Intensifying Intervention With Frequent Opportunities to Respond

Within the data-based individualization (DBI) framework, educators may use the *Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity* (Fuchs et al., 2017) to guide the adaptation of an intervention. One dimension that educators may intensify is the dosage of the intervention, which refers to the number of opportunities the student has to respond and receive feedback from the teacher. Although dosage may be increased by extending the length or frequency of intervention sessions, it can also be enhanced by embedding more opportunities to respond (OTRs) within existing instructional time. Providing frequent OTRs is associated with increased student engagement, reductions in problem behavior, and improved academic outcomes (MacSuga Gage & Simonsen, 2015). This resource provides an overview of OTRs and guidance for using them as an instructional adaptation to increase dosage within the DBI framework.

Overview of OTRs

An OTR is a question, statement, or prompt that elicits a student response. OTRs follow a simple instructional cycle: **prompt → student response → feedback**. In this cycle, the teacher provides a clear prompt, students respond, and the teacher monitors responses to provide immediate feedback, promoting active engagement and supporting real-time instructional decisions. Exhibit 1 illustrates this cycle and provides an example teacher script.

Exhibit 1. Prompt–Respond–Feedback Cycle and Example Teacher Script

Step	What it includes	Example teacher script
Prompt	Clearly state the learning target and explain how students will respond; ask the question and signal when to respond.	"Now we'll practice subtracting two-digit numbers. Solve 32 minus 18 on your whiteboard… (wait time) 3, 2, 1—show me."
Respond	Students actively respond (verbal, written, or action).	Students write their answers on whiteboards and hold them up.
Feedback	Monitor student responses; acknowledge patterns; confirm correct responses and address errors.	"I see most of you wrote 14—that's correct. A few answers are different; let's walk through the regrouping step together."

Who Responds and How Do They Respond?

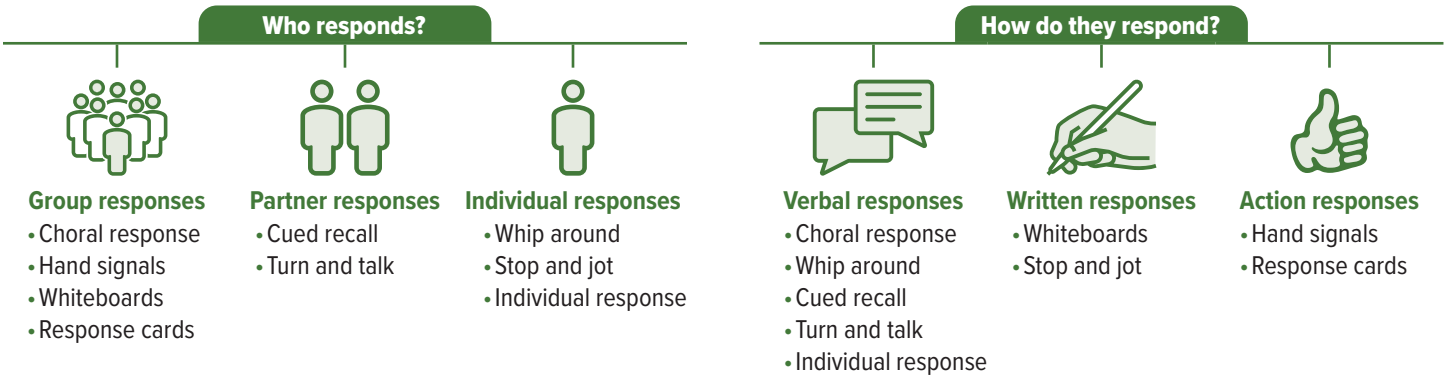
When planning OTRs, it is important to consider both **who is expected to respond** and **how students will respond**. Educators may ask students to respond individually, with a partner, or as a whole group. Response formats include **verbal responses, written responses,** and **action responses.** Exhibit 2 summarizes common response formats. Additional examples and guidance for selecting and using response formats are provided in the appendix.

To increase the intentionality and impact of OTRs, select response formats based on the instructional goal and the type of thinking students are expected to demonstrate.

- **When the goal is to learn or practice new skills,** use response formats that support frequent participation and allow efficient monitoring of student responses (e.g., choral responses, personal whiteboards, response cards).
- **When the goal is for students to explain their thinking or use academic language,** use response formats that require students to explain, apply, analyze, or justify their ideas (e.g., partner or individual responses).

Varying response formats helps maintain attention and increases access for students who may not respond well to traditional hand-raising or volunteering.

Exhibit 2. Common Response Formats

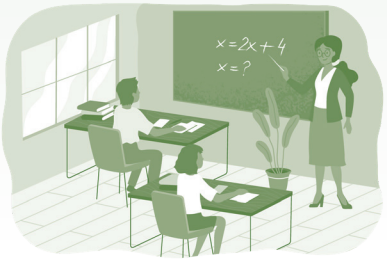


Pace of OTRs

The appropriate frequency of OTRs varies based on whether the lesson focuses on teaching new content or reviewing previously taught content.

- During direct instruction of basic facts or review of previously learned material, research suggests maintaining a rate of **approximately three to five OTRs per minute** (MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015).
- **Students with intensive needs may benefit from higher rates of OTRs**, particularly during review and practice sessions.

Intensifying Intervention With OTRs



Assess the Use of OTRs

In the DBI framework, when a student is not making adequate progress in an evidence-based intervention delivered with fidelity, educators use diagnostic data to determine how to best intensify the intervention. Assessing the use of OTRs helps educators understand whether students have sufficient and appropriate opportunities to actively engage with instruction and receive feedback.

Educators may collect informal diagnostic data about the use of OTRs by

- examining lesson plans to assess the frequency of OTRs and
- observing instruction to assess
  - question and response formats,
  - number of students responding,
  - rate of OTRs during intervention sessions, and
  - accuracy of responses (Datchuk, 2025).

Use this observation sheet to tally the number of OTRs during a selected instructional activity.

Educators may use these data to evaluate both the frequency and quality of OTRs and to inform decisions about whether increasing, refining, or varying OTRs may improve student responsiveness to instruction.

Develop a Hypothesis

After reviewing data on the use of opportunities to respond, educators develop a hypothesis to explain why a student is not making adequate progress in an intervention delivered with fidelity.

For example, if the data suggest that the student has limited opportunities to actively engage during instruction, the educator might develop a hypothesis such as the following:

> *During intervention sessions, Ava has limited opportunities to respond, which may reduce engagement and practice with the target skill. If Ava receives more frequent opportunities to practice and receive feedback on math facts, her math fact fluency will improve.*

Based on this hypothesis, educators can identify strategies to increase opportunities to respond. For example, the educator may incorporate choral responding to increase the rate of OTRs and plan to embed additional choral responses within the student's intervention sessions.

Plan the OTR Adaptation

Planning OTRs is critical because it allows teachers to intentionally embed frequent opportunities for active responding and align student responses to lesson goals. To address the identified hypothesis, educators should plan when and how students will actively engage during instruction.

When planning OTRs, teachers should do the following:

- **Identify** the key content or skill and consider how students can actively practice that skill.
- **Examine** lesson plans to determine where to increase the frequency of OTRs or improve their quality, ensuring changes align to the identified hypothesis.
- **Develop** a set of prompts, questions, or cues that can be used consistently across sessions.
- **Plan** to use at least two response formats (e.g., group, partner, written, verbal) during each intervention session.

Support from a coach can help educators track and use OTR implementation data to improve the use of OTRs over time.

The tables in the appendix provide examples of common OTR types and guidance for selecting and using response formats during instruction.

Evaluate Student Progress

After implementing the OTR adaptation for 6–8 weeks, analyze student progress monitoring data to determine whether the student is responding to the adaptation.

- If the student is making sufficient progress, continue using the adapted approach as part of the student's intensive intervention.
- If the student is not making sufficient progress, return to the diagnostic data step to refine the hypothesis and adjust the intervention.

Resources to Support Using OTRs

Organization/Author	Resource
National Center on Intensive Intervention	Using Effective Methods to Elicit Frequent Responses
Center on MTSS	Assessment of Use of Opportunities to Respond
The IRIS Center	Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 2, Elementary): Behavioral Strategies
Integrating Behavior Support and Team Technology	Intervention Guide: Opportunities to Respond

References

Datchuk, S. (2025, April 15). *Measuring opportunities to respond: A MOTR of highly interactive literacy instruction.* Iowa Reading Research Center, The University of Iowa. https://irrc.education.uiowa.edu/blog/2025/04/measuring-opportunities-respond-motr-highly-interactive-literacy-instruction

Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., & Malone A. S. (2017). The taxonomy of intervention intensity. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 50*(1), 35–43.

MacSuga-Gage, A., & Simonsen, B. (2015). Examining the effects of teacher-directed opportunities to respond on student outcomes: A systematic review of the literature. *Education and Treatment of Children, 38*(2), 211–240.

Appendix. OTR Response Formats

The tables below provide examples of common response formats teachers can use to elicit opportunities to respond (OTRs) during instruction. Use the tables to help you select response formats based on your instructional goal, the type of student thinking you want to promote, and how students will respond (e.g., verbally, through actions, or in writing). Each format includes guidance for when to use it and key considerations for implementation. Technology-based tools (e.g., clickers, online polling) can be used to collect responses across verbal, written, or action formats. To ensure all students can participate effectively, explicitly teach and model response routines so students understand how and when to respond.

Verbal Response Formats and Implementation Guidance

Response format	Best used when	What to do	Example	Intensity tip
Whip around	Activating prior knowledge, summarizing learning, or generating multiple possible responses.	Pose an open-ended question ➔ provide brief think time ➔ move quickly student-to-student for responses (students may pass or repeat ideas).	"What is one thing you learned about fractions today?"	Keep responses brief (5–10 words) to ensure all students participate quickly.
Choral response	Introducing new skills, teaching simple skills with a single correct answer (i.e., letter sounds, decoding, math facts), or building fluency.	Ask a question ➔ provide think time ➔ provide clear signal (auditory or visual) ➔ students respond together.	"Tell me all the sounds in 'hat'" ➔ wait 2–3 seconds ➔ Provide hand signal and say, "What sounds?" ➔ students say /h/ /ă/ /t/.	Aim for every student responding every time, not volunteers.
Turn and talk (partner response)	Encouraging explanation, reasoning, or use of academic language.	Pose a question ➔ provide think time ➔ assign partners ➔ students discuss ➔ optionally share out.	"Explain to your partner how you solved that problem."	Assign Partner A/B roles to ensure both students respond; monitor conversations.
Cued recall	Reinforcing recently taught content; supporting recall when students may need prompts.	Pair students ➔ one explains a concept or sequence of steps or ideas➔ partner listens and provides prompts or cues ➔ switch roles.	"Tell your partner the steps for solving this problem; your partner can give hints if needed."	Provide prompts or cues in advance to guide productive support.

Action Response Formats and Implementation Guidance

Response format	Best used when	What to do	Example	Intensity tip
Signal response (hand signals)	Quickly checking understanding or confidence, or selecting among a limited set of responses.	Ask a question → provide think time → signal students to respond using gestures (e.g., thumbs up/down, fist-to-five, fingers for options).	"Show me with your fingers: 1 = unsure, 2 = almost, 3 = got it."	Use consistent response scales across lessons; have students show responses simultaneously.
Response cards	Quickly assessing understanding when response options are limited (e.g., multiple choice, categories, true/false).	Provide each student with response cards → ask a question → signal students to hold up their response.	"Is this a noun or a verb? Show me your card."	Ensure all students respond simultaneously; prepare cards in advance for efficiency.

Written Response Formats and Implementation Guidance

Response format	Best used when	What to do	Example	Intensity tip
Whiteboards	Checking accuracy of responses from all students; practicing written responses or problem solving.	Ask a question → students write responses on whiteboards → signal to display → scan responses.	"Solve 24 + 18 and show me."	Scan for patterns of errors and reteach immediately as needed.
Stop and jot	Promoting quick written reflection or synthesis during or after instruction.	Pause instruction → ask a focused question → students write a brief response.	"In one sentence, explain how this symbol contributes to the story."	Keep responses brief (1–2 sentences) to maintain pacing.
Think–write–share	Checking understanding across all students while integrating written and verbal responses.	Pose a question → students think → write a brief response → share with a partner or teacher.	"Solve 24 + 18, then show your work to your partner and explain your steps."	Use sentence frames or prompts to support responses.

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