

A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE TIERS

While many school systems/states have adopted a tiered approach to promote the early identification and intervention for at-risk students, there are variations in these tiers from system to system. Graner, Faggella-Luby, and Fritschmann (2005) have found these variations occurring in terms of (a) length of time, number of minutes per session; (b) intensity, number of times per week; and (c) duration, total number of weeks.

The following are some general statements and/or guidelines for these tiers that may assist the speech-language pathologist in identifying her/his role in assisting the regular classroom teacher in the identification and subsequent intervention provided to the at-risk student. In implementing the tiers of intervention, the classroom teacher and SLP should keep in mind that a student does not necessarily have to “pass” through each tier one at a time in order to be subsequently referred on to special education (Tier 4). Students can progress through the tiers in one, two, three order or they may “bounce” back to one tier and move forward to another tier at any given time. The student’s individual needs/abilities dictate the level, intensity, and duration of support needed. A student could actually be in Tiers 1, 2, and 3 at one time.

TIER 1

Generally speaking, Tier 1 is instruction for all students, from the general education teacher in the general education classroom. All students are participating in standards-based instruction. Flexible groups for differentiation of instruction are employed with frequent progress monitoring.

The SLP’s role in Tier 1 could be one of simply providing the classroom teacher with information on the four disorder areas and their potential impact on classroom performance. Or, the SLP could do a presentation on (or demonstrate the use of) visual strategies; hearing impairments and preferential seating; listening skills; ELL; phonological awareness/phonemic awareness; etc.

The SLP could also become an active participant in the classroom in Tier 1. The SLP could become a language center or listening center that all students experience during center time. The SLP could co-teach a language lesson or vocabulary lesson to the entire class. The SLP could do a daily/weekly literacy review with all students.

The key to Tier 1 is that all students are involved in the instruction.

Tier 2

In this tier, the classroom teacher, resource teacher, etc. work more directly/intensely with **some** of the students. Students identified as “nonresponders” receive intervention instruction of a certain length of time, intensity, and duration.

The SLP’s role in Tier 2 becomes one of more support for small groups of students. The SLP could provide the classroom teacher with very specific activities to use with some of the students to improve their literacy skills/language skills/communication skills; or the SLP could provide the small group instruction; or the SLP and classroom teacher could provide the interventions together. Progress monitoring by the classroom teacher continues in Tier 2.

The key to Tier 2 is that **some** of the students are involved in very specific interventions targeted toward standards-based learning.

TIER 3

In Tier 3, **specific** students participate in learning that is tailored specifically to individual needs with individualized assessments. The student becomes the subject of the student support team, and the student support team suggests the interventions to be prescribed along with the length, intensity, and duration of the interventions.

In Tier 3, the SLP participates in the student support team meeting. The SLP’s role in Tier 3 becomes more therapeutic in nature. The SLP can provide therapy for specific weaknesses and collect data on the response to the intervention.

The key to Tier 3 is that **a specific** student is involved in very specific interventions targeted toward standards-based learning.



The following pages of this manual contain suggested presentations, checklists, data sheets, resources, etc. that can be employed in any or all of the Tiers. Where possible, a description of the activity and its possible use(s) will be outlined. This is by no means a comprehensive list. There are many other possibilities already available and many more to be developed in the years to come. Please adjust the presentations, data sheets, checklists, etc., to fit your situation in your school system.

The CD ROM contains the entire manual as well as additional examples of checklists, forms, and data sheets. One school system’s RtI steps for speech and preschool information are included as well.