Florida's MTSS | *A Multi-Tiered System of Supports*

This Fact Sheet is a collaborative effort between the Problem Solving & Response to Intervention Project and Florida's Positive Behavior Support projects with the Florida Department of Education and the University of South Florida.

Fact Sheet

Effective Tiered Instruction for Literacy

Introduction

The following case study focuses on a student who is struggling with effectively working and understanding the standards within his fifth-grade classroom. The School-Based Leadership Team (SBLT), in combination with the general and special education teachers, developed a multi-tiered plan to provide additional supports for the student.

Tier 1

The focus in Tier 1 is on successful implementation of the standards to drive instruction. Each standard provides clear expectations for the knowledge and skills students need to master in each grade level and ensure high-quality instruction and positive outcomes for ALL students. They provide the foundation for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that will be used throughout life. Two frameworks for supporting the implementation of standards are the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI), which provide students with options for accessing and engaging with instruction, as well as demonstrating their learning. The effectiveness of instruction is determined through student progress towards grade-level expectations.

Tier 1 Case Study

The 5th grade teacher incorporates a science of reading approach through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and differentiation (e.g., graphic and text organizers, visual and mnemonic devices, online learning games, writing tools, etc.). The students receive ninety minutes of reading instruction on a daily basis. The teacher utilizes the assessment data results (i.e., of, for as learning) to gain clearer understanding of his students' needs and provides assistance based on those results. He monitors student learning through both formative (e.g., observation, quizzes, daily quick checks, peer review, writing samples, etc.) and summative (e.g., district benchmark assessments, unit tests, projects, rubrics, etc.) assessments.

One of his students struggles with proficiently reading and comprehending informational grade-level text. He displays difficulty analyzing the author's purpose and with determining the meaning of vocabulary terms. When writing, he displays difficulty with his use of academic vocabulary when conveying ideas and responding to text. Additionally, he struggles in both reading and writing grade-level phonics and word analysis skills when decoding and recognizing the connection of grade level vocabulary using Greek and Latin roots. The teacher included mini group lessons (e.g., writing workshops, individual conferences, vocabulary and syntax clues, etc.) and the use of writing through multiple print and digital resources.

The student's progress monitoring data was reviewed, and it was determined there was not sufficient evidence of progress toward expectations. Based upon data indicating a poor response to Tier 1 instruction, the SBLT determined instruction was not matched to the student's learning needs and more focused instruction (Tier 2 supports) was necessary.

Tier 2

The focus of supplemental (Tier 2) support is to address gaps that pose barriers to learning and to improve student performance with Tier 1 expectations. This requires systematic, explicit and interactive small group instruction targeted on foundational skills. Instruction is more intense (more time and narrow focus with explicit feedback) and may be provided by various professionals (e.g., general educator, special educator).

Data (e.g., benchmark, progress monitoring, diagnostic) are used to identify groups of students who are in need of supplemental supports and those that share the same academic needs. The frequency of progress monitoring within Tier 2 varies depending on students' needs and assessment parameters. Effective Tier 2 instruction matches instruction to the need of the students in the group and provides multiple opportunities to practice the skill and receive feedback. The additional time allotted is IN ADDITION to Tier 1 instruction. The intervention includes materials and strategies designed to supplement Tier 1 instruction and are integrated and reciprocal within Tier 1.

Tier 2 Case Study

The teacher utilizes the diagnostic data and organizes the information for small group considerations. Additionally, she assesses the students' reading level, fluency/comprehension (Maze) and fluency measure (Oral Reading Fluency). She reviewed all of the data provided for the student and shared her findings with the

lead educator. Based on the information provided they hypothesized the student mastered the use of common affixes and roots or familiar vocabulary at the 3rd grade level, but struggled when combining letter-sound correspondences, patterns and morphology when reading unfamiliar multi-syllabic words at the 5th and 4th grade levels. Focusing on 4th grade expectations, the reading teacher determined that she would work with this student five days a week for thirty minutes per day targeting instruction on foundational gaps in reading and writing. In small group format, she began to pre-teach vocabulary words for reading and writing assignments to assist with progress in general education. She ensured UDL principles to connect and build background knowledge with strategies to support vocabulary (e.g., word games, graphic organizers, word study, vocabulary apps, etc.) and to engage in the language. She also included shared reading activities and phonics mini lesson instruction to increase spelling. To assist with expanding word knowledge, background information and increase reading ability, she incorporated a book club that allowed student choice in reading. The students also receive reading support through an interactive web-based program that includes lessons, assessments, tracking and reporting to be completed on an individual student basis and is monitored frequently (daily/weekly). Any effective strategies (e.g., graphic organizers, word study and online apps) were incorporated into Tier 1 instruction to support learning throughout the school day to ensure access, engagement and understanding with grade level instruction and information.

Upon review of the data, the student continued to struggle with vocabulary, so the teacher conferenced with him individually and provided specific targeted feedback. She increased her time with him during guided practice in small group; added additional informal assessments to monitor progress; and provided extra practice of applying strategies to reading material. She incorporated word study to increase his vocabulary, but noticed he had little background knowledge of concepts described in class. The student continued to struggle with vocabulary with approximately 50% accuracy rates. Although he has little difficulty with simple words and phrases and common affixes and roots, he struggles with reading and writing unknown multisyllabic words and uncommon words and phrases. The teacher also shared when information is read to him, he seems to understand the material. Based on the information and data provided by the teacher, the SBLT determined the student was not responding adequately to instruction and a more intensive (Tier 3) support was necessary.

Tier 3

The focus of intensive (Tier 3) support is for students who demonstrate both intense (large gap in expected versus current performance) and severe (unresponsive to intervention) learning problems. Effective implementation requires the support to be matched to student need and is provided by the most experienced, and/or specialized expert. Instruction is, individualized and targeted, to the skills that pose the greatest barrier to learning and is characterized by the greatest number of minutes of instruction with the narrowest focus for an individual or a very small group of students.

Individualized diagnostic data as well as instructional time is IN ADDITION to those provided in Tiers 1 and 2. Assessments occur more frequently and focus on the learning barriers to success at Tiers 1 and 2 and are based on intensity of needs. The larger the gap, the more frequent assessments occur to monitor student progress. The expected outcome, along with Tiers 1 and 2, is for the student to achieve Tier 1 proficiency levels.

Tier 3 Case Study

Using the student's individual data results, the SBLT determined a further decoding diagnostic measure was required to ensure a thorough understanding of the student's needs. According to the data, the student needed intensive instruction in word study, word recognition and support for applying decoding strategies to connected text to reinforce strategies. He also required assistance with building fluency and comprehension. The SBLT determined that the student would receive Tier 3 support five days a week for 45 minutes per day targeting instruction focused on foundational gaps in reading and writing monitored on a weekly basis. The interventionist applied a research-based program designed for students who struggle with decoding and comprehension that includes structured lessons designed to develop necessary skills. She also assisted the student through utilizing techniques like syllable and word pattern games and word sorts to increase his use and understanding of unknown multi-syllabic words. To support writing she included strategies like framed sentences and paragraphs with fading. To increase fluency, she utilized a buddy approach at the student's instructional reading level. The teacher assisted him with learning how to transfer, or generalize, these strategies and strength in learning throughout his school day. She ensured application by applying multi-modal or multi-sensory strategies and techniques and applied UDL principles (e.g., reading out loud, auditory books, partner reading, computer based auditory support, etc.). Additionally, the interventionist collaborated with the SBLT to share progress and ensure alignment to Tier 1 instruction with learned strategies to increase engagement. For additional support, she provided techniques to include additional vocabulary strategies and an online writing program to ensure learning opportunities occur throughout his day and learning experiences.

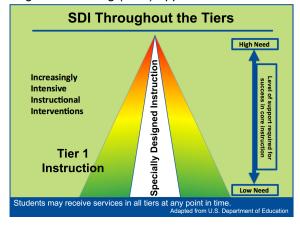**Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)**

If it is determined that the student is eligible and in need of ESE Services and Supports, they will benefit from Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). SDI refers to instruction that is provided to eligible students with disabilities (e.g., students that receive procedural safeguards by law and have an IEP). SDI is provided collaboratively by the general and special education teachers and is applicable across all tiers of instruction. It enables students with disabilities to access the Tier 1

curriculum in the least restrictive environment (LRE) through a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach. SDI provides unique instruction/intervention supports determined, designed, and delivered through a team approach, ensuring access to Tier 1 instruction through the adaptation of content, methodology, or delivery of instruction.

Conclusion

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) exists to ensure *all* students have access to high quality, engaging instruction. It integrates instruction and intervention to meet the needs of students, identified through data-based decisions, to accelerate performance and ensure mastery of the standards. Additionally, effective strategies are utilized throughout their learning experience to align tiers of instruction and to ensure students meet with success.

SDI Throughout the Tiers

Increasingly Intensive Instructional Interventions

Specially Designed Instruction

Tier 1 Instruction

High Need

Low Need

Level of support required for success in core instruction

Students may receive services in all tiers at any point in time.
Adapted from U.S. Department of Education

References

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- Academic Screening Tools Chart — https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/ascreening?_ga=2.32682430.1697820356.1677865578-120496186.1675977691
- CPALMS — http://www.cpalms.org/Public/
- Example Diagnostic Tools — https://intensiveintervention.org/tools-charts/example-diagnostic-tools?_ga=2.73060755.1697820356.1677865578-120496186.1675977691
- MTSS Implementation Components: Ensuring Common Language and Understanding — https://www.livebinders.com/b/2785147?tabid=d29024e2-4769-2ff5-a513-b4140ea0f836
- National Center on Intensive Intervention — https://intensiveintervention.org/
- What is "Special" About Special Education? — https://www.livebinders.com/b/2785147?tabid=8f09ff7a-a1bb-2958-fb08-1d75b88b34f0
    - Accompanying Technical Assistance Paper — http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7122/dps-2014-94.pdf