

TO: Directors of schools, high school principals, school counselors, special education directors  
FROM: Karen Jensen, director of response to instruction and intervention  
DATE: July 2017  
SUBJECT: **Tier II English language arts and mathematics high school course approval**

On July 28, the State Board of Education modified policy 3.205 ([here](#)) to adopt Tier II intervention course codes for high school in English language arts and mathematics ([here](#)) This memorandum provides guidance to school districts regarding the use of the new high school Tier II English language arts (ELA) and mathematics course codes (3185 and 3186, respectively).

### Context

Within the *Response to Instruction and Intervention Framework (RTI<sup>2</sup>)* ([here](#)), it is noted that students who are struggling academically may require intervention (Tier II or Tier III). Tier II and Tier III courses require high-quality intervention matched to students' needs provided by highly trained personnel through instruction that is explicit and systematic. The guidance below will outline course expectations, student placement, and frequently asked questions for Tier II intervention.

### Tier II Course Expectations

Component 3 (p. 70–79) of the *RTI<sup>2</sup> Framework* ([here](#)) outlines guidance regarding best practices for Tier II interventions. However, these interventions should be based on the unique skill deficits demonstrated by the group of students. This information should be determined from universal screening data, survey-level assessments, and diagnostic assessments. Intervention should occur daily for a minimum of 30 minutes and be taught by highly trained personnel. The recommended group size for effective intervention is no more than 12 students per teacher. The effectiveness of the intervention should be progress monitored at least every other week. Specific requirements around appropriate progress monitoring are outlined in Component 3 of the *RTI<sup>2</sup> Framework* ([here](#)) (p. 75).

Similar to the high school Tier III courses, the Tier II courses in ELA and mathematics are **elective courses**. As elective courses, **Tier II intervention in ELA and/or mathematics supplements—but does not replace—required ELA and mathematics courses needed for graduation**. Tier II courses are worth one half (0.5) credit each.

### Student Placement in Tier II Interventions

Within the *RTI<sup>2</sup> Framework* ([here](#)) it is expected that Tier II intervention will meet the needs of 10–15 percent of students. School RTI<sup>2</sup> data teams should analyze multiple sources of data to identify students in need of Tier II intervention. School RTI<sup>2</sup> data teams should meet every 4.5 weeks to review student data to assess progress and determine the need for instructional changes. Instructional changes may include deciding that a student needs a different intervention in Tier II, a more intensive intervention (i.e., Tier III), or that the student is ready to be successful in Tier I. **Before a student in Tier II is transitioned to Tier III**, RTI<sup>2</sup> data teams must first consider a change in Tier II intervention variables, such as increasing frequency of intervention sessions, changing interventions, changing the intervention provider, or changing the time of

day that the intervention is delivered. As students are successful with Tier II interventions, it is expected that they may transfer out of Tier II before the end of a semester or academic year. Therefore, districts are encouraged to examine what options are available to students transitioning out of a Tier II course midyear.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. *How do most high schools schedule Tier II interventions?*

At the high school level, most schools have a specific time of day—often referred to as a “skinny block”—when all students receive intervention, remediation, and/or enrichment based on student needs. Alternatively, schools may schedule intervention courses within their master schedule. Regardless of a school’s schedule, the intent of providing Tier II course codes is to ensure that students are receiving the academic support they need without negatively impacting progress toward graduation. Tier II courses must meet the guidelines outlined by the *RTI<sup>2</sup> Framework* ([here](#)).

### 2. *What is the difference between Tier II and Tier III interventions?*

Because Tier II and Tier III interventions are created based on the needs of the specific group of students, they may vary from year to year. However, a main difference between Tier II and Tier III interventions is that Tier III interventions should occur for a *minimum* of 225 minutes per week, while Tier II interventions occur for a *minimum* of 150 minutes per week.

### 3. *Is Tier II the same as remediation or re-teaching?*

No, there are differences between re-teaching, remediation, and intervention, which are outlined in Component 2 of the *RTI<sup>2</sup> Framework* ([here](#)) (see section 2.2 (m), p. 55). Re-teaching and remediation both address deficits relative to the standards rather than specific skills. The goal of re-teaching is to reteach standards to any and all students who are struggling with core concepts. Interventions, on the other hand, target specific skill deficits and are only necessary for some students. Therefore, the focus of Tier II intervention courses should be to provide research-based interventions aligned to specific skill deficits rather than to reteach unmet standards.

### 4. *Can Tier II intervention count toward a student’s elective focus for graduation?*

No, Tier II courses may not be substituted for or replace elective courses needed to complete an elective focus for graduation.

### 5. *How do we indicate these courses in EIS?*

The course codes for these Tier II courses are as follows: Tier II English Language Arts: **3185** and Tier II Mathematics: **3186**.

For questions and support, contact:

Karen Jensen, Director of Response to Instruction and Intervention

[Karen.Jensen@tn.gov](mailto:Karen.Jensen@tn.gov)

(615) 440-2071