

Selecting an Intervention to Meet Students' Needs: A "How-to" Resource for Educators

This resource is for educators seeking intervention programs proven to close the knowledge gaps of students struggling with learning. The resource draws upon the principles of the response to intervention (RTI) approach to preventing learning difficulties. In the many schools that implement RTI, educators provide all students with effective instruction, identify students who struggle with learning, and provide these students with increasingly intense intervention to close gaps in knowledge. Student progress, or response to the intervention, is assessed frequently. Frequent progress monitoring allows educators to make informed decisions about the effectiveness of the intervention and to tailor the intervention to meet student needs. The goal of RTI is to be proactive when students begin to struggle, intervening promptly to prevent learning difficulties.

Providing high-quality, explicit instruction in the core content areas is a key factor in preventing learning difficulties. However, when students fall behind their grade-level peers, educators need to know how to select an intervention program that will meet the needs of their students.

Choosing research- or evidence-based interventions is critical; they are an investment of time and money that must work quickly to close students' gaps in learning. An effective intervention is systematic, is evidence based, and accelerates learning to close gaps and bring students within grade-level performance.

Use this resource to inventory intervention programs already in use or accessible on campus and to conduct an objective research review to determine whether the programs are scientifically based and designed to meet students' identified needs. Grade-level teams or partners may be able to accomplish these tasks efficiently and share their findings with a larger group.

Many intervention programs claim a research basis, but closer examination may reveal problems related to scientific objectivity. Look for evidence that the intervention works for students with needs similar to those of your students. "Red flag" an intervention if it has any of the following characteristics:

- Only a very small number of studies examine its efficacy.
- The publisher or vendor sponsored the "research study."
- The number of students in the study is too small to generalize the results to the general population.
- The characteristics of the students are different from those of your students.

Use the procedure on the following pages to identify an intervention for your students. Tools for each step are provided to help organize the information you collect. Your goal is to identify one or more proven interventions to use to close your students' gaps in learning.

Identify Intervention Needs

Related tools:

- Intervention Needs Worksheet: Class Summary
- Intervention Needs Worksheet: Grade-Level Summary

- 1. Assess all students with a universal screening or benchmark instrument.** (Tip: Be sure to assess students receiving special education services.)
- 2. Identify students who are at risk.**
- 3. Using the Class Summary sheet, identify and gather related data.** (Tip: List students and their data by grade level to identify grade-level professional development needs.)
- 4. Analyze students' data to identify areas where intervention is needed.**
 - In what areas are the learning gaps? For example, in reading, students may be behind their peers in phonemic awareness, phonics or word study, vocabulary, fluency, or comprehension; in mathematics, they may lag behind in fluency or number sense.
 - How big are the gaps in student learning? For example, use student data to assign levels of need similar to the following:
 - Up to 1-year gap in grade-level benchmarks (% of students)
 - Up to 2-year gap in grade-level benchmarks (% of students)
 - Gaps greater than 2 years (% of students)
 - What are the characteristics of the at-risk students?
 - Are they primarily English language learners?
 - Do they struggle with learning in more than one content area?
 - Do any already receive intervention, including dyslexia or special education services?
- Do external challenges to learning, such as the following, need to be addressed?
 - Excessive tardies or absences
 - Chronic illness or medication factors
 - School transfer or enrollment (note if more than one a year)
 - Other, such as home issues, including being in the foster care system
- 5. Using the Grade-Level Summary sheet, identify grade-level needs for intervention.**
 - Identify areas of learning gaps.
 - Identify “gap size” and student totals for each of the following:
 - Students assigned to each level, or “tier,” of need
 - English language learners
 - Students already receiving intervention, including through dyslexia or 504 services and special education
- 6. Identify areas for targeted professional development support.**
 - Do gaps in knowledge and skills link to specific grade levels?
 - Could the learning gaps be related to staff expertise?
 - Do teachers provide explicit instruction in the content area?
 - Do teachers employ evidence-based strategies related to the areas of learning gaps?
 - Do teachers need information about evidence-based strategies to address the learning gaps?
 - Are the learning gaps related to curriculum or program implementation?
- 7. Summarize the findings to identify specific areas to target.**
- 8. Develop a “sound bite” (short statement) that describes student needs and what the ideal intervention(s) would address.** This statement will help to focus the intervention program review.

Identify Evidence-Based Interventions That Match Students' Needs

Related tools:

- Intervention Program Inventory Checklist
 - Intervention Program Research Review
1. Using the Inventory Checklist, conduct an inventory of available interventions to determine whether they include features of evidence-based instruction, present implementation challenges, and match identified student needs.
 2. Using the Research Review sheet, conduct a research review of existing inventory to determine whether the programs are scientifically designed to match identified student needs for specific grade levels and student characteristics.
 3. Survey other possible interventions and describe their potential for meeting the identified needs for intervention.

Select Interventions to Accelerate At-Risk Students' Learning

Meet with your campus team to narrow the choices. Which interventions have promise for your students? Select the intervention(s) that is the best match for your students' needs.

References

- Scammacca, N., Vaughn, S., Roberts, G., Wanzek, J., & Torgesen, J. K. (2007). *Extensive reading interventions in grades K–3: From research to practice*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research, Center on Instruction.
- Torgesen, J. K. (2005). *Remedial interventions for students with dyslexia: National goals and current accomplishments*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Center for Reading Research.
- Torgesen, J., Houston, D., & Rissman, L. (2007). *Improving literacy instruction in middle and high schools: A guide for principals*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research, Center on Instruction.

Intervention Needs Worksheet: Grade-Level Summary

Date: _____ Campus: _____ Screening/benchmark assessment: _____

Grade:					
Area of learning gap:					
Gap size	All students	Number ELL	Number RI	Number D/504	Number SE
1					
2					
3					
Totals					

Grade:					
Area of learning gap:					
Gap size	All students	Number ELL	Number RI	Number D/504	Number SE
1					
2					
3					
Totals					

Grade:					
Area of learning gap:					
Gap size	All students	Number ELL	Number RI	Number D/504	Number SE
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Grade:					
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Gap size	All students	Number ELL	Number RI	Number D/504	Number SE
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2					
3					
Totals					

KEY: ELL = English language learner; RI = receiving intervention; D = dyslexia/504 services; SE = special education.
 Gap size: 1 = < 1 grade level behind; 2 = 1 to 2 grade levels behind; 3 = > 2 grade levels behind.

Intervention Program Inventory Checklist

Reviewer(s): _____ Program: _____

Content area(s)/skill(s) targeted: _____ Designed for grade(s): _____ Author(s): _____

Publisher: _____ Intervention level: ___ (II: Supplemental/strategic or III: Intensive)

Instructional delivery	Evidence and examples	Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct, explicit instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic, sequenced instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Modeling <input type="checkbox"/> Scaffolding support and examples <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate materials and tasks for practice to automaticity <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple opportunities for student responses <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate corrective and reinforcing feedback to students <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice <input type="checkbox"/> Student engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Independent practice and generalization		

Grouping	Time, frequency, and duration	Recommended interventionist	Progress monitoring
<input type="checkbox"/> Same-ability students <input type="checkbox"/> Computer-based groups <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended group sizes provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Minutes per session specified (___ minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Days per week specified (___ days) <input type="checkbox"/> Total weeks specified (___ weeks)	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> Paraprofessional <input type="checkbox"/> Peer tutor	<input type="checkbox"/> Assessments provided (assess every ___ days) <input type="checkbox"/> Student progress charts provided <input type="checkbox"/> Computer generated

Instructional materials	Program	Cost
<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic organizers and visual support <input type="checkbox"/> Materials match student instructional levels <input type="checkbox"/> Materials vary to match student response needs <input type="checkbox"/> Materials for independent practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable materials (describe: _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Assistive technology available	<input type="checkbox"/> Progression of skills <input type="checkbox"/> Distributed practice <input type="checkbox"/> Skills reviewed <input type="checkbox"/> Variety of text and materials <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher support (describe: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> Start-up materials and licensing information provided (\$____ per student) (\$____ per teacher) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount of training needed specified (____ hours/days) (\$____ total cost) <input type="checkbox"/> Expenses for subsequent years specified (\$____ per student)

Conclusions

How is this program different from interventions previously provided to our students?

Why will this program meet/not meet our students' needs?

What are some potential implementation challenges?

Comments or additional information needed:

Intervention Program Research Review

Reviewer(s): _____

Date: _____

Intervention program title and focus: _____

Number of supporting studies found: _____

Reference information for review: _____

Review source	Other reviewers of intervention	Students
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer-reviewed journal <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher sponsored <input type="checkbox"/> Website <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> What Works Clearinghouse (www.whatworks.ed.gov) <input type="checkbox"/> Florida Center for Reading Research (www.fcrr.org) <input type="checkbox"/> Blueprints (Casey Foundation) (www.blueprintsprograms.com) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Number of all students in study: _____ Number of students in experimental group: _____ Number of students in control: _____ Age(s) or grade(s): _____ English language learners: _____ Students in special education: _____ How selected for intervention: _____

Assessment	Intervention delivery	Summary of research findings
Assessment name(s): Frequency of progress monitoring:	Group size: _____ Interventionist: _____ Frequency of sessions: _____ Time per session: _____ Duration of intervention: _____ weeks	

How findings relate to our students' needs