Digging Deeper

This Digging Deeper module will help schools identify strategies to explore underlying causes in order to better align supports with needs at the selected and intensive levels. The module provides resources for schools to dig deeper at both the student and the system level. From this, teams can identify which strategies will work best for their students and school and in return see successful student outcomes.

“The Digging Deeper process...“is as important to teaching as a physical exam is to prescribing an appropriate medical regimen... Armed with this diagnostic information, a teacher gains greater insight into what to teach.”

-Jay McTighe and Ken O’Connor,
Seven Practices for Effective Learning
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Digging Deeper

After analyzing screening level, schools are often anxious to jump to solutions (e.g. putting students in interventions) before fully understanding the nature of the problem. This step in the process - - digging deeper - - is intended to help schools and teams take a step back and consider the causes before taking actions that may help, but may also detract from, positive student outcomes.

The digging deeper process might be considered as an extension, or stage two, of the universal screening process. The purpose of screening is to identify whether and which students are on track to meet grade-level benchmarks, who is not on track, and who has exceeded benchmarks. But we know 1) that the screening process is not 100% accurate in identifying students in need of additional support, and 2) that screening results alone do not provide sufficient information to determine what to do next for students. Digging deeper plays an important role in the process of providing additional supports to students by 1) verifying the accuracy of screening results, and 2) exploring root causes, at the system and student level, in order to accurately match supports to what’s needed. Let’s explore these concepts and complementary digging deeper strategies.

The Limitations of Screening: Digging Deeper to Verify Results

Universal screening assessments and processes are designed to efficiently identify student status in relation to benchmarks at particular times in the school year. In a perfect process (as shown in Figure 1 at right), we would find two groups of students through screening: those students who need additional support (above and below) and those for whom the Universal level alone is sufficiently meeting their needs.

The tradeoff for efficiency in screening is that all screening measures will misidentify some students. After review universal screening data, teams will likely observe that the results for some groups of students and individual students do not appear to make sense based on what teachers already know about the students. In Figure 2, we see that some results are “false positives” (students represented with question marks to the right of the line) and some are “false negatives” (represented to the left of the center line). In other words, universal screening results indicate that some students need additional supports when, in fact, they do not. On the other hand, universal screening results may indicate that some students may not need additional supports when, in fact, they do. Thus, teams will want to verify results for some students.
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Two generally accepted strategies help teams verify the accuracy of screening when teams question results for students, whether (false positives or false negatives):

1. **Confirm results with data from other sources.** Teams may use existing data such as attendance, behavior, assessment data, and course grades and performance to provide a fuller picture of the student in order to verify whether additional support is needed. For instance, a student may have scored poorly on a universal screener on one test date, but all other data points to the student performing at benchmark. Teams should use this approach with caution for students who perform poorly on a screener or whose existing data so as not to overlook potential red flags. Where students perform well-above benchmark, teams should similarly not dismiss this necessarily as an outlier; again, the data may be revealing a change in student performance that may require additional support.

2. **Monitor progress without intervening for a set period of time.** In cases where few other sources of data exist (such as with primary-age or with new students), teams may consider maintaining the universal level of support alone and progress monitoring for several weeks to gauge the effectiveness of this level of support on student learning. This strategy is most effective for students “on the bubble,” or near proficiency, and should not be used as a strategy to delay accessing services or intervening. Students whose data shows significant needs beyond the universal should have immediate access to support at the appropriate level of intensity.

**Exploring Root Causes at the System Level**

**Review Aggregated Data.** Before identifying students for additional support, teams need to first examine the effectiveness of their universal level of support for students. Teams should have the data after screening to answer the questions: *Are 80-90% of our students reaching and exceeding benchmarks through our universal supports alone in our school? At each grade level? In each classroom?* This 80-90% is not a hard fast rule, but a gauge to determine if our “best prevention” - - our universal instruction - - is meeting as many of our students needs as possible. Where the answer is “not yet,” teams will need to create and test possible hypotheses, focusing on practices and factors over which the school has control.

For instance, one team might hypothesize that the instructional time allocated to a subject area is insufficient. The team now has a testable hypothesis. They could compare the outcomes of students in similar schools to their own and determine whether time is a factor in any differences. They could look at outcomes across the school to determine, again, whether time is a factor in any differences.

The *Resources section* provides tools and strategies to help schools dig deeper to determine the root cause of aggregate concerns for student level performance (e.g., Root Cause Analysis, 5 Whys). The key here is that teams use their professional wisdom in a systemic and systematic fashion to avoid “admiring the problem” and move to facing the current reality of any concerns at the Universal level of support.

**Review Disaggregated Data.** System level teams need also to disaggregate their data for their school/grade to make sure that they are providing high quality instruction equitably, particularly for students historically underserved by schools. This population includes students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students eligible for subsidized lunch. Local trends in
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achievement should also be examined to determine whether other groups of students are underserved in specific school communities. Gender equity may also be of concern at different grade/age levels (e.g., boys in elementary school, girls in secondary math and science). For these historically underserved students, schools will want to ask again: *For this underserved group, are at least 80-90% percent of the students performing at or above benchmark with universal level support alone?*

Teams should also examine disproportionality here, e.g., *Are boys over-represented as needing additional reading support? Are our African-American students under-represented in our population of students with advanced learning needs?*

Where the data reveal inequities, teams will want to dig deeper to understand underlying causes created by the school. Engaging in this process requires teams to demonstrate high levels of cultural competence. By this, we mean:

- Understanding the impact of one’s own culture on beliefs and practices,
- Holding high expectations for all students,
- Knowing the students and the community served by the school
- Being willing to examine the impact of school policies and practices on student achievement, regardless of intent, and
- Placing the locus of responsibility for change on professional and instructional systems in the school.

A culturally competent mindset is critical for undertaking this work in a strengths-based vs. deficit-based approach. The *Resources section* below includes several protocols that can help teams ask these difficult questions. The Wisconsin RtI Center also facilitates *trainings* around Culturally Responsive practices and Universal Design for Learning to further develop staff understanding in this area.

**Exploring Root Causes at the Student Level**

Work at the universal level is often long-term and slower to change. What’s more, even with a strong universal level, some students will typically need support beyond its reach. As a result, most schools find they need to concurrently dig deeper at the system level and at the student level.

*Digging deeper* at the student level helps teams understand the source and scope of the need; this, in turn, helps teams identify the type and degree of support that matches, and take action as soon as possible on behalf of students.

When digging deeper at the student level, teams need to use caution to not search for causes solely within the student, but rather search for a potential cause within the school’s control. For example, students struggling in the area of math may be doing so because they have been pulled out of universal level instruction for a reading intervention, or the math intervention they have been participating in has been cancelled more times than it has been held. In other words, teams will want to examine the school’s curriculum, instructional strategies, environment, minutes of instruction, intensity of instruction, and focus of instruction along with understanding the learner’s needs.
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The Limitations of Screening: Digging Deeper to Explore Underlying Causes

Floor and Ceiling Effect. As was discussed earlier, screeners and the screening process have critical limitations. One limitation is that universal screeners are designed to efficiently sample student performance on grade-level benchmarks through a limited set of questions or a short performance task. As a result, students scoring at the lower and upper ranges run into the “floor” and “ceiling” of these assessments. For instance, if a second grade student is unable to read a passage written at a second-grade level, screening does not tell us whether the student can read first-grade-level passages or whether s/he only knows letter sounds (floor effect). A sixth grader who scores at the 99th percentile on a locally-developed grade-level benchmark test may be ready for seventh-grade math concepts, but s/he could also be ready for algebra or geometry (ceiling effect). Screeners are not designed to provide this level of detail for students performing well above or well below benchmark. In both cases, we need to find out more.

Information to Guide Instructional Response. Another critical limitation to screeners is that while they can tell us a given student’s “status,” they are not designed to tell us precisely what the student needs and how to respond instructionally. As such, once teams have determined and verified which students are in need of support beyond the universal level, they need strategies to dig deeper to find the underlying cause(s) and instructional needs. This step is particularly important for students for whom limited supporting data are available, (such as, younger students, students identified as needing support for the first time, and students new to the system), as well as for students with significant learning needs above or below benchmark.

Digging Deeper for Students Below Benchmark. When digging deeper for students below benchmark, teams are seeking to understand strengths and root causes. Collaborative teams here often include members with different areas of expertise, including staff with expertise in universal design/modified learning strategies, in the content area under consideration, and in social-emotional development. Some data collection strategies teams might use include one of the Review-Interview-Observe-Test (i.e., RIOT) approaches detailed below (Hosp, 2006).

Review. A thorough review of existing data is essential prior to determining the root cause of the student struggles. For example, a student may have an underlying health issue, or not have consistent access to meals or sleep, or not attend school consistently, or not be engaged in school while in attendance. Professional insight may also assist with a thorough review of existing data. For example, a team may utilize a process offered by the University of Missouri to help determine whether a student has academic or behavioral root causes. (See EBI resource below for more.)

Interview. Families are likely to have more and deeper qualitative information about a student than the school. As a result, engaging families is often a crucial strategy toward identifying possible causes for student struggles. Structured interviews with the student and family may assist in gathering this data in a more objective fashion.

Observe. A structured observation of the student across various settings may also provide valuable information to verify screening results and to determine the root cause of student
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struggles. Observational data may be used in combination with the review of existing data and professional insight.

Test. Finally, a diagnostic assessment may provide more precise information about the student strengths and areas of need in order to guide determination of the explicit instructional support designed for specific skills. Diagnostic assessments consume instructional time and may require specialized personnel to administer. As such, teams should consider whether the test results will yield new information or whether other strategies may be more productive to identify the root cause of concern.

In combination with professional insight and data gathered through a solution-focused process, teams can then develop hypotheses that are more precise and closer to the exact need of the student.

State Mandates and Digging Deeper for Students Below Benchmark
Elementary school teams take note: In Wisconsin, state statute requires a diagnostic process for students struggling with reading in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. (See PI 8, statute 121: K-4 reading, Standard C in the Resources section below for specifics on which students this affects and licensure requirements for those overseeing this diagnostic process).

Schools at all levels should also consider the role of digging deeper in the application of Wisconsin’s Specific Learning Disability Rule for identifying the area of student need. (See Wisconsin’s SLD Eligibility Rule Technical Guide in the Resources section below for specifics on which students this affects and requirements for those involved in this process).

Digging Deeper for Students Above Benchmark
The digging deeper processes for students above benchmark are similar to the digging deeper process for students below benchmark, but with a different focus. Rather than looking for the root cause of student struggles, teams here are seeking to understand how best to extend and accelerate student learning. Collaborative teams here often include members with different areas of expertise, including staff with expertise in gifted and talented/advanced learning strategies, in the content area under consideration, and in social-emotional development. Some data collection strategies teams might use include:

Review. To inform this process, teams can begin with a thorough review of existing data, including portfolios, work samples, prior assessments, in-class performance, course selection, and interest inventories, among other available data.

Interview. Structured student and family interviews and surveys may provide further insight about a student’s passions, strengths, and interests outside of the school setting.

Observe. A structured observation of the student across various settings may also provide valuable information to verify the screening results and to determine the areas to extend. An observer may want to take particular note of performance assessments, the rate of task completion in class, and/or how the student performs in his/her natural setting. Observational data may be used in combination with the review of existing data and professional insight.
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Test. Finally, above-grade level assessments or assessments specifically designed for advanced learners may provide the information needed to identify area(s) for extension.

In combination with professional insight and data gathered through a solution-focused process, teams can then develop hypotheses of where to extend student learning that are more precise and closer to matching the need of the student.

See the Resources section below for more information on, and strategies to use, for the RIOT (Review-Interview-Observe-Test) data collection process.

Closing Thoughts
The digging deeper process is a responsive, proactive, and preventive process that schools use judiciously on students for whom the staff is uncertain about matching instruction to student need. Digging deeper is not necessarily a process used for all students; rather, it is a process school teams can use to better understand uncertainties.

While the process is labor-intensive, the pay-off is great. When schools are better able to match instruction based on clearly articulated needs, they spend less time, money, and effort on ineffective supports. More significantly, they are better positioned to respond effectively to meet the range of needs of the students they serve.

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Related Wisconsin RtI Center Glossary Terms

These are the terms related to this module. Use the vocabulary activities and glossaries to build common language and vocabulary with your team.

- Aggregated Data/Results
- Cultural Competence
- Data-Based Decision Making
- Diagnostic Assessments
- Disaggregated Data/Results
- Multiple Measures
- Systematic
- Universal Screener
- Universal Screening Process

Guiding Questions

1. Do we currently have a digging deeper process in place?
2. Do we have collaborative structures built into our digging deeper process? Is it built into staff expectations, schedules? Do we have protocols set up?
3. Have we determined the effectiveness of our universal instruction through this process? Have we identified the underlying areas of improvement revealed by our universal screening data? For all students? For our historically underserved students in our school?
4. How will we determine root causes in our universal instruction for any identified achievement gaps? Why are our students experiencing difficulty?
5. How will we adjust universal instruction based on what we learned though the digging deeper process?
6. How do we verify the need for additional supports for those students whose screening data is unclear? How do we find the underlying need?
7. How do we bring our menu/continuum of supports into this process?
8. How do we ensure cultural competence in our grade-level/content area team discussions and in decisions about matched support to student need?
9. How do we determine the appropriate type and level of intensity of the intervention/additional challenge? At the selected level of support? Intensive level?
10. Do we currently identify and celebrate student strengths and assets as part of this process? What does this currently look like?
11. How do we investigate significant changes in student performance?
12. How do we involve multiple staff roles and expertise? How do we involve our students?
13. Do we have protocols set up to partner with parents and families at collaborative meetings?
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Resources

Tools and Strategies to Explore Root Causes: General

*Can’t Do/Won’t Try Matrix*

*Can’t Do Won’t Try PowerPoint*

Teams can use this simple, yet powerful matrix to understand the nature of where student support is needed, whether it’s an academic need, a behavioral need, or both. This process will help teams more accurately define the type of support that will be most effective for students.

*Driving Factor Identification Protocol*


The 5 Whys or Driving Factor Identification protocol guides teams through a process to generate a series of hypotheses as to why students may be experiencing difficulty/success, moving closer to the precise root cause at each level of analysis. This analysis tool can be used for both system- and student-level conversations.

*Fishbone Analysis Tool*

[http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_03.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_03.htm)

The Fishbone Analysis tool can be used to guide discussion around potential root causes within the system (e.g., practices, programs, policies, and environment) that contribute to/inhibit student learning success. In this process, teams should consider: “Of the factors we can control, what are the potential reasons our students are experiencing success? Difficulties? Which reasons are most likely?” This analysis tool can be used for both system- and student-level conversations.

*Evidence-Based Intervention (EBI) Network*

[http://ebi.missouri.edu/?page_id=402](http://ebi.missouri.edu/?page_id=402)

This University of Missouri-developed site provides a set of questions to help teams pinpoint the type of problem the student is experiencing (i.e., academic, behavior, or both) and then develop a hypothesis as to the most likely reason students are having the problem (e.g., the task is too difficult, the student needs help learning the appropriate behavior). From there, teams can develop an informed plan of action.

*Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education*


This US Department of Education facilitation guide provides teams with a framework, vocabulary, and tools (e.g., guiding questions, activities, forms) to lead informed conversations around data. The first three sections are most useful in the digging deeper process, developing team understanding of issues prior to creating solutions.
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- Setting the stage (What is the question? What information is needed to answer the question? Is this information available?)
- Examining the data (Looking for patterns and making observations. Exploring data limitations.)
- Understanding the findings (Choosing a key challenge. Brainstorming possible driving factors for strengths and challenges.)

Instructional Decision-making Procedures for Ensuring Appropriate Instruction for Struggling Students in Grades K-3
http://resources.buildingrti.utexas.org/PDF/Instructional_Decision-making_Procedures.pdf

This Texas Education Agency booklet guides teams through a series of questions to help teams investigate which/whether system practices are contributing to meeting/not meeting student learning needs. Guiding questions examine practices for students struggling with reading, mathematics, and behavior, and for students who are English language learners (ELL), including questions around assessment practices, curriculum and instruction, and administrative support. Though written for K-3 Texas schools, many of the guiding questions can be used as is or modified to apply to other settings/grade levels.

Problem Analysis within an RtI Framework at a Secondary School

Most problem-analysis processes have been developed for use by elementary school teams. This RtI Action Network article describes a process for use at the secondary level. To ensure that secondary-level teams select interventions for students that correctly address underlying needs, the author recommends that they begin by reviewing academic engagement data. He gives suggestions for which existing data sources to use (e.g., high rates of absenteeism and office discipline referrals, low number of credits accrued) along with providing links to more specific measures of student engagement (e.g., IES Guide: Measuring Student Engagement In Upper Elementary Through High School, available http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2011098.pdf). The article also provides a suggested sequence for secondary teams to then further analyze academic needs in reading and mathematics.

RIOT/ICEL Matrix

This tool gives teams a framework and strategy for considering the range of possible reasons for student learning success (or lack thereof) and then investigating those reasons in an intentional way. Using this process increases the likelihood that the team correctly understands the underlying issue(s) before moving to action. RIOT (Review-Interview-Observe-Test) represents the multiple ways teams might obtain information; ICEL (Instruction – Curriculum – Environment – Learner) considers factors that may contribute to the issue of concern.
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The intersection of RIOT and ICEL helps teams efficiently collect data in ways that will help address hypotheses they have developed. As an example, the team hypothesizes that a group of students is struggling with reading because of classroom management concerns. From the matrix, they determine they will collect data through observation in the classroom environment. The article provides further detail on each component, examples of use, and a blank matrix.

*School Improvement Planning Basics: Root Cause Analysis*


The *Criteria for Narrowing Explanations* page of this guide provides teams with a three-step process to critically examine the hypotheses (i.e., root causes) they develop:

1. Eliminate explanations that are not within your control.
2. Evaluate the quality of your explanations and achieve consensus on priorities.
3. Clarify the language used in your explanations.

This process will help teams move more successfully on to the *matching supports to needs* process.

*St. Croix River Educational District (SCRED) Problem-Solving forms*

http://www.scred.k12.mn.us/rt_i/problem_solving/

SCRED has developed a number of useful forms to use for team problem-solving when students are not meeting benchmarks. The *Problem Analysis Form* and *Hypotheses List* forms may be of use to guide team discussion in the *digging deeper* process.

*Wisconsin’s Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Rule: A Technical Guide for Determining the Eligibility of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities*


This guide is intended to assist schools in the implementation of the SLD rule. It includes the requirements and criteria for initial SLD evaluations and reevaluations; definitions associated with the new rule; and how to apply the SLD rule, including ideas for Individualized Education Program (IEP) team discussions. For the purposes of this module, teams will want to consult this guide to understand requirements for identifying the specific area of need in order to appropriately match intensive interventions.

**Tools and Strategies to Dig Deeper for Advanced Learners**

*Determining Advanced Learning Needs: Potential Growth Domains*

Determining Advanced Learning Needs/Growth Domains Handout

This WI RtI Center-developed matrix supports teams in identifying potential areas of growth for students who exhibit advanced learning needs. The matrix includes considerations for academic, social and personal goals.
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**National Association for Gifted Children Programming Standard: Assessment**

This NAGC standard provides teams with guidance in determining the types of measures and considerations to be used as part of the process for identifying and understanding the needs of advanced learners.

**Ohio Department of Education Mathematics Learning Progressions**
http://tinyurl.com/ow3ufg4

The Ohio Department of Education developed this reconfiguration of the CCSS-Mathematics as learning progressions. Teachers can use these progressions along with regular classroom formative assessment, to assist in identifying student gaps in understanding for struggling learners as well as to guide discovery of the top range of understanding for students excelling.

**Oregon School District Referral Process for Identifying Advanced Learning Needs**
Oregon School District Referral Process Handout

This Oregon School District document provides a flow chart for how students are identified as having learning needs outside the range of the universal level. The document includes potential measures and existing data used in the review process of digging deeper for next step planning.

**Wisconsin Common Core State Standards – ELA Vertical Articulation**
http://standards.dpi.wi.gov/stn_ela-tchingandlrng

The Common Core State Standards Team has developed a set of documents that display a Vertical Articulation of CCSS, how the standards change from grade to grade. Teachers can use these progressions along with regular classroom formative assessment, to assist in identifying student gaps in understanding for struggling learners as well as to guide discovery of the top range of understanding for students excelling.

**Wisconsin DPI: RtI and Gifted Education - Identify Student Needs**
http://cal.dpi.wi.gov/cal_identify-student-needs

This Wisconsin DPI web site provides a suggested process beyond universal screening for honing in on the needs of advanced learners. The site also includes a link to a listing of targeted screeners that may be used go beyond the ceiling effects of grade-level assessments.

**Tools and Strategies to Explore Root Causes: Mathematics**

**Assessing Mathematical Understanding: Diagnostic Assessment (K-1)**
http://educationnorthwest.org/content/2228
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This NWREL-developed assessment is an in-depth diagnostic interview, providing detailed information about students’ mathematical knowledge for a range of concepts tied to the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. Materials are available in English, Russian, and Spanish. Administration guides, assessments, and supporting videos are provided at no cost.

Models of Intervention in Mathematics: Reweaving the Tapestry (book)

This 2010 book, written by mathematics education expert Catherine Twomey Fosnot, provides processes for teachers to uncover student thinking in order to understand appropriate instructional starting points for intervention.

Huron Intermediate School District: Mathematics Sorting Sheets

http://huronisd.schoolinsites.com/?DivisionID=7949&DepartmentID=7861&SubDepartmentID=3472&ToggleSideNav=ShowAll

These district-developed sorting sheets can be used following universal screening to help teams consider underlying needs as a preliminary step before identifying supports. Sorting sheets are available for kindergarten through Algebra I.

Math Reasoning Inventory (Intermediate/Middle School)

https://mathreasoninginventory.com

This assessment, developed by mathematics expert Marilyn Burns, helps teachers and teams explore student thinking in the areas of mathematical understanding that are critical for success with middle school math, including computation with, and reasoning strategies for, whole numbers, decimals and fractions. The site includes assessment interview protocols, paper and pencil assessments, scoring guides, and videos to help teachers interpret results and identify learning needs. The site is underwritten by a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant and is available at no cost to schools.

Math Screening—Identifying Students at Risk: Literature review


While research around reading difficulties is decades-deep, comparable research for mathematics is still in the emerging stage. This EPS publication summarizes research that investigates common underlying difficulties that students from k-12 may experience in mathematics learning. Teams may find this information useful in understanding areas of number sense difficulties for students.

Number Knowledge Test (Elementary)

http://clarku.edu/numberworlds/nw_TestInfo.htm

The Number Knowledge Test is an interview assessment that compares a student’s number sense to that of the average child at 4, 6, 8 and 10 years old. These foundational understandings have been linked through research as foundational for basic and higher mathematics learning. The Number Knowledge Test helps teams understand students’ current developmental level of number sense understanding, in order to more accurately pinpoint where to begin intervention or additional challenge. The site provides the administration and scoring guide for this assessment and is available at no cost.
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**Ohio Department of Education Mathematics Learning Progressions**

[http://tinyurl.com/ow3ufg4](http://tinyurl.com/ow3ufg4)

The Ohio Department of Education developed this reconfiguration of the CCSS-Mathematics as learning progressions. Teachers can use these progressions along with regular classroom formative assessment, to assist in identifying student gaps in understanding for struggling learners as well as to guide discovery of the top range of understanding for students excelling.

**Uncovering Student Thinking About Mathematics in the Common Core (Book Series)**

This EDC book series (K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12) provides assessment probes designed to quickly uncover common student misconceptions tied to sub-concepts within the Common Core Standards for Mathematics. Extensive teacher notes and sample student responses help teams pinpoint students’ current level of understanding in order to determine next best steps.

**Tools and Strategies to Explore Root Causes: Reading**

**Center on Instruction: A Suggested Progression of Sub-skills to Achieve the Reading Standards: Foundational Skills in the Common Core State Standards**


This document provides the sub-skills students need to achieve in each of the Foundational Skills (K–5) in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading. It contains five sections, each targeting one grade level in: Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency. Teachers can use these progressions along with regular classroom formative assessment, to assist in identifying student gaps in understanding for struggling learners as well as to guide discovery of the top range of understanding for students excelling.

**Comprehensive Reading Assessments**

Many Wisconsin schools have an inventory of existing, high quality comprehensive assessments, such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), and Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI). These individually administered assessments provide a rich, full profile of the student as a reader. To preserve instructional time, schools currently using these assessments for Universal screening may consider using these time-intensive tests instead as part of a digging deeper process to learn more about a smaller population of students who are struggling or excelling.

**Crandon School District Diagnostic Reading Sequence**

[Crandon Diagnostic Reading Process](#)

Crandon School District developed this graphic to depict the sequence and specific assessments used in k-12 to dig deeper into the root cause of reading concerns for students. Note: this assessment sequence
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**Instructional Sort: Comprehension**

*Reading Instructional Sort*

*Sample Instructional Sort Template*

When screening data show that students struggle with *comprehension*, teams can use this Wisconsin RtI Center-developed resource to more precisely pinpoint students’ existing strengths and skill use and where to provide additional support. The process, developed by Howell and cited by Harken and Fay, begins with administering a fluency/accuracy assessment, then sorting students in a quadrant according to results (e.g., inaccurate and slow, accurate and slow). Further direction is provided to dig deeper within each quadrant to get to the underlying need for support. A continuum of skill use (from *accuracy* up to *transfer*) is also provided to help teams understand the most useful form of support (e.g., skill development vs. additional practice).

**Instructional Sort: Phonological Awareness**

*Phonological Instructional Sort*

When screening data (e.g. PALS) show that students are struggling with *phonological awareness*, teams can use this Wisconsin RtI Center-developed resource to more precisely pinpoint students’ existing strengths and skill use - and where to provide additional support. To aid in this *digging* deeper process, the resource provides a progression of skills and subskills under the broad umbrella of Phonological Awareness (from *rhyme* up to *phonemic awareness*) and a continuum of skill use (from *accuracy* up to *transfer*).

**Reading Rockets: Target the Problem**

*http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target*

This tool was developed to help parents and classroom teachers pinpoint specific problems grade school children may have when struggling with reading. Questions begin with related processes (e.g., vision, auditory processing, attention, memory) and progress to broader categories (e.g., from phonological awareness to comprehension). Each problem area includes a description of how it affects reading and what it might look like in action at home and at school.

**SEDL Reading Assessment Database for Grades PreK-3**

*http://www.sedl.org/reading/rad/database.html*

This database provides information for about 80 reading assessment tools that can be used to dig deeper into a range of 15 cognitive strategies/knowledge domains for beginning readers (e.g., Concepts of Print, Linguistic Knowledge, Language Comprehension).

**Wisconsin Common Core State Standards – ELA Vertical Articulation**

*http://standards.dpi.wi.gov/stn_ela-tchingandlrng*
Reviewing Your Selected and Intensive Levels of Support

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The Common Core State Standards Team has developed a set of documents that display a Vertical Articulation of CCSS, how the standards change from grade to grade. Teachers can use these progressions along with regular classroom formative assessment, to assist in identifying student gaps in understanding for struggling learners as well as to guide discovery of the top range of understanding for students excelling.

**Wisconsin PALS: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening**

http://www.palswisconsin.info

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) is a required research-based screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tool. Wisconsin K-2 teachers use PALS to identify students at risk of developing reading difficulties, diagnose students' knowledge of literacy fundamentals, monitor progress, and plan instruction that targets students' needs. Student data collected from PALS provides a direct means for digging deeper to identify specific literacy needs.


**Wisconsin State Statute 121.02 Standard C: Remedial Reading**


Standard (c), remedial reading, requires school districts to provide a program to identify and help underachieving students in kindergarten through grade 4. The department views this standard as the opportunity to prevent reading failures by building upon what the child already knows about oral language, reading, and writing and by attending to deficiencies in that knowledge not met solely through the regular reading program. See the standard to identify the students affected by this standard and staff requirements to oversee the diagnostic process.

**Culturally Responsive Practices and Family Engagement in Digging Deeper**

**Classroom Family Engagement Rubric**


This rubric provides a clear picture of what effective family engagement looks like within conversations and daily practice in the areas of: educator beliefs and mindsets, relationships and communication, and investing families in student goals and helping them monitor progress and support learning. These descriptions include how to effectively help families to learn more about students in order to provide more responsive supports.
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**Frederick County Public Schools (VA) Culturally Responsive Student Services Team Reference Guide**

http://ea.niusileadscape.org/docs/FINAL_PRODUCTS/LearningCarousel/FCPS_Culturally_Responsive_Services_Guide.pdf

This handbook provides deep background knowledge and processes for teams to use in exploring the impact of culture on student learning, particularly for students whose culture does not match traditional U.S. school culture. The following sections will be particularly useful for teams in the *digging deeper* process: *Assessment of Classroom Environment, Cultural Self-Assessment and Case Studies*, and the *Self-Assessment Checklist for Culturally Responsive Practices*.

**Guiding Questions: Responding to Cultural Mismatch in Schools**

**Guiding Questions**

Developed by Dr. Lisa Bardon, UW-Stevens Point, this set of guiding questions helps school teams dig deeper to examine the degree to which mismatches between aspects of the school culture and the student’s home culture contribute to limiting student outcomes. While the document was originally designed to examine mismatches in behavioral expectations, questions can be used to consider the learning environment overall. These guiding questions can help school teams demonstrate cultural competence in the *digging deeper* process, putting the onus on the school to examine how its own practices contribute to struggles as opposed to placing the problem within the child.

**Instructional Decision-making Procedures for Ensuring Appropriate Instruction for Struggling Students in Grades K-3**

http://resources.buildingrti.utexas.org/PDF/Instructional_Decision-making_Procedures.pdf

This Texas Education Agency booklet guides teams through a series of questions to help teams investigate which/whether *system practices* are contributing to meeting/not meeting student learning needs. The first set of guiding questions examines practices for *English language learners* (ELL), including questions around assessment practices, curriculum and instruction, and administrative support. Though written for K-3 Texas schools, many of the guiding questions can be used as is or modified to apply to other settings/grade levels.

**Parent Interview**

http://resources.buildingrti.utexas.org/PDF/StudentEval.pdf

Engaging families in the problem-analysis process lends a deep and personal perspective that is often not available to school personnel. The parent interview script in this resource guide provides a structured, pre-planned conversation schools can adapt/use to learn more about student strengths and needs.