

Barneveld's PIE for Everyone

Student intervention strategy helps support all students

SESSION: *RTI? Easy as Pie* | **Presenters:** Ben Jones, assistant district administrator, Barneveld School District; Heather Schmitz, teacher, Barneveld School District

When the Barneveld School District decided to incorporate RtI, a program to identify and assist struggling students, into its curriculum, the first question officials faced was when.

“How do we create time, space and utility and what do we do with all of the kids?” asked Ben Jones, Barneveld’s assistant district administrator.

Barneveld officials liked RtI because it offered them a chance to better identify students who were having problems academically and give them help before they fell behind their peers. But finding time to provide that intervention was difficult given the tightly scheduled school day. Teachers were already providing help before and after school, and pulling students out of a class meant they would have to make up even more work catching up on what they had missed.

So with a few adjustments to the schedule, district officials decided the best option was to give all students and staff in sixth through 12th grades a common 35-minute period at the end of the school day, four times a week. Called PIE (Prevention, Intervention and Exploration), the period offers students and staff a variety of options.

The Prevention component means that teachers are available if students need extra assistance on something they learned in class. There is also time for Intervention, which is part of the formal RtI program. Students who have been identified as needing help in a particular area work one on one with a specialist to strengthen their skills and to prevent them from falling farther behind.

For all the students who don’t need assistance, the common period is one of Exploration. Teachers tap into their personal interests or hobbies and offer a host of small group activities from gardening to yoga to music lessons. Students are surveyed frequently to find out what kinds of activities they might be interested in. They can also suggest ideas through a link on the district’s website.

Heather Schmitz, a middle school science teacher and PIE coordinator, keeps a list of possible activities that is frequently updated.

“There are hundreds of ideas,” Schmitz said.

According to Jones, teachers were a little nervous at first about what they might offer.

“We said, ‘You don’t have to teach anything. Find your passion and share it,’” he said.

For high school students, PIE



offers a chance for them to take electives like art or music they might not otherwise have time for. They can also use the period to prep for AP classes or ACT tests or listen to speakers talk about colleges or careers.

On Mondays, the PIE period is used as a home room where all staff meet with a small group of students and work on community-building activities.

At the elementary school, the focus is on Prevention and Intervention during a common 30-minute period at the end of the day, four days a week.

Barneveld has completed one full semester of PIE and Jones said officials are pleased with what they have seen. Overall, the number of students with Ds and Fs has decreased and attendance has improved, especially on Mondays when students get to select their PIE sessions for the week.

The fact that Barneveld is such a small district — there are 465 students in one site — helped with the schedule changes needed to add the PIE period. Officials added 15 minutes to the length of the school day and reduced the high school lunch period by 15 minutes. ■