INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS GROUPS

Narrowing the focus of Intervention

Objective

Participants will be introduced to a systematic way for determining a student’s instructional focus during a Tier II intervention that is provided in addition to the Tier I comprehensive reading program.
Topics

Connections between assessments
Decision-making
Categorizing
Differentiating root causes of reading difficulty

Activating Prior Knowledge Activity

SCREENER

DIAGNOSTIC MEASURES

OUTCOME

PROGRESS MONITORING

Steve Underwood, BSU - CSI & PS
## Comprehensive Assessment Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Students Assessed</th>
<th>Main Purposes</th>
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</table>
| **Screening**   | Beginning of School Year          | All Students      | • Determine risk status  
• Determine instructional groups  
• Helps teachers differentiate instruction based upon identified instructional needs. |
| **Diagnostic**  | As Needed                         | Selected Students (when more information is needed for program planning) | • Helps plan instruction.  
• Helps teachers differentiate instruction based upon identified instructional needs. |
| **Progress Monitoring** | Determined by Risk Status | All Students | • Determine if students are making adequate progress with current instruction.  
• Inform schoolwide action plans. |
| **Outcome**     | End of School Year                | All Students      | • Gives school leaders and teachers feedback about the overall effectiveness of their reading program.  
• Inform schoolwide action plans. |

### Outcome Measures from Previous School Year

- **Significantly Exceeding Grade Level**
- **Grade Level**
- **Some Risk**
- **High Risk**

### In-Program Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #1</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extension of CRP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #2</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thorough CRP Instruction</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #3</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thorough CRP Instruction plus re-teach skills not mastered in program</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #4</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thorough CRP Instruction plus fluency instruction</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #5</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thorough CRP Instruction, instruction of missing phonics skills, and fluency practice at 90%+ accuracy level</td>
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<td></td>
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### Phonics Screener

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #6</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial Intervention with CRP</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #7</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>No Pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial Intervention with Intervention Core</td>
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Progress Monitoring is imbedded into the process depending on the results of your diagnostic assessment and the level of Intervention being provided.

The “Gist” of Focus Groups

- Instructional Focus Groups are aimed at moving students through mastery of the scope and sequence of the “Mechanical Skills” of Reading.
Focus Groups mostly address the foundational, **necessary but not sufficient** skills of Reading text…

This set of skills can be addressed with a **systematic and explicit program** during an Intervention period that is in addition to the core reading program.
The following Focus Groups are not sufficient to address Mental Schema. They will support this need, but will not be enough.

Mental Schema must be addressed during every interaction adults have with children during the day. This is why SIOP and other similar methods are so valuable.

The “Gist” of Focus Groups

- Focus Group 1 – Students who have demonstrated mastery of all appropriate mechanical skills and up-to-date grade-level skills.
- Focus Group 2 – Students who have demonstrated mastery of all appropriate mechanical skills but not up-to-date grade-level skills.
- Focus Groups 3 & below – Students who are lacking mastery of some level of mechanical skills as determined by a diagnostic phonics and/or phonemic awareness assessment (CORE Phonics Survey, TPRI, or similar).
The “Gist” of Focus Groups

Please note...

☐ If a school has a commonly used diagnostic phonics assessment that is valid and reliable, the Instructional Focus Groups may be rewritten to incorporate the design provided (scope and sequence of skills).

☐ Language should be clear and concise for decision-making rules regarding who goes into what group.

The “Gist” of Focus Groups

☐ The key to focus grouping is to have a standardized protocol for grouping so that:

☐ A) everyone who is involved in RTI can utilize the process and speak the same language.

☐ B) students will have a fair and due process for receiving intervention.
The “Gist” of Focus Groups

Clear Focus Group protocols are intended to rely less on “Cardiac Data” and assist schools and grade level teams in making decisions so that students are grouped based on performance data.

**Cardiac Data:** n. 1. how one's heart feels about a topic. 2. opinion. 3. a gut feeling about a student’s ability that is unsubstantiated by performance data.

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**Grade 1:**

**Instructional Focus 1** - Students who are classified as Benchmark on IRI *in all sub-skill areas*, and who pass all skill areas of the grade-level end-of-unit test, and who pass *all* appropriate sections of CORE Phonics Survey for the time of year.

**Instructional Focus 2** - Students who are classified Benchmark on IRI *in all sub-skill areas*, but who fail one or more grade-level skill areas on the end-of-unit test, and who pass *all* appropriate sections of CORE Phonics Survey for the time of year.
Grade 1:

Instructional Focus 3
Students who are NOT Benchmark on one or more IRI skill areas, but who pass all appropriate sections of CORE Phonics Survey for the time of year. (Early Fall: 1-5A; Early Winter: 1-5F; Early Spring 1-5G)

Instructional Focus 4 (Test as of Early SPRING)
Students who are NOT Benchmark on one or more IRI skill areas, and who passed CORE Phonics Survey 1-5F, but who failed CORE Phonics Survey Section 5G (Multisyllabic Words).
- Note: this group is not applicable in fall and winter of Grade 1

Grade 1:

Instructional Focus 5
Students who are NOT Benchmark on one or more IRI skill areas, and who passed CORE Phonics Survey 1-4, but who failed one or more sections of CORE 5A-5F that are appropriate for the time of year (Reading and Decoding Skills / Complex Phonic Patterns). Test first thing in the Fall: 5A Test as of Early Winter: 5A-F

Instructional Focus 6:
Students who are NOT Benchmark on one or more IRI skill areas, and who failed any portion of CORE Phonics Survey items 1-4 (Alphabet Skills / Letter Sounds). Record letter names and sounds missed (from items 1-4) for each student in this group. To further diagnose, administer the CORE or TPRI Phonemic Awareness Tests (from the most difficult skill, segmentation, to most basic, awareness) and provide intervention in any deficient areas of phonemic awareness*. 

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Grades 2-6: (only the screener differs)

**Instructional Focus 1**
Students who are classified as Benchmark on the IRI or Screening Measure, and who pass all skill areas on the grade-level end-of-unit test.

**Instructional Focus 2**
Students who are classified Benchmark on the IRI or Screening Measure, but who fail one or more skill areas on the grade-level end-of-unit test (which are not related to fluency). Further group students according to areas of need in grade-level skill work.

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Grades 2-6:

**Instructional Focus 3**
Students who are **NOT** Benchmark on the IRI or Screening Measure, **but** who pass all sections (5A-5G) of CORE Phonics Survey.

**Instructional Focus 4**
Students who are **NOT** Benchmark on the IRI or Screening Measure, **and** who pass sections 5A-5F of CORE Phonics survey, **but** who fail section 5G (multisyllabic words).
**Grades 2-6:**

**Instructional Focus 5:** Students who are **NOT** Benchmark on the IRI or Screening Measure, **and** who fail one or more of sections 5A-5F of the CORE Phonics Survey (beginning with Short Vowels in CVC words and ending with variant vowels), **but** who have passed CORE sections 1-4.

**Instructional Focus 6:** Students who are **NOT** Benchmark on the IRI or Screening Measure, **and** who fail one or more of Tasks 1-4 on the CORE Phonics Survey.

*If students perform extremely poorly on the CORE Phonics 1-4, then administer the CORE or TPRI Phonemic Awareness Tests (from the most difficult skill, segmentation, to most basic, awareness) and provide instruction in phonemic awareness.*

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**Kinder Focus Groups**

- Please note that the following suggestions for Kindergarten are in draft form.
- They can be useful, but more work needs to be done to refine them.
- Nonetheless, the process should remain the same in Kindergarten:
  - Determine a standard process that addresses the scope and sequence of skills that need to be mastered and use a diagnostic assessment to define groups.
Grade K:

**Instructional Focus 1**
Students who are classified as Benchmark on IRI in all sub-skill areas, and who pass all skill areas of the grade-level end-of-unit test, and who pass all appropriate sections of CORE Phonics Survey for the appropriate time of year.

**Instructional Focus 2**
Students who are classified Benchmark on IRI in all sub-skill areas, but who fail one or more grade-level skill areas on the end-of-unit test, and who pass all appropriate sections of CORE Phonics Survey for the appropriate time of year.

**Grade K:**

**Instructional Focus 3**
Students who are NOT Benchmark on one or more IRI skill areas, and who passed CORE Phonics Survey Sections 1-4, but who failed CORE Phonics Survey Section 5A (Short vowels in CVC words).

*Timeframe for initiating CORE subtest sections:*
Early Fall: Sections 1-2; Early Winter: Sections 1-5a

**Instructional Focus 4**
Students who are NOT Benchmark on one or more IRI skill areas, and who passed CORE Phonics Survey Sections 1-3, but who failed CORE Phonics Survey Section 4 (Single letter spellings for long vowel sounds & short vowel sounds).
Grade K:

**Instructional Focus 5**
Students who are **NOT Benchmark** on one or more IRI skill areas, **and** who passed CORE Phonics Survey Sections 1-2, **but** who failed CORE Phonics Survey Section 3 (Consonant Sounds).

**Instructional Focus 6**
Students who are **NOT Benchmark** on one or more IRI skill areas, **and** who failed CORE Phonics Survey Section 1 and/or 2 (Letter names – uppercase and/or Letter names – lowercase).

Grade K: Additional Possible Groupings

**Phoneme Segmentation Focus** – Students who are **NOT Benchmark** specifically on Phoneme Segmentation Fluency on the IRI. At minimum, teach Phoneme Segmentation to mastery. Progress Monitor PSF (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency).

**Language Development Focus** – Students who lack the skills to proficiently interact with language that is either oral or written. These students should also be placed in one of the 6 groups above. This group is especially for, but not limited to, ELL students. English speaking students with low language ability may also need this type of assistance. The need for placement in this group can be determined by low scores on measures such as the following:
- IELA (Idaho English Language Assessment) – a score of 1 or 2
- TPRI – a difficulty demonstrating listening comprehension of a story or passage
Narrowing the Intervention:
Don’t Simply Treat the Symptom

- Can the student comprehend written language proficiently?
  - Yes - you’ve arrived!
  - No - what factors are contributing?
    - Mechanical skills - is the student able to read fluently and accurately?
    - Mechanical Skills & Mental Schema
      - If not, then consider intervention with “Mechanical Skills”.
    - Mental Schema - is the student able to comprehend oral language proficiently (i.e. listening comprehension)?
      - If not, then consider intervention with “Mental Schema”.

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ELD – English Language Development
A Possible Extra Focus at Every Level

**Language Development Focus:** Students who lack the skills to proficiently interact with language that is either oral or written. These students should also be placed in one of the 6 groups above.

On a daily basis, provide regular opportunity for the development of Linguistic Knowledge, Background Knowledge, and Thinking & Reasoning Skills. Consider ways in which to develop the language proficiencies of these students in a holistic fashion throughout all portions of the day (SIOP strategies, robust teacher language, multiple opportunities to respond, read-alouds, etc.) rather than just a boost during Intervention.

Remember

- These focus group documents **ARE NOT** the “end all / be all” of grouping.
- They **ARE**, however, a great place to start.
- Keep Intervention structured around the “root cause” and **NOT** all of the symptoms.
For further information, please contact:

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