



RTI Classroom Teacher Toolkit

MTSS for Academics at the High School: Optimize Supports for At-Risk Learners

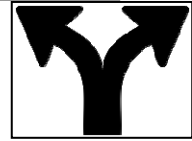
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The Struggling Student in a General-Education Setting: Pivot Points



Directions. The student competencies in the table below represent 'pivot points'—opportunities for educators to support the at-risk student to 'pivot' them toward school success. Number in descending order the 5 competencies that you believe pose the greatest challenge for students in your classroom or school to attain.

Ranking	Student Competency
	A. Basic Academic Skills. The student has sufficient mastery of basic academic skills (e.g., reading fluency) to complete classwork.
	B. Academic Survival Skills. The student possesses the academic survival skills (e.g., homework skills, time management, organization) necessary to manage their learning.
	C. Work Completion. The student independently completes in-class work and homework.
	D. Transitions. The student flexibly adapts to changing academic routines and behavioral expectations across activities and settings (e.g., content-area classes; specials).
	E. Attentional Focus. The student has a grade- or age-appropriate ability to focus attention in large and small groups and when working independently.
	F. Emotional Control. The student manages emotions across settings, responding appropriately to setbacks and frustrations.
	G. Peer Interactions. The student collaborates productively and has positive social interactions with peers.
	H. Self-Efficacy. The student possesses a positive view of their academic abilities, believing that increased effort paired with effective work practices will result in improved outcomes ('growth mindset').
	I. Self-Understanding. The student can articulate their relative patterns of strength and weakness in academic skills, general conduct, and social-emotional functioning.
	J. Self-Advocacy. The student advocates for their needs and negotiates effectively with adults.



How To: Implement Strong Core Instruction

When teachers must present challenging academic material to struggling learners, they can make that material more accessible and promote faster learning by building assistance directly into instruction. Researchers use several terms to refer to this increased level of student instructional support: explicit instruction, direct instruction, supported instruction (Rosenshine, 2008).

The checklist below summarizes the essential elements of a supported-instruction approach. When preparing lesson plans, instructors can use this resource as a 'pre-flight' checklist to make sure that their lessons reach the widest range of diverse learners.

1. Increase Access to Instruction	
Instructional Element	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Match. Lesson content is appropriately matched to students' abilities (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Content Review at Lesson Start. The lesson opens with a brief review of concepts or material that have previously been presented. (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008, Rosenshine, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Preview of Lesson Goal(s). At the start of instruction, the goals of the current day's lesson are shared (Rosenshine, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chunking of New Material. The teacher breaks new material into small, manageable increments, 'chunks', or steps (Rosenshine, 2008).	

2. Provided 'Scaffolding' Support	
Instructional Element	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Detailed Explanations & Instructions. Throughout the lesson, the teacher provides adequate explanations and detailed instructions for all concepts and materials being taught (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Think-Alouds/Talk-Alouds. When presenting cognitive strategies that cannot be observed directly, the teacher describes those strategies for students. Verbal explanations include 'talk-alouds' (e.g., the teacher describes and explains each step of a cognitive strategy) and 'think-alouds' (e.g., the teacher applies a cognitive strategy to a particular problem or task and verbalizes the steps in applying the strategy) (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008, Rosenshine, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Work Models. The teacher makes exemplars of academic work (e.g., essays, completed math word problems) available to students for use as models (Rosenshine, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Active Engagement. The teacher ensures that the lesson engages the student in 'active accurate responding' (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005) often enough to capture student attention and to optimize learning.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Assignments. Students have frequent opportunities to work collaboratively--in pairs or groups. (Baker, Gersten, & Lee, 2002; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Checks for Understanding. The instructor regularly checks for student understanding by posing frequent questions to the group (Rosenshine, 2008).	



<input type="checkbox"/> Group Responding. The teacher ensures full class participation and boosts levels of student attention by having all students respond in various ways (e.g., choral responding, response cards, white boards) to instructor questions (Rosenshine, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> High Rate of Student Success. The teacher verifies that students are experiencing at least 80% success in the lesson content to shape their learning in the desired direction and to maintain student motivation and engagement (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brisk Rate of Instruction. The lesson moves at a brisk rate--sufficient to hold student attention (Carnine, 1976; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fix-Up Strategies. Students are taught fix-up strategies (Rosenshine, 2008) for use during independent work (e.g., for defining unknown words in reading assignments, for solving challenging math word problems).	

3. Give Timely Performance Feedback	
Instructional Element	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Feedback. The teacher provides timely and regular performance feedback and corrections throughout the lesson as needed to guide student learning (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Step-by-Step Checklists. For multi-step cognitive strategies, the teacher creates checklists for students to use to self-monitor performance (Rosenshine, 2008).	

4. Provide Opportunities for Review & Practice	
Instructional Element	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Spacing of Practice Throughout Lesson. The lesson includes practice activities spaced throughout the lesson. (e.g., through teacher demonstration; then group practice with teacher supervision and feedback; then independent, individual student practice) (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Guided Practice. When teaching challenging material, the teacher provides immediate corrective feedback to each student response. When the instructor anticipates the possibility of an incorrect response, that teacher forestalls student error through use of cues, prompts, or hints. The teacher also tracks student responding and ensures sufficient success during supervised lessons before having students practice the new skills or knowledge independently (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Support for Independent Practice. The teacher ensures that students have adequate support (e.g., clear and explicit instructions; teacher monitoring) to be successful during independent seatwork practice activities (Rosenshine, 2008).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Distributed Practice. The teacher reviews previously taught content one or more times over a period of several weeks or months (Pashler et al., 2007; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1995).	



References

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Skinner, C. H., Pappas, D. N., & Davis, K. A. (2005). Enhancing academic engagement: Providing opportunities for responding and influencing students to choose to respond. *Psychology in the Schools*, *42*, 389-403.

How To: Create a Written Record of Classroom Interventions

When general-education students begin to struggle with academic or behavioral issues, the classroom teacher will typically select and implement one or more evidence-based intervention strategies to assist those students. But a strong intervention plan needs more than just well-chosen interventions. It also requires 4 additional components (Witt, VanDerHeyden, & Gilbertson, 2004): (1) student concerns should be clearly and specifically defined; (2) one or more methods of formative assessment should be used to track the effectiveness of the intervention; (3) baseline student data should be collected prior to the intervention; and (4) a goal for student improvement should be calculated before the start of the intervention to judge whether that intervention is ultimately successful. If a single one of these essential 4 components is missing, the intervention is to be judged as fatally flawed (Witt, VanDerHeyden, & Gilbertson, 2004) and as not meeting minimum Response to Intervention standards.

Teachers need a standard format to use in documenting their classroom intervention plans. The *Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet* that appears later in this article is designed to include all of the essential documentation elements of an effective intervention plan. The form includes space to document:

- *Case information.* In this first section of the form, the teacher notes general information, such as the name of the target student, the adult(s) responsible for carrying out the intervention, the date the intervention plan is being created, the expected start and end dates for the intervention plan, and the total number of instructional weeks that the intervention will be in place. Most importantly, this section includes a description of the student problem; research shows that the most significant step in selecting an effective classroom intervention is to correctly identify the target student concern(s) in clear, specific, measureable terms (Bergan, 1995).
- *Intervention.* The teacher describes the evidence-based intervention(s) that will be used to address the identified student concern(s). As a shortcut, the instructor can simply write the intervention name in this section and attach a more detailed intervention script/description to the intervention plan.
- *Materials.* The teacher lists any materials (e.g., flashcards, wordlists, worksheets) or other resources (e.g., Internet-connected computer) necessary for the intervention.
- *Training.* If adults and/or the target student require any training prior to the intervention, the teacher records those training needs in this section of the form.
- *Progress-Monitoring.* The teacher selects a method to monitor student progress during the intervention. For the method selected, the instructor records what type of data is to be used, collects and enters student baseline (starting-point) information, calculates an intervention outcome goal, and notes how frequently he or she plans to monitor the intervention.

A completed example of the *Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet* that includes a math computation intervention can be found later in this article.

While a simple intervention documentation form is a helpful planning tool, schools should remember that teachers will need other resources and types of assistance as well to be successful in selecting and using classroom interventions. For example, teachers should have access to an 'intervention menu' that contains evidence-based strategies to address the most common academic and behavioral concerns and should be able to get coaching support as they learn how to implement new classroom intervention ideas.

References

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Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet

This worksheet is designed to help teachers to quickly create classroom plans for academic and behavioral interventions.

Case Information		
<p>What to Write: Record the important case information, including student, person delivering the intervention, date of plan, start and end dates for the intervention plan, and the total number of instructional weeks that the intervention will run.</p>		
Student:	Interventionist(s):	Date Intervention Plan Was Written:
Date Intervention is to Start:	Date Intervention is to End:	Total Number of Intervention Weeks:
Description of the Student Problem:		

Intervention
<p>What to Write: Write a brief description of the intervention(s) to be used with this student. TIP: If you have a script for this intervention, you can just write its name here and attach the script to this sheet.</p>

Materials	Training
<p>What to Write: Jot down materials (e.g., flashcards) or resources (e.g., Internet-connected computer) needed to carry out this intervention.</p>	<p>What to Write: Note what training--if any--is needed to prepare adult(s) and/or the student to carry out the intervention.</p>

Progress-Monitoring	
<p>What to Write: Select a method to monitor student progress on this intervention. For the method selected, record what type of data is to be used, enter student baseline (starting-point) information, calculate an intervention outcome goal, and note how frequently you plan to monitor the intervention. Tip: Several ideas for classroom data collection appear on the right side of this table.</p>	
Type of Data Used to Monitor:	
Baseline	Outcome Goal
How often will data be collected? (e.g., daily, every other day, weekly):	
<p>Ideas for Intervention Progress-Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing data: grades, homework logs, etc. Cumulative mastery log Rubric Curriculum-based measurement Behavior report card Behavior checklist 	

Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet

This worksheet is designed to help teachers to quickly create classroom plans for academic and behavioral interventions.

Case Information					
What to Write: Record the important case information, including student, person delivering the intervention, date of plan, start and end dates for the intervention plan, and the total number of instructional weeks that the intervention will run.					
Student:	Josh H.	Interventionist(s):	Mr. Smith Social Studies Gr 9	Date Intervention Plan Was Written:	23 Oct 2019
Date Intervention is to Start:	27 Oct 2019	Date Intervention is to End:	6 Jan 2020	Total Number of Intervention Weeks:	8 wks
Description of the Student Problem:		Josh has difficulty creating a reading plan, monitoring understanding while reading, applying comprehension fix-up skills, and processing informational text.			

Intervention
What to Write: Write a brief description of the intervention(s) to be used with this student. TIP: If you have a script for this intervention, you can just write its name here and attach the script to this sheet.
Ask-Read-Tell (ART) Cognitive Strategy for Challenging Assigned Readings

Materials	Training
What to Write: Jot down materials (e.g., flashcards) or resources (e.g., Internet-connected computer) needed to carry out this intervention.	What to Write: Note what training--if any--is needed to prepare adult(s) and/or the student to carry out the intervention.
A copy of the interactive Ask-Read-Tell cognitive strategy organizer will be emailed to the student and parent.	Mr. Smith will train Josh to use the ART strategy. He will direct the student to log its use and to email completed copies of the ART form to the teacher after each assigned reading.

Progress-Monitoring	
What to Write: Select a method to monitor student progress on this intervention. For the method selected, record what type of data is to be used, enter student baseline (starting-point) information, calculate an intervention outcome goal, and note how frequently you plan to monitor the intervention. Tip: Several ideas for classroom data collection appear on the right side of this table.	
Type of Data Used to Monitor:	completed ART sheets; quiz grades
Baseline	Outcome Goal
No baseline for ART sheets Quiz Gr Avg: 65%	100% completion/ART sheets 75% for quiz grades
How often will data be collected? (e.g., daily, every other day, weekly):	
ART sheets and comprehension quizzes assigned weekly.	

Ideas for Intervention Progress-Monitoring

- Existing data: grades, homework logs, etc.
- Cumulative mastery log
- Rubric
- Curriculum-based measurement
- Behavior report card
- Behavior checklist



MTSS in the Time of Covid-19: Writing a *Home-Based Academic Support Plan*

During the extended closure of school districts in response to the Covid-19 virus, many at-risk students are failing to complete and submit schoolwork. An appropriate response is for a school representative (e.g., classroom teacher; school counselor) to contact their parent(s) (and perhaps the student) to come up with a written school/home plan to get these learners reengaged in learning.

This document provides a 5-step agenda that you as a school representative can follow as you contact with parents to develop a *Home-Based Academic Support Plan*—hereafter called ‘the form’—with practical ideas for student support. (A blank planning form and form filled in with sample student information appear later in this document.) This parent conference can be expected to last 15-20 minutes. It is recommended that your school archive completed plans as evidence of the ‘good faith’ MTSS efforts that you have made to ally with parents to promote the success of at-risk students.

Step 1: Greeting/Set the Agenda. In the opening of your parent call, you will want to set a positive tone and agree on what is to be accomplished. Here are 4 goals to weave into the start of your conversation:

- *Introduce yourself.* The parent(s) may already know you by name and professional role (teacher, counselor, etc.), but it can be helpful to refresh their memory and add relevant new information. Example: *“My name is Mr. Rappaport and I am Ricky’s Science teacher. Earlier this year, Ricky may have talked with you about the labs we have been doing on the properties of light.”*
- *State the purpose of the call.* You can reassure the parent(s) by emphasizing the solution-focused purpose of your conversation—to create a written plan between school and home to help the student successfully complete and submit schoolwork.
- *Establish rapport.* Another objective is to establish or reinforce a positive connection with the parent(s). For example, you might emphasize some positive student qualities or acknowledge the strain on the parent(s) of having to supervise home learning. Examples: *“I know that in the past Ricky has always been conscientious about submitting work.”* *“As parents, it can’t be easy for you to have to oversee Ricky to make sure that he gets his schoolwork done.”*

Step 2: Identify the Problem(s). You next communicate to the parent the student academic problem(s) that initiated the conference call. These most typically include issues such as incomplete or missing schoolwork, failure of the student to access online learning opportunities, etc. For example, you might say: *“I am reaching out to you because, in the past several weeks, Ricky has not logged in to my virtual classroom and has turned in no assignments. I think today we should be able to come up with strategies to help him with that.”* When you and parent(s) agree on the problem(s) to be the focus of the conference, record the problem in the *Identify the Problem(s)* box on the form.

Step 3: Develop a Plan. Your conversation then shifts to exploring with the parent(s) *why* the student is struggling to complete and submit work. The most frequent issues preventing efficient work completion are problems with:

1. readiness to learn (e.g., the student lacks strong self-management routines);
2. academic skills (e.g., the student does not have the academic skills necessary to do the assigned work);



3. motivation/work engagement (e.g., the student lacks motivation or fails to see a pay-off for doing the work). Keep in mind that students may be impacted by more than one of these factors.

The table below explains these academic blockers and includes sample strategies to address each. Consult this table as you talk with the parent.

Once you and the parent(s) have decided which blocker(s) best explain why their child is not completing or submitting work, choose the intervention strategies that you all agree will best address them. Write these ideas in the table *Select Intervention Ideas* on the form. Be sure to record these ideas in simple language and sufficient detail so that they can be clearly understood by school personnel and/or parent(s). Also, discuss when this academic support plan will begin (ideally, immediately!). If the parent(s) have a role in the plan, which is likely, ask them if they have questions or concerns about those roles and try to offer solutions for any issues that they bring up.

Academic 'Blocker'	Strategies
<p>Readiness to learn. The student is <i>unprepared</i> to do academic work.</p> <p>Parent Question: Do you think any of these problems interfere with your child's <i>readiness to learn</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disorganization/lack of an orderly workspace • Poor time management • Limited access to online learning • Lack of sleep. • Other issue(s). 	<p>Sample strategies to address <i>readiness to learn</i> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>disorganization</i>. [Parent]. Assist the student with a plan for storing materials and routines for orderly daily set up, and clean-up of the workspace. • <i>time management</i>. [School/Parent]. Help the student to create a daily work schedule and to check off work as completed. • <i>limited access</i> to online learning. [School]. Brainstorm options with parent(s) to get the student online; drop off printed work materials for the student. • <i>lack of sleep</i>. [Parent]. Set a fixed bedtime and wake-up time; adjust the student's school schedule to start later in the day.
<p>Academic skills. The student <i>lacks the skills</i> to do the academic work.</p> <p>Parent Question: Do you find that your child seems to <i>lack the skills</i> to do assigned work?</p>	<p>The prime strategy to address <i>academic skills</i> would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>lack of skills</i>. [School]. Reteach missing skills and adjust assigned work as needed to focus on those critical skills.
<p>Motivation/work engagement. The student is <i>unmotivated</i> to do the academic work.</p> <p>Parent Question: Do you think any of these problems interfere with your child's <i>motivation</i> to do schoolwork?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of work endurance. • Becoming overwhelmed with larger tasks. 	<p>Sample strategies to address <i>motivation/work engagement</i> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>lack of work endurance</i>. [Parent]. Advise the student to work for shorter periods and to take brief breaks as needed. [School]. Provide assignments that start off with easier, 'high-success' content and then move into more challenging material. • <i>becoming overwhelmed with larger tasks</i>. [School]. Provide assignments that break formidable tasks into series of more manageable sub-tasks. [School/Parent]. Coach the student to break down larger tasks independently. Praise and encourage the student's use of the chunking strategy.



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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being bored with the work. • Other issue(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>being bored with the work.</i> [School]. Provide the student with assignments of high interest or of greater challenge. Allow the student a voice in structuring assignments (e.g., choosing a paper topic; setting up a backyard science investigation). |
|---|--|

Step 4: Decide How to Stay in Touch. Before ending your video or audio call, agree on the best method(s) to communicate (e.g., phone call, Zoom video chat, email, text) and decide on a schedule for school and home to check in with each other about the plan's effectiveness (e.g., weekly check-in texts initiated by the teacher; a follow-up Zoom video-chat scheduled 2 weeks from the initial meeting, etc.). Of course, always encourage the parent(s) to contact you at any time if new concerns or questions arise about the existing plan.

Step 5: Share the Plan with the Parent(s). After ending your conference with the parent, add any final information to the *Home-Based Student Academic Support Plan* and send a copy (e.g., via email attachment, texted snapshot) to the parent(s).



Home-Based Academic Support Plan

Directions. Use this form to document the parent/school problem-solving conference and home-based individualized student intervention plan.

Student Name:	Date:
Who from school and home are participating in this conference call?	

Identify the Problem(s). What student problem(s) led to this conference call?

Select Intervention Ideas. What strategies will help this student? Decide which of the 3 blockers below impact the student and list strategies school/parent(s)/student will try. (Remember that students can show problems in more than one area.)
Readiness to learn. The student is <i>unprepared</i> to do academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.

Academic skills. The student <i>lacks the skills</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.

Motivation/work engagement. The student is <i>unmotivated</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.

Follow-Up Contact When will school/parent(s)/student reconnect to review the success of this plan? How will you communicate?



Home-Based Academic Support Plan: Example

Directions. Use this form to document the parent/school problem-solving conference and home-based individualized student intervention plan.

Student Name:	Date:
<i>Ricky Allen</i>	<i>April 28, 2020</i>
Who from school and home are participating in this conference call?	
<i>Heidi Allen (mom); Ray Allen (father); Ricky Allen, Mr. Rappaport, Science Teacher</i>	

Identify the Problem(s). What student problem(s) led to this conference call?
<i>Ricky is not logging on to the virtual science classroom to view teacher-posted instructional videos. Ricky also has not turned in any of 5 assignments given since March 15.</i>

Select Intervention Ideas. What strategies will help this student? Decide which of the 3 blockers below impact the student and list strategies school/parent(s)/student will try. (Remember that students can show problems in more than one area.)
Readiness to learn. The student is <i>unprepared</i> to do academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.
<i>To help Ricky get organized, Mrs. Allen will have him create a work schedule in the morning of each school day and will check his progress in the afternoon. She will also verify that he is set up at his desk ready to work and logged in for online learning by 9 am each day.</i>
Academic skills. The student <i>lacks the skills</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.
<i>Ricky's academic skills are adequate to complete his schoolwork.</i>
Motivation/work engagement. The student is <i>unmotivated</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.
<i>Ricky said that some science assignments seem overwhelming. Mr. Rappaport will break larger future assignments down into smaller steps ("chunking") and email those revised directions to Ricky and Mrs. Allen.</i>

Follow-Up Contact When will school/parent(s)/student reconnect to review the success of this plan? How will you communicate?
<i>Mr. Rappaport will call Mrs. Allen in 2 weeks to review Ricky's success with the plan. In the meantime, teacher, parents, and Ricky will email/text each other if questions come up.</i>

RTI/MTSS in the Classroom: What Are Your Expectations of the Teacher as Academic 'First Responder'?

Listed below are elements of effective classroom academic intervention.

Imagine a teacher who has a student who struggles with grade-level work and needs ongoing instructor support.

Next to each item jot down what you think should be the *minimum* expectation for any teacher to follow in providing that academic 'intervention' support:

Elements of effective classroom intervention	Minimum expectations
1. Describe the student academic problem(s) clearly and specifically	
2. Find/use effective academic-intervention strategies.	
3. Use instructional adjustments/ accommodations as appropriate.	
4. Record (write down) intervention efforts.	
5. Collect data on whether academic performance improves	
6. Communicate with the student.	
7. Communicate with parent(s).	

RTI/MTSS for Academics: School/District Planning Tool: 'Next Steps' Activity

Directions: Create a plan listing the key next steps that your school or district should take between now and June 2021 to advance the RTI/MTSS model for academics. Be prepared to report out.

	Goal Number(s) from Planning Tool/ Description of Task	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date	Additional Resources Needed
E x a m p l e	[A.1.5] created a bank of academic intervention ideas accessible by all staff.	Reading Teachers; School Psychologist, MS Counselor	March 2020	Half-Day during Supt Conf Day in March for staff Follow-up training with grade level teams
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				