HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT TIERED INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION

Through our conversations with practitioners during phone interviews and site visits, several factors specific to high schools emerged: focus, school culture, instructional organization, staff roles, student/family involvement, graduation requirements, and intervention resources. These issues all affect one other; for example, staff roles and structure affect the focus of a school's implementation of tiered interventions. Table 1 describes the unique challenge each theme/issue presents at the high school level and offers several questions that high schools might consider regarding each issue. These considerations represent a sample of questions that schools, districts, and states may choose to ask themselves prior to or during RTI implementation.

Table 1: Contextual Factors Particular to Tiered Interventions at the High School Level

High school contextual factors	Considerations
Focus: The design and implementation of all the essential components are dependent on a school's focus for tiered interventions. Tiered interventions at the high school level may not always include all students or all content areas, as is often the case in elementary RTI frameworks. Each school needs to determine its purpose and scope of tiered interventions, keeping in mind that no standard application of the framework exists at the high school level. Schools may already have in place some initiatives that support tiered intervention implementation.	• What will be the purpose and scope of tiered interventions in our school? • How will existing initiatives fit into the tiered interventions framework? • How will we align current special education and instructional support practices with tiered interventions? • Will other initiatives hinder the implementation of tiered interventions? • For schools using the academy structure: How will our academies affect the focus of the tiered interventions framework?
Culture: School culture plays an integral role in the adoption and implementation of any new initiative. A school's culture provides implicit (and sometimes explicit) guidance about beliefs, behaviors, and what is acceptable within the organization. Adopting a tiered framework in high school may require a significant shift in a school's culture. For example, staff members may need to collaborate in new ways, examine data together regularly and think about implications for instructional practice, and agree that the success of all students is the responsibility of all staff members.	• In what ways will current practices, beliefs, and behaviors align with the goals and purposes for our tiered intervention framework? • Where did the motivation for adopting the framework originate, and how might that affect the buy-in of staff? • How will current prevention efforts map onto a tiered framework? • What changes might be required for staff to collaborate, examine student data, and act on what they learn from those data? • What changes might be required to ensure that the needs of all students are addressed?

Table 1: Contextual Factors Particular to Tiered Interventions at the High School Level (continued)

High school contextual factors	Considerations

Instructional organization: The instructional organization of high school can create challenges and require flexibility in the scheduling and delivery of interventions for students and collaborative time for teachers. Single-period and block (extended or double-period) schedules enable different strategies for delivering tiered interventions within a classroom or in concurrent classrooms. The master schedule, as well as the school calendar, should be addressed when implementing tiered interventions.	• How will the staff create and/or adapt a master schedule that allows
	  – student access to tiered supports,
	  – time for teachers to collaborate,
	  – time for teachers to discuss data, and
	  – movement between tiers for students?
	• How will single class periods, block scheduling, or a combination of the two best support our focus and the delivery of tiered interventions?
	• Will any obstacles arise, given our current infrastructure?
	• Will we provide additional instructional interventions through extended days, Saturdays, and summer programs?
	• How will we support teachers in designating time to collaboratively make data-based decisions?

Staff roles: High school teachers often view themselves as teachers of content and not necessarily equipped to teach struggling students, students with disabilities, and/or English language learners (ELLs). Small schools may have less access to instructional specialists. Determining which staff member is best qualified to deliver the additional interventions and how to train teachers to deliver high-quality instruction in Tiers I, II, and III depends on a school's available staff and its purpose for implementing tiered interventions.	• Who will provide the additional interventions? How will we support this new role? • How will special education, ELL, and behavioral specialists support the implementation of tiered interventions? • If tiered interventions are implemented in more than one content area, how will we support content teachers in becoming more than "teachers of content"? • What supports, if any, will teachers need to deliver Tier I, II, or III instruction?
Student involvement: With assistance, high school students could help select appropriate interventions and monitor their progress, resulting in students feeling more involved in their educational experience.	• How will students be involved in the implementation of tiered interventions? • How will students be involved in the monitoring of their progress? • What role will students play in determining movement between tiers? • How will students be informed about the tiered interventions framework?

Table 1: Contextual Factors Particular to Tiered Interventions at the High School Level (continued)

High school contextual factors	Considerations
Graduation requirements: A goal of high schools is for students to graduate and successfully pursue postsecondary education and career opportunities. How interventions are credited on transcripts is a unique concern at the high school level.	• What impact will additional tiered interventions have on graduation requirements? • What credit will students receive for the intervention classes? • How will the tiered interventions framework support career and postsecondary education pathways?
Stakeholder engagement: High schools frequently engage a variety of external stakeholders, including parents and family members, community and business partners, tutors, and volunteers, in supporting instructional and extracurricular activities. Some students also receive "wraparound" services from social service agencies. These various stakeholders can provide valuable support for a school's tiered interventions framework.	• How will we involve parents and stakeholders in the design and implementation of tiered interventions? • How will we ensure that parents and appropriate stakeholders are engaged early enough to achieve buy-in for the tiered interventions framework? • Will in-school and wraparound services for students with disabilities be aligned and coordinated? • What types of training and support will be needed to engage and prepare parents and stakeholders?
Implementation and alignment: With the numerous other initiatives and activities being implemented simultaneously in many high schools, it is critical to align efforts that can support and accelerate the implementation of tiered interventions. A detailed scaling-up plan may be useful for incrementally expanding the focus and scope of the framework.	• What current or planned instructional and student support initiatives could be integrated to support the focus of tiered interventions? • How could these efforts be aligned with the tiered interventions, especially in Tiers II and III? • What options will exist for scaling up the implementation of tiered interventions over time to broaden the number of students, content areas, and/or interventions? • How could existing human and fiscal resources be leveraged to facilitate the implementation and scaling up of tiered interventions? • How will district departments (Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, Title I, etc.) be involved in the implementation of tiered interventions at the school level?

Table 1: Contextual Factors Particular to Tiered Interventions at the High School Level (continued)

High school contextual factors	Considerations
Instruction and assessment resources: A paucity of research on the efficacy of core, supplemental, and intensive instruction with struggling learners in grades 9–12 exists. Similarly, few measures appropriate for screening or progress monitoring purposes have been validated for use with high school students.	- How will school leaders and teachers measure the quality of Tier I instruction? - How will school leaders select interventions? - What data will support the use of particular interventions in the high school? - What evidence will inform the selection of data sources for screening and progress monitoring? - How will we determine whether selected measures are reliable and valid? - How will educational technology be used in assessment or interventions?

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This document provides brief snapshots of how eight schools across the country implemented tiered interventions, including the essential components of RTI. It is important to note that each of the schools viewed its implementation as a work in progress. Through visits with the schools and conversations with experts, it became clear that implementing tiered interventions at the high school level involves more than the "cutting and pasting" of the essential components of RTI from elementary to high schools. Although the essential components and guiding principles of RTI are the same at the elementary and secondary levels, high schools are complex entities that present a unique set of contextual factors that affect why and how the framework is applied. These contextual factors, such as focus, instructional organization, and culture, varied greatly among the eight schools; therefore, each school's tiered intervention implementation differed to such an extent that any in-depth synthesis might lead to inaccurate conclusions.

The HSTII team will host a series of webinars focusing on particular components and aspects of tiered intervention implementation at the high school level. The webinars will be open to the public, and archives will be posted on the Secondary Schools page of the National Center on Response

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