Bringing it Together: Why it Is Important to Integrate Academics and Behavior When Thinking About Intensive Intervention

Webinar Q&A

Question: What are some research-based interventions and/or low- or no-cost resources that can be used to track student growth?

Answer: Although NCII does not endorse any single intervention program or progress monitoring tool, it has developed a series of tools charts that review the research base of a number of tools. The Academic Intervention chart is available at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/instructional-intervention-tools and the Behavioral Intervention chart is available at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-intervention-chart. The intervention charts review studies of the interventions. When identifying interventions that meet your needs, both the study quality and the effects should be taken into account. NCII also has reviewed the technical adequacy of measures for monitoring student progress over time. These measures can be found in the Academic Progress Monitoring chart (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring) and Behavioral Progress Monitoring chart (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools). Implementation requirements, including cost, training, and vendor contact information, can be found by clicking the title of the tool or intervention n the chart. In addition to these resources, it may be helpful to review the sample lessons and activities at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/sample-lessons-activities, and the behavioral strategies and sample resources at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/behavior-strategies-and-sample-resources. These can be used as resources to adapt interventions to meet the needs of struggling students.

Question: How can we prevent schools from using response to intervention (RTI) or multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to delay and avoid formal exceptional student education (ESE) evaluation of students?

Answer: In some states, a lack of progress (based on data) showing minimal response to interventions may be used to identify students in need of an evaluation for special education services; the RTI process cannot delay or avoid formal ESE evaluation of students (see your state's regulations for more information). Schools and parents can elect to request a referral for special education evaluation at any point. If a district agrees that a student should be tested to determine special education eligibility, then schools must make a reasonable effort to obtain parental consent. In the event that a district does not agree that a child should be evaluated for access to special education services, the district must provide a written explanation of why it is denying an initial evaluation, with instructions to challenge the decision. Details on this process

can be found at
http://www.rti4success.org/sites/default/files/Parent%20FAQs%20About%20RTI.pdf.
To emphasize the point that RTI cannot be used to delay or deny services, in 2011, the U.S.
Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) director, Melody
Musgrove, released a memo to state directors of special education. This memo can be found at
http://www.rti4success.org/resource/memo-response-intervention-rti-process-cannot-be-used-
delay-deny-evaluation-eligibility. Additional information on identifying students with learning
disabilities can be found in the Center on Response to Intervention's webinar series at
http://www.rti4success.org/resource/learning-disability-identification-webinar-series.

Question: Do you suggest pull-out academic intervention with students who demonstrate
behavioral challenges so that other students are not distracted by their behaviors?

Answer: NCII cannot provide any broad recommendation on how to proceed with a student's
individualized education program (IEP) or determine the least restrictive environment for the
student. Instead, it is important to evaluate the student's individual needs to identify the
environment that provides the greatest access to the educational supports needed.

Question: How do you incorporate academics and behavior, and how would that be represented
in a student plan?

Answer: Establishing a plan that incorporates academic and behavior is a complex process that
needs to be approached using an established, analytical method. One critical component of this
process would be to understand the connection between academics and behaviors for the
individual student. This could happen by determining the function of the behavior using a
functional behavior analysis (FBA) and making sure that you have provided an instructional
match for the individual student. NCII would recommend identifying the function of the
student's behavior or why a student may be avoiding academic tasks. Knowing the function (i.e.,
why a behavior is being exhibited) will help determine how to best address the behavior. It is
worth noting the following: an FBA is an initial step to predict what will or can be effective; it is
not a stand-alone procedure. An FBA is not a "fill in the form and walk away strategy;" rather, it
is an initial hypothesis. For more information on FBAs, please see Module 6 of the NCII DBI
training series, "Using FBA for Diagnostic Assessment of Behavior," which can be found at
http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/using-fba-diagnostic-assessment-behavior-dbi-
training-series-module-6.

In addition, NCII has developed a series of data meeting tools to help make these meetings as
productive as possible. These tools allow a team to track whether an intervention program is
being followed with fidelity and provide scripts for meeting attendees, as needed. The NCII
materials can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/tools-support-intensive-
intervention-data-meetings.

During the webinar, Nicole Bucka shared an example of how she and a team at a school in
Rhode Island had incorporated a behavioral strategy into a student's mathematics intervention.
You can hear her discuss this example in the webinar (33:25–42:35). This information should
help to provide a frame in which academics and behavior can be integrated for a student who
may need intensive intervention in both areas.

Question: How can school psychologists and other school staff (including paraprofessionals such as classroom aides) help educators integrate academics and behavior into interventions?

Answer: NCII recommends that the delivery of instruction and interventions be performed by the most qualified staff. Regardless of role (e.g., school psychologist, general educator, special educator, reading specialist), it is essential that individuals who provide intensive intervention have adequate training and experience. In order to deliver intensive intervention as intended, individuals require a unique set of skills that equips them to individualize intervention, based on student data, to align with student skill deficits. This skill set includes the capacity to use data to adapt interventions to meet students' individual needs and to monitor student progress within the intervention. Schools often use teams to support the development and implementation of a plan for intensive intervention. These teams may include a representative group of staff who know and work with the student (e.g., school psychologist, social worker, interventionist, special educator). The team may work together to develop an individualized student plan to be delivered by a specific team member. The team would then meet regularly to review the student's data and suggest potential adaptations to the developed plan if the student was not making adequate progress.

Question: How do you motivate students to complete work in class when a teacher is not available to assist them, and turn in work?

Answer: This is a common issue that teachers and other school staff encounter. NCII has a series of behavior guides currently in development on motivational strategies, which will be released in the coming months. These guides will be added to the current collection of behavior guides that are posted on the NCII website at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/behavior-strategies-and-sample-resources. The best way to find out about our new resources is to sign up for our newsletter at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/.

Question How should I work with my kids who have the most intensive behaviors?

Answer: Intensive intervention is focused on helping students with severe and persistent learning or behavioral needs. NCII's approach to intensive intervention is data-based individualization (DBI). DBI is a research-based process for individualizing and intensifying interventions through the systematic use of assessment data, validated interventions, and research-based adaptation strategies. DBI is an iterative process of interventions, progress monitoring, and adaptation, and can be applied in academic areas (e.g., reading, mathematics, etc.) as well as to behavioral issues.

A few examples of resources that could be helpful include a webinar based on the use of DBI in behavior, which can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/video-resource/providing-intensive-intervention-using-data-based-individualization-behavior, as well as several modules of the DBI training series which can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/introduction-data-based-individualization and http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/monitoring-student-progress-behavioral-interventions-dbi-training-series-module-3.

Question: How do I progress monitor behavior, or what tools are effective in measuring behavior?

Answer: NCII has a Behavioral Progress Monitoring tools chart aimed at helping teachers and families become educated consumers who can choose programs that best meet their students' individual needs. The tools chart can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools.

Question: How should I group my students who require the most intensive level of behavioral support?

Answer: Ideally, the students with the most intensive needs should only be a small subset of students in the classroom. Those requiring intensive intervention should only account for roughly 3–5 percent of the student population. DBI does not necessarily mean that support has to be given one on one to individual students, but that a student's education plan needs to be monitored so that skill deficits can be addressed by adapted education programs. The case study that Nicole Bucka presented in the webinar addressed a program that was administered to the entire class for the success of all, not just to an individual student who required intensive support. Progress monitoring tools should be used to deem which students need access to Tier 3 resources. If an unusually large number of students are requiring Tier 3 intervention, then there is a problem with the core curriculum that needs to be identified and addressed.

Question: What is the best way to involve parents when their child requires intensive behavioral interventions?

Parents are an important part of supporting their student's academic and behavioral success. Therefore, it is important to ensure that parents are informed and empowered to be part of their children's educational experience. It also is important to recognize that parents and families bring their own cultural and educational experiences to their interactions with schools. Including parents in data meetings, when possible, and keeping them informed about student progress as well as the strategies and interventions being used at school is important. Schools also can share with families strategies that are aligned with the supports being provided at school to apply at home. During the webinar, Nicole Bucka discussed a resource, available at https://www.sophia.org/tutorials/parents-toolkit-screening, which provides some ways to engage and involve families.

Question: How do you help school staff and teams recognize that individualized and customized intensive interventions are available for any students with significant needs, whether or not the student has an IEP? In addition, how do you prevent staff from only using special education staff and settings to address individualized intensive interventions?

Answer: NCII has produced some modules and work that address these exact issues at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/content/dbi-training-series. Through our work we have identified a series of non-negotiables or key considerations, one of which is the importance of ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the most intensive intervention. An overview of DBI can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/introduction-data-based-individualization that discusses the use of DBI for students who do not have an IEP.

Question: I am a novice school psychologist, and this sounds like RTI. However, what I got from this lecture is that it is not RTI...instead, it is an intensive intervention that is offered at the third tier of what is considered the RTI model. What is the difference?

Answer: DBI, or data-based individualization, is NCII's approach to intensive intervention or intervention for students with the most intensive academic and behavioral needs. DBI can fit within an RTI or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) framework, oftentimes at Tier 3, but it does not have to be done within an RTI or PBIS framework. It is compatible with RTI and has many of the same components (e.g., progress monitoring, interventions, data-based decision making). However, DBI creates a specific process to provide individualized support to students with the most intensive needs. An overview of DBI can be found at http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resource/introduction-data-based-individualization.