



**Hamilton County
School District**

Changing Lives through Quality Education

Problem Solving User's Manual

(Revised 2/2014)

Dear Teachers,

I want to take this opportunity to introduce you to the current revision of the Hamilton County Problem Solving User's Manual and thank you for everything you to do to help our students succeed!

You put a lot of work into this manual and we appreciate all of your comments, questions, and concerns. The original version of this manual was reviewed by Heather Diamond, Program Specialist with the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Support. Julie Weatherly, Esq. of Resolutions in Special Education, Inc. also provided procedural review and legal consultation for the document.

This current version features two new features that we think will help teachers better understand and reflect over the different parts of the problem solving process. The first major change to the process is the addition of a Problem Solving Checklist. We included this so that teachers and guidance counselors had a clear listing of all of the parts of the process and also so they would be better able to share with caregivers the depth of work involved in problem solving for students.

The second major change to our packet was a revision to the wording of Tier 3 (on page 7) that clarifies that teachers may provide individualized intensive interventions from the onset if the student needs it immediately. This change was suggested by a Monitoring and Compliance reviewer of Florida Department of Education on September 19, 2013.

Thank you for all that you do for our students and families and please let my office know how we can best support your efforts with them.

Sincerely,

Betty Linton

The problem solving process at Hamilton County School District uses a three tier Response to Intervention (RtI) framework to help determine what works best for student learning and behavior. The problem solving process is intended to help maximize every student's success. Each tier applies increasingly intense intervention and instruction to students. A table at the end of this document summarizes best practice for the intensity and duration of intervention and the frequency of progress monitoring for the three tiers. It is important to recognize the value of collecting and analyzing student data in the problem solving process. It is critical that the student data is protected. Please maintain confidentiality at all times (for example, do not e-mail or display student data and do not display or write other students' names/data in another student's problem solving file). The purpose of data in the problem solving process is to use it to focus instruction to improve student outcomes. The timeliness of the data is crucial. We do not want students to have to wait to receive academic and/or behavioral assistance, as delays represent wasted instructional time.

Tier 1

Every student in Hamilton County Schools is exposed to core instruction which is research and evidence-based. Within Florida's RtI framework, this core represents Tier 1, and includes differentiated instruction and behavioral support. The goal for high quality instruction at the Tier 1 level is at least 80% of students in each class achieving benchmarks. A healthy core provides instruction in the classroom setting that permits the majority of students to meet the state designed standards for grade or content.

To assess student learning and proficiency in Tier 1, and to inform instructional decisions, the Hamilton County School District analyzes Tier 1 information at regular intervals through universal screening and progress monitoring. Universal screenings are standard assessments given to all students which are used to identify proficiency in different subject areas and allow for the analysis of group and individual performance. Universal screening occurs three to four times a year using data from measurements such as FAIR and ThinkLink. The effectiveness of instruction is also analyzed through classroom based progress monitoring. Progress monitoring uses data from sources such as curriculum based measurements, focus lesson assessments, FCAT Explorer, and STAR. The information is reviewed by the classroom teachers and school based leadership teams, at the frequent department and/or grade level data meetings. Summaries of this information are also brought by each school principal and presented at the monthly district wide leadership meeting. This meeting includes all of the principals, the district instructional services members (student services, exceptional student education, professional development, and federal programs), and the Assistant Superintendent. It is the intent of

Hamilton County Schools that the teachers, school based leadership teams, and administration work in conjunction to improve the effectiveness of instruction for all students.

Considerations when adding Tier 2 supplemental group supports:

A critical question a teacher has to answer is whether 80% or more of students are reaching benchmarks with the core instruction. If at least 80% of students are not achieving benchmarks then it is necessary to review the quality of the core curriculum, instructional strategies, and environmental conditions. Once at least 80% of the class is achieving benchmarks, research estimates that the remaining 15% to 20% of a class will need Tier 2 supplemental instruction. Anything more than 20% of a class receiving Tier 2 supports may overwhelm the support system and result in an inefficient use of resources. However, it is important to recognize that even if 80% of students in a class are not achieving mastery, we need to be sensitive to small groups of students and individual students who may need supplemental instruction or intensive intervention. But only an in-depth analysis of classroom data would result in this type of support.

Important Notes Under Rule 6A-6.0331 of the Florida Statutes and State Board of Education

Rules: (1) Students with speech disorders, severe cognitive delays, physical or sensory disorders, and/or severe social/behavioral deficits can receive evaluation procedures to determine eligibility for special education services without intervention if the student requires immediate, intensive intervention in order to prevent harm to the student or others. (2) A parent/guardian can request that the school conduct an evaluation at any time.

Tier 2

Tier 2 represents supplemental instruction for the 15 to 20% of the class who has academic/behavioral concerns that are not being addressed by the core curriculum. Tier 2 interventions need to target skill deficits and are provided in addition to and aligned with the core curriculum. Thus, both instructional levels will be implemented simultaneously. When developing or selecting Tier 2 supports the teacher may consult with the grade level/content area team, academic/data coach, or other professionals such as resource teacher, school psychologist, speech/language pathologist and diagnostician. The individual(s) administering the Tier 2 intervention(s) may include the teacher, paraprofessional, academic coach, and/or other staff, depending on the nature of the problem and the personnel resources who may meaningfully contribute to finding and implementing solutions.

Supplemental Instruction at Tier 2 typically involves small groups of students grouped by academic/behavioral needs. Tier 2 instruction should typically include at least 30 minutes of supplemental intervention 2 to 3 days per week over a 7 to 10 week period. However, the frequency and intensity of Tier 2 supports will depend on how the student(s) respond, the design of the intervention, and the nature of the problem.

Tier 2 progress monitoring should occur every two weeks. Monitoring effectiveness is crucial to prevent using an ineffective intervention for an extended period of time. It is important that the intervention and progress monitoring be completed with fidelity. Fidelity means that the intervention(s) is implemented as designed, and that the intervention is appropriate for the problem. The goal of the fidelity check is to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention as measured by student response, not to evaluate the teacher. Academic coaches, behavioral interventionists, guidance counselors, deans, resource teachers, school psychologists, or an administrator may provide training, coaching, observation, or participate in a data analysis meeting to support the fidelity of the intervention selection and implementation.

The process Hamilton County Schools follow for Tier 2 supplemental instruction is:

What is the Problem? Why is it occurring?

- Using available data and other relevant information, the teacher should first identify the problem that the small group of students is having in specific and measurable terms.
- It is important to be able to document how students receiving Tier 2 support are performing differently from their peers. Therefore, the performance of the small group receiving Tier 2 support should be compared to the class average and the expected grade level/content area performance standard. This information is used to help inform goals of the intervention.
- The team develops a hypothesized reason for why the problem is occurring. The team could seek input from multiple sources such as teachers, additional family member, academic coaches, or other educators about the creation of the hypothesis for the problem. For example, a teacher states that four students in the class are struggling with reading comprehension and she hypothesizes that this is occurring because of vocabulary deficiencies. The team would analyze data comparisons that illustrate the problem.

- Contact parents/guardians regarding concerns and potential intervention through phone call, e-mail, note home, or parent meeting. Document this interaction on the school's teacher-parent conference form. It is essential to keep a record of parent/guardian contacts with the goal of actively engaging parents in the intervention and progress monitoring. All attempts and contacts with the parent, such as messages left, should be documented.
- If hearing, medical, speech, and/or vision, is a potential concern during this contact or suspicion of intellectual disability, the parent/guardian or teacher can discuss these concerns. If there is a concern, have parent/guardian complete **Notice and Consent for Individual Screenings (HCS PS #03)**. If consent is received, conduct screenings (vision/hearing by nurse at school site; optional screenings such as speech by the Speech Language Pathologist at the school site; or cognitive processing/memory/intelligence assessments by the guidance counselor or school psychologist) to inform problem analysis and intervention design while these types of assessments are not always relevant to problem analysis and intervention design, the team may find them to be relevant in certain situations.
- If medical/mental health issues are a concern, parental consent to exchange information should be obtained using the Consent for Mutual Exchange of Information (HCS ESE #20). By completing this form, the parent/guardian is giving Hamilton County School a release to share information, however all student information is confidential and it is important that it be protected.

What are we going to do about it?

- Design an intervention to address the identified deficit. The intervention(s) must be appropriate to the identified skill deficit. The duration and type of intervention(s) should always be matched to the nature of the problem. The teacher may consult with the academic coach, behavioral dean, or other educator to design the intervention, and administer as appropriate.
- Complete the **Tier 2 Small Group Intervention Plan (HCS PS #01C)** and the **Tier 2 Graphing Form for Progress Monitoring (HCS PS #01D)** for academic concerns.
- Complete the **Tier 2 Behavior Intervention Plan (HCS PS #01B)** for behavioral concerns.

Is it working?

- Implement the intervention(s) over a sufficient time period. A best practice is to implement Tier 2 instruction for 7 to 10 weeks.

- Progress monitor the students' response to the intervention(s). Monitoring should occur at least once every two weeks with a minimum of three data points (the amount is typically determined by the nature of the intervention(s) selected) to analyze intervention effectiveness. The progress monitoring process should be aligned with the intervention and the nature of the problem. Graph data to determine if the supplemental instruction is improving outcomes for the small group of students receiving Tier 2 support. It is not essential that this exact graph be used, a similar or computer generated graph could be attached to this form.
- At designated intervals, analyze the results of the intervention and compare them to the established goals in order to determine next steps. For example, decisions might include: continuing intervention as designed, altering intervention, fading out intervention, discontinuing and/or replacing intervention, or adding a Tier 3 intensive intervention on top of what is happening in core and Tier 2 supports.
- Involve parents/guardians as members of the problem-solving team reviewing the student's response to the Tier 2 intervention(s) through phone call, e-mail, note home, or parent meeting. Document this interaction on the school's teacher -parent conference form. It is essential to maintain a record of parent/guardian communications and participation.

Considerations when adding Tier 3 intensive individualized supports:

If more intensive intervention(s) is needed for an individual student, the teacher would request assistance from the Problem Solving Team. Research indicates that approximately 5% or fewer students in a class may need more individual, intensive, and targeted instruction than what is provided in core and small group Tier 2 interventions. To initiate individualized problem solving for the student with the team, the teacher completes **Request for Assistance (HCS PS #04)** and the school counselor (with teacher/parent input) completes **Review of Student Data (HCS PS #05)**.

Tier 3

A **Problem Solving Check List** is available to help the team insure that they have all of the relevant elements to continue problem solving at the Tier 3 level for individual students. Please be aware that teachers may provide individualized intensive interventions from the onset if the student needs it immediately.

The school based Problem Solving Team is typically composed of school counselor, teacher, parent, principal, school psychologist, behavioral specialist, ESE resource teacher, and academic coach. The team may also include the student, ESOL representative, Speech and Language

Pathologist, and/or Deans. Depending on the circumstances unique to each student, any individual with relevant information, skill, knowledge, experience, relationship with the student, or training may serve as a member of the Problem Solving Team.

Tier 3 intervention(s) represent specific individualized instruction to approximately 5% of students who are not meeting goals identified in Tiers 1 and 2. The purpose of this team is to engage in intensive problem-solving for individual students to help them be successful. When providing Tier 3 supports to a student, it is important to remember that such services are provided in addition to and aligned with the core instruction and Tier 2 intervention(s). Tier 3 intervention(s) are more intense, frequent, and of longer duration than Tier 2 interventions; best practice states Tier 3 interventions should occur at a minimum 30 minutes per day, five days a week, for a 9 to 12 week period. Problem solving teams will make a decision about how frequently progress monitoring should occur, in general RtI research suggests that progress monitoring at Tier 3 should occur at a minimum of once per week. It is critical that the problem solving team matches the progress monitoring tool with the area of concern and the intervention(s). Examples of data that might be collected in Tier 3 include: numerical reasoning, fluency measures, word identification, comprehension, addition/subtraction facts, office discipline referrals, and curriculum based measurements. Academic coaches/behavioral interventionist or an administrator/designee will conduct observations and participate in data analysis meetings and professional development activities to support the appropriateness of the intervention(s) and the fidelity of its implementation.

What is the problem? Why is it occurring?

- The Problem Solving team analyzes the data about the individual student collected in Tier 1 and Tier 2 to help inform goals of the intervention(s).
- The team reviews previously hypothesized reasons for why the problem is occurring. The team will validate and revise the hypotheses as appropriate.
- Observe the student in the location where he/she is experiencing challenges/difficulties, for example the classroom, cafeteria, media center, etc. Complete classroom observation #1 at a relevant time/location using the **Student Observation Form (HCS PS #06)** to collect information that could improve the quality of the intervention. This observation may be completed by a variety of educational professionals including the classroom teacher (for the first observation only), academic coach, school/educational psychologist, guidance counselor, principal, diagnostician, behavioral specialist, or resource teacher.

- Since parents/guardians are an integral part of their child's education, Hamilton County Schools invite all parents/guardians to be active members of the problem solving process at all three Tiers of support. After the first observation, the next step is to notify the parent of the academic/behavioral concern and invite them to participate in the Problem Solving Team. Document this interaction on the school's teacher-parent conference form.
- Hold the first parent/guardian meeting. At this meeting, the Problem Solving Team should: review the purpose of the meeting, review data on forms, have teacher present concern(s), have observer share the results of Observation #1, have the teacher identify the desired goal for the student and summarize intervention(s) already utilized and the results of those intervention(s). The Problem Solving Team should review the identified problem from Tier 2 and its corresponding progress monitoring data and then refine the problem definition for Tier 3 intervention(s).

What are we going to do about it?

- Design an intervention to address the identified deficit. The intervention(s) must be appropriate to the identified skill deficit. The duration and type of intervention(s) should be matched to the nature of the problem.
- If the focus is behavior, the team completes the **Functional Behavioral Assessment**.
- If the focus is academics, the team completes the **Tier 3 Individual Intervention Plan (HCS PS #07A)** and **Tier 3 Graphing Form for Progress Monitoring (HCS PS #07B)**.
- A copy of the plan generated by the problem solving team is given to all team members. The team may decide that it would be helpful to perform additional intensive diagnostic or psychological assessments determined to be relevant to improving the effect of the interventions for the student. Only if the team has determined that it is appropriate to consider eligibility for special education, would the parent be asked to complete an **Informed Notice and Consent for Evaluation form (HCS ESE #10)**.

Is it working?

- Tier 3 interventions reflect the implementation of intensive academic and/or behavior intervention(s) over a specified time period. Best practice indicates that the intervention(s) should be carried out over a minimum of 9 to 12 weeks;

however, the intervention(s) duration and type should be matched to the nature of the problem and the student's response to the intervention.

- With a purpose identified by the Problem-Solving Team, conduct classroom Observation #2 and complete **Student Observation Form (HCS PS #06)**. This second observation should be completed by someone other than the classroom teacher, so that interactions between the instruction, teacher, and student(s) can be gathered. The individual participating in Observation #2 could be an academic coach, school/educational psychologist, guidance counselor, principal, diagnostician, behavioral specialist, or resource teacher.
- Following the intervention period, the second Parent/Guardian meeting should be held. The meeting should: review the goal, review data on the forms, present results of intervention(s) and progress monitoring and/or all other relevant data. Results of Observation #2 should also be reviewed. Parents/Guardian should be engaged each time data are analyzed by the team.
- After comparing the progress monitoring data to the goal(s) for the student, the team will recommend: (a) continuation of current intervention(s) and progress monitor, (b) discontinue interventions and implement alternative intervention(s) and progress monitor, or (c) recommend alternative intervention and progress monitor. The problem solving team may consider possible referral to Exceptional Education Services (ESE). It is imperative to note that if a student does or does not qualify for ESE services, the problem solving process continues to identify and implement effective intervention(s) for the student. A copy of the new or revised plan is given to all team members. All core, Tier 2, and Tier 3 data should be retained.

Hamilton County Summary Snapshot of Problem Solving Processes

* The exact nature, frequency, and duration of individual interventions should be dependent on the students' response to specific intervention(s) and the nature of the problem. The problem solving team should make a decision about intensity and duration of intervention and frequency of progress monitoring by doing what makes best sense in a given situation. Remember that the recommendations for the intensity, duration, and frequency of supports listed below are intended as a guide and reflect research and best practice.

Rtl Level	Intensity of Intervention*	Duration of Intervention*	Frequency of Progress Monitoring*
Tier 1 core instruction	daily core curriculum lesson taught	designated instructional period	universal screening 3 to 4 times per year with progress monitoring as indicated in the lesson plan
Tier 2 small group supplemental instruction	daily core curriculum + 30 minutes supplemental small group instruction 2 to 3 times per week	7 to 10 week intervention period	every other week
Tier 3 intensive individualized instruction	daily core curriculum + Tier 2 small group supplemental instruction + 30 minutes supplemental instruction 5 times per week	9 to 12 week intervention period	weekly