

Fidelity of Implementation

Overview

Fidelity of implementation is the delivery of instruction in the way in which it was designed to be delivered (Gresham, MacMillan, Beebe-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.



Five Elements of Fidelity

Dane & Schneider, 1998; Gresham et al., 1993; O'Donnell, 2008)

Student Engagement: How engaged and involved are the students in this intervention or activity?

Program specificity: How well is the intervention defined and different from other interventions?

Quality of Delivery: How well is the intervention, assessment, or instruction delivered? Do you use good teaching practices?



Adherence: How well do we stick to the plan/curriculum/assessment?

Exposure/Duration: How often does a student receive an intervention? How long does an intervention last?

Improved outcomes in student learning are “the product of effective innovations and effective implementation efforts” (Wallace, Blasé, Fixen, & Naoom, 2008).

Specific proactive practices that help to ensure fidelity of implementation include the following:

- 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

Why is Fidelity Important?

- Ensures that instruction has been implemented as intended
- Helps link student outcomes to instruction
- Helps in the determination of intervention effectiveness, and in instructional decision making.

Research suggests that positive student outcomes depend on:

- The degree to which interventions are supported by evidence
- Fidelity of implementation of process (at the school/district level)
- Fidelity of intervention implementation (at the teacher/classroom level)

~The National Center on Response to Intervention

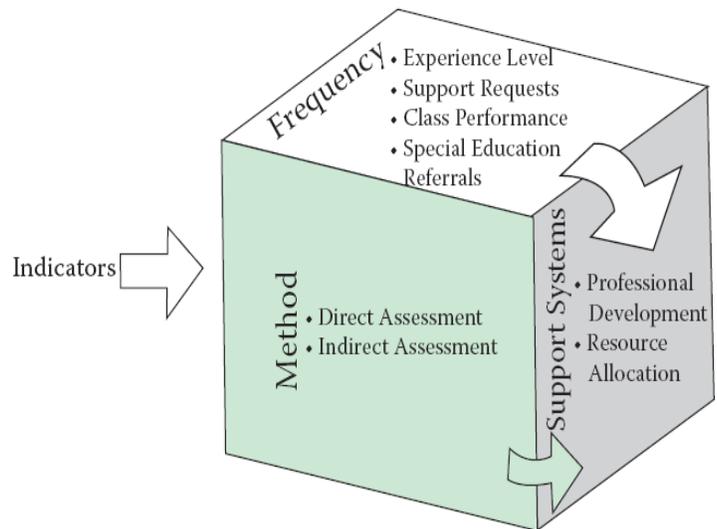
To keep fidelity manageable for schools, a three-dimensional approach has been conceptualized:

1. **Method.** Different tools provide various kinds of information.
2. **Frequency.** The frequency with which checks are conducted varies depending on the situation.
3. **Support Systems.** The feedback and professional development opportunities needed to implement a process with fidelity are provided to staff.

In using this three-dimensional model, a proactive approach will help promote the implementation of RTI as intended, with more intensive support being provided as needed.

~The National Center on Response to Intervention (2008)

“No program—no matter how sound it is— can have impact if its essential elements are not used” (Yap, Aldersebaes, Railsback, Shaughnessy, & Speth, 2000).



Instructional Integrity: Challenges

Gresham et al. (2000) and Reschly and Gresham (2006) noted several factors that may reduce the fidelity of implementation of an intervention:

- **Complexity.** The more complex the intervention, the lower the fidelity because of the level of difficulty. (This factor includes time needed for instruction in the intervention).
- **Materials and resources required.** If new or substantial resources are required, they need to be readily accessible.
- **Perceived and actual effectiveness (credibility).** Even with a solid research base, if teachers believe the approach will not be effective, or if it is inconsistent with their teaching style, they will not implement it well.
- **Interventionists.** The number, expertise, and motivation of individuals who deliver the intervention are factors in the level of fidelity of implementation.