

5 Lessons Learned From Implementing Intensive Intervention

From 2011 to 2016, the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) was funded by the Office of Special Education programs to build the capacity of local educational agencies (LEAs) to support schools, practitioners, and other stakeholders in the implementation of intensive intervention in reading, mathematics, and behavior for students with severe and persistent learning and/or behavioral needs. During that time, NCII worked with 26 schools in 12 LEAs and 4 states to support implementation.

NCII's approach to intensive intervention is **data-based individualization** or **DBI**. This process is a systematic method for **intensifying** interventions by using **data** to determine when and how to make **adaptations** that will enhance the likelihood of positive student outcomes.

1



Support from leadership is essential for successful implementation.

Leadership positions and roles might vary but strong leadership support resulted in **increased staff buy-in** and **ensured better alignment** with other school-level efforts.

As this district leader said: "You need a level of commitment that even when it gets difficult, you will not sacrifice the time you've set aside or the direction that you've given in terms of implementation of intervention. This has to be a priority.... The administrator has to be able and willing to commit resources...in order to be able to maintain fidelity to the plan."

2



Solid Tier 1 and 2 foundations allows school staff to focus efforts on DBI.

Starting with a **solid foundation** helps to ensure the right students are identified for additional support and that teachers can focus on those students.

One school noted: "We were able to kind of tackle some things that should have been tackled in Tier 1 rather than try to put a bunch of interventions in place...when it was really not a student issue, it was a systems issue.... We could not jump into Tier 3 [DBI] when we didn't have a process for Tier 1 or Tier 2."

3



Starting small and moving forward one step at a time facilitates success.

In a majority of the intensive technical assistance sites, school staff initially implemented DBI with only 4-6 students.

Staff shared:

Small-scale implementation allowed them to concentrate on understanding the DBI process and learning how to integrate the process into their instruction.

Leaders shared:

Not over committing in the early stages of DBI implementation was critical to ensuring that teachers were not overwhelmed or frustrated, and it allowed them to experience initial successes.

4



Formalizing procedures through standardized protocols helps ensure ongoing implementation.

Schools face the challenge of changing staff and responsibilities. Ensuring processes are clearly documented—including developing scripted meeting agendas and clear guidelines—and regularly repeating professional development can help ensure that the knowledge is not placed with a few key individuals and ensure sustainability when staffing changes.

5



Committing to trust the process led to successful implementation.

It is important to commit to implementing the DBI process for an extended period of time and to know that it will likely be bumpy along the way.

As one educator shared, "Data-based decision making is not for wimps...You really got to go in knowing that it's hard work.... Once you've made that commitment, you can't just give up.... The only answer we've found so far is sometimes just going ahead and doing what we need to do and having the people look at the success."