



Implementing Tiered Systems of Prevention and Intervention: Implications for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

A Promising Practice

Successful implementation of tiered models has significant implications for culturally and linguistically diverse students. By establishing a system of evidence-based instruction, screenings to identify students at risk at an early stage, consistent and frequent monitoring of skill development, and scientifically-based interventions, educators are better able to meet the needs of all students. Further, adopting a tiered model can potentially address issues of minority over-representation in special education by decreasing the number of inappropriate referrals to special education.

However, educators will not meet the needs of students of color by simply adopting a new model. Purposeful conversations about the impact that culture may have on student learning and how educational systems might adapt practices to meet the individual needs of students are needed. If we fail to have these conversations, we may simply replace one deficit-based identification model with another.

Considering Culture Across Tiers

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems (NCCRESt) has issued a position statement to address culturally competent practices associated with Response to Intervention models. In that statement, NCCRESt suggests various principles and questions to inform future intervention design efforts and research on RtI. Furthermore, while peer-reviewed journal articles on the subject of Response to Intervention and its impact on minority students are scarce, Klingner and Edwards (2006) provide educators with cultural considerations relevant to implementing response to intervention models. As we consider the role of culture in tiered systems in this article, the viewpoints of these sources are summarized below.

Tier One:

Klingner and Edwards (2006) state that, "The foundation of tiered systems should be culturally responsive, quality instruction with ongoing progress monitoring within the general education classroom." It is important that teachers be aware of instructional strategies that are positively associated with academic achievement with the population of students in their classrooms (Ortiz, 2001). Furthermore, as school staff consider the core curriculum, teams should be purposeful in their evaluation of whether or not the curriculum is multicultural. Is the curriculum delivered in such a way as to meet the needs of a variety of learning styles? Does the content acknowledge the contributions and perspectives of all groups? Are materials engaging and unbiased?

Tier Two:

At the second tier, supplemental intervention support is provided for students who have not met expected benchmarks or made adequate progress in the core program. When implementing specific interventions, it is critical that teachers have access to information on evidenced-based instructional approaches that have been validated with diverse populations. Can one truly say that an intervention is effective for a culturally linguistically diverse student if there is no evidence to support such an assumption? The National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems encourages educators to consider, "What works with whom, by whom, and for whom?" Not all interventions are successful with all students across all settings, so it is important to consider to what extent interventions will generalize across settings and populations.

Additionally, at this level the assistance of a building based general education intervention team may be helpful in the identification of specific interventions that may support the student. This team should be multidisciplinary and include

diverse members with expertise in culturally responsive practices and assessments. Using a problem-solving approach the team should use data to make decisions about student needs and develop culturally responsive interventions.

Tier Three:

In tier three, intensive instruction and intervention that is tailored to a student's individual needs is provided. If students do not show signs of progress at this stage, conversations regarding special education eligibility may arise. However, it is critical that educational teams look closely at why these students continue to struggle and not automatically assume that their struggles reflect a need for special education placement. While implementation of evidence based intervention is a critical component of tiered models, the success of these interventions is highly dependent on the socio-cultural context in which they are implemented. Klingner and Edwards (2006), suggest that the best instructional practices and interventions are, "based on sound pedagogical principals implemented thoughtfully and sensitively by a knowledgeable and reflective teacher who adapts instruction to students' needs."

Conclusion

Implementation of tiered models holds great promise for addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Adopting these preventative and early intervening practices has the potential to affect rates of minority over-representation in special education. The challenge for schools will be to ensure that culturally competent practices related to instruction and intervention are implemented consistently and with fidelity and that data is gathered to evaluate the impact that these practices have on all students, but particularly students of color.

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Building a Foundation for Tiered Prevention and Intervention

0a. Awareness

Purpose: To build awareness and shared understanding of a tiered system of prevention and intervention

Who: Key district and school personnel

0b. Needs Assessment

Purpose: To provide a tool assessing readiness for implementation of a tiered system of prevention and intervention

Who: Key district and school personnel

0c. Planning

Purpose: To facilitate a planning process that outlines actions needed for the implementation of a tiered system of prevention and intervention that supports local initiatives and school improvement efforts

Who: Key district & elementary school personnel

Training and Technical Assistance for Tier 1

1a. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Administration Training

Purpose: Provide training in the administration of DIBELS for benchmarking and progress monitoring purposes.

Who: Recommended for all K-2 school staff, DIBELS Core team, and School Improvement Team

1b. DIBELS Data Analysis – Building Level

Purpose: Provide training in the analysis of data to identify trends to inform instruction and guide professional development planning.

Who: School Improvement Team and DIBELS Core Team

1c. DIBELS Data Analysis-Grade Level

Purpose: Provide training in the analysis of individual and grade-level data trends to inform instruction and intervention.

Who: Grade level teams that include all instructional staff working with students at the grade-level

NOTE: Schools may choose to participate in (1b) School Improvement Team Analysis AND (1c) Grade-Level Team Analysis concurrently.

Training and Technical Assistance for Tier 2

2a. Building-Based Team for GEI

Purpose: Provide training to support the team to develop intervention plans for students who have not been responsive to differentiated instruction designed through grade-level teaming.

Who: Building-Based Team

2b. Expanding Roles to Support Tiered Systems of Prevention and Intervention

Purpose: Provide training and technical assistance to key personnel to enhance the evolving role on the building based team.

Who: Speech/Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, and/or Counselors

Training and Technical Assistance for Tier 3

3. Using a Facilitated IEP Process to Prevent Collaborative Breakdown

Purpose: Provide teachers and administrators the knowledge and tools necessary to inform parents and staff about the IEP process and to conduct every student-centered meeting from the vantage point of participation, collaboration and understanding.

Who: Districts or cooperatives who have staff previously trained in FIEP process

These trainings are available upon request. Related trainings can also be found on page 2.