

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Targeted Professional Development Within a Team-based Response to Intervention Model

Facing many of the same problems common to urban school districts struggling to narrow the achievement gap in critical need schools, Miami-Dade County Public Schools instituted a Response to Intervention (RTI) program, known as the Student Teacher Support Team model (ST2), during the 2005-2006 school-year, to close the achievement gap in several elementary schools identified as at-risk. Funding to launch the program was secured through a grant of \$500,000 from the Florida Department of Education.

ST2's effectiveness hinges on its ability to leverage existing resources and provide a systemic approach to identify student needs and quickly deliver targeted professional development aimed at addressing deficiencies and improving student achievement. Miami-Dade's experience in implementing ST2 is informative for school districts seeking replicable models that effectively harness professional development and curriculum resources to positively impact teaching and learning.

The ST2 model takes a preventive approach to response-to-intervention by conducting universal screening of all children and progress monitoring of children identified to be at significant risk for reading failure. The model features a school-based support team that includes a full-time school psychologist, a reading coach, a professional development specialist, a school-site administrator, a part-time school psychology intern, a part-time curriculum specialist, and hourly certified teachers. Teams support teachers by collecting diagnostic data, conducting ongoing progress monitoring, and identifying appropriate interventions.

Upon completion of focused training, team members undertake progress monitoring activities and examine student data to determine academic needs that might require an adaptation of the curriculum, specific curriculum implementation, and/or the development of interventions. Following initial assessments, interim progress monitoring is conducted for each at-risk student to measure progress towards skill attainment. Progress monitoring data is then applied to chart particular professional development needs for specific instructional personnel.

Evaluation data assessing the program's impact measured the link between professional development and student achievement gains, focusing on ST2's success in increasing student reading gains. Preliminary findings suggest that the program has resulted in several notable gains, providing evidence of a causal link between response to intervention implementation, targeted professional development, and significant student achievement gains. The data has also demonstrated that student achievement gains are affected by the degree of fidelity of implementation. In particular, schools that have closely adhered to the model through high utilization of progress monitoring data to guide decisions relating to professional development and intervention delivery and design have experienced more significant reading gains than schools that reported lower levels of implementation.

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