Tips for Intensifying Instruction at Tier 1

A strong and comprehensive Tier 1 is an essential part of an effective multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). By considering the dimensions that are most likely to impact instructional design and delivery, schools can evaluate and intensify the core to do the following:

- Meet the needs of a wide range of learners, including students with disabilities.
- Prevent and/or address academic/behavioral deficits that may require more intensive intervention.
- Sustain a healthy schoolwide core curriculum program.

How can you intensify instruction at Tier 1?

### Increase Strength

- **Ensure** that Tier 1 is designed and delivered using evidence-based practices shown to improve desired outcomes.
- **Consider** how effective the core program is for students struggling in reading, math, writing, and/or behavior, and for the populations that you serve. Effect sizes above .25 indicate that an evidence-based practice has value in improving outcomes.
- **Supplement** with additional programs and/or materials that address foundational skill development.

### Increase Dosage

- **Build in** time for daily small-group instruction to occur as part of the core blocks for reading, math, and writing. Research shows that struggling students require 10–30 more practice opportunities.
- **Increase** opportunities for students to respond and receive meaningful feedback.
- **Maximize** engagement by using prompts to elicit student responses, providing respectful redirection, using peer-assisted learning, and offering tutoring programs.
Consider Alignment
- **Review** unit and lesson plans alongside student assessment data to determine whether and when the instructional focus addresses student skill deficit areas.
- **Differentiate instruction** for students on, above, and/or below grade level by leveraging centers and technology.
- **Incorporate** instruction in foundational skills from earlier grade-level standards into homogenous small-group instruction, when necessary.

Support Transfer of Learned Skills
- **Help** students make connections between new and previously learned skills by offering frequent and varied opportunities to practice as well as helping students set and calibrate learning goals.
- **Reinforce** learning across content areas and settings (e.g., counting in gym class).
- **Involve families** in supporting student learning at home.

Improve Comprehensiveness
- When appropriate, use explicit instruction to overtly teach students new skills and concepts or skills and concepts with which they are struggling.
- Use a **checklist** to observe teachers (or have teachers self-observe) to determine the extent to which they are modeling, using simple and direct language, fading support, providing adequate practice and feedback opportunities, and incorporating systematic cumulative review.
- Supplement daily lesson plans to increase the intensity, as needed, by using scripted sample lesson supplements like the NCII reading and math resources.

Enhance Behavioral and/or Academic Support
- **Teach** students self-regulation strategies and social and emotional skills.
- **Minimize** nonproductive behavior by providing “just right” learning opportunities that are not too difficult or too easy.
- **Align** evidence-based academic and behavior supports and strategies such as respectful redirection, to address more complex learning needs.
Offer Opportunities for Individualization

- **Use** screening data to understand which students may be at risk for poor learning outcomes and in greater need of more intensive supports (e.g., small-group instruction) at Tier 1.
- **Collect and understand** progress monitoring data for all students who may be at risk and/or receiving supplemental intervention.
- **Make regular adjustments** to instruction based on these data to ensure that students are learning what they have been taught as part of ongoing data-based decision making.

What are recommended next steps?

1. Work as a school leadership team to evaluate your Tier 1: Core Programming using Section 4 of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Fidelity of Implementation Rubric.
2. Examine your schoolwide screening data to determine the strengths and needs of your core program: Are most students responding to Tier 1 instruction within each grade?
3. Develop and implement a plan to improve areas of need.
4. Learn more about NCII’s Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity and use the taxonomy tools to intensify intervention at your school.
5. Contact the MTSS Center (www.mtss4success.org) at the American Institutes for Research for support.