Chapter 9 – Fidelity of Implementation

As stated in chapter 3, fidelity (or integrity) of implementation is the delivery of instruction in the way in which it was designed to be delivered (Gresham, MacMillan, Boebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000). Fidelity must also address the integrity with which screening and progress-monitoring procedures are completed and an explicit decision-making model is followed. In an RTI model, fidelity is important at both the school level (e.g., implementation of the process) and the teacher level (e.g., implementation of instruction and progress monitoring, NRCLD 2006). If fidelity of implementation is not monitored and required, one cannot be sure that students have actually received the interventions as designed, and therefore students' response to the interventions cannot be determined, and the effectiveness of the interventions cannot be measured with validity or reliability.

How can schools ensure fidelity of implementation? (NRCLD 2006)
- Link interventions to improved outcomes (credibility)
- Definitively describe operations, techniques, and components
- Clearly define responsibilities of specific persons
- Create a data system for measuring operations, techniques, and components
- Create a system for feedback and decision making (formative)
- Create accountability measures for non-compliance

The conversation centering around fidelity of instruction is not just an intervention conversation but a conversation for all Tiers. In Georgia, the non negotiables for Tier 1 instruction require a standards-based instructional framework. With that in mind, schools have a responsibility to ensure each teacher in the building is versed in the language of standards-based teaching. The Georgia Keys to Quality is the starting point for this conversation. The descriptors outlined in the Keys to Quality detail actions teachers and administrators should be taking to provide a rich learning environment. As data teams review student achievement results, an awareness of the level of implementation of standards-based instruction in the building is key. (See Standards Based Classroom Rubric in the Keys to Quality and Appendix) With this school-wide standards based classroom implementation data, the team can begin to determine how Tier 1 instruction is impacting student performance.

The implementation of any intervention (whether a Tier 2 school created or a Tier 3 purchased program) needs to occur according to the creators specifications. As noted above, to ensure that implementation of the intervention is carried out with fidelity to the design requires monitoring by administrators and data team members to ensure that the level of student response or non-response to the intervention is or is not connected to the delivery.

Implementation fidelity can be impacted by a wide range of factors that schools should be cognizant of (Allen & Blackston, 2003; Yeaton & Sechrest, 1981):
- Intervention complexity
- Time and material resources required for the intervention
- The number of intervention agents
- Efficacy (actual and as perceived by the intervention agents and stakeholders)
- The motivation of the intervention agents and stakeholders (Gresham, MacMillan, Beebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000; Gresham, Gansle, Noell, Cohen, & Rosenblum, 1993).

The Department recommends districts create a system to monitor the fidelity of implementation of instruction (including interventions) at all Tiers of the Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions.

Fidelity has a great impact on student achievement. Research based teaching and learning practices are built on a foundation of fidelity to high standards of practice. Higher performing schools embed assessment of the fidelity of interventions. Often the more intensive the intervention/instructional practices, the more need for rigorous fidelity checks. It is important for schools to embed teaching the importance of fidelity: what it is and how it can be assessed.

If steps are not put in place to assess fidelity, it is difficult to make conclusions about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an intervention (Upah, 2008; Roach & Elliott, 2008).

There are several approaches that can be used to assess fidelity (Roach & Elliott, 2008):
- Self report
  - The person who is delivering (teaching) the intervention keeps a log or completes a checklist which records the critical components of the intervention.
- Permanent Products
  - Data and artifacts/documentation of the implementation of the intervention are analyzed to determine if critical components were followed.
- Observations
  - Observations are conducted of the delivery of the intervention, checking for the presence or absence and accuracy of implementation and critical intervention components.

Essential Questions
- **What is fidelity** (Parisi et. al., 2007)?
  - Whether an intervention was implemented as planned
  - Surface fidelity
    - Were key components implemented?
    - Was adequate time allowed?
    - Was the specified amount of material covered?
  - Quality of delivery
    - Teacher behaviors
      - How is the teacher differentiating?
      - Can you identify the standards based teaching practices?
      - Is the teacher using formative assessment to guide instruction?
      - Is there a range of teaching methods?
    - Student behaviors
      - Are the student's engaged in learning?
      - What are the students doing?
      - Are the students working together?
      - Is there evidence of active or passive learning?
- **Why measure fidelity?**
  - Ensure the intervention was implemented
  - Detect and correct errors early
  - Distinguish between an ineffective intervention and an effective intervention implemented with poor fidelity
- **How is your school measuring fidelity**?
- **Creating a form**
  - What is the scope of your form?
  - Use curriculum and intervention materials
  - Consider time allotted for instruction overall and for components of the intervention
  - Consider material to be covered
  - Consider quality of implementation