Multi-tiered System of Supports: A Comprehensive Framework for Implementing the California Common Core State Standards

Participant Packet
Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

California Department of Education
Sacramento, California
## Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

### Guided Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): A Comprehensive Framework for Implementing the California Common Core State Standards (CA CCSS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Unit 1 – What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

- Unit 2 – Data-Based Decision Making
- Unit 3 – Instructional Planning and Supports
- Unit 4 – Leadership for Implementation of MTSS

### Pre-Assessment Activity – Assess Prior Knowledge of MTSS

Locate the Pre-Assessment handout to assess your knowledge of Multi-Tiered System of Supports prior to beginning the module. Work independently to complete the assessment. Discuss with others in your team if possible.

### Welcome to Unit 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welcome to Unit 1</th>
<th>Unit 1: Learning Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What is MTSS?</td>
<td>Participants will…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How is MTSS different from Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtI²)?</td>
<td>• Recognize the structure of MTSS as a framework for implementation of the CA CCSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why is MTSS important in implementing the CA CCSS?</td>
<td>• State the rationale for MTSS framework within the context of the CA CCSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What steps do we need to take to put MTSS to practice in CA schools?</td>
<td>• Describe the core components of MTSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Define the difference between MTSS and RTI²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify critical components of the implementation process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rationale for CA CCSS

“The CCSS address deep challenges of inequality of opportunity between different students exposed to radically unequal opportunities when it comes to the material they study and the quality of instruction they have received.” (Coleman, 2011).

### Implementing the CA CC

- Embrace and address the diverse needs of ALL students
- Develop and implement high-quality curricula aligned with initiatives, resources, and supports
- Some students will need additional support and interventions

### Implementing the CA CC through MTSS

“... implementing the Common Core State Standards within a framework of a Multi-Tiered System of Support will help ensure that all students have an evidence-based system of instruction to assist them in achieving success.” (Gamm et al., 2012)
Time to Reflect – Think about the supports and interventions currently in place in your school or district.

**Which student populations are addressed?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Systems of Support</th>
<th>Services for English learners, American Indian students, and those in gifted and talented programs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Interventions within the RtI² framework</td>
<td>- Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Special Education</td>
<td>- Title I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Title I</td>
<td>- Title III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are these systems consistent with the supports you identified as available in your school or district?

Time to Reflect – Why Common Core? (NYCDE, 2011)

**What do the California Common Core State Standards demand from students?**

How does this change the curriculum?

How does it change instruction?
## Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?  
### Guided Notes

### Characteristics of the CA CCSS
- Clear and consistent framework
- Schools are globally competitive
- Logical progression of rigorous content
- Balanced application of math and literacy
- Reflect the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Evidence-based practices
- Produce the deep knowledge and skills necessary
- For ALL students

### CA CCSS for English/Language Arts & Literacy
1. A comprehensive Kindergarten – 5th grade section, including standards for foundational skills
2. Content-specific sections for grades 6 –12 for English/Language Arts

### Shifts in ELA/Literacy
1. Reaching a true balance in informational and literary text
2. Building knowledge of content areas through text
3. Creating a staircase of complexity
4. Providing text-based answers
5. Providing sources and evidence to support arguments
6. Learning of academic language

### Math Standards

#### Mathematical Practice
- Describe how standards should be approached in instruction

#### Mathematical Content
- Define what students should know and be able to do
- Organized by domains in Kindergarten through 8th grade
- Organized by conceptual categories in high school

### Shifts in Mathematics
- Focus — Moved from solving problems in a precise way to being able to solve them using a variety of strategies
- Coherence — Ensure that the learning is carefully connected
- Rigor — Reflected in a strong emphasis on fluency at the primary grades

(Cocuzza, 2012)
### Time to Reflect – Review the pedagogical shifts

**Identify two major shifts in ELA/Literacy instruction.**

**Identify one major shift in math instruction.**

**What changes in your system will be necessary to support these shifts?**
Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?
Guided Notes

### Analysis of Real Data — Percent Proficient and Above (CDE, DataQuest, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CA Achievement Gaps in ELA</th>
<th>CA Achievement Gaps in Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Disabled</td>
<td>Non-Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>Students With Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Only</td>
<td>English Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Not Economically Disadvantaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time to Reflect — Reflect on the data on the achievement gaps in ELA and math.**

**What trends do you see for all student populations when you analyze these data?**

**Have achievement gaps for any subgroups significantly closed significantly in the last nine years?**

**What do you attribute to the persistence of these gaps?**

**Suggest a solution.**
Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?  
Guided Notes

CA Graduation Rate/Percent graduated | CA Dropout Rate/Percent dropped out
--- | ---
![Graph showing graduation and dropout rates](image)

Time to Reflect — Reflect on the data on graduation and dropout rates.

**What do you believe these data suggest about current approaches to instruction and intervention?**

---

**What significant changes are necessary to improve these outcomes for all students?**

---

The Rationale for Change

“A full 70 percent of US middle and high school students require differentiated instruction, which is instruction targeted to their individual strengths and weaknesses.”

(Biancarosa & Snow, 2004)

---

What MTSS Offers | Integration of MTSS and CA CCSS
--- | ---
- The potential to create the needed systematic change | “MTSS builds on the CCSS to provide a framework and a set of critical tools and additional time to support teaching and learning at differing levels of intensity, depending on the academic needs of the students. In other words, the CCSS articulates the “what” in teaching; and MTSS provides the “how” and “when” to provide it.”
- Focus on | (Gamm et al., 2012)
  - The CCSS |  
  - Core instruction with UDL principles applied |  
  - Differentiated learning |  
  - Student-centered learning |  
  - Individualized student needs |  
  - Alignment of the systems necessary for academic behavior, and social success |  

(Averill & Rinaldi, 2011)
## Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

### Guided Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The RtI² Framework</th>
<th>Benchmark — Tier 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students receive high-quality core and universal instruction aligned to the Common Core, differentiated to meet the needs of ALL students in every classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RtI² Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic — Tier 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For students who did not progress or respond to Tier I efforts as expected and require additional evidence-based strategic and targeted instruction and supports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensive — Tier 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students receive targeted intervention designed to increase the rate of progress. These students have been through both Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and supports, but showed minimal response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOT Special Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RtI² Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Does not include all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus often is only on academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Without a system-wide approach, RtI² is not aligned with other initiatives, resources, or supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MTSS Paradigm Shifts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>From</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention for a FEW students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying which student needs help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the programs and people available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention for ALL students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying what help each student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional design and redesign of services and supports matched to needs of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MTSS Principles and Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Early Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-Tiered model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence-based supports &amp; practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fluidly driven by data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individualized interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principles of UDL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Differentiated learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integration of intervention &amp; instructional supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classroom instruction aligned with CA CCSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aligned classroom instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong, predictable, and consistent classroom management structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.kansasmtss.org](http://www.kansasmtss.org)
Take Away Activity – Read: Kansas Multi-Tiered System of Support: The Integration of MTSS and RtI (Handout located in downloads on Welcome page)

**Identify the attributes of most RtI models**

**Add the attributes of MTSS**

**Where do these models overlap?**

### Essential Concepts

![MTSS Diagram]

- Addresses the needs of ALL Students
- Requires paradigm shift
- Schools do not pick and choose which components to implement

### Bringing MTSS to California Schools

The implementation of MTSS will "require all school staff to change the way in which they have traditionally worked" across all school settings. (Castillo et al., 2010)

"Real change is possible, but only by taking a truly systematic approach. There are not quick fixes." (Fullan, 2010).

School teams must focus on
- Facilitation of consensus building
- Establishment of necessary infrastructures
- Ongoing evaluation of adhering to implementation
### Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports? Guided Notes

#### Stages of Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Exploration** | - Making decisions regarding commitment to adopting the program and practices  
- Supporting successful implementation  
- Selection of a representative implementation team to  
  - Establish vision and goals  
  - Identify the scale of needs  
  - Anticipate allocation of resources  
  - Create a professional development plan |
| **2. Installation** | - Set up infrastructure  
- Establish leadership teams and data systems  
- Conduct an audit  
- Develop a plan  
- Implement professional development plan |
| **3. Initial Implementation** | - Try out the practices  
- Work out details  
- Learn and improve  
- Ongoing collection and analysis of progress data to  
  - Determine the benefits to students  
  - Refine supports, systems, and policies  
- Analyze performance evaluation data to provide ongoing coaching and teacher supports |
| **4. Full Implementation** | - All MTSS elements are in place  
- Ongoing communication to staff members and the community  
- Performance data is continuously analyzed  
- Ongoing training and coaching is provided  
- Expand the program and practices to other locations, individuals, and times |
| **5. Improvement and Innovation** | - Increase the efficient use of resources  
- Improve outcomes for students  
- Success requires that staff members continually analyze data |
## Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?  
**Guided Notes**

### Take Away Activity – Read: Multi-tier System of Supports (MTSS)
- Note the features of RtI, PBIS, and MTSS.
- What steps are necessary to bring MTSS to scale?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RtI</td>
<td>PBIS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTSS</td>
<td>Bringing MTSS to Scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Time to Reflect

**What I learned in this unit…**  
**Questions I still have about my next steps…**

### Unit 2 Preview:
**Data-based Decision Making**
- Why is data so important in MTSS?
- What type of data is most useful?
- Where can we find resources regarding data?
Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?
Guided Notes

References


Unit 1: What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

Guided Notes


Pre-Assessment

This activity will assess your knowledge of MTSS prior to participating in the lessons, and will be repeated upon completion of the module.

1. Which of the following is NOT one of the key principles and practices of MTSS?
   - a. Intervening early
   - b. Data-based decision making
   - c. Integration and sustainability
   - d. Focus only on students with disabilities
   - e. Use of evidence-based practices

2. According to research, what percentage of California high school students require differentiated instruction?
   - a. 30%
   - b. 50%
   - c. 70%
   - d. 90%

3. While the CA CCSS articulates the “what” in teaching, multi-tiered system of supports articulates the “___ and ____” to provide it.
   - a. how and when
   - b. who and how
   - c. why and where
   - d. when and where

4. State data indicates that while progress has been made, there remain significant achievement gaps between general education students and which categories of learners?
   - a. English learners
   - b. Students with disabilities
   - c. Economically disadvantaged
   - d. All of the above
5. MTSS leverages the principles of Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and integrates a continuum of system-wide resources, strategies, structures and practices to offer a comprehensive and responsive framework for systematically addressing barriers to student learning.
   o True
   o False

6. MTSS is designed primarily to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the Common Core.
   o True
   o False

7. In MTSS, universal screening is used to:
   o a. Identify students who need specific intervention
   o b. Identify students who require referral for special education assessment
   o c. Establish intervention tiers
   o d. Predict students at risk
   o e. Develop entry and exit criteria for intervention tiers

8. Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to
   o a. assess students’ academic performance
   o b. evaluate the effectiveness of instruction
   o c. assist teachers in making instructional decisions for individual students or an entire class
   o d. all of the above

9. Effective teaching is the single most important attribute for generating academic student growth.
   o True
   o False

10. Site and district implementation leadership teams should engage in which of the following:
    o a. Aligning key initiatives
    o b. Conducting a needs assessment
    o c. Completing an action planning process
    o d. Monitoring key data
    o e. All of the above
Since the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004 the term Response-to-Intervention (RtI) has become a buzz word within education. RtI is built upon a broad research base resulting in multiple models with the common features of (1) multiple tiers of intervention service delivery, (2) problem-solving method and (3) data collection/assessment to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2006).

It is not uncommon to hear the term RtI and Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) used interchangeably. However in many instances the meaning applied to RtI does not align with the principles and practices of a MTSS. The principles and practices of a MTSS are based upon what research has shown to be effective in both creating successful and sustainable system change as well as what is necessary in providing the most effective instruction to all students. The MTSS framework is designed to address the academic and behavioral needs of every student, regardless of whether the students are struggling or have advanced learning needs. An introduction to the research base of the MTSS framework can be found in the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Research Base on the Kansas MTSS website, www.kansasmtss.org.

The meaning and practices referred to as RtI vary from a narrow view point such as the identification of students with specific learning disabilities under IDEA (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Kavale, Kauffman, Bachmeier, & LeFever, Summer 2008), to a broad view point as an educational change paradigm (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, Annual 2008; Shores & Chester, 2009). Since all models labeled RtI do not always have the same purpose or practices, Kansas has intentionally chosen to call this model the Multi-Tier System of Supports. The MTSS approach provides a framework to create a single system that has the availability of a continuum of multiple supports for all students. This approach aligns the Kansas MTSS framework with the broad educational change paradigm view of RtI. When implemented fully, an effective MTSS results in a self-correcting feedback loop that uses universal screening assessment data to not only intervene at the student level but also to continuously refine the system by analyzing grade, building and district level data for the purpose of school improvement.

The focus of most RtI models is on instruction and intervention and is typically represented as a triangle. Through years of experience Kansas educators came to the conclusion that focusing on the triangle alone is insufficient when truly realigning resources to support all students.

At the center of the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports graphic is the triangle that represents instruction and intervention. To effectively support instruction and intervention within classrooms both students and staff need aligned support
including evidence based curricula, instructional practices and a comprehensive assessment system. For these to be used effectively and systematically throughout a building or district and for the self-correcting feedback loop to function effectively Leadership, Professional Development and an Empowering Culture must be included.

Some of the key points in understanding how RtI practices integrate into the MTSS framework are:

- MTSS is the Kansas framework and encompasses the concept of response-to-intervention (RtI).
- The MTSS framework is an educational systems change paradigm (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, Annual 2008; Shores & Chester, 2009) that provides a framework for supporting students and staff as part of school improvement.
- MTSS begins in general education by establishing a strong core for all students that provides the foundation of prevention within the entire system.
- MTSS includes PreK-12 literacy, mathematics, and behavior as a continuum of instruction.
- The MTSS framework is inclusive to school accreditation (QPA, NCA) and school improvement as well as school-wide behavior programs (SWPBS, Safe and Civil Schools) and provides a common framework for schools to integrate efforts.
- Universal screening assessments used within MTSS must measure the fluency and accuracy of critical early skills that are predictive of future student skill attainment.
- Tiers within the triangle describe the intensity of instruction; not specific programs, students or staff (i.e., Title I, special education, etc.).
- The tiers describe instruction not steps in a process; therefore, students do not leave Tier 1 to receive instruction in Tier 2 or 3 nor must a student receive Tier 2 instruction prior to receiving Tier 3. The intensity of instruction (or tier of instruction required) is determined by the data.
- Students remain fluid within the tiered instruction meaning intensity of instruction students receive should be transitioned up or down within the tiers based on student performance over a set amount of time compared to predetermined decision points.
- The MTSS framework is a hybrid model using both protocol interventions and problem solving.
- Tier 3 is not special education nor does student success/failure at Tier 3 determine eligibility for special education. In no way should MTSS delay the initial evaluation of a student that is suspected of having exceptionality.

From a practitioner’s perspective, it is important to understand the differing views of RtI and to have discussions about how the beliefs and practices of the building and district align with those views. By having a clear understanding of the views, practitioners can evaluate information to determine how to best implement MTSS.

**Works Cited:**


Introduction: From RTI and PBIS to MTSS

Most educators are at least superficially familiar with the term response-to-intervention, or RTI. Since the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), which explicitly prohibits states from requiring school districts to use IQ-achievement discrepancy criteria in the identification of students with specific learning disabilities (2008) and encourages the use of a scientific, research-based approach known as response-to-intervention (Mandlawitz, 2007), “doing RTI” has become a veritable catchphrase in schools and classrooms throughout the country. RTI refers to the practice of providing high-quality, multi-tier instruction and interventions matched to students’ needs, monitoring student progress frequently to make decisions about instructional methods, and evaluating routinely collected data on student progress to determine the need to refer for special education support (Batsche, et al., 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). While numerous examples of the model have been proposed, most models comprise several common features (Batsche, et al., 2005; Gresham, 2007), including universal screening of all students, multiple tiers of intervention service delivery, a problem-solving method, and an integrated data collection and assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, or PBIS, represents somewhat of a parallel model for behavior, in which preventative behavioral instruction is delivered to the whole school population in an effort to foster a positive school climate (McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai, 2010). Like RTI, PBIS espouses a multi-tier, data-based approach to service delivery. The first tier includes teaching and reinforcing a set of appropriate behaviors within the whole school; the second tier efficiently activates behavioral interventions for students who do not respond to core instruction; and the third tier involves intensive, individualized behavior support plans for students who do not respond to primary or secondary prevention support (McIntosh, et al., 2010, p. 6). As with RTI, an integrated data collection and assessment system informs decisions at each tier of service delivery.

While their foci are different, the underlying tenets of both RTI and PBIS draw upon the U.S. Public Health Service’s conceptual multi-tier pyramid model of prevention, which involves primary, secondary, and tertiary approaches as an organizing framework for efficiently delivering interventions in order to improve outcomes (see Walker, et al., 1996). This framework provides a source for understanding how RTI and PBIS originated, and how they can be woven together, offering the foundation for a Multi-tier System of Supports (MTSS).

Multi-tier System of Supports: A Comprehensive Framework

As discussed, the RTI and PBIS approaches each involve targeting specific areas in which students are struggling and applying increasingly intensive research-based interventions until the barriers to learning are addressed (Bender, 2009). Braided, both
models directly address the academic and social, emotional, and behavioral development of children and youth, from early childhood through adolescence and represent the foundation of a comprehensive MTSS framework. MTSS leverages the principles of RTI and PBIS and further integrates a continuum of system-wide resources, strategies, structures, and practices to offer a comprehensive and responsive framework for systemically addressing barriers to student learning. MTSS offers the potential to create systemic change, which results in improved academic and social outcomes for all learners. Numerous school districts and states, including Los Angeles, Boston, Kansas, and Utah, have adopted an MTSS framework in an endeavor to more cohesively, comprehensively, and coherently meet the needs of all learners.

It is helpful to examine MTSS in further detail. MTSS, rooted in the data-informed practices of RTI and PBIS, explicitly offers a multi-tier approach: Interventions available to students are typically categorized into three tiers. Emphasis is placed on schoolwide, differentiated universal core instruction at Tier 1; Tiers 2 and 3 provide intensive and increasingly individualized interventions (Batsche, et al., 2005). Although the screening and progress monitoring procedures vary somewhat for academics and behavior, the three-tier conceptual model is similar across both domains. Tier 1 refers to the core curriculum delivered to all students that has a high likelihood of bringing the majority of students to acceptable levels of proficiency. Tier 2 provides supplemental instruction to those students who display poor response to the core instruction provided at Tier 1. Tier 3 involves the application of intensive instructional interventions designed to increase the rate of student progress. Tier 3 services may or may not include special education. A structured problem-solving process and integrated data collection system, based on the RTI and PBIS approaches, is utilized at each tier of the model (Batsche, et al., 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The effectiveness of instruction at each tier is determined by collecting data about students’ progress in a recommended monitoring schedule. Educators use a problem-solving model to evaluate the data and continuously and dynamically make informed decisions about instructional planning and intervention (Batsche, et al., 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Gresham, 2007). With its emphasis on evidence-based instruction and collaborative, iterative problem-solving, MTSS acknowledges that instruction and/or contextual issues, not student inability, could be the reason why students are not learning.

In addition to offering a multi-tier approach to assessment and intervention, MTSS integrates a systemwide continuum of supports. This means that organizational structures are established that provide a continuum of support for removing the systemic challenges and barriers that hinder students’ success. Such structures activate home-school-community relationships and bring together partners from the education, mental health, family, social service, medical, juvenile justice, recreation, and cultural domains within the multi-tier system. These collaborations, together with educational leadership at the district and school level, promote the formation of wraparound structures, supports, and practices to help students succeed in school.

Bringing MTSS to Scale
Previous educational change initiatives have often failed due to policymakers not meaningfully involving educators in decision-making or considering schools in the context of their larger social systems (Sarason, 1990).
As such, principles of systems change must be applied to facilitate the implementation of MTSS. Working within the MTSS framework requires that all school district staff, including teachers, central office personnel, school leaders, and student support specialists, change the way in which they have traditionally worked.

Castillo et al (2010) have developed technical guidance that provides an organizational blueprint for considering how to facilitate sustainable change within complex educational systems. Drawing from this work, successful implementation of MTSS within a systems change perspective generally involves three stages: consensus development, infrastructure building, and implementation (see Batsche, Curtis, Dorman, Castillo, & Porter, 2007; and Castillo, et al., 2010). District and school leadership must first achieve consensus on using MTSS practices; then build the necessary infrastructure to establish and sustain MTSS practices; and, finally, facilitate and evaluate the implementation of data-informed problem solving across a multi-tier service delivery framework. Using these stages to guide and inform the work will improve the sustainability of MTSS implementation. A brief description of each of the three components of the change model follows:

- **Consensus:** Key stakeholders in a district or school (e.g., superintendent, curriculum directors, principals, teachers, instructional support personnel, student services personnel) should arrive at consensus regarding the importance of MTSS implementation and commit to its adoption and sustainability. This is done through a discussion of beliefs and assumptions about teaching and student learning, in which educators at the district and school levels identify their own perceptions regarding the need for MTSS practices and together co-construct their vision of the MTSS framework enacted.
- **Infrastructure:** The development of infrastructure involves creating the structures required to facilitate and support implementation of the MTSS framework model. A district must examine its current goals, policies, resources, and personnel responsibilities with regard to their alignment with a MTSS model of service delivery. The following are examples of structures that school districts must consider addressing to enhance their capacity to implement MTSS:
  - Training and technical assistance to build capacity of all educators
  - Recalibration of district office roles that cross functionally support implementation
  - Identification of key district stakeholders whose primary focus will be on planning, implementation, and ongoing evaluation
  - Integration and management of data
  - Identification of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 assessment and intervention practices across academic and behavioral domains
  - Establishment of decision criteria at each tier
  - Identification of community and family resources and partnerships
  - Identification of a systemwide continuum of supports across each domain
  - Modification of schedules to include protected time for problem-solving meetings, intervention delivery, universal screening and progress monitoring, and professional development
  - Provision of greater principal autonomy for determining school resource allocation to support MTSS
Multi-tier System of Supports (MTSS)

- Alignment of district and school professional development with MTSS framework
- Provision of technology support around efficient and useful data collection and display
- Development of and/or alignment with district procedures, policies, and structures to promote common understanding and application of the MTSS framework with a focus on implementation fidelity

Implementation: Castillo et al. (2010) note that while the likelihood of successful implementation of system change practices is improved when consensus and infrastructure development occurs, Sarason (1990) suggests that many educational change initiatives fail due to a lack of cohesive implementation, implying a need to evaluate the extent to which critical components of MTSS are being implemented with fidelity and the long term support. Educators must identify the critical elements of the MTSS framework and at what level of detail and in what manner to measure those elements before being able to evaluate whether the framework has actually impacted student outcomes (Castillo, et al., 2010)

This brief outline provides a starting point for understanding the sustainable implementation of MTSS from a systems change perspective. As noted, working within the MTSS framework requires that all school district staff change the way in which they have traditionally worked. Business as usual is no longer enough to address the educational interests and needs of students. Training and technical assistance provide a critical catalyst for (1) facilitating understanding of MTSS and the development of consensus around MTSS practices, (2) establishing the necessary infrastructure, and (3) evaluating implementation fidelity to appreciate progress and understand results. When thoughtfully designed and executed with necessary training and other supports, the MTSS framework offers the potential to create systemic change that yields markedly improved academic and social outcomes for all learners.

Selected Resources

Center on Instruction
www.centeroninstruction.org

The Center on Instruction (COI) is one of five national content centers, part of the Comprehensive Center network, that is funded by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. The COI offers materials and resources on (a) effective instruction within a Response to Intervention framework and (b) implementation of the RTI framework at the state, district, and local levels. An RTI Classification Tool and Resource Locator (RTI CTRL) is available to conduct in-depth searches for resources pertaining to specific RTI topic areas and stages of RTI implementation at the school, district and state levels.

National Center on Response to Intervention
www.rti4success.org

The National Center on Response to Intervention is housed at the American Institutes for Research and works in conjunction with researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Kansas. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Center’s mission is to provide technical assistance to states and districts and build the capacity of states to
assist districts in implementing proven models for RTI.

**RTI Action Network**
www.rtinetwork.org

The RTI Action Network is dedicated to the effective implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) in school districts nationwide. Its goal is to guide educators and families in the large-scale implementation of RTI so that each child has access to quality instruction and that struggling students are identified early and receive the necessary supports to be successful. The RTI Action Network is a program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, funded by the Cisco Foundation and in partnership with the nation’s leading education associations and top RTI experts.

**What Works Clearinghouse**
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is a source of scientific evidence for what works in education. An initiative of the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, the WWC produces practice guides for educators that address instructional challenges with research-based recommendations for schools and classrooms; assesses the rigor of research evidence on the effectiveness of interventions (programs, products, practices, and policies); develops and implements standards for reviewing and synthesizing education research; and provides a public and easily accessible registry of education evaluation researchers.

**References**


Multi-tier System of Supports (MTSS)


**About the Authors**

**Orla Higgins Averill, CAGS,** is currently a training and technical assistance associate with the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

**Claudia Rinaldi, Ph.D.,** is currently a senior training and technical assistance associate with the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) and serves as a member of the National Center on Response to Intervention Technical Review Committee (TRC) on Tiered Instruction for the Office of Special Education Programs, Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

*For more information about the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, visit www.urbancollaborative.org*
Unit 1 – What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

Exit Slip

3 things I learned from this unit are:

1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________________________

2 questions I still have are:

1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________

Name: _______________________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________________

Leave the Exit Slip as your ticket out the door.