In order to enhance instructional practices within our school community and further expand our continuum of programs, our districts continue to respond and examine inclusive initiatives and curriculum adaptations. By educating students within a school community where everyone belongs and is accepted and supported, students can learn strategies and skills that demonstrate academic progress and social and emotional development. The goal of this design framework encompasses the core of inclusionary practice.

Elements addressing the needs of students at risk and students with special needs include promoting and understanding of issues surrounding inclusionary practices, encouraging service providers to focus on the individual, not the disability, developing an understanding of appropriate and effective methods of interaction and instruction, and creating appropriate and quality benchmarks and expectations.

A comprehensive, holistic approach will support professional growth and have a direct impact on improving instructional practices, not only in core content areas but in the elective areas, as well. It must also consist of integral components of a district wide effort to provide all students with a successful academic experience.

Essential questions that should become a point of conversation in schools should include, “What do we do when a student is not learning?”, “Do our teachers have a toolbox of strategies and interventions that are necessary for a differentiated model of instruction?”, and “What cohesive approach to interventions can be applied?” The implementation of Professional Learning Communities, common formative and summative assessments, along with classroom work produce a wealth of data that can identify strengths and weaknesses within a class, department, grade or school. In our schools, we have focused on generating data that identifies student needs and strengths. Our process began with a targeted focus on student achievement, which was founded by benchmark assessments, analysis of data, and the sharing of instructional strategies and interventions. This process of analysis, conversation, and collaboration identified the need for a tiered approach of interventions that was common and accessible to district staff. We identified a need to provide a “teacher toolbox” with common strategies and a model of structured intervention skills for teachers, students, and parents.

In order to address this identified need, we developed an interactive pyramid of intervention using Google Sites for accessibility (https://sites.google.com/site/pyramidofintervention). See Figure 1. This online resource was designed as a foundation for the Response to Intervention process by providing strategies, interventions and protocols that occur at the classroom level immediately when a student is identified as “at-risk.” The pyramid is based on the identification of the components of the

Any established best practices in education emulate the principles of inclusive education. Educators today are better equipped to facilitate meaningful and inclusive education for students at risk. However, a holistic and comprehensive school plan is an integral component of a school wide effort to provide all students with the education they are entitled to receive. We must continue to enhance and expand the continuum of options available to our students. Principles of this systematic plan include staff who are trained in successful instructional strategies, committed to teaching and progress, reflective on student performance, and responsive to the needs of all students. Among the initiatives to be considered are professional development to increase awareness of the nature of students’ needs while developing a culture of responsiveness and effectiveness, the incorporation and implementation of assistive technology infused into the curriculum, research-based instructional strategies, along with behavioral and motivational theory.
lesson framework. Each component of the lesson framework is linked to a wealth of best practice strategies for that particular segment of a lesson. When designing lessons, teachers may access this resource to select strategies and activities to support best practices such as activating prior knowledge, collaborative group work, formative and summative assessment, and closure. The base of the pyramid represents “good teaching” classroom instruction. The strategies contained benefit all students and are the foundation of a differentiated classroom that addresses the needs of all learners. See Figure 2

Tier One of the pyramid integrates the universal instructional strategies identified in the lesson framework and combines them with a progressive, multi-tiered intervention model, including a protocol of documentation, communication and collaboration. Teachers who have identified students who are not demonstrating proficiency or are finding challenges within the classroom may move to Tier One. An online form is accessible to guide the process of collecting and documenting information about their students. As the teachers implement this model of data collection, a revised planning for instruction emerges. Key elements of student performance and response to interventions can be embedded into the lesson design.

The protocols outlined in the Tier One form require communication with all stakeholders including parents, counselors, and other teachers the child may interact with throughout the daily activities. A review of permanent records and available data to identify a catalyst for behavioral changes and patterns are also reviewed. The use of electronic grade books, transcripts, and online student information systems has simplified the access to this valuable information.

This process of data retrieval and analysis typically results in a defined list of specific concerns or areas for improvement. Strategies defined at this level of the model involve parents, students, and teachers. Work samples, data collection, and measurement over a period of time becomes a shift in the teaching road map with a more central focus on data analysis through a reflection on the framework of instruction.
Successful implementation of the pyramid model of intervention requires sustained professional development.

For example, a review of student performance along with previous benchmark assessments may indicate that a level of achievement is not consistent with past performance. A stakeholder discussion may result in findings that identify changes in social interactions, workload, and rigor as contributing factors. The teacher can then implement best-practice strategies identified in the lesson framework to support those student needs.

When the results of planned interventions do not meet expectations, a student may be moved to Tier Two of the pyramid. At this level of the pyramid, the teacher will find best practice interventions for specific behaviors and subject areas. These include executive functioning, attention, motivation along with specific content area and work habits. Instructional opportunities along with differentiated instruction are now being delivered with more frequency, intensity, and longer periods of time. Progress through this tier is documented on the Tier Two form.

Students may need more intensive interventions if they continue to struggle to demonstrate performance gains. Additional targeted interventions applied in Tier Two may require the teacher to address student needs through Tier Three supports. This level of our model represents a referral to the Intervention and Referral Service problem-solving team.

The paradigm shift of teacher-led interventions without specific direction from an I&RS team may require a cultural shift. Successful implementation of the pyramid model of intervention requires sustained professional development. Administrators must provide teachers with a variety of strategies and interventions, a comfort level with the application of them, and the ability to articulate a classroom culture that respects an individualized and differentiated approach to instruction. A sustained commitment to personalized interventions, collaboration among stakeholders, and a focus on data are essential themes for successful implementation of the pyramid model.

References

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