

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Federal and state laws have directed schools to focus more on helping all children learn by addressing problems earlier within the regular education classroom. These laws promote the importance of high quality, effective interventions. A process of providing interventions to students who are at risk for academic or behavioral problems is called Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

What is MTSS?

MTSS is a framework that many schools use to provide specific supports to students who are struggling. The goal of MTSS is to intervene early to assist students in achieving grade level standards. MTSS is meant to focus on the “whole child” so that all stages of a student’s development are reinforced.

MTSS supports not just academic development, but behavior, vision and hearing, speech-language, health (e.g., weight, height) and social and emotional needs as well.

- MTSS is for ALL students;
- MTSS is a collaborative effort by both schools and families;
- MTSS allows for schools to individualize interventions to meet unique circumstances;
- MTSS should be based on progress that a student is making;
- MTSS can be used as a framework to assist in special education decisions.

MTSS is a process to ensure that:

1. Students who need additional support are identified early;
2. Students identified as needing more support are provided support targeted at their specific needs using sound instructional programs or strategies;
3. Students progress is monitored frequently so educators know if they are on track to meet their goals;
4. Teachers use the data to change the path when needed through a formal system of support.

Benefits of MTSS

Schools who use the MTSS framework have shown ongoing improvements in student’s academic performance. Studies also show expulsions, behavior referrals, and suspensions have decreased. MTSS is designed to help every student succeed and for every teacher to know how to help their students.

How MTSS Works

Typically, a universal screening is completed for all students early in the school year. This screening helps determine if there may be a need for additional support in a student’s academic or behavioral growth. Along with screening data, there should be other data sources (classroom performance, performance on state assessments, short-term progress monitoring, in class assignments, teacher observation, etc.) that are used to determine whether or not a student may be at risk.

Based on this information, a school team including family members, educators, administrators, counselors, etc., will meet to assess the student and plan specific interventions designed to help.

Once the team decides on appropriate strategies and goals, the student will receive these targeted interventions in small groups, through one-on-one instruction, in a classroom setting, or in a delivery method deemed appropriate by the team. This is in addition to the general instruction provided with peers in their regular classroom setting.

Student’s progress is regularly monitored to see if student is making sufficient gains. Again, classroom performance, observations, state assessment data, etc., are used to determine if the interventions are working. Then, adjustments to the frequency, intensity, time, etc. can be made according to the level of progress.

What are the different Tiers?

MTSS systems are separated into three different tiers:

Tier 1 -- All students receive instruction in the core curriculum and are taught with methods that research has shown to be effective. All students receive a universal screening to see who is and isn’t responding to these strategies.

Tier 2 -- Small groups of 3-5 students receive targeted instruction to support additional learning in specific areas of need. The goal is to keep students from missing any core instruction. The frequency of instruction is based on the intervention protocol. Progress is monitored frequently. This is done in addition to Tier 1.

Tier 3 – One-on-one instruction is delivered through interventions selected to address the specific needs of the individual student. The frequency of instruction is based on the intervention protocol. Progress is monitored more often than in Tier 2. This can be done in addition to Tier 1 and Tier 2.

What Happens if a Student is Not Catching Up?

An evaluation for special education is usually the next step. If a student is not making sufficient progress. A parent or guardian will need to give written permission for an evaluation to occur.

The school is in charge of completing the evaluation at no cost to the family. MTSS cannot be used to delay or deny an evaluation of students suspected of having a disability.

The goal of MTSS is to screen early and to provide specific intervention quickly. It can also help schools tell the difference between students who have not received appropriate instruction versus those who are in need of special education.

Parents do not have to wait for their child to work through the Tiers before requesting a special education evaluation. Parents can ask for an evaluation at any time. A school has the right to refuse to conduct an evaluation but must notify parents in writing. If a school refuses to conduct an evaluation parents have the right to dispute resolution (Due Process or filing a state complaint).

How Can Parents Be Involved?

Research shows that when students experience connections to school, educational motivation, classroom engagement, and attendance all improve. To ensure parents are engaged members of the team supporting a student’s education parents should:

- Have an understanding of the essential MTSS components within their child’s school;
- Be updated regularly regarding their child’s progress;

- Be involved in decision making regarding intervention strategies;
- Frequently communicate with their child's teacher;
- Attend school functions such as parent-teacher conferences;
- Monitor and assist with their child's homework.

What to Ask the School About MTSS

To learn more about a school's MTSS system and how they are implemented, Understood.org suggests the following questions may be helpful to ask of your child's teacher:

- What screening process do you use to identify students who need extra help?
- Are parents notified of their child's screening results? How often?
- What interventions and instructional programs are used?
- How much time each week will my child receive intervention support?
- How often will you assess my child's progress and how is progress measured?
- Will I get information about how to support my child's learning at home?
- At what point in the MTSS process are students who are suspected of having a disability referred for a special education evaluation?

What Other Terms Might Be Used?

Other terms that you might hear from schools when discussing MTSS are:

Differentiated Instruction -- refers to the strategies an educator uses for adjusting the curriculum, teaching environments and instructional practices to meet the individual needs of the student.

Progress Monitoring -- ongoing measurement of student performance to show responsiveness to the interventions and to determine if adjustments need to be made.

Response to Intervention (RTI) -- is a framework that many schools use to help students who are struggling with academics. The RTI framework can be used as part of an MTSS approach.

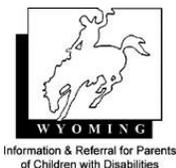
Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) -- is a problem-solving model for preventing inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior.

MTSS Resources:

Wyoming Instructional Network -- provides tools and information about MTSS components and sample documents/checklists. <http://wyominginstructionalnetwork.com/mtss/what-is-mtss/>

The National Center on Response to Intervention -- provides resources for elementary and secondary schools and districts. [\(https://www.rti4success.org/\)](https://www.rti4success.org/)

For more info on MTSS contact:



Parent Information Center

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Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Disability Brochure #34



Understanding the Tiered System of School Supports for Students' Academic and Behavioral Growth

Parent Information Center

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