



MTSS and Academics: A Practical Guide for Schools

Developing Effective MTSS Tier 2 Reading Interventions: Guidelines for Schools: **Session 1**

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The Data Analysis Team: Command & Control for Tier 2/3 Services

The Data Analysis Team (DAT) is the 'command and control' group for determining which students qualify for Tier 2/3 academic services in your Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) model and assigning them to the appropriate intervention support. The DAT meets after each of 3 school-wide academic screenings that occur in fall, winter, and spring.

The Team's tasks are to (1) share screening results with grade-level teachers to help them to improve instruction; (2) identify specific students that qualify for Tier 2/3 services; and (3) assemble an individual plan for each student identified for Tier 2/3 services.

The DAT is typically multi-disciplinary. There is no minimum or maximum number of participants on the Team. However, the DAT membership collectively should:

- be knowledgeable of all intervention personnel and evidence-based programs available for Tier 2/3 interventions.
- know how to identify students who have failed to meet expected screening benchmarks
- be skilled in using the benchmarks to estimate the risk for academic failure of each student picked up in the screening
- be able to match identified students to appropriate interventions while providing students with sufficient instructional support.
- have the capacity to document the Tier 2/3 intervention set up for each student

Here is a description of how the DAT prepares for and conducts Tier 2/3 intervention-planning meetings (adapted from Kovaleski & Pedersen, 2008).

PREPARATION: STEP 1: Establish Objective Data Sources. An appropriate range of screening tools and other data sources are identified that are capable of accurately assessing student basic academic skills and/or curriculum skills. The school:

- *selects screeners.* The school chooses an appropriate range of screening tools to accurately assess student basic academic and/or curriculum skills. For each screening tool, the school establishes 'cut-points'—score ranges that allow students to be sorted and placed in categories according to their level of risk for academic failure. Those categories include:
 - A. Tier 1: Core Instruction: Low Risk: No intervention is needed.
 - B. Tier 1: Classroom Intervention. Emerging Risk: A classroom intervention plan is sufficient.
 - C. Tier 2: Supplemental Intervention: Some Risk: The student requires intervention beyond core instruction to remediate off-level academic skill gaps. Tier 2 groups are limited to 7 students and meet at least 3 times per week for 30 minutes.
 - D. Tier 3: Intensive Intervention: At Risk: The student requires the most intensive level of intervention support matched to their unique skill deficits. Tier 3 groups are limited to 2-3 students and meet daily for 30 minutes or more.
- *identifies additional data sources.* The school optionally has selected additional data sources (e.g., state test scores; teacher nomination) for identifying students needing intervention support. When possible, cut-points are established for these additional data sources (e.g., organizing raw scores into cut-points on a state reading test to correspond with Tiers of intervention).
- *weights screeners and other data sources.* The school weights in descending order of importance all measures to be used to make intervention placements, with the most 'diagnostic' sources appearing in first position. When

a student's several data sources show an inconsistent data profile (e.g., with some sources indicating a need for intervention and others suggesting that the student is low-risk), the school assigns greater weight to the more 'trustworthy' data sources to help to resolve the uncertainty.

PREPARATION: STEP 2: Prepare Data Reports for Current Screening. The Data Analysis Team prepares the school-wide screening data in a format suitable for sharing with classroom teachers and making Tier 2/3 service placement decisions. The DAT:

- *compiles summaries depicting patterns of student performance by grade level.* For each grade level, the DAT prepares summary statistics useful for interpreting the effectiveness of core instruction. Such grade-level summary information might include the overall percentage of students performing at or above grade level on each screening measure, as well as targeted analyses of percentages of students demonstrating mastery of particular academic skills (e.g., oral reading fluency).
- *prepares student eligibility lists by Tier.* At every grade level, the school generates lists for each screening measure that use predetermined cut-point scores to group students into corresponding intervention Tiers.

DAT MEETING: STEP 1: Have Instructional Conversations with Grade-Level Teams. Once a fall, winter, or spring school-wide screening has been completed, the DAT meets with teachers at each grade level. Grade-level teachers are supplied with data reports containing screening results, including summaries highlighting patterns of student performance and eligibility lists by Tier for that grade level.

The goals of DAT/grade-level meetings are to:

- *evaluate the effectiveness of core instruction.* The DAT and teachers review the numbers and percentages of students whose screening results met or exceeded benchmarks. A general rule of thumb is that core instruction is judged to be adequate if at least 80% of students perform at or above the benchmark cut-point.
- *examine patterns of student performance.* The DAT and teachers next look over the screening results to see what grade- or class-wide patterns of performance emerge. Relative areas of strength and weakness are identified.
- *brainstorm ideas to strengthen instruction.* Once specific areas of student weakness are identified, the conversation turns to discussion of specific strategies that teachers can incorporate into core instruction across the grade level to improve learning and outcomes. A recorder takes notes and the resulting ideas are formulated as an 'action plan' for teachers to implement.

Here are examples of questions that the DAT may ask a grade-level team about how to change instruction in response to screening data:

- *According to our most recent screening data, 65 percent of our third-grade met or exceeded the benchmark for oral reading fluency. That's well below our goal of 80 percent. What ideas do you have to target reading fluency in your core reading instruction?*
- *The data show that there are at least 4 students in each of your first-grade sections who have big gaps in their letter-identification skills. Let's brainstorm ways that you can provide classroom support to help these students to catch up with their peers.*
- *When you look at student performance in reading comprehension, some of your fourth-grade classrooms were at or above benchmark and some below. Why do you think we have this variability—and more importantly, what can we do to address it?*

TIP: *Delegate to streamline grade-level meetings.* Schools may find it logistically difficult to convene a meeting between the entire DAT and each grade-level instructional team. One solution is first to convene the full DAT collectively to analyze screening results and compile analyses for all grade levels. Then a representative or sub-group of the DAT can be delegated to meet with the various grade levels to convey the updated screening information and the full DAT's recommendations, as well as to generate an action plan.

DAT MEETING: STEP 2: Identify Tier 2/3 Students. The DAT next reviews screening results at each grade level. The Team's task in this phase is to identify students who qualify for Tier 2/3 services based on their falling below the Tier 2/3 eligibility cut-point scores on the screening measure(s). Below are examples of questions that the DAT may ask as it reviews screening data and identifies specific students as qualifying for Tier 2/3 services:

- *Let's look at our screening cut-point scores for reading comprehension across grades 2 through 6. Which students fell into the Tier 2 and Tier 3 ranges?*
- *How many students in our fifth-grade qualify for Tier 2 or Tier 3 services because of reading delays? And if we cap groups at 7, how many students can our current MTSS providers accommodate at that grade level?*
- *Are there any students appearing on our Tier 2/3 eligibility list who are a surprise because we thought their skills were stronger than we saw in the screening?*
- *Which students were so low on our reading screenings that we should do more diagnostic assessment to pinpoint their intervention needs?*

DAT MEETING: STEP 3: Develop Intervention Plans for Each Eligible Tier 2/3 Student. In the final segment of the fall, winter, or spring DAT meeting, the Team assigns each student to a specific reading group/program and creates a matching intervention plan. For each student discussed, the team decides on details such as what group and intervention program that learner is to be assigned to, the frequency and length of intervention sessions, and the number of weeks the intervention will last before check-up. The DAT also creates a written record of the intervention plan. Here are sample questions that the DAT may ask as it assembles and documents a Tier 2/3 intervention plan for a particular student:

- *Let's look at our next student on the list, Jack. According to our screening data, what reading intervention would be best for Jack?*
- *How will we monitor Jack's progress during the intervention—and how often?*
- *What will be the maximum size of Jack's reading group?*
- *How frequently should Jack's reading group meet?*
- *How many weeks will the intervention last before we check in on Jack's reading progress?*

TIP: *Delegate development of intervention plans to Tier 2/3 providers.* The DAT can find it time-consuming in a single meeting to create individualized plans documenting all details of each eligible student's Tier 2/3 reading interventions. An alternative is to hand off final documentation of individual plans to the intervention providers, to be completed soon after the DAT meeting. In this scenario, the full DAT retains responsibility for identifying Tier 2/3 students and making assignments to groups and reading programs. Of course, if interventionists are given responsibility for creating Tier 2/3 plans, they will need training to ensure that the plans that they develop will be of high quality.

Reference

Kovaleski, J. F., & Pedersen, J. (2008). Best practices in data analysis teaming. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology, V*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.



Tier 2: Small-Group Intervention Plan

Interventionist. Identify the interventionist(s) for this group.

Targeted Academic Skills. Describe the academic skill(s) to be the focus of this intervention group.

Time Allocated: Start Date	End Date	Session Length (e.g., 30 mins)	Session Frequency (e.g., 3x/wk)

Students: Name	Baseline: Starting Point	Goal: Criterion for Success

Intervention(s). Describe the research-based program(s) or practice(s) to be used with these students.

Progress-Monitoring. Record the type of data to be used to monitor student growth during the intervention.	
Frequency of Data Collection. How often will data be collected? (e.g., daily, every other day, weekly):	



Tier 2: Small-Group Intervention Plan

Interventionist. Identify the interventionist(s) for this group.
Mrs. Kordisky, Reading Teacher

Targeted Academic Skills. Describe the academic skill(s) to be the focus of this intervention group.
Oral Reading Fluency

Time Allocated: Start Date	End Date	Session Length (e.g., 30 mins)	Session Frequency (e.g., 3x/wk)
M 10/10/16	F 12/02/16	20 mins	Daily

Students: Name	Baseline: Starting Point	Goal: Criterion for Success
Banks, Nicole Gr 5	51 wpm/Gr 3	63 wpm/Gr 3
Lacosta, Andrea Gr 4	44 wpm/Gr 3	56 wpm/Gr 3
Washington, Tyrell Gr 5	49 wpm/Gr 3	61 wpm/Gr 3

Intervention(s). Describe the research-based program(s) or practice(s) to be used with these students.
Group-Based Repeated Reading

Progress-Monitoring. Record the type of data to be used to monitor student growth during the intervention.	
CBM/Oral Reading Fluency using EasyCBM.com Gr 3 materials	
Frequency of Data Collection. How often will data be collected? (e.g., daily, every other day, weekly):	Weekly

Tier 2 Academic-Intervention Services: Quality Indicators

Directions: Complete this questionnaire to evaluate the current status of your school's Tier 2 academic services.

School-Wide		
Rating	Tier 2 Quality Indicator	Notes/Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Recruitment. Students are entered into and exited from Tier 2 services based primarily on the objective data of the school-wide screening tool(s) (e.g., 20- 25 th % or below). If used at all, teacher nomination is a minor source of Tier 2 recruitment.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Coordination of Services. The building Data Analysis Team (DAT) reviews school-wide academic screening data collected at 3 points during the year (Fall/Winter/Spring). The DAT decides which students are eligible for Tier 2 services, assigns students to intervention groups based on shared skill deficits, and exits students who no longer qualify for Tier 2.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Classroom Feedback. The DAT shares school-wide screening results with classroom teachers to analyze grade-level patterns of academic strength and weakness and to brainstorm how to improve core instruction to reach at-risk learners.	
Interventionist Practices		
Rating	Tier 2 Quality Indicator	Notes/Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Documentation. Tier 2 interventions are documented in writing with clear descriptions of the group intervention plans <i>before</i> Tier 2 services begin. Those Tier 2 plans are archived electronically for long-term storage and retrieval.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Research-Based Interventions. The Tier 2 interventionist employs intervention programs or practices supported by research.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Off-Grade-Level Focus. The focus of Tier 2 services is to fix 'off-grade-level' academic deficits—and is <i>not</i> simply an extension of classroom instruction through re-teaching of core instruction, homework help, or test preparation.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Progress-Monitoring. The Tier 2 interventionist is collecting progress-monitoring data <i>at least</i> 2 times per month to monitor the success of the intervention.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Not Accomplished	Intervention Check-Ups. The Tier 2 interventionists/Data Analysis Team review each student's performance at 6-10-week intervals to determine whether they are making adequate progress. At these check-ups, students can be moved into different or more intensive intervention programs or exited from Tier 2 services—depending on progress.	



Worksheet: Tier 2/3 Reading Intervention Services: Establishing a Data Analysis Team & Building-Wide Entrance/Exit Criteria

School: _____ Team Members: _____ Date: _____

Directions. Use this organizer to develop a plan to adopt entrance and exit criteria for your school's Tier 2/3 academic services.

Tier 2/3: Academic Intervention Services: General Guidelines

Here are key recommendations for establishing Tier 2/3 services at your school:

Intervention

- **Use Interventions Supported by Research.** Intervention plans for Tier 2 students contain programs or practices supported by research.
- **Cap Group Size.** Tier 2/3 services are delivered in small-group format to allow enough adult attention to close the gap in academic skills or performance. Tier 2 groups are capped at 7 students; Tier 3 groups are capped at 3 students.
- **Schedule Adequate Time.** The schedule allocates sufficient time outside of core instruction for the delivery of Tier 2/3 interventions to promote accelerated student learning. Tier 2 services meet at least 3 times weekly for 30 minutes; Tier 3 services meet daily for at least 30 minutes.
- **Put Plans in Writing.** Tier 2/3 intervention plans are written down before the intervention begins—and student progress is measured throughout the intervention period.
- **Monitor the Intervention.** Student progress on Tier 2/3 interventions is monitored regularly. Tier 2 data collection occurs at least twice per month; Tier 3 data collection occurs at least weekly.
- **Measure Intervention Integrity.** Information is collected (e.g., student attendance, observation of Tier 2/3 sessions) to verify that the intervention is being delivered with adequate integrity to be effective.

Data

- **Adopt Entrance/Exit Criteria.** Enrollment in Tier 2/3 services is dynamic: students can enter or exit at several points during the school year, depending on measured academic need.
- **Use Objective Data Sources.** Students are identified for Tier 2/3 services based on objective data sources. School-wide screenings are the primary data source and are carried out at least 3 times per year with all students.
- **Select Screeners that Identify the Right Students.** Data sources used for Tier 2/3 accurately highlight areas of academic deficit and assess degree of academic risk among the student population.
- **Appoint a Data Analysis Team.** The Data Analysis Team is the decision-maker to decide whether and when students move into or out of Tier 2/3 services.



Tier 2: What Elements Should Be Prioritized? In your group, discuss the elements of Tier 2 academic services at your school that you feel should be given priority for review or change. For each element selected, jot down your change-recommendations for the current year (easier fixed) and/or next year (e.g., changes requiring more time for preparation, shared decision-making, etc.). To spur discussion, review the attached *Tier 2: Academic Intervention Services: General Guidelines*.

Tier 2 Element	2019-20 (This Year): Changes/Recommendations	2020-21 (Next Year): Changes/Recommendations



Recruit your 'dream' Data Analysis Team (DAT). Collectively, the DAT should (a) understand data collection and analysis of school-wide screening data; (b) know programs, providers, and number of 'slots' available for Tier 2 across the school; (c) be able to set up and document Tier 2/3 intervention plans; and (d) have skills to dialog with classroom teachers on collegial terms on how to strengthen whole-group instruction. Write down names and/or positions of staff you believe should be considered for DAT membership, along with area(s) of competence.

Staff Member/Position	Area(s) of Competence to Support the Tier 2 DAT



Develop a Draft Agenda for Data Analysis Team Meetings. Look over the sample agenda and script for running a Data Analysis Team meeting (see handout). Using this resource as a general guide, draft an agenda ('Tasks' list) for how your DAT meetings will be conducted. NOTE: In this exercise, if your school chooses to schedule face-to-face meetings between DAT members and classroom teachers to talk about the impact of screening results on core instruction, you can schedule and script those as separate events.

DAT Meeting Agenda

Task Title	What is to be accomplished (include scripted dialog if helpful)
TASK 1 →: • _____	
TASK 2 →: • _____	
TASK 3 →: • _____	
TASK 4 →: • _____	
TASK 5 →: • _____	
TASK 6 →: • _____	
TASK 7 →: • _____	
TASK 8 →: • _____	



Set up your academic screening program. In column 1, generate a list of screeners and other data sources that you will use to determine student eligibility for Tier 2/3 academic services. In column 2, rank-order these data sources based on their relative importance for Tier 2/3 identification (i.e., "1" for the most important data source, "2" for the next most important source, etc.). In column 3, begin to plan how your building will establish 'cut-points' (if applicable) for each data source.

Column 1: List Each Data Source	Column 2: Rank Your Data Sources	Column 3: Create a Plan to Establish Cut-Points for Each Data Source

Tier 2 Intervention Programs at a Glance

Listed below are intervention programs available in the school to support Tier 2 reading interventions. Each program description includes information about the type of academic deficit that it is designed to address:

Tier 2/3 Intervention Program	Grade Levels	Area(s) of Academic Deficit Targeted	Method for Delivering This Intervention Program	Frequency and Length of Sessions
HELPS Program www.helpsprogram.org	2-6	Reading fluency	Trained Tutors (college practicum students; paraprofessionals)	3-5 days per week; 15-minute sessions

RTI/MTSS for Reading: Tier 2 Planning Tool: 'Next Steps' Activity

Directions: Create a plan listing the key next steps that your school or district should take between now and the end of this school year to advance your system for Tier 2 reading interventions. 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	<i>Develop form and capacity for online data storage to ensure that Tier 2 intervention plans are documented in writing before services begin.</i>	Reading teacher; psychologist; principal	June 2020	Meeting time with tech coordinator to explore online MTSS data storage options
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				