

Tiered System of Supports: Implementation Phase



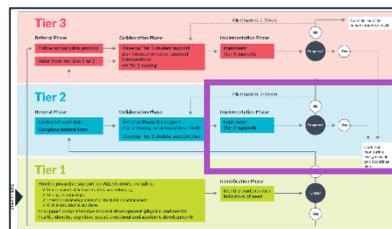
What Is It and Why Is It Important?

One of the final aspects to consider when designing, refining, or operating your current Tiered System of Supports is the Implementation Phase. This phase focuses on the action steps taken by educators and internal and external stakeholders to support students as documented in the [Student Support Plan](#). It is imperative that all participants identified on the student support plan have a copy of the plan and are able to execute on the recommendations listed.

The goals of the Implementation Phase are as follows:

1. To implement support strategies as indicated on the student's support plan
2. To observe and document how the student is responding to those supports
3. To reflect on the quality of teacher practice in executing those supports
4. Ongoing monitoring of student response and progress until the goal is achieved

The implementation data (observations, reflections and quantitative academic data) will be leveraged to make well-informed decisions during the meeting scheduled to review progress.



Important Considerations for This Phase

Given the unique context (development, environments, relationships, etc.) of each student, it is important to note that during this phase, we do not place blame on students for strategies not working. If support strategies seem ineffective, it can be easy to get discouraged and assume nothing will work. With that said, the success of this phase is hugely contingent upon thorough consideration of the student's context during the [Identification Phase](#) and determination of goals and supports to achieve those goals that are determined in the [Collaboration Phase](#).

In some cases, the data necessary to determine effective supports is not known because the context for the student may have changed just before or immediately after the support plan was developed. Therefore, it is important to not place blame on the implementer, either. Unsuitable supports can present an opportunity for the educator, outside stakeholder and/or the Tier 2 or Tier 3 team to get closer to deeply understanding what will be more effective for the student.

Another factor that impacts the effectiveness of strategies is the capacity of the implementer to provide the support in a timely manner, with fidelity. For example, an educator may not be exactly sure about how the support is to be implemented, has not adjusted their schedule to accommodate implementing the support, needs professional development or coaching support in order to effectively implement the support, etc.

Furthermore, it is common to have an unrealistic expectation that students can quickly shift once a strategy of support is applied, or perhaps it is assumed that the student would receive support elsewhere. The [science of learning and development](#) tells us that children thrive and respond well to predictability and consistency; this promotes a feeling of safety for children. Child development experts recognize that it takes time, and that the very concerns that led to a referral may get worse before getting better. This is true particularly for students who have experienced trauma, and their method of coping to feel safe, in many ways, may not be appropriate or may no longer be needed in a school environment. It can take time for students to feel safe and therefore respond better to the changes in teacher practice or environment to support them.

The above considerations elevate the significance of and necessity for teachers to continue to reflect throughout the implementation phase on the quality of the support they provide, their skill set, and the assumptions they may hold about this student. Continued reflection provides an added layer to ensure implementation of support is applied in ways that are equitable and mitigate bias. It also allows room for additional support for the teacher, if needed.

Progress Monitoring

All of the considerations mentioned above are important and highlight the importance for closely monitoring student progress toward the stated goals after the support plan has been developed. Unfortunately, progress monitoring can often be challenging in schools due to limited time and resources. However, if it is not done, there will be no way of understanding student needs, and therefore, more time will likely be spent coming up with support plans that continue to be ineffective in meeting students' needs. Progress monitoring offers an opportunity to provide data that can be leveraged in ways that support larger groups of students proactively. Typically, an incredible amount of work goes into initial preparation for support, and comparatively little goes into implementing and monitoring ongoing supports.

Therefore, it is important that schools put a clear process in place that includes structures for 1) ensuring supports are being implemented with fidelity, 2) documenting student progress and educator practice, and 3) revisiting the goal(s) set for the student and reviewing the data that can indicate the amount of progress being made. The questions below provide some guidance in designing this process:

- Does the *Student Support Plan* include clear implementation and data collection steps for the person who is implementing supports identified in the plan?
- Has the way in which progress will be documented been determined?
- Does the data being collected show how the support is being implemented?
 - *Is it happening with fidelity?*
 - *How does the implementer report it is going?*

- Does the data being collected show information about the student moving toward the goal?
 - *How is it impacting the student's experience?*
 - *What evidence do we have that the supports are working?*
 - *Have the indicators of need changed?*
 - *Have there been changes in the student's experience, skills, behavior, performance, etc.?*

For an example of how a staff member might go about documenting progress, see the *Progress Monitoring Form*. This form is to be completed by the staff member (teacher and/or other school staff) providing support according to the student's support plan.

As you preview the form, one important part is the opportunity for the educator reflect on their own experience and practice in taking the steps to implement the support for students as indicated on their plans. As mentioned in the [Identification Phase](#), the framework of whole-child design includes placing emphasis on context and not problematizing students. The self-reflection part of the *Progress Monitoring Form* asks those completing it to consider challenges and/or support that might be needed to enhance teacher practice, creating a better experience for the student. This data is important to share with the team and increases the quality with regard to collaboration.

Progress Review Meeting

The last activity in the Implementation Phase is conducting and participating in the progress review meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to reflect on the amount of progress a student has made toward their goals based on holistic data collected during implementation.

This meeting usually follows an initial meeting where the student was discussed in more depth a few weeks prior. Progress review meetings are held with the same members of either the Tier 2 or Tier 3 meetings. The meetings are typically shorter in duration and focus on the outcome of the student support plan, in order to determine how to best support the student and the teacher.

During the meeting, based on all relevant data shared, a decision is made about whether to continue, modify, or discontinue the supports. This process allows for students to receive the appropriate amount of support in a timely manner and increase the quality of collaboration among staff and other stakeholders in the student's context.

Student support plans that have been modified might indicate a need for a change in goals, a change in supports, or a referral for an alternate level of support (e.g., from to Tier 3 back to Tier 2, from Tier 2 to Tier 3, or referral for additional evaluation or to a mental health partner). See the [Tier 2 Meeting Agenda](#) and [Tier 3 Meeting Agenda](#) for how you might incorporate progress monitoring into a tiered supports team meeting and see the *Progress Monitoring Form & Sample* form for an example of how progress monitoring can be incorporated into documentation. For students who have met their goals, a team may agree to discontinue the additional support. Educators should remember each student will make progress based on their unique context.