It Can't Be This Hard: Thoughts on Leveraging Fidelity to Simplify and Sustain Intensive Intervention

National Center on
INTENSIVE INTERVENTION
at the American Institutes for Research®

Today's Session

- Welcome
- Why worry about fidelity?
- NCII's approach to intensive intervention: Data-Based Individualization (DBI)
- Five considerations for thinking about fidelity within the DBI process
- Discussion

What are 3 words that come to mind for you when you think about fidelity?

Why Worry About Fidelity?

Extensive federal investments in to identify and scale up effective MTSS and Special Education practices over the past two decades

- National evaluations
- Technical Assistance Centers
- Research grants
- State personnel development grants

Yet…

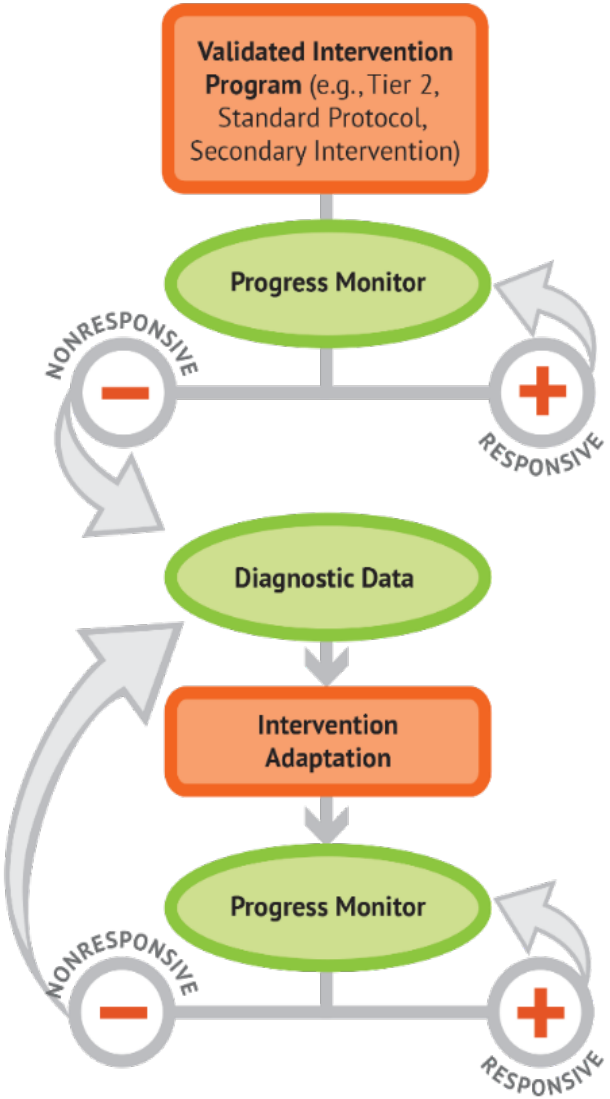
- Students with disabilities who have intensive needs continue to trail their peers across academic achievement, social-behavioral, graduation, and employment outcomes.
- 2024 NAEP data show persistent post-Covid stagnation/declines.
- Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) in schools continues to lag.
- Complex systems like MTSS are difficult for schools to implement.
- Heavy teacher burden and burnout persist.

In your experience, do schools struggle to monitor fidelity? If so, why?

Enter your thoughts in the chat!

NCII's Approach to Intensive Intervention

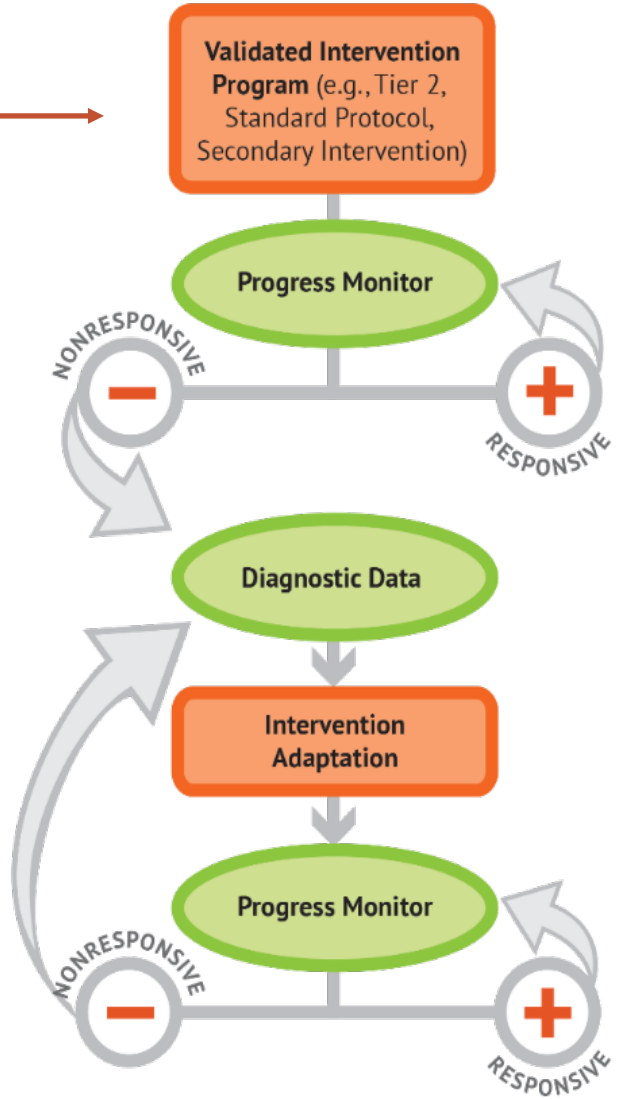
- **Data-Based Individualization (DBI)** is a research-based process for individualizing and intensifying interventions for students who do not respond sufficiently to standardized (e.g., Tier 2) intervention.
- The process integrates evidence-based intervention, assessment, and individualized adaptations.



Five Considerations for Monitoring Fidelity Throughout the DBI process

#1 Just Do It

Implement the program as designed (to the extent possible).



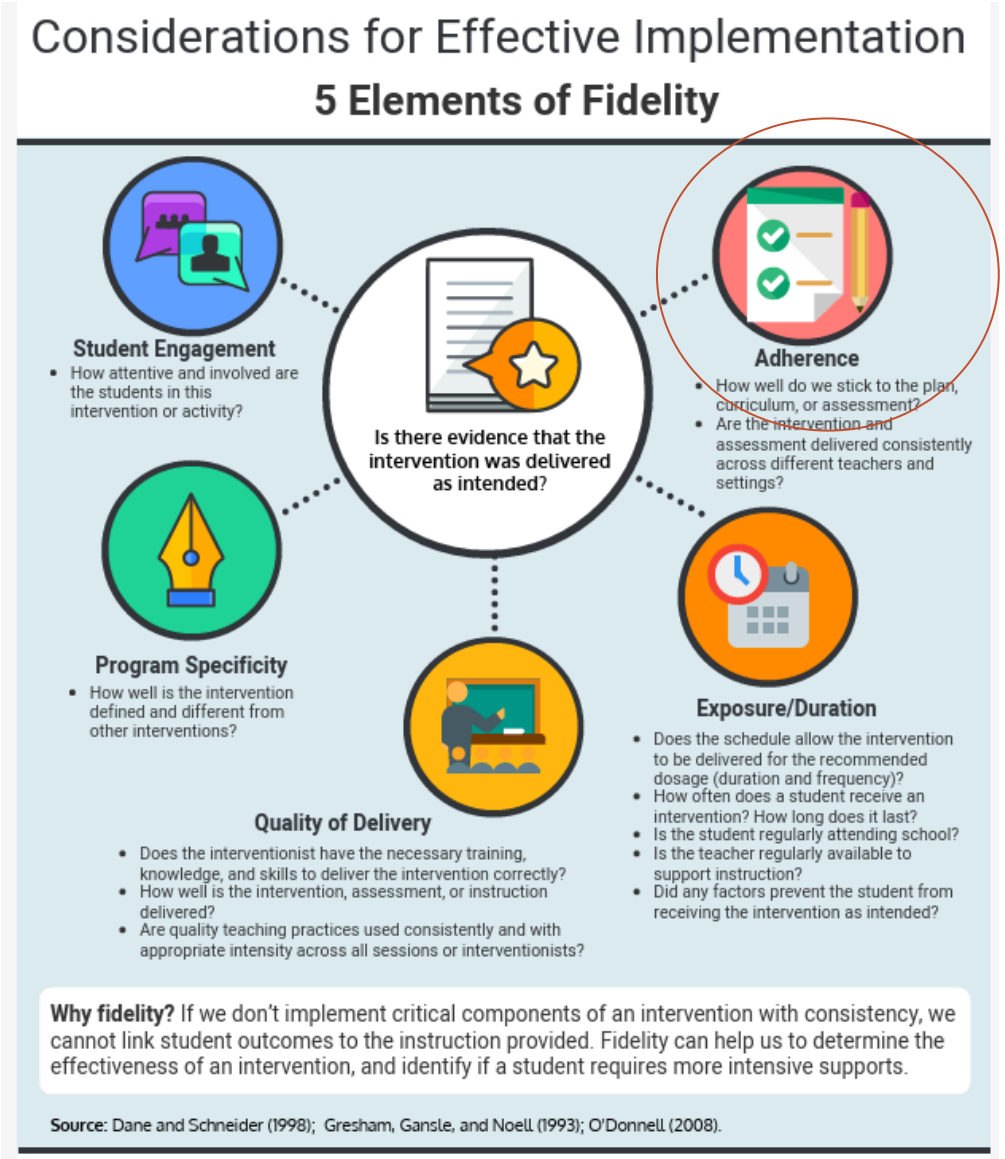
I did it…. It didn't work

Consider…

- Dosage (attendance, implementation schedule, duration)
- How is the rest of the group doing?
- Were all components implemented?
- Does the intervention align with student needs?
- What were the barriers to implementation, if present?

Resource: Wyoming's State Story
https://intensiveintervention.org/data-based-individualization/state-stories/wyoming

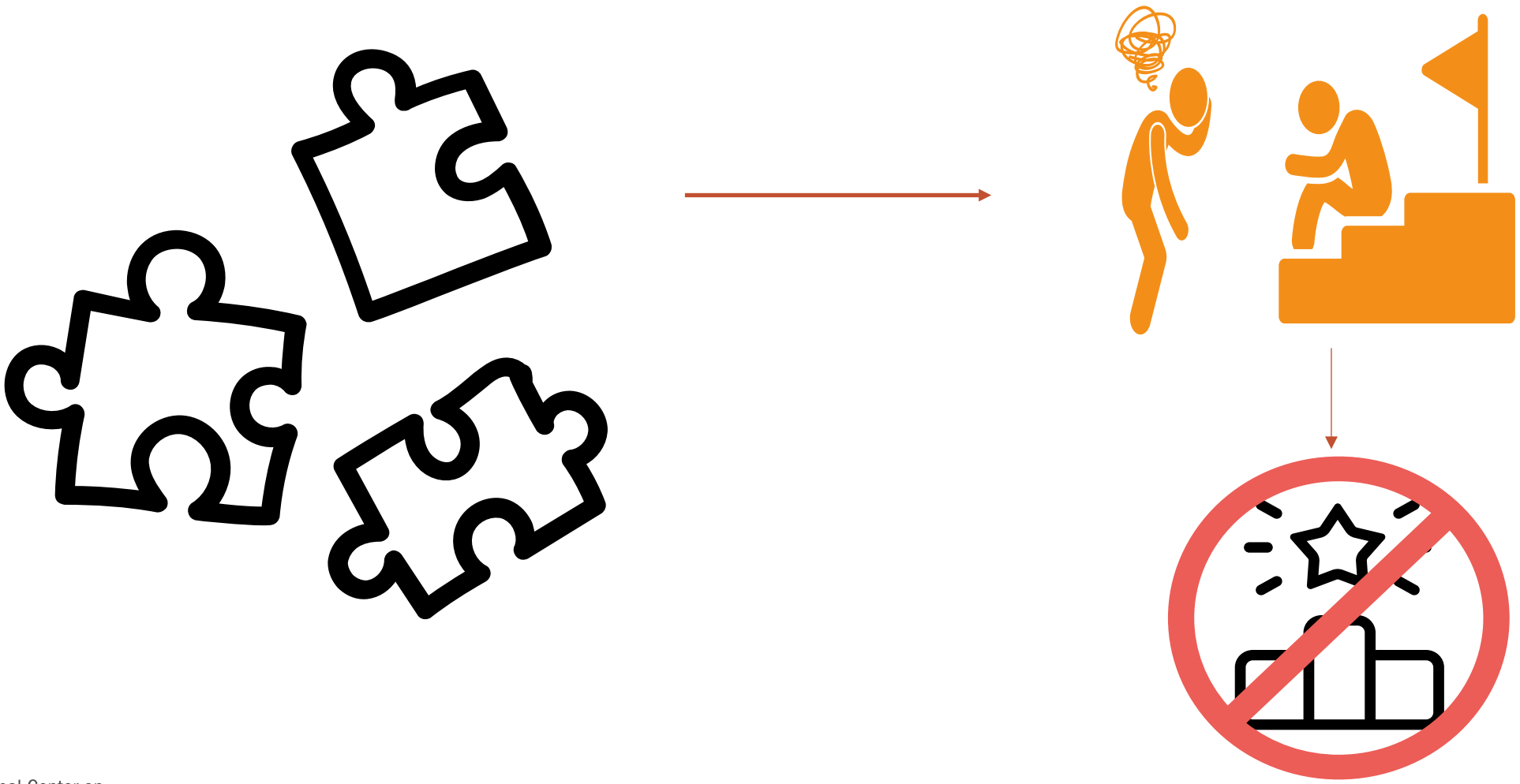
#2 Sometimes Adherence Isn't Enough



Focus of fidelity monitoring…
Necessary, but not sufficient?

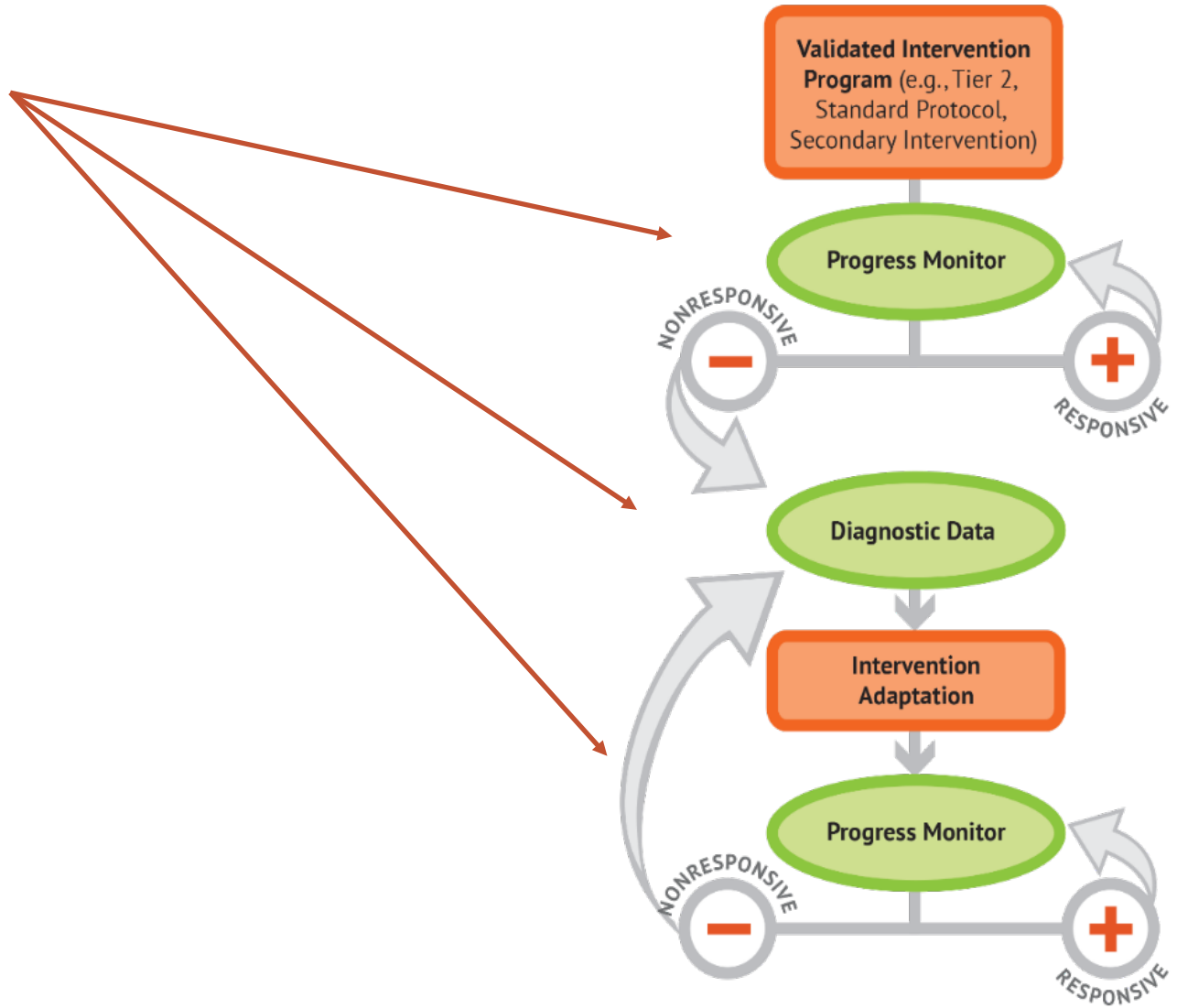
https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/five-elements-fidelity

Some Students Need More



#3 Consider your measures

Ensure accurate measurement



Common Challenges

- Inconsistent administration
- Scoring errors/inconsistency
- Data entry errors

https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/DataFidelity_Final508.pdf

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Ensuring Fidelity of Assessment and Data Entry Procedures

Successful implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and, specifically, intensive intervention through the data-based individualization (DBI) process, demands the collection and analysis of data. As teams consider data collection, challenges may occur with assessment administration, scoring, and data entry (Taylor, 2009). To ensure data about risk status and responsiveness accurately represent student performance, minimize measurement errors by preventing the following.

Inconsistent Assessment Administration

What is it?

Errors introduced due to changes in administration, including incorrect or variable instructions, inappropriate assistance, altered assessment protocols (e.g., increasing assessment time), or changes to the environment.

Why does it happen?

- Educators are unfamiliar with the assessment or its purpose.
- Educators, who are familiar with the assessment, depend on memory versus written procedures to conduct the administration.
- Environmental changes (e.g., loud classroom one day and a quiet library the next) can impact how the student responds.

How can it be avoided?

- Provide ongoing training and coaching to familiarize educators with test details and objectives.
- Utilize an administrative checklist during testing.
- Provide approved accommodations consistently.
- Ensure testing environment is quiet and free of distractions and note any variability.

Errors in Scoring Assessments

What is it?

Errors introduced when an educator incorrectly scores or interprets a student's response or is more lenient in scoring certain responses.

Why does it happen?

- Educators interpret or score data based on their assumptions about the students, not the data.
- Inconsistency in scoring due to lack of written procedures or inadequate training.

How can it be avoided?

- Train educators in scoring procedures, especially those that include rubrics.
- Establish written protocols prior to evaluating assessments.
- Periodically check for consistency.
- If scoring procedures are adjusted to student dialect or speech abilities, note the change and score consistently moving forward.
- Use multiple data points to increase accuracy of interpretation.

Data Entry Errors

What is it?

Errors introduced while inputting student data in a database or interpretation errors introduced when educators mix data from more than one measure or different grade levels into one data system or graph.

Why does it happen?

- Educators make unintentional errors when entering or transferring scores from paper copies.
- Inconsistent procedures for data entry that can lead to disagreements in processes.

How can it be avoided?

- Minimize the necessity to enter data through use of computer-based systems.
- Periodically check data with more in-depth data review if data entry is identified as an issue.

Efforts to increase fidelity of administration, scoring, and data entry will increase stakeholders' confidence in the assessment system and reduce preventable classification errors. Establishing a system that minimizes error requires sufficient and ongoing training of staff members and review of assessment procedures to ensure implementation fidelity over time. To learn more, visit www.intensiveintervention.org.

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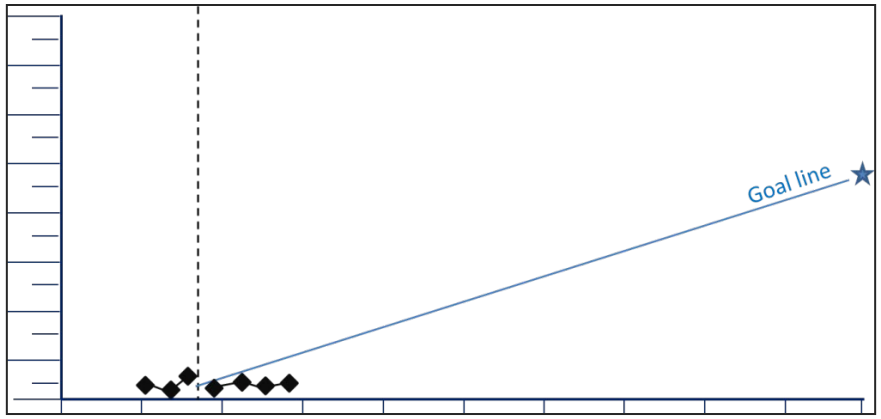
Data Patterns That May Suggest Issues with Fidelity

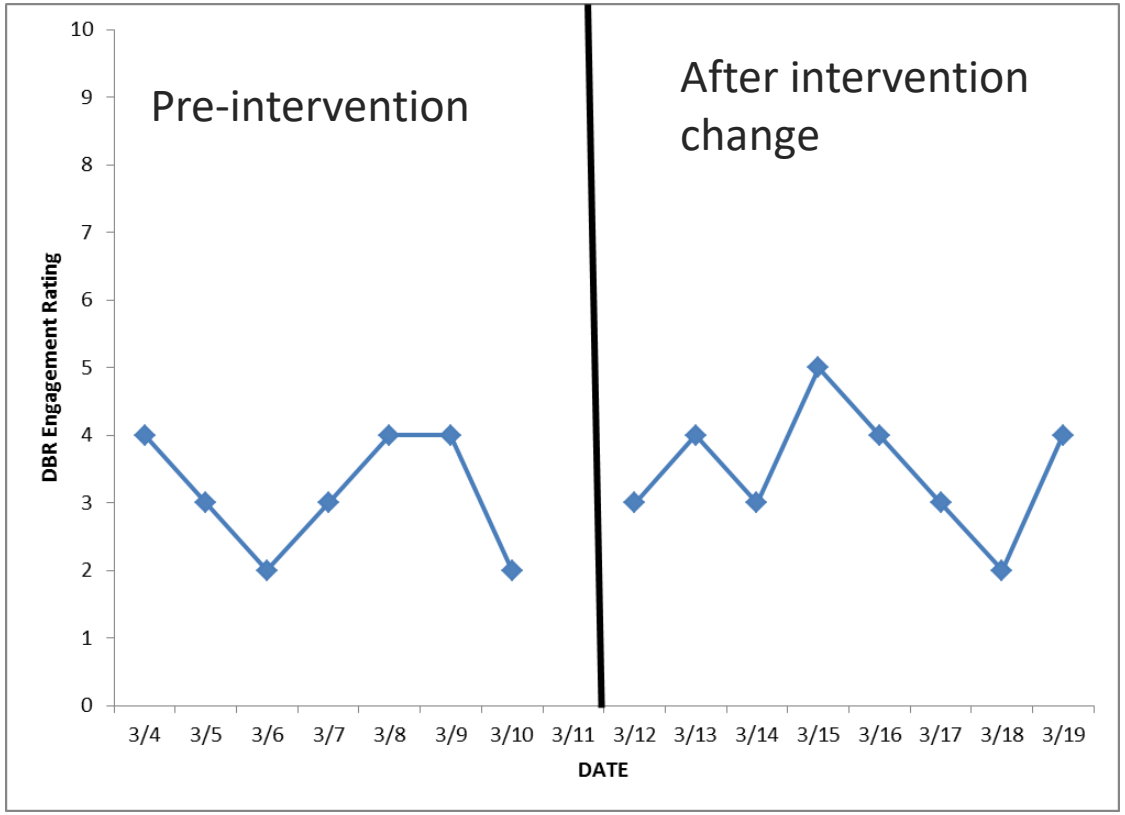
Flat Line or Minimal Change (Academic)



The situation:

Data in the intervention phase is similar to the baseline phase, creating a flat trend line.

Trend: Flat Line or Minimal Change (Behavior)

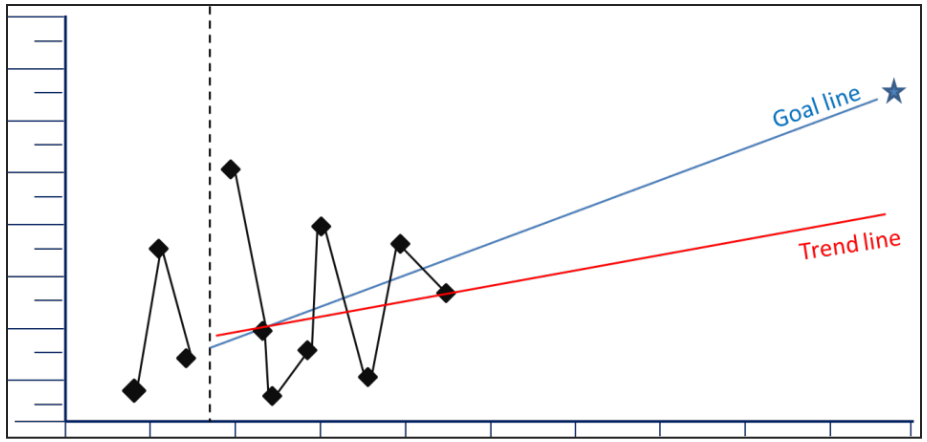


The situation:
The data from the intervention phase is similar to pre-intervention or baseline, creating a flat or stable trend.

What could this pattern be telling you?

- The student is not responding to the intervention.
- The progress monitoring tool is not appropriate.
- The student has not received the intervention with fidelity.
- The intervention is not an appropriate match for the student's needs.

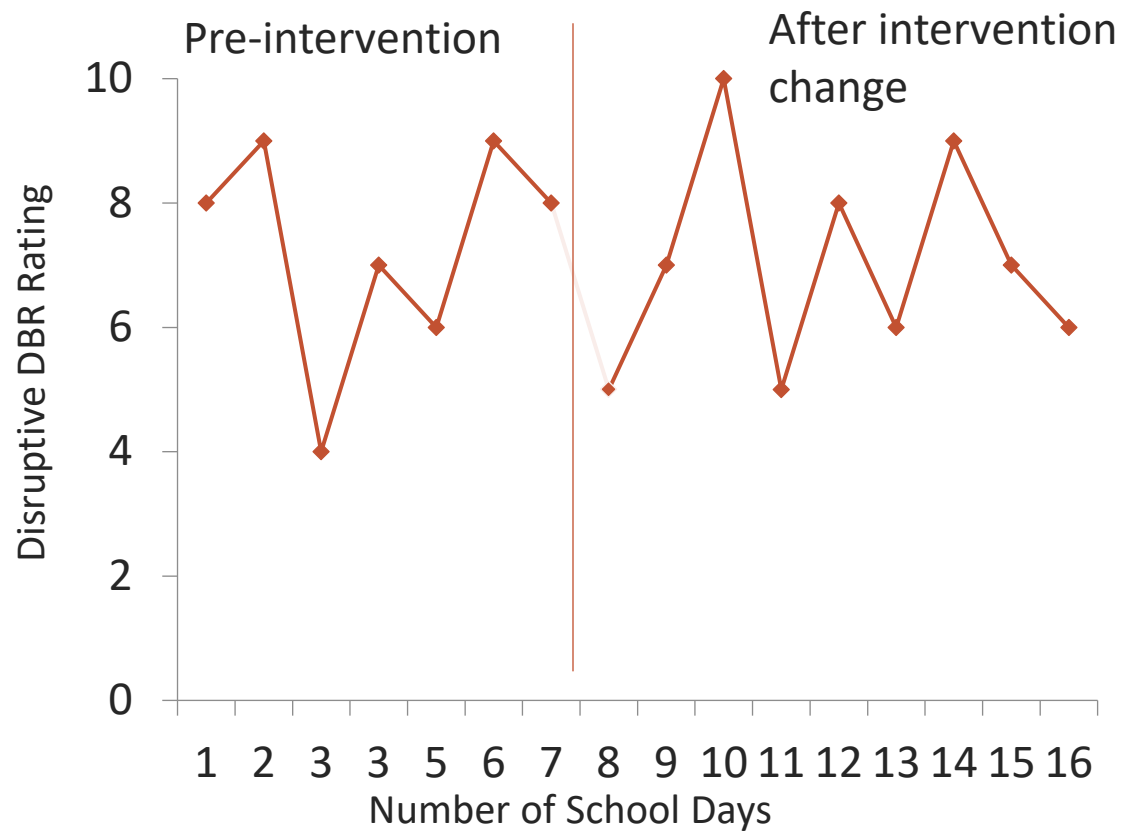
Trend: Highly Variable (Academic)



The situation:

Scores are highly variable, with significant changes from day to day.

Trend: Highly Variable (Behavior)



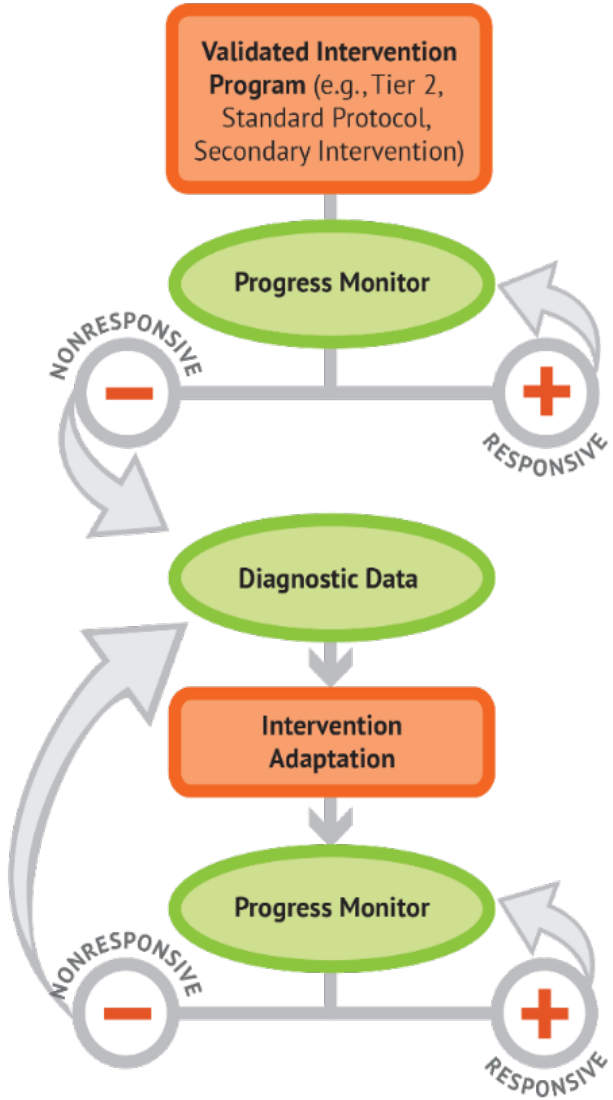
The situation:
The data from the intervention phase is similar to pre-intervention or baseline, creating a variable trend.

What could this pattern be telling you?

- The progress monitoring tool is not reliable.
- Administration of the assessment is inconsistent.
- Engagement and motivation vary greatly by day.
- Other situational or external factors affect performance or behavior.

#4 Make a Change, But Follow Through

Monitor fidelity to the individualized plan, not a single program



Did we implement the intervention as planned, using quality teaching practices?

Fidelity data are important because they allow you to rule out inconsistent implementation as a potential cause of a student's lack of progress. To improve fidelity:

- Ensure the interventionist has the training needed.
- Address scheduling conflicts that impact session delivery.
- Limit disruptions during intervention sessions.
- Work with the student and family to improve attendance.
- Boost student engagement during intervention sessions.
- Collect fidelity data using the Student Intervention Implementation Log and analyze the data to inform next steps for improving intervention delivery.

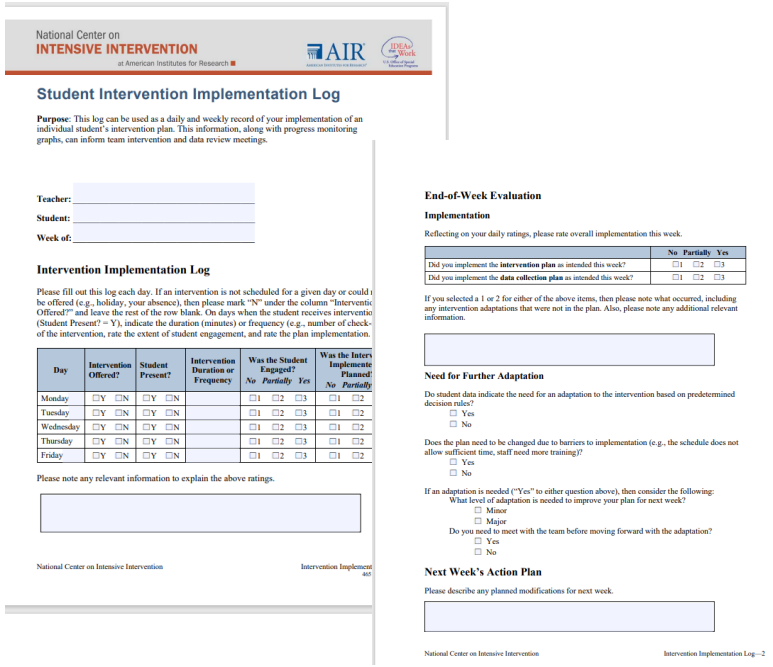
Day	Intervention offered?	Student present?	Intervention duration or frequency	Was the student engaged? *No Partially Yes*	Was the intervention implemented as planned? *No Partially Yes*
Monday	■Y ☐N	☐Y ■N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2 ☐3
Tuesday	■Y ☐N	■Y ☐N	20 min	☐1 ■2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2 ■3
Wednesday	■Y ☐N	■Y ☐N	15 min	☐1 ☐2 ■3	☐1 ☐2 ■3
Thursday	☐Y ■N	☐Y ☐N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2 ☐3
Friday	■Y ☐N	■Y ☐N	15 min	☐1 ■2 ☐3	☐1 ■2 ☐3

Available at: https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/diagnostic-questions.pdf

Did you implement the plan?

Consider…

1. What are the adjustments to the program? The progress monitoring plan?
2. How will you know if changes are working?
3. What is the plan for follow up?
4. Who is responsible?



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Student Intervention Implementation Log

Purpose: This log can be used as a daily and weekly record of your implementation of an individual student's intervention plan. This information, along with progress monitoring graphs, can inform team intervention and data review meetings.

Teacher: _____

Student: _____

Week of: _____

Intervention Implementation Log

Please fill out this log each day. If an intervention is not scheduled for a given day or could be offered (e.g., holiday, your absence), then please mark "N" under the column "Intervention Offered?" and leave the rest of the row blank. On days when the student receives intervention (Student Present? = Y), indicate the duration (minutes) or frequency (e.g., number of check-ins) of the intervention, rate the extent of student engagement, and rate the plan implementation.

Day	Intervention Offered?	Student Present?	Intervention Duration or Frequency	Was the Student Engaged? No Partially Yes	Was the Intervention Implemented as Planned? No Partially
Monday	☐Y ☐N	☐Y ☐N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2
Tuesday	☐Y ☐N	☐Y ☐N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2
Wednesday	☐Y ☐N	☐Y ☐N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2
Thursday	☐Y ☐N	☐Y ☐N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2
Friday	☐Y ☐N	☐Y ☐N		☐1 ☐2 ☐3	☐1 ☐2

Please note any relevant information to explain the above ratings.

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Intervention Implement

End-of-Week Evaluation

Implementation

Reflecting on your daily ratings, please rate overall implementation this week.

	No	Partially	Yes
Did you implement the **intervention plan** as intended this week?	☐1	☐2	☐3
Did you implement the **data collection plan** as intended this week?	☐1	☐2	☐3

If you selected a 1 or 2 for either of the above items, then please note what occurred, including any intervention adaptations that were not in the plan. Also, please note any additional relevant information.

Need for Further Adaptation

Do student data indicate the need for an adaptation to the intervention based on predetermined decision rules?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Does the plan need to be changed due to barriers to implementation (e.g., the schedule does not allow sufficient time, staff need more training)?
☐ Yes
☐ No

If an adaptation is needed ("Yes" to either question above), then consider the following:
What level of adaptation is needed to improve your plan for next week?
☐ Minor
☐ Major
Do you need to meet with the team before moving forward with the adaptation?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Next Week's Action Plan

Please describe any planned modifications for next week.

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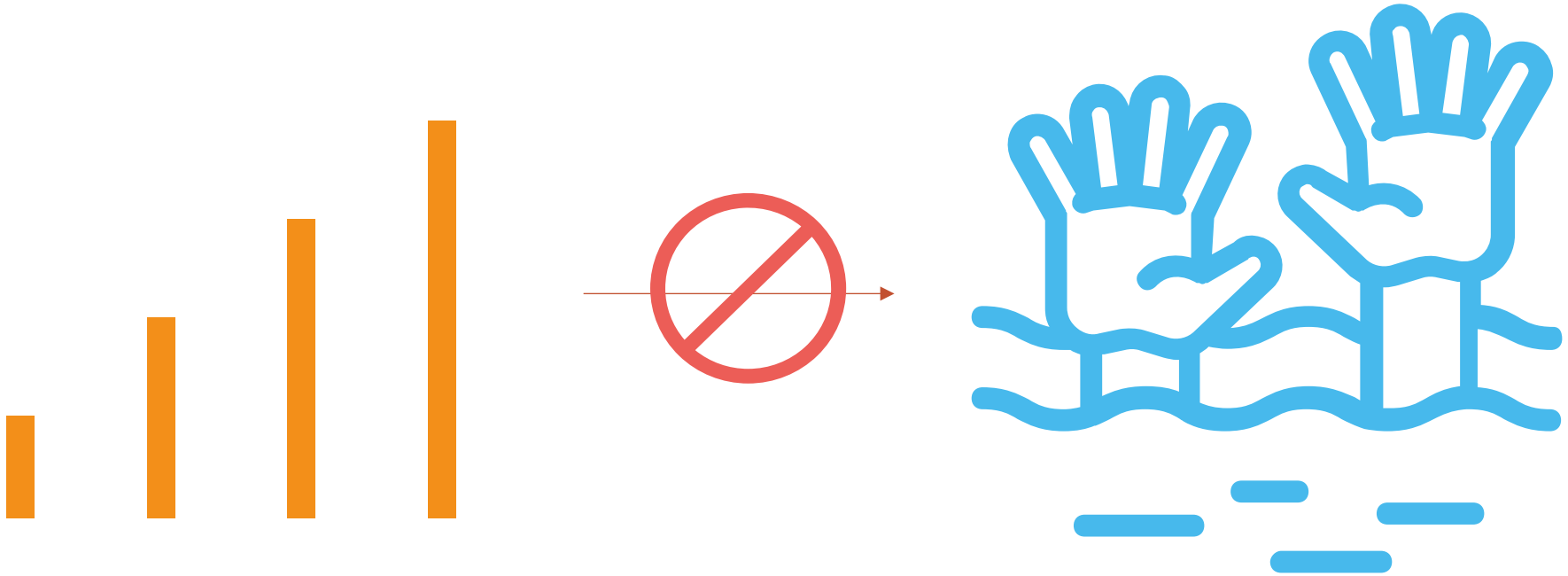
Intervention Implementation Log—2

Data Teaming Tools: https://intensiveintervention.org/implementation-intervention/data-teaming

#5 Use Fidelity Data for Continuous Improvement



…But don’t drown in it

Questions for Discussion

- Why do you think people continue to implement ineffective or counterproductive practices?
- How can we make monitoring fidelity **easier to manage**? What can we "take off the plate" for teachers?
- What knowledge and skills do teachers and administrators need to facilitate this?

NCII Disclaimer

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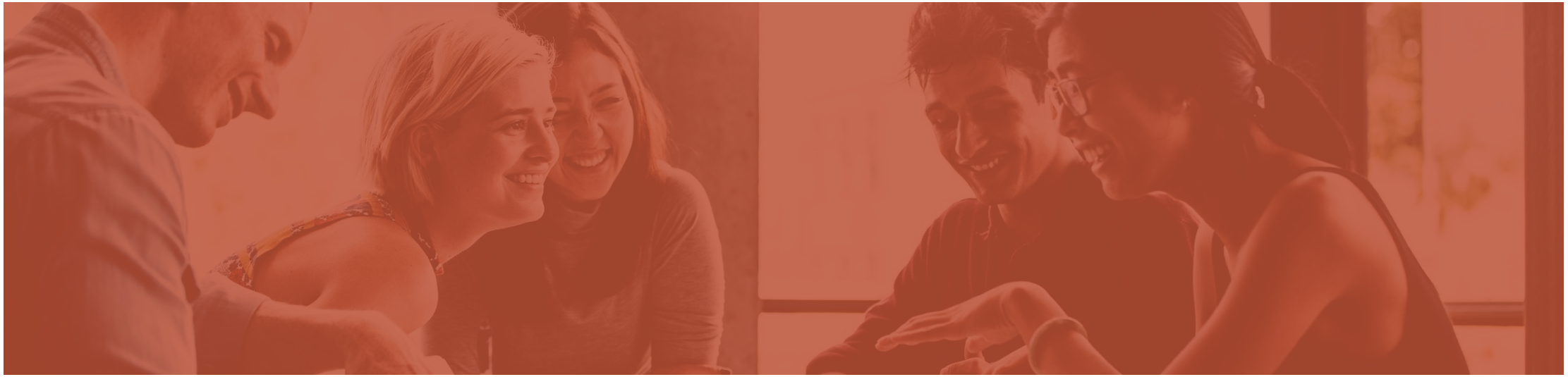

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