Evidence-Based Reading Instruction for Secondary Students With Reading Difficulties Within Multitiered Systems of Support

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Abstract

Christian Scott recently returned home from college and was set to begin his first year as a middle school special education teacher. During his first meeting with his new principal, he learned about his teaching schedule. His principal, Mrs. Walker, explained their district was making a push for using multitiered systems of support (MTSS) as a framework for instruction. Her school would identify students with reading difficulties based on their performance on prior state reading tests and use this information to develop student schedules that allow students to receive additional reading interventions (i.e., Tier 2, Tier 3). Christian would teach reading to students with disabilities on his caseload across instructional tiers (Tiers 1–3). He would be tasked with providing co-teaching support for students with disabilities as they participate in general education classes (i.e., Tier 1). He would also provide additional Tier 2 supports to students with and without disabilities that did not pass the state achievement test in reading. Finally, he would provide intensive interventions to students with disabilities who required small group instruction (Tier 3).

Having just received his special education teaching credential, Christian was familiar with the co-teaching service delivery model and the elements of effective instruction for middle school students with reading difficulties. However, he wondered, "What will this actually look like? How

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

will I support the general education teacher providing Tier 1 supports? It sounds like I will also provide Tier 2-type instruction to students via a reading intervention class. What should this look like? How will this differ from the small group, Tier 3 instruction I need to provide?" Christian's mind raced with questions he was too nervous to ask in his first meeting with his new supervisor. The special education lead teacher noticed Christian seemed unsure how to respond. She jumped in, "Don't worry, Christian. School doesn't start for a few weeks. I'll help you with the details so you can hit the ground running." Christian felt excited about the challenge but also overwhelmed. Planning lessons for students with varying needs across instructional tiers was a tall order, and he felt unsure about how to get started.

The prevalence and severity of reading difficulties among secondary students is staggering. The achievement levels of students with disabilities are particularly concerning. In 2019, 27% of all eighth-grade students scored below the basic level, whereas 63% of eighth-grade students with disabilities scored below this threshold (U.S. Department of Education, Nation's Report Card, 2019). To put this in perspective, students with disabilities were nearly 3 times less likely to meet this basic performance threshold than their peers without disabilities even though many students with disabilities received accommodations during testing (e.g., extended time, directions read-aloud, etc.).

Why do so many older students with disabilities struggle to meet basic levels of reading proficiency in the middle school grades? More than two-thirds of students with disabilities enter the secondary grades with established reading difficulties (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Many middle school students with reading difficulties continue to present difficulties in foundational reading skills (word reading or reading fluency) in addition to challenges comprehending complex texts (e.g., Cirino et al., 2013). To compound this problem, secondary students with and without reading difficulties have limited opportunities to read text and improve their reading skills during content-area classes (Swanson et al., 2009; Wexler et al., 2017). Instead, many secondary teachers convey content through videos or multimedia presentations and often forego teaching basic reading skills even when students demonstrate need in this area (Greenleaf & Valencia, 2017; Swanson et al., 2009). Additionally, students in the secondary grades typically experience decelerating reading growth rates after third grade (Cameron et al., 2015). Relatedly, intervention research reveals the effects of intensive reading interventions are smaller for older students (Scammacca et al., 2015) than they are for students in the primary grades (Wanzek et al., 2016).

What can be done about this? Two recommended approaches for improving reading outcomes for secondary students with reading difficulties are to integrate reading instruction within content-area classes (e.g., Capin & Vaughn, 2017) and identify students with documented reading difficulties and provide intensive interventions for those students (Reed et al., 2012). To accomplish these goals, secondary schools can adopt a MTSS framework. MTSS approaches were initially developed and tested for students in the elementary grades as a way to prevent academic and behavior problems through early identification of students with difficulties and immediate provision of interventions. Although the focus in secondary schools often shifts from prevention to remediation (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012), the essential

elements of MTSS are appropriate for the secondary grades: (a) implementation of a schoolwide system to ensure learning is maximized for all students, (b) use of screening data to identify students with reading difficulties, (c) collection of progress monitoring data to inform instructional planning and to determine movement within multitiered systems, and (d) enactment of evidence-based instructional practices informed by data (Duffy, 2007; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; National Center on MTSS, 2020). Furthermore, research shows MTSS can boost academic outcomes for secondary students (e.g., Vaughn et al., 2010). Like elementary schools, secondary schools adopt MTSS frameworks as a schoolwide system for identifying struggling readers and providing evidence-based intervention aligned with students' needs (King et al., 2012; Reed et al., 2012).

Secondary school structures present significant challenges for moving students between instructional tiers on an ongoing basis (Williams et al., 2018). Specifically, it is difficult for schools to transition students in and out of intervention groups because of scheduling barriers and limited staffing resources (e.g., King et al., 2012; National Center on Response to Intervention [RTI], 2010; Savitz et al., 2022). Secondary schools often schedule students with reading difficulties into interventions during separate class periods and keep students in these classes for an entire semester (National Center on RTI, 2010). These logistical challenges make it difficult for schools to create flexible schedules that permit student movement across tiers based on progress monitoring data (National Center on RTI, 2010). Despite these challenges, secondary schools like Mr. Scott's middle school are increasingly adopting MTSS frameworks that include identifying students who have reading difficulties prior to the beginning of each year and providing three tiers of instructional support (Savitz et al., 2022).

The purpose of this article is to support secondary special education teachers, like Mr. Scott, and reading interventionists who are responsible for providing high-quality instruction to students with varying degrees of reading difficulties, including students with disabilities. In this article, evidence-based recommendations for secondary reading instruction are provided including a description for how to apply those practices across three tiers of instruction. Specifically, examples about what to teach in each tier (e.g., vocabulary, word reading) and how to teach it (e.g., explicit instruction, use of strategies) are provided. Implementing evidence-based instruction in a way that allows secondary students to improve their reading performance and acquire content knowledge requires special education and intervention teachers to have expertise of reading development, effective teaching methods, and data use. How can a lesson that may be appropriate for all students in Tier 1 be enhanced for students in Tier 2 who need additional supports? How might instruction between Tiers 2 and 3 really differ?

This article provides three illustrative lesson plans all focused on the same reading passage: the life of Claudette Colvin and the role she played in the civil rights movement. The Tier 1 lesson presents an example of how explicit vocabulary and reading comprehension strategy instruction (implemented in a cooperative learning format) can be woven into the content-area instruction before, during, and after text reading. Providing vocabulary and reading comprehension instruction in this way supports struggling learners during Tier 1 instruction.

In contrast, lesson plans for Tiers 2 and 3, which support students in comprehending the same reading passage, illustrate the need to target different aspects of reading to better meet the needs of struggling readers while covering the same learning objectives related to content knowledge. Although the lesson plans use the same reading assignment, we do not mean to imply that students who receive interventions receive duplicative lessons or that Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction supplants instruction in Tier 1. To the contrary, these illustrative lessons simply show how different aspects of instruction can be adjusted to meet students' learning needs.

Implementation of MTSS in the secondary grades varies considerably from that of elementary grades. Although three-tier models for instruction are common in the secondary grades, state and local policies typically provide limited guidance regarding implementation of MTSS in the secondary grades (Savitz et al., 2018). Thus, some secondary schools may organize their instruction with more or fewer tiers of support or without formally adopting an MTSS framework. However, our recommendations about differentiating instruction across instructional tiers are relevant to all secondary campuses because all schools have students with varying degrees of reading difficulties who require instruction aligned with their needs.

Reading Instruction for Secondary Students With Reading Difficulties Within MTSS

As an advanced organizer, Figure 1 illustrates a general guideline for how instructional content (e.g., vocabulary, fluency, etc.) and methods (e.g., explicitness of instruction) may vary by instructional tier. As shown in Figure 1, the number of reading domains that require support will be greater for students with the greatest reading difficulties. This figure is presented as a potential starting point; however, it will be critical to assess each student's reading skills and prepare instruction accordingly, particularly for students receiving Tiers 2 and 3 instruction. It is recommended to take advantage of state test scores and state-mandated screening measures to identify students who need supplemental reading interventions (e.g., Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Diagnostic assessments that measure students' reading fluency and decoding skills may also be particularly helpful in identifying the sources of students' reading difficulties and determining the extent to which teachers need to attend to these areas (Clemens et al., 2017; Denton & Al Otaiba, 2011).

Furthermore, student performance must be monitored and instruction adjusted to ensure students meet their learning goals. Frequent curriculum-based formative assessments should be conducted to inform instruction and monitor progress. Consider data-based individualization, an evidence-based approach to assessment and instructional design (Deno & Mirkin, 1980; Filderman et al., 2019; Lemons et al., 2014). This approach involves the frequent and organized collection and scrutiny of assessment data as part of an ongoing process to determine how and when to modify interventions. Within this framework, teachers can monitor the progress of students receiving Tier 2 interventions at least monthly (maze and other comprehension progress-monitoring assessments may be best administered monthly; oral reading fluency could be measured every 2 to 3 weeks). The progress of

students receiving more intensive, Tier 3-type interventions should be monitored more frequently, such as every 2 weeks. This progress monitoring serves to inform instruction and determine whether students are adequately responding to teaching.

In addition to using data to ensure the reading domains targeted by the intervention correspond to students' areas of need, teachers will also want to consider other crucial differences between tiers related to the teaching methods. Students with more severe difficulties will require more intensive and explicit interventions. The sections that follow describe how to implement evidence-based instructional practices in each instructional tier. How assessment informs high quality secondary reading instruction within a MTSS and ways to address the motivation and behavior challenges that secondary struggling readers may present are discussed.

Tier 1

Tier 1 is referred to here as core instruction provided to all students. One important research-based recommendation is to integrate vocabulary and reading comprehension instruction into content-area teaching (e.g., Herrera et al., 2016; Pearson et al., 2020; Scammacca et al., 2015). Targeting vocabulary and comprehension during content-area instruction has been found effective in improving content knowledge outcomes among secondary students (e.g., Vaughn et al., 2015). In fact, studies examining the relative effects of this approach to instruction have often found the largest effects on content outcomes are present for students with reading disabilities (Swanson et al., 2015) and limited English proficiency (Wanzek et al., 2016). Additionally, research evidence suggests improving content knowledge will increase reading comprehension (e.g., Cromley & Azevedo, 2007; Hwang et al., 2021), given that it is difficult to understand texts without relevant background knowledge.

> Figure 2 illustrates how Mr. Scott can integrate evidence-based explicit vocabulary instruction using a graphic organizer and reading comprehension strategy instruction into content-area lessons to support his students with reading difficulties. The lesson is organized into before-, during-, and after-reading phases and grounded in key elements of explicit instruction, including: (a) providing clear and direct explanations; (b) following an explicit instructional routine of I do, we do, you do; (c) prompting students to respond frequently to encourage task engagement and skill development; and (d) gradually fading student supports and releasing responsibility to students
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> (Archer & Hughes, 2010).

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

In the before-reading phase, provide explicit vocabulary instruction using a graphic organizer, a widely recommended practice for improving content acquisition and reading (e.g., Kamil et al., 2008). Figure 3 shows a sample graphic organizer recommended to initially establish students' knowledge of preselected vocabulary words. For each word, this involves pronouncing the word, providing a student-friendly definition, discussing related words, and describing how the word relates to the image. From there, ask students to read the example sentences in pairs and then discuss the "turn-and-talk questions." Seeing the

words in multiple sample sentences and discussing the words with peers provides students with opportunities to learn nuances in word meanings across multiple contexts and practice using words in oral discourse (Baumann et al., 2003).

> Mr. Scott initially models how peers take turns reading the sample sentences and responding to the turn-and-talk questions. Then, he circulates around the classroom, focusing on those students who have learning and behavioral difficulties, providing specific feedback and additional modeling as needed.

Vocabulary graphic organizers are a useful launching pad for teaching word meanings before reading text, but effective vocabulary instruction also provides students with multiple opportunities to engage with new words across reading and writing tasks. Therefore, it is key to fully support student word learning by drawing attention to the key words as they emerge in text and providing additional opportunities for students to practice applying new word knowledge across multiple contexts after reading (Baumann et al., 2003). For example, in the sample lesson, students are asked to write the vocabulary words in sentences using their own words after reading.

Reading comprehension strategy instruction.—Teaching reading comprehension strategies, and particularly how to use multiple comprehension strategies (Shanahan et al., 2010), is an evidence-based approach to improving comprehension (e.g., Herrera et al., 2016). Effectively implemented, strategies provide students with a plan for understanding text and facilitate active engagement during reading. Therefore, identify a couple of effective reading comprehension strategies (e.g., asking and answering questions, identifying main ideas, recognizing text structure, summarizing; Kamil et al., 2008; National Reading Panel et al., 2000) to teach students. For example, one reading comprehension strategy identified in the sample lesson is called "get the gist" (Klingner & Vaughn, 1998), which focuses on helping students identify main ideas in text. As shown in the Tier 1 lesson, begin by modeling your own strategy use, using think-aloud procedures that simultaneously describe and demonstrate the reading comprehension strategies. This demonstration should include step-by-step description of how to use the comprehension strategy to identify a "gist" statement for a passage of text. After explaining and modeling get the gist, students have an opportunity to engage in guided practice in small groups. Of course, this process will likely need to be repeated for several days, until students demonstrate they understand how to use get the gist and can apply it while reading. This same routine of modeling, guided practice, and, ultimately, independent use of the practice would be followed for any new strategy taught to students.

Research suggests cooperative learning can be an effective and engaging method for learning to apply reading comprehension strategies such as get the gist (e.g., Jenkins et al., 2003). Not only does cooperative learning increase student engagement by increasing students' social motivation to learn (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2018), but it can also increase opportunities for students to respond and receive feedback (i.e., when students are trained to provide feedback for their peers). To implement cooperative learning, group students together to accomplish shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Explicitly teach students how to work cooperatively by (a) identifying the group's overall goal and assigning each

student a role (e.g., note-taker, reader, time-keeper), (b) purposefully grouping students to ensure groups are heterogeneous and include at least one leader, (c) modeling how to enact the individual roles at the outset and as needed, and (d) providing ongoing feedback to continuously shape behavior (e.g., Boardman et al., 2016). In training students to provide specific, constructive feedback for their peers, it can be helpful to provide a rubric. For example, when a class is working on using get the gist to identify a main idea, students can use a checklist that asks whether their peer has (a) identified the correct subject, (b) described the most important idea about the subject, and (c) written a main idea with 10 words or less. Student peer reviewers can be provided with a "cheat sheet" with correct answers, if helpful. They can also practice using generalizable sentence starters that help ensure feedback is constructive, positive, and respectful (e.g., "I like how you … but I think it would be more effective if you… "). Of course, it is important to monitor students and provide additional teacher modeling and feedback as needed during cooperative learning group work. Teachers interested in learning more about how to implement cooperative learning techniques may benefit from reading about the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) program (Klingner & Vaughn, 1998; see The IRIS Center, n.d.), which features get the gist and other reading comprehension strategies. When implemented with fidelity, CSR has shown to be beneficial for diverse samples of students, including English learners and students with disabilities (Annamma et al., 2011; Freeman-Green et al., 2021; Klingner & Vaughn, 1998). The program provides frequent opportunities and scaffolds to support the use of oral language and engaging in positive and productive peer conversation among traditionally marginalized students (Klingner & Vaughn, 2000).

Co-teaching considerations.—Many middle schools (e.g., Solis et al., 2012; Wexler et al., 2018) have not adopted one specific model of co-teaching instruction (e.g., team teaching, station teaching, one-teach-one-assist; for a review of these models, see Sinclair et al., 2018). Research is still investigating whether particular models of co-teaching are more effective than others within particular learning contexts (Iacono et al., 2021). However, there are a few principles of effective co-teaching instruction that can inform planning. For one, co-teaching models should be selected based on the purpose of instruction and needs of all students (Cook et al., 2021). Second, co-teaching is more effective when general and special educators equally share responsibility for teaching (Bottge et al., 2018). This suggests that approaches such as team teaching or station teaching are superior to approaches in which one teacher plays a more passive role. Additionally, general and special education teachers should collaboratively design instruction that meets the needs of all students (i.e., those with and without disabilities who are receiving instruction in the same classroom at the same time). Finally, it is important that special education teachers recognize that although secondary general education teachers possess unique content expertise, they may not have much experience supporting struggling readers in reading and understanding content-area texts (e.g., Kosanovich et al., 2010). Thus, special educators can help their counterparts integrate some of the practices described previously, which are beneficial for all learners. To support such efforts, Wexler and colleagues (2018) developed a co-teaching instructional framework (Project CALI: Content Area Literacy Instruction) that helps middle school general educators and special educators share in the planning and implementation of explicit

literacy instruction in secondary content-area classrooms (for additional information, see UCONN, n.d.).

Mr. Scott collaborated with his general education partner to plan their co-teaching approach for supporting vocabulary, reading comprehension, and content expertise. Together, he and his co-teacher chose to implement a team-teaching approach where both teachers would provide instruction and support to small groups as they worked in collaborative groups. By simultaneously providing support, the teachers were able to provide more feedback and support, particularly to struggling readers.

Tier 2

Tier 2 interventions are strategic interventions for students who are having difficulty keeping pace with their peers during Tier 1 instruction. In many schools, these strategic interventions take the form of a booster class for students who performed "on the bubble" (performed just below or above the passing score) on the state test or a universal screening measure (Reed et al., 2012). On many secondary campuses, these specialized classes serve as a supplement to Tier 1 instruction and often include a smaller number of students (e.g., 10–12 students). Recommended practice involves conducting reliable assessments of students' reading skills to determine specific reading domains to target and the intensity of instruction (e.g., group size, number of instructional minutes). Many adolescents who require Tier 2 intervention demonstrate weaknesses in multisyllable word reading and reading fluency, among other areas (Archer et al., 2003; Cirino et al., 2013). Like Tier 1, Tier 2 instructional goals include supporting content knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension because these represent important grade-level expectations.

Figure 4 illustrates how Mr. Scott modified the Tier 1 lesson (Figure 1) for use with his students receiving Tier 2 instruction. Recall, it is not suggested Mr. Scott teach the exact same content in his Tier 1 and 2 lessons; a reading lesson based on the same text is provided to illustrate ways in which instruction can be intensified during Tier 2. As shown in the sample lesson, Mr. Scott adds instruction to improve multisyllable word reading and reading fluency because they address the underlying word reading difficulties his students are experiencing.

Multisyllable Word Reading and Fluency Instruction

Struggling readers often have difficulties with multisyllable words (e.g., Duncan & Seymour, 2003). These words are often critical to understanding the meaning of texts (Carnine & Carnine, 2004), and multisyllable word reading instruction has been found to be effective in improving the decoding skills of struggling readers (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004; Toste et al., 2017, 2019). To implement, teach students to break words into syllables using knowledge of syllable types or word parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots) and model flexible application of decoding strategies during word reading. We recommend keeping multisyllable instruction relatively brief and focus on the words students will see in the day's text to make the text more accessible. Provide students with multiple opportunities to practice reading words with teacher feedback (Toste et al., 2017, 2019).

Peers can also support multisyllable word reading and fluency instruction. There is considerable research to support partner reading and peer-to-peer feedback in reading interventions (D. Fuchs et al., 2000). Peers can be trained to provide specific, goal-directed, constructive feedback (Meisinger et al., 2004). For example, students could refer to a flowchart or checklist of prompts to use if their partners misread or are stumped by a multisyllable word. They can refer to a cue card to ask, "Are there any parts you know?" and potentially refer to an "answer key" with affixes that are in the words in text (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). Peers can be taught to provide a verbal prompt to "sound it out, chunk by chunk" and to check whether the word produced makes sense in the context of the sentence ("Does that word make sense?").

> As shown in the lesson, Mr. Scott enhances his students' fluency by (a) modeling how to read accurately, with appropriate pace and prosody, and (b) providing students opportunities to engage in repeated reading with feedback. He specifies that the multisyllable words and connected text that students read to support fluency are related to the content covered during the rest of the lesson. Mr. Scott engages his students in cooperative learning during Tier 2 instruction, pairing a stronger reader with a less proficient peer reader during repeated reading activities and organizing the activity such that the more advanced reader goes first. The Tier 2 sample lesson also displays several ways in which Mr. Scott makes his Tier 2 instruction more explicit, including (a) providing additional teacher-led modeling and guided practice of comprehension strategy use, (b) supporting students' comprehension strategy use by providing student scaffolds (described in the following), and (c) using sentence stems to support writing and vocabulary use.

Making instruction more explicit.—Beyond the inclusion of decoding and reading fluency instruction, many of the differences between Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction lie in the instructional methods employed. Students receiving Tier 2 supports require more explicit instruction with multiple opportunities to respond and receive feedback. Student learning scaffolds can facilitate students' knowledge and use of reading strategies as teachers gradually transfer responsibility to students (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). For example, the student prompts shown in Figure 5 support academic language use and reading comprehension strategy use (e.g., get the gist strategies; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). As noted earlier, Tier 2 guided practice with scaffolding can occur in pairs or small cooperative learning groups in which peers can assist one another in implementing strategies and provide feedback.

> As students demonstrate proficiency during guided practice, Mr. Scott gradually reduces the amount of scaffolding so students can practice using the strategies independently. Although Mr. Scott initially follows the sequence of teacher modeling ("I do"), guided practice ("we do"), and independent practice ("you do"), he remembers that strategy learning and use—and really all learning—does not always occur in a linear sequence, particularly for students with reading difficulties. Mr. Scott provides additional modeling and guided practice when students demonstrate difficulty recalling the strategy or applying it while reading.

In this way, the instructional stages of "I do," "we do," and "you do" are more iterative than sequential.

Tier 3

When providing Tier 3 supports, target students' underlying word-reading difficulties through explicit, systematic phonics instruction. Solidify students' knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and help them improve in single-syllable decoding as needed. This type of instruction is the most intensive intervention, reserved for students who require instruction that is more intensive than the instruction provided in Tier 2 settings. Although content knowledge acquisition is a primary goal of instruction for secondary teachers, it is also key to acknowledge that students need to be fluent readers to read text and access content. Some students–particularly those with most significant reading difficulties–will enter the secondary grades with foundational word reading deficits (e.g., Capin et al., 2021).

> Figure 6 shows how Mr. Scott modified the instructional goals and methods presented in the previous sample lessons to meet the needs of his students needing additional Tier 3 supports. Mr. Scott increases the number of minutes (i.e., dosage) overall in the lesson to allocate time for his students to develop word reading. He also reduces the student-to-teacher ratio to ensure students have adequate time to respond and receive individualized feedback.

During Tier 3 instruction, ensure instruction exemplifies the principles of explicit instruction and there is a strong fit between student needs and instruction (i.e., the instruction meets the individual needs of students). As illustrated in the Tier 3 sample lesson, ensure modeling and guided practice are even more explicit, including (a) dividing the text into shorter, more manageable sections and providing more frequent checks for understanding and feedback; (b) breaking reading comprehension strategies down into their most basic component parts using a think-aloud procedure during teacher modeling to support strategy learning; and (c) providing additional scaffolds (e.g., graphic organizer) to support student writing. In addition to increasing the explicitness of instruction, provide supports to meet the specific needs of students. In particular, Mr. Scott's Tier 3 lesson calls for students to practice vowel sounds in isolation and then allocates time to work on reading multisyllable words and develop reading fluency in connected text. This increased focus on word reading reflects instruction that is targeted to meet the specific needs of his students; however, it is important to note that the lesson still provides these students opportunities to engage with grade-level content and build knowledge.

Addressing Motivation and Behavior Challenges During Secondary Reading Instruction

Learning difficulties and behavior difficulties frequently co-occur (McIntosh et al., 2008). Many students who have had repeated experiences of academic failure struggle with internalizing behavior difficulties (e.g., reading anxiety) but also with externalizing behavior difficulties (e.g., oppositional or defiant behaviors). To improve reading engagement and achievement for secondary students, it is often critical to address reading motivation and challenging behaviors.

To increase reading engagement, address students' intrinsic motivation to read, sense of self-efficacy, social motivation, and awareness that reading has value in the world (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2018). Help cultivate intrinsic motivation by supporting students in identifying an existing interest or interests (e.g., via an interest inventory) and helping them locate texts on topics of interest; then help students identify other topics related to existing interests. Providing scaffolded opportunities for students to choose the texts they will read (e.g., initially offering a limited selection of texts or allowing students to choose between two different texts) or to choose between two potentially useful strategies while reading can also increase intrinsic motivation. Increase students' self-efficacy by guiding them in using strategy-use checklists and providing task-specific feedback that encourages students to attend to their own successful strategy use (e.g., "See how you used your vocabulary strategy; notice how it helped you determine the meaning of that unknown word"). As noted earlier, scaffolding work so that all group members are engaging meaningfully in group work supports students' motivation. Increase students' awareness of the value of reading by noting the usefulness of knowledge gained via reading texts in solving problems in the world. Make sure texts used during lessons represent the racial, ethnic, and/or cultural diversity of individuals in the classroom/school community.

Extrinsic motivators also have a place in secondary reading instruction. It is often possible to transition students from extrinsic motivators (e.g., 5 minutes to listen to music at the end of class) to intrinsic motivators (e.g., enjoyment of interesting texts). At first, engage students in reading and logging "likes" in exchange for extrinsic motivators. Gradually help students identify texts that will be "likable" based on their log data and then gradually fade the extrinsic motivator (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2018).

When students have challenging behaviors that get in the way of learning, assist students in (a) setting behavioral goals, (b) monitoring progress toward meeting these behavioral goals, and (c) reflecting on progress toward meeting behavioral goals. First, work with students to create behavioral goals that are explicit, positively worded, measurable, attainable, and written using student-friendly language (e.g., "When partner reading today, I will only make comments related to the text we're reading"). When introducing a behavioral goal, explicitly state the goal and model the expected behavior while thinking aloud. Guide students to practice examples and nonexamples of the expected behavior and provide specific feedback. Once students are working to implement the expected behavior independently, provide behavior-specific positive praise when student behavior meets expectations and behavior-specific corrective feedback when student behavior does not meet expectations.

To support students in becoming independent in their behavior management, facilitate student self-monitoring of progress toward engagement and behavioral goals. Provide students with opportunities to check in with themselves periodically during a lesson (e.g., by using a timer set for every 10 minutes as a reminder) or at the end of the lesson. Self-monitoring forms or checklists can facilitate this when they include a goal, allow for self-assessment of the extent to which students met their goals (e.g., via a rating scale), and encourage reflection. For an example using reading goals, see Texas Center for Learning Disabilities (2021). Reflection will involve identification of goals students have met and goals students are still working toward. Help facilitate the reflection process by asking

questions such as "What was one thing that was helpful for you as you worked toward your goal?" Eventually, students will be able to independently create their own goals, self-monitor, reflect on their ability to accomplish goals, and create new goals.

Final Thoughts

Despite the logistical challenges that secondary class schedules present, MTSS is an ongoing process that involves using student performance data to guide instructional decisions, including movement between tiers (King et al., 2012; Prewett et al., 2012). It may be overwhelming to consider making schedule changes in the middle of a semester to allow for movement between tiers of instruction (Thomas et al., 2020); however, student movement across instructional tiers is an essential element of successful MTSS models. Some secondary schools have found it helpful to use a flexible block scheduling approach that enables students to move across instructional tiers (Savitz et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2020). Secondary educators interested in developing and enhancing MTSS systems and policies may wish to take advantage of the resources developed by the Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (n.d.), which offers guidance documents and lessons learned from implementing MTSS in the secondary grades. Additional resources for secondary special educators are presented in Table 1.

With the upsurge in collaborative teaching models over the past 25 years and prevalence of MTSS frameworks in the secondary grades, secondary special education teachers are frequently asked to collaborate with general education teachers to support students with disabilities in content-area classes in addition to providing support to students with disabilities in separate classrooms (Pratt et al., 2017). Planning for and providing high-quality reading and content-area instruction across multiple tiers of instruction within MTSS systems to students with varying levels of reading difficulties is a tall task for beginning teachers, like Mr. Scott, and the most experienced educators. One common element present across the instructional lessons presented is the application of explicit instructional techniques. By providing students with clear modeling and frequent opportunities to respond and practice, teachers can reduce the frequency of problem behaviors and increase opportunities for students to develop mastery of the skills and knowledge being taught. This is key for secondary students with learning disabilities, many of whom also have behavioral difficulties (McIntosh et al., 2008) as a result of struggling to make academic progress over multiple years. Schoolwide approaches that enable students with disabilities to experience evidence-based instruction in every class are particularly important to the success of students with reading disabilities given that previous research shows intensive interventions typically lead to only modest improvements on generalized measures of reading comprehension (Scammacca et al., 2015).

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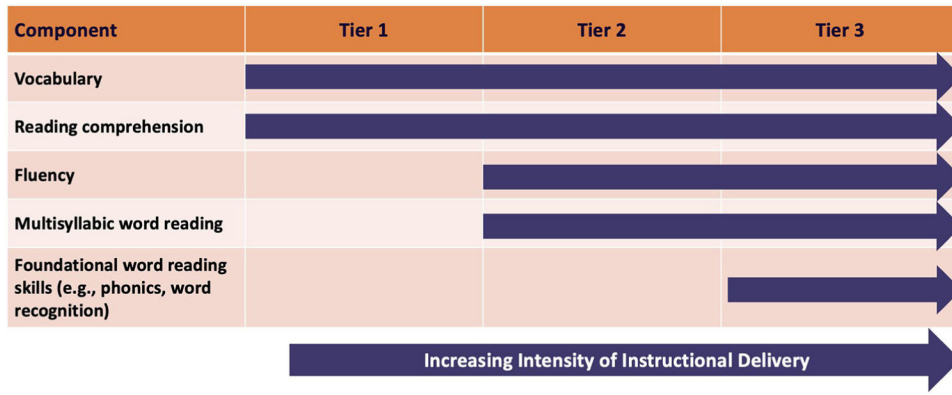
Component	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Vocabulary			
Reading comprehension			
Fluency			
Multisyllabic word reading			
Foundational word reading skills (e.g., phonics, word recognition)			

Increasing Intensity of Instructional Delivery

Figure 1.
Secondary reading instruction across instructional tiers

Sample Lesson for Secondary Grades: Tier 1 (50 minutes)

Materials

Text: "Before Rosa Parks, There Was Claudette Colvin" (Adler, 2009)

Supplemental: Vocabulary graphic organizer (see Figure 3 below)

Primary Learning Objectives

Reading: Students will synthesize information to support understanding.

Content: Students will identify how individual actions influenced larger outcomes of the civil rights movement.

Supporting Goals

Students will understand and use key vocabulary terms, work collaboratively to identify main ideas, and write a summary to support text understanding.

Grouping Structures Within Lesson (Overall Group Size = Whole Class)

Before and after reading: Whole class (20–30 students)

During reading: Small groups (4 students)

Before Reading (10 minutes)

Vocabulary

"Before we start, let's learn some key vocabulary that you'll encounter in the text. We have vocabulary maps for the words *boycott* and *oppression*." (For each word, present a student-friendly definition, visual representation, synonym, and example sentence using the vocabulary graphic organizer. [See Figure 3 below for example.])

> *Teacher provides brief vocabulary instruction on key words selected from the text.*

Comprehension Strategy

"Today, you will monitor your reading comprehension as you read the article in small groups. I will show you how to use a strategy called get the gist. As you read each section, you will decide what's the most important 'who' or 'what.' Think about what's the most important idea about that 'who' or 'what.' Then, write the gist in 10 words or less. Let me show you how. Listen and follow along as I read the first paragraph." (Read the paragraph.)

> *Teacher models comprehension strategy explicitly.*

"Who is the most important 'who' or 'what'? I think the most important 'who' is Claudette Colvin because the whole paragraph describes her. What's the important information about Claudette?" (Students respond.) "Yes, she refused to give up her seat. My job is to put this into 10 words or less: 'Claudette refused to give up her seat on the bus.' That's 10 words! It's OK if it's a little more or less than 10 words. The goal is to capture the most important information from the paragraph." (Model additional times as needed.)

Content-Focused Comprehension Purpose Question (CPQ)

"Now you will read the rest of the text in your teams. Remember, think about our unit comprehension purpose question: How did individuals contribute to and influence the civil rights movement? After reading, your team will be responsible for telling me how Claudette Colvin contributed to the civil rights movement."

> *Teacher aligns CPQ with content objective.*

During Reading (25 minutes)

Comprehension Strategy Practice in Groups

Students read the article in predetermined groups of four. Each student is responsible for writing a gist statement for each section and for discussing and coming to an agreement on the best gist statement. Students follow their previously taught cooperative learning procedures. For example, students have roles for each group member (leader, announcer, timekeeper, reporters), take turns reading the article with each, and carry out their roles. (For an example, see https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/csr)

While students read in groups and write gist statements, circulate, provide feedback, and prompt students to monitor their understanding. Example: "Luis, what is the gist of what you just read? Veronica, is he accurate? What would you change?"

While circulating, provide scaffolding as appropriate. Ask students to demonstrate the strategy for their peers. Moderate an evaluation of the statement. Example: "Does Daniel's gist statement contain the most important information?"

> *Students engage in guided practice as teacher circulates and provides feedback on gist statements.*

> *Teacher prompts additional student responses.*

After Reading (15 minutes)

Summarization

Students individually write a brief overall summary after reviewing their previous gist statements.

Continue to circulate and provide specific feedback.

Vocabulary Wrap-Up

Students write in their own words how each vocabulary word was used in the article.

Call for student responses to review each vocabulary word.

CPQ Wrap-Up

Lead a brief discussion on the CPQ, beginning by asking students: "How did Claudette Colvin contribute to the civil rights movement?" A potential follow-up question is: "Why is Rosa Parks more well known than Claudette Colvin, even though Claudette was the first to refuse to give up her bus seat for a white person?"

> *Students independently write summary while teacher circulates and provides feedback.*

Lesson Closure

"Great job today, class. Today, we learned about a brave young African American woman named Claudette Colvin who fought for justice. Tomorrow, we'll read about more young people who were influential in the civil rights movement: the Little Rock Nine."

Figure 2.
Sample Tier 1 lesson plan

Figure 3.

Example of a vocabulary graphic organizer

Note. Reprinted with permission from the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (2020). *Vocabulary Graphic Organizer.* Austin, TX. Middle School Matters. https://greatmiddleschools.org/words. The term "cognate" refers to words that are similar in two languages, such as family (English) and familia (Spanish), or in this case, compassion (English) and compasión (Spanish).

Sample Lesson for Secondary Grades: Tier 2 (75 minutes)

Materials

Text: "Before Rosa Parks, There Was Claudette Colvin" (Adler, 2009)

Supplemental: Vocabulary graphic organizer (see Figure 3 above), thumbs up/thumbs down response card, gist question cue card (see Figure 5 below)

Primary Learning Objectives

Reading: Students will synthesize information to support understanding.

Content: Students will identify how individual actions influenced larger outcomes of the civil rights movement.

Supporting Goals

Word Reading/Fluency: Students will read multisyllabic words and demonstrate fluent reading.

Vocabulary/Comprehension: Students will understand and use key vocabulary terms, work collaboratively to identify main ideas, and write a summary to support text understanding.

Grouping Structures Within Lesson (Overall Group Size = 10–12)

Before and after reading: Small groups (10–15 students), pairs

During reading: Small groups (4 students), pairs

Before Reading (30 minutes)

Multisyllable Word Reading

Affix practice: Students practice reading 8–10 selected affixes (e.g., *pre-*, *dis-*, *-tion*).

Multisyllable strategy review: To review syllable types, ask students to quickly explain the syllable types to a partner.

Multisyllable word practice: Model strategic reading, using both affix and syllable-type knowledge, with 2–3 preselected words from the text. Then, have students practice in pairs.

Example: "Watch how I break up this big word. (Write "constitutional" so students can see the word.) "I first break off the prefix and suffixes. What prefix do we have at the beginning of this word?" (Students say "con.") "Good." (Draw a dividing line between syllables as they are identified here and throughout.) "We have two suffixes in this word. What's the first one?" (Students say "tion.") "Great. What's our next one?" (Students say "al.") Great. Now, I know most of the word already by knowing my prefixes and suffixes! I will break up the rest of the word. I know this has two syllables because there are two separate vowel sounds left. I will try dividing the syllables after the *i* and say the long sound because it's an open syllable. *Con/sti/tu/tion/al. Constitutional.* What's the word?" (Students say "constitutional.") That sounds right. I know the constitution is an important document that helped set up America." (Continue modeling with 1–2 additional words, asking students to provide choral responses to maintain engagement.)

Lesson integrates multisyllable word reading practice using text from the day's reading lesson.

Fluency

Develop oral reading fluency through modeling and the partner reading routine using the first few sections of the text.

First read: Model reading fluency, emphasizing appropriate prosody, rate, and accuracy.

Second read: Students work in pairs. One student reads while a partner listens and provides feedback.

Third read: Partners switch roles.

Students develop oral reading fluency.

Vocabulary
Same as Tier 1 instruction. Then, provide additional opportunities for students to hear vocabulary words in context by (a) saying the vocabulary words in sentences and (b) asking students to determine whether the words are used appropriately by raising a response card that shows a thumbs up or thumbs down.

Teacher provides additional opportunities to practice with vocabulary.

Comprehension Strategy
Same as Tier 1 instruction, except introduce, model how to use, and distribute student index cards that show the two gist questions: "What is the most important 'who' or 'what'?" and "What is the most important thing about the 'who' or 'what'?"

Teacher scaffolds strategy use with index cards.

Content-Focused Comprehension Purpose Question (CPQ)
Same as Tier 1 instruction.

During Reading (30 minutes)

Further Modeling and Guided Practice for Comprehension Strategy
Model the comprehension strategy with another text section, using the same think-aloud procedure.

Lead guided practice of comprehension strategy use. Wait until students demonstrate some proficiency with the strategy during teacher-led practice before releasing students to work in small groups.

Students receive additional teacher-led modeling and guided practice before group practice.

Comprehension Strategy Practice in Groups
Same as Tier 1 instruction.

After Reading (15 minutes)

Summarization
Same as Tier 1 instruction.

Vocabulary Wrap-Up
Students use provided stems for each vocabulary word to write sentences with the vocabulary in their own words.

Students use sentence stems to practice vocabulary.

CPQ Wrap-Up
Same as Tier 1 instruction.

Lesson Closure

Same as Tier 1 instruction.

Figure 4.
Sample Tier 2 lesson plan

Get the Gist Cue Card

Step 1: Who or what is this section about?

Step 2: What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?

Step 3: Write your gist statement by combining information from Steps 1 and 2.

Remember, your gist should

- include only the most important information,
- leave out unnecessary details, and
- be a complete sentence.

Figure 5.
Sample student prompts for get the gist comprehension strategy

Note. Reprinted with permission from the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (2020). Get the Gist Toolkit. Austin, TX. https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/get-the-gist/

Sample Lesson for Secondary Grades: Tier 3 (90 minutes)

Materials

Text: "Before Rosa Parks, There Was Claudette Colvin" (Adler, 2009)

Supplemental: Vowel sound index cards, vocabulary graphic organizer (see Figure 3 above), thumbs up/thumbs down response card, gist question cue card (see Figure 5 above), summarization graphic organizer

Primary Learning Objectives

Reading: Students will synthesize information to support understanding.

Content: Students will identify how individual actions influenced larger outcomes of the civil rights movement.

Supporting Goals

Word Reading/Fluency: Students will read vowel sounds and multisyllabic words and demonstrate fluent reading.

Vocabulary/Comprehension: Students will understand and use key vocabulary terms, work collaboratively to identify main ideas, and write a summary to support text understanding.

Grouping Structures Within Lesson (Overall Group Size = 3–10)

Before and after reading: Small groups (5–10 students), pairs

During reading: Small groups (4 students), pairs

Before Reading (40 minutes)

Word Reading

Vowel sound warm-up: Have students quickly read previously practiced vowel sounds (short vowels, long vowels, vowel + *r*) in isolation and practice spelling them aloud when they hear the sounds. Use a mix of individual and choral responses to maintain engagement and provide students with many opportunities to respond.

> *Students have an opportunity to practice reading vowel sounds in isolation and in real words.*

Vowel sound identification and word reading: Have students identify vowel sounds in words and then read the words.

Affix practice: *Same as Tier 2 instruction.*

Multisyllable strategy review: *Same as Tier 2 instruction.*

Multisyllable word practice: *Same as Tier 2 instruction.*

Fluency
Same as Tier 2 instruction.

Vocabulary
Same as Tier 2 instruction.

Comprehension Strategy
Same as Tier 2 instruction, except use a detailed think-aloud procedure and check for understanding more frequently to ensure that students understand the comprehension strategy modeling.

> *Teacher leads comprehension practice using think-aloud procedure.*

Content-Focused Comprehension Purpose Question (CPQ)
Same as Tier 2 instruction, except (a) remind students of the purpose of the CPQ, (b) refer students back to it throughout the lesson, and (c) ask questions related to the CPQ throughout the lesson.

> *Teacher reminds students of and asks questions related to the CPQ throughout the lesson.*

During Reading (35 minutes)

Further Modeling and Guided Practice for Comprehension Strategy
Same as Tier 2 instruction.

Comprehension Strategy Practice in Groups
Same as Tier 2 instruction, except (a) divide the passage into shorter, more manageable sections for students to practice reading and writing gist statements and (b) have students work in small groups of 2–3.

> *Teacher divides text into shorter sections; students work in groups of 2–3.*

After Reading (15 minutes)

Summarization
Teach students to use a graphic organizer that helps them use gist statements created during reading to write a summary. Similar to the comprehension strategy, teach the graphic organizer by following an explicit instructional routine (I do, we do, you do).

> *Students use a graphic organizer to summarize.*

Vocabulary Wrap-Up
Same as Tier 2 instruction.

CPQ Wrap-Up
Same as Tier 2 instruction.

Lesson Closure

Same as Tier 2 instruction.

Figure 6.
Sample Tier 3 lesson plan

Table 1

Practitioner-Focused Resources for Secondary Special Educators Related to Reading

Resource	Description
Capin, P., & Vaughn, S. (2017). Improving reading and social studies learning for secondary students with reading disabilities. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 49*(4), 249–261.	This article describes two evidence-based programs that special education teachers can readily implement in special or general education settings that promote reading and social studies learning: (a) Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text and (b) Collaborative Strategic Reading.
Guthrie, J., & Wigfield, A. (2018). Literacy engagement and motivation: Rationale, research, teaching and assessment. In D. Lapp & D. Fisher (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (4th ed., pp. 57–84). Taylor & Francis.	This chapter describes concrete ways to increase secondary students' engagement by addressing the following aspects of reading motivation: intrinsic motivation to read, sense of self-efficacy, social motivation, and sense that reading has value in the world. It also discusses the usefulness of extrinsic motivators to engage in reading.
National Center on MTSS's Resources for Secondary Schools (https://mtss4success.org/special-topics/secondary-schools)	This web site offers educator-friendly resources related to implementing MTSS in the secondary grades. Included online are videos, guidance documents, and planning templates related to identifying students who are at risk for school failure (early warning system) and providing tiered interventions.
The IRIS Center. *Intensive intervention: Using data-based individualization to intensify instruction (Parts 1 and 2)*, https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dbi1/	These modules provide step-by-step instructions about how to implement data-based individualization in your classroom.
The IRIS Center. (2012, 2014). *Secondary reading instruction: Teaching vocabulary and comprehension in the content areas (Parts 1 and 2)*. https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/sec-rdng/	These modules provide detailed information about the practices recommended in this article, including using graphic organizers to support vocabulary development and reading comprehension strategies.
Wexler, J. (Ed.). (2021) Improving instruction in co-taught classrooms to support reading comprehension [Special Series]. *Intervention School and Clinic*, 56(4).	This special issue includes five practitioner-oriented articles focused on providing special educators guidance on how to effectively implement co-teaching practices in middle school classrooms to support reading development. Articles cover (a) preparing for co-teaching, (b) teaching vocabulary and background knowledge, (c) teaching reading comprehension strategies, and (d) individualizing instruction.