What to do When MTSS Interventions Aren't Working

Question	Rationale	How to further investigate
Have we chosen a high-quality, effective intervention?	If the intervention isn't generally effective or has limited evidence supporting efficacy, we can't confidently expect progress.	Search for the intervention on the **What Works Clearinghouse** to evaluate the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) evidence ratings. Need a quick list of effective interventions? **Check out this list.** If the intervention you've chosen has limited to no evidence backing it, it may be time to choose a new intervention.
Is the intervention matched to the student's needs?*	We can have the most effective, research-based intervention in the world but if it's not matched to what the student needs, it is unlikely to help.	Consider carefully the student data available including universal screening data, classroom assessments, and team discussions. Evaluate the skills targeted by the intervention and make sure they match the student's specific area(s) of need as identified by available data. If the intervention is not teaching specific skills the data identifies the student lacks, it may be time to choose a better-matched intervention.
Is the progress monitoring tool matched to both the intervention and the student's needs?*	Sometimes the student is making progress, and we're not set up to see it! Even if you've chosen a high-quality intervention that is well-matched to the student's needs, your progress monitoring measure could fail to capture the progress made.	From the first two questions, you know that you have a high-quality intervention that is well-matched to the student's needs. Now you need to look closely at the progress monitoring tool you've chosen. Does it measure the specific skills that are being taught through the intervention? If not, it's time to choose a new progress-monitoring tool.

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Has the intervention been happening as planned or have there been regular absences?	Absences happen. But the question here is are frequent absences happening due to student or teacher absences or other schedule disruptions? If instruction isn't happening regularly, then the student isn't getting the intervention time they need to make progress.	Look at intervention attendance logs. If you don't have them already start intervention logs. Make sure the logs track both student and teacher absences as well as other disruptions that may occur. If there are frequent absences for any reason, problem-solve with your team about how to make intervention delivery more consistent.
Have you talked to the interventionist to see what else may be going on?	Sometimes there is something unexpected going on that doesn't fit neatly into any box. Maybe everything was set up effectively but certain kids are not getting along. Maybe the group is sharing a space and there are environmental distractors.	Conversations with the intervention staff are going to be the key here. Open dialogue is encouraged. Ask about the dynamics of the group members, the intervention environment, and anything else the interventionist may notice. Make adjustments as necessary (e.g., move intervention to a less distracting environment or adjust groups for better group dynamics).
Is the student making progress, but very slowly?	You may see a slight upward trend in data that suggests the intervention is working but not enough to help the student catch up.	Consider increasing the intensity or duration of the intervention- giving the student more frequent or longer sessions or another round of intervention. If these adjustments don't improve progress, you may want to walk through the other questions in this guide to see if you can hone other aspects of the intervention to improve efficacy.

** On these questions, specificity is critical. Choosing something like "reading" is too vague to accomplish these goals. Instead, identify the specific reading skill the student is struggling with and choose a matched intervention and progress monitoring tool for that **specific skill.** For example, a student may be struggling with reading fluency, so you will want to choose a reading fluency intervention and reading fluency progress monitoring tool.*