

Follow Up on Early MTSS and VTmtss (Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports) Needs and Networking: Vignette

Purpose

The following is a vignette that describes a tiered approach to addressing a young student's learning challenges. In this scenario, the student is eventually found eligible for special education with a specific learning disability. This is not the only way to apply this process or the only possible outcome. The process will vary from district to district depending on resources and standards of practice. The vignette is structured such that each paragraph represents an opportunity and/or decision point – there are various ways this story could change, depending on those decisions.

Christopher began experiencing difficulty in kindergarten with skills related to reading. His kindergarten teacher noted some difficulty with letter-word identification as well as phonemic awareness. The teacher discussed this with Christopher's family, and they agreed that the teacher would provide additional support to instruction in school and the family agreed to provide some enrichment activities at home. Progress monitoring data showed that Christopher was gaining skills but at the end of the school year he was still lagging his peers. The teacher and family met with the first-grade team for transition and ensured that they were aware of these concerns.

Christopher's first-grade teacher paid particular attention to his progress with basic reading skills and found early in the year that these difficulties were continuing and were likely preventing Christopher from keeping up with the class. This was demonstrated through regular formative assessments and benchmark assessments. The teacher consulted with other members of the grade level team who offered suggestions to differentiate instruction. These suggestions were implemented but little improvement was noted.

At the mid-year, Christopher's teacher scheduled an observation and consultation with the literacy interventionist. The interventionist agreed to provide additional instruction in a small group during the school-wide intervention period. The teacher and interventionist communicated regularly, sharing information about Christopher's progress in the regular class and the small group. The interventionist also shared observations about instructional methods that were most effective with Christopher. Still, after several weeks, Christopher was not progressing at a rate that would allow him to catch up with his class. The literacy interventionist recommended an Educational Support Team (EST) referral.

The EST developed a plan that provided 6 weeks of direct instruction during the intervention block. Christopher's progress was recorded and charted weekly with the expectation that

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progress would show skill acquisition trending toward a level at or near the rest of the 1st-grade class. A review of data after 8 weeks showed that the plan had been implemented as written but Christopher's skill development was well below the desired trend line. At this time the EST (including family) agreed that a special ed evaluation was indicated. A referral was made to the special education administrator.

As noted in the introduction, this vignette is one possible scenario. Some elements in this vignette reflect practices recommended by the AOE. The EST in this school used data to define the educational problem and developed a highly specific EST plan to address it. Progress monitoring and decision-making were part of the plan and were used for decision-making. Throughout the vignette, there was evidence of a consistent data system, a culture of collaboration, and available expertise. For all of that to work consistently, there had to be ongoing and intentional administrative support.