Florida's MTSS | A Multi-Tiered System of Supports

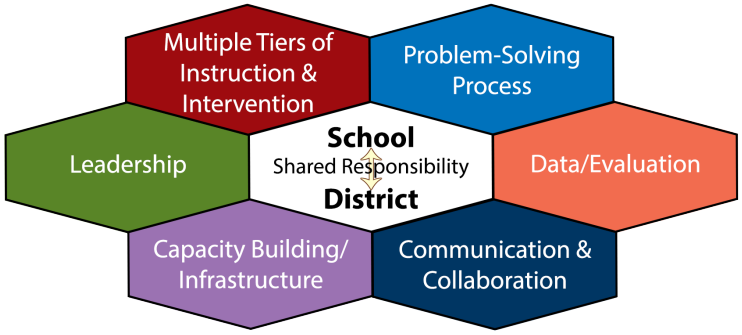
This Fact Sheet is a collaborative effort between the Problem Solving & Response to Intervention Project and Florida's Positive Behavior Support projects with the Florida Department of Education and the University of South Florida.

Fact Sheet

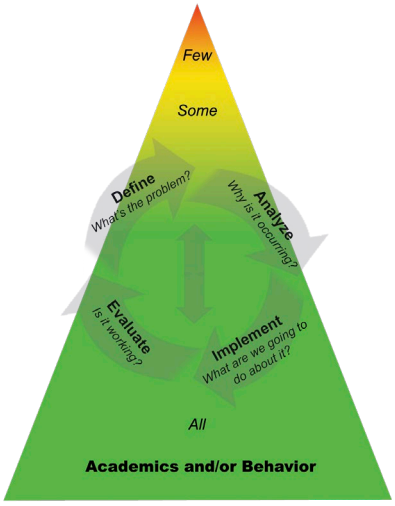
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

A Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is an educational framework designed to ensure successful educational outcomes for ALL students. When districts and schools are organized as an MTSS, educators use a databased problem-solving process to inform multiple tiers of integrated academic, behavior, and social-emotional instruction and intervention in alignment with educational standards.

Research and literature indicate that a number of critical elements are associated with an MTSS that yields positive outcomes for students. These elements can be grouped or categorized into six domains: Multiple Tiers of Support, the Problem-Solving Process, Data/Evaluation, Leadership, Capacity Building/Infrastructure and Communication and Collaboration.



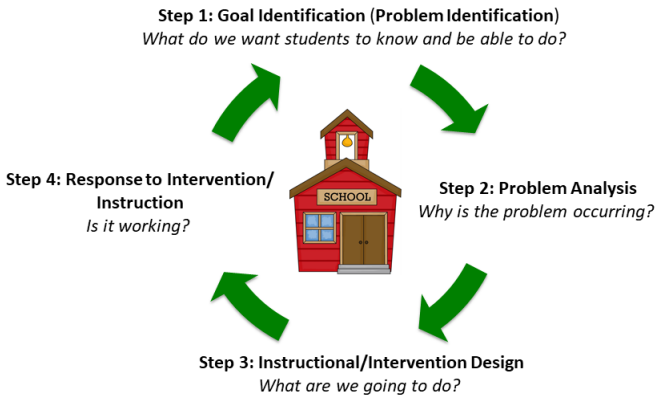
Providing evidence-based instruction, intervention, and support matched to the diverse needs of ***all*** students is paramount to a district's multi-tiered system of supports. While the critical elements of an MTSS should be present in every school, the organization and nature of the elements may be different from school to school, based on the unique resources, barriers, and student population. Just as different students require various levels of tiered instruction and intervention to reach grade level expectations, different schools will, at times, require supplemental and/or intensive *district* supports. The inter-relationship among the six critical domains is optimized when school and district leaders share responsibility for MTSS implementation to improve student outcomes and reach school and district improvement goals.



Multiple Tiers of Instruction and Intervention

Tiered instruction and intervention is the foundation of an MTSS. Tier 1, or core, includes the instruction that is accessible to ***all*** students. Tier 2, or supplemental instruction and intervention, is provided to students not meeting expectations and is often delivered to small groups of students who will likely benefit from instruction focused on the same target skill(s). Tier 3, or intensive intervention, is intended for students experiencing significant barriers to learning. Tier 2 and 3 interventions should be aligned with Tier 1 and include additional instructional time focused on critical skills.

For schools, the tiers represent the full continuum of standards-based curricula, instruction, and assessment options provided to all students and matched to their unique needs. At the district level, tiers represent a full continuum of *systemic* support options based on the strengths and needs of schools and allocated to help them achieve their goals for continual improvement.



Problem Solving Process

Data-based problem solving is the process used to make educational decisions within an MTSS. Different models exist, but a common four-step problem solving model can be used to improve student outcomes across content areas, grade levels, and tiers. The four-step process includes: 1) defining what students should know and be able to do (including comparisons of expected and current levels of performance), 2) identifying possible reasons why students are not meeting expectations, 3) developing and implementing a plan based on evidence-based strategies to address reasons why students are not meeting

expectations, and 4) evaluating the effectiveness of the plan (or student response to instruction/intervention). Problem solving can also be used to address systemic barriers to school and district wide implementation of the practices associated with an effective MTSS.

Data/Evaluation

Given the importance of data-based problem solving for making decisions about multi-tiered instruction and intervention, the need for an accurate, fluid data and evaluation system is clear. This critical component of an MTSS is an important driver for effective multi-tiered instruction and intervention and problem solving. Staff members need to understand and have access to data sources across the tiers that fulfill multiple purposes for assessment (e.g., screening, identification of barriers, progress monitoring). Procedures and protocols for administering assessments and analyzing data help staff members make sound, data-based educational decisions. At the systems level, data on the fidelity with which the critical elements of multi-tiered system of supports are implemented allow leaders to examine current practices and to make changes to promote continuous improvement and sustainability.

Leadership

Effective leadership at both the school and district level is critical to the success of an MTSS. Effective leaders consistently communicate their vision and expectations for the implementation of MTSS. Additionally, they establish and maintain relationships with staff members built on mutual respect and shared responsibility for MTSS and invest in comprehensive professional learning. Leaders model and engage staff members in planning and data-based problem solving, ensuring they have access to needed data. Effective leaders also allocate necessary resources and remove barriers to implementing the critical elements of an MTSS with fidelity.

Another aspect of the domain of Leadership is an understanding that a multi-tiered system of supports encompasses all existing school and district plans, initiatives, and instructional infrastructure. With this perspective, leaders should carefully consider those plans, initiatives, and other requirements to ensure alignment and coordination with the practices associated with a successful multi-tiered system of supports.

Building the Capacity/Infrastructure

School and district-wide capacity and infrastructure are required in order to implement and sustain an effective MTSS. This domain incudes a focus on academic learning standards and school-wide behavioral expectations and ensures alignment across all instructional practices. Necessary capacity and infrastructure include ongoing professional learning and coaching with an emphasis on data-based problem solving and multi-tiered instruction and intervention. School schedules and calendars should allow staff members to plan for and implement instruction and intervention, engage in data-based problem solving, and allocate resources to support key practices. Leaders who systematically build capacity and infrastructure empower educators to implement the critical elements of MTSS with fidelity and to make system-level changes needed to improve student outcomes.

Communication and Collaboration

Ongoing communication and collaboration are essential for key stakeholders to understand and enact the practices that comprise an MTSS. Many innovations fail due to a lack of consensus, a lack of feedback to implementers to support continuous improvement, and a lack of stakeholder involvement in planning. In addition to including educators in planning and providing continuous feedback, it is also important to communicate and work with families and other community partners. These efforts increase the likelihood that the practices associated with a successful MTSS will be understood, embraced, and implemented in a sustainable and effective manner.

Assessing Your MTSS: Strengths and Needs

The ***Self-Assessment of MTSS (SAM)*** is a building-level needs assessment designed to allow leadership teams to rate their school's implementation of the critical elements of a multi-tiered system of supports. Data from the SAM helps schools **and** districts identify strengths as well as areas of needed improvement. School level reports and districtwide aggregate data are made available to inform decision-making. The SAM and the accompanying technical assistance manual can be accessed on the Florida Problem Solving/RtI website at http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/resources/program_evaluation/index.html.