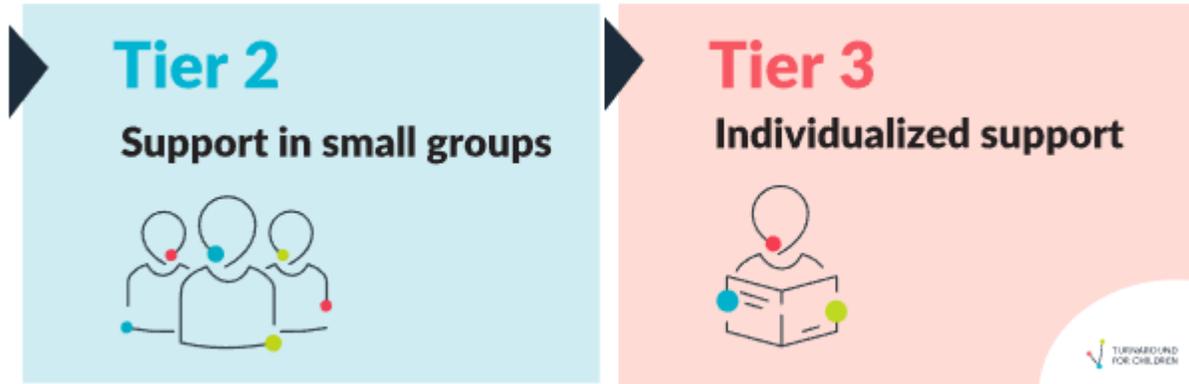


# Understanding the Differences Between Tier 2 and Tier 3



The purpose of a tiered system of supports is intended to ensure that each student's individual needs are met and that appropriate resources are allocated in a way that matches the student's level of need. These supports are crucial, regardless of whether a school is in-person, hybrid or fully remote. The tiers of support stay constant across these settings, although there may be differences in how students are identified as needing support and how supports are implemented and evaluated.

There are three levels of support: Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. It is imperative that schools recognize that Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are to be accessed when universal Tier 1 supports have not been effective in meeting the needs of a student.

## Tier 2

Tier 2 provides selective supports for individuals or groups of students with some additional low-level learning, social-emotional and developmental needs.

This tier adds a layer of support to a select group of students that will ultimately be impactful for all students. These supports are based on need and call for one or more of the following:

- A change in environment
- A need for improved relationship or interaction (between staff and student or between students)
- The learning of a new skill
- Development of a mindset

Tier 2 supports can be provided in the following ways:

- The student is referred to and discussed at a Tier 2 meeting
- The referring individual reaches out directly to another service provider or student support staff member in the building

Tier 2 team membership includes all teachers (including the referral teacher) on a given grade, along with any specialist educators who work with that grade. Optional members include school leaders, to

provide expertise and logistical support around decisions regarding student interventions; and intervention specialists or clinical support persons, to provide more support around mental health and other learning needs.

Regardless of the pathway selected for support, Tier 2 planning includes creating goals, selecting intervention supports, and documenting this as part of a student support plan, followed by the opportunity to review student progress after the intervention/support has been implemented for a pre-determined period of time.

### Tier 3

Tier 3 provides intensive supports for individual students with more significant needs, or whose needs are not sufficiently met by Tier 2 supports. There are two reasons for a student to be referred to receive Tier 3 supports

- The student is not benefiting sufficiently Tier 2 interventions
- The student is demonstrating crisis-level indicators of need at Tier 1; this is called Direct Tier 3 referral and is considered the [crisis component of a tiered system of support](#)

The venue through which this support is provided is primarily a Tier 3 meeting of multidisciplinary staff and other stakeholders within a child's context outside of school.

Tier 3 team membership often comprises teacher(s), caregiver(s), a special educator, administration, a mental health provider (if one is part of your school community) and/or a student support staff member, and community stakeholders, based upon the child's context. This collective group reviews data and considers supports attempted prior to the referral. They will then determine appropriate goals and interventions. Interventions at this level may involve both in-school and out-of-school supports. In addition, progress monitoring may occur more frequently. Occasionally, there may be students who, based on the review of their progress, are determined to have needs beyond what the school can provide. At this point, schools may consider external services and evaluations, including external mental health agencies.

### Implementing the Crisis Component

It is important for schools to design and implement a Crisis Component within their tiered system of supports. As indicated above, each tier of support has its own purpose and function. While most students have needs that can be met through the Tier 2 and Tier 3 processes, other students may have more immediate needs that require urgent attention. [Click here](#) to understand more about the design of this component of the system.

As mentioned previously, schools must outline clear steps for providing students access to supports, allowing for smoother collaboration among adults. [Click here](#) to see a visual of how students might receive access to supports within a tiered system.