

Tiers of Reading Instruction - Meeting the Needs of All Students

“ . . . prevention and early intervention are better in both human and practical terms, than waiting until children’s reading difficulties become severe, entrenched and greatly compounded by behavioral or social emotional factors. Although individual children vary widely in the ease with which they learn to read, effective educational practices can make a tremendous difference in children’s reading outcomes.” -- Louise Spear-Swerling

The aim of the **Colorado READ Act** is to prevent reading difficulties in young children through early identification and best first instruction. Section 5.00 of the Rules for Administration of the Colorado READ Act describes the **Attributes of Universal Instruction**. The attributes of a multi-tiered system of support contribute to more meaningful identification of learning problems related to literacy achievement, improve instructional quality, provide all students with the best opportunity to learn to read, assist with the identification of learning disabilities specific to learning to read, and accelerate the reading skills of advanced readers.

Tiers of Instruction at a Glance

Variable	Tier 1 – Core Support	Tier 2 – Strategic Support	Tier 3- Intensive Support
Definition	The “core” curricular and instructional reading programs and strategies in the general education setting, including ongoing professional development and assessment three times per year to determine if students are meeting target benchmarks for reading competency.	Programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to <i>supplement, enhance, and support</i> Tier I which takes place in small groups.	Specifically designed and customized reading instruction that is extended <i>beyond</i> the time allocated for Tier I and Tier II and which takes place in small group or one on one setting.
Focus	For <u>all</u> students.	For students identified with marked reading difficulties, and who need targeted support in addition to Tier I.	For students with marked difficulties in reading or reading disabilities and who need support in addition to Tier I and Tier II instruction.
Students served at this layer	Most students (80%-85%) in a school benefit from core instruction alone if instruction is delivered by a teacher that demonstrates knowledge of high quality research-based instruction and uses high quality research-based materials. Students scoring low risk, some risk and at-risk receive Tier 1 instruction.	A small percentage (10%-15%) may need additional support even with adequate Tier I instruction.* Students score in the some risk range on the interim assessment and are likely to need support in addition to Tier I in order to score within the low risk range.	A few (5%) may need intensive support* even with adequate Tier 1 and Tier II curriculum and instruction. *Students identified as having a significant reading deficiency.
Curricular Program	Scientifically based reading researched (SBRR) core reading program that emphasizes the five essential elements of beginning reading instruction.	SBRR core reading program PLUS Strategic enhancements of the five essential elements of beginning reading or specific targeted supplemental programs.	Sustained and intensive supplemental or accelerated/intervention programs on selected essential elements of beginning reading PLUS Carefully selected objectives from grade-level core materials.
Delivery of teacher guided instruction	Provided throughout the school day by the general education teacher. <i>In addition to Tier 1 literacy instruction, EL students receive Tier 1 language supports from qualified teacher.</i>	Increased explicitness of instruction and focus. Additional opportunities to practice embedded throughout the day with increased opportunities to review skills. Provided by the general education teacher or supplemental qualified teacher.	Increased explicitness of instruction and focus. Additional opportunities to practice embedded throughout the day with increased opportunities to review skills. General education teacher, reading specialist and or special education teacher.
Grouping	A combination of large group and differentiated small group instruction.	Small-group of 3-5 students.	Small groups of no more than 3 students or one on one tutoring.
Allocated instructional time	A minimum of 90 minutes dedicated to the essential elements of literacy skills. May take place throughout the school day.	A minimum of 30 minutes of additional time allocated to the essential elements of literacy skills. Evaluate effectiveness of intervention using progress monitoring data.	Additional 20-30 minutes per day. 10-12 weeks in duration. Evaluate effectiveness of intervention using frequent progress monitoring data.
Instructional setting	General education classroom	General education classroom	General education classroom with push-in or pull-out instructional support
Evaluating student learning	Assess at the beginning, middle, and end of year. Progress monitor as needed	In addition to interim assessments, progress monitor at least once every 2-4 weeks.	In addition to interim assessments, administer diagnostic assessments upon determination of reading deficiency Progress monitor no less than once every two weeks.

Adapted from Evidence-Based Reading Practices for Response to Intervention (Haager, Klingler, Vaughn 2007)

*If percentages are more than indicated above, consideration should be given to all Tiers of instruction as adjustment may be needed. Considerations include instructional programming and materials, time allocation, intensity of instruction, and teacher knowledge.



Common Features of Three Tier Approach to Literacy Instruction

Approaches to implementation of a response to intervention (RtI) or multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) vary however there are several common attributes.

- **Universal screening and progress monitoring**- screen the entire school population for potential risks and frequent progress monitor those students scoring below cut points on interim assessments. Administer a diagnostic assessment when students do not appear to be making progress when provided with effective core and intervention instruction.
- **Intervention for students determined to be at risk with intensive or individualized intervention for children at greater levels of risk**- students determined to be at risk receive intervention promptly. These students are closely monitored for progress.
- **A focus on effective and systematic core general education reading instruction**- Ensuring effective core instruction is an essential initial emphasis in a three tier approach. Good core instruction cannot prevent all reading difficulties but it will result in fewer students identified for risk.
- **Attention to fidelity of implementation**- Teachers recognize the importance of implementing core and intervention instruction as intended with adherence to time requirements, use of materials, and necessary professional development.
- **Systematic data collection and data analysis, with clear decision rules**- Teachers use the same screening and progress- monitoring procedures as well as the same rules for deciding which students they consider for intervention.
- **Use of data to inform educational practice in relation to not only individual children but also core general education and intervention systems**- Educators use data to determine effectiveness of both core and intervention programming. System level data analysis will indicate the effectiveness of the core programming when most students are reaching benchmarks on interim assessments. Likewise, individual student data will indicate that intervention instruction is working for students at risk.

The following checklist may be used to determine the essential components of a multi-tiered system of supports approach to literacy instruction at the school level.

Checklist for Implementing a Three Tier Approach

- ___ Review current reading practices within the school.
 - ___ Core reading program is in place, and is aligned with scientifically based reading research
 - ___ Assessment tools are in place and the assessment calendar is published for teachers and families
 - ___ Scientifically-based supplemental programs are in place
- ___ Reading instructional practices are aligned with Colorado Academic Standards
- ___ A plan is in place for collecting and analyzing interim and progress-monitoring data
- ___ Protocols are in place for Tier I teachers to deliver instruction in both whole group and small group formats.
- ___ A school-wide plan is in place for small group supplemental instruction for students who don't meet interim benchmarks (Tier II).
- ___ A school-wide plan is in place for longer, more intensive instruction for students who don't demonstrate progress towards benchmark targets or goals after receiving Tier II or Tier III intervention.
- ___ Set criteria for entry into and exit from Tier I, Tier II and Tier III.
- ___ Provide professional development as needed to implement steps.