



8 Steps For Navigating Special Education Referrals in the “New Normal”



Identifying students in need of special education services is different after more than a year of disrupted learning—here's what to do about it.



STEP 1

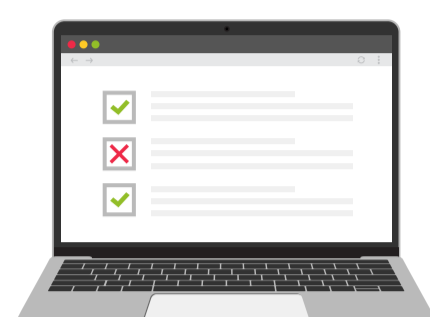
Recognize more students than before may be behind.

Expect [greater learning loss in math](#) than in reading.

STEP 2

Conduct universal screening.

This will identify needs among the total student population.



STEP 3

Review and act on Tier 1 data first.

If fewer than 80% of students meet benchmark, Tier 1 core instruction will need to be intensified. Then, data from following screening period will show the impact that the intensification had on overall student growth.

STEP 4

Tier 2 interventions should be reserved for the lowest-performing students.

- ▶ **Determine what that threshold is for your students** based on your school's resources and when/how interventions can be provided with integrity.
- ▶ **Provide targeted group interventions** for students at-risk in reading and/or math and track progress to goal over 6–12 weeks.
**Illuminate recommends weekly or bi-weekly progress monitoring.*

STEP 5

Review intervention results.

If most students in the group intervention are on track to meet goals, the intervention was effective and students should exit once goals have been met. If not, consider if there are group differences.



Examine group differences.

Determine whether there are progress differences for students who were fully remote last year versus those who were in hybrid or onsite classrooms.

- ▶ Look at the rate of improvement (ROI) for one or more students.
- ▶ If neither group is making the expected progress, intensify the intervention for everyone.
- ▶ If there are differences in growth between the two groups, it may be appropriate to provide additional practice only to the students who were fully remote.

STEP 6

Example



Reading intervention



Hybrid learners in 2020–21



Remote learners in 2020–21



If last year's remote learners aren't making as much progress as the other group, provide them with an additional 5 minutes of practice during independent learning time.

STEP 7

Implement Tier 3 Interventions

If a student doesn't achieve growth with intensified group intervention, they should receive a more targeted and individualized Tier 3 intervention. If, after implementing the intervention for 6–12 weeks, the student's ROI is still low, teams should decide whether or not a disability is suspected.

STEP 8

If a disability is suspected, conduct a comprehensive evaluation.

A comprehensive evaluation may be the next step if a student's ROI during intervention is persistently low and indicates that the student will not catch up to the grade-level goal.

