What Does It Really Take? Frequently Asked Questions About Implementing Intensive Intervention

Webinar QA

Question: What are some models for intensive intervention in a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework?

Answer: NCII's approach to intensive intervention is data-based individualization (DBI), a systematic method for using assessment data to determine when and how to intensify intervention in reading, mathematics, and behavior. DBI relies on the frequent collection and analysis of student-level data, modification of intervention components when those data indicate inadequate response, and use of teachers' clinical experience and judgment to individualize intervention. DBI is an ongoing process in which intervention and assessment are linked and used to adjust a student's academic or behavioral program over time. It is a validated, multi-step process, and is not a single strategy or program. NCII has developed a wealth of resources to help schools implement DBI that are available for free on the NCII website, http://www.intensiveintervention.org/. For an overview of DBI and the available resources it may be helpful to

- Review *Data-Based Individualization: A Framework for Intensive Intervention:* http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/data-based-individualization-framework-intensive-intervention

- Watch the NCII website tour: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/ncii-web-tour

- Visit the DBI Training Series: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/content/dbi-training-series

Question: Does NCII recommend any strategies for keeping progress-monitoring data organized?

Answer: To support decision making within the DBI process, school teams will need to collect and organize a substantial amount of data, including weekly progress monitoring data.

Some assessment tools, such as AIMSweb, DIBELS, STAR (see http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring and http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools for a longer list of available academic and behavioral progress monitoring measures), include graphing tools and data management systems. If not available, teachers can create graphs using a spreadsheet or word-processing program. For example, NCII developed an Excel graphing template that can be used to graph behavior ratings directly for behavioral progress monitoring

http://www.intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/NCII_DBR_Graphing_Template.xlsx. A companion tool for academic progress monitoring will be available on the NCII website soon. In addition, there are several free online templates and paper forms available on the Intervention Central website (http://www.interventioncentral.org/curriculum-based-measurement-reading-math-assesment-tests#6). 0The site provides links to paper forms, a link to the Chart Dog website for graphing, and a link to an Excel template.

Overall, there is no one-size-fits-all method for organizing data. Intensive technical assistance sites that NCII works with use a variety of methods. Some have developed Google forms that incorporate data-meeting tools and individualized student plans (see, for example, http://www.intensiveintervention.org/tools-support-intensive-intervention-data-meetings) along with graphed student data. Other sites use a combination of assessment systems that graph data and data meeting forms, and still others have developed more comprehensive Web-based data systems that house multiple forms of data and plans.

Question: How can schools find time for Tier III intervention time within their school schedules?

Answer: Students with intensive needs often require 10 to 30 times as many practice opportunities as their peers to learn new information (Gersten et al., 2009) and may benefit from more intervention time (Vaughn et al., 2012). Increasing the amount of time a student spends in an intervention allows more instruction to take place, provides more practice with feedback (because the teacher is present), and increases the student's engaged learning time, all of which can help to accelerate student learning. It is important to note that to achieve the greatest results, increasing the time should (in most cases) be combined with changes to content and method of delivery. Planning schedules prior to the school year that incorporate time for interventions, using time before or after school, breaking up intervention time into multiple blocks within a day, and using elective periods have all been used by schools to ensure that students have access to the interventions that they need. In considering the needs of middle schools specifically, the National Center on Response to Intervention developed a brief that highlights scheduling examples and considerations (http://www.rti4success.org/sites/default/files/0681MS_RTI_Rescheduling_Brief_d2.pdf) and a webinar that discusses these examples in more depth (http://www.rti4success.org/video/rti-scheduling-processes-middle-schools). Additional scheduling examples for elementary schools, high schools, and schools participating in NCII also are available:

- Elementary School Scheduling Webinar: http://www.rti4success.org/video/rti-implementation-developing-effective-schedules-elementary-level

- High School Tiered Interventions Initiative document on lessons learned: http://www.rti4success.org/resource/tiered-interventions-high-schools-using-preliminary-lessons-learned-guide-ongoing

- NCII's Making It Happen: What Does It Take to Implement Intensive Intervention? http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/making-it-happen-what-does-it-take-implement-intensive-intervention.

For more information about the research on increased practice opportunities and intervention time, see the following resources:

- Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., & Tilly, W. D. (2009). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to intervention (RtI) and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades.* IES Practice Guide (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice_guides/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf

- Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., & Roberts, G. (2012). *Intensive interventions for students struggling in reading and mathematics: A practice guide.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. Retrieved from http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Intensive%20Interventions%20for%20Students %20Struggling%20in%20Reading%20&%20Math.pdf

Question: Which is more effective: individual instruction for a short time (e.g., 10 minutes) or small group for a longer time (e.g., 20 minutes)?

Answer: Instructional plans for students receiving intensive intervention should be dictated by their individual needs and driven by data. Some students may benefit from more individualized instruction for a targeted time and others may benefit from small-group instruction for longer periods of time. As the question implies, students in intensive intervention need additional opportunities to respond (opportunities can be provided through individualized one-on-one instruction or in group settings). In addition, they may have co-occurring academic and behavioral needs that influence the best intervention approach for the student. As teams use the DBI process to identify student needs and develop individualized intervention plans, they should consider the approach that is feasible and will be most effective for the student. The following handouts may be helpful for teams to consider:

- Ask Clarifying Questions to Create a Hypothesis: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/Ask_Clarifying_Questions_Hypot hesis-Question_Bank_Handout.pdf

- Intensification Strategy Checklist: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/Intensification_Strategy_Checklis t_Handout.docx

Question: What are the critical features necessary to build an effective and efficient system to support Tier 3 implementation?

Answer: NCII's approach to intensive intervention, often defined as Tier 3 within MTSS frameworks, is DBI. On the basis of research and implementation in intensive technical assistance sites, NCII developed a set of critical features that are necessary for DBI to be successful. We have found that implementation of DBI improves when supported by a committed staff, valid and reliable progress monitoring tools, student meetings that are driven by data and develop and monitor individualized student plans, and the inclusion of students with disabilities within intensive intervention as appropriate. Consider the following:

- Are staff and leadership members supportive of and communicative about DBI efforts?

- Are students' plans being adapted on the basis of progress monitoring data?

- Do educators have adequate meeting time that is integrated into the school day?

- What methods are educators using to evaluate student growth and response to interventions?

- Who is receiving intensive intervention?

NCII lays out a series of critical features, but we also recognize the need for flexibility in how this will look in schools. A webinar presented by Louis Danielson, Michele Walden-Doppke, and Nicole Hitchener describes these features in more detail and provides examples of what they look like in practice: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/making-it-happen-what-does-it-take-implement-intensive-intervention.

In addition, NCII has developed a module, *Getting Ready to Implement Intensive Intervention: Infrastructure for Data-Based Individualization*, which reviews the critical elements and helps schools reflect on their current practices and plan for DBI implementation: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/getting-ready-implement-intensive-intervention-infrastructure-data-based-individualization.

Question: If a student has good comprehension but poor fluency, should I intervene or focus more on moving comprehension from good to great?

Answer: Research indicates the existence of a relationship between comprehension and fluency; this relationship changes, however, as students' progress through the grades. A specific and targeted emphasis on building fluency skills is much more important for younger students, or those in early elementary grades, who are commonly working to master phonemic and phonological awareness. In these grades, there is a significant link between fluency practice and increases in comprehension. For students in Grades 4 and above, in contrast, fluency practice becomes less critical for improving comprehension. Research suggests that for older students, instruction focused on increasing background knowledge, vocabulary skills, and inference making provides a stronger connection to increases in comprehension than fluency practice. (Edmonds et al., 2009; Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

Regardless of the focus, NCII always suggests that decisions for students who demonstrate significant academic or behavioral difficulties always be data based and individualized to match the students' needs whenever possible.

For more information, visit the following resources:

- Pikulski, J. & Chard, D. J. (2005). The bridge between decoding and reading comprehension. *Reading Teacher, 58*(6), 510-519.

- Edmonds, M., et al. (2009). A synthesis of reading interventions and effects on reading comprehension outcomes for older struggling readers. *Review of Educational Research 79*(1), 262-300.