

Strategies for Scheduling

How to Find Time to Intensify and Individualize Intervention



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National Center on
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Introduction

Research suggests that 10% or more of students will not respond adequately to evidence-based intervention delivered with fidelity (Fuchs et al., 2008; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2009). Furthermore, these students may require 10 to 30 times as many practice opportunities as their peers to learn a new skill (Gersten et al., 2008). This group of students needs intensive intervention, which may be delivered through special education or Tier 3 within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), to make meaningful progress on academic and behavior goals. One approach to intensive intervention is data-based individualization (DBI), a research-based process for individualizing and intensifying intervention for students with the most severe learning and behavior needs. To learn more about DBI, see the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) [website](#).

If you are like most educators, you agree with the idea of providing intensive intervention for students with the most intractable academic and behavior problems. The question you may be asking is, how do I find the time? Intensive intervention requires time for planning and delivering individualized instruction, as well as time for collecting and analyzing progress monitoring and diagnostic data, developing intervention plans, and making changes to plans when needed.

One approach to intensifying an intervention as part of the DBI process is to increase the length or frequency of intervention sessions (Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, & Roberts, 2012). Using diagnostic data, you might determine that a possible explanation for a student's lack of progress is that they have had insufficient time in the intervention. Perhaps the intervention sessions are too brief (e.g., 15–20 minutes per session) or the intervention sessions are too infrequent (e.g., three times a week rather than five times a week) to allow for sufficient practice opportunities and feedback. However, finding time for longer and more frequent intervention sessions can be challenging. Although it is important to consider whether a student needs additional time in an intervention (e.g., the intervention sessions are too brief or too infrequent), adding time to an existing intervention session may not be possible. Educators may need to think flexibly about how they plan and schedule instruction, both within existing intervention time and across the school day, to maximize efficiency and create more opportunities for students to respond to instruction and receive feedback. The following strategies are intended to help educators think about how to find the time for this intensification within the constraints of busy school schedules.

As you consider the strategies in this guide, it may be helpful to examine a range of resources to support implementing and scheduling intensive intervention. We recommend exploring the NCII website, where we provide [tools to support efficient and effective intensive intervention data meetings](#) in your school. In addition, it may be useful to examine resources related to scheduling MTSS more broadly. Because intensive intervention is most often designed as a supplement to the core academic curriculum—in other words, students are provided with more, not less, instructional time—it may be necessary for schools to develop a master schedule that includes one or more intervention blocks. Appendix A of this guide provides examples of school schedules that include an intervention block. You also may want to examine the information about scheduling for MTSS, including scheduling intervention blocks, that is included in the Resources section of this guide.

MTSS IMPLEMENTATION AND SCHEDULING

When MTSS is not implemented effectively, too many students may be identified as needing intensive intervention, straining school resources. If this problem occurs in your school, consider:

- Do we need to focus on improving our core instruction by embedding evidence-based practices or differentiating instruction?
 - Do we need to improve our screening procedures to minimize false positives and ensure we are not overidentifying students who need intervention?
 - Are we implementing our Tier 2 interventions with fidelity?
 - Have we clearly differentiated between Tier 2 and intensive intervention?
-

STRATEGY 1

Intensify Intervention Without Adding More Time



You may be wondering how you might intensify intervention for students without adding more time. In some cases, educators will not be able to add more time to an intervention because of other demands on the students' instructional programming. However, several strategies exist for increasing the intensity of an intervention without adding additional time. These strategies may be implemented with individual students or small groups of students who require more intensive instruction within an existing academic or behavior intervention.

Consider intensifying an intervention by making it more explicit and systematic (Gersten et al., 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000). Given the value of explicit and well-sequenced (systematic) instruction, you would likely

want to include these practices even under conditions where students were provided more time. How might you make instruction more explicit and systematic? One way is to modify the language in an intervention so that instructions are clearer, simpler, and more direct. Many educators would benefit from reducing the amount of time they talk and increasing the amount of practice for the students. Educators also can break the content into smaller chunks, supporting students who struggle with processing complex language. In addition, a highly valuable method is to provide more explicit modeling, scaffolding, and guided practice to ensure that students acquire mastery of the focal academic or behavioral skills. For example, during a math lesson, an educator may use manipulatives and a think-aloud procedure to demonstrate the steps in solving a subtraction problem and then provide guided practice with corrective and affirmative feedback (Powell & Fuchs, 2015). More information on explicit instruction can be found in the NCII course [Features of Explicit Instruction](#).

Another way to intensify intervention without adding time is to create more opportunities for students to respond to questions, prompts, or cues and to give immediate corrective feedback to these responses during the existing intervention time. Response cards, personal whiteboards, hand signals, choral response, and other whole-group response techniques allow multiple students to be engaged simultaneously. As a general guideline, students should have three to five opportunities to respond per minute of instruction (MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015).

DID YOU KNOW?

The Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity provides a systematic way to consider how intensive an intervention is and how to intensify to better meet student needs. More information on the taxonomy can be found [here](#).

Examples of how to use group response strategies during instruction can be found in NCII's [sample reading lessons](#) and accompanying [user guide](#).

Practice with feedback is a valuable part of intensifying interventions. If additional intervention time with an instructor is not possible, peer-mediated practice also can offer students increased opportunities to respond and receive feedback. In this approach, higher performing students are paired with students who need more support. For example, more fluent readers may be paired with less fluent readers and taught to give feedback to their partner during partner reading. In a small-group intervention, the teacher may structure the intervention to allow for peer-mediated practice for most of the group while providing more instruction or practice opportunities for one or two students. Paraprofessionals can also guide additional practice and deliver feedback during an intervention session.

To intensify a behavioral intervention without adding time, educators can increase students' opportunities to practice a target social skill, increase the amount of positive or corrective feedback the student receives, or increase the frequency of positive reinforcement. For example, an educator may decide to deliver more frequent behavior-specific praise to a student who exhibits off-task behavior or provide more opportunities for a student to practice interacting with peers in small groups. NCII has developed a series of resources that present [behavioral strategies to support intensifying interventions](#) to help educators who work with students with academic deficits and challenging behaviors.

Efficient classroom entry and exit routines also can provide time for independent or peer-mediated practice and allow educators to manage multiple overlapping small groups. When students enter the classroom, or at the end of a lesson, they can immediately begin a practice activity, either alone or with a partner. For example, an entry routine could consist of getting a timer and math fluency worksheet and practicing math facts until the teacher begins the lesson. Use of these routines also may reduce the time students spend waiting, thereby increasing engagement.

Flashcards, worksheets, and other tools that can be used as part of entry and exit routines, and to support fluency practice, can be found in the [NCII sample math lessons](#). Instructional videos illustrating math content also are available.

Additional strategies for intensifying intervention without adding more time may include the following:

- providing a more highly skilled interventionist;
- reducing the size of the instructional group; and
- creating more homogenous groups to align instruction to a specific skill deficit.
(Note: This may not be appropriate for all interventions.)

STRATEGY 2

Find Minutes Hidden in the Day



Although educators may not be able to lengthen the intervention session for a student, there are often opportunities to extend intervention or provide additional practice opportunities throughout the school day and beyond. There is considerable power in delivering 1-, 2-, or 3-minute lessons throughout the day to add more scaffolds and opportunities for students to practice and receive feedback. In addition to using the 1–3-minute opportunities throughout the day, it also may be necessary to identify time for additional practice:

- during lunch (e.g., social skills intervention);
- before or after school;
- during transitions (e.g., practicing facts or fluency while transitioning); and
- during independent work time or learning centers.

Having frequent, short practice sessions throughout the day, referred to as distributed practice, is an effective method for supporting students' acquisition and retention of a variety of skills, including basic math facts, vocabulary, and science (Coddling et al., 2016; Sobel, Cepeda, & Kapler, 2011). Furthermore, breaking up intervention time into multiple sessions can ease scheduling challenges and may support students who struggle to maintain engagement and attention during a longer intervention session (Gersten et al., 2008).

Providing additional 1- to 10-minute practice sessions in skills such as math facts, foundational reading skills, vocabulary, and reading fluency may be possible without increasing the length of the intervention session. For example, a student can start the morning with 10 minutes of math fact practice during the arrival period, spend 10 minutes practicing vocabulary flashcards during an independent work station, and spend 10 minutes on a computer-based reading fluency practice at the end of the day.

In addition to the strategies discussed previously, collaborating with families is an important strategy for increasing students' opportunities to practice academic and behavioral skills. Educators should share information with families about students' goals, progress, and areas of need, as well as strategies to support practice at home. When educators develop collaborative partnerships with families and share information and resources, families can reinforce instruction that occurs at school. More information about [collaborating with families](#) of students with intensive needs is available on the NCII website.

STRATEGY 3

Replace an Existing Activity



Ask yourself, is the student benefitting from all the existing activities? Is it possible to offer additional time for intensive intervention by replacing existing school activities that are part of the student's regular schedule? For example, a small number of students may require additional time for intervention during specials (e.g., music, art) or enrichment activities. Of course, we recognize the value of these enrichment activities and would not suggest that they be replaced all of the time or for all of the students; however, occasionally replacing these activities temporarily may provide the necessary boost to facilitate academic or behavioral success. We think this approach may be considered as a last resort when the strategies discussed previously have not been effective in producing adequate gains in learning and behavior. Before deciding to remove a student from an

activity to provide intervention, consider how these schedule changes may affect students' motivation and engagement in the intervention and in school more broadly. Many students with intensive needs display challenges with motivation, engagement, and self-regulation. Taking away a preferred activity may result in more behavior challenges and decreases in motivation and engagement. It also is essential to involve a student's family when deciding whether to replace an existing activity with an intervention.

Conclusion

This guide offers strategies for maximizing the efficiency of instruction within the time constraints of a busy school day. As you implement the strategies in this guide, consider the following overarching recommendations:

1. **Be flexible and creative:** A “one-size-fits-all” approach to scheduling intensive intervention does not exist. What works well in one school or with one student may not fit or work in the context of another school or with another student within the same school.
2. **Begin with easier-to-implement strategies:** When possible, select strategies that require the least investment of school resources and time, and are the least disruptive to a student’s school day or overall schedule.
3. **Be proactive:** When developing your master schedule, consider how time for intensive intervention fits into the overall school schedule. When designing intervention plans, consider how scheduling constraints will impact a student’s access to intensive intervention and plan for how to address these challenges.

TIP

It can be helpful to track how much time you are actively providing intervention to a target student. Before changing an intervention, ensure that the student has received the intervention as planned, for the intended amount of time. The [DBI Implementation Log](#) can be used as a daily and weekly record of your implementation of a student’s intensive intervention plan.

Next Steps

1. Use Appendix B to evaluate which strategies may work with your students and in your context.
2. Identify opportunities for maximizing the instruction time during scheduled interventions.
3. Ensure that the intensive intervention is available to students who need it and that Tiers 1–2 are appropriate to prevent overidentification.

Resources

Organization / Author	Resource
National Center on Intensive Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity ▪ Literacy Strategies to Support Intensifying Interventions ▪ Mathematics Strategies to Support Intensifying Interventions ▪ Behavior Strategies to Support Intensifying Interventions ▪ Intensive Intervention Course: Features of Explicit Instruction ▪ Tools to Support Intensive Intervention Data Meetings ▪ DBI Implementation Log ▪ Intensive Intervention: Practitioner’s Guide for Communicating With Parents and Families
Center on Response to Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RTI Scheduling Processes for Middle School (brief) ▪ RTI Scheduling Processes for Middle School (webinar) ▪ RTI Implementation: Developing Effective Schedules at the Elementary Level ▪ Tiered Interventions in High Schools: Using Preliminary ‘Lessons Learned’ to Guide Ongoing Discussion
RTI Action Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Middle School Principal’s Perspective: Scheduling for RTI ▪ Scheduling Considerations for RTI at the Elementary Level ▪ Scheduling Challenges: Tiered Reading Intervention ▪ Scheduling Challenges: Tiered Math Intervention
Oregon Response to Instruction and Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Instruction (webpage includes sample schedules and downloadable PPT on scheduling) ▪ Interventions (webpage includes sample schedules, scheduling considerations, and downloadable PPT on scheduling)
School Scheduling Associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sample school schedules ▪ Presentation handouts
The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finding Time: Building Schedules to Implement RTI
Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SWIFT Master Scheduling Tool

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Appendix A. Master Schedule Examples

Midland Elementary School, Tacoma, Washington. In addition to core instruction, each grade has at least a 30-minute intervention block for reading and math. During these times, instructional specialists, English learner teachers, and paraprofessionals provide support to general and special education teachers. The bottom two rows show the interventionists' schedule.

Example Schedule 1: Separate Intervention Block for Reading and Math

	8:05-8:45	8:50-8:55	8:55-9:00	9:00-9:05	9:05-9:10	9:10-9:15	9:15-9:20	9:20-9:25	9:25-9:30	9:30-9:35	9:35-9:40	9:40-9:45	9:45-9:50	9:50-9:55	9:55-10:00	10:00-10:05	10:05-10:10	10:10-10:15	10:15-10:20	10:20-10:25	10:25-9:30	10:30-10:35	10:35-10:40	10:40-10:45	10:45-10:50	10:50-10:55	10:55-11:00	11:00-11:05	11:05-11:10	11:10-11:15	11:15-11:20	11:20-11:25	11:25-11:30	11:30-11:35	11:35-11:40	11:40-11:45	11:45-11:50	11:50-11:55	11:55-12:00	12:00-12:05	12:05-12:10	12:10-12:15	12:15-12:20	12:20-12:25	12:25-11:30	12:30-12:35	12:35-12:40	12:40-12:45	12:45-12:50	12:50-12:55	12:55-1:00	1:00-1:05	1:05-1:10	1:10-1:15	1:15-1:20	1:20-1:25	1:25-1:30	1:30-1:35	1:35-1:40	1:40-1:45	1:45-1:50	1:50-1:55	1:55-2:00	2:00-2:05	2:05-2:10	2:10-2:15	2:15-2:20	2:20-2:25	2:25-2:30	2:30-2:35	2:35-2:40	2:40-2:45	2:45-2:50	2:50-2:55	2:55-3:00	3:00-3:05	3:05-3:10	3:10-3:15	3:15-3:20	3:20-3:35
Kindergarten	Circle attendance and announcements										ELA 30 minutes	Reading Intervention	ELA 70 min										Lunch 11:10-11:35 Recess 11:35-11:55	ELA 20 min	Specialist 12:20-1:05	Science	Math 50 min					Recess	Math Intervention/ Centers																																															
First	Circle attendance and announcements										Reading Intervention	ELA 9:30-11:15 (105 min)										Lunch 11:15-11:35 Recess 11:35-11:55	ELA 15 min	Math	Specialist 1:05-1:48	Math 10 min	1st Grade Math Intervention	Recess	Science																																																			
Second	ELA 60 min					Recess	Reading Intervention	ELA 55 min					Lunch 11:40-12:00 Recess 12:00-12:20	Math 60 min					Math Intervention	Specialist 1:50-2:33	Science																																																											
Third	Math 60 min					Recess	Reading Intervention	ELA 55 min					Lunch 11:40-12:00 Recess 12:00-12:20	ELA 60 min					Math Intervention	Science	Specialist 2:35-3:20																																																											
Fourth	Math 15 min	Math Intervention	Specialist (45) 9:45-10:28					Math 45 min	ELA 55 min					Lunch 12:10-12:30 Recess 12:30-1:05	ELA 65 min					Science	Reading Intervention																																																											
Fifth	Specialist (45) 9:00-9:43					Math 60 min					Math Intervention	ELA 55 min					Lunch 12:10-12:30 Recess 12:30-1:05	ELA 55 min					5th Grade Reading Intervention	Science																																																								
Support Center	Classroom										Specialist (45) 10:30-11:13					Lunch 11:15-11:35 Recess 11:35-11:55	Classroom										Recess	Classroom																																																				
Specialist	5th Grade Specialist (45) 9:00-9:43					4th Grade Specialist (45) 9:45-10:28					S.Center - Specialist (45) 10:30-11:13					Planning (35) Lunch (30)					Kinder Specialist (45) 12:20-1:05					1st Grade Specialist 1:05-1:48					2nd Grade Specialist 1:50-2:33					3rd Grade Specialist 2:35-3:20																																												
LP Reading	1st Grade Reading Intervention					Kindergarten Reading Intervention					2nd Grade Reading Intervention					Planning Time					Lunch 30 min					3rd Grade Reading Intervention					5th Grade Reading Intervention					4th Grade Reading Intervention																																												
LAP Math	4th Grade Math Intervention					3rd Grade Math Intervention					5th Grade Math Intervention					Planning Time					Lunch 30 min					2nd Grade Math Intervention					1st Grade Math Intervention					Kindergarten Math Intervention																																												

Dismissal

Harvard Elementary School, Tacoma, Washington. In this K–5 school, each grade has a 30- to 40-minute intervention block.

Example Schedule 2: Single Intervention Block

	Kinder	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
9:00	9:00-10:30 ELA	9:00-10:30 ELA	9:05-10:05 Math	9:00-9:40 Intervention	9:00-9:45 Specialist	9:00-10:30 Math	
9:15							
9:30							
9:45				9:45-10:30 Specialist	9:50-10:25 Intervention		
10:00			10:05-10:35 ELA				
10:15	10:30-10:45 Recess	10:30-10:45 Recess				10:30-10:45 Recess	
10:30			10:40-11:25 Specialist	10:30-12:30 ELA	10:30-12:30 ELA	10:50-11:25 Intervention	
10:45	10:50-11:25 Math	10:55-11:55 Math					
11:00			11:25-12:00 Intervention				
11:15						Lunch/Recess 11:30-12:15	
11:30	Lunch/Recess 11:30-12:15		Lunch/Recess 12:00-12:45				
11:45		Lunch/Recess 12:00-12:45					
12:00				Lunch/Recess 12:30-1:15	Lunch/Recess 12:30-1:15	12:15-1:05 ELA	
12:15	12:20-12:50 Math						
12:30		12:50-1:35 Science/Social Studies	12:45-2:10 ELA				
12:45	12:50-1:20 Intervention			1:15-2:15 Math	1:15-2:15 Math	1:05-1:50 Specialist	
1:00	1:20-1:50 Science/Social Studies	1:40-2:10 Intervention				1:50-2:20 Science/Social Studies	
1:15							
1:30							
1:45							
2:00	1:55-2:40 Specialist	2:10-2:40 ELA	Recess 2:15-2:30 2:30-3:00	Recess 2:15-2:30 2:30-3:00	Recess 2:15-2:30 2:30-3:00		
2:15			Science/Social Studies	Math	Math	2:20-3:30 ELA	
2:30			3:00-3:30 Math	3:00-3:30 Science/Social Studies	3:00-3:30 Science/Social Studies		
2:45	2:45-3:25 ELA	2:45-3:30 Specialist					
3:00							
3:15							

Segue Institute for Learning, Central Falls, Rhode Island. This school serves Grades 5–8 and has an extended school day. The school’s schedule includes two 40-minute intervention periods per day, 4 days per week. Students who are performing at or above grade level receive enrichment opportunities in math and literacy during these periods as well.

Example Schedule 3: Extended School Day With Two Intervention Blocks

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:25-8:00	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	No Advisory
8:04-8:59	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	7:25-8:18 Elective
9:03-9:58	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	8:22-9:20 ELA
10:02-11:02	Music, Art, Theater, Health/Physical Ed	Music, Art, Theater, Health/Physical Ed	Music, Art, Theater, Health/Physical Ed	Music, Art, Theater, Health/Physical Ed	9:24-10:22 Humanities
11:05-11:28	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	10:26-11:24 Math
11:31-11:51	DEAR RECESS	DEAR RECESS	DEAR RECESS	DEAR RECESS	11:28-12-26 Science
11:55-12:35	Numeracy Intervention	Numeracy Intervention	Numeracy Intervention	Numeracy Intervention	12:26-12:55 Lunch
12:37-1:17	Literacy Intervention	Literacy Intervention	Literacy Intervention	Literacy Intervention	12:55-1:30 Segue Block
1:21-2:16	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	1:30 Dismissal
2:20-3:15	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	Content Class	
3:15-3:25	Community Debrief	Community Debrief	Community Debrief	Community Debrief	
3:30-5:00	Dismissal Afterschool Program & Dinner (optional)	Dismissal Afterschool Program & Dinner (optional)	Dismissal Afterschool Program & Dinner (optional)	Dismissal Afterschool Program & Dinner (optional)	

Appendix B. Questions to Consider

The following questions can help educators think about how to use time efficiently to provide more practice opportunities and feedback to students with intensive needs.

Strategy	Questions to Consider
Intensify Intervention Without Adding Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How can we use peer-assisted learning to increase students' opportunities to respond and receive corrective feedback? ▪ Are there ways that the instruction can be made more explicit and systematic? ▪ How can group response strategies be incorporated into the intervention? ▪ Are there additional staff (e.g., paraprofessionals) that can support an intervention to create more practice opportunities? ▪ Are the most highly skilled interventionists instructing students with the most intensive needs? ▪ Can the group be made smaller or more homogenous?
Find Minutes Hidden in the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there time during learning centers, independent work, or transitions that can be used to provide additional instruction and practice? ▪ Are students available before or after school for additional practice and instruction? ▪ Can lunch time be used to provide social skills instruction, if needed? ▪ How can technology be used to support additional practice or instruction? ▪ Given the needs of individual students, what skills should be targeted during this additional intervention time?
Replace an Existing Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is our school's process for determining if a student should receive intervention in lieu of an existing school activity? ▪ If an existing activity is replaced by intervention, how will this change affect the student's motivation and engagement in the intervention and in school more broadly? ▪ How will we involve the student's family in the decision about whether to provide intervention during an existing school activity?



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