

Learning Support: Responsive Teaching

A weekly blog for Forest Ridge faculty; format generally the same

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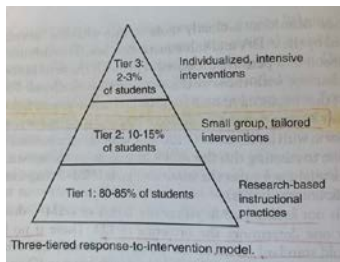
Seen and heard: Teachers embedding brain-based learning and metacognition in the classroom

2-in-2: Louisa asked French 1 students to choose two skills they didn't do well on in a previous test and use active studying skills to improve. She taught them about working memory/short term memory/long term memory (easy-to-access content at [John Medina's Brain Rules](#)). Each day they will share with a partner what they're doing to study. They will take another test in two weeks, with a customized section for their chosen two skills.

Evidence-based corner

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): An inclusive philosophy that we (school, teachers) can meet the needs of all students in our classrooms. Accommodations are supported but are less necessary because Tier 1 practices are used.

Response to Intervention (RTI): The provision of *evidence-based core instruction* to *all* students and close monitoring of academic progress. We would only expect about 5% of students to need highly individualized, intensive interventions beyond the classroom experience and some small-group or tailored intervention (such as 1-1 meetings).



Tier 1 implicitly refers to UDL. It's more effective to embed various strategies directly into classes, versus referring students out for assistance with different tasks.

In middle school and high school, this is especially true regarding executive functions: the complex mental processes that control the skills of organizing tasks, remembering details, managing time, solving problems, chunking out bigger tasks into smaller ones. Executive functions are not fully developed in humans until the mid-20s, and they don't develop at the same pace for everyone. While one teenager might be farther along, we can't set her as the bar for the timeline everyone else should be on. It's important to remember this, so we can avoid inadvertently assuming our students "should know" how to plan their time effectively or manage a task whose deadline is two weeks away.

Figure is from p. 80, Lovett and Lewandowski, *Test Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*, APA, 2015.

Strategies and structures

Simple UDL strategies (Tier 1 RTI) to use immediately:

Always have an agenda on the board for how the class period will go. If you want further discussion about why, come talk with me.

Break big projects into smaller chunks, with due dates and built-in feedback. If a student misses one of those early dates, you can intervene quickly before the whole project spirals out of control.

Compose work groups intentionally and keep groups together for a stretch of time, assigning clearly defined roles to members.

Anything of substance that is said verbally (content, directions, due dates, requirements) should be accompanied by written instructions.

Clearly label the organizational systems (OneNote repository of content), Veracross, etc.

Ensure readability level is appropriate for the age group.

Prompt feedback that fosters & requires learning the class's content and skill (think: formative assessment). Feedback does not have to be graded to be effective.

Clarity in design of tests and test questions: use simple language; beware of how multiple-choice questions can increase complexity and test things you're not truly interested in; minimize unintended consequences of test questions; be transparent in saying what students will be tested on and how; make tests as short as possible while still accomplishing their job.