

Academic Problem-Solving: A Framework For Teachers

1. Identify & Verify the Scope of the Academic Problem

Task	'Look-Fors'	Possible Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify students who are falling behind or failing to complete work Document the magnitude of the student's academic problem(s) 	The student may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appear unable to complete work Have basic skills but work much more slowly than peers Fail to turn in classwork, homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document <i>specific</i> curriculum tasks in which the student has difficulty ('criterion-referenced') Observe the student working independently and examine the resulting work products Review records of student work completion over time (e.g., teacher grade book or other archival data) Compile group or classroom academic norms and compare the student's performance to them ('local norms')

2. Select Intervention(s) That Address 'Root Cause'

Task	'Look-Fors' & Possible Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine whether the student problem is '<i>can't do</i>' (skill deficit) or '<i>won't do</i>' (motivation deficit) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the student completes significantly more work when given incentives, the 'root cause' is motivation. Give the student incentives to perform the skill and/or make learning activities more positive and reinforcing. If the student <i>can't</i> perform the skill yet (<i>acquisition phase</i>) directly instruct the student in the skill. If the student has the basic skill and struggles only because the selected work is too difficult (<i>poor instructional match</i>), adjust the work to guarantee a high rate of success. If the student <i>can</i> perform the skill but is not yet very fluent (<i>fluency phase</i>), give the student lots of engaging opportunities for drill & practice. If the student can perform the skill accurately and fluently but does not do so across settings or situations (<i>generalization phase</i>), use incentives, encouragement, and coaching to promote generalized use of the skill.



3. Set Goals for Improvement

Task	'Look-Fors'	Possible Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on rate or level of student improvement & a deadline for achieving that improvement 	Goals should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Ambitious but realistic' Stated in specific, observable, measurable terms Relevant to the student's identified academic problem area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have teacher make 'best guess' about feasible rate of improvement Compute goal by (1) measuring gap between student's performance and average classroom performance (group norms) and (2) calculating rate needed to 'catch up' with class Use research-based benchmarks (e.g., DIBELS) or average rates of progress (e.g., Curriculum-Based Measurement)

4. Monitor Student Progress on an Ongoing Basis & Evaluate Outcome

Task	'Look-Fors'	Possible Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect frequent data of student performance on the target skill(s) using several measures Review outcome data frequently to ensure that student progress goals (step 2) are being achieved 	Outcome measures should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valid indicators of the target skill Feasible for classroom data collection Sensitive to short-term student gains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a collection of Teacher Behavior Report Cards to measure common student behaviors Put together a library of CBM, DIBELS monitoring materials for teachers to use Consider other monitoring information (e.g., teacher records of classwork and homework completion)