Key Terms/Concepts for Understanding Multitier Services and Supports

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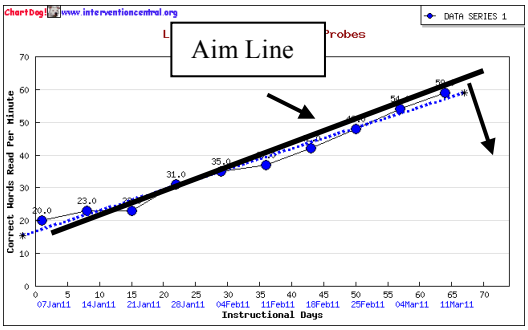
Ability-Achievement Discrepancy: A student's achievement score is subtracted from their ability score and if the difference was large, the interpretation is that the student had a learning disability. This is one of the original methods for identifying students with learning disabilities that is no longer required by IDEA 2004 due to concerns about poor evidential and consequential validity.

Accountability: Assessment that allows for judgments to be made regarding student achievement and/or adequate yearly progress. The term is also associated with program evaluation, (i.e., determining the extent to which a particular educational program or practice impacts student achievement appropriately, a concept referred to as "value added"). State tests are a common example, but other achievement tests can serve this purpose.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): The minimum level of improvement that schools and school divisions must achieve each year as required by a state department of education.

Aim Line (also referred to as Goal Line): The Expected Rate of Progress that reduces the gap from peers shown as a line on a graph connecting a student's initial performance level to the student's year-end expected level.



AIMSweb: Publisher of Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) materials in a variety of basic skills areas (reading, early literacy, math, early numeracy, writing, and behavior). These tools have been reviewed favorably by the US Department of Education's National Center on RTI for use in reading screening and progress monitoring. ACPS uses this instrument as a universal screening tool and a progress monitoring tool.

Assessment: A process of collecting data to make a decision(s). There are a prescribed set of assessment decisions and not all tests or information can be used validly for all decisions. Failure to match assessment data to decision type can cause problems.

At-Risk Students: Students whose current performance level predicts poor learning or behavioral outcomes unless an appropriately intensive intervention is provided.

Benchmarking, Benchmark Assessment: A process of combining universal screening and progress monitoring for purposes of monitoring the educational progress of all learners while

identifying students at promise and students in need of enrichment, determining educational need and progress, and communicating both regularly to parents.

Benchmarks: A learning standard or target that define success in an academic or behavioral area. One presumes an empirical relation between the Benchmark and a criterion has been established.

Collaboration: A model of consultation featuring a collegial process wherein two or more colleagues share expertise with each other; to implement instructional or behavior strategies to benefit student learning.

Consensus Building: A commonly employed component in school improvement that is predicated on the idea that schools and staff must be "ready" for any innovation and this is attained by explaining the "whys" so that they can be on-board. However, waiting for consensus can be passive and is disconnected with the knowledge that consensus often comes after adoption of new practices.

Commitment Building: A more proactive step in school improvement that actively attempts to ensure that staff members understand the foundational "whys" including how innovation can affect them. A key role of leadership in school improvement is creating the conditions for commitment.

Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS): Support services that require collaborative involvement of general and special education focused on providing high quality and effective early learning experiences for all students (PreK-12). In most cases, this involves setting up systems of prevention support to address the most common problems that have the highest impact on student outcomes.

Core Curriculum (also known as Tier1): Curriculum provided to all students within specific content (e.g., reading, languages arts, and mathematics) for the purposes of ensuring high quality academic and behavior outcomes.

Curriculum: A system for facilitating student learning comprised of the following key elements: (a) the written curriculum: i.e., course/grade level documents with clearly described units that articulate desired results, recommended assessments, and a learning plan; (b) the assessed curriculum: i.e., those aspects of the curriculum that are formally assessed and evaluated by all instructors teaching the same course or grade-level content; (c) the taught curriculum: the instructional delivery process guided and informed by the written and assessed curriculum; (d) the supported curriculum: i.e., the materials, resources, and time given to support viable curriculum implementation; and (e) the learned curriculum: i.e., what students actually achieve and retain as a result of studying the written curriculum

Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA): Any testing strategy that uses a student's curriculum, general or specific, as the basis for decision making. CBA is the umbrella term that includes a variety of forms of assessment including Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), but also tests that come with specific published curricula and teacher-made tests.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM): A set of standardized basic skill measures (e.g., fluency, letter recognition, single-digit addition, basic order of operation problems), that are brief, easy to administer and score, and valid for the purposes of progress monitoring and screening. CBM is distinctive form of Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) because of two additional properties: (a) Each CBM test is an alternate form of equivalent difficulty; and (b) CBM is standardized, with its reliability and validity well documented (IDEA Partnership). For example, AIMSWeb is a made of CBMs in reading, math, writing and behavior.

Cut Scores: A score on a screening test that divides students who are considered potentially at risk from those who considered not at risk (or some other outcome) or scores that are predictive of later outcomes. (National Center on RtI)

Data-Based Decision Making: The process of guiding decisions based on objective data for purposes of screening, intervention planning, progress monitoring, program evaluation and accountability. Different approaches (i.e., procedurally driven, model driven) use different terms to communicate these basic decisions.

Determinant Factors: A student cannot be determined to be a student with a Specific Learning Disability if they have not had appropriate reading or mathematics instruction or if formal assessment of achievement during instruction has not been provided to parents at regular intervals. One of the three major components of identification of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) together with Inclusionary and Exclusionary Factors.

Diagnostic Assessment or Diagnostic Testing: An assessment that allows for planning an intervention, including performance level or placement and presence or absence of critical skills and strategies

Differentiation: Adaptations of the content, process or product of a learning objective to meet the needs of diverse learners based on the students' current level of performance as well as diagnosed interests and learner profiles.

Disproportionality: Over- or under-representation of racially, culturally, ethnically or linguistically diverse groups of students in special education, restrictive learning environments, or school disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) in comparison to other groups.

Dual Discrepancy: A key feature of the inclusionary component of Specific Learning Disabilities eligibility when RTI is part of the eligibility determination process. Students must (a) be significantly different (discrepant) from their peers in educational achievement and ("educational need") and (b) not be improving at an adequate rate when given high quality, scientifically based instruction" ("educational progress" or rate of improvement).

Early Intervention: A process of providing interventions of appropriate intensity before problems become more severe. In most cases, this involves setting up systems of prevention support (i.e., Tiers) to address the most common problems that have the highest impact on student outcomes.

Educational Benefit: A critical component that drives early intervention and potential special education determination. Measured by student progress through the rate of improvement (ROI). Also forms the second of two components in the Specific Learning Disability dual discrepancy.

Educational Need: A critical component that drives early intervention and potential special education determination. Measured by the achievement or performance discrepancy from peers. The first of two components in the Specific Learning Disability dual discrepancy.

Effect size: Number of "standard deviations one treatment group performed better than another. Generally, in educational research, an effect size of .30 is considered small, .50 is considered moderate, and .70 is considered large." Typically, an intervention can be considered to be appropriate as part of Response to Intervention if it represents a statistically-determined effect size that suggests it has a high level of value in promoting student achievement and performance (i.e., evidence-based interventions).

Evaluation: Determines the extent to which adequate progress has been achieved in the learning process (i.e., student progress/achievement evaluation) and/or adequate yearly progress (AYP) has been achieved by the school as a learning organization. The latter is referred to as "summative evaluation."

Evidence-Based: Often used synonymously with scientifically based. Among the various components, the two most important criteria for judgments are publications in peer-reviewed journals and/or reviewed favorably by an appropriately credentialed panel of independent experts.

Evidence-based interventions: Academic or behavioral strategies and tactics confirmed by educational research to have a high level of positive impact upon individual student outcomes.

Exclusionary Components or Factors: What cannot explain why a student has a severe discrepancy in the area of Specific Learning Disability. For example, a student cannot be a student with a Specific Learning Disability if they have not regularly attended school. The determination of eligibility for a specific learning disability must not be primarily the result of one of the following factors: (Federal Regulation 300.309(a)(3))

a visual, hearing, or motor disability;

mental retardation;

emotional disturbance;

cultural factors;

environmental or economic disadvantage; or

limited English proficiency

Expected Rate of Progress: A key component in multi-tier services where teams specify in advance the rate of improvement (ROI) that would be judged as evidence that a student is responding to any Tiered intervention. Represented by an aimline on a progress monitoring graph. For students who receive Tier 3 or special education, the expected rate of progress should reduce the gap from peers

Explicit Instruction: Systematic instructional approach that includes a set of delivery and design procedures derived from effective schools research; essential components of well designed explicit instruction include (a) visible delivery features of group instruction with a high level of teacher and student interactions, and (b) the less observable, instructional design principles and assumptions that make up the content and strategies to be taught. (IDEA Partnership)

Fidelity of Implementation: Consistent and accurate implementation of an intervention, curriculum or program according to research findings and/or on developers' specifications.

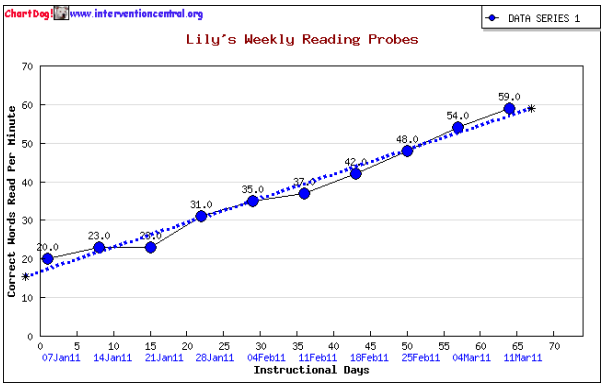
Formal Assessment: A commonly used term that means an instrument or test is standardized; that is, intended to be administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard way.

Formative Assessment: Assessment information that is collected during instruction for purposes of judging whether a student is learning.

General Outcome Measurement (GOM): One of two families of progress monitoring methods (the other being Mastery Measurement (MM)) where student performance is assessed the same way over time using a valid "indicator" of a construct (e.g., reading) using repeated tests of equal difficulty. Also referred to as long-term monitoring (LTM). CBM is the most common educational form of GOM. Other disciplines also judge progress using GOM such as medicine's use of blood pressure, weight or temperature to judge "health." In contrast to MM, GOM has greater validity when progress is judged.

Grade-level Teams: In many RTI models, grade-level teams are tasked with using universal screening data to align students to Tiered interventions based on student need and meet monthly to review progress of students receiving Tier 2 interventions. Grade-level teams are augmented principals, support persons, and Tier 2 providers as attendees and participants.

Growth or Progress Chart: A graphical display of individual student's or group's progress over time.



High Quality Instruction/Intervention: Instruction or intervention that has shown to be effective for most students with similar needs via scientific evidence (evidence-based) and matched to student need.

Inclusionary Components: Those elements that must be displayed by a student to be considered eligible for special education under the category of Specific Learning Disabilities, including Educational Need, Educational Benefit, and Instructional Need.

Individualized Educational Program (IEP): A critical component of IDEA that comes to students, families, and schools as part of the guarantees provided by law, including statements of goals that special education is intended to accomplish and the intervention(s) and services that are to be provided to attain those goals.

Infrastructure Building: Changes within the school or district to support any school improvement process, including, but not limited to schedules, additions or deletions of courses, staff development plans and models, and intervention skills and programs.

Instructional Need: One of the inclusionary components for Specific Learning Disabilities eligibility where a team must demonstrate that the student needs more than the current general education intervention (including Tier 3) and what features would be part of the proposed special education intervention(s) to be delivered as part of the IEP.

Lack of Appropriate Instruction: A student cannot be determined eligible for special education if they have not had appropriate instruction in reading and mathematics. Appropriate instruction is judged as evidenced based. One of the determinant factors that cannot be present if a student is to be determined eligible for special education under the category of Specific Learning Disability.

Learning Rate: A student's progress over time in achievement or behavior, compared to that same student's prior progress, or compared to peers' progress. This term is less preferred because it (incorrectly) infers that this learning rate is solely a characteristic of the student (i.e., that it is innate) rather than a function of the student and curriculum and instruction. A better term is Rate of Improvement (ROI), rate of progress, or Educational Benefit.

Level of Performance: A student's standing compared to expected performance standing relative to norms (i.e., grade or age peers) or standards; Also referred to as a Performance Discrepancy or Educational Need.

Local Capacity: When schools have the internal personnel for staff development or evidence-based intervention practices and programs such that external support (i.e., outside the district) resources are required less for successful implementation.

Mastery Measurement (MM): One of two families (the other being General Outcome Measurement (GOM)) of monitoring progress. (Also commonly known as Short-Term Monitoring (STM).) In MM, students are tested on different content each time progress is monitored (e.g., end-of unit tests). In contrast to GOM, MM has greater instructional validity, the ability to answer the question did the student learn what was taught within the time frame

(e.g., each week, each day, each month). Although much more common than GOM, within the basic skills area, decisions made using GOM are stronger when progress is judged.

Matthew Effect: Biblical term/idea used to illustrate that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer; popularized by the reading researcher Keith Stanovich with the research showing that those students who read Early, Well, and Wide become "smarter" and thus read more, becoming even "smarter" while those students who fail to read early, well, and wide (EWW) fall farther behind, leading to less reading, leading to falling farther behind.

Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS): An umbrella term for RtI and PBIS, referring to a service delivery system tied to data-based decision making, early intervention with tier services of appropriate and evidence-based intensity aligned with student needs. MTSS allows communication that the changes in service delivery are more than just a process for special education decision making.

National Reading Panel 5 Components of Reading: Scientifically based reading instruction should include instruction in a set of highly related skills, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, including oral language development and early literacy skills.

No Child Left Behind (NLCB) - Federal legislation that enacts the theories of standards-based education reform, which is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education.

Normative or Norm-Based Decisions: An approach to screening or elements of progress monitoring goal setting where judgments about Educational Need or Benefit are made relative to other students.

Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW): A method of identifying students as Specific Learning Disabilities in lieu of ability achievement discrepancies or RtI. There are two common approaches, achievement PSW and cognitive PSW, with the former having greater utility in intervention planning and the latter lacking evidence of validity. Both PSW methods, like all Specific Learning Disabilities eligibility methods, lack an extensive data base showing the universal and specific features necessary for a classification system.

Performance Discrepancy: See Educational Need.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): One broad family of systematic multi-tier interventions for promoting positive behavior, improving school and classroom climate and systems of increasingly intense interventions aligned with behavioral needs.

Priority Scheduling: Scheduling more scarce resources for Tiers 2 and 3 in the building master schedule first to ensure that all students with potentially severe educational needs have access to intervention throughout the day.

Problem-solving model: A method for making decisions about the need for intervention and intervention components, typically for individual students through a systematic process of four steps followed sequentially: 1. Problem Identification; 2. Problem Analysis: 3. Intervention Implementation; and 4. Progress Monitoring.

Program Evaluation: Using data to judge whether an intervention or program is having its desired effects.

Progress Monitoring: A process used to assess students' academic progress and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring tools should be brief and more frequently administered (i.e., in comparison to "universal screening tools"). ACPS will use progress monitoring data to establish student's goals that represent adequate progress and determine when to continue or change a particular intervention, set of interventions, and/or a program.

Rate of Improvement (ROI): See Educational Benefit. A measure of progress that typically is used to judge response to tiered intervention.

Reliability: The accuracy of a score or judgment, reflective of the amount of error. For high stakes, individual decisions, reliability estimates of .90 or greater are desired. For screening purposes, reliability estimates should be higher than .80.

Reasonable Intervals: A component of IDEA that provides guidance as to how often parents need to be provided information on achievement during instruction (i.e., standardized progress monitoring data). Usually defined locally based on the frequency of report of progress of non-disabled peers such as grade reports.

Response to Intervention (RtI): A framework for providing evidenced-based, high-quality instruction and interventions through a multi-tiered service delivery model. Although originally promoted as a component of Specfic Learning Disability eligibility, the broader goal is to provide support to increase the successof all students through on-going data based decision making. See Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS).

RtI Leadership Team: Implementation success is enhanced through a district leadership team that meets regularly to establish commitment, allocate resources, develop staff development plans, and ensure critical tasks are completed. The Leadership team is typically comprised of administrators from different programs, teacher and related services personnel, and parent representatives. The RtI leadership team at the school level has similar responsiblities .

Scientifically Based: See Evidence-Based.

Screening: See Universal Screening. A process of determining whether educational need is severe enough to warrant additional assessment and/or more intensive intervention.

Self-study: An instrument to identify what is already in place and what needs to be done.

Severe Discrepancy: A cornerstone of early intervention. Students are provided intervention services of appropriate intensity aligned with the severity of need as measured by the severe discrepancy. See also Educational Need.

Standard Protocol Intervention: A technical term used in many published RtI studies where students are provided the same empirically validated intervention if their needs are similar. Allows for an efficient mechanism for providing services rather than developing individual interventions one student at a time through the referral process.

Standardized: Tests and performance assessment tasks that are meant to be administered, scored and interpreted in a standard way.

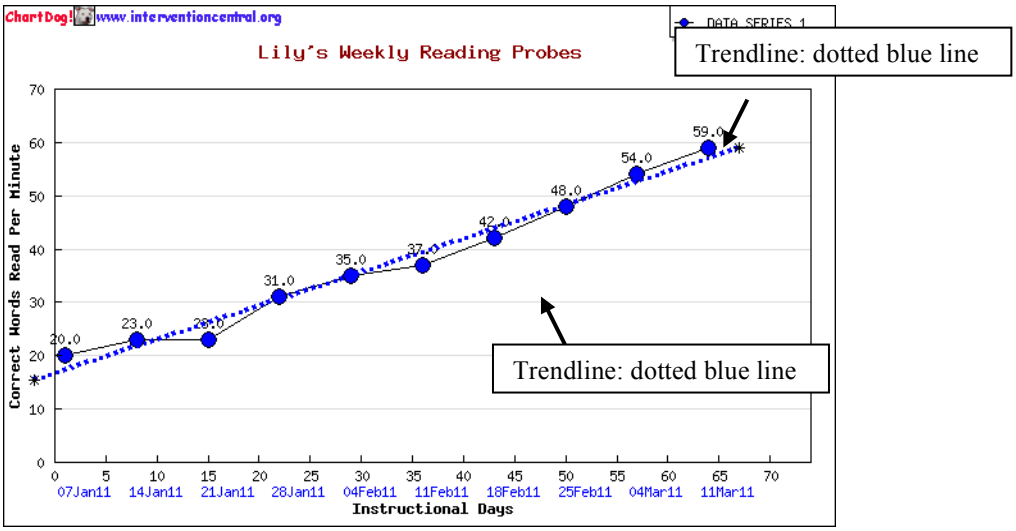
Summative Assessments: Assessment that is done at the end of instruction to judge what a student has learned.

Tier 1(also referred to as core instruction): High quality, appropriate (i.e., evidence-based) instruction delivered to all students.

Tier 2 Intervention: More intensive, evidence-based, high quality intervention supplementing the core instruction that occurs in Tier 1 for students at risk; typically through small group instruction (3-8 students).

Tier 3 Intervention: Most intensive evidence-based, intervention provided to students who are significantly below or above the established grade-level norms or standards benchmarks; delivered to small groups (1-4students) and may include students who receive Special Education and TAG services.

Trendline: A progress line on a graph that shows a student's actual rate of progress or improvement (ROI). When the trendline exceeds the aimline, the student is benefiting from intervention. When the trendline is below the aimline, the student is not benefiting from intervention and it needs adjustment or change.



Universal Screening: All students are assessed beginning, middle, and end of school year to identify students in need of additional intervention.

Validity: A judgment that a test measures what it is supposed to measure. The judgment is based on evidential and consequential data relative to sets of professional standards.