Chapter 8 - Tier II Interventions

What is an Intervention?

Intervention means extra help or extra instruction that is targeted specifically to skills that a student has not acquired. During intervention time, the teacher selects approaches that reach students while providing numerous opportunities for practice, feedback and error correction. Options teachers can use to adjust the intervention include increasing time allowed for intervention, decreasing group size, changing materials or strategies, or moving students to a different group.

What is a Tier 2 Intervention?

Tier Two intervention is for those students for whom Tier One instruction is insufficient and who are falling behind on benchmark skills and require additional instruction to achieve grade-level expectations. Although many variations of Tier Two interventions are described in the research, in general, Tier Two is small-group supplemental instruction (ratio of up to one teacher to five students, 1:5) provided by a specialist, tutor, or special education teacher to students who fail to make adequate progress in the general classroom. Tier Two includes programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier One instruction to all students.

At Tier II, strategic interventions are provided to students who are not achieving the desired standards through the core curriculum alone. Strategic interventions supplement the instruction in the core curriculum provided in Tier I and should be targeted at identified student needs and stated in an intervention plan. Decisions about selecting the appropriate strategic interventions should be made when a student enters Tier II and then reviewed through progress monitoring at appropriate intervals after interventions are implemented.

When Does Tier 2 Intervention Start?

Tier Two instruction starts as soon as possible after students have been identified as falling behind grade expectations through benchmark testing. In this way, it differs from current approaches to SLD identification in which a student must undergo a lengthy referral and evaluation system before receiving supplemental instruction. The evidence on Tier Two interventions supports the use of a standard protocol approach, in which the supplemental instruction also is centered on evidence-based practices for students at risk. The progress of students in Tier Two also is monitored to determine whether they are responding to the intervention.
What Percentage of Students Need Tier II Interventions?

Tier II typically consists of 5-10% of the student body.

Are Strategic Interventions in Tier II Short or Long-Term?

Strategic interventions are intended to be short-term in duration (e.g., 9-12 week blocks) and are in place for immediate implementation. Interventions are generally provided in small groups of three to six students and may occur in the main classroom or in other settings. It is recommended that interventions at Tier II consist of three to four sessions per week at 30-60 minutes per session. Instruction must be provided by trained staff and supervised by individuals with expertise in the intervention chosen by the decision making team. Students may benefit from more than one Tier II intervention cycle.

Schools set up and deliver strategic interventions that are designed to address routine problems exhibited by students. When selecting materials for strategic interventions, districts and schools are encouraged to identify 2-3 programs, or fewer, per academic area and to utilize on a district-wide or school-wide basis for behavior. Districts or schools can identify additional programs, though limiting programs to two or three prevents redundancy and a lack of coordination across or among programs. It also reduces the amount of professional development that would be required to implement strategic interventions.

What are the Core Features of a Tier 2 (and beyond) Intervention?

Tier 2 and beyond consists of general education instruction plus specialized intervention that has the following features:

Size of instructional group.
Tier 2 and beyond instruction is provided in small groups (two to four students).

Mastery requirements of content.
Cut scores identified on screening measures and continued growth as demonstrated by routine progress monitoring are indicators of content mastery.

Frequency of progress monitoring.
Although recommendations vary, weekly to three times per week monitoring of progress is typical.

Duration of the intervention.
Tier 2 and beyond interventions last for nine to 12 weeks and can be repeated as needed.
**Frequency with which the intervention is delivered.**
Tier 2 and beyond provides for three to four intervention sessions per week, each lasting 30 to 60 minutes.

**Instructor qualifications.**
Instruction is conducted by trained and supervised personnel (not the classroom teacher).

Placement in and completion of Tier 2 and beyond interventions can result in one of three possible outcomes (Vaughn):

1. Successful progress is made in the area of deficit and the student exits Tier 2 and beyond instruction to return to only Tier 1 instruction.
2. Although progress is being made, the student has not progressed enough to warrant leaving and thus remains in Tier 2 and beyond for continuation of the intervention.
3. The rate and amount of progress or the level of support required for the student warrants referral for special education eligibility determination.

**How Long Should Tier 2 Interventions Be?**

Although no clear consensus exists on the duration of Tier Two interventions, in general, the research supports 8 to 12 weeks for each round of intervention. At the end of this period, a decision should be made about the student's instructional needs. The options to be considered include the following:

- Return to the general education classroom if the student has made sufficient progress.
- Receive another round of Tier Two intervention if the student is achieving progress but still remains behind his/her grade-level expectations (e.g., perhaps repeat the intervention or change to another scientific, research-based intervention depending on progress monitoring results).
- Consider for more intensive intervention in Tier Three.

**What is a Problem-Solving Approach (Individually Designed Instructional Package)?**

Most schools currently have an existing form of a problem-solving team, such as a student instructional team (SIT), student study teams (SST), or building assistance team (BAT). The purpose of these teams is to develop an accommodation or modification plan for the instructional program in the general education classroom to support the targeted student, while simultaneously providing a positive effect on the instructional program for all students. Under an RTI service-delivery system, these teams would adopt a problem-solving approach that is based on data and a continuing system of evaluation. Problems need to be objectively defined, observed, and measured directly in the general education classroom. The data collected are then analyzed, using information to develop hypotheses about the cause of the problem and the appropriate selection of evidence-based strategies to remedy them. As the interventions are implemented, the student’s progress is monitored at regular points in time. The team continues to meet to discuss
the outcome data and determine whether the intervention is having its desired effect, whether the specific intervention needs to be revised, or whether the student should be considered for further evaluation.

Some researchers say that the research on the problem-solving approach suggests it will be used most effectively when developed and implemented according to following attributes:

- A scientific approach to problem solving
- Interventions designed for an individual student
- A system for continual monitoring/evaluation of intervention
- Collaborative relationships with general education and special education to develop, implement, and monitor the intervention
- Collection of information from a variety of sources, including teachers, parents, and others who best know the child
- Use of curriculum-based measurement (CBM) to assist in problem identification and for continuing progress monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention
- Interventions embedded in the daily classroom routine so the classroom teacher takes responsibility for implementation

(adapted from Kovaleski)

At this point, the evidence supporting these attributes is insufficient. Whereas problem solving has been shown to be a scientifically validated approach to help children with behavioral problems, the evidence is insufficient to show effectiveness for children with severe reading and math problems.

What is a Standard-Protocol Approach?

Standardized protocols are interventions that researchers have validated as effective, meaning that the experimental applications were completed with the proper experimental and control groups to demonstrate that the interventions work. School staff is expected to implement specific research-based interventions to address the student’s difficulties. These interventions are not accommodations to existing curriculum; rather, they are instructional programs targeted to remediate a specific skill. Research for standard protocol interventions should specify the conditions under which the intervention has proven successful, including the number of minutes per day, the number of days per week, and the number of weeks (typically eight to 12) required for instruction with the intervention. Information about each research-based intervention also should describe the specific skills addressed, where the instruction should be provided, who should provide the instruction, and the materials used for instruction and assessing progress (adapted from Fuchs et al.).

Many standardized protocols for reading have been developed. Some are listed in the resources section at the end of this chapter. Some of the key characteristics in a program of Tier 2 and beyond intervention include the following:
Focus

The focus is on students identified with marked reading difficulties and whose response to Tier 1 efforts places them at risk for reading problems. Instruction involves specialized, scientifically based reading programs that emphasize the critical elements of beginning reading.

Grouping

Instruction is provided in homogeneous small groups (teacher-to-student ratios of one-to-three, one-to-four, or one-to-five).

Time

A recommended minimum of 30 minutes of instruction per day in a small group in addition to core reading instruction, generally provided over a period of eight to 12 weeks after which a determination is made about whether the student needs to continue in the program, move to more intense levels of intervention, or leave the program to receive Tier 1 instruction only.

Assessment

Students in Tier 2 and beyond should have their progress monitored on a weekly basis on the targeted skill to ensure adequate progress and learning. Progress monitoring on Tier 1 skills should continue to be monitored to determine whether the intervention is resulting in improvements in reading.

Interventionist

Personnel are determined by the school, but possible options are the classroom teacher, a specialized reading teacher, or an external interventionist, such as a tutor.

Setting

Instruction is provided in an appropriate setting—either within or outside of the classroom—designated by the school.

How is Progress Monitoring Done in Tier II?

At Tier II, progress monitoring involves reviewing existing data of the student’s performance and progress using CBM tools. Progress monitoring is done more frequently at Tier II than Tier I, usually occurring at least two times per month, or more frequently as determined by the decision making team. Data gathered through Tier II progress monitoring informs teams of modifications needed to student intervention plans. For example, if progress monitoring data reflects student performance below the goal line over four consecutive periods of data collection,
the amount and frequency of the intervention should be increased, or new strategic interventions should be added.

**What if Students are Successful at Tier II? What if They are Unsuccessful?**

Students who are successful at Tier II may be reintegrated into Tier I. However, for a small percentage of students, Tier II interventions will not be enough. If a student is not meeting proficiency after it is determined that Tier II strategic interventions have been implemented with fidelity, the student will require intensive interventions at Tier III.

**How Does Tier 2 (and Beyond) Fit Within an RTI Model?**

We distinguish between Tier 2 and beyond interventions that might be part of an SLD determination process and a Tier 2 and beyond model used in providing early intervention for students who are at risk for failure.

In the former case, the Tier 2 and beyond interventions have an assessment role and address the assessment question of how well a student responds to a specific research-based intervention. In this role, if a student is performing at a lower level of achievement or is learning at a significantly slower rate than his or her peer group, RTI is used to determine whether inadequate instruction would account for this discrepancy.

In the latter case, Tier 2 and beyond is considered to be an intervention intended to remediate the student’s deficits and promote participation in Tier 1 with general education students. Other researchers have offered a similar view of this latter purpose. Many people think of Tier 2 and beyond interventions as prereferral interventions, or “prereferral writ large” (Kavale, Holdnack, Mostert, & Schmied), that provide support to struggling students and prevent referral to special education.

Two approaches to structuring Tier 2 and beyond interventions have been described in the research literature: (1) problem-solving and (2) standard treatment or intervention protocol (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young). Although the two vary in their focus and implementation, the goal of each is to provide supplemental instruction to students for whom Tier 1 instruction is insufficient. Some schools may incorporate a combination of these two approaches. In some implementations, the two approaches occur sequentially with the standard intervention protocol occurring first.
Will Tier 2 (and Beyond) Interventions Affect Staff Roles, Responsibilities and School Structures?

Tier 2 and beyond interventions will require significant changes to many staff roles and responsibilities and to school structures. Specifically, schools will need to do the following:

- Develop or adopt an aligned system of progress monitoring and screening measures to identify the population of students as at risk or not making adequate progress in the general education curriculum and therefore eligible for Tier 2 and beyond interventions.
- Identify scientifically based interventions across the academic domains that can be implemented as intended.
- Adopt a standardized protocol (i.e., reading intervention curriculum) that is scientifically based.
- Adopt detailed procedures for consistent implementation of a standard treatment protocol or problem-solving framework for tiered intervention (Fuchs et al.).
- Provide teacher and staff development to ensure sufficient staff to provide small-group instruction.
- Adopt a system for continued progress monitoring and review of results along with set criteria for exit, continuation in Tier 2 and beyond, or consideration for movement to special education levels.