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Staff Attitude Change in a Response to Intervention Program Evaluation

Alicia Kirby

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Staff Attitude Change
In a Response To
Intervention Program Evaluation

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By

Alicia Kirby

Fred Jay Krieg, Ph. D., Committee Chairperson
Stephen L. O'Keefe, Ph.D.
Sandra Stroebel, Ph. D

Marshall University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to predict whether the staff attitude about the Response to Intervention (RtI) Project in the areas of reading achievement, student potential, the time it takes to implement the RtI Project, and parent involvement have improved from the survey in December of 2005 to the survey in March of 2006. Winfield Elementary began the project with very little funding and professional development training on Response to Intervention (RtI). The prediction for change in attitude is a result of additional funding and RtI professional development training.

A total of 399 initial and final surveys from the participating pilot schools in the WVRtI Project were used in the study. Results indicated that a trip to a model RtI school and a persuasive presentation, and adding cadre teachers had a significant effect on attitude in the school which got the intervention; however, there were no differences within the treatment school between individuals who participated in the professional development interventions and those who did not. Therefore, the additional cadre of teachers apparently effected the change in attitude more than the professional development intervention.

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*Staff Attitude Change In a Response to
Intervention Program Evaluation*

Change is a process, not an event, and it takes time to institute change; therefore, implementing a new program in a school system can be a troublesome battle. In order for change to occur there are many obstacles that teachers have to overcome. They are forced with new rules which can make them feel powerless, frustrated, and uncomfortable.

Models of Change

There are three alternative models of attitude change which are helpful in determining the sequence of change as new programs are implemented. These include the Tuckman model, Concerns-Based Adoption Model, and the Resistance to Change Model.

Tuckman model. The Tuckman model is a four-phase model of change (Tuckman, 1965). The stages are Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. In the earliest stage, the Forming stage, is when schools are initially thinking about adopting a new program or have adopted it but have not fully implemented it yet (Knight & Tippett, 2004). In this phase, all of the major characteristics of this new program are under way such as, materials being ordered, training sessions, and classroom set up.

The second phase is the Storming phase where implementation of the new program occurs. It is here where teachers are actually using and having difficulty implementing new material in their classrooms. Teachers are uncomfortable with their abilities to teach the new program well, so it's common for teachers to express many concerns about the program (Tuckman, 1965). Some teachers at this phase may feel frustrated or abandoned; the need for support is very important in efforts to keep the frustrated teachers "on board."

Norming is the third phase in the Tuckman change model. At this phase the new program is feeling more comfortable to the teachers and little support is needed. The roles and responsibilities of the teachers are clear leaving them with a sense of identity.

The final phase of the change process is the Performing stage, which is the optimum level of change. At this stage, teachers are confident and able to adjust their teaching to get maximum impact with students without compromising the integrity of the program (Tuckman, 1965). The importance is placed on if the program is giving the results that it should be, and what can be done to make it better.

Concerns-based adoption model. The Concerns Based Adoption Model, better known as CBAM, is arguably the most robust and empirically grounded theoretical model for the implementation of educational innovations to come out of educational change research in the 1970s and 1980s (Anderson, 1997). The model is a theory of change that describes, explains, and predicts probable teacher behaviors in the change process. This model is made up of two strategies, The Level of Use (LoU) and the Stages of Concern (SoC). The Level of Use entails eight different levels of change that teachers experience when they are implementing a new program, and the Stages of Concern is the most important tool in the change model because it is used to measure teachers' concerns about the program that they are expected to implement (Christou, Eliophotou-Menon, & Philippou, 2004).

The Level of Use (LoU) provides distinct levels of change that can be used to determine where a teacher stands in relation to the change process of a new program. The first level is non-use; the schools have not been exposed to the new program. The second level is Orientation; the school is acquiring awareness of the new program. The third level is Preparation and this is when the school is preparing for the new program by training teachers and ordering materials.

Mechanical Use is the fourth level. It is here where the implementation of the new program is occurring, and the teachers are having difficulty teaching the new materials often resorting to the manuals; their frustration levels are high and the teachers are still not convinced.

The fifth level is Routine and by now the teachers have created a routine and feel comfortable using the new program. They are getting the hang of it and want to get better at teaching it. The focus is on the teaching process, not the outcome. It is essential that school leaders make sure that a school does not stabilize at the routine level (Hord, Rutherford, Huling, Austin & Hall, 1987).

Refinement is the sixth level where the teacher is using the program to increase the expected benefits within their classroom. The teacher can see the impact of this program working and uses the program to maximize the effects of student achievement (McCarthy, 1982). It is in the seventh level, Integration where the teacher believes that the program is important to them and combines his own efforts with related activities of other teachers and colleagues to achieve student achievement (Bailey & Palsha 1990).

In the final level, Renewal, is where the teacher reevaluates the quality of use of the program in their classroom, seek major modifications, and explore new developments as a staff and school.

Stages of Concern (SoC) are the other dimension of CBAM that focuses on the concerns of teachers involved in change. There are seven stages: Awareness, Informal, Personal, Management, Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing. The first stage, Stage 0, Awareness, indicates that a teacher has little concern or involvement at this time with the new program. The other stages reflect three categories: Self, Task, and Impact.

The Self category is derived from two stages Informational and Personal. It is in the Self category that teachers have a general interest in the new program and would like to know more about it (Pedron & Evans, 1990). They also question how the new program will affect them. The Task stage deals with Management. Teachers learn the processes and tasks of the new program and how to implement the change. They focus on information and resources. The final stage, Impact, deals with Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing. In this final stage, teachers focus on the program's impact on the students' achievement and cooperate with each other in implementing the program. The teachers also consider the benefits of the program and think of additional alternatives that might work even better. What level of use a teacher progresses to in implementing a change is dependent on the interaction between numerous factors, for example, teacher norms, innovation characteristics, implementation assistance, time and experience with implementation, and administrative pressure and support (Anderson, 1997).

Resistance to change model. Resistance is part of change and often shows up in self-concerns. Resistance to change is the action taken by individuals and groups when they perceive that a change is occurring as a threat to them (Resistance to Change, 2006). Teachers who have been in the same place for a long time have trouble with change. They see that since their needs are being met, there is no need for change. They also have invested a lot of time and energy in building up their position, any change may mean a loss in their identity and control.

Some teachers might be reluctant to change because the outcome of the change looks worse for them than the current practices or there may not be anything that attracts them to move forward. In other words, if the teachers feel that they have no pull then they will not buy into the change. Sometimes teachers begin to change and get stuck wondering what to do and other times they might be hesitant about changing because they don't trust the person asking for change.

In order for change to occur one must understand that change is a process, not an event, and it takes time for change to occur. The change process is a personal experience and how it is perceived by the teacher will strongly influence the outcome. Furthermore, teachers must be the focus if change is going to occur and schools as a system will not change until their teachers change.

Model Program Description

Winfield Elementary School was one of the eleven schools chosen to be a pilot in the West Virginia Response to Intervention (WVRtI) Pilot Project using the Three-Tiered reading model. The WVRtI project at Winfield Elementary School consists of a school principal, a project coordinator, two interventionists, four kindergarten teachers, four first grade teachers, four second grade teachers, three third grade teachers, and all 317 students in kindergarten through third grade.

This RtI Three-Tiered reading model provides early intervention for at-risk students who are falling behind in kindergarten through third grade. Tier I is a 90 minute uninterrupted reading block designed for all students in the regular education classroom that is received daily. Test grades, teacher's input and DIBELS are used to determine if the instruction needs to be altered or if a student needs to move to Tier II.

Tier II is for the students that are falling behind on the grade-level skills that are being taught in Tier-I. It was not until January of 2006 that Tier II and Tier III was implemented at Winfield Elementary due to lack of funding and staff; in January, the cadre teachers joined the interventionists to provide the additional 30 minutes (Tier II instruction), in addition to the 90 minutes received in the regular education classroom, of intense small group reading instruction for the students that are falling behind on the grade-level skills. The kindergarten through third

grade teachers use DIBELS to progress monitor the “at risk” students and determine if the instruction is meeting their needs.

At Winfield Elementary School, Tier III is used for those students that don’t respond to the interventions in Tier I and Tier II and need additional support. It is in the third Tier where the cadre or the interventionists provide an additional 30 minutes of intense instruction, in addition to the 30 minutes received in Tier II and the 90 minutes received in Tier I. DIBELS is used to progress monitor these students. DIBELS data, students’ test grades, and teachers’ input, is reviewed to determine if a comprehensive evaluation may be warranted to determine if the student is eligible for special education or related services.

Statement of Hypothesis

The present study will evaluate the staff attitude about the RtI Project in the areas of reading achievement, student potential, the time it takes to implement the RtI Project, and parent involvement during its first year of operation. The staff at Winfield Elementary School began the pilot project with limited funding and professional development training. About midway through the project, Winfield Elementary School was almost dropped by the West Virginia State Department as a pilot school in the Response to Intervention Project. The West Virginia State Department intervened and based upon their input, Putnam County Schools found the funding to keep the project alive by providing cadre teachers and additional professional development training for the staff. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

1. There will be an increase in positive staff attitude as a result of additional funding and professional development training
2. There will be an increase in positive staff attitude of those who received professional development training compared to those who did not.

Method

For the 2005-2006 school year, the West Virginia Department of Education piloted the Response to Intervention model for eleven elementary schools in nine counties across the state which included a program evaluation component. As part of this evaluation project, in December of 2005 and March of 2006, the school principal, project coordinator, interventionists, and all of the teachers in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade were given a survey to evaluate the RtI project at their school. The survey consists of 34 questions that have been broken into four sections: State and Local Training and Support, Effects of the System, Where you Stand, and Summary.

Instrument

The West Virginia Response to Intervention Program Evaluation Team at Marshall University Graduate College segregated the questions from the survey into 6 different measures. The measure chosen for this current study reflect the staff attitude in the areas of reading achievement, student potential, the time it takes to implement the WVRtI Project, and parent involvement from the initial survey in December 2005 to the final survey in March 2006. From the category that measures staff attitude, there are seven 8-point Likert Scale questions:

1. RtI does not take too much time for the benefits we receive.
2. Other curriculum areas have not been neglected because of the emphasis on reading in the RtI Project.
3. As a result of RtI our school schedule has changed in a positive direction.
4. Parent involvement with the RtI project has increased student progress in reading.
5. Our parents are pleased with the RtI approach.
6. Components of the RtI project such as DIBELS and the additional 30-minute instruction block for small groups of struggling students (Tier 2) will increase reading achievement at my school and
7. RtI has allowed me to see potential in each student.

After collecting the surveys, results showed that 208 (90%) initial surveys were collected in December of 2005 and 191 (83%) final surveys were collected in March of 2006. The data from each RtI participants were analyzed using Chronbach's Alpha to determine reliability of the data. Results indicated that the initial survey in December of 2005 and the final survey in March of 2006 was highly reliable when comparing the seven items to staff attitude, Chronbach's Alpha = .894, $p < .05$.

All statistical measures of staff attitudes were based upon the seven questions, which is designed as the dependent variable. The additional funding, the trip to Nutter Fort and Dr. Susan Hall's presentation served as the independent variables. A paired t-test was used to demonstrate statistically significant relationships between variables. The staffs attitude means and standard deviations are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Participants

The subjects used in this study are the principals, project coordinators, interventionists, kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, second grade teachers, and third grade teachers in all participating pilot schools. The subjects were asked to fill out the initial survey in December of 2005 and the final survey in March of 2006 that reflected their views on the West Virginia Response to Intervention Project. The eleven schools participating in the WVRtI project were given the same 34 question survey twice in the school year.

Procedure

In the summer of 2005, the RtI participants at Winfield Elementary School were asked to attend one of two trainings; at each training, every team member was given a palm pilot for data

collection and two very different procedures on how to interpret the data and what the data meant.

A site visit to Winfield Elementary School on January 6, 2006 by the West Virginia State Department of Education found that the WVRtI model was not being followed properly. Tier II and Tier III instruction was not being implemented because of the limited staff and funding, and Winfield Elementary School was on the verge of being dropped from the pilot project. The West Virginia Department of Education held a meeting with the Special Education Director for Putnam County and discussed the resource issue. Putnam County funded additional teachers for Tier II and Tier III services. This consisted of five part-time retired teachers who provided 30-60 minutes of extra instruction per student. Professional development training consisted of attending a persuasive presentation and visiting a successful pilot school.

On February 2, 2006 the principal, the project coordinator and one teacher from each grade level, kindergarten through third, went to Nutter Fort Elementary School. The staff was able to observe how the five components of reading were taught and how flexible groupings were done; part of our staff was able to take pictures, notes, and ask the staff at Nutter Fort Elementary School questions regarding RtI.

The following day, Dr. Susan Hall presented at the Stonewall Resort on how to use DIBELS data to guide intervention instruction. This six hour workshop gave a brief overview of DIBELS and the rest of the time was allotted for grouping students according to their ability using the DIBELS data. She even gave intervention activities and sample lesson plans.

Results

The objective of this study is to investigate the change in staff attitude towards the RtI Project. For comparison purposes, a two-tailed t-test showed equivalence, $t(217) = 4.57, p > .05$, between the attitude means of the staff at Winfield Elementary on the December 2005 survey when compared to the attitude means of the other schools in the project on the December 2005 survey.

The post-test comparison of the treatment group and the comparison group showed a significant effect, $t(217) = 2.0, p > .05$. This supported hypothesis 1. that additional funding and staff development would effect attitude.

There was not a statistical difference, $t(17) = .48, p > .05$, between the staff who got professional development and those who did not. This failed to support hypothesis 2. that staff development would change attitude.

Discussion

This study examined the staff attitude after an increase in funding and staff development months after the WVRtI Project was implemented. The results of this study demonstrated that providing extra funding for cadre teachers and professional development made a statistically significant difference.

Further analysis of the participants from Winfield Elementary that went to Nutter Fort and heard Dr. Susan Hall's presentation indicated that there was not a significant difference between the staff that received the intervention and the staff that was not able to attend. There may have been a spread of effect from those who received the intervention to the staff at Winfield Elementary. This additional analysis indicates that the more likely explanation of cause of the change of attitude was the addition of the teacher cadre for Tier II and Tier III services.

The model that best fits the staff at Winfield Elementary is the resistance to change model (Resistance to Change, 2006). At the beginning of the project the staff was resistant to change from their old style of teaching to their new method teaching, but after adding additional teachers they didn't have to be resistant to change anymore because adding new staff allowed them to stay in their old routine of teaching. When a child struggled with academics, the first instinct that the teachers wanted to do was to give them extra help outside of their classroom. By adding additional cadre teachers this enabled them to send the students out of their classroom for the additional help resulting in them acting just as they had before.

In conclusion, if replication of this study is conducted it would be beneficial to evaluate the staff attitude in the beginning, middle, and end of the RtI Project. The addition of another data point would allow for examination of curvilinear change and delayed effects. Further, it is

recommended that the surveys be given on different days; the surveys were given during December, right before the holidays, and in March, right after the professional development intervention. The data from these surveys may have been influenced by the holidays and the halo effect from a workshop. An additional limitation to the interpretation of the result is the response rate of the participants 87% of the staff completed both the initial and the final survey. Assuring that all participants completed the survey would make the results more generalizable. Because of the rival hypothesis of selection with static groups for comparison, this study should be replicated with another intervention group before the results are generalized.

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Table 1. December Survey Means and Standard Deviations

	Number	Mean	SD
Winfield Elementary	19	2.73	2.39
All other Pilot Schools	210	4.42	1.98
Overall	229	3.58	2.19

Table 2 March 2006 Means and Standard Deviations
Resources

	Number	Mean	SD
Winfield Elementary	19	3.36	2.16
All Other Pilot Schools	210	4.28	2.24
Overall	229	3.82	2.2

Table 3 December Survey Means and Standard Deviations of Winfield Elementary School

	Number	Mean	SD
Professional Development	7	4.11	8.96
No Professional Development	12	3.42	9.97
Overall	19	3.76	9.47