Making It Happen: What Does It Take to Implement Intensive Intervention?

Webinar Q&A

Question: When developing a school schedule, what key factors should be considered to ensure that students who receive intensive intervention do not miss out on core instruction?

Answer: Students with intensive needs often require 10 to 30 times the number of practice opportunities required by their peers to learn new information (Gersten et al., 2009). 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 students' engaged learning time, all of which can help to accelerate student learning. It is important to note that in order to achieve the greatest results, increasing the time should (in most cases) be combined with changes to content and method of delivery.

Evidence suggests that students with intensive needs may benefit from 60 to 120 minutes of intervention per day. However, staff may consider breaking this time into several sessions throughout the day, particularly if they are working with younger students. This strategy may be especially helpful in terms of maintaining attention and engagement among younger students (Vaughn et al., 2012). For example, students might receive intervention at different times during the day, rather than in a single block (such as 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon, rather than a single 40-minute session) (Gersten et al., 2009; Vaughn et al., 2012). Breaking interventions up into multiple sessions per day can help to address scheduling challenges, facilitate pre-teaching and reinforcement of new concepts, and support young students who are likely to have shorter attention spans and less stamina than older students. A student may start the morning with 30 minutes of phonological awareness and decoding practice, for example, and then spend 30 minutes practicing reading connected text in the afternoon. The use of entry or exit routines can also provide independent or peer-mediated practice opportunities for students (e.g., mathematics facts practice, letter writing, and paired oral reading) that minimize unengaged waiting time and allow multiple small groups to run at once. Entry and exit routines that provide students with opportunities to practice skills may allow interventionists to manage multiple overlapping small groups. In addition, incorporating these routines may reduce the amount of time students spend waiting and increase engagement.

Hopkins Hill Elementary School in Rhode Island (discussed in the webinar) develops its schedule prior to the start of the school year to ensure staff members have appropriate intervention time. This allows interventionists and special educators to work together on the schedule. To provide intervention time, Hopkins Hill schedules an additional intervention block for each grade level. Other approaches used by schools include the use of elective periods or time before or after school to ensure time is available for interventions. Additional information about schedules and scheduling strategies used by elementary, middle, and high schools is available on the Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research website:

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

- Middle School Scheduling Brief: http://www.rti4success.org/resource/rti-scheduling-processes-middle-school

- Middle School Scheduling Webinar: http://www.rti4success.org/video/rti-scheduling-processes-middle-schools

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

For more information, see the following resources:

- Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., et al. (2009). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide*. (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=3).

- 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%26%20Math.pdf.

Question: How can school psychologists, general and special educators, and other members of the school community contribute to the appropriate and successful implementation of intensive intervention?

Answer: Regardless of role (e.g., school psychologist, general educator, special education, reading specialist), it is essential that individuals who provide intensive intervention have adequate training and experience. In order to deliver intensive intervention as intended, individuals require a unique set of skills that equips them to individualize intervention, based on student data, to align with student skill deficits. This includes the capacity to use data to adapt interventions to meet students' individual needs, and to monitor student progress within the intervention. Schools often use teams to support the development and implementation of a plan for intensive intervention. These teams may include a representative group of staff who know and work with the student (e.g., school psychologist, social worker, interventionist, special educator). The team may work together to develop an individualized student plan that may be delivered by a specific team member. The team would then meet regularly to review the student's data and suggest potential adaptations to the developed plan if the student was not making adequate progress. Tools to support individual student meetings and facilitate individual student plan development are available on the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) website: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/tools-support-intensive-intervention-data-meetings.

When schools are determining who should provide intensive intervention, they may consider the staff member's relationship with the individual student, the skill needs of the student, and whether the staff member will have availability on a consistent basis. It is important to ensure that students with intensive needs (including students with disabilities) have consistent access to intensive intervention. As a result, it is important to ensure that the assigned staff member is available to implement the intervention in accordance with the required schedule.

Question: How can school staff members who are implementing intensive intervention ensure that they are doing so with fidelity?

Answer: The center's approach to intensive intervention is data-based individualization (DBI). Within this approach, we begin with an evidence-based secondary intervention or intervention platform that is delivered with fidelity. These interventions typically offer explicit guidance on implementation from the developer. Some of the tools reviewed on the NCII academic and behavioral intervention tools charts (available at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resources/tools-charts) include examples of fidelity checklists used within studies. This information is available under the program information tab. It is important to ensure that an intervention is delivered with fidelity because without this assurance, it is difficult to determine whether a student is unresponsive to an intervention or unresponsive to the way in which the intervention was delivered.

When we talk about students with intensive needs, we are talking about a small subset of students for whom standardized interventions—even those delivered with fidelity—are not always sufficient. Through the data-based individualization (DBI) process, however, we can use data to adapt the intervention to meet an individual student's needs. As a result, we no longer measure fidelity to the intervention as developed by the vendor. Instead, we measure fidelity to the student's individual intervention plan, developed by the DBI team, after reviewing student data (including progress-monitoring data and diagnostic assessment data). NCII will be releasing tools that teachers and teams can use to monitor whether an intervention plan was delivered as intended. When talking about adapting interventions to meet individual student needs, it is also important to note that adding components to a program is less likely to have a negative impact on student outcomes than removing or skipping components. Throughout the entire DBI process, we use progress-monitoring data to continuously monitor whether our adaptations are helping students to progress at an adequate rate.

Question: What strategies could be used to motivate teachers and school staff to support implementation of intensive intervention?

Answer: As a result of the work NCII has done to implement intensive intervention, we have recognized that strong leadership is essential for supporting implementation of intensive intervention and motivating staff. When introducing new priority areas (such as the implementation of intensive intervention), it is important for the principal and other school leaders to help staff understand why the new priority is important for student success, how it connects to the school's visions and any other initiatives being undertaken by the school, and how they can support the new priority. Hopkins Hill's principal was a strong advocate for intensive intervention. She demonstrated to her staff how it connected to their ongoing efforts to improve their NECAP scores (the state's assessment tests), and she showed her support for

implementing DBI by ensuring staff had adequate time to attend training and receive coaching support, as well as making time to attend the trainings herself. Her staff then mirrored her investment in the priority.

Generating buy-in often demands a shift in school culture and may take time. In addition to making connections with other efforts and current practice, it may also be helpful to target a select group of "early adopters" who can help to share the message from the ground up. We have successfully adopted this approach in some of the sites where NCII is working, supporting early adopters so that they can motivate others within their school to buy in by demonstrating the impact of intensive intervention for struggling students. This approach allows early adopters to use data and student growth to showcase the importance and value of intensive intervention.

Question: How much time do you allow before a student is deemed "non-responsive" to intense intervention?

Answer: NCII recommends that teachers collect progress-monitoring data for students with intensive needs at least once per week. Collecting these data more frequently will allow teachers to monitor the progress of these students more closely, and to make decisions about their interventions on a more frequent basis. In a study by Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, and Kulik (1991), the frequency of general outcome data collection had a direct impact on student performance. Taking weekly data struck an ideal balance between benefit to students and feasibility for teachers. Although collecting data twice a week was associated with slightly stronger student gains, it is important to consider school resources and feasibility given the diminishing returns obtained from collecting data two or more times per week. The sensitivity of the progress-monitoring tool will also play a role in determining how frequently teachers evaluate progress and decide whether changes to the intervention are needed and to what degree. This information is described in more detail within the *Using Academic Progress Monitoring for Individualized Instructional Planning* webinar (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/webinars/2013March), presented by Dr. Rebecca Zumeta.

In general, we recommend collecting six to nine data points (Christ and Siberglitt, 2007) before making an initial decision in the area of academics. Once six to nine data points have been collected, the four-point rule offers a quick (but less precise) way of estimating a trend line that allows teachers to estimate how a student will continue to perform. When at least eight data points have been collected over the span of four weeks of instruction, trend line analysis can be used to determine response to instruction. A trend line can be drawn by hand or calculated by a software program. Decision rules for progress monitoring are also addressed in more detail in slides 82 to 92 of *Using Academic Progress Monitoring for Individualized Instructional Planning (DBI Training Series Module 2)* (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/using-academic-progress-monitoring-individualized-instructional-planning-dbi-training). Although it is standard procedure to collect progress-monitoring data for approximately four to six weeks before making intervention changes, teachers may choose to make intervention changes more frequently if they have data that demonstrate an urgent need for such changes.

In the area of behavior, guidance may be more variable depending on the context and nature of the behavior. In this Ask the Expert video, Dr. Joe Wehby addresses the following question:

"*For students with intensive behavior needs, how many data points are needed to make decisions?*" (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/ask-the-expert/2013december).

For more information about the recommended frequency of data collection, please see the following resources:

- Bangert-Drowns, R. L., Kulik, J. A., & Kulik, C.-L. C. (1991). Effects of frequent classroom testing. *Journal of Educational Research, 85*(2), 89–99.

- Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (1986). Effects of systematic formative evaluation: A meta-analysis. *Exceptional Children, 53*(3), 199–208.

- Christ, T. J., & Silberglitt, B. (2007). Curriculum-based measurement of oral reading fluency: The standard error of measurement. *School Psychology Review, 36*(1), 130−146

Question: How does the process of special education eligibility begin and what data are needed?

Answer: NCII believes that intensive intervention is appropriate for:

- Students in a tiered intervention program who have not responded to evidence-based secondary intervention or other standardized remediation programs

- Students with very low academic achievement and/or severe behavior problems who are not making adequate progress in their current intervention program

- Students with disabilities who are consistently not making adequate progress in meeting their individualized education plan (IEP) goals

Including students with disabilities within intensive intervention is one of the essential elements described by Dr. Lou Danielson within the webinar. For those students who may not have been identified with a disability, Dr. Evelyn Johnson discusses when to consider referring a student for special education services (and the types of data to collect) in the following Ask the Expert video: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/what-point-should-team-consider-referring-student-special-education-services-what. Additional information on this topic can be found within the learning disability webinar series on the Center on RTI website (http://www.rti4success.org/resource/learning-disability-identification-webinar-series). The RTI Action Network has also released an RTI-based specific learning disability (SLD) identification toolkit (http://rtinetwork.org/getstarted/sld-identification-toolkit).

Question: How can wraparound services be implemented for students with intensive needs, including students with disabilities? How can parents be involved?

Answer: When thinking about how best to support students with intensive needs, it is worth noting that the provision of wraparound services that include families, schools, and community partners may be an important aspect of meeting a student's individual needs. DBI is an approach that focuses on developing an individualized intervention plan for a student based on their individual data. The development of this individualized plan aligns closely with the idea of wraparound services put forth by the Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) Technical Assistance Center: "Wraparound distinguishes itself from traditional service delivery in special education and mental health with its focus on connecting families, schools, and

community partners in effective problem solving relationships. Unique implementation features include the following: (a) family and youth voice guide the design and actions of the team; (b) team composition and strategies reflect unique youth and family strengths and needs; (c) the team establishes the commitment and capacity to design and implement a comprehensive plan over time; and (d) the plan addresses outcomes across home, school, and community through one synchronized plan." Therefore, it may be helpful to invite community service providers, family members, and others who support the student to individual data meetings, depending on student need. NCII has recently released data meeting tools to support the development and monitoring of individual student plans. While these tools already recognize the importance of examining the contextual home and community factors that may be influencing a student, they can be adapted to support meetings that incorporate a wider wraparound focus.

The Interconnected Systems Framework described in the monograph *Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support* (edited by Susan Barrett, Lucille Eber, and Mark Weist) represents a proposed and developing interconnection between positive behavioral interventions and supports and school mental health systems to improve educational outcomes for all children and youth, especially those with or at risk of developing mental health challenges. This monograph is available at http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf. Additional information about wraparound services is available from Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at https://www.pbis.org/school/tertiary-level/wraparound.

Parents are essential partners in students' education. For additional information on engaging families, view our archived webinar *Bringing Families to the Table: Family Engagement for Struggling Students* (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/bringing-families-table-family-engagement-struggling-students); visit the Center for Parent Information Resources (http://www.parentcenterhub.org/about-us/); reach out to your local parent center; and read *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships* (http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf).

Question: How do you undo practices that may have been learned through an incorrect intervention match?

Answer: Despite our best efforts, we recognize that we may face instances where a student has received an intervention that did not match their skill deficits or become reliant on a particular strategy. Conducting miscue or error analysis using a student work sample or progress-monitoring response may help to identify the student's actual skill gaps and support the adaptation of an intervention that better meets their needs. View Part 3 of our informal academic diagnostic assessment module to learn more about miscue and skills analysis for reading and mathematics (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/informal-academic-diagnostic-assessment-using-data-guide-intensive-part-3-miscue-and-skills) and Part 4 to learn more about identifying target skills (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/informal-academic-diagnostic-assessment-using-data-guide-instruction-part-4-identifying). Undoing practices or strategies that may have been learned in error often takes time and may require explicit instruction in new skills and strategies or modeling when to use different strategies.

Question: What strategies can be used to manage extreme behaviors (e.g., spitting, refusing to participate, intentionally hitting adults and other students)? What might you use to monitor a student's progress within a behavioral intervention?

Answer: Before selecting a behavior intervention or specific strategy to address a student's extreme behavior, it is necessary to determine the function of the student's behavior. The function of aggressive outbursts may vary among different students displaying the same behavior. Therefore, it is important that a team first uses data and knowledge of the student to create a hypothesis about the function of a student's behavior. Is the child displaying the behavior because he or she lacks a certain skill? Is he or she trying to escape an undesired task or attain teacher attention? After creating a hypothesis about the function of the student's behavior, the team should begin implementing a behavioral intervention that aligns with the hypothesized function, while collecting valid progress-monitoring data to determine whether the intervention is effective and the hypothesis is correct. For example, if a team hypothesizes that a student has aggressive outbursts when entering the mathematics classroom because the student lacks the skills to complete grade-level mathematics work, the team might begin by considering the instructional match and ensuring that the student receives mathematics assignments at his or her instructional level. The team would then collect valid progress-monitoring data—using a tool such as the Direct Behavior Rating (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/direct-behavior-rating-overview; http://www.directbehaviorratings.com/cms/)—and categorize outbursts on a scale over time to determine whether the behavior is improving. Additional behavioral progress-monitoring tools that have been reviewed by the Center's Technical Review Committee are available at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools.

For more information on specific behavior interventions that address different behavior functions, view the following archived webinar: *What Is an Evidence-Based Behavior Intervention? Choosing and Implementing Behavior Interventions That Work* (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/what-evidence-based-behavior-intervention-choosing-and-implementing-behavior). You can also consult NCII's Behavioral Intervention Tools Chart (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-intervention-chart) and the Evidence Based Intervention Network (http://ebi.missouri.edu/). Additional information about identifying the function of a behavior and designing and delivering intensive interventions that match student need can also be found in the following DBI training modules: *Using FBA for Diagnostic Assessment in Behavior* (DBI Training Series Module 6; http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/using-fba-diagnostic-assessment-behavior-dbi-training-series-module-6) and *Designing and Delivering Intensive Intervention in Behavior* (DBI Training Series Module 8; http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/designing-and-delivering-intensive-intervention-behavior-dbi-training-series-module-8).

Question: What is the National Center on Intensive Intervention's model for working with states at the "intensive" level?

Answer: The NCII's model for intensive technical assistance is focused at the district and school level. During our initial year of implementation, a call for technical assistance support was released to identify states with districts and schools that were interested in receiving NCII technical assistance. From that call, NCII selected districts to receive intensive support. You can

find information about the districts and schools on our website: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/content/districts-receiving-intensive-ta. During the initial phases of our work, states were involved as partners to help NCII identify district sites, and to ensure that state structures allowed interested districts to participate and recognize the districts' involvement. In some states (such as Rhode Island), state staff and state-funded technical assistance providers support NCII work as coaches. NCII's intensive technical assistance provides a mixture of training and ongoing coaching support to help schools and districts build the capacity to implement data-based individualization in reading, mathematics, and behavior. While continuing to target intensive technical assistance support to districts and schools, the center is now beginning initial conversations with states to discuss opportunities for capacity building and implications for the future.

Additional Resources: In addition to the above questions, we received a number of targeted questions about specific interventions or scenarios related to early childhood interventions, mathematics, reading, and writing. The center does not recommend interventions or progress-monitoring tools but provides a series of tools charts that review interventions and tools to support students across academic domains. The academic progress-monitoring tools chart can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring and the academic intervention tools chart can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/instructional-intervention-tools. The tools charts include filters for secondary and elementary schools to help identify interventions that might be appropriate for students in the middle grades and above, and to identify interventions by subject matter (including reading, writing, and mathematics). What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/findwhatworks.aspx) also offers a wealth of reviewed interventions, as well as practice guides for reading, mathematics, and early intervention. Relevant available practice guides include the following:

Young Children

- Teaching Math to Young Children

Writing

- Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Mathematics

- Improving Mathematical Problem Solving in Grades 4 Through 8
- Developing Effective Fractions Instruction for Kindergarten Through 8th Grade
- Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for Elementary and Middle Schools

Reading

- Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade
- Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades
- Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices

Other relevant research includes:

- [Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents: A Guidance Document from the Center on Instruction](#)