Small Groups, Big Impact: Intervention Strategies that Work

@characterstrong

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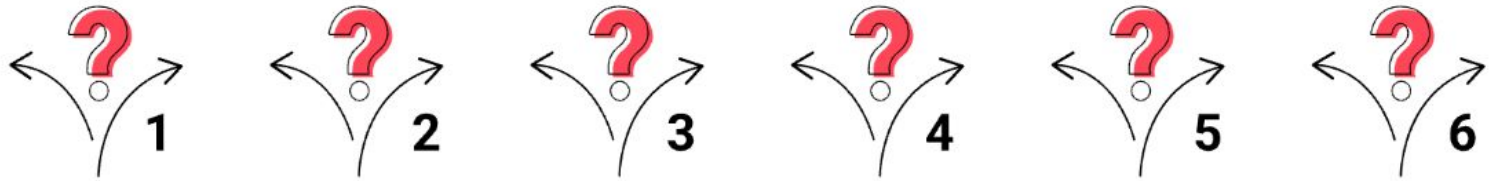
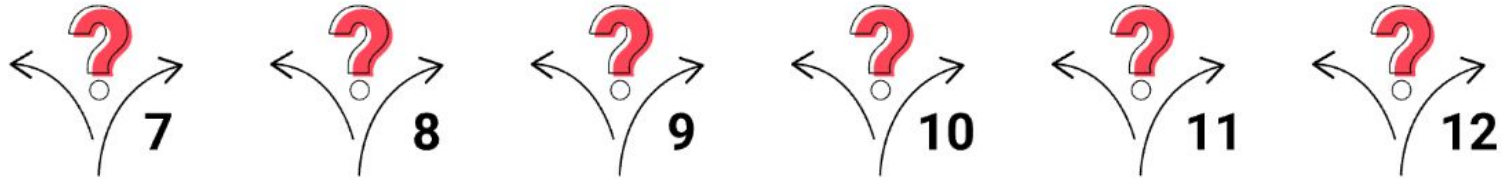
This or That

Choose a number to reveal 2 options. Everyone shares their preference by holding up/typing “1” or “2.” 1 person from each side shares a story or reflection related to their choice.





Objectives

- Understand the benefits of getting Tier 2 right
- Identify practical strategies to overcome barriers to launching small group interventions

Impacts of Tier 2

- **Increased Engagement:** Students in Tier 2 behavioral interventions report **greater school connection** and demonstrate **better self-regulation**.
- **Reduction in Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs):** Schools implementing Tier 2 behavioral supports (e.g., Check-In/Check-Out or Social Skills Groups) often see 20–60% reductions in ODRs for participating students.
- **Reduced Special Education Referrals:** When Tier 2 supports are effectively implemented, schools see **lower rates of special education referrals** because more students respond to early intervention.
- **Reduced Recidivism:** When interventions are matched to the function of the behavior (e.g., attention, escape, sensory), the likelihood of behavior recurrence drops significantly.

Turn & Talk:

What role do you play in Tier 2 interventions?

If There's Time:

What is the biggest roadblock you face with Tier 2 interventions?

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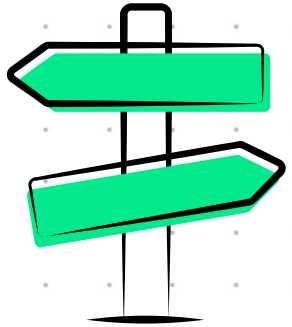
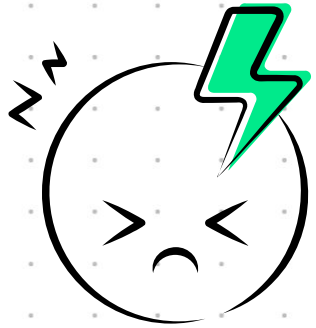
Root Cause Solutions

Analyzing WHY the identified need exists

What happens when **we skip this step?**



Confusion



Frustration/Resentment

Disengagement

Implementation Gap

Define

Behavior to Decrease
Behavior to Increase

Analyze

What is the root cause for why the need exists?

Acquisition Need

Student missing key knowledge and skills.

Performance Need

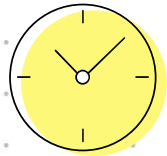
Environment does not support or motivate student to use skills

Define

Behavior to Decrease
Behavior to Increase

Decrease:
What's **getting in the way** of daily life functioning?

Increase:
What will **improve** aspects of daily functioning?



Dimension:
Frequency, Duration, Intensity

Define: Behaviors to Decrease

Gets in the way of daily life functioning

Social and Relationships

- Negative Interactions
- Conflicts with Others
- Difficulties in Groups
- Communication

Executive Functioning

- Off-Task Behavior
- Difficulty Stopping Before Thinking
- Difficulty Following Directions
- Difficulty Staying Focused
- Disorganized

Emotion Regulation: Internalizing

- Social Withdrawal
- Avoidant Behavior
- Anxious Distress
- Negative Affect/Mood
- Irritability
- Somatic Complaints

Emotion Regulation: Externalizing

- Emotional Dysregulation: Anger/Frustration
- Behaviors Disrupt Learning
- Behaviors Impact Relationships
- Behaviors Inconsistent with Norms
- Elopement

Define: Behaviors or Skills to Increase

Improve aspects of daily functioning

Social

Kind Behaviors

Communication

Conflict Resolution

Cooperation in Groups

Academic Engaged Time

Executive Functioning

Impulse Control

Following Directions

Responsible Behavior

Organized

Tools to Self-Manage

Academic Engaged Time

Emotion Regulation and Coping

Positive Self-Affirmations

Strategies to Manage Emotions

Emotionally Regulated

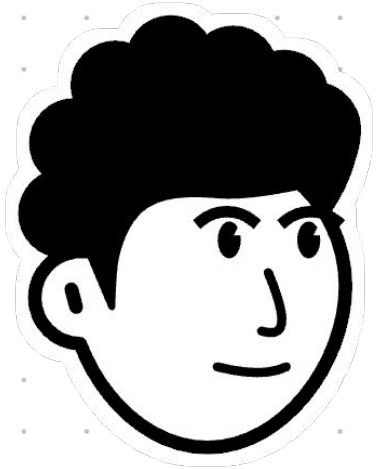
Positive Interactions

Follow Directions

Academic Engaged Time

Attendance

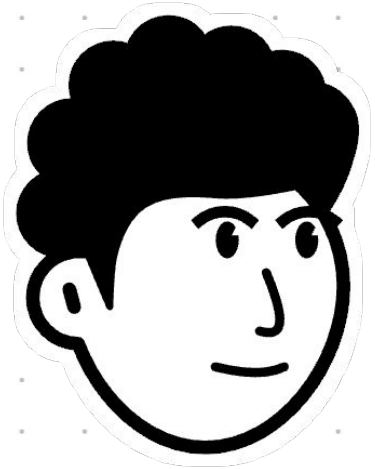
Increased Attendance



Jamie

Grade: 8

- Strengths: Creative & athletic
- Failing English & Math
- At risk for chronic absenteeism
- Scored at high risk for Externalizing and Internalizing behaviors
- Becomes verbally aggressive when he is feeling frustrated or angry



Jamie

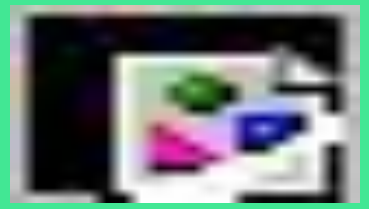
Grade: 8

Behavior to Decrease:
Emotionally Dysregulated: Anger/Frustration

Behavior to Increase:
Uses Strategies to Manage Emotions

Dimension: Intensity

- **What stands out?**
- **What else would you need to know?**
- **Acquisition/ Performance?**



Jamie is a well-liked and expressive 8th grader who participates actively in class, especially during hands-on lessons.

When frustrated—such as when he doesn't understand an assignment or receives constructive feedback—Jamie may raise his voice, slam materials, or shut down entirely. He sometimes walks out of class without permission. While he often apologizes afterward and can reflect on what happened, these incidents occur regularly. Jamie has said, "I get mad fast," and "It's hard to calm down once I'm upset."

Define

Behavior to Decrease
Behavior to Increase

Analyze

What is the root cause for why the need exists?

Acquisition Need

Student missing key knowledge and skills.

Performance Need

Environment does not support or motivate student to use skills

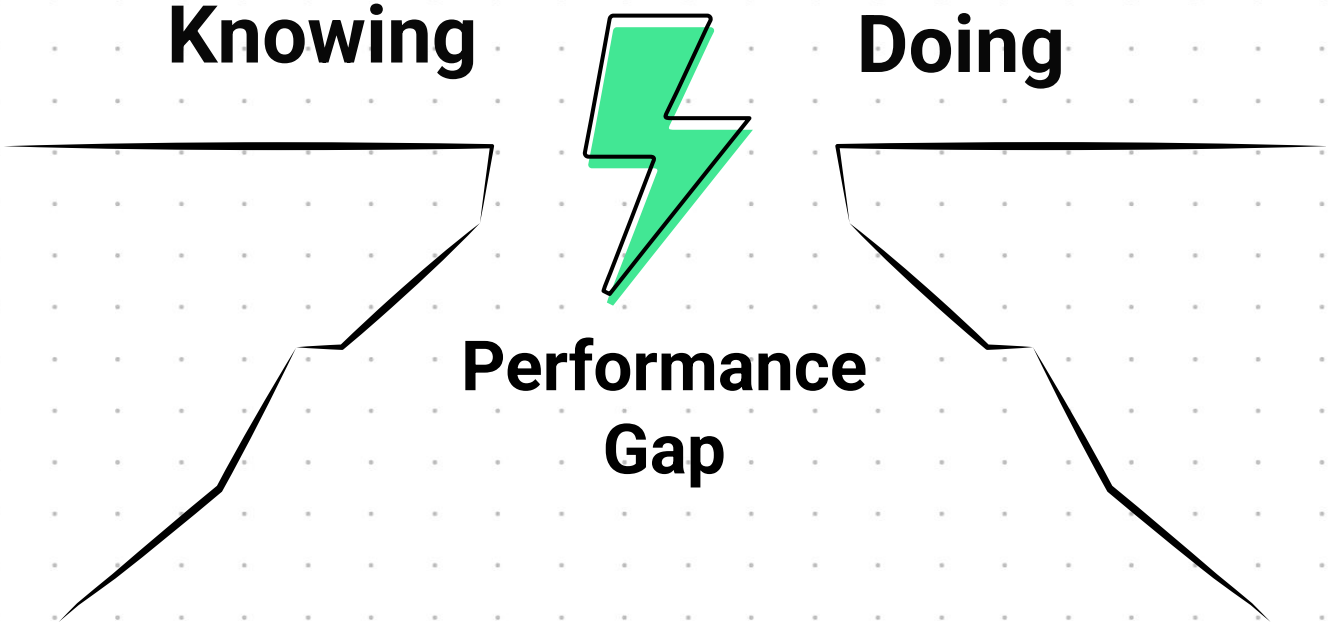
Acquisition Need

Environment
Challenges, expectations, and demands

>

Student
Knowledge and skills currently possessed

Performance Need

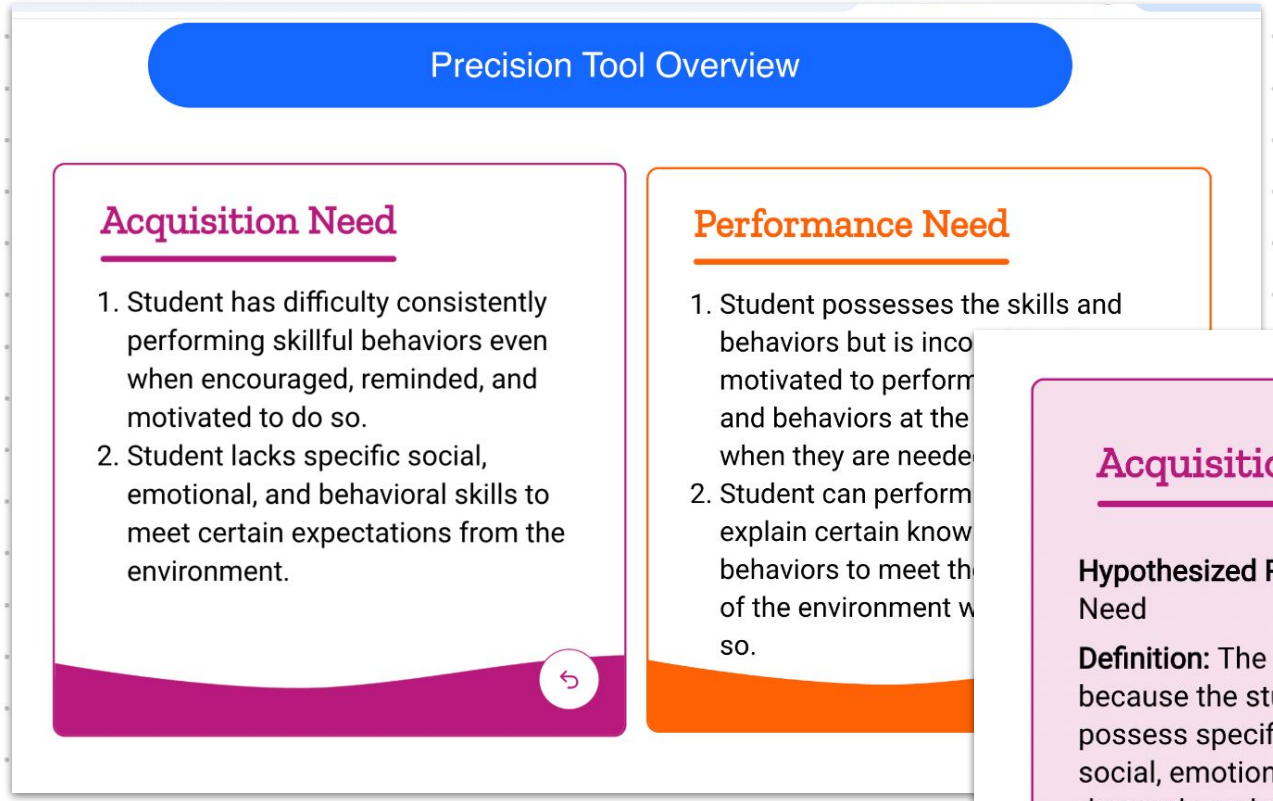


Define, **Analyze,** Select

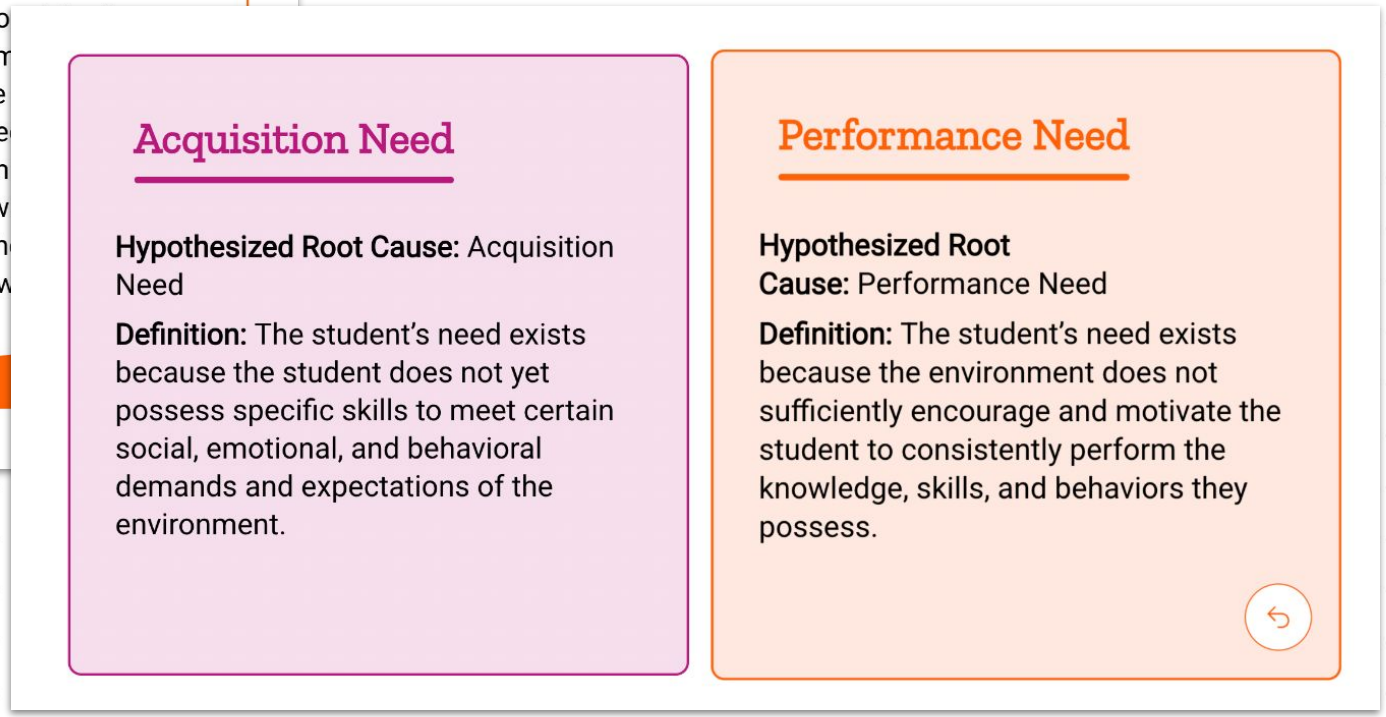
Turn & Talk

What are some signs that a student has an acquisition need v. a performance need?

Front


Precision Tool Overview
Acquisition Need
1. Student has difficulty consistently performing skillful behaviors even when encouraged, reminded, and motivated to do so.
2. Student lacks specific social, emotional, and behavioral skills to meet certain expectations from the environment.
Performance Need
1. Student possesses the skills and behaviors but is inco
motivated to perform
and behaviors at the
when they are neede
2. Student can perform
explain certain know
behaviors to meet th
of the environment w
so.

Back


Acquisition Need
Hypothesized Root Cause: Acquisition Need
Definition: The student's need exists because the student does not yet possess specific skills to meet certain social, emotional, and behavioral demands and expectations of the environment.
Performance Need
Hypothesized Root Cause: Performance Need
Definition: The student's need exists because the environment does not sufficiently encourage and motivate the student to consistently perform the knowledge, skills, and behaviors they possess.

Tier 2

Tutorials & FAQ

Welcome to the CST2

CST2 Includes C

Explore T2 Curriculu

Support Mar

Development

School Supports

Add Support

Students with T2 Needs

View All

Matched Students

120

View →

Performance Based Supports

	In Progress	Completed
Behavior Contracts	0	0

Content Language

Support Type Overview

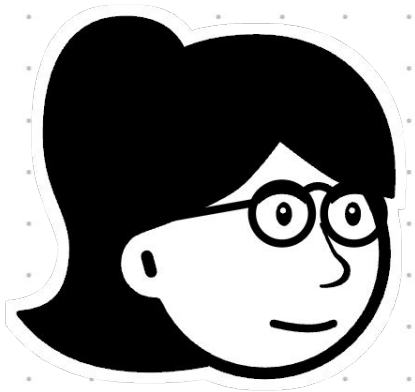
Performance Based Supports
Has the skills but struggles to use them consistently. Choose if support is needed to apply skills in real time.

Skill Building Curriculum
Lacks the skills to meet expectations. Choose if the student needs direct skill instruction.

Attendance Supports
Inconsistent attendance limits progress. Choose if steady attendance is needed for success.

Cancel

Next



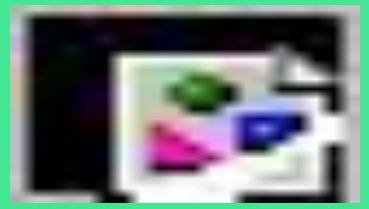
Alana

Grade: 10

Alana is a 10th-grade student who participates actively and shows strong understanding in class discussions.

Her written work and test scores don’t match her verbal abilities. Essays are often rushed or disorganized, and she underperforms on assessments, especially under pressure. Alana says things like, “I blank when I write,” or “I get too stressed to think.” She frequently seeks reassurance and sometimes avoids submitting work if it doesn’t feel “good enough.”

- **What stands out?**
- **What else would you need to know?**
- **Acquisition/ Performance?**



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Define, Analyze, Select

Turn & Talk

How often are you having these types of conversations about students prior to interventions?

If there's time:

How easy would this be to integrate into your practices?

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Root Cause > Symptom Solutions

Character Strong

A Menu

Mapping Interventions

- Gather a **complete list** of all Tier 2 interventions currently in use across the school.
  - For each, record:
  - Target skill/need addressed
  - Format (group/individual, push-in/pull-out)
  - Grade levels served
  - Staff trained to deliver it
  - Frequency/duration
  - Evidence-base (if known)
  - Ease of Use
- Identify the **most common student needs** based on your school's data (e.g., reading fluency, task avoidance, anxiety).
- Determine the **gaps** in current menu versus student need
- Understand the gap in **resources allocated** to deliver the menu
- **Start small** then scale as needed

Tools to Identify Need

- Existing Data Sets
- Screening Tools
- Structured Nomination Form

Screening for Needs

- Not all screeners are equal
  - **Valid, Reliable, and Normed**
- Culturally and Developmentally **Appropriate**
- Screeners **don't tell you why** the needs exist
- Screeners should have **cut scores**
- Screeners should be universally applied at minimum **2x per year**
- Screener not only **identify students' needs** but tell you **where Tier 1 is weak**

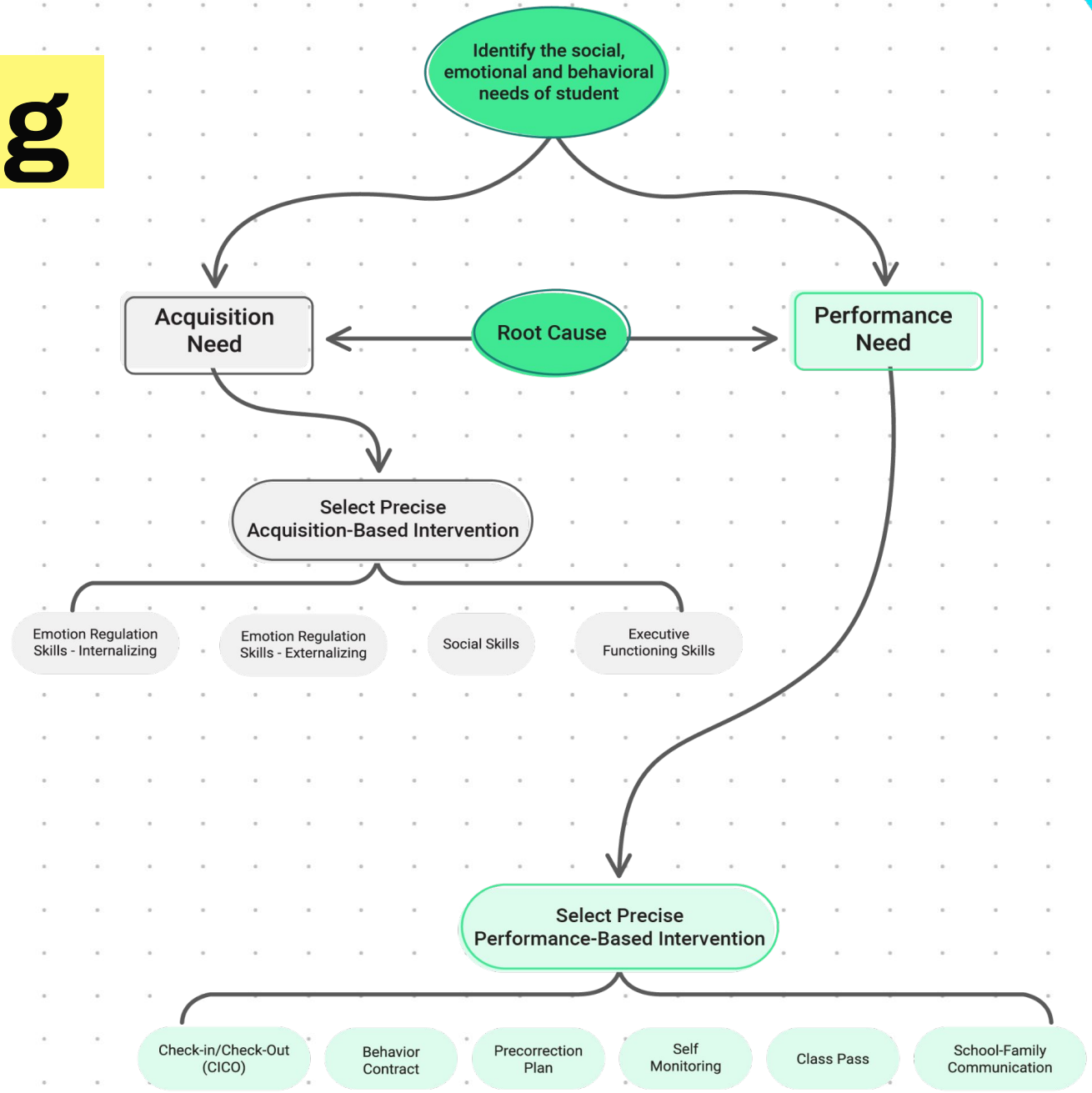
Decision Rules

Decision Rule #1: How do students go from Tier 1 to Tier 2 or Tier 3?

Decision Rule #2: How do students go from Tier 2 to Tier 3?

Decision Rule #3: How do students go from Tier 2 to Tier 1?

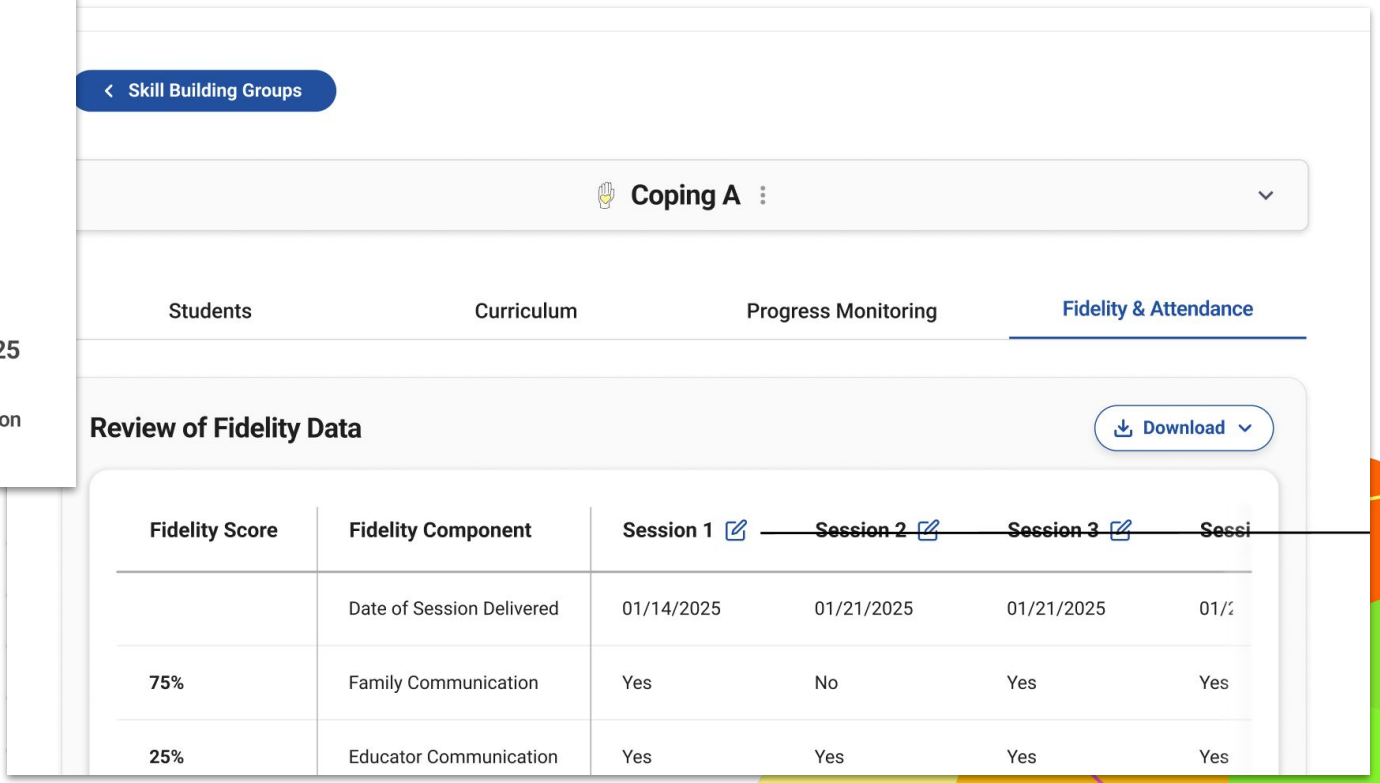
Matching


Identify the social, emotional and behavioral needs of student
Acquisition Need
Root Cause
Performance Need
Select Precise Acquisition-Based Intervention
Emotion Regulation Skills - Internalizing
Emotion Regulation Skills - Externalizing
Social Skills
Executive Functioning Skills
Select Precise Performance-Based Intervention
Check-in/Check-Out (CICO)
Behavior Contract
Precorrection Plan
Self Monitoring
Class Pass
School-Family Communication

“If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you’ll never get it done.”

— Bruce Lee

Building Tier 2 into Your Day



Fidelity Score	Fidelity Component	Session 1	~~Session 2~~	~~Session 3~~	~~Sessi~~
	Date of Session Delivered	01/14/2025	01/21/2025	01/21/2025	01/
75%	Family Communication	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
25%	Educator Communication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Building Tier 2 into Your Day

What are your biggest **ROADBLOCKS** around scheduling small groups?

What have you done to **OVERCOME** barriers around scheduling?

Building Tier 2 into Your Day

- Consider the Master Schedule
- Prioritize proactive planning
- Establish clarity amongst team (School Readiness)
- Alternate days/times for intervention
- Intentional Grouping

Pre-session Checklist

Pre-session Checklist

Supporting Group Readiness

Small groups often need priming before students can come together to fully engage. With that in mind, we created this Pre-session Checklist to support facilitators in getting the most out of these brief and effective sessions.

Structural Supports

- [ ] Learn the outcome goals for the sessions and review the facilitator's notes
- [ ] Identify a space that allows everyone to see you and each other
- [ ] Keep the group to 8 or fewer students
- [ ] Create a safe space for students by establishing routines before, during, and after the Group
- [ ] Be sensitive to triggers in the Group space that may cause reactions to children experiencing trauma
- [ ] Establish how children can exercise choice during the sessions
- [ ] Anticipate behavioral responses and have a plan for the student and the group
- [ ] Establish, Maintain, or Repair relationships with students joining the Group before the first session
- [ ] Be aware of your emotions and responses, and be prepared to regulate as needed

Process Steps

- [ ] Refrain from coercing students to join
- [ ] Gain consent from the student and their caregiver for participation
- [ ] Elicit caregiver support in encouraging their student's engagement
- [ ] Conduct pre-session meetings with each student individually
    - [ ] Outline the purpose, commitment level, and what it looks like to be an active participant
    - [ ] Explore students' fears, goals, and misconceptions of the group
    - [ ] Answer any questions the students have about the upcoming sessions
- [ ] Determine if each student can work together in a small group

Maximize the Time: Lock it in

“Good intentions cannot overcome bad study strategies.”

– Stephen Chew

Shallow vs Deep Processing

involves minimal cognitive effort, focusing on the basic aspects of information

- **Repetition**
- **Copying**
- **Simple Recognition**
- **Surface-level Questions**
- **Word Association**

involves meaningful analysis of information the information

- **Self-Generated Questions**
- **Compare & Contrast**
- **Connect to Prior Knowledge**
- **Concept Mapping**
- **Rephrase**

Hot Hands

An activity that provides a way to energize and reflect on the content.

Objective

To energize and reflect on the content.

Instructions

- Have everyone get into partnerships and stand facing their partners.
- Have people try to get as close to each other's hands as possible without touching.
- Have them reflect by touching 1 finger at a time.
  - Thumbs can be something positive.
  - Pointer fingers can be something they want to point out or point to.
  - Middle fingers can be skipped or used to talk about something that is frustrating or that is "in between" other things.
  - Ring fingers can be used to talk about something they are committed to.
  - Pinkies can be used to talk about promises or something small that is important to them.

Hot Hands

Thumbs- Something positive you've done with your small groups

Pointer Fingers- Something you want to point out about what you've heard so far

Middle Fingers- Something that is frustrating about small groups

Ringer Fingers- What is something you are committing to that you've heard today?

Pinkies- Why is getting small groups right this upcoming year important for you?

Words From Your Partner's Name

A low-risk, partner activity that promotes creativity through critical thinking.

Objective

The person with the most words wins.

Materials

- Something to write with and write on

Instructions

- Have everyone get into partnerships
- Have each participant write their full name at the top of their paper
- Partners will then switch papers so that they have the paper with their partner's name on it
- Set a timer for the students and have them create as many words as possible using only the letters in their partner's full name
- After a set time limit, the partner with the most words wins

Optional: Create new partnerships and have them keep score to see who is the ultimate winner.

Words from your Partner's Name

1. Write your full name at the top of the piece of paper.
2. Swap papers with your partner.
3. You have 2 minutes to use each of the letters in your partner's name to create words related to *small groups*.

Example:

A
Sundae
Hot
Lazy
Ew
Yellow sun

Beach
E
Nana
N
E
Tan
O
N
E

Generalize the Practice

- Mentor
- Share information with those who are supporting them for positive reinforcement
- Second-hand compliments

Intentional Exit

Thinking Stems

Structure to support students or participants in their discussion and argumentative w

Materials

Something to write with and on

Instructions

- The facilitator determines the type of thinking they want students or participants to engage in: is it compare and contrast, e
  or argument construction?
- Then, the facilitator deploys a sentenc
- Optionally, the activity can be turned i
  into a cohesive, completed response.
- Once a stem is finished, participants c
  participate in a whole group discussio

Sample Stems

Argument:

- Though not everybody would agree, I want to argue that I have several reasons for advocating this point of view.
- My first reason is...
- A reason someone might argue against this is...
- Therefore, although some people might argue that...
- I have shown that...

Explanation:

- There are several reasons why...
- The most important reason is...
- Another reason is...
- A little-known reason is...
- So you can see why I came to this conclusion because...

Compare and Contrast Similarities:

- These two ideas, _____ and _____ are similar in several ways. First, they both...
- Another important similarity is...
- A lesser-known way they are the same is...
- Finally, they are

Summary (video or text)

- Although I already knew that...
- I learned some new things from ...
- I learned...
- I also discovered that...
- Another fact I learned was...
- Overall, the most interesting thing I learned was...