

So What do I do Now? Strategies for Intensifying Intervention When Standard Approaches Don't Work

Webinar Q&A

Question: What is the appropriate setting for intensive intervention?

Answer: When considering what setting is most appropriate for a student receiving intensive intervention, it is most important to first focus on outcomes and student progress rather than where the intervention occurs. If a student is making adequate progress in an intervention, this suggests that the current setting is a good fit and that there is no need to change the setting at this time. However, if a student is not making adequate progress in an intervention, teachers may consider modifying the setting to ensure high rates of student engagement and attention.

Question: How can teachers incorporate strategies to improve cognitive processing when using a scripted intervention?

Answer: Teachers should consider incorporating cognitive processing strategies into instruction and intervention when students do not respond sufficiently to the standardized intervention delivered with fidelity. For these students, standardized interventions may be adapted by adding strategies for cognitive processing. For example, if a student struggles with memory, the teacher could incorporate a review of the prior lesson and of previously learned material before each new intervention lesson. The teacher also might use visual checklists as reminders of routines and procedures. If the student struggles with self-regulation, the teacher could integrate modeling “think-alouds” into the intervention when teaching new concepts. Incorporating strategies to improve cognitive processing generally involves adding to the standardized intervention in a way that intensifies and individualizes instruction based on the student’s needs. More information on this topic is available in the *Designing and Delivering Intervention for Students with Severe and Persistent Academic Needs* training module at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/designing-and-delivering-intervention-students-severe-and-persistent-academic-needs-dbi>.

Question: How can teachers make sure they are delivering the intervention with fidelity when making adaptations?

Answer: Delivering a standardized intervention with fidelity typically means that the teacher follows the structure of the lesson accurately and delivers the intervention in the way that is intended by the developer. Research has shown that for a subset of students (approximately 3

percent to 5 percent), standardized interventions are not sufficient to meet their needs. For these students, we recommend making adaptations to the standardized intervention through the data-based individualization process. These adaptations may include changing the intervention dosage or time, changing the learning environment to promote attention and engagement, combining cognitive processing strategies with academic learning, and modifying the delivery of instruction.

To make adaptations that are most appropriate for students, teachers should use student data to determine which adaptations may be most impactful based on their specific needs. For students receiving these intensive interventions, the adaptations to the standardized intervention should be clearly articulated in an individual student plan. We would then measure fidelity to the individual student plan, rather than to the standardized intervention specifications. For example, as part of a student's individualized intervention plan, we may make a change to add a component where we are promoting student engagement by reinforcing on-task behavior. As a result, fidelity for that student would be that he or she is getting the standardized program combined with this approach to promoting on-task behavior or engagement. When considering fidelity, changes to the program that involve adding components are less likely to have a negative impact on outcomes for students compared with changes that involve removing or skipping instructional components.

Question: What intervention programs do you recommend for students with intensive needs?

Answer: Although many intervention programs have been found to be generally effective, we know that they are not universally effective and that the lowest 3 percent to 5 percent of students typically require something more intensive and individualized in order to make adequate progress. Rather than recommend specific intervention programs, the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) suggests that teachers start with an intervention program and then intensify the program by making adaptations on the basis of student data using the data-based individualization (DBI) process. The NCII Academic Intervention Tools Chart, available at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/instructional-intervention-tools>, reviews tools that may be used as the foundation of the DBI process. NCII does not promote or endorse any of the programs on the tools chart, but we provide the chart to assist educators and families in becoming informed consumers who can select intervention programs that best meet their needs. The *User's Guide* and an audio tour for the tools chart also are available:

- <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/pdf/1797a%20NCII%20Academic%20Intervention.pdf>
- <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/instructional-intervention-tools/audiotour>

Question: What strategies develop higher-level critical thinking skills that are impacted by a student's disability?

Answer: Incorporating strategies to improve cognitive processing into academic learning can help students with intensive needs to develop their ability to think critically. Specifically, teaching students self-regulation strategies involves developing their ability to take ownership of their learning, a skill with which many students who have disabilities and intensive needs

struggle. Self-regulation comprises students' ability to plan and set goals for learning, monitor their own progress toward learning goals, and use strategies to support his or her learning. Examples of strategies for teaching self-regulation include modeling "think-alouds," providing specific feedback, teaching goal setting and monitoring, and explicitly teaching strategies and routines for learning. Teaching students with intensive needs to become more self-directed learners is an important prerequisite to building higher-level and critical thinking skills. These strategies are discussed in greater detail during the webinar. Another way to allow students with disabilities to access content and develop high-level thinking is by preteaching new content. This helps students with disabilities prepare to learn new and potentially challenging content. Lastly, using appropriate accommodations that permit students to access higher-order content during core instruction is essential for developing critical thinking skills.

Question: What type of evidence or data do I need before making a change to a student's intervention program?

Answer: Before making a change to a student's intervention program, it is important that teachers have collected regular progress monitoring data and analyzed the student's progress against a realistic goal to determine if and when a change to the intervention program is needed. For academic intervention, teachers should gather six to nine initial data points to obtain reliable trend-line data. We recommend collecting data at least weekly, so that initial instructional decisions can be made within six to eight weeks. However, after the instruction has been established, the four most recent data points or the extent to which the goal line and trend line come together can be used to make more frequent and quick instructional decisions.

NCII has developed a number of resources focused on progress monitoring and decision making:

- Webinar: "Data Rich, Information Poor? Making Sense of Progress Monitoring Data to Guide Intervention Decisions" available at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/webinar/2014february>
- Webinar: "Using Academic Progress Monitoring for Individualized Instructional Planning" available at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/webinars/2013March>
- Training Module: "Using Academic Progress Monitoring for Individualized Instructional Planning" available at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/using-academic-progress-monitoring-individualized-instructional-planning-dbi-training>

Question: How can the strategies mentioned in the webinar be used to include students with special needs who are significantly behind their peers in the general classroom and the grade-level curriculum?

Answer: The strategies mentioned in the four categories of practice for intensifying intervention can be very impactful in helping students with special needs access the grade-level curriculum. These strategies can help with breaking down content into manageable chunks, prioritizing learning objectives, and making instruction more explicit. For instance, teaching students to use graphic organizers and building in review of previously taught content helps students with disabilities to self-regulate their learning and can support students struggling with short-term

memory. These strategies can be integrated into the grade-level curriculum and will often benefit students with disabilities as well as their non-disabled peers. There is also evidence that peer-mediated instruction is beneficial for students across the achievement continuum, including students with low and high achievement (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997).

Incorporating both explicit instruction as well as structured time for peer mediation into the general classroom can provide both effective and meaningful learning opportunities for students with disabilities and their peers. Here is the full reference for the research cited:

- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., Mathes, P. G., & Simmons, D. C. (1997). Peer-assisted learning strategies: Making classrooms more responsive to diversity. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34, 174–206.

Question: What is the difference between accelerated instruction and intensive instruction?

Answer: Accelerated instruction is intended to advance students through curriculum at a faster rate than their typical development path. This type of instruction may be used to accommodate the needs of gifted and talented students. Intensive instruction is intended to help remediate and close achievement gaps between students who struggle academically (often students with disabilities) and their peers. Intensive instruction should be individualized to meet the needs of the specific student, which should be determined by regular review of student data. Both types of instruction intend to result in increased rates of progress for students but may target different student populations.

Question: When should a team consider referring a student for a comprehensive evaluation to determine special education eligibility?

Answer: We recommend that a student should be referred for a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility for special education at the point when he/she is referred for intensive intervention for failing to make adequate progress after two rounds of a tier 2 or standardized intervention. (In some cases where very low initial achievement is evident, referral may occur more quickly.) Although aptitude and achievement tests play a part in eligibility determination, determination of eligibility should not be limited to these criteria. Rather, standardized achievement test data may corroborate valid, reliable progress data collected over time. If progress data indicate the student requires intensive, individualized intervention in order to make progress, it also suggests the student is a candidate for an individualized education program (IEP). It is important for teams to note that intensive intervention and the DBI process are do not simply constitute a stop along the way to a special education referral. Once a student already has an IEP in place, the DBI is an effective framework for that providing individualized and specially designed instruction to meet the student's needs.

Question: When intensive intervention is yielding slow progress, what is next?

Answer: Intensive intervention is an ongoing process. If a student is yielding slow progress, this is likely an indication that the student requires further adaptations to intensify the intervention based on his or her unique needs. As Dr. Rebecca Zumeta highlighted in the webinar, “It all

works out in the end. If it hasn't worked out, it's not the end yet." When a student is making slow progress, the strategies from the four categories of practice for intensification mentioned in the webinar can be incorporated systematically while teachers collect ongoing progress monitoring data to determine what adaptations the student requires to make adequate progress.

Question: Is there research that compares the effectiveness of different types of intervention changes (e.g., group size reduction versus adding time versus change in program, technique, or practice)?

Answer: Most studies compare interventions or intervention changes with business as usual, and do not compare different intervention changes with one another. In addition, most studies involve combinations of the strategies mentioned in this webinar and not a single strategy in isolation. Because of this, decisions about which changes to make or strategies to use should be driven by knowledge of the student and the context of the student's challenges and regularly evaluated with progress monitoring data.

Question: Do you have any recommendations for how to share information about intensive interventions with parents?

Answer: Communication with parents is an essential part of successfully delivering intensive intervention. First, we recommend that the parents are notified and updated on a student's progress as soon as the student is identified as "at risk." In addition, the parents should receive a description of the school's intensive intervention process and what this means regarding the services their child will receive. Parents should be involved as key stakeholders in decision making around their child's intervention. To do this, we recommend inviting parents to attend team meetings about their child when the team reviews the child's data and plans for the child's intensive intervention. Last, school teams should have a process for continually updating parents about their child's progress in the intensive intervention. By looking at their child's data, parents also can learn how to improve the support they provide at home. A brief titled *Common Progress Monitoring Omissions: Reporting Information to Parents* (<http://www.rti4success.org/sites/default/files/RTI%20ProgressMonitoringBrief4-Reporting%20Information%20to%20Parents.pdf>) developed by the National Center on Response to Intervention, presents information about sharing progress monitoring data with families.

Additional helpful resources that teachers can share with parents about progress monitoring include the following:

- *The ABCs of RTI in Elementary School: A Guide for Families*. Available at <http://www.rti4success.org/resource/abcs-rti-elementary-school-guide-families>
- *The ABCs of RTI in Middle School: A Guide for Parents*. Available at <http://www.rti4success.org/resource/abcs-rti-middle-school-guide-parents>
- *Student Progress Monitoring: What This Means for Your Child* developed by Kathleen McLane for the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. Available at <http://www.rti4success.org/resource/student-progress-monitoring-what-means-your-child>

- *What Is Curriculum-Based Measurement and What Does it Mean to My Child?* Available at <http://www.rti4success.org/resource/what-curriculum-based-measurement-and-what-does-it-mean-my-child>

Question: How can I add behavioral strategies to an intervention for students who refuse to participate or who require motivation?

Answer: The Center has developed a training module focused on designing and delivering intensive interventions in behavior. The module focuses on four main content areas: (a) relating assessment to function, (b) selecting evidence-based interventions that align with functions of behavior, (c) linking assessment and monitoring, and (d) connecting data with the evidence-based interventions selected. The overarching goal is to connect concepts and theories in behavior and begin planning how intensive intervention can be put into practice to support students with intensive behavioral needs, including those related to motivation and escape behaviors. This module, *Designing and Delivering Intensive Intervention in Behavior* is available at <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/designing-and-delivering-intensive-intervention-behavior-dbi-training-series-module-8>.