

School-Based Intervention Idea from [www.interventioncentral.org](http://www.interventioncentral.org)



Focus: **MATHEMATICS**

## Math Review: Balance Massed & Distributed Practice (Carnine, 1997)

Teachers can best promote students acquisition and fluency in a newly taught math skill by transitioning from massed to distributed practice.

When students have just acquired a math skill but are not yet fluent in its use, they need lots of opportunities to try out the skill under teacher supervision—a technique sometimes referred to as 'massed practice'. Once students have developed facility and independence with that new math skill, it is essential that they then be required periodically to use the skill in order to embed and retain it—a strategy also known as 'distributed practice'. Teachers can program distributed practice of a math skill such as reducing fractions to least common denominators into instruction either by (a) regularly requiring the student to complete short assignments in which they practice that skill in isolation (e.g., completing drill sheets with fractions to be reduced), or (b) teaching a more advanced algorithm or problem-solving approach that incorporates—and therefore requires repeated use of—the previously learned math skill (e.g., requiring students to reduce fractions to least-common denominators as a necessary first step to adding the fractions together and converting the resulting improper fraction to a mixed number).

### *References*

Carnine, D. (1997). Instructional design in mathematics for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30, 130-141.

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