



Intensifying Instruction: What Teachers Need to Know Module Note-Taking Guide

Module Overview

This course focuses on reviewing and intensifying instruction. It is part of a series covering instructional practices. When developing and implementing instruction and supports for students with disabilities, within individual, small-group, or whole-class instruction, teachers should consider following a three-phase cycle: planning, delivery, and reviewing and intensifying instruction and supports. At the center of this cycle is data-based decision making because it is critical across all three phases of the cycle. In this module, we focus on the third step in the process, which is intensifying instruction and supports. These practices were identified through an extensive, systematic meta-analysis* of the high-leverage practices for students with disabilities.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you will be able to

- identify when to intensify instruction or intervention to support the development and implementation of specially designed instruction and
- describe some components of intensifying instruction by adapting dosage, alignment, and transfer.

Using the Note-Taking Guide

As you engage in the module, **take notes on the key themes and answer the summary questions** at the end of each section. After you complete the module, check your responses against the responses given at the end of this document.

*Nelson, G., Cothren Cook, S., Zarate, K., Powell, S. R., Maggin, D. M., Drake, K. R., Kiss, A. J., Ford, J. W., Sun, L., & Espinas, D. R. (2021). A systematic review of meta-analyses in special education: Exploring the evidence base for high-leverage practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 43(5), 344–358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325211063491>

Section 1: When should we intensify instruction?

This section explains how teachers should analyze data to determine if a student is making adequate progress despite high-quality instruction. It also emphasizes the importance of confirming implementation fidelity before deciding to intensify instruction.

Notes

Key themes	Notes
Analyzing data	
Determining the necessity of intensification	
Confirming implementation fidelity	

Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
How can educators use data to determine when instruction needs to be intensified?	



Questions	Responses
What role does implementation fidelity play in deciding whether to intensify instruction?	

Section 2: How do we intensify instruction?

This section introduces data-based individualization (DBI) as a research-based process for individualizing and intensifying instruction through the systematic use of assessment data. It also presents the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity, which provides seven dimensions to consider when intensifying instruction.

Notes

Key themes	Notes
Data-based individualization (DBI) process	
Resources to support intensifying instruction	
Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity	

Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
What is the DBI process, and how does it guide instruction intensification?	
How can the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity be used to support instructional intensification?	



Section 3: Dosage

In this section, dosage is the number of opportunities that students have to practice and receive feedback during instruction. The content suggests how teachers can increase dosage by adjusting group size, session length, or frequency and by designing lessons with increased opportunities for practice and response.

Notes

Key themes	Notes
Considerations for increasing dosage	
Opportunities to practice and respond	
Designing opportunities to practice	
Differentiating opportunities to respond	



Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
What strategies can teachers use to increase instructional dosage without necessarily increasing time?	
How can teachers design and differentiate opportunities for practice and response to meet individual student needs?	

Section 4: Alignment

In this section, alignment is described as focusing instruction on areas of need while limiting time on concepts already mastered. The section stresses that teachers should ensure instruction aligns with both the student's specific needs and grade-level standards.

Notes

Key Themes	Notes
Adjusting content	
Ensuring alignment with grade-level standards	
Strategies for maximizing alignment	



Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
How can teachers adjust content to ensure alignment with both student needs and grade-level standards?	
What are effective strategies for maximizing alignment in instruction for students with disabilities?	

Section 5: Transfer

This section discusses how transfer promotes the application of learned skills to new situations. The content emphasizes that teaching for transfer is crucial because students with disabilities often struggle to generalize skills across different contexts and assessments.

Notes

Key themes	Notes
Transfer example	
Why is teaching transfer important?	
Examples of teaching to transfer	
How can teachers intensify for transfer?	



Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
Why is teaching for transfer crucial, and how does it impact student performance across different contexts?	
What practical strategies can teachers employ to intensify instruction for better skill transfer and generalization?	



Sample Responses

This section presents sample responses to the questions provided after each section. You may use these responses to compare them with your own responses.

Section	Summary questions	Sample responses
Section 1: When should we intensify instruction?	How can educators use data to determine when instruction needs to be intensified?	Educators should regularly collect and analyze student performance data, including progress monitoring data. If a student's data show that they are not meeting goals or making adequate progress despite high-quality instruction, this indicates a need for intensification.
	What role does implementation fidelity play in deciding whether to intensify instruction?	Implementation fidelity is crucial in determining whether to intensify instruction. Before intensifying, educators should ensure that the current instruction is being delivered as designed, using tools such as a student intervention implementation log.
Section 2: How do we intensify instruction?	What is the DBI process, and how does it guide instruction intensification?	DBI is a systematic process for individualizing interventions using assessment data, validated interventions, and research-based adaptation strategies. It guides intensification by providing a framework to collect and analyze data, develop hypotheses about student needs, and make data-driven decisions to adapt instruction.
	How can the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity be used to support instructional intensification?	The Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity provides seven dimensions for educators to consider when intensifying instruction.
Section 3: Dosage	What strategies can teachers use to increase instructional dosage without necessarily increasing time?	Teachers can increase dosage by reducing group size, incorporating more frequent response opportunities, and using strategies such as choral response or polling. Leveraging technology, peer-assisted learning, and co-teaching arrangements also can provide additional practice opportunities.



Section	Summary questions	Sample responses
	How can teachers design and differentiate opportunities for practice and response to meet individual student needs?	Teachers can create tasks at varying difficulty levels and use technology to assign specific activities to individual students. Incorporating multiple response modes and offering choice in demonstrating learning can help meet diverse student needs.
Section 4: Alignment	How can teachers adjust content to ensure alignment with both student needs and grade-level standards?	Teachers can break complex skills into smaller segments while maintaining exposure to grade-level content. Using a scope and sequence that bridges the gap between current skills and grade-level expectations, along with worked examples, can help align instruction effectively.
	What are effective strategies for maximizing alignment in instruction for students with disabilities?	Effective strategies include using diagnostic assessments to identify student needs, creating word walls for content-specific vocabulary, and employing hands-on tools to support abstract concepts. Focusing on fewer skills intensively and providing explicit instruction that connects foundational skills to grade-level applications can maximize alignment.
Section 5: Transfer	Why is teaching for transfer crucial, and how does it impact student performance across different contexts?	Teaching for transfer enables students to apply learned skills to new situations beyond the original learning environment. It helps narrow the gap between intervention performance and broader academic success, supporting students in applying their skills more flexibly across all areas of their academic life.
	What practical strategies can teachers employ to intensify instruction for better skill transfer and generalization?	Teachers can explicitly teach how skills apply in different contexts and provide varied practice opportunities across settings. Using consistent language across instructional settings, incorporating real-world examples, and teaching metacognitive strategies can enhance skill transfer and generalization.



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