

DRAMATIC STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS IN BLUE RIBBON

NYC school exemplifies Response to Intervention (RTI)

As administrators, teachers, parents, and students at Brooklyn's PS 380—John Wayne Elementary School—returned to school in the fall of 2009, they learned some fantastic news: they were among the elementary elite as a Blue Ribbon School.*

PS 380 was one of three NYC elementary schools chosen to implement an RTI initiative starting in 2007-2008. The initiative paid off: PS 380 is now on the National Honor Roll!

How did RTI begin?

Leadership was absolutely critical to the success at PS 380. Principal Josephine Viars and Assistant Principal Diane Vitolo championed the RTI program. "The administration fostered a culture of collaboration that allowed enthusiastic teachers to focus on student achievement, creating the perfect environment for RTI implementation," said Sandi Feldman, Senior Innovative Program Specialist, NYC Department of Education (DOE).

The Office of Special Education Initiatives, in the NYC DOE, observed that most initial referrals to special education in 2nd and 3rd grades were about literacy issues. Would an evidence-based approach for students at risk for reading failure in K and 1 reduce unnecessary referrals to special education? Executive Director Linda Wernikoff wondered about this as she convened an expert advisory committee on RTI.

The committee participants represented the major stakeholders, including the teachers' union, university partners, general and special education curriculum staff, and the NY State Education Department. The committee assisted the Office of Special Education Initiatives in outlining the parameters of the RTI initiative and selecting the pilot schools.

To ensure successful implementation of the RTI Initiative, they would start with three sites which would serve as demonstration sites when the initiative was expanded to include additional schools. Pilot schools were recommended by the Regional Academic Intervention Team Leaders, with the final selection made with the help of the committee. The choice was based on several factors.

Each school had to have strong leadership that would commit to implementation, staff development, follow-up coaching, and designating a staff member to coordinate the initiative. The school needed a high referral rate to special education and several students performing at Level I (not meeting ELA learning standards).

The Office of Special Education Initiatives developed a systematic approach to RTI that could be implemented in the schools.

A standard treatment protocol approach was appealing. Wilson Foundations®, developed by Wilson Language Training, was already in more than 530 elementary schools as part of the core curriculum for word study. With a standard treatment approach, there would be a protocol for students at risk for reading failure who would benefit from a double dose of Foundations in Tier II.

Wilson had also adopted the 10-step process from Drs. Rachel Brown-Chidsey and Mark Steege (see Step-by-Step Process on page 2). This was appealing as it established clear parameters for schools. Self-monitoring ensured that the schools were diligently implementing the RTI process.



PS 380 students hard at work making tremendous progress

*The Blue Ribbon Schools Program, run by the U.S. Department of Education, "honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels." (www.ED.gov)

NYC SCHOOL EXEMPLIFIES RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)

RTI Highlights at PS 380

Provide Evidence-Based General Education Instruction

- All students receive Foundations in Tier I as the word study component of balanced literacy.
- Teachers were fully trained, with periodic implementation support and fidelity checks.

Identify students scoring below benchmark

- All students were screened with DIBELS three times during the year. Students below benchmark were reviewed by the team.

Provide Small-Group Instruction

- Students were grouped and received Foundations double dose lessons during Tier II instruction.
- Instruction was provided by Academic Intervention Service (AIS) teachers: at least 3 weekly sessions in groups of 3–6.

Monitor Student Progress Frequently

- Grades K and 1 were monitored bi-weekly using the Foundations Progress Monitoring probes.
- Grade 2 students were monitored with DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency.
- Program Test scores, classroom performance, and winter DIBELS Assessment were examined.

Review/Revise Small Group Instruction

- AIS and classroom teachers met regularly to determine groupings, instruction intensity, and duration.

Outcomes

Students in grade 3 (see below) benefited from one year of Foundations in grade 1 and then two years of RTI implementation in grades 2–3. The data indicates that significant progress was made in 3rd grade ELA scores at PS 380. They exceeded in performance compared to all city schools.

2009 Grade 3 ELA Performance

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVELS 3 & 4
PS 380	0.0	8.6	72.9	18.6	91.4
ALL NYC SCHOOLS	6.5	24.1	61.5	7.9	69.4

Level 1: Not meeting learning standards Level 2: Partially meeting learning standards
 Level 3: Meeting learning standards Level 4: Meeting learning standards with distinction

A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR SUCCESS

The following 10 steps, adopted for the Wilson program, were outlined in the book: *Response to Intervention Principles and Strategies for Effective Practice* by Drs. Rachel Brown-Chidsey & Mark W. Steege (2005 Guilford Press). These steps were adopted to provide detailed guidelines for implementing the Wilson programs with fidelity within a K-3 RTI framework.

- Step 1:** Implement Evidence-based General Education Instructional Methods
- Step 2:** Collect Benchmarks of All Students' Performance 3 Times during the School Year
- Step 3:** Identify Which Students Scored Below the Benchmark Targets
- Step 4:** Provide Daily Scientifically Based Small-Group Instruction
- Step 5:** Monitor Student Progress toward the Benchmark(s) Using Frequent Assessment
- Step 6:** Review, Revise, and/or Discontinue Small-Group Instruction
- Step 7:** Increase the Intensity, Duration and/or Frequency of Instruction
- Step 8:** Review, Revise and/or Discontinue Small-Group Instruction
- Step 9:** Comprehensive Evaluation, If Needed
- Step 10:** Special Education Eligibility

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Due to the success of the pilot schools, RTI expanded in 2008–09 to include 16 schools. In 2009–10, 13 more schools are being added.