

Chapter 7 – Specially-Designed Learning

Section 7.1 Tier 4

SPECIALLY-DESIGNED LEARNING:

In addition to Tiers 1 through 3, targeted students participate in :

- Specialized programs, methodologies, or instructional deliveries.
- Greater frequency of progress monitoring of student response to intervention(s).

Tier 4 is developed for students who need additional supports and meet eligibility criteria for special program placement including gifted education and special education. With three effective tiers in place prior to specialized services, more struggling students will be successful and will not require this degree of intervention. Tier 4 does not represent a location for services, but indicates a layer of interventions that may be provided in the general education class or in a separate setting. For students with disabilities needing special education and related services, Tier 4 provides instruction that is targeted and specialized to meet students' needs. If a child has already been determined as a child with a disability, then the school system should not require additional documentation of prior interventions in the effect the child demonstrates additional delays. The special education instruction and documentation of progress in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) will constitute prior interventions and appropriate instruction. In some cases, the student may require a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility of additional disability areas.

Guiding Questions in Implementing Tier 4 Interventions:

- Are only those students who need specially designed instruction placed in specialized programs?
- Are data collection and progress monitoring clearly defined?
- Are goals for students clearly defined and measurable?
- Are services and methodology distinctly different from those provided in the general education environment?
- Is consideration given to ensuring placement in the least restrictive environment?
- Who is responsible for the delivery, monitoring, and recording of the intervention results?

English Language Learners

Although the nature of the RTI Pyramid indicates all students begin at Tier 1 and move upward through the tiers only if the interventions at the previous tiers are not sufficient to allow them to achieve, Title III under NCLB does not permit delayed eligibility testing for language minority students. Neither should language assistance be delayed in order to allow students to progress "normally" through the tiers.

Eligibility for ESOL services automatically should be considered a Tier 4 Intervention. For the purposes of serving the student effectively and efficiently, the language minority student enters the Pyramid at the Tier 4 and as the student progresses with language development and academic proficiency, the level of interventions needed to support the student will decrease accordingly.

(More information in Chapter 8)

Gifted Learners

Advanced learning needs can be addressed in the general education classroom by providing instructional interventions prior to identifying students for specialized educational services. By documenting instructional interventions, the RTI process allows high-achieving students access to differentiated curriculum, flexible pacing, cluster grouping, and other universal interventions available to all students in the regular classroom. Data teams should determine additional interventions needed to meet individual accelerated learning needs during analysis of progress monitoring of student response to the intervention. Additional interventions should be considered to meet the individuals accelerated learning needs. These additional interventions could include gifted program services. An important consideration for the team is determining that interventions have been given a reasonable amount of time to work. Also, data points over time need to provide a sound basis for making decisions about how the student is responding to the intervention.

(More information in Chapter 8)

Special Education

Special education eligibility and the required pre-referral process are intended to support the practice of providing high quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction, and applying child response data to important educational decisions. This framework should guide eligibility teams in applying decisions to general, remedial and special education, creating a well integrated system of instruction/intervention guided by child outcome data.

To obtain child outcome data, a multi-tier system of intervention options is necessary as a means to integrate educational problem-solving across educational levels. Multi-tiered systems of interventions are consistent with federal legislation (Individuals with Disabilities Education Actions IDEA 2004) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB 2001)) and evidence-based research. The purpose of these laws is to produce better outcomes for all children and to apply procedures with strong scientific bases to a wide range of decisions, including determination of eligibility for all disability areas (e.g., speech-language impairment, autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disability, emotional and behavioral disorder, intellectual disability, speech/language impairment, significantly developmental disorder, other health impairment, etc.).

- The Department frequently receives questions about timelines for eligibility determination related to RTI. As stated in Tier 3, the length of an intervention will vary by case, but most cases will occur over a six to twelve week period. For students being considered for eligibility in areas other than SLD, the key consideration is that interventions have been given a reasonable amount of time to work and that there are enough data points over time to provide a sound basis for making decisions about how the student is responding to the intervention.
- The Department also receives questions about vision and hearing screenings. Typically, these are obtained in Tier 3, but it may be beneficial to screen vision and hearing in Tier 2 to rule out possible sensory issues which could have an impact on the student's response to interventions.
- Parents maintain their due process right to request an evaluation. However, eligibility for special education should not be considered without documentation of prior instructional interventions. A Student Support Team bypass procedure does exist (see Georgia Rule 160-4-2-.32) for rare cases when indicated by the severity of the disability or extreme circumstances.

For students who may eventually be considered for Specific Learning Disabilities eligibility:

Note that the required time period is twelve weeks. Interventions must be implemented for 12 weeks before a student can eventually be found eligible for special education services for a learning disability, but it does not all have to take place in Tier 3/SST. Additional weeks of interventions can take place during the specified evaluation period for Special Ed eligibility. Interventions from Tier 2 may also count toward the required 12 weeks for students being considered for SLD eligibility.

Additional Information:

English Language Learners:

1. See Section 8.1 of this document
2. http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_esol.aspx

Gifted Education:

1. See Section 8.2 of this document
2. http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_gifted.aspx

Special Education:

http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCImpMan

