

Designing ESSA-Friendly Multi-Tiered Systems for Academically and Behaviorally Struggling Students

Howie Knoff, Ph.D.

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The new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) requires districts and schools to develop multi-tiered systems of services, supports, strategies, and interventions for students who are at-risk, underachieving, unresponsive, and/or unsuccessful. These systems should address students who are struggling academically, and/or presenting social, emotional, or behavioral challenges in an integrated and comprehensive way. But these systems need to recognize and modify some of the basic flaws in previous RtI approaches.

To this end, this presentation will discuss a series of flaws that undermined the integrity of the RtI framework advocated and implemented during the No Child Left Behind years, and how to improve the entire MTSS process—for the betterment of both students and staff.

Relative to an improved system, the presentation will discuss both (a) a district/school systematic multi-tiered decision-making process that guides the assessment to intervention process when students are not academically or behaviorally succeeding in the classroom; and (b) a school/classroom data-based functional assessment problem-solving process used to assess specific students so that the underlying reasons for their difficulties can be linked with high success instructional or intervention approaches.

The approaches discussed have been field-tested across the country for well over 15 years at the state, regional, and district/school levels.

As a result of this workshops, participants will understand—at a functional and practical level—the following information:

1. Multi-tiered systems of services, supports, and interventions.
2. An effective multi-tiered decision-making process (and suggested flow-chart) for academically and behaviorally unsuccessful students.
3. How to effectively use a defensible data-based problem solving process—including the problem identification, problem analysis, intervention, and evaluation steps.
4. How to complete a data-based Problem Analysis of a student's academic or behavioral challenges—including how to generate and confirm or reject different instructional, curricular, and student hypotheses to explain specific challenges.

Periodic systems-level case studies will be presented to demonstrate this process and allow participants to practice. Discussion will be strongly encouraged. Participants should leave the session with a working understanding of how to apply the data-based problem-solving process on an individual staff, grade- or instructional-team, or multi-disciplinary school staff level.

Functional Assessment for the 21st Century: Linking Tier 2 Intervention to the Seven High-Hit Reason for Students' Challenging Behavior

Howie Knoff, Ph.D.

April 19, 2019 9:00 AM PST

In the context of multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS), when students are not progressing or “responding,” academically or behaviorally, to effective classroom instruction and classroom management, a data-based problem solving process is needed to determine the underlying reason(s) for the lack of success. The results of the assessments then are linked, as appropriate and necessary, to instructional or behavioral interventions that are delivered at different levels of intensity so that, hopefully, students quickly make progress and experience success.

For students with social, emotional, and/or behavioral issues, the completion of a functional assessment often is a significant part of the problem-solving process. While functional assessment approaches have existed since the 1970s, they do not significantly differ from their historical roots, and thus, they have not kept up with over 40 years of research that has helped us to more specifically understand why students present with behavioral challenges.

This presentation will integrate the “old” and the “new” research to discuss the Seven High-Hit Reasons for students' challenging behavior—with a recommendation that this become the contemporary functional social, emotional, and behavioral assessment process in the field.

Once described, the seven high-hit reasons will be directly linked to over 25 social, emotional, or behavioral strategies or interventions. The importance of conceptualizing these as Tier 2 interventions will be addressed, along with how some of these interventions will need Tier 3 adaptations in order to be successful.

This presentation, then, will have three primary objectives:

- To discuss the steps that school-level Student Assistance Teams (or the equivalent) should take when conducting data-based problem solving;
- To describe the seven “high-hit” reasons why students present with behavioral challenges, and discuss how to assess these reasons as part of a “21st Century” functional assessment; and
- To demonstrate how to link each high-hit functional assessment reason with specific social, emotional, or behavioral interventions.

Howie Knoff, Ph.D. is a nationally-known innovator and hands-on practitioner in the areas of:

- School Improvement and Turn-Around, Strategic Planning and Organizational Development
- School Discipline, Classroom Management, and Student Self-Management (PBIS/PBSS)
- Differentiated Academic Instruction and Academic Interventions for Struggling Students
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Instruction and Strategic and Intensive Interventions for Challenging Students
- Multi-tiered (RtI) Services, Supports, and Program
- Effective Professional Development and On-Site Consultation and Technical Assistance

Howie is the President of Project ACHIEVE Educational Services which has implemented his nationally-known, evidence-based school improvement program in thousands of schools or districts over the past 30 years. A national expert on school discipline, classroom management, student engagement, and interventions with behaviorally challenging students, Dr. Knoff has also been a university professor (22 years at the University of South Florida and SUNY-Albany), and the Director of the federally-funded State Personnel Development/State Improvement Grant for the Arkansas Department of Education from 2003 to 2015.

Dr. Knoff received his Ph.D. degree from Syracuse University in 1980, and has worked as a practitioner, consultant, licensed private psychologist, and university professor since 1978. Dr. Knoff is widely respected for his research and writing on school reform and organizational change, consultation and intervention processes, social skills and behavior management training, multi-tiered services, and professional issues. He has authored or co-authored over 20 books, published over 100 articles and book chapters, and delivered over 2,500 papers and workshops nationally—including the **Stop & Think Social Skills Program (from Voyager/Sopris Learning)** and **School Discipline, Classroom Management, and Student Self-Management: A Positive Behavioral Support Implementation Guide (from Corwin Press)**.

Dr. Knoff has a long history of working with schools, districts, and community and state agencies and organizations. For example, he has consulted with a number of state departments of education, the Department of Defense Dependents School District during Desert Storm, and the Southern Poverty Law Center. He has also served as an expert witness in federal court six times, in addition to working on many other state and local cases. Specific to school safety issues, Dr. Knoff was on the writing team that helped produce Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools, the document commissioned by the President that was sent to every school in the country in the Fall of 1998; and he participated in a review capacity on the follow-up document, Safeguarding our Children: An Action Guide.

A recipient of the Lightner Witmer Award from the American Psychological Association's School Psychology Division for early career contributions in 1990, and over \$21 million in external grants during his career, Dr. Knoff is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (School Psychology Division), a Nationally Certified School Psychologist, and a Licensed Psychologist in Arkansas. Howie was the 21st President of the National Association of School Psychologists which now represents more than 25,000 school psychologists nationwide.