

Introduction

Teachers are asked to do many things besides teach. They are responsible for identifying and addressing emerging learning and behavior problems within their classrooms as well as assisting in problem solving. Some of these problem-solving processes are referred to as multi-tiered support systems or multi-tiered systems of support and some as response to instruction and intervention or response to intervention. Education professionals in and out of the content classroom find themselves having to answer the question of what to do with specific student learning and behavior issues. All students deserve a chance to learn to the best of their abilities, but sometimes it requires efforts beyond basic instruction to facilitate that happening. As President Obama said about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), *“With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal—that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will.”*

The ESSA was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents the latest commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The new law builds on key areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country. The ESSA represents moving from the overreliance on high-stakes standardized testing to measure student success to the call for a more nuanced system that includes “Fewer, Better Assessments,” and an “Investment in Innovation.” This includes MTSS. The improvements offered under ESSA support the effort of schools to build capacity around MTSS in individual schools. MTSS represents a way for an entire school or school system to develop a data-driven, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes through a tiered or layered continuum of evidence-based practices and procedures.

In essence, MTSS is about using data (including standardized, authentic, and formative assessments) to identify struggling students and to make a plan to resolve the students’ specific challenges. An MTSS student plan includes a problem statement, goals, interventions, and a schedule for monitoring student progress. Data are tracked over a period of time (typically 6–8 weeks) and then revisited to see if the MTSS plan should be continued, modified, or changed to another approach. RTI is a type of multi-tiered system of support based upon data about a student’s specific presenting concern, specific goals for resolution, specific interventions to resolve the presenting concern, and data collection concerning the student’s response to these interventions.

Within MTSS, support for the student at issue is thought of as tiers of support or as layered like a cake. The bottom tier is a universal tier called Tier 1, meaning that all students receive it. Tier 1 encompasses all the components of general classroom management and instruction in core curricula. An example of a universal support might be the class rules or behavioral expectations that a teacher hangs on the wall. This Tier 1 strategy is an effective means of providing students with consistent guidance about how one should behave in class. Another would be for the teacher to post the specific objectives for the day's lesson on the wall, spelling out what the goals are and the achievement expectations for the content being taught. This particular example of a Tier 1 strategy is part of typical Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) instruction where the classroom has mixed language and culture students.

For students who are not succeeding with Tier 1 supports, Tier 2 is applied. A typical Tier 2 support might be creating a small group where some of the students review key vocabulary words related to specific content in English and in their more proficient language prior to rejoining the class for the main content lesson. The tiered supports become more intensive and focused as they are layered upon the instruction. These supports can be highly individualized with daily check lists for self-monitoring or with weekly one-on-one management strategies.

In theory, MTSS should be basic common sense, and as several teachers have said to me, it is just good teaching. However, not all teachers feel ready to take on the degree of differentiation required of this type of instruction, continual progress monitoring, documentation, and modification of instructional approach. One of the main comments I hear is "Well fine, but what do I actually do?"

The purpose of this book is to summarize evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom learning and behavior intervention and support strategies for teachers. These strategies should be used classroomwide, intensified to support small group instruction, or amplified further for individual students. These tools can help teachers capitalize on instructional time and decrease disruptions, which is crucial as schools are held to greater academic and social accountability measures for all students.

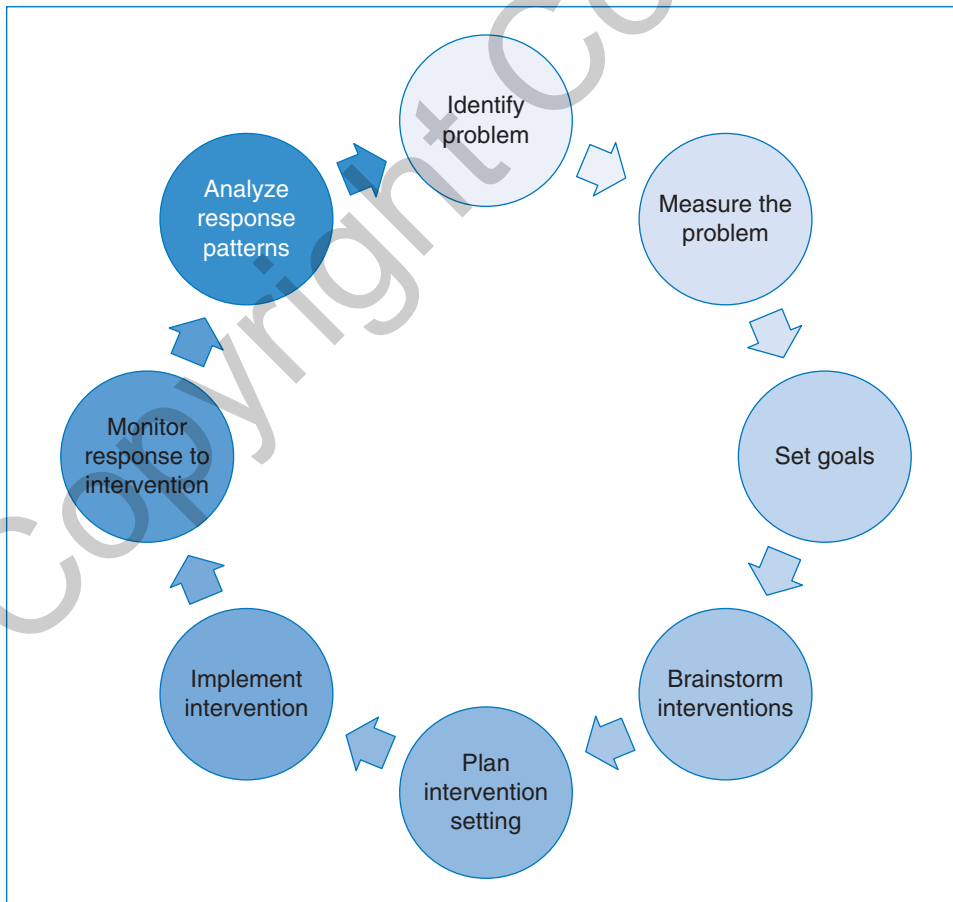
Strategies used in instruction and intervention should not be selected at random or in a shotgun manner. It is important that they be selected and implemented with strategy fitness, that is, to target specific, identified learning and behavior problems of concern to the teacher. Additionally, instructional interventions are best when used in a differentiated instructional approach when using targeted interventions within an inclusive or integrated classroom setting. General suggestions for using differentiated instruction are to be (1) inclusive not exclusive, (2) developmental not remedial, (3) comprehensive but focused, and to focus on (4) building skills and strengths.

The effectiveness of these strategies arises maximized when (1) implemented within a schoolwide multi-tiered framework, such as schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), MTSS, or RTI type models; (b) classroom and schoolwide expectations and systems are directly linked; (c) classroom strategies are merged with effective instructional design, curriculum, and delivery; and (d) classroom-based data are used to guide decision making.

STRATEGY FITNESS

The purpose of any strategy used in instruction and intervention is to attempt to address identified learning or behavior problems. Many schools now require some form of intervention prior to referral for formal assessment, for example, MTSS, PBIS, RTI, or so on. Figure 0.1 illustrates the problem-solving model involved in this process. Selecting and implementing specific strategies that will effectively address specific learning and behavior problems is the heart of problem solving. It is critical that the strategy selection be narrowly defined and targeted on achieving an objective with specificity. Good instructional strategies are sometimes ineffective when used to address a problem only remotely related to their purposes. As shown in the problem-solving model, it is important to identify with as much specificity as possible exactly what the presenting concern is first. Upon identifying the nature and extent of the issue, a plan of action can be initiated including a specific strategy to use, the context within which to use it, the length of time and intensity to employ, the criteria for identifying success or resolution, and the method or methods of monitoring and measuring this success or resolution.

Figure 0.1 Problem-Solving Model



Source: Collier (2010b).

The steps for achieving strategy fitness are summarized as follows:

- Identify student's principal learning or behavior issues and prioritize
- Take the top two or three, and write specific objectives to be achieved for these student needs
- Look at the online Strategy Selection for these objectives, and identify the strategies that fit
- Plan for the duration of implementing the strategy within specific instructional contexts in light of your criteria for success
- Plan how you will monitor student response
- Plan how and when you will analyze your progress monitoring and criteria for when to tweak or stop

MONITORING STRATEGY EFFECTIVENESS

As shown in Figure 0.1, besides selecting appropriate strategies, another part of the problem-solving process is monitoring the student's response to the implementation of the strategy and determining if there is change or growth. Progress monitoring is used to assess student progress or performance in those areas in which they were identified by universal screening as being at risk for failure (e.g., reading, mathematics, social behavior). It is the method by which teachers or other school personnel determine if students are benefitting appropriately from the typical (e.g., grade level, locally determined, etc.) instructional program, identify students who are not making adequate progress, and help guide the construction of effective intervention programs for students who are not profiting from typical instruction (Fuchs & Stecker, 2003). Although progress monitoring is typically implemented to follow the performance of individual students who are at risk for learning difficulties, it can also follow an entire classroom of students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

To be effective, progress monitoring measures must be available in alternate forms, comparable in difficulty and conceptualization, and representative of the performance desired at the end of the year (Fuchs, Compton, Fuchs, & Bryant, 2008). Measures that vary in difficulty and conceptualization over time could possibly produce inconsistent results that may be difficult to quantify and interpret. Likewise, using the same measure for each administration may produce a testing effect, wherein performance on a subsequent administration is influenced by student familiarity with the content.

Within an average instructional intervention team period of eight weeks, several specific learning issues or behaviors may be addressed. The instructional intervention or RTI process usually takes at least six weeks and may last as long as the intervention team observes and documents positive responses to each successive or concurrent intervention. The instructional intervention team designs an instructional intervention plan that specifies the responsibilities of each member to address

- a. any academic areas impacted by language difficulties;
- b. learning and behavior problems arising from culture shock;
- c. improvement of verbal skill in one or both languages;

- d. improvement of writing skill in one or both languages;
- e. any medical, behavioral, or emotional needs or adaptive behavior skills;
- f. any cognitive learning strategies that would enhance students' ability to engage in learning; and
- g. community services needed and outside agencies to access (food, clothing, employment, protective services, counseling).

Frame for Progress Monitoring of Specific Tasks

This frame can be used by any teacher or paraprofessional to monitor the ongoing progress of a student's response to a particular lesson or task. I provide a blank copy and then examples from lessons.

Beginning = 1 Developing = 2 Proficient = 3 Advanced = 4

Student	Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Beginning = 1 Developing = 2 Proficient = 3 Advanced = 4

Data Collection for Monitoring: *Quick Write Activity*

Student	Following directions	Provided information about the country	Able to come up with predictions about story	Able to say what he or she wants to learn from the story	Able to share what he or she already knows about stories like this
Sam	2	3	2	1	2
Maria	3	3	2	3	2
Petre	1	3	1	1	1
Ali	4	3	3	3	4

Beginning = 1 Developing = 2 Proficient = 3 Advanced = 4

Data Collection for Monitoring: ___ Krypto Activity _____

Student	Following directions	Used addition	Used subtraction	Used higher level	Able to solve	Able to help others
Jose	2	3	2	2	3	3
Katra	2	3	3	2	2	1
Emil	3	3	3	2	3	3
Vlado	2	3	3	2	2	2

The strategies presented in this book are all offered in reference to the goals or objectives to be achieved by implementing them. Educators may locate a favorite strategy they are familiar with and which they have found useful and use the identified objectives listed under “Purpose” to design targeted lessons or interventions as part of the MTSS or RTI process. They may also look on the online Strategy Selection Grid and find the particular goals or objectives they wish to accomplish with the student and locate the strategy or strategies that will facilitate that purpose.

For each strategy there is also an explanation of how to do the strategy and often an example from one of our classrooms of how another teacher used it in a lesson or unit. Also included for each strategy are considerations for using the strategy with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, including English language learners. I am intentionally using the term CLD without getting into a discussion of social justice, marginalization, or other issues common with these unique students. My purpose is to give the classroom teacher practical tips or suggestions to keep in mind when working with students who come from cultures different from their own, who speak languages or dialects different from their own, who come from backgrounds or experiences that diverge from those with which the teacher is familiar, or who are in any way very different from what the teacher is used to. This can also include economic and living situation factors, gender identity issues, health and mobility issues, and any other form of diversity from the teacher’s common frame of reference. I hope that all teachers take into account how these different modes, identities, and experiences may have added challenges to the students’ lives and learning within mainstream American schools and educate themselves about how oppression, poverty, injustice, and marginalization play a role in our school curriculum, rules, administration, system, and language use. I will not, however, include that discussion in this book beyond the notes on each strategy with advice for teachers working with CLD students within the context of their classroom.