



## 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).

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**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 need. 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.

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**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.
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**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.

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**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?*
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**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.