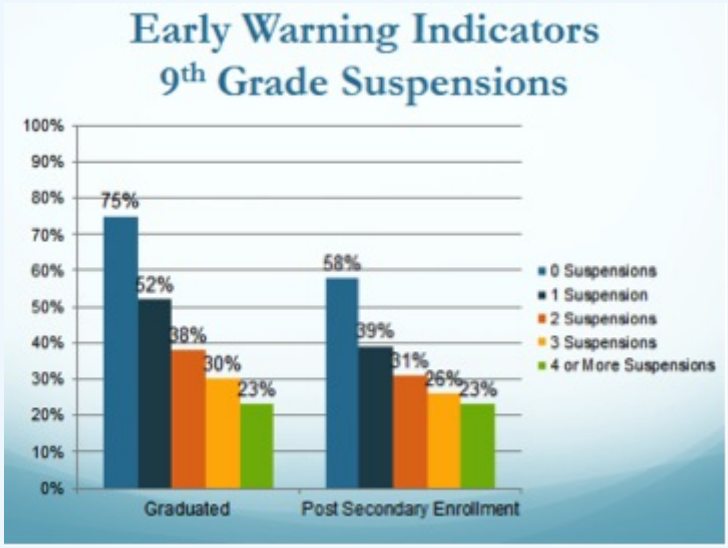

Cassandra Stocker

Is it pertinent to use a screener 3 times are year at the high school level for ALL students and, if so, what is being used?

Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.

Universal screening at the high school level is important for all students and should occur at a minimum 3 times a year with a recommendation that *?screening?* occur quarterly for all students. It is important to clarify that we typically do not need to gather additional data beyond student historical data for screening purposes. For instance, we do not have to administer a universal screener to a middle or high school student in order to identify those who without intervention are likely to struggle or demonstrate disengagement. We have years of historical data that tell us who is in need of support. The students who struggle in 9th grade are by and large the students who struggled in middle grades. Instead of administering an assessment which takes time, energy, and money, schools should design a structured and systematic approach to examining student historical data. Vertical articulation of early warning indicator data (i.e., course performance, discipline, and attendance) data is critical to the development of effective transition, prevention, and early intervention services. With the resources saved by this approach, schools can invest in much needed diagnostic assessments which provide data to help teams understand the root of student academic and engagement issues.

joe zima

What is the best step to take with a high school that is both, still very early in the exploration stage of MTSS and also very excited to begin implementing programming that will support staff collaboration, improved academic outcomes, improved behavioral engagement, and improved staff morale? Our worry is any type of false start that would derail a continuous improvement model.

Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.

We have found that the best approach to take when first starting out is to start small and then grow and expand the RtI framework over time. For instance, we have had great success beginning in one grade level or within in one content area and then adding additional grades/content areas each year. This approach allows for the provision of important professional development and coaching support needed to support implementation. It also allow school leaders to address infrastructure problems such as teaming or master schedule development problems in a manageable and effective rate. For instance, beginning in 9th grade, a school can provide professional development and ongoing coaching for 9th grade teams at an intensity needed to ensure implementation fidelity. Also, if the master schedule does not allow for multi-tiered instruction during the school day, instead of addressing the whole schedule in the first year, the leadership team can augment just the 9th grade schedule. I recommend that, when starting small, you consider beginning in transition years (e.g., 6th and 9th grade) where interventions have the greatest promise.

Q ***Cira Guevara***

How do you establish a multi-Tier system of supports for students who come from poverty, specifically dealing with at-risk behaviors and mindsets?

A ***Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.***

The most effective approach to building a multi-tiered system of supports for students from high poverty backgrounds is to ensure that instruction and interventions address both academic and engagement issues in an integrated fashion. For instance, instructional design should be focused on engaging students immediately and supporting sustained student engagement. All student engagement domains (academic, social, psychological and behavioral) should be considered when designing and implementing all tiers of instruction.

Academic Engagement: Particular focus should be paid to avoiding or removing barriers to student engagement and learning that are introduced by the instructional approaches and curricular materials and environmental variables utilized. Please consider the following simplified lesson plan example:

Lesson Focus Standard: SC.912.L.16.14: Describe the cell cycle, including the process of mitosis. Explain the role of mitosis in the formation of new cells and its importance in maintaining chromosome number during asexual reproduction.

1. Students will independently read a grade level text on mitosis.
2. After reading, each student will record 3 things that they learned about how mitosis results in the formation of new cells and 2 questions that they still have about mitosis.
3. Students will engage in a large-group discussion about mitosis, sharing what they have learned and posing their questions to others.
4. Student understanding of mitosis will be assessed by teacher observation of student dialogue during the large group discussion and a quiz on mitosis administered at the end of the lesson.

Although simplified, the above lesson closely represents many lesson plans that my team encounters when working in schools. The lesson requires students to read grade-level text independently, to organize and manage information about mitosis with very little structure, to discuss newly acquired knowledge openly within a large-group setting, and to demonstrate their learning through a pencil and paper quiz. When considering the high probability barriers of students from high poverty backgrounds such as issues related to background knowledge and vocabulary as well as often present barriers related to organization, sustained focus and attention, communication, academic risk-taking behaviors, below-level reading skills, and executive functioning (e.g. planning), the barriers introduced by the lesson above really stand out. For instance, students with below-level reading skills will not be able to engage in the learning process because they will not be able to access the information presented in the grade-level text. Students with organization or working memory issues will have difficulty recalling and recording three things that they learned and two questions that they still have. Students with writing issues will have

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difficulty recording their thoughts. Students with on-demand communication issues (e.g., shy students, students with communication disorders) will have difficulty participating effectively within the large-group discussion, etc. etc, etc. As such, the design of the lesson introduces barriers for student engagement and thus learning that have little to do with the actual learning that must take place. For instance, the science standard requires students to be able to explain the role of mitosis in the formation of new cells but says nothing about how students must access or interact with information about mitosis or how students should be expected to demonstrate their learning. Thus, instead of requiring all students to access information about mitosis from the same grade-level text, a variety of options for accessing the information from which students may choose should be made available. For instance, to remove the impact of below-level reading skills, information about mitosis and its role in cell reproduction could be provided via online tutorial or virtual demonstration, a video, leveled-texts, digital text with translation (e.g., for ELL students), digital text with on-demand supports such as embedded dictionary and text-to-speech options. Providing options for students that minimize or remove the impact of barriers to their academic engagement will increase engagement rates and learning outcomes.

Psychological Engagement: Ensuring students understand the relevancy of school and of the learning at-hand is critical to keeping students engaged in the learning process. Linking instruction to students? personal goals and aspirations will increase student interest and engagement with the content. Our observations of instruction within secondary school classrooms have revealed very little, if any, time spent discussing the importance of the day?s content or the relevancy to students? lives, goals, and aspirations. The result of this missing instructional component is droves of students reporting that school is *?boring?* which we are convinced at least in part means *?not relevant to me*?.

Supporting students to set short- and long-term goals, provide actionable feedback, and assist students to monitor their progress toward related academic and engagement (e.g., attendance, productivity) goals are developed, will support sustained student engagement and help students to understand the relationship between their engagement and their academic outcomes. Further, teaching students how to problem solve common issues and challenges encountered at school, at home and in the community will allow students to independently address barriers to their own engagement.

Social Engagement: Ensuring the learning environment is a safe and inclusive place for students within which all students feel comfortable taking academic risks such as asking and answering questions is critical. Learning environments within which student responses and/or questions are met with ridicule, frustration or rejection will cause students to disengage and will decrease academic achievement. As such, educators must work hard to set a tone of inclusiveness and of valuing persistence, struggling, and help-seeking behavior. Peer-relationship issues such as teasing or bullying have to be addressed severely and immediately. Secondary educators must be on the look-out for student teasing and intimidation which by the time students are in secondary schools often appear subtle in nature but continue to have devastating outcomes for targeted students.

A In addition to ensuring a safe and inclusive learning environment, students should be instructed in critical intra-personal skills such as active listening, effective communication, teaming, collaboration, and conflict management. Many of these social-emotional skills are explicitly included within the Common Core State Standards (e.g., within the Speaking and Listening standards) while others such as active listening are strongly implied by and foundational to mastering the standards. Providing students with opportunities to apply these inter-personal skills through structured peer collaboration and teaming is essential for full development.

Behavioral Expectations: In addition to other student engagement areas, ensuring that all students understand school and classroom rules as well as the consequences for following and for violating the expectation. Rules and expectations should be explicitly taught, visually displayed and consistently reinforced and retaught when necessary.

Addressing student engagement and learning problems by considering multiple intervention domains helps schools to tease apart very complex problems to identify actionable issues that impact student engagement and learning, producing more targeted and manageable action plans. Integrating student engagement strategies and supports into all instructional environments is a more efficient and effective approach to increasing student engagement and academic outcomes than trying to address student engagement problems one student at a time or separately from academic issues.

Q ***Teri Lawler***
What are your recommendations for Tier 2 supports and interventions?

A ***Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.***
Tier 2 interventions should be designed to support student success with core instructional content. To accomplish this, tiered intervention supports must be closely aligned with core instruction in terms of focus and pacing. The tiered instruction students receive in Tier 2 should be designed to address the knowledge and skill gaps that are most pertinent to what students are currently expected to learn during core instruction. The integration of core instructional materials into tiered intervention utilizing a preview-preteach model of intervention will maximize the effectiveness of intervention and increase student benefit from core instruction. For instance, instead of facilitating word study or practicing vocabulary acquisition strategies with a random set words, utilize important content-specific vocabulary that students will need to know to master their current science/social studies/ELA content. Interventions that tie very closely to core content instruction will be more effective than interventions that operate independent of core instruction. Further, tier 2 interventions should address both student academic and engagement needs through the incorporation of strategies such as goal setting, increased high quality feedback, and involving students in monitoring their own progress. Also, be mindful to select the most highly effective teachers who have the skills to quickly form positive and motivating relationships with students.

Group Size: Tier 2 intervention groups should be small enough to ensure students who have a high

likelihood of making errors receive the immediate corrective feedback required to prevent them from practicing and thus strengthening these errors. Additionally, struggling students also need increased opportunities for productive practice within which they can apply new, more effective strategies and practice them until fluent.

Angie Fogle

What do you see as the biggest problem that RTI teams encounter when first implementing this intervention at the Secondary Level?

Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.

The biggest problem encountered by secondary teams when first implementing RtI is consensus building. Secondary educators need to understand why increasing student outcomes is critical and that what is provided to students in terms of instruction, curriculum, and environment impacts student outcomes in sometimes positive and sometimes negative ways. Further, secondary educators need to understand the purpose and expected outcomes of multi-tiered interventions as well as the potential and necessary changes to teaming structures, master schedules, professional development protocols, etc. that are needed to improve core instructional outcomes and multi-tiered intervention supports. RtI must be communicated as a whole-school continuous improvement framework designed to maximize all students outcomes and not as something we do for some students who don?t learn. Next to consensus, teaming practices, or lack thereof, at the secondary school level are often barriers to implementation and must be addressed by school leadership to support RtI implementation.

Sherry Geier

What types of interventions create change for high school students? We are struggling with making choices between working on core skills and working with the student to help them pass their classes and obtain credits necessary to graduate.

Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.

The most effective interventions in secondary schools are designed to accomplish three important goals: 1) close existing knowledge and skill gaps, 2) address students? proximal needs (i.e., remove or lessen the impact of barriers to students learning current content), and 3) support high levels of student engagement. Fortunately, carefully designed interventions can accomplish all three goals without forcing intervention teachers to sacrifice any of the three. By adopting a pre-teach-preview, rather than a re-teach-review, model of instruction, intervention teachers maximize student benefit from core instruction by addressing high probability barriers to student engagement and learning up-front. For instance, instead of re-teaching science content because a student?s below level reading skills, vocabulary deficits, and limited comprehension strategies precluded him from accessing the science content, intervention teachers incorporate the science text into intervention and use the text for fluency practice, to teach content-area vocabulary and vocabulary acquisition and comprehension strategies. Because the instruction occurs as part of a

A pre-teach, the student will be more prepared to receive science instruction and will consequently be more engaged, retain more of the science content and require less re-teaching on the other end of instruction.

Further, because adolescent reading is highly dependent on students? background knowledge and vocabulary acquisition, incorporating the content area, informational text into intervention helps to strengthen the student?s reading proficiency overall. We have found that schools must be much more strategic with intervention time and energy within secondary schools than is perhaps required in elementary. We must build intervention programming that prevents students from acquiring new knowledge and skill gaps while we are attempting to close old ones. New gaps in knowledge and skills leads to disengagement and course failures, which is essentially the recipe for school dropout. While addressing previously acquired gaps is important, we must address the gaps when it makes the most sense given what students are expected to know, understand, and do during core instruction.

For instance, it makes little sense for math intervention to focus on closing gaps related to multiplying decimals if the students are learning how to divide fractions during core instruction. This mismatch will only cause confusion and disengagement for students who are likely to be struggling with both concepts simultaneously. Instead, math intervention should work to intensify the overall instructional package the student is receiving. This can be accomplished by addressing gaps directly related to core instructional success such as multiplying fractions, intentionally link the skill of multiplying fractions to the skill of dividing fractions so that students understand the connection, and preview and practice dividing fractions prior to initial core instruction. In this scenario, additional intervention resources are not needed. The amount of intervention providers, time, and materials remains the same. The increased alignment will result in much improved student outcomes.

Q ***Ruth Poage-Gaines***

As a lead coach and MTSS Facilitator, these are still questions that are brought up as barriers to moving forward with MTSS at the district/building high school level, including how to provide professional development to assist with struggling learners within a high school system with CCSS and other initiatives always taking the PD time?

A ***Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.***

This is a great question that truly deserves ongoing dialogue and problem solving at all levels of leadership (state, district, and school). One of the biggest challenges to continuous improvement that my team and I face as we provide coaching to schools and districts is the tendency to look toward the level just below our own to identify barriers without fully examining the barriers introduced at our own level. For instance, state personnel often identify district issues, district leaders identify school leadership issues, school leaders identify instructional (teacher) issues, and teachers identify student and parent issues when identifying the barriers to increasing student outcomes. Although barriers certainly exist at all levels of the system, sustained continuous

A improvement of any system will require all levels of the organization to examine and address barriers that are most directly under their control while communicating issues that are beyond their direct influence to those who can address the issue. Consider the following example:

From this?	To this?
High school Algebra 1 teachers blame middle school educators and a perceived general apathy amongst students (likely attributable to parents? not valuing education) related to mathematics	• High School Algebra 1 teachers work together to identify high probability barriers to student engagement and learning and to design lesson plans with their students? needs in mind. • The teachers engage in lesson study to determine the effectiveness of instructional practices and curricular and environmental supports for their students. • The teachers expand effective practices and supports and discontinue less effective approaches. • Teachers communicate with school leadership team regarding the impact of insufficient common planning time on their ability to improve instructional practices. They also articulate the need for lesson study facilitation support and in-classroom coaching to support implementation of school and district instructional priorities.
School leadership team blames the lack of improvement in student outcomes on teachers, citing the observation of insufficient application of instructional best practices. School leaders require teachers to attend professional development and place several Algebra teachers on improvement plans.	• School leaders collect information from teachers to identify barriers to improving their instructional practices by which teachers cite insufficient common planning time for ongoing lesson study and a lack of coaching support for lesson study and the integration of school and district instructional priorities. • School leaders re-design master schedule to allow for sufficient common planning time for Algebra teachers and allocate school-based leadership team member time to content area planning teams to support the ongoing lesson study process. • School leaders communicate with district leaders regarding the need to change policies related to options for high school schedules which currently restricts options for scheduling common planning time for teachers so that schools can have more flexibility to provide sufficient common planning time. • School leaders communicate with district leaders the need for additional coaching resources and facilitation support for lesson study, following district professional development and to support district instructional priorities.

District leaders blame school leaders for failing to improve instructional practices and student outcomes.	• District leaders collect information from school leaders and teachers to identify barriers to improving instructional practices and student outcomes and discover that the current policies governing master schedule development does not currently allow for sufficient common planning during the school day for ongoing lesson study. The district also discovers that although ample professional development is offered for school personnel aligned with district instructional priorities, limited coaching resources are available to support implementation at the school level. • District leaders augment district policies that govern master schedule development to allow for increased common planning options, clearly communicates the expectation for common planning, and provides support for schools to redesign master schedules to allow for common planning. • District leaders augment district professional development plan to increase the availability of coaching support for schools aligned with district priorities. District also augments plan to allow for the development of school-level instructional coaches to support reading and mathematics instructional improvement.

Examining and addressing the barriers present at each level of the organization will allow for more effective and sustained continuous improvement. It is important to remember that all educators work within a school *system* and are not independent contractors each doing his or her own thing. Thus, it is imperative for districts to recognize that when many schools demonstrate a problem (e.g., low reading proficiency rates) that the schools are not independent entities refusing to improve but part of a system with systems-level constraints and barriers that impact the schools as a group. District leaders who spend their time identifying and addressing common barriers to school functioning, teaching, and learning (i.e., those that impact many schools) related to district-level policies, practices, and organization that are able to be augmented at the district level will see improved school outcomes. Similarly, school leaders should seek to understand and address barriers to teaching and learning that result from school-level policies, practices, organization, etc.).

There is so much more to talk about here with limited time and space. With this in mind, I will offer one more recommendation. Do not try to compete with large initiatives such as CCSS implementation. In fact, there is really no reason to compete. Instead, look for ways to integrate the RtI framework and problem solving process into these priorities. We have worked hard to demonstrate the relationship between CCSS implementation and RtI in Florida and have enjoyed much success in helping educators to understand how to engage in data-based planning and problem solving with the expected levels of performance set by the standards as well as how to provide appropriate multi-tiered intervention supports aligned with CCSS expectations. So, instead of competing, ask yourself, ?How can the RtI framework and problem solving process be integrated

into [insert high priority initiative] in order to maximize the impact of both??

James Bauernfeinid

The schools I consult in have no issue in wanting to implement the RTI program, the question asked is "Where do I get 45 minutes of uninterrupted time" (State of Tennessee) out of a 4x4 block schedule? The schools have been able to steal 30 minutes but not 45.

Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.

There are actually several approaches to incorporating uninterrupted intervention time during a 4X4 schedule. The first is to incorporate an Intervention-Reteach-Enrichment (IRE) period daily for students within which students are assigned to an intervention group, receiving tutoring, and/or have access to enrichment opportunities (e.g., jazz band) according to their needs. The thirty minutes your schools have been able to set aside may be sufficient to begin with as long as the thirty minute period occurs every day and transition to and use of the IRE is efficient. I recommend providing a variety of intervention, reteach, and enrichment opportunities during this period matched to your students? needs. Make sure to plan for and carry out the collection of progress monitoring data that will help the schools to determine the sufficiency of the intervention and re-teach programming. Schools will want to collect data that will allow them to answer the questions, ?What percentage of students receiving intervention are a) closing knowledge and skill gaps (e.g, multiplying fractions), b) performing successfully in the aligned core-instructional environment (e.g., 6th grade math course), and c) on-track for on-time progression (e.g., being promoted from 6th to 7th grade)?? and ?What percentage of students receiving re-teaching are performing successfully within their core instructional environment and are on-track for on-time progression?? This data will help determine the sufficiency of intervention and re-teach programming. If your schools find that high percentages of students are responding positively to the interventions then there may not be a need to increase the amount of intervention time.

One thing to keep in mind with this scenario is that when time cannot be increased, it becomes increasingly important to attend carefully to group sizes. Ultimately, students with more intensive needs require more immediate corrective feedback to prevent them from practicing high probability errors and more opportunities for supported, productive practice. Given this, providing intervention in small groups for students with more intensive needs is critical, particularly when intervention time is limited. Implementing an IRE period can help provide the personnel resources needed to provide smaller intervention groups because all personnel can be utilized simultaneously. Enrichment groups can be large and taught by a wide variety of personnel from media specialists to fine and performing arts teachers, allowing content-area teachers, intervention providers, and student services to provide small group instruction for students who need it.

An alternate, or complimentary, strategy for providing intervention time within a 4X4 schedule is to divide the specials/encore block into 2 skinny periods. One skinny period continues to be utilized to provide student electives while the other skinny period can be attached to a specific content area or areas to provide support for all or some students. For instance, if a school?s data indicates that

A a large percentage of its students fail Algebra 1 (e.g., greater than 20%), the school may choose to provide an additional skinny period for all Algebra 1 students. Another school with lower course failure rates may choose to provide the support class only for students who are at-risk for failing Algebra 1 as determined by past and present mathematics performance. In this scenario, students who do not need the additional support course would have access to additional elective options. It is important to note that although the additional skinny period does not have to be blocked with the existing Algebra 1 block in terms of time but must be tightly aligned and integrated with core Algebra 1 instructional content. Also, additional time is effective only when the instruction provided during the additional time is explicit, systematic, and engaging.

Q ***Mary Jo Wegenke***

Do you have a recommended problem solving process and tools to conduct data meetings at the high school level? What data sets are high schools analyzing during data days?

A ***Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.***

We have found that the most critical and influential data to review during data days is Early Warning Indicator data. This data is typically readily available within the school, is highly predictive of student progression and graduation, and allows school personnel to systematically address barriers to student engagement and learning utilizing prevention and early intervention, rather than a reactive-firefighting, approach. The National High School Center has provided an immense amount of tools and resources to guide problem solving utilizing early warning data including an implementation guide which can be found on the Early Warning Systems page of their website.

Early warning data, which includes both academic and engagement indicators, are essential for the identification of students and systems in need of support. One thing that we know for sure is that struggling students and systems (e.g., Algebra 1 pipeline and course) are highly likely to continue to struggle without intervention. For instance, a student who accrued excessive absenteeism during middle grades is virtually guaranteed to accrue excessive absenteeism during 9th grade without intervention. The silver lining here is that schools do not have to wait until students begin to disengage (e.g., not attend school, demonstrate behavior issues) or fail courses before intervention services can be provided. Instead, schools can anticipate, with appropriate data, which students and percentage of students will need support long before students arrive for the first day of school. Anticipating needs rather than reacting to them allows schools to design the master schedule and secure the intervention resources needed to meet the needs of incoming students before the school year begins. Similarly, schools can anticipate the needs of specific content areas (e.g., math), courses (e.g., Algebra 1), and grade-levels (e.g., 9th grade) utilizing early warning trend data and allocate resources accordingly. Because system-level variables (i.e., instruction, curriculum and environmental) typically remain relatively stable over time, so do student outcomes (e.g., approximately 64% of students pass Algebra 1 each year). The silver lining here is that school teams can identify content areas, courses, and grade-levels that require instructional, curricular, and/or environmental changes (and the support to make such changes) in order to improve student outcomes. This information should be used to make difficult and important

A decisions regarding the focus of school improvement efforts and the allocation of resources such as professional development and coaching, time within the master schedule, and personnel support.

In Florida, we have adopted and adapted the National High School Center?s early warning and college and career readiness data recommendations and have focused our problem solving utilizing the early warning data outlined in the table below. The indicators outlined in black text represent the early warning indicators for on-time progression and graduation. The indicators outlined in green text are indicators that indicate whether or not students are on-track to graduate college and career ready. We recommend that a school begin by problem solving utilizing the indicators in black first to support student progression toward on-time graduation. As the school team becomes more comfortable with problem solving with early warning data, the college and career readiness indicators should be slowly incorporated.

Middle School Early Warning and CCR Progression Indicators	
Performance and Progression Indicators	• Successful credit earning behavior (earns sufficient credits for appropriate progression) • Successfully passes both math and ELA courses • Calculated Grade Point Average at or above 2.0 • Misses less than 10% of the available instructional time due to attendance and/or behavioral issues • On-track for participation in accelerated learning programs and/or college- and career-ready courses of study in high school • Successful performance on standards-aligned assessments of middle school core content (Common Assessments, End of Course, state assessments, PARRC/Smarter Balance)
Postsecondary Planning Indicators	• Successful completion of a detailed College, Career and Education Plan outlining: ◦ College and career goals ◦ Aligned high school course of study ◦ Achievement levels required to access and achieve student?s college and career goals
High School Early Warning and CCR Progression Indicators	

Progression and Readiness Indicators	• Sufficient credit accumulation and recovery • Grade Point Average 2.0 or high • Misses less than 10% of the available instructional time due to attendance and/or behavioral issues • Participation in accelerated learning programs and/or college- and career-ready courses of study • Successfully completing Algebra 1 by 9th Grade • Performance on standards-aligned assessments of high school core content (Common Assessments, End of Course, state assessments, PARRC/Smarter Balance) • Performance on College Readiness Assessments (e.g., ACT/SAT/CPT)
Postsecondary Access and Enrollment Indicators	• Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and postsecondary applications completed • Postsecondary program enrollment • Employment applications completion • Internship or employment opportunity acceptance

It is important to note that while early warning data are critical for problem identification, progress monitoring, and program evaluation, the data is insufficient for problem analysis. Early warning data helps schools to identify students and systems in need of intervention and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions but does not tell you *?why?* students or systems are off-track or what type of support is needed. Course failures and disengagement (e.g., attendance/discipline problems) should be regarded as symptoms of underlying issues, typically involving instructional, curricular, and/or environmental variables. For instance, students may not attend school regularly due to adult-student relationship issues, perceptions of instructional relevancy, peer-relationship issues, transportation issues, or a host of other school-influenced variables. Understanding the root causes of course performance and engagement problems typically requires school teams to collect data beyond the early warning indicators such as student, teacher, and parent survey and focus group data and structured observations of instructional practices.

Q ***Kerry Anne O'Toole***

Any suggestions for implementing RTI at a special act high school? The students at the school where I work are all already classified through CSE, the majority with Emotional Disability. The students come to us from other school districts when they are in need of a smaller more therapeutic setting.

A ***Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.***

My suggestions for implementing RtI within any ?alternative? setting, whether the setting is a dropout prevention or alternative school or a center school for exceptional student education students with very intensive needs, is very similar to the recommendations I make in all school settings. If we regard RtI as a framework for maximizing student outcomes that involves the provision of effective core instruction and interventions matched to student needs and the

A implementation of collaborative data-based problem solving to make important educational decisions then we can apply this same framework across all schools and school types. The difference is not in the RtI framework or with the data-based problem solving process but with what will need to be provided related to core, supplemental and intensive instruction, and supports. For instance, it is very likely given the student population that all students will require on-going and intensive therapeutic counseling, meaning that therapeutic counseling will be part of core. In other words, the core instruction and support package provided at the school will need to be more intensive for ALL students and will look very different from the traditional high school down the street. The use of a data-based problem solving process will help school teams to determine the intensity and scope of academic and engagement problems (i.e., problem identification), understand the specific barriers to student engagement and learning (i.e., problem analysis), design and implement instruction and interventions to remove identified barriers (i.e., intervention design and implementation), and monitor student progress and the impact of instruction/interventions on student outcomes (i.e., progress monitoring and program evaluation). As with all schools, schools that serve very high risk students must begin by focusing on core instructional, curricular, and environmental barriers to student engagement and learning within the core instructional environment. For example, if maintaining focus and attention are wide-spread barriers that impact many students? ability to maintain high levels of engagement within the learning process, then core instruction should be designed to lessen the impact of such barriers by implementing appropriate instructional strategies (e.g., incorporate movement, provide instruction in small, connected chunks, provide increased opportunities for authentic and hands-on learning activities) and curricular and environmental options that support focus and attention (e.g., use of timers, apps that support executive functioning, graphic organizers, technology, high interest materials). In addition to these strategies, core instruction should also include explicit instruction and guided practice in self-monitoring and management. Intensifying core instruction by making it more explicit, systematic, and guided and by providing options that support student engagement, access and interaction with content will improve core instructional effectiveness and reduce the need for remediation and intervention. Certainly, some students will require more intensive or specialized support than is available during core instruction and these students should be provided supplemental and/or intensive intervention matched to their needs and aligned with core instructional expectations and goals. Our experience has taught us that it is not the RtI framework or data-based problem solving process that needs to change when we are serving high-risk students but the amount of available resources. For instance, it is not uncommon for us to find that a district?s ?alternative? or ?center? schools are allocated very similar resources in terms of personnel, length of school day, materials, etc., as traditional schools within the district. The result of this rather uniform resource allocation is incredibly differential student outcomes, with higher risk student populations paying a huge price. If we are to increase the effectiveness of schools which serve high risk students (including those with low SES populations), districts will need to begin to allocate resources to schools matched to the aggregate needs of each school?s population. The facts are that higher needs schools need more resources to meet the needs of their higher risk students. When resource allocation to schools is focused on equal rather than equitable, high needs schools fail to meet the needs of their high risk student population. With this in mind, district leaders should engage in district-level data-based problem solving with schools as the unit of

A analysis in order to facilitate effective resource allocation a multi-tiered support systems for schools. Several resources exist which focus on meeting the needs of high risk populations. One of my favorites by Robert Balfanz is *Overcoming the Poverty Challenge to Enable College and Career Readiness for All: The Crucial Role of Student Supports*, available at the Everyone Graduates website. Although this particular resource focuses on meeting the needs of students from high poverty backgrounds, I believe it offers much insight and several recommendations that are appropriate for all schools serving high risk students.

Q ***Kelly***
How can RTI help teachers that are frustrated with secondary students that "just won't work?"

A ***Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.***
Like with any problem we would like to solve, we must spend time and energy understanding the root of the issue. ?Why? are students disengaged? What barriers to engagement exist? Disengagement as evidenced by nonattendance, misbehavior, and/or non-productivity are symptoms of a problem and need to be analyzed to understand how to address them. Student voice within this process is critical. One of my favorite quotes is, ??Understanding a complex process such as student engagement necessitates understanding the student experience from the perspective of the students themselves? (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012). Analyzing student engagement issues requires us to listen to and trust students? voice. As adults, we make many assumptions about the source of student disengagement, typically related to internal student, family and community issues. What we have found time and time again is that students when asked provide the most informative and helpful information relate to the barriers that cause or contribute to their disengagement and the facilitators that would help re-engage them. Educators typically cite parents and community factors, most of which are outside of our direct influence, while students provide immediately actionable information about needed changes to instruction, curriculum, and environment.

Related Reading from RTINetwork.org:

- Early Warning Systems: Moving From Reaction to Prevention by Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D.
- Problem Analysis Within an RTI Framework at a Secondary School by Matthew K. Burns, Ph.D., Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D., Hollie Pettersson, Ph.D
- Response to Intervention for Literacy in Secondary Schools by Matthew K. Burns, Ph.D., University of Minnesota; Rebecca Sarlo, Ph.D., Florida PS/RtI Implementation Project; Hollie Pettersson, Ph.D., Canyons School District, Colorado
- Screening for Reading Problems in Grades 4 Through 12 by Evelyn S. Johnson, Ed.D., and Juli L. Pool, Ph.D.
- Response to Intervention in Secondary Schools: Is It on Your Radar Screen? by Barbara J. Ehren, Ed.D.

Additional Resources:

- National Center on Response to Intervention

- National High School Center