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**Toward True Integration of Response to Intervention Systems in Academic and Behavior Support: Part Two: Tier 2 Support.**

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Toward True Integration of Academic and Behavior Response to Intervention Systems Part Two: Tier 2 Support

BY KENT MCINTOSH, HANK BOHANON, & STEVE GOODMAN

In the previous article in this series, we provided a rationale for integrating academic and behavior response to intervention (RTI) systems (McIntosh, Goodm an, & Bohanon, 2010). Our rationale included (a) research showing that challenges in academic and social behavior are highly interrelated, (b) a description of the common features that both RTI systems share, and (c) the understanding that implementing two parallel major systems-change initiatives presents significant challenges to sustaining either one. We then provided examples of areas where integrating RTI systems at the Tier 1 level of support would be beneficial and concluded with state-level data demonstrating enhanced outcomes in both areas through integrated systems. This article will describe how to integrate academic and behavior RTI systems effectively at Tier 2.

Tier 2 support (also known as targeted, secondary, or strategic support) is consid ered the next level of support in terms of RTI—students who do not respond to Tier 1 academic or behavior support are provided one or more Tier 2 interventions, and if students are not successful with this combination of Tier 1 and Tier 2 level of support, it signals the need for more intensive, individualized treatments (Hawken, Adolphson, MacLeod, & Schumann, 2009). According to the public health model, the theoretical proportion of students in a school that are provided Tier 2 support is approximately 15% (Walker et al., 1996), though this number is dependent on the quality of the Tier 1 support provided and the fidelity and effectiveness of the Tier 2 interventions used (McIntosh, Reinke, & Herman, 2009). We contend that support at Tier 2 can be both more effective and efficient when it is strategically integrated.

SHARED FEATURES OF TIER 2 SUPPORT

Like Tier 1 systems, Tier 2 academic and behavior systems share a surprising number of critical features. Tier 2 support is often overseen by a team charged with prereq uisite consultation, screening, and progress monitoring, in addition to actual interven tion (Lewis-Palmer, Bounds, & Sugai, 2004). Strategies used in Tier 2 academic and behavior interventions usually include (a) additional instruction and practice, includ ing increased feedback on student performance, and (b) increased structure or explicit ness to increase the probability of success. Additional instruction may include reteaching of critical skills (“double-dosing” an academic or social behavior lesson) or teaching lessons at the student’s instructional level, with ample opportunities for practice and feedback. Examples include repeated reading (Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Baker, Doabler, & Apichatabutra, 2009), math fluency timings (Rathvon, 2003), and teaching or reteaching school-wide expectations or social–emotional skills lessons (Langland, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 1998).

Increasing structure and explicitness provides students opportunities with high probability for success (Fuchs, 2009). Either the curriculum and instruction or the physical environment is changed to place students in situations in which correct responding is more likely. In academics, students may be instructed in smaller groups, using a carefully sequenced curriculum with instruction in conspicuous strategies (Coyne, Kame’enui, & Carnine, 2007). In behavior, Tier 2 interventions add additional struc ture to the school day or challenging routines, often through increased adult or peer role model contact and/or set routines, such as a check-in/check-out feedback and mentoring intervention (Crone, Hawken, & Horner, 2010).

INTEGRATING TIER 2 ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

Though Tier 2 interventions are usually considered stand-alone programs, a true sys tem for Tier 2 support includes systems to coordinate recurring tasks regarding who receives support, what type of support is provided, and how progress is monitored. At this level, the actual interventions may be separate, but outcomes are likely to be enhanced by integrating teams. It is useful to consider four common team activities when integrating systems: screening, assessment, intervention, and progress monitoring.

Screening. A critical task for teams is to examine school-wide data to identify which students require more than Tier 1 support to be successful. With RTI, Tier 2 support often involves curriculum-based measurement (CBM), a collection of measures across acade mic domains that have adequate to strong psychometric properties (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). For behavior, common measures include office discipline referrals (ODRs; McIntosh, Frank, & Spaulding, in press) and multiple-gate screening systems (Severson, Walker, Hope-Doolittle, Kratchowl, & Gresham, 2007).

There are considerable benefits to combining the groups charged with screening for academic and behavior challenges into one team. First, the processes of screen ing for both are remarkably similar. Though data sources are different, the decision-making steps are exactly the same. Second, considering both sets of data at the same time provides advantages beyond examining them separately. For example, when a student is flagged in both areas at the same time, it may indicate a more significant (perhaps Tier 3) need that may have otherwise been missed (Reinke, Herman, Petros, & Ialongo, 2008). In addition, problems in one area may serve as an effective screener for problems in another. Given the low rates of ODRs in kindergarten and prediction of behavior problems from kindergarten reading deficits (McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, & Good, 2006), intensive reading needs can be used as a screener for behavior, picking up behavior needs more quickly. Conversely, when students receive frequent ODRs or suspensions, their classroom instruction is interrupted, signaling the need to monitor academic skills more closely. Finally, using both data sets can help predict problems that are not solely academic or behavioral in nature, such as dropout. Effective dropout screening involves assessing both data sources simultaneously (e.g., ODRs, GPA, and credits toward graduation). Hence, an integrated screening team can identify students more accurately with less time spent.

Assessment. Screening identifies which students need Tier 2 support, but additional information is often required to select the appropriate intervention. In some cases, reanalysis of screening data may provide much of this information. For example, reading benchmark data may indicate whether intervention should focus primarily on skill acquisition (data indicating low accuracy) or fluency (data indicating accurate but slow reading rates; Dalby, Chaofouela, & Skinner, 2005). Use of ODR data may indicate whether the student has difficulty interacting with peers or teachers and which school settings should be targeted for additional support (Newton, Horner, Algozine, Todd, & Algozine, 2009). In many cases, however, additional information will improve intervention selection.

One approach that provides a link between academic and behavior support is func tional behavior assessment (FBA). The FBA is a process conducted to understand prob lem behavior within an environmental context, particularly the events that evoke and maintain problem behavior (O’Neill et al., 1997). The final steps of an FBA are to select intervention strategies that will prevent problem behavior, teach adaptive skills that serve the same function as problem behavior, and monitor plan implementation and effectiveness. This process is an evidence-based practice for individuals with significant disabilities (Carr et al., 1999), and a growing body of research shows the effectiveness of FBA with general education populations (McIntosh, Brown, & Borgmeier, 2008). Moreover, FBA has been used to distinguish between students who are likely or not likely to respond to Tier 2 interventions (Filter & Horner, 2009; Preciado, Horner & Baker, 2009). As such, identifying the likely function of problem behavior is necessary for selecting appropriate Tier 2 interventions.

When integrated teams examine academic and behavior data together, they may have enough information to complete an efficient brief FBA (Crone & Horner, 2003). For example, students receiving ODRs outside of the classroom with a recorded motivation of obtaining peer attention but without academic challenges (e.g., CBM data below benchmarks or failing grades) could be perfect candidates for Tier 2 behavior interventions. Similarly, students receiving ODRs in the classroom with a motivation to avoid work (Filter & Horner, 2009; Preciado, Horner & Baker, 2009) as such, identifying the likely function of problem behavior is necessary for selecting appropriate Tier 2 interventions.

Intervention. Because a fully implemented RTI system includes a range of interven tions for Tier 2 support, some additional level of assessment may be necessary to select the most appropriate intervention. As described above, there are predictable challenges that students may face (e.g., academic skill acquisition, fluency, or generalization; low levels of positive interactions), and as a result, schools should have more than one Tier 2 intervention available (McIntosh, Campbell, et al., 2009). Teams can audit their Tier
systems by identifying what interventions are already in place and what student needs are. Recent, direct behavior rating systems and brief behavior rating scales have been proposed as efficient and reliable methods for monitoring student behavior (Chafouleas et al., in press). Currently, direct behavior rating systems and brief behavior rating scales have been proposed as efficient and reliable methods for monitoring student behavior (Chafouleas et al., in press). Repeated rating intervention for students with learning disabilities: Status of the evidence. Exceptional Children, 75, 263-281.


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