
Welcome to a continuation of the “Multi-Tiered System of Supports: A Comprehensive Framework for Implementing the California Common Core State Standards” professional learning module series. Four professional learning units have been designed for use during regularly scheduled site staff meetings or other common professional learning opportunities.

This is Unit 4: Leadership for Implementation of MTSS

In order to extend the learning beyond each individual unit, a “take away” assignment is provided at the end of each unit. For individuals completing these units independently, “Reflect and Respond” discussion activities are included in the *Unit 4 Participant Packet*, so that you can record your responses even if you do not have a discussion with others.

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Identify the stages of implementation for MTSS
2. Identify the key members of a district or site implementation team
3. Describe the functions of a leadership team
4. Describe the self-correcting feedback loop
and
5. Identify the status of your district or school site leadership in implementation of MTSS

Click to hear from the West Wind and the National Implementation Research Network about how successful educational teams scale-up for the challenge of implementing MTSS.

When you have finished viewing the video, click the play button in the toolbar below to continue.

The video presented three key points:

1. The multiple initiatives at both the district and site levels must be aligned to the overall vision and to each other.
2. Teams must develop the capacity to implement multiple initiatives in a coherent and cohesive manner.
3. Educational systems need a new type of leadership that can attend to both the technical challenges and the hearts and minds of those who implement the change.

Successful school systems ensure a culture of alignment. In such a culture, alignment of initiatives, transparency, accountability, collaboration, and joint responsibility for student learning equals successful implementation.

As school systems gear up to implement MTSS, alignment of initiatives, policies, and practices must be considered at all levels, and the following questions must be asked:

- How do the vision, mission, and goals of the school district support or hinder the implementation of MTSS?
 - How can district resources be allocated to support the implementation of this comprehensive system of supports?
 - What will be the role of the information technology department in data-driven decision making?
 - How can school district and individual school-site initiatives be aligned with MTSS?
-

It is helpful to examine current and past district initiatives in terms of expected outcomes, target populations, whether they were mandated or voluntary, the financial support provided, the relationship to district priorities and strategic plans, how successful they were, and the evidence of the level of success.

For the purpose of this training, use the District Initiative Inventory provided in your *Unit 4 Participant Packet* to identify the initiatives in your district that you are aware of.

When you have finished, click the play button in the toolbar below to continue.

Consider implementation in five stages.

In the exploration stage, the teams address the question, “should we do it?” During this stage, educators make decisions regarding their commitment to adopting the proposed programs and practices, and support successful implementation.

Once the educational team has made the commitment, the focus becomes, “work to do it right!” In the installation stage, the team will set up an infrastructure for successful implementation — which includes establishing leadership teams and data systems, conducting an audit of current practices and results, and developing a plan. In the initial implementation stage, district and school site teams try out the practices, work out the details, and use what they have learned to expand to other contexts.

Educational teams then move into the elaboration stage in which the focus is, “work to improve it!” In the full implementation stage, program and practices can be expanded to other locations, individuals, and times. In the Improvement and Innovation stage, team members will begin to suggest and implement ways to make the innovation easier, more efficient, and how to embed and align it with other practices.

It is important to recognize that implementation takes time. A great deal of planning and support is required to change long-established practices and cultures. District and school site teams should expect 2 to 3 years from initial implementation to reach full implementation. It is critical to build in supports for all involved to sustain the effort through the change.

Take a moment to reflect on your own district. Are there initiatives that are being proposed and/or considered? Has the district considered the stages of implementation that will lead to sustainable programs and practices? What steps have been taken prior to initial implementation?

When you have finished writing down your responses in your *Unit 4 Participant Packet* and/or discussing with your team, click the play button in the toolbar below to continue.

In implementing systemic change with MTSS, there are four levels that must be addressed:

- the district level
 - the site level
 - the grade/course level
- and
- the student level

Without committed leadership at all levels, system-wide innovations cannot sustain.

The exploration and initial implementation stages for MTSS require a clear and unbiased understanding of the current practices and the way these practices impact outcomes for students. They also require a strong vision and commitment at all levels of leadership throughout the system.

Implementing MTSS is best accomplished by a careful consideration of the district and site cultures, and requires developing and navigating a course for improvement in light of present and past practices. This means that formal leadership and stakeholders must fully participate in problem-solving and decision making — a complex process that will not happen without clear and concise planning.

The successful implementation of MTSS will require collaborative and facilitative leadership. This leadership will provide the basis for embedding and sustaining MTSS in the fabric of the school district.

The role of leadership is to align supports and practices to effectively implement MTSS, and to develop a communication plan for communicating consistent and timely information to site teams and the community.

District leadership is crucial to ensure that systemic support for MTSS is in place prior to, and continuing as, site leadership teams are developed.

Within MTSS, the establishment of leadership teams is a critical first step. There are two immediate functions of leadership teams: to align policies, practices, and procedures to support site implementation and to design the MTSS to support the learning of all students.

To accomplish these functions, leadership teams must include district and site administrators to provide leadership, support, and authority. They must also include all other individuals with decision-making authority over curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

To clarify the critical role of district-level engagement in implementation of MTSS, this graphic presents essential elements of active support.

At the cabinet level, the team provides a vision for the district, political support for the innovation, and visibility for MTSS.

The cabinet ensures appropriate allocation of resources to support and sustain implementation, and works with staff to remove barriers to implementation.

With support at the cabinet level, the district implementation team collects, summarizes, and evaluates data. The implementation team analyzes the data to develop a district-wide implementation plan, coordinates and monitors the plan, creates and modifies support materials, and identifies barriers to implementation.

Implementing MTSS involves thoughtful, systematic planning and communication. Effective district leadership teams ensure continuous improvement by utilizing a feedback loop that incorporates 5 phases: plan, do, study, act, and communicate.

In the Plan phase, the district leadership team will collect data on student progress, policies, practices, and procedures in order to develop an initial plan.

In the Do phase, the plan is implemented systematically and with fidelity.

In the Study phase, data is frequently and continuously examined as the plan is implemented to evaluate its effectiveness.

In the Act phase, the information collected in the Study phase guides the team to refine the plan to address systemic needs.

The final phase is Communicate. It is critical for system-wide implementation and sustainability that all teams communicate within and across the systems.

The district level implementation team gathers and examines data on student progress, practices, policies, and procedures. Based on the collected data, the team develops a plan to implement MTSS. The team also coordinates, supports, and monitors the plan.

The MTSS coordinator, who is a member of the implementation team, directs the implementation to support school sites involved. The coordinator trains and coaches support staff and other members of the leadership team, ensures there are experts available for content, provides materials, and conducts evaluations.

The critical steps taken and supports established at the district level will support successful implementation at the site level. Collaborative leadership provides the basis for sustaining and embedding MTSS when formal district and then site leadership teams make decisions and create structures to implement MTSS.

Site implementation leadership teams are inclusive so that those directly impacted by the implementation of MTSS can give input.

The site principal is a key member of this team. As the instructional leader of the school site, principals must be directly involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating the process.

Representative teachers, including general educators, special educators, and English learner educators are also essential members of the leadership team. Since they are the staff who will be implementing MTSS, their knowledge of the curriculum, class management, and student needs ensures that implementation will be done in a practical and responsible manner.

Representation from specialists and support staff will provide insight and understanding of the needs of students with disabilities and English learners. The site leadership team will ensure that related services are provided with the intensity and frequency required within MTSS. The support staff may include psychologists, speech and language specialists, English language development specialists, and reading specialists. Support staff may also include paraprofessionals, who provide an additional perspective of the unique individual needs of students.

The perspectives of parents and families are also important for the successful implementation of MTSS. As partners in the educational process, parents can provide insight into how changes in instruction and intervention affect their children, and can assist the team by supporting school instruction in their home.

Because each school site is different, site implementation leadership teams can include other members where appropriate.

The roles and responsibilities of the site implementation leadership team are similar to the district team.

The site team will align current initiatives and activities to ensure they are not counterproductive or an inefficient use of resources.

The team will collect and analyze current academic and behavioral data. The team will then complete a site MTSS needs assessment to determine what supports are in place, and use the resulting data to establish priorities.

The team is also responsible for building the necessary infrastructure to establish and sustain MTSS practices. Finally, the team will facilitate and evaluate the implementation of data-informed problem solving across the multi-tiered service delivery framework.

The site implementation leadership team will continuously monitor the implementation of MTSS, and has the responsibility to consistently communicate with both the district level team and site personnel.

Site Leadership teams utilize the same continuous improvement feedback loop as district teams. Collecting objective site academic and behavioral data, and completing a site-level MTSS needs assessment, provides relevant information for a practical, evidence-based intervention plan. The team monitors the implementation of the site plan and uses progress monitoring and fidelity data to evaluate its effectiveness. With that information, the team can refine the plan to address systemic needs.

The continuous improvement feedback loop is also followed by grade and course-level teams. The teams utilize academic and behavioral progress-monitoring data to generate instructional plans, evaluate the effectiveness of the plans, and address systemic needs at the grade and/or course level.

It is critical to system-wide implementation and sustainability that all teams communicate within and across the systems.

The system-wide change involved in implementing MTSS requires coordination and communication among teams at each level in the process.

When coordinated among each collaborative team, the self-correcting feedback loop ensures that the implementation of MTSS is effective, continually improved upon, and sustained over time.

When you are ready to proceed, click the play button in the toolbar below.

A needs assessment and action-planning tool is provided in the *Unit 4 Participant Packet* to assist you in developing a framework for implementing the California CCSS within MTSS. The tool is designed for use by district and site level implementation teams as they begin the planning process.

The MTSS Needs Assessment and Planning Tool is organized into three sections: Leadership and Empowerment, Data-driven Decision making and Instructional Planning and Supports.

Each section includes readiness elements, implementation level choices, and a section for comments to fully describe the status of the element. There is also space for the team to comment on their findings and discussions.

Criteria for the level of implementation are shown at the bottom of each page.

Complete the needs assessment provided individually, noting your understanding of the current status for each element. If some elements are not clear, or if you do not know the current status, note that in the comments section.

When you have finished, click the play button in the toolbar below to continue.

The information generated through the MTSS needs assessment provides a basis for a meaningful and informed discussion of what is in place and what the priorities are for the team in building an effective and sustainable multi-tiered system of supports for implementing the Common Core State Standards.

Examine your completed needs assessment. List one action for each section and note what evidence you will need to show it has been completed.

When you have finished, click the play button in the toolbar below to continue.

Take a minute to reflect on what you have learned from this unit, as well as any questions you have.

When you have finished writing down your thoughts in your *Unit 4 Participant Packet*, and/or discussing with your group, click the play button in the toolbar below to continue.

This completes the “Multi-Tiered System of Supports: A Comprehensive Framework for Implementing the Common Core State Standards” professional learning module. Thank you for your participation.

We hope this module has been a helpful tool for you to begin your important work of establishing and implementing MTSS.

To request further information, contact Dona Meinders of the WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention.
