



## MTSS in the Time of Covid-19: Writing a *Home-Based Academic Support Plan*

During the extended closure of school districts in response to the Covid-19 virus, many at-risk students are failing to complete and submit schoolwork. An appropriate response is for a school representative (e.g., classroom teacher; school counselor) to contact their parent(s) (and perhaps the student) to come up with a written school/home plan to get these learners reengaged in learning.

This document provides a 5-step agenda that you as a school representative can follow as you contact with parents to develop a *Home-Based Academic Support Plan*—hereafter called ‘the form’—with practical ideas for student support. (A blank planning form and form filled in with sample student information appear later in this document.) This parent conference can be expected to last 15-20 minutes. It is recommended that your school archive completed plans as evidence of the ‘good faith’ MTSS efforts that you have made to ally with parents to promote the success of at-risk students.

**Step 1: Greeting/Set the Agenda.** In the opening of your parent call, you will want to set a positive tone and agree on what is to be accomplished. Here are 4 goals to weave into the start of your conversation:

- *Introduce yourself.* The parent(s) may already know you by name and professional role (teacher, counselor, etc.), but it can be helpful to refresh their memory and add relevant new information. Example: *“My name is Mr. Rappaport and I am Ricky’s Science teacher. Earlier this year, Ricky may have talked with you about the labs we have been doing on the properties of light.”*
- *State the purpose of the call.* You can reassure the parent(s) by emphasizing the solution-focused purpose of your conversation—to create a written plan between school and home to help the student successfully complete and submit schoolwork.
- *Establish rapport.* Another objective is to establish or reinforce a positive connection with the parent(s). For example, you might emphasize some positive student qualities or acknowledge the strain on the parent(s) of having to supervise home learning. Examples: *“I know that in the past Ricky has always been conscientious about submitting work.”* *“As parents, it can’t be easy for you to have to oversee Ricky to make sure that he gets his schoolwork done.”*

**Step 2: Identify the Problem(s).** You next communicate to the parent the student academic problem(s) that initiated the conference call. These most typically include issues such as incomplete or missing schoolwork, failure of the student to access online learning opportunities, etc. For example, you might say: *“I am reaching out to you because, in the past several weeks, Ricky has not logged in to my virtual classroom and has turned in no assignments. I think today we should be able to come up with strategies to help him with that.”* When you and parent(s) agree on the problem(s) to be the focus of the conference, record the problem in the *Identify the Problem(s)* box on the form.

**Step 3: Develop a Plan.** Your conversation then shifts to exploring with the parent(s) *why* the student is struggling to complete and submit work. The most frequent issues preventing efficient work completion are problems with:

1. readiness to learn (e.g., the student lacks strong self-management routines);
2. academic skills (e.g., the student does not have the academic skills necessary to do the assigned work);



3. motivation/work engagement (e.g., the student lacks motivation or fails to see a pay-off for doing the work). Keep in mind that students may be impacted by more than one of these factors.

The table below explains these academic blockers and includes sample strategies to address each. Consult this table as you talk with the parent.

Once you and the parent(s) have decided which blocker(s) best explain why their child is not completing or submitting work, choose the intervention strategies that you all agree will best address them. Write these ideas in the table *Select Intervention Ideas* on the form. Be sure to record these ideas in simple language and sufficient detail so that they can be clearly understood by school personnel and/or parent(s). Also, discuss when this academic support plan will begin (ideally, immediately!). If the parent(s) have a role in the plan, which is likely, ask them if they have questions or concerns about those roles and try to offer solutions for any issues that they bring up.

Academic 'Blocker'	Strategies
<p><b>Readiness to learn.</b> The student is <i>unprepared</i> to do academic work.</p> <p>Parent Question: Do you think any of these problems interfere with your child's <i>readiness to learn</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disorganization/lack of an orderly workspace</li> <li>• Poor time management</li> <li>• Limited access to online learning</li> <li>• Lack of sleep.</li> <li>• Other issue(s).</li> </ul>	<p>Sample strategies to address <i>readiness to learn</i> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>disorganization</i>. [Parent]. Assist the student with a plan for storing materials and routines for orderly daily set up, and clean-up of the workspace.</li> <li>• <i>time management</i>. [School/Parent]. Help the student to create a daily work schedule and to check off work as completed.</li> <li>• <i>limited access</i> to online learning. [School]. Brainstorm options with parent(s) to get the student online; drop off printed work materials for the student.</li> <li>• <i>lack of sleep</i>. [Parent]. Set a fixed bedtime and wake-up time; adjust the student's school schedule to start later in the day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Academic skills.</b> The student <i>lacks the skills</i> to do the academic work.</p> <p>Parent Question: Do you find that your child seems to <i>lack the skills</i> to do assigned work?</p>	<p>The prime strategy to address <i>academic skills</i> would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>lack of skills</i>. [School]. Reteach missing skills and adjust assigned work as needed to focus on those critical skills.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Motivation/work engagement.</b> The student is <i>unmotivated</i> to do the academic work.</p> <p>Parent Question: Do you think any of these problems interfere with your child's <i>motivation</i> to do schoolwork?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of work endurance.</li> <li>• Becoming overwhelmed with larger tasks.</li> </ul>	<p>Sample strategies to address <i>motivation/work engagement</i> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>lack of work endurance</i>. [Parent]. Advise the student to work for shorter periods and to take brief breaks as needed. [School]. Provide assignments that start off with easier, 'high-success' content and then move into more challenging material.</li> <li>• <i>becoming overwhelmed with larger tasks</i>. [School]. Provide assignments that break formidable tasks into series of more manageable sub-tasks. [School/Parent]. Coach the student to break down larger tasks independently. Praise and encourage the student's use of the chunking strategy.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being bored with the work.</li> <li>• Other issue(s).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>being bored with the work.</i> [School]. Provide the student with assignments of high interest or of greater challenge. Allow the student a voice in structuring assignments (e.g., choosing a paper topic; setting up a backyard science investigation).</li> </ul>
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**Step 4: Decide How to Stay in Touch.** Before ending your video or audio call, agree on the best method(s) to communicate (e.g., phone call, Zoom video chat, email, text) and decide on a schedule for school and home to check in with each other about the plan's effectiveness (e.g., weekly check-in texts initiated by the teacher; a follow-up Zoom video-chat scheduled 2 weeks from the initial meeting, etc.). Of course, always encourage the parent(s) to contact you at any time if new concerns or questions arise about the existing plan.

**Step 5: Share the Plan with the Parent(s).** After ending your conference with the parent, add any final information to the *Home-Based Student Academic Support Plan* and send a copy (e.g., via email attachment, texted snapshot) to the parent(s).



# Home-Based Academic Support Plan

**Directions.** Use this form to document the parent/school problem-solving conference and home-based individualized student intervention plan.

Student Name:	Date:
Who from school and home are participating in this conference call?	

<b>Identify the Problem(s).</b> What student problem(s) led to this conference call?

<b>Select Intervention Ideas.</b> What strategies will help this student? Decide which of the 3 blockers below impact the student and list strategies school/parent(s)/student will try. (Remember that students can show problems in more than one area.)
<b>Readiness to learn.</b> The student is <i>unprepared</i> to do academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.

<b>Academic skills.</b> The student <i>lacks the skills</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.

<b>Motivation/work engagement.</b> The student is <i>unmotivated</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.

<b>Follow-Up Contact</b> When will school/parent(s)/student reconnect to review the success of this plan? How will you communicate?



# Home-Based Academic Support Plan: Example

**Directions.** Use this form to document the parent/school problem-solving conference and home-based individualized student intervention plan.

Student Name:	Date:
<i>Ricky Allen</i>	<i>April 28, 2020</i>
Who from school and home are participating in this conference call?	
<i>Heidi Allen (mom); Ray Allen (father); Ricky Allen, Mr. Rappaport, Science Teacher</i>	

<b>Identify the Problem(s).</b> What student problem(s) led to this conference call?
<i>Ricky is not logging on to the virtual science classroom to view teacher-posted instructional videos. Ricky also has not turned in any of 5 assignments given since March 15.</i>

<b>Select Intervention Ideas.</b> What strategies will help this student? Decide which of the 3 blockers below impact the student and list strategies school/parent(s)/student will try. (Remember that students can show problems in more than one area.)
<b>Readiness to learn.</b> The student is <i>unprepared</i> to do academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.
<i>To help Ricky get organized, Mrs. Allen will have him create a work schedule in the morning of each school day and will check his progress in the afternoon. She will also verify that he is set up at his desk ready to work and logged in for online learning by 9 am each day.</i>
<b>Academic skills.</b> The student <i>lacks the skills</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.
<i>Ricky's academic skills are adequate to complete his schoolwork.</i>
<b>Motivation/work engagement.</b> The student is <i>unmotivated</i> to do the academic work. List strategies and person(s) responsible.
<i>Ricky said that some science assignments seem overwhelming. Mr. Rappaport will break larger future assignments down into smaller steps ("chunking") and email those revised directions to Ricky and Mrs. Allen.</i>

<b>Follow-Up Contact</b> When will school/parent(s)/student reconnect to review the success of this plan? How will you communicate?
<i>Mr. Rappaport will call Mrs. Allen in 2 weeks to review Ricky's success with the plan. In the meantime, teacher, parents, and Ricky will email/text each other if questions come up.</i>