RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION & INTERVENTION

RTI^2 REOPENING GUIDE

NOTE: All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

Contents

Overview

While safety and logistics continue to be top concerns for the 2020-21 school year, schools must also prioritize the needs of our students receiving critical tiered interventions. The guiding questions and considerations in this toolkit are intended to be a springboard to inspire educators' creative and innovative solutions for providing students with tiered intervention within the school models being utilized throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessment

Assessment of student learning provides continuous, vital feedback on the effect of school closures and the effectiveness of instruction, and it informs important changes to teachers' instructional strategies. Assessments are essential to providing engaging, tailored instruction that addresses students' individual needs, especially following an extended-school closure. Students often experience some learning loss during the traditional summer break, often referred to as a "summer slide." The extended school closures due to COVID-19 will have an additional impact on this learning loss. Therefore, it is even more critical for schools to assess current student knowledge and skills to determine "just-in-time" instruction while concurrently providing grade-level standards-based instruction (benchmark/interim assessment). Students with disabilities or those who were receiving tiered intervention should be assessed to determine their current levels of performance and any additional skill deficit impact or needs (diagnostic assessment).

School teams should use multiple types of data throughout the problem-solving process to make data-based decisions. These types of assessments include screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, standards-based summative, and other quantitative and qualitative data explained on the next page.

Types of Data Collection: Ways to Gather Evidence of Learning

Type of Data	Purpose	Examples (not an exhaustive list)	May provide information for:
Universal Screener Data	• Brief, informative tools used to measure academic skills (i.e., phonemic awareness, decoding skills, math problem solving, written expression) and non-academic skills that are predictors of future success. • Typically administered to all students in the fall, winter, and spring for K-8; grades 9-12 utilize an Early Warning System (EWS). • A skills-based universal screener is the most appropriate, defensible tool for identifying students that have skills deficits and informing the need for a skills-based intervention. • For the 20-21 school year, district may want to delay until all students have had at least several weeks of remediation.	• AIMSWeb • EasyCBM • DIBELS • SRSS (Student Risk Screening Scale)	• Intervention area(s) of need • Area(s) in need of diagnostic/ drill-down assessments
Diagnostic Data	• Informal and/or standardized assessments that identify specific skill deficits in need of intervention. • Typically administered to students who are not making adequate progress and may be administered at any time during the school year when a more in-depth analysis is needed.	• Phonological Awareness Skills Screener (PASS) • Phonics and Word Reading Survey (PWRS) • Math error analysis • Running records	• Informing intervention instruction • Narrowing the focus of intervention
Progress Monitoring Data	• Progress monitoring is used to assess a student's academic performance, to quantify a student's rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction/ intervention and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction/intervention. • General outcome measures are broad and nationally normed to determine rate of improvement, while mastery measures are based on day-to-day instruction to measure mastery of skills taught during intervention. • Typically administered more frequently (1-2 times per month for general outcome measures and at least weekly for mastery measures).	General Outcome Measures • AIMSWeb • EasyCBM • DIBELS Mastery Measures • Intervention program assessments • Teacher made tests that provides a skill mastery check on taught materials	• Quantifying a student's progress in an intervention • The need to change intervention intensity • The need to assess intervention fidelity

Type of Data	Purpose	Examples (not an exhaustive list)	May provide information for:
Grade-level Assessment of Standards	• These are measures of student learning at the end of a learning period (i.e. semester/year/course). State-level summative assessments include TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) and EOC (end of course) assessments, including alternative assessments. • Typically administered as a summative end-of-year or end-of-course assessment. Optional free additions are being provided for the 2020-21 school year to allow for measurement of standards missed during school closure, as well as checkpoints throughout the school year.	• TCAP/TN Ready • Start of Year Checkpoint • Assessment Platform w/TCAP Item Bank & Reporting • Full-length "Mock" Interim Assessments (mirror current TCAP summative assessments)	• Learning loss/regression of/missing knowledge/ skills due to extended closure to inform accessible instruction • Remediation required due to closure • Mastery of grade-level standards
Qualitative and other Quantitative Data	• Multiple types and sources of information can provide contextual information useful for making decisions about students and instruction. • Typically administered regularly throughout the school year.	• Teacher observation, classroom grades, common formative assessments, informal skills inventory, state-level assessments, attendance, behavioral patterns, anecdotal notes, intervention records	• Corroborating other data from assessments • Understanding context to inform decision-making

Universal Screener

Upon reopening, students should be assessed to make decisions regarding academic learning loss. However, students will require a readjustment period to recoup their skills and accurately demonstrate what they know. Therefore, it is *not* advised to give the Universal Screener immediately and instead wait to administer the Universal Screener during the LEAs normal timeframe, which allows students time to participate in some form of learning recovery/recoupment.

The department will provide the Start of Year Checkpoint to districts at the start of the school year as an optional standards-based benchmark assessment. Like other standards-based assessments, the data from this tool should be considered as one of multiple data sources when making student placement decisions, but it does not take the place of the skills-based universal screener.

As always, universal screening results should be shared with parents, including for students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.

Virtual Assessment

In traditional school settings, it is recommended that districts prioritize in-person assessment (i.e., universal screener, progress monitoring) when possible. When this is not possible, districts should contact their assessment vendor for guidance on how to virtually assess with their specific product rather than exploring alternatives such as computer-based assessments. In situations where virtual assessments are utilized, it is recommended to problem solve variables and barriers to obtaining valid results and provide ways to mitigate for such problems as much as possible. Additionally, it will be especially critical to use multiple sources of data (e.g., mastery measures) during the data-based decision making/ screening process.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is used to assess a student's academic performance, to quantify a student's rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring schedules (e.g., at least every other week) should commence with intervention groups upon reopening. Educators should anticipate some learning loss upon the start of school. The rate at which a student regains skills should help guide the RTI^2 team's decisions. A student's change or lack of change in skill development may be due to:

- a disruption to learning,
- the need for a more intensive intervention, or
- a referral for a special education evaluation.

As a reminder, a nationally normed, general outcome measure given on grade-level should be administered to help identify the student's achievement gap. However, it should be noted that national norms may not represent current grade level norms, given the disruption to instruction for all students. Therefore, teams should also consider local class, school, or district norms for students who were instructed in like modes when gauging progress. Given the different learning models being implemented this year, if a district uses different types of normed progress monitoring

measures other than general outcome measures (e.g. computer-based measures), it is critical to ensure alignment between the skills addressed through intervention and those measured on the given progress monitoring measure.

When a student's skills are significantly below grade level, it is recommended that teams also consider additional measures on the student's instructional level to measure incremental progress. For example, the team may use assessments that are built into intervention programs to gain progress checks that inform lesson planning. Additionally, teams may want to consider other sources of data that indicate whether the student is mastering specific skills taught (e.g., intervention-based assessments, teacher made tests based on completed lesson plans, growth on skills inventories, etc.)

Below are actions steps that may be helpful when determining student progress:

- Develop appropriate mastery measures given the frequency and intensity of lesson delivery.
    - For example, if lessons are less frequent than five days a week and growth on general outcome measures appears slower than previous years, include weekly teacher checks after intervention lessons to gauge the student's mastery of the skills addressed during intervention. The collection of data should be viewed collectively to inform decisions.
- In addition to general outcome measures, consider formative assessments and other measures of distinct skills after lesson delivery to inform intervention decisions.
    - For example, consider any assessment information embedded in the intervention program or consider administering diagnostic inventories that demonstrate a student's skills pre- and post- intervention delivery. Consider local norms and compare the student's growth to that of typical peers and like peers (peers instructed similarly) to inform decisions.
- Ensure there is documentation for parent notification of their child's intervention and progress. Consider revising any parent letters to communicate clearly what is being done for intervention and why.
- Review the obtained data regularly to inform intervention and formative assessment changes. For example, if the entire intervention group is not making progress, problem solve potential reasons, adjust accordingly, and determine the effectiveness of the adjustments. If one student in a group is not making progress, follow the same problem-solving procedure to help determine child specific intervention needs.
- Consider alternate ways to obtain progress monitoring data to inform growth. If a student is not making progress, it may be necessary to utilize traditional methods to track progress by scheduling one-on-one progress monitoring. Data teams should consider all data and any barriers to growth when making decisions.

Early Warning System

Early Warning Systems consist of multiple sources of data that help to identify students who are at risk academically. In the absence of formative and summative data, LEAs will need to consider reestablishing their criteria, thresholds for each indicator, and/or the weight of indicators for identifying at-risk students.

Tier 1

Learning Loss, Learning Recover, and Remediation

Learning Loss:
The decline in knowledge or skills due to a disruption in learning.

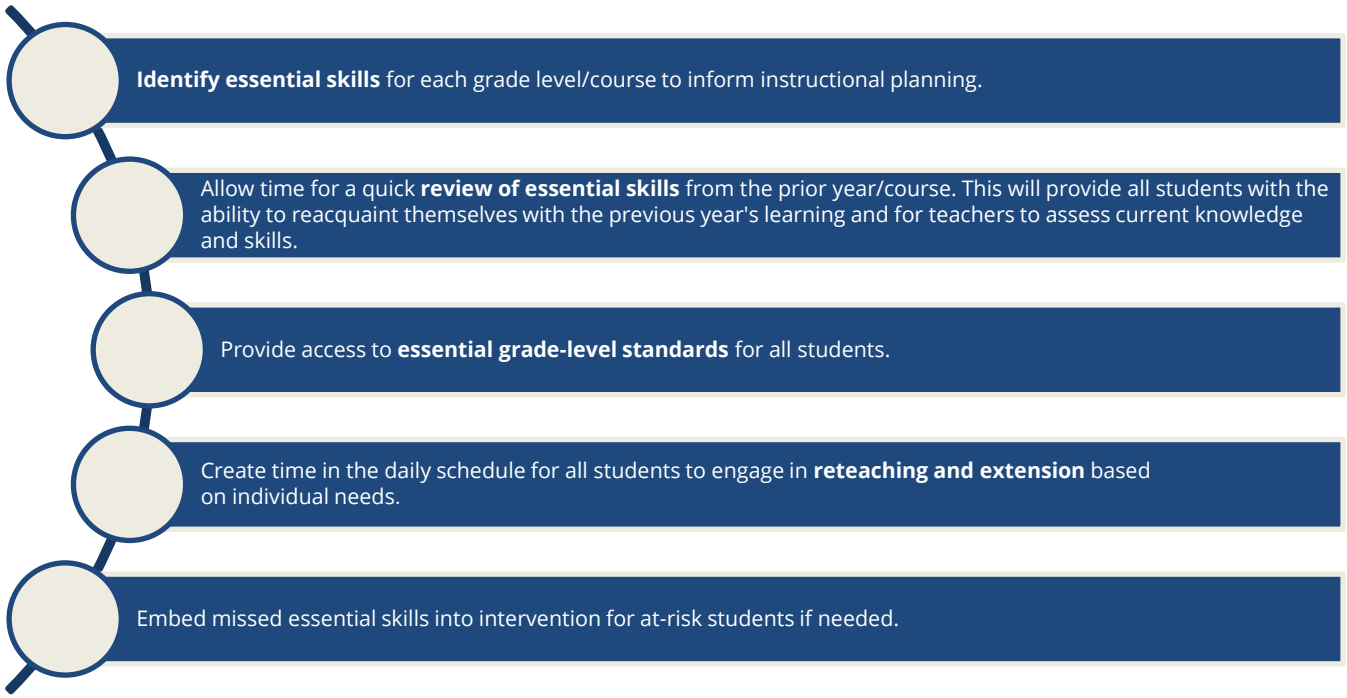
Learning Recovery:
The time it takes to regain skills to the prior level of functioning

Remediation:
Corrective instruction that fills in gaps in understanding, skills, or knowledge

As schools reopen, it is likely that the disruption to learning will result in students experiencing some learning loss, including those who were previously not receiving intervention. This will require an adjustment period for all students to address academic needs. Therefore, LEAs will need to put a plan in place for all students to receive remediation opportunities. See the following reopening toolkits for Tier I planning and supports:

- Academics
- Access and Opportunity

The steps below may assist districts in developing a remediation process.



Questions for Consideration

- What data will you utilize to determine remediation intensity?
- How will teams determine students with expected levels of learning loss versus students with significant levels of learning loss?
- What professional development is needed to assist teachers in identifying skills for remediation and matching it with instruction?
- When will vertical planning take place to assist instruction on missed/needed prior-year skills?
- How will teams determine essential skills from the previous year/course to guide assessment and remediation?
- How might you utilize your pacing guide when planning for remediation?
- What materials are needed for both teachers and students in the different learning environments?
- How long do you expect learning loss and learning recovery/recoupment to occur before flagging at-risk students with intervention needs?
- How much time will be needed for remediation?
- When will remediation occur within your instructional blocks or schedule?

Tier II & III Interventions

Interventions should be systematic and evidence-based, targeting the student's needs using a problem-solving approach to align interventions to the identified area of deficit. The level of intervention intensity is typically determined using a review of the previous year's data, demonstrated improvement or lack of progress, in conjunction with any new data provided or collected at the beginning of the school year.

Interventions should include four essential elements (Witt, VanDerHeyden & Gilbertson, 2004):

1. A clearly defined target that is specific, observable and measurable
2. Baseline data that is used as a point of comparison throughout the intervention
3. A performance goal which indicates a date by which a student is expected to have attained the targeted skill
4. Progress-monitoring plan for regularly collecting data to track student performance

Although schools may be reopening in various models (i.e., traditional, staggered schedule, alternating days, distance learning, etc.) and intervention may not look the same, it is critical that interventions still occur and the RTI^2 Framework is followed to the greatest extent possible. To do this, it is important to adhere to the core practices of the RTI^2 Framework as closely as possible:

- Use assessment for screening, diagnosis, and progress monitoring;
- Apply RTI^2 decision-making process;
- Follow recommended group sizes;
- Implement interventions with fidelity; and
- Apply standards of intervention practice.

For students requiring special education services, please refer to the Special Education Framework, The Path Forward, and/or School Re-Opening Toolkit: Special Populations.

Planning Intervention

When reopening, schools should prioritize restarting interventions with students previously assigned to Tier II and Tier III. A district can reinstate previous interventions until it has the opportunity to complete universal screening and diagnostic assessments. Reinstating previous interventions (or similar interventions that are more age/grade appropriate) will ensure students' needs are being addressed; school teams should make intervention decisions on a student-by-student basis using prior progress data (including 2019-20 data), amount of instruction missed, and whether the student received supports during school closure.

The department strongly recommends that schools and district focus on re-acclimating and establishing relationships and routines in the opening days of school. When appropriate, districts should complete fall universal screening, diagnostics, and benchmark assessments, then teams should update students' placement in tiered intervention and make appropriate data collection decisions. As always, communicate any intervention changes and plans to parents.

Many students may demonstrate a new need for remediation. For students who do not need Tier II or III interventions, the intervention block may be used to provide whole group lessons to address lost instruction. Students who continue to demonstrate significant learning loss despite remediation and intervention efforts may need more intensive interventions. RTI^2 teams can use various data points to help with decision making, see examples below:

- Most recent screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring data
- Student attendance and participation in distance learning
- Teacher observation
- Parent observation and input
- Formative data gathered
- Student work samples
- At-risk student populations (i.e., special education, English learners)

A parent may request an evaluation at any time regardless of the student's placement in tiered interventions and all requests must be considered. See federal memo here.

Historical Data

All historical interventions and progress monitoring data should be considered when RTI² teams make decisions regarding interventions. The data collected prior to school closures in the 2019-20 school year should be included in decision-making. The beginning of the school year is not a "start over" but rather a continuation of data collection.

RTI² teams should consider the disruption to learning and natural learning loss that occurs after a break. The historical information is valuable when considering intensity of intervention needs. For example, a student may have demonstrated slow to little growth even before instruction was disrupted in the 2019-20 school year and thus a stronger intensity of intervention or an adjusted intervention plan that better aligns to deficits may be needed to address the current gaps of skill development.

Best Practices

The RTI² Framework is critical to supporting children in becoming ready students. The foundation of the RTI² framework is effective instruction, and a culture of high expectations for all students. Educators must provide high-quality, data-driven, differentiated instruction to all students.

Essential Questions

The goal of intervention is to provide high-quality instruction targeted and designed for at-risk students to master the skills needed to access the curriculum. Keep in mind the essential questions to consider when making decisions about design, delivery, and intervention plans/IEP goals including:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- What is it that we want learners to know, understand, and be able to do as a result?
- How do we design the learning opportunity to engage learners and move them to the desired outcome?
- How will we ensure fidelity to interventions to the greatest extent possible?

As schools plan for the challenge of determining how best to provide interventions through blended models of learning, begin by addressing the fundamental aspects of tiered interventions.

Intervention Within Different Models

Students Physically in School Building

During a pandemic, we understand that having students in-person and receiving interventions may look different; however, the RTI2 Framework's guidance and procedures are relevant and should be applied to the best extent possible.

Grouping Students

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends that student and staff groupings are

as static as possible with limited mixing between groups if possible[1]. Contact your local health department for recommendations about blending groups of students.

If students are leaving their classroom for intervention, you will need to plan for regular cleaning in-between student groups, as well as creating a plan for shared materials.

Materials and Manipulatives

The CDC's Considerations for Schools provides the following guidance around shared objects:

- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.
- Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assigning each student their own art supplies, equipment) or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
- Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.[1]

With these considerations in mind, districts may want to consider providing each child with a manipulative kit for shared items that are difficult to disinfect with less expensive alternatives (e.g., letter cards cut out of paper, pom-pom balls, sheet protector with changeable inserts, etc.).

Students Participating in Virtual Education

The RTI2 Framework's guidance and procedures still apply to virtual education; however, the way intervention is provided may look different within this model. It is important to prioritize the provision of high-quality interventions that are matched to students' needs with at least 50% synchronous instruction led by highly trained personnel. When determining how virtual intervention will be provided, LEAs must ensure experiences remain equitable, or similar, to in-person intervention experiences.

Below are considerations for planning equitable virtual intervention:

- How will virtual interventions provide at least 50% face-to-face virtual instruction from a teacher?
- What training is needed to support staff who are expected to provide engaging, skill-based synchronous virtual intervention?
- How will you utilize your master schedule to plan for tier II/III intervention blocks that will not interfere with whole group synchronous instruction?

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[1] Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, May 19). Considerations for Schools. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html

- What kind of information/tips should be provided to parents to ensure that the student is set up for success as much as possible?
- What materials will the student need and how will they be provided?
- What is needed to help determine intervention fidelity (e.g., attendance logs, ways to document student engagement/lack of engagement, completed lessons, etc.).
- How will you embed adequate planning time for educators providing intervention to adapt their materials to virtual instruction?

Providing Interventions Virtually

Delivering virtual intervention is nuanced (content, grade level, program, etc.); therefore, we recommend contacting intervention vendors for additional guidance and/or tools for virtual delivery of specific intervention programs.

It is also recommended that districts provide professional development on adapting instruction to a virtual platform to ensure high quality intervention is occurring. To support virtual delivery of interventions, please see Appendix A: Virtual Learning Accommodation Options. In addition, webinars and resources to support virtual instruction can be found at Best for All Central (i.e., Preparing My Remote Classroom, Leading in a Remote Learning Setting).

Data-Based Decision Making

> *"The school team should have plans in place, based on the results of data, for students who are making adequate progress and for students who are not making adequate process" (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017).*

As stated in the department's RTI2 framework, intervention decisions should be based on the data-based decision-making process. Data-based decision making is the use of appropriate data gathered through ongoing assessment to inform and drive instructional decisions. Step four of the model outlined in the framework (see components 1.4 and 2.4 of the RTI manual) indicates the school team should have plans in place, based on the results of data, for students who are making adequate progress and for students who are making adequate progress. The current implementation of various instructional models due to COVID-19 highlights the need to engage in data-based decision making.

Below are a few considerations while preparing for and making data-based decisions when providing interventions virtually:

- What data will you gather to know that students are making adequate progress?
- How often will data be reviewed to determine if adequate progress is or is not being made?
- What are the next steps if the student is not making adequate progress?
    - Does the high-quality intervention match the student's targeted area of need?
    - Do you need to intensify the intervention? Intervention intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

Students Participating in a Hybrid Schedule

LEAs may implement a schedule where some students are physically in buildings and some students are learning virtual. This can mean that students attend split days with half days at school and half days virtual, alternating days where students come to school on their scheduled days, or physical attendance based on need for students with the greatest needs. While this instructional model may look different than the traditional instructional model, the RTI2 Framework's guidance and procedures still apply. It is important to prioritize the provision of high-quality interventions that are matched to students' needs with at least 50% synchronous instruction led by highly trained personnel. When determining how intervention will be provided, LEAs must ensure experiences remain equitable, or similar, to in-person intervention experiences. LEAs should reference the sections 'Students Physically in the Building' and 'Students Participating in Virtual Education' to support planning for students in these two settings.

Below are considerations for planning equitable intervention while some students are in physical buildings and some students are virtual:

- How will students in need of tiered interventions be prioritized for in-person learning? For example, schools on split day schedules may have some students attend for the full day instead of just the morning or afternoon.
- How will you ensure that students in need of tiered intervention will receive high-quality intervention while attending in-person and virtually? Consider ways to structure weekly intervention plans to maximize direct instruction.
- What materials will students need during virtual intervention? Will students receive materials for virtual use, or will materials be brought to and from school?
- How will virtual days maintain continuity of the intervention? Will students receive synchronous or asynchronous learning on virtual learning days?
- Can progress monitoring be scheduled for in-person days to minimize variables?
- How will your intervention plan provide at least 50% face-to-face in-person and/or virtual instruction from a teacher?

Intervention Planning Considerations

As schools resume, all students will need time to readjust and engage in learning recovery/recoupment opportunities; however, students previously receiving tiered interventions should immediately resume their intervention plans and progress monitoring as soon as possible. In some cases, intervention materials may need to be adjusted, yet the interventions should still align with identified deficits. Intervention considerations are listed below to help guide planning.

- Intervention decision-making
    - Make team decisions based on a data-driven analysis using multiple sources of information.
    - Ensure there is alignment between the root cause of the student's deficit and the intervention.

  - Who should be part of the district-level team making decisions regarding intervention practices to ensure all tiers and exceptionalities are considered?
  - How will teams access historical data (including the 2019-20 year) to make informed decisions regarding intervention planning?
  - What is needed to ensure that teams have appropriate data to make decisions regarding dyslexia-specific interventions?
- Intervention logistical considerations
  - Consider the location of interventions, ensuring that staff and student safety and validity of the intervention remain at the forefront.
  - Consider the group size, location distractions, safety protocols needed for each unique student and staff member, and supplies needed to make the best possible decision for intervention groups.
  - What materials are needed for both teachers and students in the different learning environments?
  - What information will be provided to parents about interventions and how will it be provided?
  - How will decisions be communicated to those responsible for coding which students receive dyslexia-specific interventions in the district's student information system (SIS)?
  - If intervention is to occur virtually, what staff members will provide intervention and what training is needed?
  - How will progress monitoring occur in nontraditional models (i.e., virtually, in-person, scheduled in-person timeslots, etc.)?
- Intervention fidelity
  - Review the intervention design and make sure to select one that best enables the interventionist to maintain fidelity given the model of delivery. What does the intervention require of the instructor and the student? Is this possible in the current mode of delivery? Note any limitations in intervention delivery to address issues and consider the impact during decision making. The team may determine that a change in intervention programming is needed due to a change in delivery (i.e., in-person vs. virtual).
  - Determine how the district will document the lesson's fidelity components (e.g., student engagement, lesson delivery, frequency and duration of each intervention session, student attendance, observations, etc.). See example document in Appendix C.
  - Document the skills addressed within interventions to ensure team members can track the student's growth, or lack of growth, and whether it is resulting from a lack of instruction.
  - How will teams document parent contacts, student intervention participation, and fidelity when working in nontraditional instructional models?

Fidelity Monitoring

Fidelity is important to ensure an intervention was implemented as designed and the student was engaged in instruction. The intention of monitoring the fidelity of instruction and intervention is to have sufficient data to demonstrate the student was provided with appropriate instruction during the intervention. It is critical that the RTI2 Framework is followed to the greatest extent possible.

Issues with Fidelity due to School Closure

If there were problems with fidelity when schools closed in the spring or when schools opened in the fall, the RTI data team should investigate whether there was a difference in student performance/improvement when fidelity was improved to help determine if a lack of fidelity was the reason for the lack of progress.

Fidelity for Students Participating in Virtual Education

For virtual intervention, districts should determine how to best document attendance, delivery, alignment of materials to deficit area, and how the instruction was provided as it was designed. Any adaptations to the intervention methodology (e.g., virtually providing an intervention that was originally designed to be provided in person) should be noted and if ineffective, this should lead to a change in intervention and/or delivery. Districts will need to devise a plan for an instructional leader to monitor fidelity through direct (e.g., virtual synchronous intervention) and indirect fidelity checks. This is especially important for students who are not making progress or when fidelity is a concern. Teams should determine whether intervention fidelity could be contributing to a student's lack of progress identify any barriers and determine next steps to improve fidelity.

For example, they may want to have someone observe a synchronous lesson remotely. In such cases, the observer should note the following: student engagement, participation, teacher engagement strategies, lesson content, etc. During asynchronous lessons, it may be possible to observe the student through scheduled sessions that allow for an observer (whether remotely or in-person) to obtain needed information. Follow up discussions with the parent and the student may provide additional information to provide insight on the student's setting, distractions, the student's familiarity with the technology, duration of participation of lessons, student engagement with assigned tasks and instruction, etc.

Special Education Referrals

Parent Referrals

A parent may request an evaluation at any time regardless of the student's placement in tiered interventions. See federal memo here.

All parent requests should be considered in a timely manner. Make sure to collect all relevant information to help the referral team make an informed decision as to whether there is reason to suspect an educational disability. If the team suspects a disability, the team must initiate the evaluation process by obtaining consent for evaluation and providing the parent with prior written

notice. All evaluation criteria and eligibility guidelines are still required. If the team does not suspect a disability, they may decide not to evaluate and must provide the parent with prior written notice.

Pre-Referral Considerations

As schools reopen it is not unexpected to see an initial learning loss depending on the student's access to instruction during school closures. Before referring a student based on their current progress, all factors that may have influenced the student's skill level or needs. A referral is appropriate if you suspect that an **educational disability** is the reason for underperformance and potential need for specialized instruction should be considered. A referral may not be appropriate if the primary reason for underperformance is a lack of instruction, vision, or hearing difficulties (unless an impairment is suspected), adjustment to school re-entry, or concerns that can be addressed through general education programming.

Referrals

All historical interventions and progress monitoring (see applicable sections above) should be considered when teams make decisions regarding referrals for special education. See the reopening toolkit for special education for more information regarding referrals. If the team suspects a disability, they must initiate the evaluation process. As a reminder, all evaluation criteria and eligibility guidelines are still required.

Evaluations

The disability standards (i.e., evaluation procedures and required participants) must still be followed when evaluating for a specific learning disability. The RTI^2 framework provides evidence- and research-based practices related to instruction, intervention, progress monitoring, and data-based decisions using formative assessments. Given the unique challenges that districts are facing and the unprecedented situations the pandemic has created with varying instructional models; assessment teams should continue to follow research-based practices, such as utilizing a problem-solving model to investigate a student's responsive to intervention that best enables teams to determine eligibility. The assessment team should refer to the specific learning disability (SLD) standards, review all past and current relevant information as usual, evaluate the effectiveness of intervention plans and instruction (including fidelity and engagement), and address each evaluation component. When questions arise, teams should problem solve how to test hypothesis regarding reasons for underperformance and continue to track student growth to provide data on changes in performance trajectories.

Below are considerations and guidance on how to address the evaluation standards during this unprecedented time:

- The evaluation team must include at minimum the parent, general education teacher, special education teacher, and licensed school psychologist). When developing the assessment plan consider the role of each assessment team member and how they might help gather needed information as part of the evaluation.
- Ensure all materials are sensitive to cultural, linguistic, environmental factors, and sensory (e.g., hearing, vision, and motor) impairments

- Use the TN Assessment Instrument Selection Form to help identify and plan for child-specific assessment considerations
- Include the reasons for selected materials, especially if they are chosen to address any of the factors that could influence test results, in the written report.
- Consider environmental factors that may impact the delivery of interventions, pre-referral formative assessments validity, and other data collected in the different instructional models. For example, in virtual settings, note all factors that need to be considered when reviewing intervention and formative assessment data. In-person assessment considerations should include the safety protocols needed when administering the assessment and how those protocols may impact the validity/ reliability of the results.
- Consider linguistic and cultural differences for EL students. Use available resources to help determine the best assessments to obtain the most valid results. To plan more effectively, consult with the student's ESL teacher, review national best practices, and include parent interview information. Below is a list of resources and data sources to consider:
  - Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for English learners
  - WIDA/ACCESS scores and break down of areas
  - Peer comparison (with like language proficiency) progress monitoring
  - Parent interviews (cultural, language, health, past educational exposure) (see sample interview form: Ethnographic Interview for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students)
  - Educational history/ cumulative file (attendance, school history, previous special education services in native country)
  - ESL history (e.g., proficiency in the primary language, length of time exposed to English, ESL service history and supports received)
  - American Speech-Language-Hearing-Association: ELLs in the Schools
  - Assessment technical manuals (e.g., to look at sample population and standardization flexibility)
  - Tennessee Association of School Psychology Resources
  - National Association of School Psychology
- Review the most recent hearing and vision screening; the family may provide a copy of the student's most recent physician's screening for consideration.

To ensure the student's underachievement is not due to a lack of instruction in grade level standards, the evaluation should address Tier I and intervention instruction (including methodology and fidelity data), formative assessment data (or progress monitoring) , and the data-based decisions implemented to improve the student's outcomes. As referenced in the RTI^2 COVID Considerations document, all data should be considered and interpreted in context. The written report should clearly outline the student's history, information obtained from progress monitoring, and how the data informed decision-making regarding the student's interventions. The RTI^2 framework provides a research-based model for decision making and intervention planning. To the

greatest extent possible, RTI2 practices should continue within that model. Given the various instructional models provided during the pandemic, make sure to also document the instructional methodology, any limitations of that methodology or fidelity concerns that may have impacted learning, and how the interventions were adapted in attempt to mitigate concerns. When reviewing formative assessments provided, include data associated with intervention-based measures that indications of growth on taught skills (e.g., measures of mastery) and any other data collected by the interventionist to help determine if the student was instructed and received intervention appropriately in the deficit area. These practices will help develop the body of evidence for the team to consider.

Further guidance on the evaluation procedures and eligibility criteria can found in the RTI^2 COVID FAQ guidance document and in the SLD evaluation template in Appendix B.

Resource List

Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)

Tennessee's multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) is a framework for seeing how all the practices, programs, and interventions fit together to meet students' needs both within an individual classroom and across the school building.

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

NASP has been putting together resources including the Ask the Experts Webinar Series featuring lead researchers and practitioners in the education field. They have launched a special series that will only be available to NASP members (everything else has been free to date) that will focus exclusively on returning to school with special in-depth webinars addressing academic and mental/behavioral health issues.

National Center on Intensive Intervention

The National Center on Intensive Interventions (NCII) provides tools and resources to help leaders, including school and district administrators, for leading tiered systems of support and special education initiatives. They have created resources specific to current needs presented through the pandemic which include sample lessons for educators and families, frequently asked questions regarding progress monitoring virtually, tips for implementing lessons virtually, and engaging parents.

National Center on Improving Literacy

A website with tools and resources for state agencies, schools, and families on improving literacy outcomes. Topics include beginning reading, dyslexia, identification, interventions, legislation, and screening.

Special Education Re-Opening Toolkit

This is a Tennessee Department of Education resource for schools as they re-open. It can be found on the site with all other department reopening toolkits and has references to more

Tennessee Department of Education Teleservices Toolkit

A teleservices toolkit for related service providers was developed to assist specialists with considerations for delivering services remotely.

What Works Clearinghouse

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews the existing research on different *programs*, *products*, *practices*, and *policies* in education. *Our goal* is to provide educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions. We focus on the results from *high-quality research* to answer the question "What works in education?"

Appendix

Appendix A: Virtual Learning Accommodation Options

Accommodations change ***how*** the student is taught or expected to learn. They provide necessary access during instruction and assessments and neither change the construct being assessed, nor compromise the integrity or validity of the assessment or content. They are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability or limited English language proficiency. They do

not reduce learning expectations, if based on need.

Accommodation	Virtual Learning Options
Presentation	
Large print	Change your computer settings (Settings-->Ease of Access -->Make text bigger)
Text read aloud or on audio tape	• Assign audio books (e.g., Epic!, Storyline Online, Newsela) • Enable your computer/device to read text (e.g., Read Aloud Google Chrome Extension) • Enable your computer/device to scan paper assignments and read aloud (e.g., Reader+, Read Text of Scanned Documents, KNFB Reader) • Preview the assignment. Reduce repetitive questions (e.g., odds, evens, 1-5) • This should not change the complexity of the task, just the number of items completed
Provide a designated reader	
Present instructions orally	
Reduce number of items per page	
Provide a copy of the notes/outline	• Many video chat platforms allow you to add automatic transcription • Take a picture of your notes and send it to the student • Have another student take a picture of their notes and share it • Share your digital notes
Get a written list of instructions	• Type up a clear, concise list of step-by-step instructions and share it with the student
Provide graphs and visual aids such as graphic organizers and webs	• Incorporate visual aids during lessons • Record yourself creating a graphic organizer or web using whiteboard apps (e.g., ShowMe, Educreations) and share with the student • Take pictures of visual aids used and send it to the student
Response	
Allow verbal responses as needed	• Enable 'Voice Recorder' on your computer to allow the student to record their verbal response. • A student can send their voice recording to the teacher via Google Classroom, Edmodo or email.
Answers to be dictated to a scribe	• Enable your computer to perform voice to text (e.g., Voice to Text a Google Chrome Extension).
Permit responses to be given via computer	• For paper and pencil assignments, allow the student to complete his or her response on a computer.
Permit spelling and grammar assistive device for writing assignments	• Enable spell and grammar checker on Microsoft platforms, Google platforms, etc.
Use a calculator or table of "math facts"	• Supply a calculator from the school or teach the student how to use the calculator app on their device.
Timing	
Provide a daily schedule	• Since virtual learning allows for more flexibility with time, create a daily schedule with required times for online learning (e.g., video lesson, chat discussion).

	• Reach out to the parents and work collaboratively to create a daily schedule that meets the needs of the student.
Allow extra time to respond to questions in class	• Provide think time during virtual learning before requiring a response. • Have a student type/submit their answer once they have it instead of giving a time restriction for their response.
Allow frequent breaks	• Create a document outlining suggestions for when to take breaks and generate ideas with the student about what they can do during their breaks. • Share student breaks document with the parents/care giver. • First/then statements (e.g., first complete _____, then you may _____).
Extend allotted time for a test	• Inform the student that they have additional time to complete an assignment/test. • Encourage the student to approximate the amount of time they may need for an assignment/test.
Allow additional time to complete an assignment	
Setting	
Provide preferential seating	• Preferential seating means that a student's seat is placed in a location that is most beneficial for his/her learning. • Talk with the student and/or parents about where in their home may be the best place for the student to work.
Provide a space with minimal distractions	
Provide special lighting or acoustics	
Test in small group setting	• At home learning is already a small group setting.
Use sensory tools such as an exercise band that can be looped around a chair's legs	• Allow the parents/care giver to pick up sensory tools the student used at school to use at home. • Create a list of sensory tools that are commonly found at home (e.g., sand, beads, Velcro, weighted blanket).
Organization	
Use a timer to complete a task	• Provide options for timers at home (e.g., kitchen timer, phone timer, Visual Countdown Timer app, Visual Timer app).
Mark texts with a highlighter	• Create a task in Microsoft Word or Google Docs and highlight areas to assist with organization (i.e., math key words, reading clue words, the question being asked).
Other	
Provide redirection	• Use precise language to reinforce, remind, and redirect.
Use nonverbal signals to re-engage a student	• You can use eye contact, a facial expression, proximity (move closer), tap on desk, gesture.

Appendix B: Specific Learning Disabilities Assessment Document- COVID-19 Guidance Added

Specific Learning Disabilities

Assessment Documentation Form

☐**Initial** ☐**Comprehensive Re-Evaluation**

Student Name:	**DOB:**	**Age:**
School:	**Grade:**	
Parents:	**Test Date(s):**	
Examiner:		

Reason for Referral

Provide a summary of the reason the student was referred for an evaluation (e.g., what led the team to suspect an educational disability).

Background Information

Include any relevant background information such as educational history, attendance, previous evaluations, behavior concerns/ intervention plans (if applicable), etc.

**Additional information to include: instructional history/standards taught in area of deficit prior to 2019-2020 school closures; any instructional opportunities occurring during school closures.*

Parent Input/ Developmental History

Include any pertinent familial information. Student developmental history, medical history, etc.

**Additional information to include: parent interviews, information related to the impact of school closures and pandemic on the student's wellness, any differences in their child's academic performance (from 2019-2020 compared to the current year), any observational input if student is taking part in remote instruction (e.g., on student engagement/ participation in instruction, distractibility, motivation, technology concerns, stamina, etc.),*

Teacher Input

Include indirect observations, work samples, informal checklists, teacher interviews/input regarding overall academic and behavior strengths, weaknesses, needs, concerns, etc.

**Additional information to include: input from last year's teacher as compared to input from the current year's teacher, the current year's teacher interaction level with the student (e.g., if virtual-how do they build rapport, how are they able to track student learning, any concerns regarding student engagement, etc.).*

Student Concerns/Input

Complete if the student provided input as part of the evaluation. Delete this section if not appropriate.

**Additional information to consider: student interviews (gain input on the student's perspective on the current instructional model used such as what their instructional setting and schedule looks like, how much time they spend on given tasks, any challenges to learning this year compared to last year's instruction and interventions, whether they have access to what is needed to participate, motivation and distractibility challenges, etc.). Also, consider obtaining student self-rating engagement checks during tier I instruction and tiered interventions.*

Tier I - Core Instruction

In the narrative section, provide an overview of the data collected that provides evidence the student received appropriate instruction in the area of deficit as part of Tier I instruction. It may be appropriate to provide a historical reference to standards instruction of foundation skills that were taught in earlier grades that were addressed through interventions. Expectations across grade bands for Tier I English language arts (ELA) and math instruction can be found in component 2 of the RTI² framework.

Indicate if the evidence demonstrates that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the student was provided appropriate instruction (i.e., empirically research-based instruction that is rigorous and systematic) in regular education settings delivered by qualified and appropriately trained personnel.

**Additional information to consider: input/indirect observations from the previous year's teacher(s) to include the pacing of scope and sequence and standards covered/not covered related to the area of deficit; input from this year's teacher regarding the instructional modality the student is receiving (e.g., hybrid scheduling, virtual asynchronous instruction, virtual synchronous instruction, traditional in-person);the use of class wide formative and benchmark assessments to guide instruction; feedback opportunities provided to the student; methodologies used in the current instructional modality; remediation and recoupment efforts due to loss of learning from school closures; standards covered related to area of deficit; and evidence-based strategies used in Tier I.*

Intervention Review

Check the appropriate box and provide a summary that includes evidence of the data and data-based documentation referenced. If the answer is "no" to either statement, provide an explanation in your summary and whether it appears to have impacted the overall outcome of the student's progress. Document use of the problem-solving model to describe how the team:

- *identified problems (e.g., initial deficits compared to typical peer performance nationally and locally);*
- *analyzed problems, indicating potential causes for deficits, and identified plans to address them (e.g., data used to perform a root cause analysis to plan how to address the deficits/barriers);*

- *developed and implemented an intervention plan (e.g., interventions used, adjusted interventions based on identified barriers, frequency/duration/ intensity of interventions, etc.); and*
- *evaluated the intervention plan (e.g., the frequency and outcome of team reviews including evaluation of progress monitoring and fidelity monitoring data).*

**Additional information to consider: The problem-solving model analysis is especially important to communicate in the written report. Follow the steps above when outlining any differences made to intervention for those who resumed or began interventions post school closures due to the states of emergency in 2019-20. Consider all historical information regarding interventions, intervention decisions during this school year, regression and recoupment due to loss of learning (as identified by any diagnostics/ formative assessments), instructional delivery, fidelity findings and data-informed decisions to address concerns, summary of skills taught and mastered, summary of skills taught mastered/ not mastered, and summary of formative assessments provided (to include all historical data, normative data and additional data obtained from formative assessments used to drive instruction). Refer to the RTI² framework for an overview of Tier II and III data sources, decision making, and tiered intervention expectations.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Data demonstrates that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the student was provided appropriate instruction during interventions (i.e., empirically research-based instruction that is rigorous, systematic, and implemented with fidelity) delivered by qualified and appropriately-trained personnel.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Data-based documentation of repeated assessments (e.g., a reliable trend of progress monitoring data, collected weekly or every other week throughout tiered interventions; approximately 20-30 data points if collected weekly or approximately 16-20 if data points if collected every other week) of achievement, reflecting formative assessment of student progress during intervention, which was provided to the student's parents at a minimum of once every four and one-half (4.5) weeks.*

Systematic Observations

Check the appropriate box and provide a description of the observations within the learning environments listed below. Document the student's academic performance and behavior in the areas of suspected disability.

Additional considerations: Observations provide valuable sources of information to help validate other sources of data obtained during the evaluation. If students are returning remotely, problem-solving various ways to complete observations. Start with the question regarding what you are specifically trying to obtain information on and identify various ways to obtain that information. If a classroom observation is needed and the child participates in synchronous instruction (live remote) then you could join the session and observe remotely. If the student participates in asynchronous instruction/ intervention, as you schedule the in-person evaluation you may also include a time for the student to use the instructional platform in the evaluation setting and observe engagement, alignment, familiarity with the platform, etc.

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Systematic observation of routine classroom instruction*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Systematic observation during intensive, scientific research-based or evidence-based intervention.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ *N/A If the student is in a placement outside of the local education agency, a team member observed the student in an environment appropriate for a student of that age.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No At least one of the observations was completed by the certifying specialists.*

Rate of Improvement/ Progress

Provide a summary indicating the student's overall progress within the interventions and how that impacts the student's achievement gap and addresses the statements below.

**Additional considerations: If a student was in interventions in 2019-20 (and previous school years), include that progress monitoring data, the rate of improvement during that time, and gap analysis and compare to current rates of improvement. Consider the student's rate of improvement this school year to other student's in the same intervention groups/ schools/ district to get local normative data. All data should be viewed collectively to help provide context and determine if the student is making typical rates of improvement and the impact of the student's growth/ lack of progress. Additionally, consider all formative assessments provided to the student to provide further indications of skills mastered and the rate in which the student is able to demonstrate skill development. For example, a student may average mastery of 60% of the intervention content as demonstrated by intervention specific or teacher made tests or it may take the student three times as longs as peers in the same intervention group to demonstrate mastery of a given skill. It is also important to note any validity concerns regarding the obtained data and ways in which the assessment team attempted to gain more reliable data if needed. Both quantitative and qualitative information is important when making decisions regarding the student's rate of progress.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No The student does not make sufficient progress to meet age or state-approved grade-level standards in one or more areas (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, written expression, math calculation, mathematics problem solving) when using a process based on the student's responsiveness to scientific, research-based intervention in each area of suspected delay.*

A lack of sufficient progress is established by examining the student's rate of Improvement (ROI) including a gap analysis based on the following criteria:

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No The rate of progress or improvement is less than that of his/her same-age peers.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No The rate of progress is the same as or greater than that of his/her same age peers but will not result in reaching the average range of achievement within a reasonable period of time.*

Assessment Observations

Provide a summary of observations recorded while administering assessments and whether the

results appear valid estimates of skills/ ability based on those observations.

**Additional information to include: setting of the assessment administration, any deviations to standardization, student rapport and affect, and other qualitative observations that help determine the accuracy of results.*

Academic Achievement Assessments

Check the appropriate box(-es) below indicating the suspected area of disability. Provide a description of the individual, standardized, and norm-referenced measure of academic achievement administered in the area of suspected disability and the student performance on the assessment. The summary should include when the assessment was administered and whether the student does/does not achieve adequately for the student's age or to meet state-approved grade- level standards in one or more of the following areas when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or state-approved grade level standards:

An evaluation of oral expression and listening comprehension shall be completed pursuant to the speech or language impairment eligibility standards if a specific learning disability (SLD) is suspected in either area. If a student has been evaluated by a speech language pathologist and does not qualify as language impaired, then the IEP team may consider an SLD in either oral expression or listening comprehension if either continues to be a suspected area of disability; however, the rigorous intervention and progress monitoring standards must be met.

**Additional considerations: Consider whether age–based norms or grade-based norms best represent the student's mastery of taught skills. Using an item analysis, provide information on errors within tasks or items to help the team differentiate between whether the student's performance was reflective of deficits despite instruction or if they were associated with missed content due to an interruption in instruction/taught skill standards. It may be helpful to include both qualitative and quantitative findings from informal or formal diagnostic surveys (e.g., phonics or phonological awareness measures and inventories).*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No An individual, standardized, and norm-referenced measure of academic achievement was administered in the area of suspected disability.*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Basic reading skills*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Reading fluency*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Reading comprehension*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Written expression*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Mathematics calculation*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Math problem solving*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Oral expression*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No Listening comprehension*

Other Assessments

If additional assessments were completed as part of the evaluation provide a description and interpretation of the results below. Delete this section if no other assessments were administered as part of the evaluation.

Exclusionary Factors

Provide a description of the evidence that indicates how each of the listed exclusionary factors was ruled out as the primary cause of underachievement.

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No The team determined the student's underachievement is not primarily the result of visual, motor, or hearing disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, cultural factors, environmental or economic factors, limited English proficiency, or excessive absenteeism.*

**Additional considerations: The team may consider medical records to address vision and hearing, review of past assessments. When evaluating English language learners consider parent interviews to address acculturation, educational history, and language development (see Ethnographic Interview template) and appropriate assessment choice to obtain valid and accurate responses. Use the exclusionary factor worksheet to help guide team decisions.*

Summary

The term Specific Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Such a term includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities (e.g., visual processing), brain injury that is not caused by an external physical force, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific Learning Disability does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual impairment; hearing impairment; orthopedic impairment; intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; limited English proficiency; or environmental or cultural disadvantage.

Provide a summary of the evaluation results for the suspected area of disability below:

It is the responsibility of the IEP team to determine whether a student meets eligibility standards for special education services including whether a student's needs, even with the presence of an educational disability, can be met in the general education without special

education services This information should be considered with all other relevant data and team member input when determining eligibility for special education services based on the disability definition and evaluation standards (https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/special-education/eligibility/se_eligibility_sld_standards.pdf).

Recommendations

Provide any recommendations to address the student's deficits and needs below.

Certifying Specialist Signature:

Name:

Title:
Date:

Other Assessment Team Members
Name/Title:
Name/Title:
Name/Title:
Name/Title:

Appendix C: Virtual Intervention Sample Documentation Form

Week of		**Teacher**	
Student(s)		**Group Focus**	
Program		**Frequency**	
Legend	**T&A**- Total Time and Attendance **Synch**-Time for Synchronous Instruction **Asynch**-Time for Asynchronous Instruction		

	Monday			**Tuesday**			**Wednesday**			**Thursday**			**Friday**			**Total # of Minutes**
Student	**T&A**	**Synch**	**Asynch**	**T&A**	**Synch**	**Asynch**	**T&A**	**Synch**	**Asynch**	**T&A**	**Synch**	**Asynch**	**T&A**	**Synch**	**Asynch**	
	Skill of the Day			**Skill of the Day**			**Skill of the Day**			**Skill of the Day**			**Skill of the Day**			
	Observations (Engagement, Interruptions, Accuracy etc.)			**Observations (Engagement, Interruptions, Accuracy etc.)**			**Observations (Engagement, Interruptions, Accuracy etc.)**			**Observations (Engagement, Interruptions, Accuracy etc.)**			**Observations (Engagement, Interruptions, Accuracy etc.)**			
Jean	45 min	30 min	15 min	Absent			45 min	45 min	0	45 min	30 min	15 min	45 min	35 min	10 min	3 hours
	Skill: Vowel digraph a_e						Skill: Vowel digraph a_e			Skill: Vowel digraph a_			Skill: Vowel digraph a_			
	Jean was highly engaged and participated the entire lesson.						Many interruptions occurred at home for Jean, so we stayed synchronous the entire time. Accuracy: 3 out of 6 attempts			Today went smoothly and Jean participated the whole time. Accuracy: 4 out of 6 attempts			Accuracy: 8 out of 10 attempts			