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Response to Intervention: An Opportunity for School Counselor Leadership

This article describes a novel implementation of a response to intervention (RTI) model at the elementary school level, with particular focus on the role of the school counselor. The RTI process was used with all K-2 students as a way of delivering research-based best practice to all students, and as a way of documenting the educational progress of students identified as at risk for school problems. A member of the development and implementation team, the school counselor collected data to estimate the impact of the model on student progress after the first year of data collection. The article also shares implications for the role of the elementary school counselor.

Response to intervention (RTI) is a relatively new service delivery model of instruction and intervention that is recommended in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). According to the National Center on Response to Intervention, RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multilevel prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems (Fairbanks, Sugai, Gardino, & Lathrop, 2007; www.rtinetwork.org). Using the RTI framework, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities (Trolley, Haas, & Patti, 2009). School districts are moving to develop and implement RTI programs for their students that complement instructional practices already in place. This article describes how one school developed and implemented an RTI program that has become a model for implementation in the district and is consistent with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) position that the delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program aligns with the RTI process to improve student achievement and behavior (ASCA, 2008).

Impetus for RTI

RTI was developed out of a concern that the conventional method for identifying students with potential learning disabilities in need of special education services is inadequate (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 2005). The conventional method involves calculating the discrepancy between children's current ability and achievement levels. Inconsistencies in the way students are evaluated for special education services resulted in discrepant prevalence rates between states and school districts, calling into question the theoretical basis of the ability-achievement discrepancy classification framework and practice of identifying students in need of special education services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Additionally, schools using the ability-achievement discrepancy model (a) tend to overidentify students for inclusion in special education, especially minority students; (b) take too long to provide appropriate services to students in need, working against early intervention, which has been shown to significantly reduce reading problems in students; and (c) have difficulty determining whether low achievement was a result of an actual learning disability or poor teaching (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; NJCLD, 2005).

Several models of RTI exist, but all approaches share the core concepts that all students receive research-based instruction in general education, are screened for academic problems for which they need additional support, and are continuously screened with resulting data used to inform instruction (Howell, Patton, & DeIotte, 2008; NJCLD, 2005). RTI is a multitiered model, typically with three or four tiers characterized by increasingly targeted interventions. Though RTI models vary, they typically include:

1. Tier 1: General Curriculum
 - a. All students are universally screened
 - b. Curriculum is research based
 - c. Ongoing assessment and progress monitoring are used to modify curriculum according to student needs

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2. Tier 2: Intervention Curriculum
 - a. Students whose performance falls behind peers receive increasingly targeted interventions
 - b. Student progress is closely monitored and intervention is modified according to student needs
 - c. Parents are consulted and informed of child's response to specific interventions
 - d. Teachers working in Tier 2 receive training to deliver research based intervention curriculum
3. Tier 3: Intensive Curriculum
 - a. Students are provided with specialized, individual instruction including more intensive instruction and smaller group size
 - b. Student progress is monitored daily and intervention is modified according to student needs
 - c. Service providers, including counseling, physical therapy, speech, and others, provide individual services as necessary
 - d. Students whose performance does not improve when provided with increasingly intensive instruction are referred to the school's Child Study Team to determine whether students are eligible for special education or related services. Parents are consulted during this process (NJCLD, 2005; Trolley, Haas, & Patti, 2009).

The 2004 LD Roundtable (see Trolley et al., 2009) suggested that that RTI programs also possess the following characteristics:

- high quality, research-based instruction and behavior supports in general education;
- scientific, research-based interventions focused specifically on individual student difficulties and delivered with appropriate intensity;
- use of a collaborative approach by school staff for development, implementation, and monitoring of the intervention process;
- data-based documentation reflecting continuous monitoring of student performance and progress during interventions;
- documentation of parental involvement throughout the process;
- documentation that the timelines described in the federal regulations are adhered to; and
- systematic assessment and documentation that the interventions used were implemented with fidelity. (p. 30)

RTI Best Practice

Recommendations for best practice in implementing RTI programs include phasing in the program; pro-

viding Tier 1, 2, and 3 teachers with extensive training; monitoring student progress; and adapting instruction accordingly on a daily basis. Intervention is measured using curriculum-based measurements (CBM), which are short and timed. Curriculum-based assessment (CBA) is testing that provides instructional adaptations (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005). The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) calls for evaluations of sites that have demonstrated best practices in RTI implementation and outcomes so that these models can be replicated nationwide (NJCLD, 2005).

This article details the implementation of RTI in kindergarten through second grade at Bobcat Elementary School (fictitious school name), a school recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as having a model RTI program. Bobcat Elementary School offers a replicable model for RTI implementation supporting the federal government's goal to have RTI implemented in all schools by 2012 (Bender & Shores 2007).

Implementing RTI

RTI is called Responsive Instruction (RI) in Loudoun County Public Schools, Virginia. This name change was chosen to serve the needs of students achieving at all levels and incorporate 21st-century critical thinking, abstract reasoning, and grade-level Standards of Learning (SOL). Focus grades for the pilot year 2009-2010 at Bobcat Elementary School were kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Three schools piloted RI programs in Loudoun County during the 2009-2010 school year, including one middle school. Four additional schools will implement RI in the 2010-2011 school year. One district administrator is focused on RI district-wide implementation. The district developed an action plan that offers specific strategies to build consensus and support, conduct universal screening, provide core instruction, monitor progress, and identify research-based intervention strategies. Leadership team members from all RI participating schools in the district meet monthly with district staff to debrief implementation progress and discuss program issues. Work on RI began in the summer of 2009, as key staff participated in a two-day staff development conference. Bins containing research-based interventions were created by instructional staff. The initial success of the program was a direct result of the dedication of the leadership team and staff, and the support from the district administrator.

RI Program Description

The RI program at Bobcat Elementary School is unique in that, in addition to the Tier 2 intervention groups for identified students working on specific

Table 1. Overview of RI Program 2009-2010

Participants	September 2009	January 2010	*June 2010
Intervention Instructors	13 Teachers, 1- Assistant	13 Teachers, 1- Assistant	13 Teachers, 1 - Assistant
Discovery Instructors	7 Specialists, 1 Classroom Teacher	7 Specialists, 1 Classroom Teacher	7 Specialists, 1 Classroom Teacher
Total Students	205	197	193
Tier 1 – Students	113, 55.1%	119, 60.4%	119, 61.6%
Tier 2 – Students	91, 44.3%	78/197, 39.6%	84, 43.5%
Tier 3 – Students	12, 5.8%	Not implemented during this timeframe	5, 2.5%
Students in child study	8	10	15
Students receiving special education support	8	8	17, **4 in Tier 1

Note. Screening was completed in April instead of June and used to inform placement for 4thQuarter RI; four students in Tier I receive special education support services not related to reading.

literacy skills, it incorporates the needs of students achieving at all levels with a program called Discovery. The program provides Tier 1 students with two-week direct instruction units that focus on 21st-century critical thinking, abstract reasoning, and grade-level Standards of Learning (SOL).

The Tier 2 interventions are provided by two kindergarten teachers, three first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, one ELL (English language learner) teacher, two special education teachers, and one reading specialist. Their roles include teaching, monitoring progress, and communicating the students' progress or lack of progress to the homeroom teacher and RI Leadership Team. The Discovery program provides enrichment curriculum to Tier 1 students functioning on or above grade level. The RI Discovery units are taught by instructional faculty including those teaching art, music, physical education, and technology, and the librarian, school counselor, regular education teachers, and the gifted teacher.

RI has provided a process by which educators can gather the data for all students, and it allows for skill-specific early intervention in literacy. RI helps staff determine the skills with which children are struggling and targets those specific skills for intervention. RI provides concrete data that pinpoints where a student needs the most assistance. Although educators are expected to identify deficit areas and provide remediation, this has not always been done and has been dependent on the skill level of the educator. Teacher concerns in the past have resulted in referrals for special education services without documentation about the types of interventions that have

been implemented. RI is thought to increase literacy levels and thereby provide targeted early intervention that may result in fewer special education referrals.

Scope of RI Implementation

Table 1 provides an overview of the RI program at Bobcat Elementary for 2009-2010 and indicates instructors and students participating in the tiered program. It lists the numbers of students receiving Tier 3, special education services, and students that are involved in the child study process. Typically, universal screening is conducted in June but the RI Leadership Team decided to conduct the screening six weeks earlier in order to obtain benchmarks for the pilot year of the RI program.

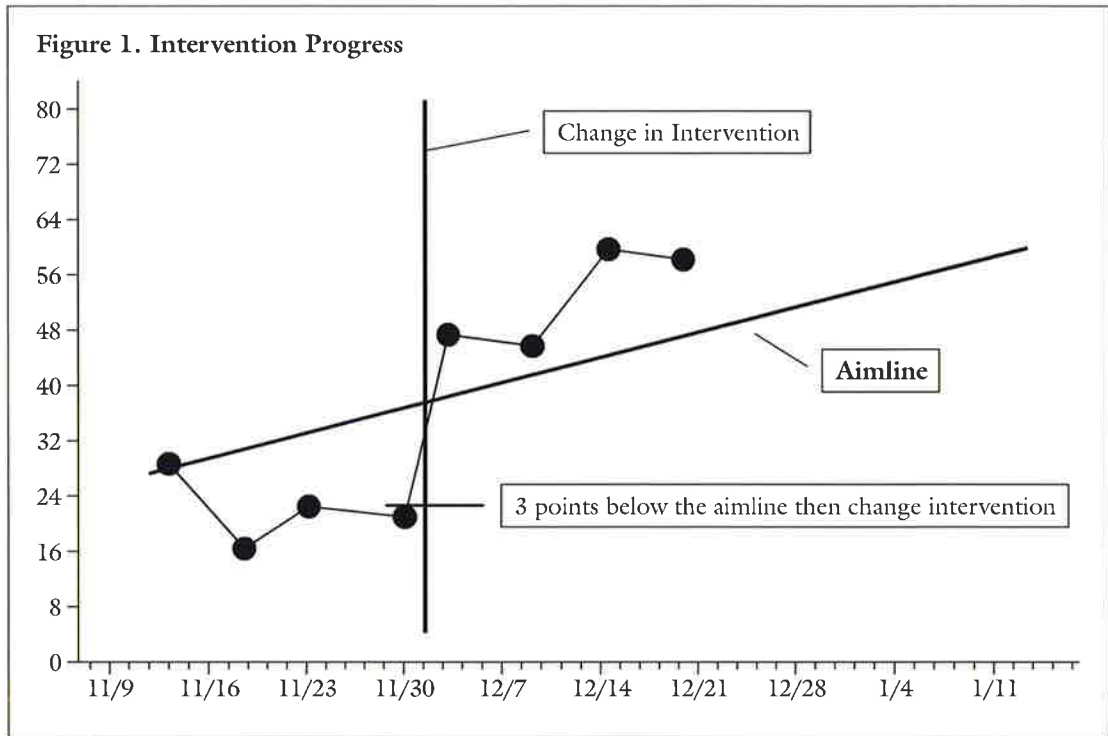
Screening and Student Placement

The diagnostic staff, consisting of the school psychologist, educational diagnostician, reading specialist and administrative intern, universally screen all students in kindergarten through second grade. The RI Leadership Team, which includes the principal, school psychologist, educational diagnostician, reading specialist, two special education teachers, general education teacher, occupational therapist, administrative intern, and school counselor, evaluates the screening data and teacher recommendations. Students are placed in Tier 2 Intervention or Tier 1 Discovery groups.

The RI Leadership Team looks first at universal screening, using AIMSweb screening probes (AIMSweb.com; Pearson Education, 2008). The AIMSweb components provide one comprehensive progress monitoring system, endorsed by the

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Leadership team members from all RI participating schools in the district meet monthly with district staff to debrief implementation progress and discuss program issues.



National Center for Response to Intervention. AIMSweb is a benchmark and progress monitoring system based on direct, frequent and continuous student assessment. Students are screened on fluency first. If they do not pass for grade level on fluency, then they are screened on specific reading skills. The results are reported to students, parents, teachers and administrators via a Web-based data management and reporting system. Students who score lower than the 25th percentile using national normative data based are flagged. Second, developmental reading assessment (DRA) benchmarks for students are examined to determine if the student is on grade level for reading. Third, the team considers the classroom teacher recommendation, based on daily performance. The philosophy of placement at Bobcat Elementary is to overidentify students for Tier 2 if any concerns are present and the child's scores are borderline Tier 1. Approximately 40% (see Table 1) of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students received Tier 2 intervention during the 2009-2010 school year at Bobcat Elementary.

The school counselor is highly involved in student placement school-wide with the belief that appropriate teacher placement is the best intervention for a student. The school counselor also places students in RI groupings. Serving on the Leadership Team, the counselor provides the master grouping list of all students and maintains any changes as the school year progresses, and places new students, communicating and coordinating screening and grouping for RI.

Tier 2: Intervention Groups

The school has eight Tier 2 Intervention groups with no more than eight students per group. The groups are provided daily instruction for 25 minutes each morning for total of eight weeks. During progress monitoring, if a student has four monitoring points out of six below their individually set aimline or progress goals, instruction may be changed or the student may be referred for additional assistance to the RI Leadership Team using the Student Not Progressing (SNP) form (see Figure 2). Aimlines, or progress goals, are set using AIMSweb based on a universal screening score for the student and reasonable gains (usually 1.5-2.0 with 1 being standard benchmark growth for grade level skill) for an eight-week period. For example, a second grade child may need to gain three to four additional words per minute fluency per week in order to catch up to grade level benchmark, whereas a student who is already on benchmark is expected to make one to two words per minute. The eight groups were developed using a research-based intervention manual, Reading Strategies for Struggling Readers (Ballard, Bray, Campbell, DiFilippo, & McNabb, 2008) that included specific skill focused interventions (i.e., Cavanaugh, Dickey, Kim, Drezmien, Levy, Twiddy, 2005; Gillon, 2004; Shapiro, 2004). The Intervention groups at Bobcat Elementary in 2009-2010 were:

1. **Letter Recognition:** identifying and naming uppercase and lowercase letters.
2. **Phoneme Identification:** matching sounds to

letters. Students must be able to identify and manipulate sounds, associating them with corresponding letters.

3. **Blending and Segmenting:** increases a student's awareness of the individual sounds in language, including how each of these sounds is represented by a letter or a combination of letters. Students learn to manipulate sounds and letters to form words.
4. **Rime:** spelling patterns, phonograms, or word families. Onset refers to the letters that precede the rime. Students segment words between an onset (/fl/ in the word flat) and the rime (at at the end of flat). Rime follows patterns that children more easily understand.
5. **Sight:** words for which students can recognize the meaning and pronunciation automatically. Words are read as whole units. Sight words play a critical role as a child learns to read, building confidence and forming the foundation for word analysis strategies.
6. **Nonsense:** words that do not make sense, that do not have meaning. The ability to read nonsense words requires a student to understand that letters represent sounds in words and that those sounds can be blended together to make "words." This skill enables students to read and decode unfamiliar words.
7. **Fluency:** the ability to read accurately, quickly, and with prosody (reading with appropriate expression and intonation).
8. **Handwriting**

Tier 1: Discovery Groups

Bobcat Elementary has eight Tier 1 Discovery groups of 15-20 students each. The groups are provided daily direct instruction for 25 minutes each morning for a total of two weeks. RI Discovery educators create their own two-week units (see Figure 3 for an example of a Discovery Instruction Class Overview) supporting the Virginia Standards of Learning, 21st-century critical thinking, and abstract reasoning skills. (see Figure 4, Chess Unit Plan, for an example of a Discovery Unit). Discovery Units were reviewed before implementation by an administrator and assistance was provided by the RI Leadership Team to control for SOL alignment and best practices.

Discovery groups rotate every two weeks to different specialists for a different unit. In the ninth week of each quarter, Intervention group students go to a Discovery class for one week. This is to allow Intervention group students time with Discovery instructors and lessons. Tier 1 Discovery students stay with their classroom teacher, who addresses other instructional needs. For example, students may receive small group assistance in math during

SNP FORM

Student Not Progressing— Reevaluation Requested

Student Name _____ Grade: _____

Classroom Teacher: _____

RI Intervention Teacher: _____ RI Group: _____

Please Complete the following Checklist and Questions

1 Two interventions were implemented.

Intervention 1 _____

Intervention 2 _____

2 After each intervention phase, 1 of the 6 data points were below the airtline **(Please attach graphs)**

3 Probes were implemented correctly. **(Please attach probes)**

4 Interventions were implemented correctly.

What are the specific difficulties the student had with the interventions?

What additionally affected students lack of progress? Circle all that apply

Absences Tardias Behavior Attention Interest Motivation

Other: (Please Explain) _____

Recommendation Made by Leadership Team: _____

Figure 2. Student not Progressing

this time. At the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, each educator received nine-week plans for the participating grade levels for the school year as a lateral articulation guide, and the first nine weeks were set aside for 2009-2010 Discovery Unit planning. This being the pilot year for Bobcat Elementary, instructional groups did not begin until the second quarter of 2009-2010. This was to allow for proper implementation during the pilot of an RI program. The expectation was that RI instruction would begin the first quarter of the 2010-2011 school year.

RI Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an important component of any RI model. The Bobcat program was evaluated in two ways. Student progress was continually monitored as part of Tier 1, 2 and 3 instruction, the goal being to increase on grade level student performance. In order to evaluate on grade level performance, the reading level of students was compared to the previous year. The perceptions of the faculty and

Figure 3. Discovery Instruction Class Overview

Chess Discovery

This unit is aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning, and the Standards of Learning for School Counseling. Students will reinforce Oral Language, Reading, Writing, Math, Science & Social Studies Standards of Learning through Chess activities. Students will have the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of chess including: learning setup, rules, vocabulary, movement of all chess pieces, and a basic Checkmate. Students will partner to play Chess Learning Games included in the take home Chess Discovery Unit Book, as well as full games of chess. Future participation in Bobcat's Chess Club is a great extension opportunity.

Music Discovery

This unit is in alignment with the Virginia Standards of Learning, The National and the Virginia Standards of Learning for Music. Students will reinforce Oral Language, Reading, Writing, Math, Science & Social Studies Standards of Learning through musical activities. Students will reinforce letters, numbers and patterns while exploring different styles of dance music through critical listening and read narrative about dance and classical music. Students will sing number songs and will manipulate the numbers to solve math problems.

Sound Discovery

Students will participate in a S.T.E.M. unit on sound.

- Science – Students learn that you can hear, feel and see sound, but you cannot taste or smell sound. They participate in experiments and observe patterns. Vocabulary associated with ears and sound is introduced and reinforced.
- Technology – Students use tuning forks to make sound, glass bottles filled with water to make music, and mirrors to make observations.
- Engineering – Students create an instrument to make sound – A Lion's Roar!
- Math – Students create patterns of sound and graph hypotheses.

Technology Discovery

Students learn and practice science and math SOLs that relate to plain and solid figures. Students create season themed figures, such as Shape Turkeys, Shape Snowmen and Shape Reindeer. They use Pixie2 where they have to choose, draw and label these shapes which are then combined to make a slideshow that is showcased on the webpage.

Physical Education Discovery

Cooperative Games with Mathematic concepts – included are comprehension, and demonstration of Spatial Awareness. Students will learn and practice Individual and Group Locomotor Skills using Movement Activities & Games that also incorporate math concepts. Turning, twisting, balancing, stretching, transferring weight, throwing, and dribbling are Nonlocomotor and Manipulative skills that are also included. Along with these essential fundamental movement activities, math concepts such as single and double column addition and subtraction will be explored.

Art History Discovery

Students will learn to look at pieces of art critically in order to understand different events and cultures in history. Students will observe and critique the painting "Napoleon Crossing the Alps." Students will then reflect upon the differences in the world and peoples, both past & present. Students will then observe and critique pottery from Greece, learning about the daily life of Ancient Grecians and the multiple purposes of these pieces of pottery.

Art Discovery

We had looked at some basics of Pointillism and its visual color mixing. Our examples were not only Georges Seurat and Paul Signac, but also student examples and various works found on the internet. Our groups worked on two different types of Pointillist pieces. The first used a piece of graph paper to guide our dotting methods with markers. Our final attempt was done as an experiment with small dowels and tempera paint. Each work had a large item in the foreground, and smaller items leading back to a horizon line.

RI has provided a process by which educators can gather the data for all students, and it allows for skill-specific early intervention in literacy. RI provides concrete data that pinpoints where a student needs the most assistance.

staff are also an important component of effectiveness for any program. Therefore, evaluation of the Bobcat program also used perception data from the Bobcat faculty. Table 2 shows the comparison of 2008-2009 pre-RI percent of students not reading on grade level, based on Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA) scores, compared to 2009-2010 pilot RI year percent DRA scores. DRA scores were used for both percents, as RI data was not available for the previous year. In upcoming years, RI data will be compared to RI data from past years. These numbers include all special education students and

Figure 4. Discovery Instruction Example – Chess Unit Plan

Grade Level: 1st Subject: Guidance/Chess Prepared by: Theresa Ryan

Overview & Purpose

Students will reinforce Oral Language (1.1-1.3), Reading (1.5-1.9), Writing (1.11-1.12), Math (1.11-1.21), Science (1.1), Social Studies (1.10) Standards of Learning through Chess instruction and group activities. Guidance SOIs covered: Academic – EA1-EAB, Career – EC4, EC6, Personal/Social – EP1-EP6.

Education Standards Addressed

This unit is aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning for First Grade, and the Virginia Standards for School Counseling.

Materials Needed

- Chess Boards
- Chess Pieces
- Chess Unit Books for each student
- Markers/Crayons

Other Resources

- None

Day	Summary of Lesson – Week 1	Day	Summary of Lesson – Week 2
1	Introduction to Chess. Students will receive instruction in the set up of a Chess Board, in the Rules of Chess, and in New Chess Vocabulary. Students will then begin their Chess Unit Books by completing pages 2&3 – Chess Vocabulary.	6	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-5 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn, Queen, and Knight, Rook, and Bishop Movement. See Chess Unit page 9 for Home Connection Information & Extension. Then partner for a full game of Chess.
2	Reinforce & Review Lesson 1 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, and Vocabulary. Begin teaching movement and basic strategy (flexible reasoning & logic skills) – Pawn & The Pawn Game. See page 4 of the Chess Unit Book.	7	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-6 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn, Queen, and Knight, Rook, and Bishop Movement. Review proper Checkmate. Then partner with different partners for a full games of Chess.
3	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1&2 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, and Vocabulary. Review Pawn Movement & Pawn Strategy. Instruction on The Queen, followed by partner activity The Attack of The Mad Queen. See Chess Unit Book, page 5 for activity.	8	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-6 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn, Queen, and Knight, Rook, and Bishop Movement. Review proper Checkmate. Then partner with different partners for a full games of Chess.
4	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-3 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn Movement, and Queen Movement. Instruction on The Knight, including kinesthetic movement as the Knight followed by individual activity The Knight Driving Test. See Chess Unit Book, Page 6 for activity.	9	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-6 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn, Queen, and Knight, Rook, and Bishop Movement. Review proper Checkmate. Then partner with different partners for a full games of Chess.
5	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-4 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn, Queen, and Knight Movement. Instruction on The Bishop & The Rook, including kinesthetic movement followed by group activities – The Rook Exercise & The Bishops Test. See page 7 & 8 in Chess Unit Book for activities. If time partner for a full game of Chess.	10	Reinforce for retention Lesson 1-6 Chess Knowledge. Review Set Up, Rules, Vocabulary, Pawn, Queen, and Knight, Rook, and Bishop Movement. Review proper Checkmate. Then partner with different partners for full games of Chess. Chess Class Evaluation. Chess Books & Future Participation in Algonkian’s Chess Club are Great Extension opportunities.

The school counselor is highly involved in student placement school-wide with the belief that appropriate teacher placement is the best intervention for a student. The school counselor also places students in RI groupings.

students from two autism programs currently residing at this elementary school.

Table 2 data shows the effectiveness of the RI program in 2009-2010. Of kindergarten students, 90%

were reading on grade level as of June 2010, as compared to 76% in 2008-2009. Eighty-four percent of first grade students were reading on grade level as of June 2010, as compared to 72% in 2008-2009.

School counselors may wonder why the counselor would be involved in reading, literacy, and instruction. School counselors are educators who believe that early intervention is an important part of any counseling program.

Second graders' DRA scores show some regression and lack of progress of students. This will require additional time to be spent in the coming year on evaluation of core instruction. In the second grade group, 24.3% met basic reading benchmarks of RI but did not achieve grade level DRA benchmarks by the end of 2009-2010 school year. The DRA grade level benchmarks for second grade include comprehension, but the school's 2009-2010 RI program did not include intervention groups for comprehension. In 2010-2011, intervention groups will receive comprehension instruction and RI leadership anticipates that second-grade DRA grade level benchmark scores will show greater gains.

In June 2010, faculty and staff completed a questionnaire concerning their perceptions of the effectiveness of the RI program and their perceptions of the role of the school counselor in the program. Of 23 staff faculty and staff RI participants, 17 completed the questionnaire. A Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 2 = *disagree*; 3 = *unsure*; 4 = *agree*; 5 = *strongly agree*) was used to respond to questions, such as: "RI addresses the needs of students achieving at all levels," "RI is important," and "The data and interventions of RI help identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes."

What is most significant is the strength of staff scores of the RI program, both Intervention and Discovery. Table 3 shows that staff scored at or above 4.7 on the Likert scale for six out of 10 measures. The Discovery instruction scores were lower, the lowest being 3.75 for "Higher achieving students receive differentiated instruction in Discovery Units." This may not have been an effective question, because differentiation of Discovery was not a topic discussed school-wide. This finding will be addressed by increasing staff training and collaboration between Intervention instructors and Discovery instructors. The survey led RI leadership to see the need for increased understanding between all implementing staff. One of the final questions on the survey spoke to this, with 75% of staff strongly agreeing that it was useful to tour during RI time and see Intervention and Discovery implementation.

Question 9 referred specifically to the role of the school counselor in the RI program at Bobcat Elementary. In Table 3, the highest scores related to the school counselor were in collaboration, advocacy, implementation, coordination, and communication with parents. The highest score was in collaboration with other RI educators, with a rating average of 4.69 on the Likert scale. Second highest was advocacy, with a score of 4.65. The school counselor's role in the RI process was perceived as an asset to the program. To quote one staff member's survey comment, "Our school counselor has been an integral part of the success of RI at our school—she has embraced RI

Table 2. Comparison of DRA Scores – Percent of Students not Reading on Grade Level at the End of the School Year

Grade Level	2008-2009	2009-2010
Kindergarten	24%	10.4%
First Grade	28%	16.0%
Second Grade	18%	24.3%

and strongly believes in the concept, therefore she serves as a model for other specialists in this regard."

The Role of the School Counselor

School counselors may wonder why the counselor would be involved in reading, literacy, and instruction. School counselors are educators who believe that early intervention is an important part of any counseling program. Early intervention is part of preventive services to students. The ASCA Position Statement on RTI (2008) states:

Professional school counselors are stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Professional school counselors align with the RTI process through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program designed to improve student achievement and behavior. (p. 34)

Professional school counselors' roles support RI's prevention and early intervention functions. The RI three-tiered framework aligns with the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* that identifies responsive services based on the student's level of risk (ASCA, 2005). Data-driven decision making is key in any current counseling program, advocacy, collaboration, and providing for levels of interventions.

Implications for School Counselors

School counselors are essential leadership personnel in the RI process. RI is a team effort requiring collaboration, implementation, organization, and evaluation skills. As a member of the Bobcat Elementary School RI Leadership Team, the counselor not only was part of the team that developed the RI program, she also created and delivered presentations for parents, staff, and administration explaining and advocating for RI. She coordinated with other RI leaders to use student data to place students in Tier I Discovery units and Tier 2 Interventions. She was responsive to staff concerns and suggestions and to student needs, and used this information to modify

Table 3. Faculty Perceptions of the RI Program (n=17)

Question	Mean *
High achieving students receive differentiated instruction in Discovery units	3.75
RI Discovery addresses needs of higher achieving students	4.06
RI Discovery is important	4.41
RI addresses the needs of all students	4.47
RI identifies Tier 2 students and provides interventions	4.71
RI provides early intervention for students at risk	4.76
RI data is useful in child study meetings	4.82
RI intervention is important	4.82
School counselor (SC) works collaboratively with RI educators	4.69
SC advocates for all children in RI	4.65
SC coordination of RI has contributed to program's success	4.65
SC's communication with parents has contributed to the program's success	4.56
SC provides important insight to the RI program	4.53
The SC's role as Discovery unit teacher contributed to program's success	4.47

Note. Respondents reported the extent of agreement with statements (1) *strongly disagree* – (5) *strongly agree*.

the program. The school counselor also created forms and school best practices, such as the Student Not Progressing form (see Figure 2) that was used to reevaluate a student's progress and provide informative data for the Leadership Team to evaluate how best to readdress the student's needs.

School counselors' involvement in RTI is also an opportunity to work with all of the students in the school in an instructional setting. RI Discovery provided the school counselor with the opportunity to teach critical thinking skills in an intensive, two week daily timeframe. Since Discovery units allow the instructor latitude in what is used to teach these skills, such as chess, mind puzzlers, and word problems, the school counselor was able to infuse personal/social and career objectives into the academic curriculum objectives.

School counselors' roles in RTI provide an opportunity for early counseling interventions. Because of the RI program at Bobcat Elementary, the school counselor has the opportunity to provide much earlier intervention and insight into students' counseling needs. Case Study 1 provides the example of a second-grade student who participated in the school counselor's Chess Discovery Unit and describes how this unit helped the school counselor provide early intervention with a student new to the school. Figure 4 illustrates the Chess Discovery Unit used to provide the intervention.

This school counselor's involvement in RI also created a much stronger connection between the counseling program and the participating teachers. RI has encouraged collaboration among diverse school professionals all working towards the same goal of increasing student literacy. Counselors are highly skilled in collaboration and coordination, yet one of the toughest jobs a counselor has in a school is public relations with the teaching staff. The counselor's involvement in RI leadership and in teaching RI Discovery afforded the school counselor a much more visible counselor role. Collected data shows that 93.8% of RI staff feel that the counselor works collaboratively with other RI educators (See Table 3). Part of this counselor's duties on Bobcat's RI leadership team was to represent and collaborate with the Discovery educators, who were asked to provide additional lessons over and above their regular duties. This required time and took a great deal of listening and problem solving on the part of the school counselor. What convinced the teachers that the extra effort was worthwhile was seeing the data (see Figure 1, Intervention Progress): as a result of the RI program, children were succeeding.

The RI program has provided Bobcat Elementary School with an objective look at student performance, giving educational professionals a framework to monitor research-based interventions and instruction. It has also provided objective data doc-

This school counselor's involvement in RI also created a much stronger connection between the counseling program and the participating teachers. Counselors are highly skilled in collaboration and coordination, yet one of the toughest jobs a counselor has in a school is public relations with the teaching staff.

Case Study 1. A Case Example of the School Counselor's Role in RI

In November, I began a new two week Discovery Unit with a second grade class. There was a student in the class, Samantha, who was new to our school as of the 2009-2010 school year. I had not been made aware of any needs this student might have had at that time. After missing two days of the unit and being concerned, I asked the other classroom students if Samantha was ill. The students said “No, she was always tardy.” I then spoke to the classroom teacher, who said, “Yes, this student was chronically tardy and often missed at a minimum the first 15-20 minutes of each school day.” Samantha followed this pattern in Discovery, too, attending the following few days, but missing the first 15-20 minutes of each class. I was able to use the Discovery Unit on Chess that I was teaching as an intervention, as this student was excited to learn how to play. However, since she missed the instructional portion of each lesson, I spoke to her regarding getting to school on time, made a plan of catching the bus so she was not dependent on anyone to drive, and rewarded her with attention, praise, and chess instruction. There was immediate improvement. Samantha was on time for the rest of Chess Discovery Unit, and went from 8 and 9 tardies per month prior to intervention to zero for the following two months. Samantha has continued to be on time with an average of 1.8 tardies for the remainder of the 2009-2010 school year. I have continued to work with this student, and, with an additional plan in place, she is also now completing work throughout the school day. Without the daily contact I was afforded through our RI program, and my involvement in Discovery, it may have been many more weeks before this child would have come to my attention. This is just one example of many children for whom I was able to provide an early counseling intervention as a result of my involvement in RI.

By using the RTI process, the child study meeting decisions are based on data, not teacher opinions. One hundred percent of staff surveyed feel that RI information (graphs, interventions used, universal screening data) is useful in child study.

umentation regarding instruction and student performance necessary for the child study team to determine whether further testing is needed. By using the RTI process, the child study meeting decisions are based on data, not teacher opinions. See Figure 1 for an example of one graph that was used at child study. The student was not responding to the original intervention, which was noted as progress monitoring data shows four data points below the labeled aimline. As the intervention was changed to a different research-based intervention for the same skill, the student showed marked growth. This type of concrete informational data is integral to the child study process at Bobcat Elementary. One hundred percent of staff surveyed feel that RI information (graphs, interventions used, universal screening data) is useful in child study. This same graph (Figure 1) is what “made believers” out of Discovery instructors who were unsure about RI and the large use of time for the RI program.

CONCLUSION

The RTI service model has provided new opportunities for school counselors. As more schools and school districts move toward implementing RTI programs, school counselors should consider how their involvement in RTI can not only serve students but can build relationships with administrators, teachers, staff, and parents. The story of the Bobcat RI program serves as a model of how one elementary school counselor influenced the development and implementation of the RI program. ■

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