Response to Intervention/Instruction

Title: Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI)
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Recommendations:

• Educators must embrace a belief that all children can and will learn.
• All children are entitled to the highest quality instruction.
• Cultural environments rooted in rich collegiality and collaboration best support RtI.
• Research and evidenced-based practices must serve as the foundation of the decision-making process.
• Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI) should be defined and developed within a continuous school improvement process.

All students have a right to the highest quality instruction within supportive and caring learning environments. Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI) provides a framework for engaging educators in rich collegial dialog, based upon multiple data points, leading to the highest quality instruction that supports the growth of each and every child. An RtI process, founded upon rigorous learning targets, serves to ensure students who are career and college ready when they complete their K-12 school experiences.

What You Need to Know:

Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI) is a framework representing the alignment of instructional practices and data with the monitoring of student progress to improve student learning and behavior. RtI is a multi-tiered framework that moves from high-quality, differentiated universal classroom instruction through small group focused instruction to targeted individualized instruction, matching the best research-based instructional practices to student needs. The ongoing process of monitoring student progress serves to shape instruction and educational decision-making.

A clearly identified RtI framework will benefit student performance through:

• Early identification of student learning and behavior difficulties
• Coordination, collaboration and integration of efforts to serve student needs
• Equitable access to and delivery of high-quality instruction
Introduction:

The Appleton Area School District serves a diverse student population of 15,000, pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Overall, the district serves a population comprised of 24% students of color, 14% students with disabilities, and 37% students identified as economically disadvantaged. Our long-term commitment has been and continues to be focused upon carrying out the following belief:

As members of the Appleton Area School District, we believe that all students can learn at high levels when we:

• provide the highest quality instruction;
• maintain and communicate high expectations;
• create supportive learning environments that foster a sense of belonging; and
• develop and maintain strong community and home-school connections.

This commitment drives our efforts to continuously improve ourselves as educators, improve our schools and improve the entire district, so that our students’ dreams are attainable.

The Challenge:

Engaging students in the highest quality learning opportunities that assure improved learning for each student, while closing learning gaps between student groups, has driven the Appleton Area School District for many years. Providing educators with an instructional framework that supports the work that is done to assure learning for each student has been inconsistent. The challenge is to provide educators with structures that build educator dispositions and expertise to maximize student learning within collegial learning environments founded upon a commitment to a response to instruction framework; instruction must match the individual needs of students, so that “all students can and will learn.”

The Approach:

Build, support, and sustain a culture based upon a commitment to continuous improvement. To accomplish this, we have developed our local continuous school improvement process (CSIP) that each school is engaged in. CSIP is founded upon three objectives identified as: (1) a commitment to a rich response to instruction mind-set and environment; (2) building and sustaining a collaborative culture of improvement within each educator, team, school, and the entire district; and (3) building and sustaining strategic family and community partnerships to support student engagement and learning.
CSIP leads teams of educators from each school through a process that evolves throughout the entire year and truly never ends. This process is defined as follows:

1. **Team Readiness (May)**: Site Leadership Teams come together to develop their norms, working expectations, and meeting protocols. Teams also engage in team building activities, while building their understanding of Learning Forward’s *Standards for Professional Learning*.

2. **Data Digs (early/mid June)**: Site Leadership Teams come together to analyze various state, district, site, and classroom data (academic, behavioral, attendance, course enrollment, etc.), identify observations/hypotheses, and reflect upon ways to address challenges/issues.

3. **Clarifying Retreat (late June)**: Site Leadership Teams come together to revisit their Data Dig work and they craft their site improvement goal(s) and action plans to support the objectives centered upon Response to Instruction, Collaborative Culture of Improvement, and Strategic Family and Community Partnerships.

4. **Planning (July)**: Site Leadership Teams reconvene at their convenience to refine their goal(s) and action plans and establish progress monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure academic and behavioral success for all students.

5. **Commitment Retreat (mid/late August)**: Site Leadership Teams come together to receive constructive feedback to improve their goal(s), they develop specific year-long plans for how CSIPs will be shared and brought to life with the entire school community, and they identify possible ways to build a culture of celebration within their classrooms, teams, and schools.

6. **Site Team Meetings (September through May)**: Minimally, Site Leadership Teams meet monthly at their sites to implement, adjust, and monitor their CSIP.

7. **Implementation Visits (November and February/March)**: An Assessment, Curriculum & Instruction and a Student Services administrator visit sites during the late fall and late winter to facilitate Site Leadership Teams through a process of reviewing and reflecting upon the implementation of their CSIP. The specific foci of supporting CSIP plans adjustments to support student learning and building a culture of celebration for success are of primary importance.

8. **Team Reflection Retreat (April)**: Site Leadership Teams come together to reflect upon and respond to data collected during the improvement cycle, as well as the improvement process.

9. **Showcase Planning (May)**: Site Leadership Teams create a summary document that highlights their goal and success measure(s), as well as major learnings.
10. **Showcase Presentations (early June):** Site Leadership Teams come together to share their CSIP journeys, focused upon successes and learnings, with other district staff.

**The Results:**

Building and sustaining a culture founded upon continuous improvement is serving the Appleton Area School District well in its pursuit to develop rich response to instruction learning environments. Student achievement data, as well as anecdotal and perceptual data, suggest that CSIP is supporting our response to instruction efforts. Honoring the individual culture of each school, as well as the training and expertise of staff has allowed the Appleton Area School District to differentiate support assuring a commitment to continuous improvement at each school. We have learned that a “one size fits all” model does not work well in the pursuit to build the knowledge, skill, and expertise of staff, leading to the refinement and sustainment of a rich response to instruction environment within each classroom and school.

**Educational Value Points:**

A rich response to instruction/intervention based learning environment is essential to meet and propel learning for each and every student. Key elements to creating and sustaining such an environment include:

- Educators must embrace a commitment to doing whatever it takes to assure that all students learn.
- Collegial relationships that result from collaborative work within high-functioning learning communities must support continuous adult learning and the improvement of professional practice.
- Multiple data sources must regularly be collected, analyzed, and used to make data driven decisions resulting in improved academic and behavioral success for students.
- Educators cannot meet the academic and behavioral needs of students by themselves. Building and sustaining strategic family and community partnerships is essential to our students’ success.
- A vision and structures must be in place to support continuous improvement.

**References:**


*Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. SEDL, [http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/5.html](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/5.html)