

Tier 3 Problem Solving Facilitation Guide



Tier 3 problem-solving meetings can be a powerful way for schools to improve individual student outcomes. However, without effective facilitation, these meetings can easily become unproductive or unfocused. This facilitation guide is designed to help users plan, structure, and lead problem-solving discussions that are collaborative and result in effective intervention.

This document provides guidance for facilitating problem solving at the Tier 3 level, and can be used in conjunction with the [Tier 3 Problem Solving Worksheet \(PSW\)](#). It features sections of the PSW with numbered fields that correspond to sample prompts and notes/examples. The sample prompts in italicized text offer suggested language to use when guiding a team through each step of the problem-solving process.

Using this step-by-step guide will help facilitators keep discussions on track and lead problem-solving meetings that are focused, efficient, and ultimately generate effective solutions that improve student outcomes.

Pre-Meeting Preparation

Before initiating Tier 3 problem solving, certain preliminary steps should be taken to ensure an effective and efficient initial team meeting.

1. **Identify the individuals who will participate on the problem-solving team.** The team should include the student's teachers (including ESE teachers) and any relevant content area specialists (e.g., reading, math, behavior). (Document this in PSW, #1 below.)
2. **Ensure parent involvement.** The student's parent or guardian should be invited to actively participate in the problem-solving process. (See #2 below.)
3. **Provide a summary of the instruction and interventions the student has received.** Include the student's response to Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2 intervention as well as the response of their peers. (See #3 below.)

Pre Meeting Preparation		
Student:	Meeting Date(s):	
School:	Grade (at time of initial meeting):	
Team Members:	1	
Parent/Guardian:	2	
Instruction/ Intervention Review:	3	

	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
1 Team Members	<i>"Who will participate as a team member in the problem-solving meeting?"</i>	The team should include the student's teachers, including ESE teachers, as well as content area specialists or experts.
2 Parent/Guardian	<i>"How will we enable the parent/guardian to contribute to the problem solving for their child?"</i>	Ensure the parent or guardian has been invited to contribute meaningfully to the problem solving for their child.
3 Instruction/ Intervention Review	<i>"What supports has this student received already, how did they respond, how did that compare to their peers receiving the same intervention?"</i>	Summarize the instruction and intervention that has been provided, including the student's response Tier 1 and Tier 2, as well as the response of their peers.

Step 1: Goal Identification/Problem Identification

During Step 1, teams identify the student's current level of performance and compare it to the expected level and the performance level of their peers. This comparison allows teams to quantify the intensity of the problem and determine the intensity of intervention that will be required to close the performance gaps.

Step 1: Goal Identification/Problem Identification				What do we want students to know and be able to do?			
4	Data Source:	<input type="checkbox"/> Tier 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Tier 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Tier 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Tier 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 2		
5	Expected Level of Performance:						
6	Current Level of Performance:						
7	Peer Performance:						

	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
4 Data Source	"What whole group data (Tier 1) and small group data (Tier 2) are available to help determine the student's needs?"	Identify for which tier the data was collected and document the data source.
5 Expected Level of Performance	"What level of performance on this assessment is considered 'on grade level' or 'at low risk'?"	"456 Scale Score (at PM3)," "46 Digits Correct per Minute (DCPM)," "earn 0-1 ODRs as measured by ODR reports," "absent no more than 10% of instructional time as measured by attendance records," "have 0-1 early warning indicators as measured by the EWS system"
6 Current Level of Performance	"At what level is the student currently performing?"	Document the student's most recent performance for each data set.
7 Peer Performance	"What percent of the peer group is meeting the expectation?" Or "What is the average performance of the peer group?"	Identify the percent of the peer group (for Tier 1-whole group and Tier 2-small group) that is currently performing at the expected level. If this information is not available, identify the average peer performance.

Step 2: Problem Analysis

During the Step 2, teams consider why there is a difference between expected and current levels or, in other words, why the student is performing below the expectation. Teams develop hypotheses considering instructional, curriculum, environment, and learner (ICEL) variables that are research-based, alterable, measurable, and will lead to intervention. It is critical during problem analysis to ensure that the hypotheses are valid before developing an intervention plan. Each hypothesis is assessed using the methods of review, interview, observe, and test (RIOT) to determine which are most likely true. Intervention plans should be created addressing validated hypotheses only.

Step 2: Problem Analysis Why is the problem occurring?

Hypothesis #1:

Domain: ☐ Instruction ☐ Curriculum ☐ Environment ☐ Learner **8**Hypothesis: **9**Prediction Statement: **10**Assessment Method(s): ☐ Review ☐ Interview ☐ Observe ☐ TestSpecific Data to be Collected: **11**Validated: ☐ Yes ☐ No **12**

	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
8 Domain	<i>"As we think about reasons why there's a difference between the expected and current student performance, consider reasons that are related to the instruction, curriculum, environment as well as the learner."</i>	Hypotheses should be developed considering <i>Instruction, Curriculum, Environment, or Learner</i> (ICEL) variables. Identify the domain for each hypothesis generated.
9 Hypothesis	<i>"Using the sentence starter, 'The problem is occurring because...' why do you think [student name] is not meeting the expectation?"</i>	Be sure to guide team members to generate hypotheses that are research-based, alterable, measurable, and that will lead to intervention. Encourage the team to focus on hypotheses that explain the student's underperformance. This may include reasons related to either a lack of skill or performance (i.e., can't do or won't do).
10 Prediction Statement	<i>"Now let's create an if/then statement based on the hypothesis. It will help us to make sure the hypothesis is actionable and will identify what should be implemented within our intervention plan."</i>	<i>"If we provide the student with sufficient instruction on foundational phonemic awareness, <u>then</u> the problem will be reduced."</i> Prediction statements can help teams focus on alterable hypotheses and can point the team toward an actionable plan for intervention that is matched to the underlying cause.
11 Specific Data to be Collected and the Assessment Method(s)	<i>"Our hypothesis is _____. How can we find out if that is actually true?"</i>	To validate the hypotheses, consider RIOT: what can be Reviewed , who can be Interviewed (or surveyed), what can be Observed , what can be Tested . Determine which assessment method (RIOT) will be used and what specific data will be reviewed or collected in order to validate the hypothesis above. Note: It may be necessary to reconvene when the data are available.
12 Validated	<i>"Is our hypothesis in fact true or valid? What did the data (RIOT) tell us?"</i>	Describe what was found during the assessment (RIOT) and indicate whether or not the hypothesis above is valid. If there are multiple valid hypotheses, select one or two to address first (i.e., most foundational, immediately actionable).

Step 3: Instructional/Intervention Design

In this step the team will develop a comprehensive plan to address the validated hypothesis(es) identified in Step 2. As a part of the comprehensive plan development, the team will document details of the intervention, establish the support needed for the interventionist, determine how intervention fidelity will be documented, and identify how student progress will be monitored. It is important in this step to be as detailed as possible so that all members of the team are clear on what will be done.

Step 3: Intervention Design and Implementation What are we going to do?		
Validated hypothesis(es): 13		
Goal (SMART): 14		
	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
13 Validated hypothesis(es)	"Our validated hypothesis was _____"	Rewrite the validated hypothesis to keep it closely tied to the intervention design.
14 Goal (SMART)	"By when do we want this goal to be met?" "What exactly do we want [student] to do or achieve?"; "How will we measure progress or attainment of the goal over time?"	"By May 25, 2025, Susie will read 119 words correct per minute (WCPM) on a 3 rd grade oral reading fluency probe." The goal should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (i.e., SMART). The goal date, desired level and rate of improvement should be ambitious, yet realistic.
Intervention Plan		
15 Intervention Plan Who is responsible?	Sample Prompt: "Let's refer back to the validated hypothesis; we confirmed that ____ is a reason why the problem is occurring. What will we do to address that? As we create this intervention plan, it's important that we're as specific and detailed as possible so that everyone is clear on who is doing what, and when. We want to write it so that anyone can pick up this plan and know exactly what we're doing to improve outcomes for this student."	
16 What will be done?		
17 When will it occur?		
18 Where will it occur?		
	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
15 Who is responsible?	"Who will deliver the intervention? Let's make sure to write down each person's name and role."	Use the person's name when identifying who will provide the intervention. The person(s) responsible should be involved in the planning. At a minimum, clearly identify how the person will be notified of their responsibilities.
16 What will be done?	"What exactly will be done?"	Refer to the prediction statement, specifically what follows the word "if." Indicate the specific intervention that will be provided or implemented. Be as detailed as possible.
17 When will it occur?	"On what days and at what times will this take place?"	If the action is ongoing, indicate exactly when (e.g., daily, 9:05-9:20am). Be as detailed as possible.
18 Where will it occur?	"Where will it happen?"	Indicate exactly where the intervention will occur. For example: In Ms. Jasper's classroom.

Support Plan		
<div>19</div> <div>20</div> <div>21</div> <div>22</div>	<div>Support Plan</div> <div>Who is responsible?</div> <div>What will be done?</div> <div>When will it occur?</div> <div>Where will it occur?</div>	Sample Prompt: <i>"We just identified Ingrid as the person to deliver the intervention. Now, we're going to create a plan to support her so that the intervention will be implemented with the highest level of fidelity. Ingrid, what do you need to ensure the intervention is delivered as we intend it to be? This can include modeling or coaching for the intervention, observation and feedback, support with materials, or even just reminders. Again, we're going to be as specific and detailed as possible so that everyone is clear on who is doing what, and when."</i>
	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
	<div>19</div> <div>Who is responsible?</div>	Use the person's name when identifying who will provide support. The people responsible should be involved in the planning. At a minimum, clearly identify how the person will be notified of their responsibilities.
	<div>20</div> <div>What will be done?</div>	Ask the people responsible for implementation what would be helpful to them. In addition, consider what barriers could keep the plan from being executed as designed. If adjustments to instruction, materials, curriculum, or scheduling are involved, include securing the necessary permissions from leadership, providing professional learning/training, ensuring all materials are available, etc.
<div>21</div> <div>When will it occur?</div>	<i>"On what days and at what times will the support be provided?"</i>	Use dates and times if appropriate; be as detailed as possible.
<div>22</div> <div>Where will it occur?</div>	<i>"Where will the support be provided?"</i>	Indicate exactly where it will occur; be as detailed as possible.

Fidelity Documentation		
<div>23</div> <div>24</div> <div>25</div> <div>26</div>	<div>Fidelity Documentation</div> <div>Who is responsible?</div> <div>What will be done?</div> <div>When will it occur?</div> <div>How will data be shared?</div>	Sample Prompt: <i>"How can we measure the fidelity of the intervention? In other words, how can we document that what we intended to happen, actually happened?"</i>
	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
	<div>23</div> <div>Who is responsible?</div>	This may be the person delivering the intervention, and/or someone observing the intervention.
	<div>24</div> <div>What will be done?</div>	For example, if the plan involves providing additional instruction to the student, consider how the team will know the instruction was provided (dosage), and whether the instruction was delivered as designed? For example, were all the parts/steps delivered, was the script followed (i.e., adherence, quality).

Tier 3 Problem Solving Facilitation Guide

25	When will it occur?	<i>"When will fidelity data collection occur?"</i>	Use dates and times if appropriate; be as detailed as possible.
26	How will data be shared?	<i>"How will the fidelity data be shared with the intervention provider(s) and the team?"</i>	Consider providing interim opportunities for reviewing data with the intervention provider(s) to strengthen fidelity of intervention implementation.

Progress Monitoring Plan			
27	Progress Monitoring Plan Who is responsible?	Sample Prompt: <i>"How can we measure the effectiveness of the intervention? What data can we use to monitor how well the student is responding?"</i>	
28	What data will be collected and when?		
29	When will team reconvene to evaluate progress?		
	How will we decide if the plan is effective?		
30	Decision rules: Positive Rtl = Questionable Rtl = Poor Rtl =		
		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
27	Who is responsible?	<i>"Who will be responsible for collecting the progress monitoring data?"</i>	This may be the person delivering the intervention or may be someone specifically trained to administer the progress monitoring tool.
28	What data will be collected?	<i>"Let's look back at the goal. What data will we collect to determine student progress?"</i>	Consider what data will help the team know that the changes are making the intended impact. There may be more than one source of progress monitoring data collected, and the data may be collected at different intervals, but details should be outlined in terms of what, who, and when. The frequency of data collection should be decided based on what makes sense for the skill or skills being addressed (i.e., the rate at which students typically develop the skill).
29	When will the team reconvene?	<i>"On what day and at what time will we meet to determine progress?"</i>	Identify when the team will meet to determine intervention effectiveness. The next review meeting should be scheduled, identifying the day, time, and location. Participants should be clear on their responsibility to come prepared, especially those who are responsible for bringing data.
30	Decision rules	<i>"What will we consider to be a positive response to intervention (Rtl)? How about a questionable and poor response?"</i>	<p>Consider what will be considered a positive, a questionable, or a poor response.</p> <p>Indicate the decision rules for Step 4. This is usually described as:</p> <p>Positive = \geq ____</p> <p>Questionable = ____ - ____</p> <p>Poor = \leq ____</p>

Step 4: Response to Intervention/Instruction

During Step 4, the team reviews RtI data and determines if the intervention is working as planned to achieve the desired student outcomes. It's important that the team meets at the designated time and follows the progress monitoring plan (i.e., what data will be reviewed, how the team will decide effectiveness, and the decision rules for a positive, questionable, and poor student response). All decisions made during Step 4 should be clearly documented and as appropriate, a subsequent follow-up meeting should be scheduled after each meeting.

Step 4: Response to Intervention/Instruction Is it working?

Data-based decision making based on pre-determined decision rules:

- 31** ☐ **POSITIVE RtI**
 Goal is *not* met: ☐ Continue plan as designed or ☐ Increase intensity of current plan (document all changes or adjustments)
 Goal is met: ☐ Fade intervention and monitor or ☐ Identify new goal, modify plan (document all changes or adjustments, complete new PSW if appropriate)
- 32** ☐ **QUESTIONABLE RtI**
 Fidelity concerns: ☐ Address fidelity, continue plan as designed and monitor (document adjustments to address fidelity)
 No fidelity concerns: ☐ Increase intensity of current plan and monitor; *if improvement doesn't occur* ☐ return to earlier steps of problem solving (document all changes or adjustments, complete new PSW if appropriate)
- 33** ☐ **POOR RtI**
 Fidelity concerns: ☐ Address fidelity, continue plan as designed and monitor (document adjustments to address fidelity)
 No fidelity concerns: ☐ Return to earlier steps of problem solving to consider replacing the intervention (still addressing validated hypothesis), revisiting other viable hypotheses, or reassessing problem identification (document all changes or adjustments, complete new PSW if appropriate)

Attach all available progress monitoring data.

34 Changes or adjustments to the plan:

35 Next meeting date:

	Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
31 Positive RtI	<i>"RtI was positive. We have some options."</i>	
Positive, goal met	<i>"The student met the goal we set. Should we continue the plan, or gradually fade the intervention to see if students can maintain current performance with less intense supports?"</i> <i>Then, "Based on the current data, are there other areas we can address and improve?"</i>	If appropriate, consider fading the intervention. Progress must be closely monitored and the intervention should be put back in place immediately if the data indicate achievement is not maintained. If the team identifies a new area to address, document problem solving using a new PSW.

Tier 3 Problem Solving Facilitation Guide

Positive, goal not met	<i>"The student is on track to meet the goal we set, but they're not there yet. Should we continue with the current plan as designed or should we increase the intensity?"</i>	Increasing the intensity could help achieve the goal more quickly.
32 Questionable Rtl	<i>"Rtl was questionable. Let's look first at the fidelity data that was collected. Does fidelity need to be addressed before considering other changes?"</i>	When Rtl is questionable, always look at fidelity data first. Decisions about intervention effectiveness can't be made when the intervention wasn't delivered as planned.
Questionable Rtl with poor fidelity	<i>"Moving forward, how can we ensure that the intervention is delivered as planned?"</i>	Fidelity should be addressed first before making any changes to the intervention plan.
Questionable Rtl with good fidelity	<i>"Since fidelity was good, our next step is to intensify the intervention for a short period of time, and closely monitor student progress."</i>	If, after intensification, the response is still questionable, guide the team to earlier steps of problem solving: (Step 3) is there another intervention that may yield better results? Or (Step 2) is there a different valid hypothesis to address? Or (Step 1) was the problem accurately identified?
33 Poor Rtl	<i>"Rtl was poor. Let's look first at the fidelity data that was collected. Does fidelity need to be addressed before considering other changes?"</i>	When Rtl is poor, always look at fidelity data first. Decisions about intervention effectiveness can't be made when the intervention wasn't delivered as planned.
Poor Rtl with poor fidelity	<i>"Moving forward, how can we ensure that the intervention is delivered as planned?"</i>	Fidelity should be addressed first before making any changes to the intervention plan. Consider whether additions to the support plan are needed to improve fidelity.
Poor Rtl with good fidelity	<i>"Since fidelity was good, our next step is to work our way back through the problem solving steps. First, is there a different intervention, aligned to our validated hypothesis, that we could implement? If not, we'll go back to problem analysis to see if there are other viable hypotheses that we should consider instead. If we need to, we can go back to problem identification to make sure the problem was accurately identified."</i>	Intensifying the intervention at this point is not a defensible decision because as time is passing, the student is falling further behind.
34 Changes or adjustments to the plan	<i>"What are our next steps?" "How are we adjusting the plan?"</i>	
35 Next meeting date	<i>"When will we meet again to review data and make decisions?"</i>	

To view an example of a completed Tier 3 Problem Solving Worksheet, click [here](#).