



## Running Effective Tier 1/Classroom Problem-Solving Meetings: Tips for Consultants

A Tier 1 problem-solving meeting takes place when the consultant meets with a student's teacher to help the instructor design a classroom intervention plan for that struggling learner. This handout includes advice for consultants on how to ensure positive, collegial discussions with classroom teachers and how to structure Tier 1 meetings so that they are efficient and result in workable intervention plans.

*Tips for Teacher Consultation.* The goal of consultant and teacher is to reach shared agreement in developing a Tier 1/classroom intervention plan. Here are several ideas to encourage positive interactions and outcomes at Tier 1 meetings:

- **Classroom interventions address classroom problems.** When a teacher has a student requiring a Tier 1/classroom intervention, the instructor's goal is to create a plan that will help the student to 'get through the next lesson' (i.e., achieve success in the classroom). The teacher should remember that he/she is NOT expected to fill in the student's off-grade-level skill gaps—as that is the responsibility of the Tier 2 reading or math interventionist. Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions are intended to complement—not replicate—each other.
- **Intervention-planning is negotiation.** The educator who meets with a teacher to offer intervention strategies assumes the role of a **consultant**. In this role, the consultant is co-equal with the teacher—able to *suggest* strategies but not dictate them. In effect, Tier 1 problem-solving meetings represent a process of *negotiation*, with consultant and classroom teacher reaching agreement on:
  - the cause(s) and degree of severity of the student's presenting deficits(s).
  - what key 1-2 problems to focus on at the meeting.
  - what intervention strategies to include in the Tier 1 plan.
  - how to monitor intervention progress.
- **Limit conversation to 'the fixable'.** When meeting with teachers, consultants can easily get pulled into digressions about issues outside of the school's control, such as patterns of parenting. Whenever discussion veers toward factors that educators cannot change, the consultant should be quick to steer it back to goals that can be achieved within the school setting.
- **Focus on the needs of the 'struggling learner'.** The consultant can increase teacher acceptance of intervention recommendations by framing those recommendations as matching the unique needs of the struggling student. For example, instead of saying to a teacher "You should pre-teach vocabulary for Ricky to prepare for challenging reading assignments", the consultant might say, "Ricky is a halting reader and would benefit from having difficult vocabulary terms pre-taught before he takes on a challenging reading assignment."
- **Redefine 'successful intervention'.** Teachers can sometimes be reluctant to try a classroom intervention because they worry that—if the student fails to respond—this will reflect badly on the instructor. Teachers should be reassured, however, that if an intervention is implemented with care and yet the student fails to respond, that outcome actually represents valuable new information about what attempted intervention strategies the student did NOT respond to. So, irrespective of outcome, any intervention can be defined as 'successful' if it is carried out to completion and with integrity.



- **The teacher remains responsible for the intervention.** The consultant assists the teacher in the process of creating a viable intervention plan. That assistance may even include the consultant visiting the classroom to demonstrate specific intervention strategies. However, the teacher is the classroom 'first responder' and retains ultimate responsibility for carrying out the intervention.

*How to Structure a Problem-Solving Meeting.* At the start of the Tier 1 problem-solving meeting, it is recommended that teacher and consultant sit at a shared computer with a blank classroom intervention-plan form open and ready to be filled out.

The consultant opens the discussion by briefly reviewing meeting expectations ('talking points'). Then, the consultant can use this agenda to run the meeting:

1. **Problem ID: Agree on target problem areas.** Teacher and consultant review information about the student's academic performance and agree on 1-2 academic areas to target for intervention.
2. **Intervention: Select interventions to match problems.** Teacher and consultant identify 1 or more intervention strategies (and perhaps additional accommodation ideas) to address the identified problem(s).
3. **Data: Choose progress-monitoring method(s).** Teacher and consultant agree on at least 1 method to track progress on the classroom intervention plan.
4. **Follow-Up: Select check-in date.** Teacher and consultant choose a check-in date (e.g., after 6 instructional weeks) when the consultant will meet with/ email teacher to check in on the intervention outcome.
5. **Obstacles: Identify & plan to address roadblocks.** Before adjourning, teacher and consultant should briefly review the intervention plan and identify any likely roadblocks / problems that may arise. They then brainstorm ideas to address each potential roadblock.