Is Your Tier 1 Literacy Working? A 5-Question Check

Intervention can reach about 20% of students. When 7 in 10 students aren't reading on grade level, the fix has to happen in core instruction. **We can't intervene our way out of a Tier 1 problem.**

How to score

Answer each question for your school as it runs today, not as it's planned. Give each one **0** (not yet), **1** (partly, or in some classrooms), or **2** (yes, consistently, in every core subject). It takes about five minutes.

Quick gut check first: What percent of your students are in Tier 2 or Tier 3 reading support right now? _____% If it's over 20%, your Tier 1 is carrying less weight than it should.

The five questions

#	Question	What a "2" looks like	Score (0–2)
1	**Do we know why each student struggles?**	Screening separates word recognition from language comprehension (e.g., DIBELS ORF and Maze; NWF or PAST for students who need it). We can name our non-decoders, dysfluent readers, and non-comprehenders.	
2	**Is a strong Tier 1 curriculum in place in every core subject?**	A knowledge-rich curriculum is used with fidelity in ELA, science, and social studies. Curriculum is the *what*; instruction is the *how*.	
3	**Are students doing the reading?**	In a typical class, students read the text themselves through choral, echo, partner, or independent reading. Teachers and audio aren't doing the lifting.	
4	**Is every teacher a reading teacher?**	Science, social studies, math, and CTE teachers have had literacy PD and use routines like explicit vocab instruction and before/during/after reading with their texts.	
5	**Does intervention go to the right students, from the right people?**	Non-decoders get systematic, explicit instruction from your most skilled teachers, with age-respectful texts and a respectful name (like "linguistics").	
		Total (out of 10)	

What your score means

Total	What it means	Focus
9–10	Tier 1 is working.	Protect it. Monitor with walkthroughs and keep new initiatives from crowding it out.
6–8	Solid base with one or two gaps.	Fix your lowest-scoring question first.
3–5	Tier 1 is leaking.	Expect too many students in intervention. Start with questions 1 and 3.
0–2	Intervention is carrying the load.	Start with assessment (question 1) so you know who needs what.

Based on the seven moves for a stronger Tier 1 in *The Science of Reading for Grades 4–12: Every Subject, Every Day!* (McKnight & French, p. 15). Available at Booth #68.

Your biggest gap and a first move

If your lowest score is…	Try this first
1. Knowing why	Add a quick fluency screener (like ORF) for students below benchmark on your comprehension test.
2. Curriculum	Audit what's actually taught in each core class against the adopted curriculum.
3. Who's reading	Ask teachers to swap one read-aloud or audio lesson a week for choral or partner reading.
4. Every teacher	Give content teachers one shared routine, like the explicit vocab routine, and practice it in PLCs.
5. Intervention	Move a skilled teacher into intervention and rename the class so students feel respected.

My biggest gap: _____ **My first step:** _____

Want help closing the gap?

Engaging Learners provides Science of Reading PD for grades K–12 teachers in every content area, literacy coaching, leadership support for Tier 1–3 planning, and The Reading Gym, a secondary intervention curriculum from phonics to fluency to grade-level text.

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