



Planning the Gradual Release of Responsibility on Tier 1/Classroom Intervention Plans

Often, when a student struggles academically, the teacher can trace the problem to a gap in skills or knowledge. The simplest –and often best—response is for the instructor to create a lesson plan to teach the missing skills or content. A teacher-developed direct instruction plan might be the response of choice when:

1. the student's academic delay(s) can be effectively improved in a 4-8 week span.
2. the teacher is able to manage the task of providing this small-group or individual instruction within the core-curriculum classroom.

When creating a Tier 1 intervention lesson plan, the teacher should consider the 'gradual release of responsibility' model (Fisher & Frey, 2008) that incrementally shifts responsibility for the academic task from teacher to student. Initially, the instructor will teach the essential skills or concepts through direct instruction, including modeling. Students then work collaboratively to learn and practice the content. Finally, students are 'released' to practice independently.

Teachers can review this document to ensure that they provide appropriate support in their classroom intervention plans, while also planning over time to shift responsibility for the learning task to the student (Burns, VanDerHeyden & Boice, 2008).

Continuum: Release of Responsibility. Table 1 lays out the 4 successive stages of instruction through which teachers and learners progress as the instructor releases responsibility to the student. The process is fluid; learners who have achieved independence on one academic task (step 4) are likely to require a teacher-delivered lesson (step 1) to start them toward mastery of a new, more ambitious learning goal. Note also that this model is flexible and can be applied to larger and smaller groups:

Table 1: Gradual Release of Responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2008)		
Level	Description	Grouping Options
Step 1: Teacher-delivered lesson:	The instructor delivers a 'focus lesson' to prepare student(s) for the learning task. Lesson content may include an overview of key concepts and vocabulary, modeling of problem-solving or other cognitive strategies, and activation of student prior knowledge. Lessons are usually brief and establish a context and purpose for the upcoming student work.	Entire class; small group, student pairs, individual student
Step 2: Guided instruction	The teacher uses a range of communication tools (e.g., questioning, prompting, directing, demonstrating) to guide students through learning tasks. Ideally, guided instruction occurs in small-group format, to increase frequency of teacher-student interactions and attention given to each learner. Exiting this stage, students have a basic understanding of the main elements of the learning task, while the teacher knows which learners may require additional instructional support.	Entire class; small group or student pairs (preferred), individual student
Step 3: Collaborative learning	Students are put in pairs or groups to engage in activities allowing them to rehearse, discuss, practice, and/or apply the key concepts of the learning task. Collaborative learning activities should have sufficient structure to provide the group with a guiding purpose as well	Small group or student pairs



	as to require each participant to be individually accountable for completing some of the work.	
Step 4: Independent work	When students have sufficient understanding and mastery of the learning task, they are assigned independent work to complete in-class or as homework. Students at this stage may benefit from various supports (e.g., checklists outlining steps in the learning task; rubrics or other evaluative frameworks to evaluate their work; fix-up strategies to apply when stuck; etc.)	Individual student

Continuum: Help Statements. During large- and small-group instruction, teachers often use prompts and related statements to elicit student responses. Instructors seek a balance in providing the student with any information necessary for success on an academic task while also holding students responsible for their own learning.

Table 2 presents an array of coaching statements that are progressively more directive. Teachers can reference it as they formulate help statements most likely to encourage the student to be active rather than passive learners.

Table 2: Scaffolded 'Help' Statements with Increasing Levels of Support (Rodgers, 2016)		
Level	Description	Teacher Examples
1. Prompt only	The teacher 'prompts' the student to perform an action, solve a problem, or provide information while offering no direction, hints, or other assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Locate the word 'extricate' in this paragraph. What does "extricate" mean?</i> • <i>What is your next step in this assignment?</i> • <i>Read aloud, starting at the top of page 54.</i>
2. Prompt with information	The prompt directs the student to perform an action, solve a problem, or provide information —while including hints or guidance that may help the student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is this word? It is one that we practiced yesterday.</i> • <i>Who is the protagonist of this story? She is a character that has appeared in every book in this series.</i> • <i>Define "assurance". I heard you use the term correctly in your discussion group this morning.</i>
3. Direction	The student receives direction in what steps to take or tools to use to perform an action, solve a problem, or provide information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at your list of fix-up strategies and decide what to do next.</i> • <i>Does your answer make sense?</i> • <i>Look over your outline for any sections that need more explanation.</i>
4. Demonstration	Through modeling, the teacher provides full information to the student on how to perform an action, solve a problem, or provide information. The student is then prompted to follow the same procedure(s) to perform a similar task.	The teacher performs a 'think-aloud', reading a paragraph, pretending to have trouble decoding a word, and applying a checklist of word-attack strategies to sound out. The student is then directed to read aloud and use the word-attack checklist on unknown words.
5. Telling	The teacher provides complete information to the student about how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The word is "penguin". What is this word?</i>



	to perform an action, solve a problem, or provide information. The student observes, listens, and may be asked to study or repeat the problem solution or correct answer. However, the student does no further problem-solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Look over this paragraph. I have highlighted the main idea and 2 important supporting details.</i>
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References

Burns, M. K., VanDerHeyden, A. M., & Boice, C. H. (2008). Best practices in intensive academic interventions. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp.1151-1162). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

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