



Provide intensive instruction on a daily basis that promotes the development of various components of reading proficiency to students who show minimal progress after reasonable time in tier 2 small group instruction (tier 3)



Tier 3 interventions (and above for MTSS) are provided to students who do not progress after a reasonable amount of time with the tier 2 intervention. Tier 3 usually entail one-on-one tutoring with a mix of instructional interventions. Intensify instruction by focusing on fewer, high-priority reading skills during lessons and scheduling multiple and extended instructional sessions. One-on-one or small-group instruction also provides intensity as students have more opportunities to practice and respond. One-on-one instruction includes giving students feedback based on their individual responses, teaching students to a mastery level based on individual learning progress, and planning instruction with materials and an instructional sequence that meets individual student needs.



How to carry out the recommendation

1. Implement concentrated instruction that is focused on a small but targeted set of reading skills.
2. Adjust the overall lesson pace.
3. Schedule multiple and extended instructional sessions daily.
4. Include opportunities for extensive practice and high quality feedback with one-on-one instruction.
5. Plan and individualize tier 3 instruction using input from a school-based RtI team.
6. Ensure that tier 3 students master a reading skill or strategy before moving on.

Potential roadblocks

1. The distinction between tier 2 and tier 3 interventions can often be blurry.
2. Because most tier 3 students have problems with decoding and fluently reading connected text, some may have tier 3 interventions that only highlight these areas.
3. School and staff resources are often too limited to support individualized instruction for tier 3 students.
4. Schools tend to give the least experienced teachers the toughest-to-teach students.
5. Adding multiple and extended instructional sessions to a daily schedule can be overwhelming for some students and a challenge for schools in terms of scheduling.
6. Some students who require tier 3 instruction do not catch-up despite intensive, one-on-one instruction.

Reference: Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., & Tilly, W. D. (2008). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades* (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/3>



How to carry out the recommendation

1. Implement concentrated instruction that is focused on a small but targeted set of reading skills.

Focused instruction on a single skill or set of skills works best for struggling readers. Too many instructional objectives can overwhelm students and make it more difficult to learn skills necessary for reading proficiency. Use assessment to help determine how to target instruction by identifying aspects of reading that are blocking student growth. These become the focus of tier 3 instruction. Additionally, tier 3 instruction should involve in-depth modeling from the teacher as well as practice with targeted, specific feedback. Tier 3 instruction often focuses on phonemic awareness and decoding, especially for younger students or those with very limited reading proficiency. However, comprehension and vocabulary are also critical.

2. Adjust the overall lesson pace.

Use a pace that is slow and deliberate—in other words, more intensive. Often the pace of instruction can be focused around a single component. In one lesson, introduce and practice a new skill and review the skill during the next lesson. Further lessons may provide opportunities to extend and apply. Teachers can slow and focus the instructional pace by implementing a series of lessons concentrating on a variety of review and practice activities.

3. Schedule multiple and extended instructional sessions daily.

Research does not suggest a specific number of sessions or duration but does suggest that students needing tier 3 interventions benefit from more reading instructional time. On average, students participating in tier 3 interventions receive an additional 75 minutes of instruction per week, but teachers can include an additional 45–120 minutes per week if needed and scheduling allows. As an example, schools might provide an additional 30 minutes of instruction by creating a “double dose” of reading time for struggling readers where a teacher introduces skills during the first session and then reteaches with added practice during the second.

4. Include opportunities for extensive practice and high quality feedback with one-on-one instruction.

To become proficient in the application of newly acquired skills and strategies, students with the most intensive instructional needs will need multiple opportunities to practice with immediate high-quality feedback. Tier 3 students might require 10 or 30 times as many practice opportunities as their peers. One-on-one instruction is an effective way to maximize practice during tier 3 instruction. If scheduling one-on-one instructional sessions is not possible, organize students in small groups with homogenous reading needs. One-on-one or small-group instruction provides the greatest opportunity for continuous and active learning for students, as well as for immediate and individualized feedback from the teacher.

5. Plan and individualize tier 3 instruction using input from a school-based RTI team.

Detailed and individualized planning is necessary at tier 3, as students need intensive scaffolding. Students with intensive reading needs require substantial supports during the initial stages of learning; as they progress in their understanding and knowledge, these supports are gradually withdrawn to allow students to apply their skills and strategies independently. Specific materials designed for this level of intensity (e.g., graphic organizers, color-coded question cards, and concrete manipulatives) can help students as visual prompts to support internalizing skills and strategies. Again, use of these is gradually faded out as students grow toward mastery. Finally, teaching skills that reinforce each other (such as spelling and reading) will help optimize instructional time.

6. Ensure that tier 3 students master a reading skill or strategy before moving on.

Before a student moves to the next lesson, skill, or activity, he or she must demonstrate that a reading skill or strategy is mastered. For example, when teaching a series of lessons on phonemic awareness, teachers should only discontinue activities when a student reaches 100 percent accuracy on all of the items in the activity. In this, it is essential that teachers maintain detailed and accurate records of student performance.

Provide intensive instruction on a daily basis that promotes the development of . . . (tier 3)

Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>The distinction between tier 2 and tier 3 instructional interventions can often be blurry.</i>	Realize that the terms are for convenience only and are merely meant to be a way to provide variation in resources to match the nature and intensity of instruction. Thus, teachers should not be overly concerned about differences between the two tiers. The focus should be on meeting the needs of the students.
<i>Because most tier 3 students have problems with decoding and fluently reading connected text, some may have tier 3 interventions that only highlight these areas.</i>	Include important comprehension proficiencies as part of any tier 3 (or above) intervention.
<i>School and staff resources are often too limited to support individualized instruction for tier 3 students.</i>	Consider creative alternative school and staff resources, including the use of community volunteers and resources.
<i>Schools tend to give the least experienced teachers the toughest-to-teach students.</i>	Ensure that more experienced teachers or specialists provide tier 3 (or above) instruction. Provide professional development and mentoring as needed.
<i>Adding multiple and extended instructional sessions to a daily schedule can be overwhelming for some students and a challenge for schools in terms of scheduling.</i>	Consider breaking needed additional instruction into multiple smaller sessions.
<i>Some students who require tier 3 instruction do not catch-up despite intensive, one-on-one instruction.</i>	Remind school staff that obtaining progress toward reading proficiency should be the primary goal and must involve the integration of new knowledge with previously learned knowledge.



For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.