Planning for Adolescent Tier 3 Reading Instruction

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Mrs. Silverman is a special educator working at Central High School. In addition to supporting students on her caseload, she was recently asked to plan Tier 3 reading intervention for two ninth graders, Dominic and Mia, who have not responded to previous attempts at intervention. Mrs. Silverman wants to ensure that the Tier 3 reading instruction they receive consists of evidence-based practices effective for adolescents at risk of reading failure. Central High, however, has only recently implemented the response to intervention (RTI) model and has provided few resources to help her identify what this type of instruction looks like. Mrs. Silverman is concerned that she will not be able to plan instruction that really makes a difference for these students. She wonders if any other resources are available to help her with the challenge of planning such urgent intervention.

Increasingly, secondary schools are adopting an RTI model to help prevent and remediate reading failure in adolescents. Within the RTI model, the third tier (Tier 3) is designed to meet the needs of students most at risk (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003). Tier 3 reading instruction, however, is hard to define as teachers look for ways to improve outcomes for adolescents who have not responded to years of intervention. Tier 3 requires unique application of content and pedagogical structures beyond repeating identical curriculum from Tiers 1 and 2 (e.g., Wanzek & Vaughn, 2008). That is, repeating the identical curriculum with just additional time in Tier 3 amounts to an educational form of "rinse and repeat": doing the same thing without reason to expect further effect.

This article contextualizes adolescent reading instruction within an RTI framework and then summarizes the critical components of evidence-based reading instruction in Tier 3 settings, both in terms of the content of instruction and the instructional method (i.e., the pedagogy). Additionally, the article provides a planning tool designed in alignment with these components. Finally, the article illustrates how teachers might use this tool to plan high-quality Tier 3 reading instruction. Collectively, these resources are intended to help educators improve reading outcomes for adolescents with the most urgent need for intervention. In addition, by using the planning tool as a checklist, teachers will free up mental energy to devote to instruction and problem solving while working with students.

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The Context of Reading Interventions in Secondary Schools: The RTI Framework

RTI has four common principles: (a) high-quality core curricula for all students, (b) universal screening, (c) progress monitoring, and (d) implementation of a tiered system of interventions and supports to accommodate the learning needs of all students (Fuchs et al., 2003). Though researchers have presented various models for RTI (e.g., Reschly, 2005), the most common is a three-tiered system of instruction and intervention, as follows:

- Tier 1 represents core instruction.
- Tier 2 represents small-group intervention.
- Tier 3 represents intense individualized interventions for students who have not responded to Tier 2 intervention.

In Tier 1, general education teachers provide high-quality core reading programs and conduct universal screenings to identify students who require additional reading support. Eighty percent of the general student population is expected to reach grade-level goals with Tier 1 instruction alone. In Tier 2, students identified as requiring additional intervention are provided with evidence-based reading interventions in small-group settings multiple times per week by the general education teacher. Students' progress is monitored weekly using technically valid assessments (e.g., curriculum-based measurement [CBM]); and teachers use the data in the decision to continue, discontinue, or adjust an intervention. Typically, three quarters of the students who receive Tier 2 intervention, in addition to high-quality Tier 1 instruction, will achieve grade-level expectations.

For the other one quarter of the students, however, which equates to approximately 5% of all students, the instruction provided in Tiers 1 and 2 will be insufficient to meet learning needs. These nonresponding students are moved to Tier 3 to receive intense individualized interventions and frequent progress monitoring.

RTI in Secondary Schools

Minimal research has examined RTI models in secondary schools (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; National High School Center [NHSC] et al., 2010). Adapting the elementary RTI model to function in a secondary setting is one of the first challenges to implementation. Some of the confounding factors of secondary implementation include the following: (a) content-area teachers (not reading teachers) provide the evidence-based instruction in Tier 1, (b) block schedules increase the difficulty of scheduling and staffing interventions, (c) the need to demonstrate content-area mastery for high school credit puts pressure on students and educators, and (d) the emphasis on remediation rather than screening because most students who struggle with reading have typically already been identified (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010). Indeed, some researchers recommend that secondary students with reading difficulties bypass Tier 2 and move directly to Tier 3 because of the urgency of intervening for this population (Fuchs et al., 2010).

Tier 3: Not Just Tier 2 With More Time

Tier 3 interventions are commonly defined by three attributes: (a) individualized instruction, (b) intervention intensity, and (c) frequent and precise progress monitoring (Reschly, 2005; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010). These elements alone, however, may be insufficient for helping adolescents with significant reading difficulties respond to intervention curricula. Studies of secondary students receiving Tier 3 intervention using the same curriculum (as Tiers 1 and 2) with modifications in group size, instructional time, and supplemental instruction did not significantly contribute to improved educational outcomes (Vaughn et al., 2010; Vaughn et al., 2011). As a result, Tier 3 interventions should be distinguished from interventions at Tiers 1 and 2 by a substantive difference in instructional content and pedagogy (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Critical Content Components of Adolescent Reading Instruction in Tier 3 Settings

According to recent meta-analyses and research syntheses of adolescent reading instruction, there are at least eight commonly agreed upon critical components of adolescent reading instruction relevant in Tier 3 settings.

Content: What to Teach	
Prior Knowledge	Introducing, building, and clarifying necessary background knowledge for understanding the academic task.
Vocabulary and Concepts	Providing direct instruction on word meanings, word structure (morphology), and conceptual understanding.
Text Structure	Teaching students to recognize and use the organization of narrative and expository texts to support comprehension and expression.
Cognitive Strategies	Instructing techniques that help students develop and independently apply key behaviors and thinking skills that support comprehension.
Fluency	Teaching students how to orally read a text with appropriate rate, accuracy, and expression (prosody).
Decoding	Providing instruction on how to segment, blend, and decode multisyllabic words.
Motivation	Promoting engagement in learning, self-efficacy, and self-determination.
Writing Instruction	Teaching sentence construction skills, the writing process, and strategies to compose genre-specific text in order to enhance relevant reading abilities.

Selected References and Resources: Edmunds et al. (2009); Faggella-Luby & Deshler (2008); Graham & Hebert (2010); Kamil et al. (2008).

A Tool for Planning Adolescent Tier 3 Reading Instruction

Challenges to Successful Planning

Educators planning adolescent Tier 3 reading instruction face a herculean challenge. With limited research on RTI in secondary schools (NHSC et al., 2010), few models exist to help guide teachers' instructional planning. As a result, teachers must identify for themselves the critical components of reading instruction that are both foundational to content-area learning and also support skill development in key literacy areas (see Figure 1). In addition, teachers must identify *how* to teach these components so that students with a long history of learning difficulties can be successful (see Figure 2). Even for veteran educators, this is an incredibly complex undertaking. Many teachers, however, find ways to reduce the difficulty of planning this type of instruction by using planning tools developed in alignment with evidence-based instruction.

Instructional Planning Made Easy

One tool that alleviates the difficulty of planning adolescent Tier 3 reading instruction is the *Tier Three Adolescent Reading Instructional Planning Tool* (T-TIP). The T-TIP has been designed in alignment with the critical components of content and pedagogy appropriate for adolescents with reading difficulties, as described in Figures 1 and 2. It consists of two forms: T-TIP: Content (Table 1) and T-TIP: Pedagogy (Table 2) and includes examples and planning questions for each instructional component.

Used in conjunction with student diagnostic data, including nonresponse data from Tier 2 and educators' local lesson-plan template, the T-TIP reduces the difficulty of planning Tier 3 reading instruction for adolescents and ensures that this instruction moves beyond simply repeating ineffective Tier 2 instruction. T-TIP-constructed lesson plans support the many roles of special educator interventionists (Simonsen et al., 2010)

by (a) informing the planning of professional development for the general educators implementing the plan/lesson (push-in), (b) guiding consultation with general educators to ensure fidelity of implementation, (c) supporting collaboration with general educators on individualized education program (IEP) teams to develop appropriate and individualized programs for identified students, and (d) ensuring implementation of interventions and supports either by paraprofessionals or special educators themselves. Figure 3 lists the steps for using the T-TIP, and the next section of this article presents a detailed illustration of these steps.

Using the T-TIP for Instructional Planning

Step 1: Select Primary and Secondary Reading Content

First, Mrs. Silverman identifies the evidence-based content components to include in her lesson plan (Table 1). Diagnostic data and nonresponse data from Tier 2 showed that Dominic and

Figure 2. Critical Pedagogy Components of Adolescent Reading Instruction in Tier 3 Settings

Based on the existing literature, we have selected eight frequently cited components of explicit instruction effective for use with adolescent struggling readers and which facilitate teaching the eight content components of Tier 3 reading instruction.

Pedagogy: How to Teach	
Provide Advance Organizers	Engaging in activities that help students organize and integrate new information with prior knowledge.
Carefully Sequence and Segment Instruction	Breaking down a targeted skill into specific components and presenting information in small steps.
Control Task Difficulty	Targeting instruction at a student's ability level and providing guided instruction.
Provide Extensive Modeling	Using demonstration and think-alouds to explicitly model key learning behaviors and thinking skills.
Provide Opportunities for Questioning and Feedback	Providing many opportunities for students to respond and receive corrective feedback.
Encourage Self-Regulated Learning	Encouraging students to be active partners in the learning process by self-monitoring and self-evaluating their performance.
Provide Opportunities for Repeated Practice	Affording students multiple opportunities to practice taught skills in different contexts, such as through speaking, listening, and writing
Regularly Conduct Progress Monitoring Assessments	Conducting brief assessments of key aspects of reading ability and making instructional adjustments based on that data to ensure adequate response to instruction.

Selected References and Resources: Archer & Hughes (2011); Faggella-Luby & Deshler (2008); Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Graetz (2003); Swanson (1999).

Mia continue to struggle with decoding multisyllabic words, reading fluency, and reading motivation, even after 6 weeks of Tier 2 instruction. Mrs. Silverman recognizes, however, that a single lesson cannot address all of her students' weaknesses, and accordingly decides to prioritize her instruction. She decides that teaching rules for decoding multisyllabic words and developing fluency should take priority because when Dominic and Mia read accurately and at an appropriate rate, their motivation will likely improve, as well. Of these components, Mrs. Silverman prioritizes decoding as the primary and fluency as the secondary reading component to focus on in the lesson.

Adolescents who are struggling readers often have multiple skill deficits, which may mean that multiple content components are involved. Educators should consider prioritizing instruction to address the component(s) that will have the greatest impact. A single lesson does not need to include every component. The T-TIP, however, can be used to facilitate instructional planning that targets single or multiple content components. These content components are listed in the first column of the T-TIP: Content form (Table 1).

Step 2: Choose Example Activities for Primary Reading Content

Having selected the content components of decoding and fluency, Mrs. Silverman wants to know ways of effectively instructing these components. Mrs. Silverman uses the T-TIP to find examples of activities related to decoding. She decides to focus her lesson on teaching rules for decoding vowel-team syllables because Dominic and Mia struggle with these syllables and regularly encounter them in their texts.

To promote the use of evidence-based instruction within Tier 3 settings, the second column of the T-TIP: Content form lists example activities that educators can embed within their lesson plans to effectively address the content components they have selected (Table 1).

Step 3: Content Planning Questions for Primary Reading Content

Mrs. Silverman now uses the T-TIP to find planning questions related to decoding. Mrs. Silverman knows that there are many questions she will ask herself about teaching decoding—such as how much time to devote to this component and which words she will use as examples. She knows, however, that if she addresses the T-TIP's planning questions, her lesson plan will not overlook any critical considerations for teaching decoding. Accordingly, Mrs.

Table 1. The *Tier Three Instructional Planning Tool* (T-TIP), T-TIP: Content

Component	Example Reading Content Activities	Planning Questions
Prior Knowledge	Engaging students in a discussion prior to reading about the ideas/themes of the text.	Have I determined what relevant prior knowledge is necessary to introduce for understanding the academic task?
	Asking students to reflect on what they already know about a topic and any life experiences they have had that relate to the ideas/themes of the text.	How will I embed learning opportunities in my lesson to introduce, build, and/or clarify my students' relevant prior knowledge?
Vocabulary and Concepts	Clarifying the meaning of relevant academic language and/or discipline-specific terminology prior to reading.	Have I analyzed the text for any unfamiliar academic vocabulary and discipline-specific terms?
	Providing students with multiple exposures of key terms using examples and non-examples to increase word learning.	How will I introduce student-appropriate definitions and build knowledge of word structure prior to or during my lesson?
Text Structure	Explaining how to identify different types of text structures from the curriculum (e.g., narrative, compare/contrast, sequence, or problem-solution) by drawing students' attention to critical text features.	Have I selected readings that represent clear examples of different text structures?
	Demonstrating how to use knowledge of text organization to identify key information.	How will I help my students to strategically use the organization of the text to understand key information?
Cognitive Strategies	Introducing goal-specific strategies (e.g., summarization, prediction, inferencing, questioning, predicting).	Have I pretested my students to learn what strategies are needed to help them accomplish academic tasks?
	Introducing packages of strategies to support flexible learning in multiple contexts (e.g., peer-assisted learning strategy and reciprocal teaching).	Have I selected a small number of powerful strategies for my students to master?
	Promoting self-monitoring and repair strategies for use during student learning.	How have I planned to use explicit instruction to demonstrate, model, and guide students to independent mastery of new strategies?
Fluency	Having students conduct repeated readings of difficult passages while providing error-correction.	Have I chosen texts for fluency practice that also support content area learning?
	Modeling appropriate rhythm, stress, and expression (prosody) and asking students to replicate the model while reading the same passage.	Does my lesson include activities that target expression (prosody) in addition to rate?
	Organizing students into high-low reading pairs to conduct partner reading.	What grouping strategies will I use to support fluency practice?
Decoding	Teaching students syllabication strategies.	How does my lesson sequence syllabication strategy instruction?
	Explicitly teaching rules for decoding the six syllable types.	How does my lesson assist students' progress to apply decoding skills in isolation, in sentences, and then in connected text?
	Instructing students to decode multisyllabic words by recognizing common prefixes, suffixes, and affixes, as well as common root words.	Does my lesson have high relevance? (i.e., does my lesson focus on root words and affixes that commonly appear in my students' text?)

continues

Table 1. *Continued*

Component	Example Reading Content Activities	Planning Questions
Motivation	Increasing student engagement by providing a clear rationale for learning.	When I introduce my topic, how can I emphasize the relevance and value of the topic to stimulate student interest?
	Increasing students' perceived self-efficacy by helping them identify their strengths and attribute their effort to their achievements.	How will I ensure that my students receive corrective feedback relevant to reading tasks that identifies their strengths and helps them attribute their effort to their achievements?
	Affording students chances to choose texts to read.	Does my lesson allow for students to have input and choice in what they read and how they engage with texts?
Writing Instruction	Explicitly teaching spelling skills, sentence-construction, and word choice.	Which published or student-created texts will I use to model the spectrum of writing skills?
	Teaching students the writing process: goal-setting, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.	How can I provide opportunities for students to write extended text, so that as readers they better identify a writer's decision making?
	Teaching students the knowledge and skills needed to write genre-specific text (e.g., narrative, persuasive, informative).	How can I supplement my lessons on Text Structure with opportunities for students to learn strategies for composing genre-specific text?

Silverman decides to (a) review syllabi-cation strategies, and (b) provide prac-tice decoding vowel-team syllables in isolation, within sentences, and within connected text.

Teachers ask themselves many questions to develop a clear plan of instruction. The T-TIP does not include every planning question, but includes a column of high-impact planning questions to ensure that educators do not over-look the critical instructional considerations related to instructing each content component.

Repeat Steps 2 and 3 for Additional Content Selected

Mrs. Silverman selected fluency as a secondary component. She repeated Step 2 to select repeated readings of passages that contains vowel-team syl-lables within multisyllabic words as an activity for Mia and Dominic. To ensure that she considers critical aspects of fluency instruction, Mrs. Silverman repeated Step 3 to review the planning questions related to fluency on the T-TIP.

Educators should not feel compelled to address every planning question in a single lesson. Future lessons can address any postponed considerations. Steps 2 and 3 can be repeated for any remaining content components that have been identified.

Step 4: Select the Pedagogy Components

Mrs. Silverman knows that often it is the "how" of instruction that makes the difference for struggling readers. So she uses T-TIP: Pedagogy (Table 2) to help her select evidence-based components of explicit instruction to include in her lesson plan. She reads through the component options and decides to address each of the eight components in her lesson, but to specifically focus on Control Task Difficulty, Provide Extensive Modeling, and Encourage Self-Regulated Learning.

The eight pedagogy components shown in Table 2 are arranged in order of teaching activities that occur at the beginning, middle, and end of a lesson. As such, they form an excellent peda-gogical structure for Tier 3 instruction.

Teachers, however, may wish to pay extra attention to certain components because of students' individual learn-ing needs.

Step 5: Choose Example Pedagogical Activities

Mrs. Silverman then reads through the examples of pedagogical activities to think of ways to address the pedagogy components in her lesson plan. She pays particular attention to the exam-ples for Control Task Difficulty, Provide Extensive Modeling, and Encourage Self-Regulated Learning since these components also help her address Dominic and Mia's motivation to read. For Control Task Difficulty, Mrs. Silverman decides to provide plenty of practice applying previously taught decoding skills before progressing to repeated readings of passages from To Kill a Mockingbird. *For Provide Extensive Modeling, she decides to include modeling of both behaviors and thinking skills. For Encourage Self-Regulated Learning, Mrs. Silverman plans to provide opportunities for*

Table 2. The *Tier Three Instructional Planning Tool* (T-TIP), T-TIP: Pedagogy

Component	Example Pedagogical Activities	Planning Questions
Provide Advance Organizers	• Discussing prior knowledge. • Stating lesson objectives.	How can I help students organize new learning with previously learned content?
Carefully Sequence and Segment Instruction	• Teaching foundational skills before advanced skills. • Breaking down the task or target skills into small steps.	How will I break down new skills into small steps to facilitate student learning and mastery?
Control Task Difficulty	• Matching texts to students' reading level. • Scaffolding practice from easy to difficult.	Have I identified the aspects of my lesson that I anticipate being most difficult for my students?
Provide Extensive Modeling	• Conducting extensive modeling of key learning behaviors. • Using think-alouds to model thinking and problem-solving skills.	What are the critical behaviors and thinking skills that I should model for this learning task?
Provide Opportunities for Questioning and Feedback	• Asking low-level and high-level questions. • Providing corrections and feedback regarding content and skills.	When are the critical points in my lesson that I should ask questions and provide elaborative feedback to students?
Encourage Self-Regulated Learning	• Helping students set learning goals and establish plans to meet those goals. • Prompting students to self-evaluate performance.	Have I helped students set measureable goals that they can self-evaluate?
Provide Opportunities for Repeated Practice	• Affording multiple opportunities to practice taught skills. • Using writing, listening, and speaking as means for improving reading skills.	Have I provided ample opportunities for students to practice new skills in multiple modes of response?
Regularly Conduct Progress Monitoring Assessments	• Frequently using CBM probes to monitor and chart student progress. • Adjusting instruction based on students' response to intervention.	Have I selected clear criteria for determining when to make instructional adjustments?

Note. CBM = curriculum-based measurement.

Dominic and Mia to set goals and self-monitor their progress.

> **Instructional planning is only the beginning of implementing high-quality Tier 3 instruction.**

The examples of pedagogical activities help teachers think about ways of addressing each pedagogy component in their lesson. Certain activities may be more or less salient depending on the individual needs of the student or the location of a particular lesson within a unit.

Step 6: Pedagogy Planning Questions

To ensure that she does not overlook any critical instructional considerations related to pedagogy, Mrs. Silverman uses the planning questions of T-TIP (Table 2). After considering the planning questions for Control Task Difficulty, she acknowledges that Dominic and Mia will likely have difficulty conducting repeated readings and plans to introduce this activity carefully to ensure they are successful. For the remaining two components, Mrs. Silverman decides to model problem-solving skills related to repairing miscues when reading connected text, and help Dominic and Mia set measureable reading goals.

The planning questions of T-TIP: Pedagogy (Table 2) help teachers focus their mental energy on critical instructional considerations related to explicit instruction. These questions also help educators clarify how to implement selected pedagogy components.

Step 7: Implement High-Quality Tier 3 Instruction

With a completed lesson plan in hand, Mrs. Silverman feels confident that her instruction is aligned with evidence-

Figure 3. Instructions for Using the T-TIP for Planning Tier 3 Instruction for Adolescents

T-TIP: Content (steps 1-3)

Step 1: Select Primary and Secondary Reading Content
Based on diagnostic data, select the component(s) from *T-TIP: Content* to address your students' particular reading-specific weaknesses.

Step 2: Choose Example Activities for Primary Reading Content
Select activities from the Example Reading Content Activities column for the content component you have prioritized as being the primary content of the lesson.

Step 3: Use *T-TIP: Content* Planning Questions for Primary Reading Content
Determine the critical considerations for instruction for primary reading content through reading the Planning Questions column.

Repeat steps 2 and 3 for additional selected content components

Choose Example Activities for Additional Reading Content
Select activities from Example Reading Content Activities for your secondary reading component.

Use *T-TIP: Content* Planning Questions for Additional Reading Content
Read Planning Questions to determine the critical instruction related to your secondary content component.

T-TIP: Pedagogy (steps 4-6)

Step 4: Select the Pedagogy Components
Select the pedagogy components from the *T-TIP: Pedagogy* that best facilitate achieving the goal(s) of your students.

Step 5: Choose Example Pedagogical Activities
Read the column of Example Pedagogical Activities to choose how you will address each pedagogical component.

Step 6: Use *T-TIP: Pedagogy* Planning Questions
Read through the Planning Questions column and determine the critical considerations for instruction that should be addressed related to pedagogy.

Step 7: Implementing High-Quality Tier 3 Instruction
With a completed lesson plan in hand, enact your efforts toward implementing Tier 3 interventions and supports for your students.

Note. Steps 1–3 require T-TIP: Content. Steps 4–6 require T-TIP: Pedagogy.

based practices. Having expended less energy on the planning process, Mrs. Silverman also feels energized and ready to enact this high-quality Tier 3 reading instruction lesson plan.

Instructional planning is only the beginning of implementing high-quality Tier 3 instruction. It should not exact a great toll on special educators' mental energy. The T-TIP facilitates instructional planning and helps educators expend their energy where it is needed most, for instruction and problem solving with students. The special

educator is now ready to enact the completed lesson plan. The teacher may then use it for various purposes, whether for providing professional development, for consultation, for use in collaborating with other teachers, or for directly implementing interventions and supports for struggling readers.

Final Thoughts

In this article, we have contextualized adolescent reading instruction within the RTI framework and have identified

the critical components of content and pedagogy appropriate for adolescents most at risk of reading failure. By using a planning tool created in alignment with these components, educators can reduce the complexity of instructional planning, develop high-quality Tier 3 reading instruction and interventions, and guide necessary supports for implementation. It is our hope that by doing these things, the T-TIP will assist educators in helping those most at risk of reading failure experience academic success.

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