

# Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS)

## Operational Definition

Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) is a framework to use during meetings (e.g., PBIS, RTI, MTSS) focused on data-based decision making to improve student outcomes.

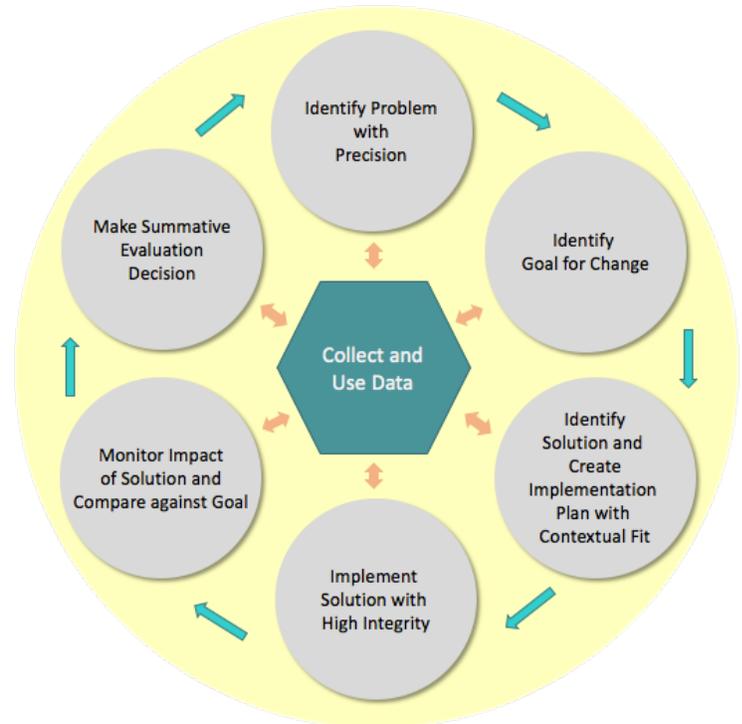
TIPS is applicable to varied data sources (e.g., DIBELS, AIMSweb, SWIS), content areas (e.g., academic, behavior), and levels of application (e.g., school, district, state).

## Rationale

It is common for schools to have “problem-solving teams” focused on addressing student academic and behavior challenges. Some teams use general problem-solving models (e.g., problem identification, problem analysis, plan development, and plan evaluation) to lead them to problem resolution. Unfortunately, research documents that, although school teams indicate they are adhering to problem-solving guidelines, they are often missing critical components, thus decreasing the chances of improving student outcomes. Barriers to conducting efficient problem solving meetings have been identified to include:

### TIPS Process

- ❖ Identify a problem with precision
- ❖ Identify goal for change
- ❖ Identify solution and create implementation plan with contextual fit
- ❖ Implement solution with high integrity
- ❖ Monitor impact of solution and compare against goal
- ❖ Make summative evaluation decisions



limited time scheduled for meetings, gaps in foundations for efficient meetings (e.g., location, team members, procedures, efficiency of meeting), an unfocused or unidentified purpose for meeting, and inadequate training and support to implement effective and efficient problem solving. Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) is a model that addresses these barriers by breaking down problem solving into six critical steps to guide teams through a data-based decision making process that leads to desired outcomes. TIPS also infuses critical elements of effective and efficient meetings (e.g., consistent procedures, team member roles, meeting minute guides) into the problem solving process. TIPS is a generic problem solving model that provides structure to any type of meeting. The **TIPS model includes focus on meeting foundations guided by a structured Meeting Minutes form and a six-step problem solving process.**

## Meeting Foundations

Effective teams establish effective foundations for their meetings:

- Meeting schedule is created
- Members attend meetings
- Projected agenda is reviewed and followed
- Team roles are clearly defined and assigned

**Defined Team Roles**

- ◆ Facilitator
- ◆ Data Analyst
- ◆ Minute Taker
- ◆ Team Member

to team members with specific responsibilities for before, during and after meetings

- Solutions identified by team can be approved for implementation during the meeting

## Meeting Minutes

Effective teams document critical features of their meetings.

- TIPS Meeting Minutes are used to document meeting foundations, guide meetings through problem-solving steps, and record decisions made during the meeting
- Previous problems are reviewed with data to indicate their level of implementation (fidelity) and current levels (outcome data to compare to goal) and documented on meeting minutes
- Data are projected and in right format to answer questions

## Problem Solving Process

Effective teams follow a data-based decision-making process:

- Identify a problem with precision
  - *Teams identify who, what, when, where, why for every problem that requires a solution*
- Identify goal for change
  - *Teams set a goal that defines levels at which the problem is no longer a problem*
- Identify solution and create implementation plan with contextual fit
  - *Teams brainstorm solutions and decide what they are going to do to bring about desired change*
- Implement solution with high integrity
  - *Teams implement and use data to determine if they did what they said they would do*
- Monitor impact of solution and compare against goal
  - *Teams use outcome data to determine if the solution is having the desired impact on the outcome.*
- Make summative evaluation decisions
  - *Teams determine what to do next (continue, modify, or stop plan, continue through problem solving process again)*

**The greatest challenge to any thinker is stating the problem in a way that will allow a solution.**  
--Bertrand Russell

## Research Supporting TIPS

In a randomized control trial, Newton, Horner, Algozzine, Todd, and Algozzine (2012) evaluated the effects of TIPS training on 34 PBIS school teams implementation of TIPS. Teams in treatment were trained in TIPS and provided follow-up technical assistance and environmental supports. Wait-list (control group) teams did not receive TIPS training. Researchers observed PBIS team meetings using the Decision Observation, Recording, and Analysis (DORA) instrument. Results indicated trained teams demonstrated higher levels of problem solving linked behaviors than control teams. This research demonstrated that school teams can be trained to problem solve, which led to a new question, what impact does problem solving have on students?

To address this question, Horner, Algozzine, Todd, Algozzine, Cusumano, and Preston (in preparation) conducted a replication study with 38 school PBIS teams using a randomized control trial to evaluate the effects of a two-part intervention (TIPS training plus two coached meetings) on team implementation of TIPS and student outcomes. During the first wave, treatment teams and coaches received the TIPS Intervention (i.e., a full day of TIPS team training, a full day of coaches training, and two coached meetings following the team training). Wait-list teams did not receive any training or coaching in TIPS during this phase. Researchers observed PBIS team meetings using the DORA instrument before and after intervention. Results indicated treatment teams had higher problem solving scores after TIPS intervention than wait-list teams. Furthermore, treatment teams that implemented the solution with full or partial fidelity reported positive student outcomes. During the next phase the following year, wait-list teams received the TIPS Intervention. Results from this study were similar to results in the first study.

Overall, this research indicates that *teams can be trained to improve problem solving and, more importantly, improved problem solving has a positive impact on student outcomes.*

## Lessons for Improvement of Practice

- Regular attendance and roles being assigned is critical so members know what is expected.
- Reliability of meetings is important; members must know when tasks are due and next meetings are scheduled.
- Agendas must be displayed and can be used to keep discussion on target.
- Meeting Minutes must be projected, used to guide the meeting, prompt steps for problem solving, and record decisions made.
- Teams must be taught how data drives each step in problem solving.
- Problems must be identified with precision.
- Highlight the link between solutions implemented and positive student outcomes.
- Attention to how differences in precision elements lead to different sets of solution options should be emphasized.
- Make teams aware that it is better to implement a few targeted and specific solutions than too many that overextend resources and/or cannot be maintained.
- Teams must be taught about the concept of fidelity, how it is non-evaluative, and easy was to gather it.
- Teams should use fidelity data as a component of evaluating outcomes of solution implementation.
- Teams must be taught to review all problems until resolved.

## FAQs

- Where do I start if I want to learn more about TIPS?
  - *Start by visiting the TIPS website [www.TIPS2info.blogspot.com](http://www.TIPS2info.blogspot.com) to learn more information about TIPS.*
- What resources are available on TIPS?
  - *Meeting Minute guide, overview videos, Readiness for Training Checklist, TIPS Fidelity Checklist, skill building resources, sample meeting video, take home practice tasks, and much more.*

### Additional Resources

- ❖ [www.TIPS2info.blogspot.com](http://www.TIPS2info.blogspot.com)
- ❖ [www.PBIS.org](http://www.PBIS.org) (Click- Training)
- ❖ [TIPS2grant@gmail.com](mailto:TIPS2grant@gmail.com)
- ❖ [TIPS2grant on YouTube](#)
- ❖ [TIPS Connect on Google Communities](#)

- Is TIPS only compatible with PBIS teams?
  - *No. TIPS is a generic problem-solving process that can be used with any problem-solving team using quantitative data to identify and solve problems. TIPS can be used with RTI teams, MTSS teams, student assistance teams, state/district teams, any problem-solving team*
- How long is TIPS training?
  - *Full TIPS training includes one day devoted to teams using TIPS, one day dedicated to coaching TIPS, and one day building skills to train TIPS.*
- What types of TIPS trainings are available?
  - *Team, coaches, and trainer trainings are available for coaches and trainers. Trainers are*

*trained in all three areas, coaches are provided TIPS team training and coaching through TIPS.*

- Who do we contact if our district is interested in TIPS training?
  - *Email us at [TIPS2Grant@gmail.com](mailto:TIPS2Grant@gmail.com)*
- Do schools have to use coaches?
  - *Yes. In order to sustain TIPS, coaches are required to provide support for long-term implementation.*
- Do schools have to use SWIS for TIPS?
  - *Schools can use SWIS as a database for behavior data, but any type of database that can analyze student, class, grade level data by the precision problem statement elements (who, what, when, where, why) will work.*
- Does TIPS only work at the Tier 1 level?
  - *No. TIPS is a generic problem solving process that can be used when discussing academic and behavior problems in Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3.*
- Does TIPS only work with school teams?
  - *No. TIPS is a generic problem solving process that can be used by state and district teams to problem solve administrative problems (e.g., new initiative buy-in, disproportionality, graduation rates, attendance).*
- I'm interested in TIPS. Now what?
  - *Review the TIPS Training Checklist (found on [www.TIPS2info.blogspot.com](http://www.TIPS2info.blogspot.com)) to determine if your district is ready for TIPS or what steps you need to take before starting the TIPS journey.*

***TIPS provides a clear model  
for problem solving***

## Student Level Example- Elementary

Precise Problem Statement <i>What? When? Where? Who? Why? How Often?</i>	Goal and Timeline <i>What? By When?</i>	Solution Actions <i>By Who? By When?</i>	Identify Fidelity and Outcome Data <i>What? When? Who?</i>
<p>Eight 5<sup>th</sup> grade students scored in the strategic range on fall oral reading fluency benchmark, due to poor phonics skills.</p> <p><b>Current Levels:</b> Oral Reading Fluency scores: Phil- 90 wpm Fernando- 99 wpm Quinn- 89 wpm Demarius- 98 wpm Emma- 91 wpm Aiden- 88 wpm Diana- 103 wpm Veronica- 96 wpm</p>	<p>All students will read at least 127 wpm by Spring benchmark.</p>	<p>All students will be given the CORE Phonics Survey and placement tests for explicit instruction phonics program by Ms. James (reading specialist) by next Wednesday.</p> <p>Students will be provided small group reading instruction at their level, 30 minutes 5 days a week with Ms. James starting next Friday.</p>	<p><i>What fidelity data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>Attendance collected during small group reading instruction by Ms. James</p> <p><i>What outcome data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>Once a week using 5<sup>th</sup> grade ORF assessments by Ms. James.</p>

## Student Level Example- Secondary

Precise Problem Statement <i>What? When? Where? Who? Why? How Often?</i>	Goal and Timeline <i>What? By When?</i>	Solution Actions <i>By Who? By When?</i>	Identify Fidelity and Outcome Data <i>What? When? Who?</i>
<p>Ralph, a senior, is failing two courses, has poor attendance, and is not responding to CICO with his English teacher (Tier 2 intervention). This is thought to be due to Ralph not having input/buy-in into his education and lack of a plan before/after graduation.</p> <p><b>Current Levels:</b> CICO levels- decreasing trend Attendance levels in class: Physics- 54% English- 91% World History- 35% Algebra 2- 47%</p> <p>Grades: Physics- 47% English- 82% World History- 74% Algebra 2- 63%</p>	<p>Ralph will attend all classes 90% of the time within one month.</p> <p>Ralph will increase/maintain passing grades in all classes (&gt;70%) by next quarter.</p> <p>Ralph will graduate within two semesters.</p>	<p>Ralph will begin Tier 3 RENEW intervention with his chosen team (English teacher, assistant principal, counselor) where Ralph will take on responsibility to collaborate with team to create plans for before/after graduation. Meeting- Tuesdays at 3:00.</p>	<p><i>What fidelity data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>Counselor will email RENEW plan to facilitator by Wednesday after meeting.</p> <p><i>What outcome data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>English teacher will collect Ralph's attendance and grades for this semester, weekly until end of semester.</p> <p>Counselor will complete checklist of courses for graduation, reviewed each quarter.</p>

# Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS)

## School Level Example

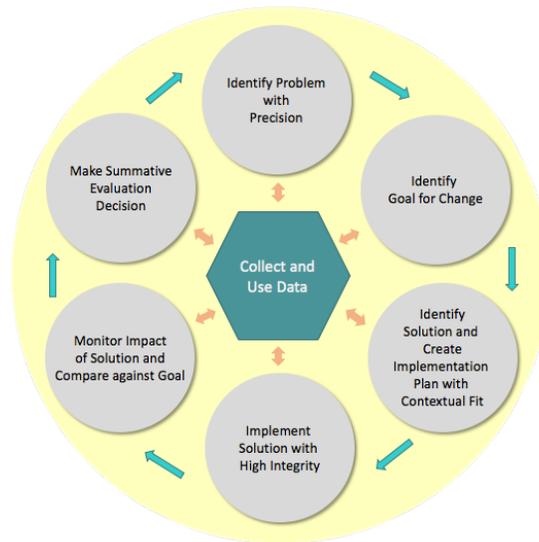
<b>Precise Problem Statement</b> <i>What? When? Where? Who? Why? How Often?</i>	<b>Goal and Timeline</b> <i>What? By When?</i>	<b>Solution Actions</b> <i>By Who? By When?</i>	<b>Identify Fidelity and Outcome Data</b> <i>What? When? Who?</i>
<p>Marion High School RTI team has low attendance at meetings and does not consistently use meeting minutes during problem solving meetings.</p> <p><b>Current Levels:</b> Observation data- Only 20% of team arrives on time Meeting minutes used during 5% of meetings.</p>	<p>Team will have 80% attendance rate at remaining problem solving meetings beginning next month (or if needed reschedule meeting).</p> <p>Minute taker and backup will take minutes for 100% of meetings.</p>	<p>Team will review meeting foundations video on TIPS website, email facilitator after viewing video by Friday next week.</p> <p>Team will confirm date and time work with their schedules by Friday next week.</p> <p>Coach will meet with minute takers to review role responsibilities and meeting minute guide by Friday next week.</p>	<p><i>What fidelity data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>Facilitator will collect emails from team on video and date/time of meeting.</p> <p>Coach will check off meeting with minute takers in task list once completed.</p> <p><i>What outcome data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>Coach will collect data on attendance and use of meeting minutes at problem solving meetings.</p>

## District Level Example

<b>Precise Problem Statement</b> → <i>What? When? Where? Who? Why? How Often?</i>	<b>Goal and Timeline</b> → <i>What? By When?</i>	<b>Solution Actions</b> → <i>By Who? By When?</i>	<b>Identify Fidelity and Outcome Data</b> → <i>What? When? Who?</i>
<p>Hinson School District schools are ineffective and inefficient at problem solving during MTSS meetings. This is due to the lack of structure within MTSS meetings.</p> <p><b>Current Levels:</b> Audit of problem solving meeting components: 15% of schools use meeting minutes 10% meet regularly 5% use general problem solving process 0% of schools trained in TIPS</p>	<p>In HSD, 100% of schools will be trained in TIPS by the beginning of next school year.</p>	<p>HSD leaders and MTSS coordinator will designate TIPS trainers and coaches and all will attend TIPS trainings within two months.</p> <p>HSD trainers will train 50% of schools in TIPS within six months.</p> <p>HSD trainers will train remaining 50% of schools will be trained within one year (before the start of next school year).</p>	<p><i>What fidelity data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>HSD district calendar and task list- HSD MTSS coordinator</p> <p><i>What outcome data will we collect?</i> <i>What? When? Who?</i></p> <p>Attendance at TIPS trainings for coaches and trainers</p> <p>Attendance at TIPS trainings for schools</p>

## References

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