

designed to help each TAPS Teacher consider the types of skills that he or she will need to target and learn (e.g., mastery in more academic intervention programs, more experience using academic progress monitoring) prior to facilitating TAPS cases during SOPAA implementation. Like the Schoolwide Capacity Assessment, the questions in the TAPS Teacher Self-Assessment should be considered broadly (rather than answered in detail) so that each TAPS Teacher can most accurately respond to the 10 likert-scale items at the bottom of the assessment. After each one completes the self-assessment, all TAPS Teachers should meet and discuss their responses.

Last, Appendix D (SOPAA Implementation Planning Summary Checklist) can be used by the SOPAA facilitators to summarize their discussion following the Schoolwide Capacity Assessment and the TAPS Teacher Self-Assessment. As shown, this planning checklist allows the SOPAA facilitators to discuss and establish some consensus about which SOPAA features are likely to be implemented with success during the initial year of implementation. In essence, discussing and completing the checklist should serve as a general guide to help facilitators better determine how to plan and proceed with implementation, as well as to create the most feasible implementation timeline. For example, responses to the checklist may help guide decisions about whether to have a SOPAA preparation year, initiate implementation with only some components, or implement the full model with only a small number of teachers, and how to address the other planning considerations discussed earlier in the section about incremental implementation.

USING THE SOPAA WITH OR WITHOUT OTHER MODELS OF PROBLEM SOLVING, SUCH AS RTI

Recently, whole-school problem-solving models and prevention frameworks, typically containing a multi-tiered approach to addressing children's learning and behavioral needs, have been a focus in education research, policy, and practice. Multi-tiered models, often referred to as RTI, incorporate many of the features of previous problem-solving and school improvement models (e.g., prereferral problem-solving teams, PLCs), but have added a focus on core instruction and sequential decision making as students move up and down a continuum of increasingly intense interventions (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010; Fuchs et al., 2010). Given the current focus on multi-tiered models, readers might wonder whether the SOPAA is compatible with prevention and problem-solving models such as RTI, and if so, how?

The SOPAA is quite consistent with the core principles of RTI, and there are several possible ways that the SOPAA can align with RTI, ranging from using the SOPAA model's incremental approach to school change as a means to moving a school to RTI, to using the TAPS process as one tier of problem solving in an existing RTI model. We elaborate on these points below, starting with a very brief overview of RTI.

There is no unitary RTI model. Instead, there are multiple models with important commonalities and differences (Fuchs et al., 2010). Commonalities in all RTI models are a focus on improving core (or Tier 1) instruction, more intense services when students encounter difficulty in core instruction, a focus on evidence-based instruction and treatment integrity, universal screening, and data-based decision making (Batsche et al., 2005). Models differ in (1) the number of tiers (some models have three, some have four); (2) whether both academic and behavioral concerns are addressed in the model (sometimes only academic concerns are addressed); (3) whether special education is a tier in the RTI model or separate from it; and (4) the use of individualized versus standard protocol approaches to developing interventions after the first tier.

For a school that does not have an RTI model in place and has no plans to move in that direction, the SOPAA, and in particular the TAPS process, is meant to help the school improve the

problem-solving process that is already in place to address student learning difficulties. For example, as stated in Chapter 2, many schools have an existing prereferral or student assistance process wherein educators design and implement an instructional intervention in general education. One of the purposes of this problem-solving process is to confirm that a student's educational difficulty cannot be solved with a brief but high-quality instructional intervention before the student is assessed for possible special education placement. However, in our experience, this prereferral problem solving at individual schools often is not implemented as was intended by policymakers. The interventions and the documentation to support their implementation are usually weak, as is any impact on student outcomes. Our perception has been confirmed by others (e.g., Doll et al., 2005; Flugum & Reschley, 1994). The TAPS process is meant to assist educators in strengthening this problem-solving process, but also making it more efficient by providing structure, standardization, and professional development to support the process.

For schools that are contemplating moving to an RTI approach, the SOPAA offers a means to begin systematically and incrementally changing from current school problem-solving structures to the broad outlines of an RTI model. For instance, if the SOPAA were fully implemented at school, then strong core instruction in reading and mathematics would be in place, universal screening would be under way, and there would be a range of standardized interventions for students who were not responding to core instruction. There would also be a process in place for assuring that these standardized interventions were implemented with integrity and a process for documenting students' responses to intervention. These components would constitute the first tier of RTI, core instruction, and a second tier of specialized interventions for students who are not making sufficient progress when provided only with core instruction. For RTI models in which there are three tiers of intervention (exclusive of special education), converting to a three-tier model would likely involve examining the interventions available through TAPS, differentiating them into second- and third-tier interventions, and likely adding interventions to assure a full range of interventions at the second and third tiers. Second-tier interventions would typically consist of standardized group-based or brief one-on-one interventions administered by a range of personnel, including volunteers. Third-tier interventions would consist of TAPS interventions that were more intensive, more individually tailored, and typically provided only by a teacher. Therefore, beginning RTI implementation after experience with SOPAA would likely smooth the transition to RTI, as universal screening would already be in place and school staff would have experience with both progress monitoring and interventions. With the transition from SOPAA to RTI, placement of students into interventions at the second tier could begin to be based on decision rules (e.g., using scores on the universal screening instruments), and second-tier intervention plans would likely be well developed and implemented properly, based on teachers' earlier experience with TAPS and SOPAA professional development activities. With teacher-led development and implementation of Tier 2 interventions (i.e., the TAPS Teacher would not need to be involved or only minimally involved), the TAPS process, with its individualized approach to problem solving and teacher consultation, could then begin to take place primarily at the third tier.

Finally, for schools with RTI currently in place and no prior experience with the SOPAA, adding components of the SOPAA may be helpful in assuring that the RTI process runs more smoothly. For example, the recruitment and training of community-based volunteers would likely increase the number of second-tier interventions available, or free up educators to conduct complex interventions for which trained volunteers are not appropriate and credentialed teachers or specialists are required. Also, developing and documenting interventions may be more systematic and time-efficient through using the TAPS process, and clear documentation would provide a means of evaluating the efficacy of all interventions developed and implemented. Further, targeted professional development activities and TAPS Teachers' ongoing professional development

might better facilitate the intervention and assessment practices embedded within the RTI model. Finally, the SOPAA includes a structured system of evaluating the TAPS problem-solving process and communicating with teachers about the effectiveness and potential changes in that process, which is not always explicit within an RTI model.

Collectively, the SOPAA model shares characteristics of other problem-solving models, such as RTI, but SOPAA implementation can be used concurrently with a model such as RTI because it may improve the efficiency, documentation, and evaluation of the interventions implemented with struggling learners. In schools without an RTI model, the SOPAA can also be used and in some cases may help schools move toward it.

STEP-BY-STEP SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS BOOK TO IMPLEMENT THE SOPAA

To conclude this chapter we list a step-by-step framework for using this book. Some educators may find that SOPAA implementation will be successfully carried out using a slightly different sequence than the one listed below, but in most cases the following sequence should move readers from first exposure to this book through actual implementation. The specific steps are also provided because the interrelated SOPAA components described throughout this book cannot be presented in a perfectly linear way; therefore, a more linear representation of SOPAA implementation may be useful to some readers.

1. Read this book to acquire a primary understanding of the model and the resources provided within the book. *Note:* It will be impossible to read all chapters of this book and then successfully implement the SOPAA without ever returning to the book for recommendations and resources. As such, the goal of the first read of this book should be to gain a full understanding of the SOPAA model and to know which resources are available to assist with implementation, including the companion website www.sopaaforschools.org.
2. If appropriate, and using Chapters 9 and 11 for guidance, generate potential interest from a small number of other educators within the school who may be able to serve as SOPAA co-facilitators.
3. Read Chapter 3 again and complete The Schoolwide Capacity Assessment, the TAPS Teacher Self-Assessment, and the Intervention Planning Summary Checklist.
4. With the SOPAA facilitators, generate a basic plan for how implementation might occur and prepare to discuss the plan with the school principal, if this has not been done earlier.
5. Communicate ideas with the principal in order to develop an implementation and evaluation plan and ensure that implementation time and resources can be acquired (use Chapter 9, in particular, for guidance).
6. As needed and determined by the implementation timeline, facilitate a SOPAA preparation year (use Chapter 3, in particular, for guidance).
7. At the beginning of Year 1 of implementation, introduce the SOPAA to the teachers in the school who will be involved with implementation that year (use Chapter 10, in particular, for guidance).
8. Using this entire book for guidance and resources, implement the SOPAA as dictated by the Year 1 implementation plan that was developed, and using guidance from Chapter 10, evaluate SOPAA implementation at specified times during the year.

