

An Introduction to Intensive Intervention

Q&A

Question: How does DBI differ from RTI, special education, or specialized instruction? How does DBI mesh with a multi-tiered system of support?

Answer: In many ways, Response to Intervention (RTI) is a precursor that ensures many of the foundational pieces are in place for Data Based Individualization (DBI). Some of the necessary pre-conditions for DBI that would be in place through an RTI framework include ongoing progress monitoring, a multi-tiered system of support, and evidence based intervention platforms implemented with fidelity. While it is easiest to conceptualize and explain DBI within an RTI framework, the Center tries to convey DBI in a way that would make sense to districts and schools who may not have an RTI system in place. DBI focuses more on what is typically thought of as “tertiary intervention”, however it is not limited to this as in many multi-tiered intervention systems there are more than three tiers of support. RTI is a framework used to provide multiple tiers of prevention to result in positive learning outcomes for all students, and DBI refers to the process teams should follow when students require the highest level or tier of intervention. DBI is a form of individualized instruction, a key distinction being the rigorous and intensive use of data to individualize interventions.

Overall, the definition of DBI is consistent with the definition of special education. We expect that some of the students who meet the criteria for requiring intensive interventions may not have been identified as having a disability, but the focus of the Center is primarily on students with disabilities.

Question: What is the approximate timeframe for the time a student begins to receive intervention and the time they receive intensive intervention? How certain are we that we are delivering intensive interventions in a timely fashion, particularly for students with behavioral needs?

Answer: When considering the decision of moving a student to a more intensive level of intervention, it is important to not only consider time but also the responsiveness of the student to an intervention that was delivered with fidelity. In most cases, before a student who is targeted as struggling or at-risk receives intensive intervention, he or she should receive an evidence based intervention with fidelity. Ongoing progress monitoring, conducted once a week or every two weeks, is used to determine whether or not the student is responsive to the intervention platform. If a student remains non-responsive to an intervention, then it would be necessary to move the student to a more intensive level of intervention. In certain cases, students



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with behavioral needs may be placed directly into the most intensive level of intervention due to the nature of their behavior. Overall, it is important for school teams to consider whether or not a student has been delivered high quality intervention with fidelity before considering a more intensive level of intervention.

Question: What is meant by “fidelity” as it is referred to in this presentation?

Answer: With regard to secondary interventions; this means implementing the program with regards to the way a program was demonstrated to work. Evidence based secondary interventions should be implemented in the way that they were used when they were found to be research-based. Vendors of evidence based intervention platforms will report specifics about how the program should be taught, often including but not limited to: the level of training necessary for instructors, frequency, duration, group size, and lesson structure.

Question: Where does an evaluation of the curriculum and instruction being provided fit into the DBI process?

Answer: In the DBI process, it is crucial to evaluate the curriculum and instruction that are being provided. It is important to have solid core instruction as well as secondary intervention platforms in place before moving on to an intensive intervention with the DBI process. Throughout the DBI process, as teachers analyze student data they should also be continuously analyzing their instruction and the way the student responds to the curriculum. Curriculum and instruction should be adapted or changed based upon student response over time.

Question: What is the typical or recommended duration of DBI?

Answer: There is no definitive answer for the recommended duration of DBI. Many of the students who would most likely benefit from DBI are students who have been non-responsive to high quality intervention over time and/or present with very substantial disabilities that would require intensive intervention over an extended period of time. Because DBI typically focuses on very specific skill deficits, it is likely that a student may show improvement in a deficit area



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but will require continued intervention at that level of intensity over time to continue to progress. It will take multiple sessions to determine if a student is responsive to the intervention.

Question: The presentation cites NAEP data. Does NAEP 2011 allow accommodations?

Answer: The NAEP does allow accommodations; however, there may be some accommodations that are allowed in a certain states that may not be permitted on the NAEP such as the read aloud accommodations for reading tests and the use of calculators.

Question: If RTI is working and is resulting in a lower number of students identified for special education services, why wouldn't we see a decrease in school drop-out rates?

Answer: Recent data from the National Center for Learning Disabilities shows that although the rate of school drop-outs has declined significantly over the past 10 years, students with learning disabilities continue to drop-out at a much higher rate than their non-disabled peers. While many systemic improvements, including RTI, have been beneficial to struggling learners and students with disabilities, there remain significant gaps in terms of the ability of educators to meet the intensive needs of the most struggling learners both behaviorally and academically.

Question: Is there any overlap between the students requiring intensive intervention for behavior and academics?

Answer: While it is common for students with academic and behavioral needs to overlap, it is rare that a student would require the most intensive level of support for both academics and behavior. For example, a student requiring intensive intervention in academics may require some secondary level interventions to improve time on task and motivation, but would not typically require intensive behavioral supports as well as intensive academic supports.



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Question: There are many challenges to implementing RTI at the high school level that would make the implementation of intensive interventions difficult. What suggestions for overcoming these implementation challenges can you offer?

Answer: Implementing RTI and delivering intensive interventions can be especially challenging in the high school setting. The National High School Center has researched some of the challenges associated with implementing RTI and has conducted site visits at the high school level to determine the contextual factors that aid in the successful implementation of tiered intervention.

The following resources are available through the National High School Center for improving the implementation of tiered intervention at the high school level:

- Meeting the Needs of Significantly Struggling Learners in High School: A Look at Approaches to Tiered Intervention
http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/usergd_stlr.asp
- A Systematic Approach to Implementing Response to Intervention in Three Colorado High Schools
http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/NHSC_CORTI_Mar12.pdf
- Tiered Interventions In High Schools: Using Preliminary ‘Lessons Learned’ to Guide Ongoing Discussion
http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/HSTII_LessonsLearned.pdf
- Contextual Factors of Implementation Planning Template
http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/ContextualFactors_NHSC.pdf

NCII will be working primarily with elementary schools in its first year of providing technical assistance, but will expand technical assistance to secondary grades in order to build capacity for providing intensive intervention to students of all ages.



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Question: How long has DBI been around?

Answer: The term “Data Based Individualization” is a term synonymous with experimental teaching, which has been around for a long time. The process is not new, however it is something that is not currently widely used. The Center aims to operationalize the DBI process so that it can be more easily used to meet the needs of students with intensive needs.

The origins of DBI are in the research conducted at the University of Minnesota in the 1970s (Deno & Mirkin, 1977), funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education. Considerable research has been conducted during the past 30 years on data-based individualized intervention (cf. *Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Gresham, 2004; Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005*). This research suggests that DBI can accelerate the performance of many special education students who have persistent learning and behavioral difficulties. Randomized control trials indicate that its use is associated with moderate to large effect sizes (0.60 to 1.10) in reading and mathematics (Stecker et al., 2005) and similar results (0.70 to 0.90) with respect to behavior change (Gresham, 2004).

Question: Does DBI utilize an electronic database like DIBELS?

Answer: When implementing DBI it is important to collect and analyze student data. However, DBI does not prescribe a particular program to collect or analyze this data. In the DBI process, it is important to collect data at a regular interval with a progress monitoring tool that is reliable, valid, and sensitive to changes in student learning. Analyzing data is a key component of the DBI process but does not necessarily require an electronic database like DIBELS.

Question: Who is responsible for designing and implementing intensive interventions? Teachers, administrators, or parents?

Answer: Ideally, a team is involved in determining appropriate intensive interventions for a student in need. For intensive interventions in behavior, a team of teachers, administrators, specialists, and family should be involved when making decisions about what a student needs based off of the analysis of individual behavior patterns. The team is also responsible for implementing the intervention, however a specialist may take the lead in organizing the interventions and analyzing the results. For academic interventions, similar teams generally



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meet to review and analyze student data. Specialists such as reading or math interventionists or special educators are typically responsible for delivering the instruction, progress monitoring, analyzing the data, and making adaptations as needed.

Question: Are DBI efforts generally targeted at a narrow range of skills or a broader range of skills?

Answer: DBI efforts are generally targeted at a specific skill set. This allows teachers to carefully track student learning in response to the intervention and as a result tailor interventions to result in the maximum student output.

