Implementing the Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Protocols: Implications for School Social Workers

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If we can really understand the problem, the answer will come out of it, because the answer is not separate from the problem.
-Krishnamurti

Contextual Issues Affecting The Problem-Solving Process in General and Special Education

- IDEA Re-Authorization
  - Focus on academic outcomes
  - General education as baseline metric
  - Labeling as a "last resort"
  - Increasing general education options
  - Pooling building-based resources
  - Flexible funding patterns
  - RtI Introduced as option for LD eligibility
- ESEA Legislation-No Child Left Behind
- National Emphasis on Reading
- Evidence-based Interventions

Why Problem-Solving ?
BIG IDEAS

- AYP and Disaggregated Data (NCLB) move focus of attention to student progress, not student labels
- Building principals and superintendents want to know if students are achieving benchmarks, regardless of the students "type"
- Accurate "placements" do not guarantee that students will be exposed to interventions that maximize their rate of progress
- Effective interventions result from good problem-solving, rather than good "testing"
- Progress monitoring is done best with "authentic" assessment that is sensitive to small changes in student academic and social behavior

Big Ideas (con'd)

- Interventions must be "evidence based" (IDEA/NCLB)
- Response to Intervention(RtI) is the best measure of problem "severity"
- Program eligibility (initial and continued) decisions are best made based on RtI
- Staff training and support (e.g., coaching) improve intervention skills
- "Tiered" implementation improves service *efficiency*

Status of Reauthorization

- Title: "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act"
- Passed House in 2003, Senate in 2004
- Signed by President Bush in December.
- IN EFFECT July 1, 2005
- Regulations in Fall

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

- (B) Additional authority._In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention.
- Process refers to "Problem Solving Process"
- Responds refers to "Response to Intervention"

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(5) SPECIAL RULE FOR ELIBIGILITY DETERMINATION- In making a determination of eligibility under paragraph (4)(A), a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is—

(A) lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the ESEA of 1965);
(B) lack of instruction in math; or
(C) limited English proficiency.

Proposed Regs

- For a child suspected of having a specific learning disability,
- the group must consider, as part of the evaluation described in
- §§300.304 through 300.306, data that demonstrates that--

- (1) Prior to, or as a part of the referral process, the child was
- provided appropriate high-quality, research-based instruction in
- regular education settings, consistent with section 1111(b)(8)(D) and
- (E) of the ESEA, including that the instruction was delivered by
- qualified personnel; and

- (2) Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement
- at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student
- progress during instruction, was provided to the child's parents.

Proposed Regs

- (c) If the child has not made adequate progress after an appropriate
- period of time, during which the conditions in paragraphs (b)(1) and
- (2) of this section have been implemented, a referral for an
- evaluation to determine if the child needs special education and
- related services must be made.

Implications

- Poor/lack of instruction must be ruled out
- Curricular access blocked by any of the following must be addressed
  - Attendance
  - Health
  - Mobility
- Sufficient exposure to and focus on the curriculum must occur
- Frequent, repeated assessment must be conducted

Problem Solving

- A process that uses the skills of professionals from different disciplines to develop and evaluate intervention plans that improve significantly the school performance of students
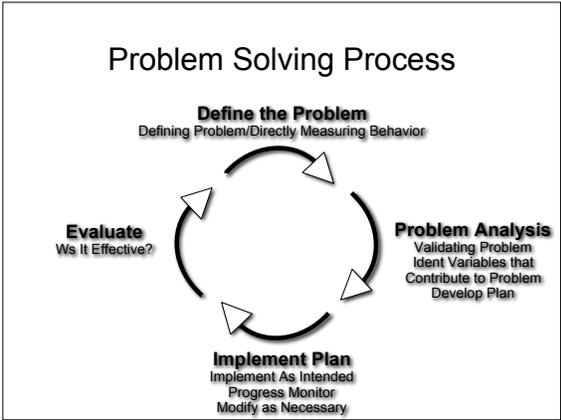
Problem Solving Process

Define the Problem
Defining Problem/Directly Measuring Behavior

Evaluate
Ws It Effective?

Problem Analysis
Validating Problem
Ident Variables that
Contribute to Problem
Develop Plan

Implement Plan
Implement As Intended
Progress Monitor
Modify as Necessary

Response to Intervention: How Well Are We Doing?

- A systematic and data-based method for determining the degree to which a student has responded to intervention.
- Determined solely through analyzing data
- Services should intensify for a student as the student response to intervention is below expectations.
- When the intensity of services exceed significantly those available through general education, then a student should be considered for special education funding.

Response to Intervention: How Well Are We Doing?

- What do we do when a student has been "placed" in special education but the student's rate of progress has not changed significantly?
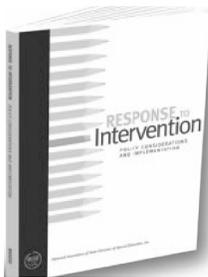- This has significant implications for special education re-evaluations under the RtI model.

RESPONSE TO Intervention POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Order at:
www.nasdse.org

Cost: $15 with discounts for large orders

Research on Problem-Solving/RtI

- Focused on accuracy of referral methods and response to proven interventions

- RtI methods (local comparisons and multiple measurement) were superior to teacher referral for problem accuracy.

- Teachers over-referred male students

- Greater proportion of African American students responded successfully to intervention relative to similarly at-risk Caucasian students. Reduced disproportional placements.

- Early intervention was powerful

- Significant reduction in LD placements

(VanDerHeyden, Witt, and Naquin)

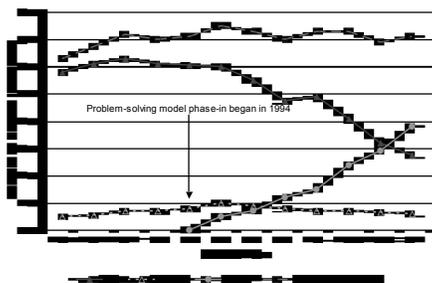Child-count percentages for students with high-incidence disabilities (1990-2001):
Minneapolis Public Schools

Problem-solving model phase-in began in 1994

Adapted from Marston (2001).

Percentage of African-American students at each stage of referral process at 41 schools

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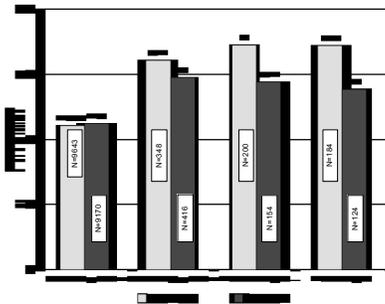
Research and PSM/RtI

- Problem identification is more accurate using the PSM (Gap Analysis) compared to simply teacher referral.

- The number of students requiring services has not diminished-- the WAY the services are provided has changed.

- Universal screening and progress monitoring practices ensure that students do not slip through the cracks

- In most cases, the percent of students receiving LD services has diminished.

What Have We Learned From Other States?

- Changes in assessment and intervention practices can occur-- generally it takes a number of years to effect the change completely.

- Teacher and parent satisfaction is greater with the PSM/RtI model (Illinois Flexible Service Delivery Model)

- Student performance is enhanced under the PSM/RtI model

- Student/parent rights do not change under this model

RtI:
The Conceptual Model

- **Integrate with Core Instructional Programs and Activities in the District**
  - Reading First, Early Intervention, Positive Behavior Support

- **3-4 Tiered Model of Service Delivery and Decision-Making**
  - "Universal"--What all students get
  - "Supplemental"--additional focus and intensity
  - "Intensive"--modifying instructional strategies
  - "Extraordinary"-- highly specialized methods

- **Problem-Solving**
  - Can occur at any level
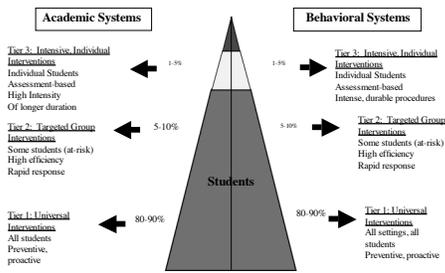 - Increases in intensity across levels

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Three Tiered Model of School Supports

Academic Systems		Behavioral Systems

Tier 3: Intensive, Individual Interventions
Individual Students
Assessment-based
High Intensity
Of longer duration
← 1-5%

1-5% → **Tier 3: Intensive Individual Interventions**
Individual Students
Assessment-based
Intense, durable procedures

Tier 2: Targeted Group Interventions
Some students (at-risk)
High efficiency
Rapid response
← 5-10%

5-10% → **Tier 2: Targeted Group Interventions**
Some students (at-risk)
High efficiency
Rapid response

Students

Tier 1: Universal Interventions
All students
Preventive, proactive
← 80-90%

80-90% → **Tier 1: Universal Interventions**
All settings, all students
Preventive, proactive

"Universal Interventions"

- Core instructional programs
  - Reading curriculum
  - Student progression requirements
- Core behavioral programs
  - School-based discipline policies
- Core home/community programs
  - Attendance program
  - Wellness curricula

"Supplemental Interventions"

- Increased time and focus in academic instruction
- Classroom-based behavioral interventions
- Building-based interventions for issues such as attendance, grief management
- Activate existing peer support programs, mediation

"Intensive Interventions"

- Specialized academic interventions
  - Intensive acceleration classrooms
  - 180+ minutes of instruction
- Social skills training, anger control training, parent education groups
- Behavior intervention plans
- Alternative education programs

Example of Tier Level Interventions

Reading

	Tier I	Tier 2		Tier 3
Time	90	120		180
Curricular Focus	5 areas	Less than 5		2 or less
Curricular Breadth	Core	Core + Supplemental		Core + Supplemental + Intensive
Frequency of Progress Monitoring	Yearly or greater	Monthly or greater		Weekly

**What is Necessary for RtI to
Work for Students and Districts?**

- *Early intervention* Use Kgn DIBELS and similar assessments for this purpose
- *Access to and Use of Data* Student data is the most accurate means of referring students for assistance and making judgments about intervention effectiveness
- *Accurate Tier 1 Decisions* Special education cannot "cure" large-scale pedagogical problems one student at a time

**What is Necessary for RtI to
Work for Students and Districts?**

- *Evidence-Based and Available Tier 2 Interventions* Good example is K-3 Academic Support Plan
- *Identifying SUCCESSFUL Tier 3 interventions PRIOR to making an eligibility determination*
- *Staff Professional Development*
- *Technology Support for Data Management and Access to Evidence-Based Tier 2 and 3 Interventions*

Do We REALLY Want To Do This?

- It Depends
- If we are interested in as many students AS POSSIBLE achieving benchmarks AND AYP--it's the best thing we have
- If we are looking to solve pedagogical management problems for diverse populations, then probably not.

How Long Will It Take to Implement this Effectively?

- 3-6 years
- Take it one step (e.g., skill) at a time.
- Start with young students (Kgn/DIBELS)
- Consider Tier 1 issues
- Create Tier 2 options with existing staff and resources
- Develop a 5 year PDP for staff
- Ease their job with social support and technology
- Use networks-avoid "reinventing" the wheel.

Implications for Social Workers

- Identification of "evidence-based" interventions for high rate student concerns
- Identification of Tier 1 interventions
- Identification of Tier 2 interventions
- Identification of Tier 3 interventions
- Methods to assess "response to intervention" in social work
- We must relate student outcomes to service delivery