Tier 1 Problem Solving Facilitation Guide

Tier 1 problem-solving meetings are an essential tool for schools seeking to improve student outcomes. However, without effective facilitation, these meetings can easily become unproductive or unfocused. This facilitation guide is designed to help meeting facilitators plan, structure, and guide problem-solving discussions, ensuring a collaborative approach that drives actionable outcomes.

This document provides guidance for facilitating problem solving at the Tier 1 level, and can be used in conjunction with the Tier 1 Problem Solving Worksheet (PSW). Each screenshot of the PSW in this document contains numbered fields with corresponding sample prompts, as well as examples or notes. The italicized text offers suggested language to use when facilitating a team through each step of the problem-solving process.

Using this step-by-step guidance will help facilitators to keep discussions on track and lead problem-solving meetings that are focused, efficient, and ultimately effective in generating solutions that meet the team's goal of improving student outcomes.

Pre-Meeting Decision Making

A pre-meeting with the school principal is strongly recommended before facilitating Tier 1 problem solving with a team. Establishing important meeting details in advance will significantly improve the efficiency of the initial team meeting.

- **First, determine what group of students the principal wants to focus on and what area will be addressed.** For example, ELA or math for all students in a specific grade level, school-wide attendance or behavior, or all students enrolled in a specific course (e.g., Algebra 1). (*Documented on the PSW, #1 below*)
- **Next, determine who is expected to participate on the problem-solving team.** This should always include all teachers for the grade level or course (including ESE teachers) and any content area experts (reading, math, behavior, etc.). (*#2 below*)
- **Lastly, discuss the expectation for that group of students for the identified focus area and how it will be measured.** For academic content areas, the expected level of performance is typically based on state academic standards and is considered "scoring Level 3 or above on FAST." If the focus is attendance or behavior, confirm the expectation (e.g., at least 90% attendance, no more than one ODR) and what data is available to provide that information for all students in the group. It is important that data for the entire group of students can be readily displayed during the meeting and that disaggregated data (by student subgroup and other filtering options) will be available. (*#3 below*)

Pre-Meeting Decision Making with School Leadership		
School:		
Meeting Date:		
Student Group/Area of Concern: ①1		
Team Members: ②2		

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
①1	**Student Group/Area of Concern**	*"Which group of students are we problem solving for* (e.g., a grade level, class, or course), *and what are we focusing on (e.g.,* ELA, math, attendance, behavior, etc.)*?"*	"2nd grade math," "7th grade ELA" or "all students enrolled in Algebra 1," etc. This is usually decided prior to the problem-solving meeting.
②2	**Team Members**	*"Who will participate as a team member in the problem-solving meeting?"*	The team should include all teachers for the student group, including ESE teachers, as well as any content area specialists or experts

Step 1: Goal Identification/Problem Identification

During the goal identification/problem identification step, teams define the expected level of performance for what they want the students in the group to be able to do. Then, they determine what percentage of the students in the group are meeting the defined expected level of performance. This step allows teams to clearly articulate the expectation and understand the scope of the problem.

Step 1: Goal Identification/Problem Identification – What do we want students to know and be able to do?
Expected Level of Performance:
(3) Students will _____, as measured by _____.
Current Level of Performance:
(4) _____% of students met or exceeded expected level of performance
_____% of students did not meet or exceed expected level of performance
Appropriate Tier of Problem Solving:
(5) ☐ Less than approximately 80% of students are meeting or exceeding expected levels of performance, continue problem solving to develop Tier 1 instructional/intervention plan.
☐ Approximately 80% or more of students are meeting or exceeding expected levels of performance, consider Tier 2 problem solving for students not meeting expectations.

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
(3)	**Expected Level of Performance**	*"What is our expectation for every student within the group, and how will we measure the student performance?"*	(All students will…) "demonstrate grade-level skills as measured by universal screening (e.g., FAST) data", "earn 0-1 ODRs as measured by ODR reports", "be absent no more than 10% of instructional time as measured by attendance reports", "have 0-1 early warning indicators as measured by EWS data"
(4)	**Current Level of Performance**	*"What percentage of student are currently meeting the expectation?"* *"What percentage of students are* not *currently meeting the expectation?"*	Using the data measuring the agreed upon expectations, indicate the percent of students meeting, and *not* meeting expectations. The two percentages should equal 100%.
(5)	**Gap Analysis**	*"Are less than, or more than, about 80% of our students meeting the expectation?"* (If > about 80%) *"Since the data indicate that about 80% or more of our students are meeting expectations, we'll shift to problem solving at the Tier 2 level for the students who are not meeting expectations."* (If < about 80%) *"Since the data indicate that less than about 80% of students are meeting expectations, we'll continue with Tier 1 problem solving. We will schedule time for Tier 2 and Tier 3 problem solving, but we'll stay focused on Tier 1 now."*	Indicate whether less than or more than 80% of students are meeting expectations. In addition to looking at looking at aggregate data for all students, teams should also look at data for student subgroups. If supported by the data, it is acceptable to focus the goal and problem analysis on a subgroup of students.

SMART Goal		

Goal (SMART): By _____ (6), _____ (7) % of students will _____ (8), as measured by _____ (9).

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
(6)	**Goal Date**	*"By when do we want this goal to be met?"*	"By the end of the school year" or "by May 25, 2025" The goal date should be ambitious, yet realistic.
(7)	**Desired Level**	*"What percent of the student group do we expect will meet the goal by the established date?"*	The desired level should be ambitious yet realistic.
(8)	**Performance**	*"What exactly do we want students to do or achieve?"*	This usually matches the expectation described above.
(9)	**Measurement**	*"How will we measure progress or attainment of the goal?"*	This usually matches how the student performance is measured as described above.

Step 2: Problem Analysis

During the problem analysis step, teams consider why there's a difference between expected and current levels, or in other words, why too few students are meeting the expectation. Teams are guided to develop hypotheses considering instruction, curriculum, environment, and learner (ICEL) variables that are research-based, alterable, measurable, and will lead to intervention. It is critical during problem analysis to ensure that the hypotheses are valid before developing an intervention plan, so each viable hypothesis is assessed using the methods of review, interview, observe, and test (RIOT). Intervention plans should be created addressing validated hypotheses only.

Step 2: Problem Analysis – Why is the problem occurring?

Hypothesis #1:

Domain: ☐ Instruction ☐ Curriculum ☐ Environment ☐ Learner (10)

(11) Hypothesis:

(12) Prediction Statement:

Assessment Method(s): ☐ Review ☐ Interview ☐ Observe ☐ Test

Specific Data to be Collected: (13)

Validated: ☐ Yes ☐ No (14)

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
10	**Domain**	*"As we think about reasons why there's a difference between the expected and current student performance, consider reasons that are related to the instruction, curriculum, environment as well as learner."*	Hypotheses should be developed considering *Instruction*, *Curriculum*, *Environment*, or *Learner* (ICEL) variables. Identify the domain for each hypothesis generated.
11	**Hypothesis**	*"Using the sentence starter, 'the problem is occurring because…' why do you think too few students are meeting the expectation?"*	Be sure to guide team members to generate hypotheses that are research-based, alterable, measurable, and that will lead to intervention. Discussion is focused on hypotheses that could explain underperformance for most students within the whole group. Indicate hypothesis here.
12	**Prediction Statement**	*"Now let's create an if/then statement based on the hypothesis. It will help us to make sure the hypothesis is actionable and will identify what should be implemented within our intervention plan."*	"If we provide students sufficient instruction in phonemic awareness skills, then the problem will be reduced." Prediction statements can help teams focus on alterable hypotheses and can point the team toward an appropriate plan for intervention.
13	**Specific Data to be Collected and the Assessment Method(s)**	*"Our hypothesis is ___. How can we find out if that is actually true?"*	To validate the hypotheses, consider RIOT: what can be *Reviewed*, who can be *Interviewed* (or surveyed), what can be *Observed*, what can be *Tested.* Determine what assessment method (RIOT) will be used and what specific data will be reviewed or collected in order to validate the hypothesis above. Note: it may be necessary to reconvene when the data are available.
14	**Validated**	*"Is our hypothesis in fact true or valid? What did the data (RIOT) tell us?"*	Describe what was found during the assessment (RIOT) and indicate whether or not the hypothesis above is valid. If there are multiple valid hypotheses, select one or two to address first (most foundational, watershed effect, quick win, etc.).

Step 3: Intervention Design and Implementation

In this step the team will develop a comprehensive plan to address the validated barriers identified in Step 2. As a part of the comprehensive plan development, the team will document details of the intervention, establish the support needed for the interventionist, determine how intervention fidelity will be documented, and identify how progress will be monitored. It is important in this step to be as detailed as possible in the planning so that all members of the team are clear on what will be done.

Step 3: Intervention Design and Implementation – What are we going to do?	
Intervention plan developed for: (15)	Content area/focus of improvement:
Validated hypothesis: (16)	

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
15	**Plan developed for, and focus of improvement**	*"To make sure our plan is clear, we'll indicate who the plan is for, and what our area of focus is."*	Repeating from the demographics section on page 1, identify the group of students receiving the intervention as well as the content area or focus of improvement.
16	**Validated hypothesis**	*"We'll restate the validated hypotheses to ensure the intervention plan addresses the confirmed barrier."*	

Intervention Plan

Intervention Plan	**Sample Prompt:** *"Let's refer back to the validated hypothesis; we confirmed that ___ is a reason why the problem is occurring. What will we do to address that? As we create this intervention plan, it's important that we're as specific and detailed as possible so that everyone is clear on who is doing what, and when. We want to write it so that anyone can pick up this plan and know exactly what we're doing to improve Tier 1 outcomes."*
17 Who is responsible?	
18 What will be done?	
19 When will it occur?	
20 Where will it occur?	

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
17	**Who is responsible?**	*"Who will deliver this intervention? Let's make sure to write down each person's name and role."*	Use the person's name when identifying who is responsible for the intervention. The people responsible should be involved in the planning; at a minimum, how the person/people will be informed of their responsibility should be documented in the plan.
18	**What will be done?**	*"What exactly will be done?"*	Refer to the prediction statement, specifically what follows "*if*." Indicate the specific intervention that will be provided or implemented. Be as detailed as possible.
19	**When will it occur?**	*"On what days and at what times will this take place?"*	If the action is ongoing, indicate exactly when (e.g., daily, 9:05-9:20am). If the action is a single event, indicate *by when*. Be as detailed as possible.
20	**Where will it occur?**	*"Where will it happen?"*	Indicate exactly where the change will occur. For example: in all 2ⁿᵈ grade classrooms

Support Plan

Support Plan	**Sample Prompt:** *"We just identified ___ as the person/people to deliver the intervention. Now, we're going to create a plan to support them so that the plan will be implemented with the highest level of fidelity. ___, what would be helpful to you to ensure the intervention is delivered as we intend it to be? This can include modeling or coaching for the intervention, observation and feedback, support with materials, or even just reminders. Again, we're going to be as specific and detailed as possible so that everyone is clear on who is doing what, and when."*
21 Who is responsible?	
22 What will be done?	
23 When will it occur?	
24 Where will it occur?	

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
21	**Who is responsible?**	*"Who will provide support to the person(s) delivering the intervention?"*	Use the person's name when identifying who will provide support. The people responsible should be involved in the planning; at a minimum, how the person/people will be informed of their responsibility should be documented in the plan.
22	**What will be done?**	*"Specifically what support will be provided to the person(s) delivering the intervention?"*	Ask the people responsible for implementation what would be helpful to them. In addition, consider what barriers could keep the plan from being executed as designed. If adjustments to instruction, materials, curriculum, or scheduling are involved, include securing the necessary permissions from leadership, providing professional learning/training, ensuring all materials are available, etc.
23	**When will it occur?**	*"On what days and at what times will the support be provided?"*	Use dates and times if appropriate; be as detailed as possible.
24	**Where will it occur?**	*"Where will the support be provided?"*	Indicate exactly where it will occur; be as detailed as possible.

Fidelity Documentation	

25	Fidelity Documentation — Who is responsible?
26	What will be done?
27	When will it occur?
28	How will data be shared?

Sample Prompt: *"How can we measure the fidelity of the intervention? In other words, how can we document that what we intended to happen, actually happened?"*

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
25	**Who is responsible?**	*"Who will be responsible for collecting the fidelity data?"*	This may be the person delivering the intervention, and/or someone observing the intervention.
26	**What will be done?**	*"How will we know that the intervention plan is being implemented as designed?"*	For example, if the plan involves providing additional instruction to the students, consider how the team will know the instruction was provided (dosage), and whether the instruction was delivered as designed, e.g., were all the parts/steps delivered, was the script followed (adherence/quality).
27	**When will it occur?**	*"When will fidelity data collection occur?"*	Use dates and times if appropriate; be as detailed as possible.
28	**How will data be shared?**	*"How will the fidelity data be shared with the intervention provider(s) and the team?"*	Consider providing interim opportunities for reviewing fidelity data with the intervention provider(s) to strengthen fidelity of intervention implementation.

Progress Monitoring Plan

Progress Monitoring Plan 29 Who is responsible? 30 What data will be collected and when? 31 When will team reconvene to evaluate progress? How will we decide if the plan is effective? 32 Decision rules: Positive RtI = Questionable RtI = Poor RtI =	**Sample Prompt:** *"How can we measure the effectiveness of the intervention? What data can we use to monitor how well our intervention plan is working?"*

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
29	**Who is responsible?**	*"Who will be responsible for collecting the progress monitoring data?"*	This may be the person delivering the intervention or may be someone specifically trained to administer the progress monitoring tool.
30	**What data will be collected?**	*"Let's look back at the goal. What data will we collect to determine student progress?"*	Consider what data will help the team know that the changes are making the intended impact. There may be more than one source of progress monitoring data collected, and the data may be collected at different intervals, but details should be outlined in terms of what, who, and when. The frequency of data collection should be decided based on what makes sense for the skill or skills being addressed. At the Tier 1 level, this is typically the universal screener at a minimum. Sometimes, if a particular skill is being taught, progress monitoring may also include assessment of the skill.
31	**When will the team reconvene?**	*"On what day and at what time will we meet to determine progress?"*	Identify when the team will meet to determine intervention effectiveness. The next review meeting should be scheduled, identifying the day, time, and location, and participants should be clear on their responsibility to come prepared, especially those who are responsible for bringing data. At the Tier 1 level, this is typically after the next universal screener assessment.
32	**Decision rules**	*"What will we consider a positive response? How about a questionable and poor response?"*	Consider what will be considered a positive, a questionable, or a poor response. For example, this may be an increase in the percent of students meeting expectations, or the number of students closing the gap between expected and current performance. Indicate the decision rules for Step 4. This is usually described as: Positive = ≥ __% Questionable = __% - __% Poor = ≤ __%)

Step 4: Response to Intervention/Instruction

During Step 4, the team reviews RtI data and determines if the intervention plan is working as planned to achieve the desired outcomes. It's important that the team meets at the designated time and follows the progress monitoring plan (i.e., what data will be reviewed, how the team will decide effectiveness, and the decision rules for a positive, questionable, and poor response). All decisions made during Step 4 should be clearly documented, and a subsequent follow-up meeting should be scheduled after each RtI meeting, as appropriate.

Step 4: Response to Intervention/Instruction – Is it working?
Progress Monitoring Data: **(33)** _____% of students met or exceeded expected level of performance _____% of students did not meet or exceed expected level of performance **Data-based decision making based on pre-determined decision rules: (34)** ☐ POSITIVE **(35)** Goal is *not* met: ☐ Continue plan as designed *or* ☐ Increase intensity of current plan (document all changes or adjustments) Goal *is* met: ☐ Fade intervention and monitor *or* ☐ Identify new goal, modify plan (document all changes or adjustments, complete new PSW if appropriate) ☐ QUESTIONABLE **(36)** Fidelity concerns: ☐ Address fidelity, continue plan as designed and monitor (document adjustments to address fidelity) No fidelity concerns: ☐ Increase intensity of current plan and monitor if improvement doesn't occur, return to earlier steps of problem solving (document all changes or adjustments) ☐ POOR **(37)** Fidelity concerns: ☐ Address fidelity, continue plan as designed and monitor (document adjustments to address fidelity) No fidelity concerns: ☐ Return to earlier steps of problem solving to consider replacing the intervention (still addressing validated hypothesis), revisiting other viable hypotheses, or reassessing problem identification (document all changes or adjustments)

		Sample Prompt	Documentation Examples or Notes
(33)	**Progress Monitoring Data**	*"Looking at our progress monitoring data, what percent of students met, and didn't meet, the expected level of performance?"*	The data to answer this question was identified in Step 3. Indicate the percent of students meeting, and *not* meeting expectations. The two percentages should equal 100%.
(34)	**Data-Based Decision Making**	*"Let's look back to our previously established decision rules (in Step 3) to determine the students' response to intervention."*	Decision rules for a positive, questionable, and poor response were identified in Step 3. Compare the percent of students meeting expectations to the established decision rules and identify the RtI.

35	**Positive RtI**	*"RtI was positive. We have some options."*	
	Positive, goal met	*"Our students met the goal we set. Should we continue the plan, or gradually fade the intervention to see if students can maintain current performance with less intense supports?"* Then, *"Reviewing current data, are there other areas we can address and improve?"*	If appropriate, consider fading the intervention. Progress must be closely monitored, and the intervention should be put back in place immediately if the data indicate student achievement is not maintained. If the team identifies a new area to address, document problem solving using a new PSW.
	Positive, goal not met	*"Our students are on track to meet the goal we set, but they're not there yet. Should we continue with the current plan as designed, or should we increase the intensity?"*	Increasing the intensity could help to achieve the goal more quickly.
36	**Questionable RtI**	*"RtI was questionable. Let's look first at the fidelity data that was collected. Does fidelity need to be addressed before considering other changes?"*	When RtI is questionable, always look at fidelity data first. Decisions about intervention effectiveness can't be made when the intervention wasn't delivered as planned.
	Questionable RtI with poor fidelity	*"How can we ensure moving forward that the intervention is delivered as planned?"*	Fidelity should be addressed first before making any changes to the intervention plan.
	Questionable RtI with good fidelity	*"Since fidelity was good, our next step is to intensify the intervention for a short period of time, and closely monitor student progress."*	If, after intensification, the response is still questionable, guide the team to earlier steps of problem solving: (Step 3) is there another intervention that may yield better results? Or (Step 2) is there a different valid hypothesis to address? Or (Step 1) was the problem accurately identified?
37	**Poor RtI**	*"RtI was poor. Let's look first at the fidelity data that was collected. Does fidelity need to be addressed before considering other changes?"*	When RtI is poor, always look at fidelity data first. Decisions about intervention effectiveness can't be made when the intervention wasn't delivered as planned.
	Poor RtI with poor fidelity	*"How can we ensure moving forward that the intervention is delivered as planned?"*	Fidelity should be addressed first before making any changes to the intervention plan.
	Poor RtI with good fidelity	*"Since fidelity was good, our next step is to work our way back through the problem solving steps. First, is there a different intervention, aligned to our validated hypothesis, that we could implement? If not, we'll go back to problem analysis to see if there are other viable hypotheses that we should consider instead. If we need to, we can go back to problem identification to make sure the problem was accurately identified.*	Intensifying the intervention at this point is not a defensible decision because as time is passing, students are falling further behind.

To view an example of a completed Tier 1 Problem Solving Worksheet, click here.