Conclusion

Numerous books and journal articles have been written on the Response to Intervention (RTI) service delivery model. Although most research has focused on RTI at the elementary level, a growing body of work is now focusing on how to implement RTI at the middle and high school educational level, as has been the focus of this book. Existing research agrees that RTI implementation takes a great deal of planning and several years of trial and error. Stakeholders must make a full commitment to the model in order for it to be a success, and educators must be committed to learning from their mistakes and not giving up on the process. Without such commitment, the Response to Intervention service delivery model will not flourish.

What is unique about this book is that it goes beyond the aforementioned research and demonstrates how to use the RTI model in the different content areas. It also examines some of the issues encountered, both through general discussions and through case studies. Overall, it is hoped that this book will serve as a guide to any middle or high school administrator leading RTI program implementation and/or as a valuable resource for teachers implementing RTI tier implementation within the classroom. Although readers will benefit most by partaking of the book as a whole, each chapter is written as a stand-alone manuscript that can benefit educators seeking specific information on one of the topics presented herein.

As a final summary, following are the primary lessons learned during the research process that went into compiling this book. It is hoped that these lessons will assist readers in establishing and operating a successful Response to Intervention service delivery model at their own schools.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Patience Is Required

When a teacher sees one of his or her students struggling to grasp an academic concept, he or she will often automatically provide that student with some type of assistance because this is what a good teacher does. However, when a teacher must provide this help repeatedly, and he or she feels that whatever is being done is simply not working, the teacher may assume the student has a disability and request that the student be evaluated for special education services. With the RTI model, a teacher cannot simply try one intervention at each tier and then pass the student off to someone else. The teacher must try a number of interventions, and then if the student is still not responding, at that point the teacher may take steps to consider moving the student on to the next tier. The key is to be patient. In many cases, the teacher simply needs to try using another method to educate the student.
Conclusion

Patience must also be exercised when implementing the RTI model as a whole. It takes several years for a good RTI service delivery model to get up and running efficiently and effectively, as has been demonstrated by the case studies in this book. Even if the model is running well, it must be evaluated often to ensure that all students are being serviced in such a way that they can reach their academic potential and that all staff members are following the model components correctly. The RTI model is not something that can be implemented overnight, and it can only be sustained with continual patience.

2. Professional Development Must Occur on a Regular Basis

It is of course important for educators to stay abreast of RTI research by perusing books, journal articles, and websites; however, if structured professional development does not occur on a regular basis, the model will fail. For example, ongoing workshops need to be offered on the many different components of the RTI model (e.g., assessment, progress monitoring, research-based interventions). These workshops can be provided by current school personnel (perhaps on a rotating basis to help ease the burden associated with designing and making presentations) or by other professionals brought in specifically for that purpose. In addition, teachers need scheduled time to collaborate on various research-based interventions, like the ones provided in this book. It is foolish to have teachers try interventions and not share their successes and failures with other teachers. Collaboration must be viewed as a time-saver rather than a time-waster.

In some school districts, teachers are given a “toolbox” of interventions for each tier. This is an excellent resource, but schools must make sure that the toolbox is updated regularly in order to make sure all teachers have the necessary research-based tools to work with students at the different tier levels.

3. Accurate Recordkeeping Is Critical

Along with being patient, ensuring precise and accurate recordkeeping is critical. Progress monitoring is an essential, mandated component of RTI, and it can only be done by keeping excellent track of and plotting data on a graph to ensure accuracy. Assessment should occur at regular intervals, and when there is a drop or decrease in the data, the teacher should try to discover the reason for the occurrence.

Because most teachers do not know how to collect data accurately, data collection should be part of the regular professional development provided. Workshops should be given not only on how to properly collect and track data but also on how to use that data to guide instructional decisions.

4. Content Area Teachers DO Need to Follow the RTI Model

The use of the RTI service delivery model to increase literacy (reading and writing) and math skills has been studied in depth. What has not been examined or has been examined very little prior to this book, however, is the use of RTI in other content area classrooms (e.g., science, social sciences, electives, etc.). The lack of a focus on RTI use in content areas may cause secondary content area teachers to believe that the RTI model does not need to be implemented in classrooms beyond English and math. This is definitely NOT the case, and this misconception was one of the driving forces behind this book. It is essential that ALL content teachers practice the RTI model because in every single classroom, students should be required to read, write, and, in some cases, do math.
The specific tier interventions listed in each content-specific chapter in this book are designed to assist the reader in learning to use the RTI model in a content classroom. However, these interventions are not all inclusive; therefore, the content teacher may need to explore other outlets—e.g., other teachers, counselors, principals, the Internet—for additional resources. This book is a starting resource, not a complete, all-encompassing compilation. It is critical to remember that the reading and writing chapters contain valuable information regarding interventions that can be employed by all teachers, not just English teachers, to improve literacy across the curriculum.

5. Students and Parents Should Be Included in All Decision Making

Students at the secondary grade levels (Grades 6-12) should be involved in the planning of the interventions at each tier. Providing the student with several intervention options and allowing him or her to pick which one he or she feels affords the most benefit will greatly assist the student with academic success and increase the likelihood that he or she will continue to use the intervention. Likewise, the student should also be consulted when the intervention is not working because perhaps the student can provide some insight into the reasons for the failure. The more power a student has in deciding which intervention works best for him or her, the more likely he or she will stay with the intervention.

This same philosophy should be applied to including parents in RTI. Parents who are willing and interested in being involved in the process can provide valuable insight into a student’s successes and failures, motivations, etc., and can help ensure that intervention strategies are carried over to home-based learning.

6. Research-Based Instructional Interventions Must Be Followed with Fidelity

Throughout this book, a vast number of research-based interventions have been provided. These need to be used exactly as described within their respective chapters, in other words, used with fidelity. If these intervention strategies are implemented correctly, students will get the maximum benefit from the strategy and are more likely to show improvement. If the strategies are not followed properly, students are less likely to show improvement, and it may be a struggle to figure out why the student failed. Was it because fidelity was not followed or because the student did not respond to this particular intervention and another one needs to be tried prior to changing tiers?

Of all the lessons learned, this is probably the most crucial, and it is by far the one that is the most difficult to follow. Fidelity needs to be a top-down mandate, and collaboration can help make it easier to maintain.

FINAL NOTE

The contributors to this book hope that the information provided herein will help with the successful implementation of the Response to Intervention service delivery model in middle and high schools across the nation. Contributing to the body of work on RTI and providing research-based information like what is included here will help us move further toward closing the achievement gap, increasing literacy, and promoting the academic success of all students, and thus enhancing our future as a nation.