

Clarifying Questions to Create a Hypothesis to Guide Intervention Changes: Question Bank

This resource includes questions that teams can use to develop a hypothesis about why an individual or group of students may not be responding to an intervention. The hypothesis should help guide intervention planning and selection of intensification strategies using the [Intervention Intensification Strategy Checklist](#). When developing a hypothesis, teams should consider the intervention design, fidelity of implementation, and learner needs. Intervention fidelity data collected using the [Data-Based Individualization Implementation Log](#) and informal diagnostic data may help teams answer the sample questions below related to these three areas.

Tip: If most students are not responding to the intervention, consider developing a hypothesis to guide selection and implementation of adaptations or intensification strategies for the group. If most students are responding and a few students are not, consider using this resource to develop a hypothesis to guide adaptations and intensification for individual students.

Intervention Design (*Strength/Evidence base*)

- Does evidence suggest that the intervention is expected to lead to improved outcomes (*strength*)?
 - For the identified skill deficits and/or function of the behavior?
 - For students with similar characteristics (e.g., English learner, disability, socioeconomic status, geographic setting)?
 - For students with similar growth goals?
- Does the group size, duration, and frequency provide sufficient opportunities to respond and receive corrective feedback (*dosage*)?
- Does the intervention match the student's identified needs (*alignment*)?
- Does it assist the student in generalizing the learned skills to general education or other tasks (*attention to transfer*)?
- Does the intervention include elements of explicit instruction (*comprehensiveness*)?
- Does the student have opportunities to develop the behavior skills necessary to be successful (*behavioral support*)? Does the behavior intervention complement rather than supplant the academic focus (*academic support*)?

If teams indicate no or are unsure about any of these questions, click on the link in the parentheses to access additional questions to help clarify or narrow the hypothesis.

Intervention Delivery/Fidelity

- Does the interventionist have the necessary training, knowledge, and skills to deliver the intervention with fidelity?
- Is there evidence that the intervention was delivered with fidelity? Consider the following:

- **Adherence:** How well do we stick to the plan, curriculum, or assessment? Is the intervention delivered consistently across different teachers and settings?
- **Program specificity:** How well is the intervention defined and different from other interventions?
- **Engagement:** How engaged and involved are the students in this instruction/intervention?
- **Duration:**
 - Is the student regularly attending school?
 - Is the teacher regularly available to support instruction/intervention?
 - How often does a student receive instruction/intervention? How long does instruction/intervention last?
 - Did any factors prevent the student from receiving the intervention as intended?
- **Quality of delivery:**
 - How well is the intervention, assessment, or instruction delivered?
 - Are quality teaching practices used consistently and with appropriate intensity across all sessions or interventionists?

Learner Needs and Background

- What previous interventions or supports has the student received? How has he/she responded to these interventions or supports?
- Have we reviewed available assessment data related to areas of strength, concern, skill deficits, etc.?
- Has the teacher communicated with previous teachers, parents, or the student to get a better sense of his/her performance and considerations of factors that may be impacting the student?
- Are other factors contributing to the learning or behavior concerns that need to be addressed (e.g., home life, health, vision, hearing, attendance/tardies, disability, behavior)?
- Are there environmental variables that may be impacting the student's learning? For instance, does the problem occur in a particular setting, under certain conditions, or at a certain time of day?
- Is the student an English learner? Are appropriate practices to support language development used?
- For students with an identified disability, does the support and instruction align with the individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan? Are modifications needed to the student's program or plan?
- For students without an identified disability, do data warrant a referral to special education, given the district's policies?

Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity Dimensions—Refining the Hypothesis

Teams may use these additional questions, organized using the [Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity](#), to refine the hypothesis to make more effective and efficient decisions about intensification.

Dosage (*Opportunities to practice and receive corrective feedback*)

- Does the intervention, when delivered with fidelity, provide enough opportunities to learn or practice the target skill(s)? Is the frequency of corrective feedback sufficient?
 - How does the group size impact the student's opportunities to respond and receive feedback?

- Is there sufficient time during the intervention session for modeling, guided practice, and corrective feedback?
- Does the frequency in which the intervention components are delivered match the learner's needs?
- Does the student participate or remain engaged during the entire session?
- Does the student need additional practice opportunities or feedback to benefit from the intervention?
- Does the student need additional practice opportunities distributed across the instructional day or week?

Alignment

- Does the intervention target the student's academic or behavior learning needs?
- Have we identified all potential skill deficits or functions of the behavior?
- Are progress monitoring data collected at the appropriate level and frequency?
- Does the intervention incorporate a meaningful focus on skills necessary to access grade-appropriate curricular standards or meet schoolwide expectations?
- Are the academic tasks at the right level for the student? Are the target behavior skills relevant for the student?
- Does the student need additional instruction in a specific skill area?
 - What specific skill deficits may be contributing to the problem?
 - Are the academic tasks on the right level for the student?
- What does the team believe the student is trying to accomplish with the behavior? (What is the function of the behavior?)
 - To avoid or escape something (e.g., difficult task or social interaction).
 - To gain or obtain something (e.g., attention or stimuli).
- Have you considered the Antecedents-Behavior-Consequences (ABCs)? Also, are strategies in place to address the [ABCs](#)?
 - Antecedent (i.e., anything that happens immediately before the behavior occurs)
 - Behavior (i.e., the action a student demonstrates that can be clearly defined and measured)
 - Consequence (i.e., any positive or negative event that occurs after a student demonstrates a behavior)
- Other: _____

Attention to Transfer (*Generalization of skills*)

- To what extent are other classroom teachers reinforcing the knowledge and skills being taught in the intervention?
- To what extent does the intervention help the student(s) realize connections between mastered and related skills?
- Do data suggest the student is making progress in the intervention, but not transferring the skills to other settings (e.g., core instruction, other content areas, other settings)?
- Are there inconsistencies in expectations or routines from transferring the intervention to other settings?
- Other: _____

Comprehensiveness (*Elements of explicit instruction*)

- To what extent does the academic intervention include elements of explicit instruction? Consider the following:
 - Provides explanations in simple, direct language.
 - Models efficient strategies (e.g., decoding unknown words) instead of expecting students to discover strategies on their own.
 - Ensures that students have the necessary background knowledge and skills to succeed with those strategies.
 - Gradually fades support for students' correct execution of those strategies.
 - Provides practice so that students use the strategies to generate many correct responses.
 - Incorporates systematic cumulative review.
- To what extent does the behavior intervention:
 - Teach appropriate behavior?
 - Adjust antecedent conditions to prevent problem behavior?
 - Reinforce appropriate behavior?
 - Minimize reinforcement for problem behavior?
 - Fade supports?
 - Monitor fidelity?
 - Work in conjunction with related services?
- Is the student's academic/behavioral/social-emotional skill deficit a "can't do" (i.e., the student requires instruction) or a "won't do" (i.e., the student has performed the skill previously but is no longer demonstrating the skill)?
- Other: _____

Behavior and Academic Supports and Considerations

- Does the student demonstrate appropriate behavioral/social-emotional skills? If so, how are those reinforced during academic intervention? If not, how are those skills being taught to the student?
- How engaged and involved is the student in this intervention or activity?
 - What strategies support the student's engagement?
- Other: _____

For Intensive Intervention in Academics

- Are methods to promote self-regulation and executive function incorporated?
- Are behavioral principles to minimize nonproductive behavior incorporated?

For Intensive Intervention in Behavior

- Is the intervention easily integrated within the context of academic instruction?
- Does it complement rather than supplant the academic focus?
- Does it include procedures for reinforcing responses related to academic achievement (e.g., engagement, work completion)?