

Considerations for Intervention in the Area of Written Expression

For students who have been identified for Tier II or Tier III skill-based intervention in the area of written expression (the ability to communicate in writing), several factors should be considered in developing appropriate interventions. The effectiveness of an intervention relies on two major variables: 1) the selection of appropriate intervention materials and 2) the delivery of these materials. This document outlines considerations for both of these variables when planning interventions for written expression.

Intervention Materials

Any intervention, regardless of content area, should be:

- systematic and research-based;
- targeted to the student's identified area of deficit; and
- chosen based on the unique needs of the students.

Content specific to written expression should be considered when selecting interventions. Effective written expression intervention content may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- both high- and low-level writing skills, with an emphasis on the individual student's needs;
- explicit and systematic instruction of writing skills;
- transcription skills occurring simultaneously with composition skills;
- teacher modeling;
- multisensory techniques;
- predictable writing routines;
- verbal discussion of writing; and
- instruction in self-assessment and self-monitoring strategies for written expression.

The "[Intervention Peer Review Screening Instrument K-12 Reading, Mathematics, and Writing](#)", was created to aid districts in identifying appropriate intervention materials. Districts are encouraged to review current intervention materials for written expression interventions in order to determine whether materials are adequate in addressing student needs.

Intervention Delivery

In addition, intervention content should be delivered in a way that optimizes success. The [RTI² Framework Manual](#) outlines qualities of effective interventions in sections 3.1-3.2 and 4.1-4.2. Group size, intervention duration, intervention frequency, and training for the intervention provider are key. Additional environmental considerations may include:

- high expectations and belief that students will learn to write;
- regular teacher/student conferences;
- cooperative student work in planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing work;
- regular peer feedback; and
- methods to motivate resistant writers.¹

¹ Sopris, 2014; Graham, Harris, & Larsen, 2001

Other Considerations

- While handwriting and spelling may be one indicator of a larger deficit in written expression skills, intervention content should not focus solely on handwriting and spelling. Sometimes a student who struggles with spelling may, as a secondary consequence, do poorly on written expression tasks. If spelling is the primary concern, this may be an indicator of an underlying phonics concern (a characteristic of dyslexia).
- Even though some reading intervention programs may contain written expression tasks, such as transcribing words or answering open-ended questions, they may not provide explicit instruction in written expression. If districts are utilizing portions of reading intervention programs for Tier II or III written expression intervention, they are encouraged to review the content of the writing tasks or instruction to ensure that the content and strategies meet [intervention peer review guidelines](#).
- Reading intervention programs are developed to address reading skill concerns, not written expression concerns; writing tasks are often included in programs in order to have students apply and generalize their newly acquired reading skills.
- Often when students struggle with reading, it impacts their written expression skills. Just because they have a written expression concern does not mean that they need Tier II or III intervention in written expression. RTI² data teams are encouraged to examine what is causing a student's written expression concerns. If underlying reading deficits are determined to be the cause, then intervention should be provided in reading instead of written expression.

With questions, reach out to Karen.Jensen@tn.gov.