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From the Playroom

Connecting to



Primary Project prides itself in being a research-based intervention that starts with universal screening and has a strong evaluation component. These components of Primary Project make it a natural fit for a school's Response to Intervention (RtI) process. All children deserve interventions that are effective and depend on educational staff to make decisions based on sound data. This is true in both academic and social/emotional interventions, because we know that school adjustment and engagement are inextricably linked to school success.

This edition of *From the Playroom* focuses on the linkage between Primary Project and the RtI process. Read how schools in Connecticut and New York State place Primary Project along the tiered service delivery continuum. Also, don't miss the professional development opportunities offered this spring and fall. Start planning now to attend!

Connecticut's Response to Intervention (RtI) = Scientific Research Based Interventions

Primary Project and RtI (SRBI): A perfect fit



–Jocelyn Mackey, Ph.D.

*Education Consultant for School Psychology, Connecticut State Department of Education
Manager, Primary Mental Health Program (Primary Project)*

When I first arrived as an administrator with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and learned that my responsibilities would include managing the Primary Mental Health Program (Primary Project), frankly I wasn't sure what to expect. I didn't realize at the time the extent to which the fundamental tenets of this program were aligned with my own. As the long-standing goals of Primary Project (i.e., improving the social, emotional, and learning behavior of students) were revealed, I became increasingly enticed by the merits of the program and was sold after reviewing district data from previous years depicting its effectiveness.

Since these initial impressions, I continue to experience a burgeoning appreciation for Primary Project as connections are made with various CSDE initiatives. One such connection is to Connecticut's scientific research-based interventions (SRBI) framework. SRBI is the term Connecticut uses for Response to Intervention (RtI), the national term describing the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions to meet the specific needs of students. In Connecticut, our interest was in emphasizing the central role of general education in the intervention process and the importance of utilizing educational practices that are scientific and research-based. This resulted in the change in terminology from RtI to SRBI. The basic principles underlying SRBI hold considerable promise for supporting Connecticut schools in improving education for all students and Primary Project is one of the key interventions used to address the behavioral component of the SRBI process for students primarily in Kindergarten through grades K-3.



Connecticut Primary Project teams reviewing their data in a recent training.

The SRBI framework is depicted as a triangle with one-half representing academic growth and the other half dedicated to the behavioral development in students. It builds upon the coherence of various research-based school improvement models, and is grounded in the implementation of research-based interventions. Primary Project provides the kind of activities that support the continuum of developmental and preventive services indicative of our SRBI framework and supportive of outcomes shown by research to enhance students' social, emotional, and learning needs. In fact, Primary Project has supported optimal social, emotional, and academic growth and development in Connecticut students for over twenty-five years. Pre- and post-measure results consistently indicate significant improvement in

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student functioning in the areas of task orientation, behavior control, assertiveness, and peer sociability. Additionally, its early detection of school adjustment difficulties helps to prevent the development of social, emotional, and learning concerns.

The SRBI framework consists of a three-tiered multistep approach to the provision of services and interventions through increasing levels of intensity. Primary Project has the distinction of providing interventions along the tiers of the SRBI framework. The universal screener completed by teachers for consideration of student participation in Primary Project is a tier one SRBI activity. Some schools consider Primary Project a tier two intervention based on the mild to moderate social and emotional needs of children. Other schools may consider Primary Project a tier three intervention based on the fact that is delivered as a one-to-one or individualized intervention. Each school will define and determine which tier Primary Project belongs according to how they choose to define their interventions, but one thing is for certain...Primary Project fits into this multi-step tiered approach. Once students are screened, the level of intervention can be determined based on the needs of the student.

Teachers, administrators, support personnel, and other school staff are continually required to adjust to new educational initiatives, oftentimes the outcome of various state and federal mandates. This has been our challenge and opportunity in light of the ever-changing needs of our students. Primary Project is an intervention that has found a home in Connecticut's schools and it continues to lend support to our SRBI framework. Recognizing the intersect between Primary Project and our various activities and initiatives here at the Connecticut State Department of Education has helped to confirm that we are on the right track to ensuring the optimal growth and development of our students!

A key ingredient for ensuring the optimal growth and development of Connecticut students is using timely data to inform decision making and instruction. Schools in Connecticut utilize COMET®, a web-based data collection and management system, developed by Children's Institute and its technology partner. Teachers complete screening instruments, such as the Teacher-Child Rating Scale, in COMET and immediately receive the results for each student, allowing for faster screening and placement of children into Primary Project and other services they need to support their success. In addition to screening, teachers and administrators can use COMET to store student data, complete assessment instruments, conduct surveys, and generate reports that can be used to support education. For more information, visit www.comet4children.com.

The three tiers of Rtl...

While many schools started Response to Intervention (Rtl) with academic content areas in mind, others have included social, emotional, and behavioral domains alongside academic content. In fact, several schools use the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) as their universal screener in the first tier of strategies. The T-CRS provides information for both internalizing and externalizing behavior which is vital. From the screening information, children who fall in the mild to moderate range for school adjustment difficulties may be recommended for Primary Project as a tier two intervention. Primary Project offers a targeted research-based intervention with data monitoring points, meeting what is needed in the Rtl process. The data from the screening will also inform the team which children should be referred for more intensive services, often considered tier three services. Frequent and continuous assessment is part of Rtl, and some schools may choose to add a mid-intervention data monitoring point during the Primary Project intervention. If Rtl is implemented in the school the way it is intended, students who are "at risk" will be identified and helped early using research-based interventions.

Primary Project supervisors, in their roles as school mental health professionals, typically serve as a member of the school wide Rtl team. Through weekly Primary Project supervision discussions, the supervisor has the opportunity to continuously hear about and monitor the progress of children through the perspectives of the child associate. The supervisor also has the opportunity for consultation discussion with teachers that provides more information regarding how the child is benefiting from the Primary Project intervention or if another more intensive intervention may be needed to support the needs of the child. Supervisors can also use the data evaluation information from the T-CRS to become data-based decision making coaches, overseeing school wide social, emotional, and behavioral data efforts of other research-based interventions that span across the three tiers of interventions.

A Match Made in Syracuse

Some very exciting things are happening in the Syracuse City School District and Primary Project is part of it all. A community partnership called the Syracuse Promise Zone comprises the Department of Mental Health, Syracuse City School District, Say Yes to Education, OnCare, and community-based organizations who together are working to match student's emotional needs with proper and targeted interventions, keeping children ready to learn.

Doing things well is part of what this district values. The Syracuse City School District has had an exemplary school-based intervention team project model for the past 16 years, called S-BIT. The S-BIT has been recognized by the New York State Education Department as an exemplary program for training schools to run effective pre-referral intervention teams. A number of other school districts in New York State and around the nation have adopted the S-BIT problem-solving model for their own students.

Based on the success of the S-BIT model, the Syracuse City School District is about to roll out a student support team structure to identify and support youth called S-BIT B. Similar to the problem-solving model the S-BIT Team uses to address academic or behavioral concerns, the S-BIT B Team will use data and other assessments to monitor and measure the student's response to the behavioral intervention implemented. The behavioral intervention will be matched to student needs depending on availability of relevant supports, monitored to evaluate student response, and applied to general, remedial, and special education students.

Behavioral interventions such as Primary Project may focus more on prevention and target young children. Still other research-based behavioral interventions will be utilized ranging from Aggression Replacement Training, Group Work, the Check In/Check Out Program, as well more intensive on-site mental health counseling provided by area mental health clinics.

A promise zone in the works...

- Matching needs to interventions
- Identifying and targeting children early
- Thinking along the lines of prevention, intervention, and treatment
- Effective programs, frequently monitored

Primary Project is proud to have a place in the continuum of services available for children in Syracuse.

For more information about S-BIT, contact: Stephanie Burt Pelcher, School-Based Intervention Team Coordinator, Syracuse City School District. For other school services, contact Debra Montroy, Coordinator for Student Support Services, Syracuse City School District or Susan VanCamp, LCSW, Director School Services, contact Community Services, Inc., E. Syracuse.

The Cardinal Sings



I have a clear image of a meeting 25 years ago when I was working as a school psychologist at McManus Elementary. We were talking about a specific child, her strengths and needs. I was able to access data from the T-CRS! Amazing! Five years earlier at Paradise Elementary, I talked with a third grade teacher about students based on information from the AML-R. I guess we were ahead of our time...using data to plan and meet the needs of children is timeless. You can do both. Use information to plan for a group; and an individual child.

Things go in circles, don't they? Data-driven decision making is timeless. The challenge seems to be in our hesitancy to step outside of the box, to slow down, understand the data, and use it to make a difference.

Knock down the walls. Share the data, share the training, and share the knowledge. When you get screening data, share it with others. When you get your annual evaluation, share it with others. The information you share can help you build relationships with others who have a knowledge and passion for the social and emotional health of children.

*—Deborah Johnson
Director of National Services*

Stephanie Dorn (1958–2011)

Children, families, and staff of Rochester City School #8, NY mourned the loss of long-time Primary Project child associate Stephanie Dorn. Stephanie served passionately as a child associate for 15 years with a profound commitment to the children at school #8. She was a gentle person whose kindness and laughter were treasured by the school community. Stephanie embraced the philosophy that anything could be done to help a child—it was only a matter of how. She will be missed greatly.



Bringing the Lessons Home

Response to Intervention (RtI)

As a parent, keeping informed of the many acronyms for school programs and practices can at times feel like a game of alphabet soup. In the last few years, as a parent you may have heard about Response to Intervention (RtI).

Simply put, "Response to Intervention" refers to a three-tiered strategy which includes prevention, early identification, and intervention provided in general education.

RtI is an array of procedures that can be used at a school to determine if and how students respond to changes in instruction and interventions. Early in the school year, schools determine which children are progressing on grade level for both academics and behavioral needs and which children may need more specialized interventions.

Frequent assessment and monitoring ensures individual students and entire classes stay on target, and are continuously monitored and supported by a variety of school personnel.

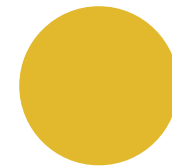
As a parent and a partner in your child's education, you can ask the following questions at your child's school:

1. Does our school use an RtI process? If not, is there a plan to adopt one?
2. Are there written materials for parents explaining the RtI process? Who is the best individual at school to help me understand this?
3. What interventions are being used, and are these scientifically based and supported by research? Are the interventions being carried out as intended?
4. How can parents be involved including how do parents receive updates or monitoring reports?

Adapted from information by Klotz, M.B. & Canter, A. (2007). Response to Intervention (RtI): A Primer for Parents. Available from the National Association of School Psychologists at www.nasponline.org.



As a parent, keeping informed of the many acronyms for school programs and practices can at times feel like a game of alphabet soup.



Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar



Respuesta a la intervención (RtI)

Como padre, el mantenerse informado acerca de los muchos acrónimos para los programas y prácticas de la escuela puede a veces parecer como un juego de sopa de letras del alfabeto. En los últimos años, como padre usted habrá escuchado acerca de la Respuesta a la Intervención (RtI).

Simplemente, “Respuesta a la Intervención” se refiere a una estrategia de tres niveles que incluye prevención, identificación temprana e intervención que se provee en la educación general.

RtI es una gama de procedimientos que se pueden usar en la escuela para determinar si y cómo los estudiantes responden a los cambios en la instrucción o intervenciones. Temprano en el año escolar, las escuelas determinan cuáles de los niños están progresando al nivel del grado tanto para las necesidades académicas como las de conducta y cuáles de los niños necesitarán intervenciones más especializadas.

Las evaluaciones y monitoreo frecuentes garantizan que los estudiantes individuales y las clases completas se mantienen encaminadas, y son monitoreadas y apoyadas continuamente por varios miembros del personal escolar.

Como padre y socio en la educación de su niño(a), usted puede hacer las siguientes preguntas en la escuela de su niño(a):

1. ¿Usa nuestra escuela el proceso de RtI? De no ser así, ¿existe un plan para adoptar uno?
2. ¿Hay materiales escritos para los padres que explican el proceso de RtI? ¿Quién es la persona más indicada en la escuela para ayudarme a entender esto?
3. ¿Qué intervenciones se están usando, y están éstas basadas en y apoyadas por la investigación? ¿Hay intervenciones que se están llevando a cabo según intencionado?
4. ¿Cómo pueden los padres involucrarse incluyendo cómo los padres reciben informes sobre las actualizaciones y monitoreo?

Adaptado de información por Klotz, M.B. & Canter, A. (2007). Respuesta a la Intervención (RtI): A Printer for Parents. Disponible de la National association of School Psychologists en www.nasponline.org

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Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.

Training Opportunities

Primary Project Conference - Fall 2012

Plans are already underway for our October 2012 Primary Project conference to be held in Rochester, New York.

Call for proposals coming soon

The Fall 2012 conference committee will soon be accepting proposals for workshops related to Primary Project. Consider presenting with a colleague or your whole team.

The conference theme will be: Relationships, Relevance, Resiliency. Specific topic areas of interest for workshops will include:

- Relationships: Intentional relationships with children, parents, and teachers within your team, school, district, or community;
- Relevance: How Primary Project is relevant to today's data driven school environments;
- Resiliency: Topics that show resiliency in children, our programs, or ourselves.

Any proposal delineating intentional, relevant, and creative practice ideas that focus on relationships or resiliency in a variety of Primary Project contexts are encouraged. Most presentations will be 1.5 hours in length. More information to come...

Attention supervisors & administrators: SPRING into COMET...Showing impact in our data driven climate

Spring seminars in New York State (April, May, June)

If you are not currently using data in your program, or not yet clear about how data may help support Primary Project or other data management needs in your school, please consider joining us for one of three spring seminars. Participants will learn how to use COMET®, our web-based data management and collection system, with the guidance and support of the COMET team. This is a seminar for Primary Project supervisors or administrators who currently have the program in their school but for a host of reasons are not evaluating the program or children. Let us show you how to make this happen.

Learn how to demonstrate how your program makes a difference to teachers, administrators, and school boards. This is one seminar you will not want to miss. We will have two options for participation: face-to-face presentations and Go To Meeting (web-based/phone conference) to accommodate needs and preferences.

For more information, please contact Mary Anne Peabody at mpeabody@childrensinstitute.net for registration materials and preferences. If you are outside of New York State and would like more information about using COMET in your school, please visit www.comet4children.com.

Certified Schools

Allen Elementary School
Siloam Springs, Arkansas

Bayyari Elementary School
Springdale, Arkansas

Mary Mae Jones Elementary School
Bentonville, Arkansas

Northside Elementary School
Siloam Springs, Arkansas

Parson Hills Elementary School
Springdale, Arkansas

The Children's School of Rochester
Rochester, New York

A reminder....

Effective July 1, 2012 there will be a small increase in measure costs.

For more information, visit our online store at www.childrensinstitute.net/store

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274 N. Goodman Street, Suite D103
Rochester, New York 14607
(585) 295-1000 (phone)
(585) 295-1090 (fax)
(877) 888-7647 (toll free)

www.childrensinstitute.net

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Contributors: Janis Cameron, Deborah Johnson,
Jocelyn Mackey, Mary Anne Peabody, Susan VanCamp

Designer: Mary Maiolo

To receive this newsletter, please send your e-mail
address to sfernandez@childrensinstitute.net

