

**MTSS**  
**Multi-Tiered**  
**System**  
**Of**  
**Supports**

**2020-2021**



**Martha Weimorts**  
**Assistant Superintendent for special Services**  
**Office of Instructional Services**



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>MTSS: A Working Definition .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Tiers:.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Research to Support MTSS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Impact of MTSS Implementation.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Required Commitments and Resources for Staff Development.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Accountability.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Universal Instructional Strategies at Each Tier.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Case Study: Academic Interventions .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Case Study: Behavioral Interventions.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>MTSS Team (Multi-Tiered System of Supports Team).....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>MTSS Team Member Responsibilities.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Assigned Roles and Duties of Team Members .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>MTSS Team Meeting Formats.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Problem Solving Procedures .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Forms.....</b>	<b>30</b>



# **Gulf School District Multi-Tiered System of Support**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gulf District Schools recognizes the obligation to effectively identify and provide the resources necessary for all students to meet educational standards.

The first step in meeting this obligation involves the development of educational standards, the use of proven curriculum and instruction to teach the standards, and assessing to determine which children have met those standards. The next step, involves identifying students who are in danger of not acquiring the desired skills, determining what skills they lack, and providing additional support or instruction to assist them to be successful – before they fail. To do this, our schools will implement this process:

- Research based curricula and highly qualified teachers administer instructional techniques.
- Student progress is screened frequently during the year. In Gulf County Elementary Schools, some of this screening is done with ERDA, Florida Assessment of Instruction in Reading, SAT 10, and other time and validity tested instruments.
- The results are analyzed at the school, classroom, and individual levels.
- The problems are identified and additional support is provided.
- Progress monitoring continues at the school, class and individual levels.
- Individual students who continue to have difficulty when the rest of the group is making adequate progress are reconsidered, and additional resources or responses are developed.

The most effective strategies often involve applying intensive services within general education. IDEA requires that there is extensive effort to remediate a problem prior to consideration for special education services. IDEA legislation stresses:

- The need for early intervention, to address the learning and behavioral needs of children, which, if effective, will reduce the need to label these children as being disabled;
- An intervention approach to assist in determining who should be considered for Exceptional Student Education;
- Students not be considered for ESE if their problems are due to “lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction...instruction in math, or limited English proficiency;”
- That prior to or as part of the referral process, the child was provided appropriate high-quality, research based instruction, and that “data based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, was provided to the child’s parents.”

This method of educating children embodies the following assumptions:

- We can effectively teach all children.
- Early Interventions are more productive and better for the child.
- A multi-tier model of service delivery is necessary to overcome the wide range of difficulties that exist in our heterogeneous population.
- A problem solving method should to be used to make decisions within the multi-tier model.
- Frequent progress monitoring is required to assess both learning rate and level of performance.

- Decisions about interventions require data to determine if the interventions are working, and to decide which interventions to try.
- The actual services and supports that a student receives, are more important than where the services are delivered.
- Increased emphasis on programs that are supported by general education will help prevent excessive and unnecessary identification of students with disabilities.
- An integration of general education, remediation, and special education will provide the best outcomes for children.

## **MTSS: A WORKING DEFINITION**

MTSS is defined as the change in behavior or performance as a function of an intervention. It is the practice of (1) providing high quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions. These components of MTSS are essential to the development of a successful MTSS implementation strategy.

1. **HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION/INTERVENTION** is defined as instruction or intervention matched to student need that has been demonstrated through scientific research and practice to produce high learning rates for most students. Individual responses to even the best instruction/intervention are variable. Selection and implementation of scientifically based instruction/intervention markedly increases the probability of, but does not guarantee positive individual response. Therefore, individual response is assessed in MTSS and modifications to instruction/intervention or goals are made depending on results with individual students.
2. **LEARNING RATE AND LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE** are the primary sources of information used in ongoing decision making. Learning rate refers to a student's individual growth in achievement or behavior competencies over time. Level of performance refers to a student's relative standing on some dimension of achievement/performance compared to expected performance (either criterion- or norm-referenced). Learning rates and levels of performance vary significantly across students. Most students with achievement or behavioral challenges respond positively to explicit and intense instruction/interventions. Decisions about the use of more or less intense interventions are made using information on learning rate and level. More intense interventions may occur in general education classrooms or pull-out programs supported by general, compensatory or special education funding.
3. **IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL DECISIONS** about intensity and the likely duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction across multiple tiers of intervention. Decisions about the necessity of more intense interventions, including eligibility for special education and/or exit from special education or other services, are informed by data on learning rate and level.

The basic components of this model are:

- Organizing the remedial services into multiple Tiers of increasing intensity;
- Using a problem solving model at all levels of problem identification and response (in the classroom, at grade level, in the MTSS Team meetings);
- Progress monitoring to gather enough information to determine what is working, and how well;
- The implementation of school-wide, classroom, group, or individual interventions.
- Inclusion in the K-12 Reading Plan, Student Progression and the District Improvement and Differentiated Accountability Plan.

This model is consistent with other educational initiatives; they differ from each other only in their focus (ex. Reading or behavior) or in the specifics of implementation.

## **TIERS**

The introduction outlined the assumption that all children will receive the same high quality curriculum and that the majority of students (80 to 85%) will be successful.

**TIER 1** level of instruction includes:

- The whole class;
- High quality, evidence-based instruction delivered by a qualified teacher;
- In Gulf County Schools the school-wide principles of Positive Behavior Support, and the instructional approaches included in the Learning Focused Strategies;
- Use of evidence-based methods to instruct English Language Learners;
- Universal screening to monitor progress, inform instruction, and identify at risk students;
- Early intervention for students who struggle (iii).

**TIER 2** level of instruction is targeted and supplemental. It is for students who do not progress in the Tier 1 level. The student's rate of progress is monitored, and is judged against both the goals articulated in the Florida Standards, and is compared to the progress of other students with similar cultural and linguistic diversity. If the student's rate or level of progress is significantly different then Tier 2, interventions are developed. Characteristics of Tier 2 interventions are:

- Smaller group instruction;
- More frequent progress monitoring;
- Significantly more time practicing the skill (for example an extra 30 to 60 minutes a day spent learning the targeted skills).

**TIER 3** interventions are much more intensive and individualized.

Tier 3 interventions are developed based on individual student needs following a problem-solving process that will use additional formal and/or informal diagnostic assessment, allowing more in-depth problem analysis to inform intervention development. Additional methods of progress monitoring of intervention effectiveness include those used at Tiers 1 and 2, but may also include additional measures that are unique to more narrowly defined skills. Characteristics of Tier 3 interventions are:

- Interventions are delivered to very small groups of students or to students individually.
- Interventions must be highly focused on targeted skill areas with increased duration and frequency and be provided in alignment with and in addition to the effective Tier 2 and Tier 1 instruction.
- All Tier 3 interventions must be integrated with Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. These cannot be three completely different interventions that do not strengthen the work of the other interventions and core instruction.
- Frequent progress monitoring and results interpretation (weekly or more often).
- Much more instructional time and practice than is used for the Tier 1 and Tier 2 students.

A student that needs Tier 3 interventions continuously may require special education services.

## **RESEARCH TO SUPPORT MTSS**

Research demonstrates the effectiveness of MTSS as evidenced by the utilization of key components of MTSS through Reading First and the decrease of special education rates of approximately 40% (Torgesen, 2007). Schools that implemented school-based positive behavior support system with fidelity had 40% fewer in-school and out-of-school suspensions in comparison to schools that did not implement such a system. The use of evidence-based practices is required to ensure that all students receive appropriate instruction. This practice is a contingency requirement for eligibility for placement in special education programs.

MTSS also systematically connects and is interdependent with the existing mission, vision, beliefs, goals and objectives of the District's Strategic Plan and the District's Intervention and Assistance Plan.

Gulf School District administered a "Beliefs" Survey and a "Practices" survey to teachers and using the results to guide our efforts will ensure maximum benefits if:

- Evidence-base instruction is delivered by highly qualified personnel utilizing
  - Curriculum and instructional approaches that have a high probability of success for most students.
  - Differentiate instruction to meet individual learning needs.
- Reliable, valid, and instructionally relevant assessments are used for
  - Screening, Collecting Data for the purpose of assessing effectiveness of core instruction and identifying students needing more intensive interventions and support.
  - Formative: On-going progress monitoring to guide instruction and monitor student progress and intervention effectiveness.
  - Diagnostic: Gathering information from multiple sources to determine why students are not benefiting from instruction and what specific areas of need must be addressed.
- The problem-solving method is used to make decisions based on a continuum of student needs and a strong core curriculum, instruction, and assessment are provided;

- Data are used to guide instructional decisions to align curriculum and instruction to assessment data, allocate resources, drive professional development, and to create student growth trajectories to target and develop interventions;
- Professional development and follow-up modeling and coaching are provided to ensure effective instruction at all levels in math and reading;
- There is strong administrative support to ensure commitment and resources, strong teacher support to share in the common goal of improving instruction and a leadership team to build staff support, internal capacity, and sustainability over time;
- All students and their families are part of one proactive and seamless educational system that believes that all students can learn, using available resources to teach all students, use instructional time efficiently and effectively and informs and involves parents continually, meaningfully, and effectively.

Barriers to the success of MTSS include but are not limited to the following:

### **Schools**

- Unfunded mandates;
- Time management for documentation;
- Lack of evidence-based progress monitoring tools for math;
- High free/reduced lunch rate.

### **Staff Development**

- Time for academic training;
- Classroom management training;
- Progress monitoring for reading and math;
- Lack of understanding the why and process of MTSS;
- Utilizing interventions that are data driven;
- Funding for training and follow-up must be on-going;
- Funds for assessment tools/materials;
- Finding training in interventions that work;
- Funds for substitutes.

### **Parents**

- Time to inform and educate parents;
- Getting parent buy-in;
- Getting active parent participation: meetings, implementation at home and follow through with fidelity;
- Expectations and values.

### **Community**

- Getting information out;
- Timing for communication;
- Rural community without access to real time media.

## **IMPACT OF MTSS IMPLEMENTATION**

One of the impacts of MTSS includes achieving the maximum effect of core instruction and behavioral supports for all students while targeting instruction and interventions for at-risk students. The outcome of this is significant improvements in academic achievement, pro-social behaviors, and overall school climate. With proficient implementation of MTSS, schools can also expect a reduction in special education referrals.

One of the greatest impacts of the MTSS model is the reduction in over-representation of diverse student groups in low academic performance, special education, suspension/expulsion, and alternative education (VanDerHeyden, 2005). The impact of this model and its application to issues related to over-representation are research based. In Florida, both referral rates and special education placement rates of minority students dropped approximately 40 percent in schools characterized by early identification, early intervention, frequently collected data, and evidence-based interventions (Torgesen, 2007). Amanda VanDerHeyden's (2005) research indicated that the growth rates in early literacy skills for African-American students of low socioeconomic status (SES) increase more dramatically than for any other racial group when provided with interventions within an MTSS framework.

We expect to improve achievement rates and reduce disproportionality through intensive intervention, delivered early, monitored frequently, and modified to meet the needs of students. A commitment to early assessment of all students (within the first 30 days of school), improved core instruction, early intervention with at-risk students (no more than three months from the beginning of school), and frequent monitoring of student progress using efficient assessment procedures will result in significantly fewer students failing.

## **REQUIRED COMMITMENTS AND RESOURCES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

- Panhandle Area Education Consortium (PAEC) Consultants, Training and materials, Follow-up;
- Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) – Training and materials;
- Severely Emotionally Disturb network (SED Net) – School and parent support;
- Gulf School District – Title I-A, II-A, IV, IDEA grant funds for training teacher and materials;
- Gulf School District – New Teacher and Developing Teacher programs;
- University of South Florida – Positive Behavior support training and coaching;

### **Exemplary Training Practices**

Exemplary practices which support the vision of MTSS, *to provide effective interventions to meet the needs of all students through early and evidence-based interventions and data driven systems planning, are:*

- Use common language which avoids jargon and acronyms
- Trainers should “know” their audience
- Provide a variety of activities and resources
- Trainers should provide differentiated resources as well as model differentiation
- Build time for reflection
- Provide on-site follow-up

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS**

### **Internal partners who have a vested interest in the development and implementation of MTSS:**

Students

Parents

Teachers

ESE Support Staff – Psychologists, Speech Therapists, Behavior Specialist, Occupational Therapists

District and School Administrators

School-based support – Guidance, Paraprofessionals, Secretaries

School Health Services

Parent Liaisons

School Advisory Councils

### **External Community partners who can have a vested interest in MTSS:**

Mental Health Agencies, Faith-Based Ministries, Volunteers, Family Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Doctors, PTO, Gulf County Health Department, Junior Service League, DuPont Youth Initiative, Title I Parent Advisory Council, Langston Foundation, College For Every Student Foundation, Florida State University, Gulf Coast State College, and Tom P. Haney, North Florida Child Development, Private Schools, ESE Advisory Council, PAEC, ABLE TRUST, and DJJ.

## **ROLES OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS/TRAINING TEAMS IN THE RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Assistant Superintendent for Instruction**

Title I, Title II

Curriculum

Student Progression

District Comprehensive Reading Plan

Safe and Drug Free Schools

Technology

Staff Development

### **Assistant Superintendent for Special Services**

Exceptional Student Education

Related Services

English Language Learners Program

Early Childhood Programs

- To chair the development of the district's MTSS Plan
- To provide guidance to staff on the mandates and requirements as related to other initiatives, resources, and services that are in effect.
- To facilitate meetings on the implementation process and to chair quarterly MTSS support meetings.
- To collaborate with staff on the blending of services, funds, and resources to provide the appropriate training, products and information on this process.
- To coordinate the district training team's activities.
- To co-monitor implementation of the building level plan.
- To arrange trainings, staff development and support for all levels of staff tailored to their needs and experiences.

- To train building level teams and to monitor follow-up.
- To arrange resource services for schools and staff.
- To provide assessment materials relevant to the implementation and success of MTSS.
- To collaborate with staff on the implementation guidelines.
- To maintain up-to-date information on interventions.
- To co-monitor building level plans.
- To co-coordinate the district's training team's activities.

### **Director of Human Resources and Assessment**

Staff Development

Assessment

- To review the building level's evaluation component and to co-monitor implementation of the plan.
- To assemble data for progress monitoring.

### **Community Plan/Communication**

Information concerning MTSS will be communicated via newspaper, school newsletter, All Call, PTO meetings, Information sheets attached to Progress Reports, Parent Liaison, Guidance Counselors, ESE & Title I newsletters, and the school and district websites. Information disseminated will be concise and void of confusing jargon. Oral presentations will be designed specifically for each target audience and will be time conscious in order to allow for questions

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **The district is accountable for**

- The development of the district MTSS plan;
- Providing high quality staff development;
- Providing financial and human resources to successfully implement MTSS;
- Initiating and continuing on-going communication with all stakeholders. District Administrators are accountable for monitoring the implementation process and holding accountable school-based administrators. School-based decision making is supported by the district in that site based administrators know their school's strengths and challenges as they commit to MTSS. It is expected that each administrator will become thoroughly knowledgeable and that they will:
  - Provide staff training and follow-up support;
  - Provide time during the school day for meetings as appropriate to problem solve and to provide feedback;
  - Provide resources for interventions;
  - Provide guidance counselors with screening resources;
  - Encourage on-going communication with teachers and intervention specialists;
  - Promote a positive environment for MTSS implementation.

When appropriate, decision making is a shared process between the district, site base administrators, teachers, support personnel and parents. Decisions which are necessary to the daily functioning of the school belong to the school based administrator. The district will actively provide technical assistance and support to facilitate the timely and legally correct decision making process in all cases.

## **POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES**

The district must take into consideration fiscal needs in relation to resources for curriculum and assessment; staff development; substitutes; release time for teachers; information and training for parents; and educational and behavioral evaluations and assessments. With the current shortfall in funding from the state, implementing an unfunded mandate will, at best, be a significant challenge. Possible funding sources include but are limited to:

- The General Fund
- Title I, II, IV
- IDEA
- Reading Instruction Allocation

## **CONSENSUS AND SUPPORT**

Gulf School District will utilize its current network of stakeholders to build consensus and support for MTSS. It is anticipated that there will be commitment and buy-in by the Superintendent and School Board, the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, Positive Behavior Support, Florida State University, and grant coordinators who will collaborate to braid resources. Consensus building will be assessed by Beliefs Survey and the SAPSI.

## **DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The District Leadership Team is comprised of the following: Director of Instruction, the Director of Special Services, the Director of Personal and Assessment, School Psychologists, Principals and a Behavior Specialist. The team meets a minimum of once each quarter and may meet more often if need warrants. Meetings will be chaired by a district administrator who has gathered data and input from schools and has established a meaningful agenda. Each member has an active voice in all matters related to MTSS.

Principals will be supported by district staff. Supervision of the implementation of MTSS will be provided jointly by the Director of Special Services and the Director of Instruction. Support mechanisms include MTSS training, coaching, assistance with fiscal and human resources, and monitoring. Workshops which focus on roles of players, methods of implementation and data collection will be provided throughout the year.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

In order to define universal needs, the district requires all students, unless a current IEP indicates otherwise, to participate in district and state assessments: K-2 – Iowa; 3-9 – FSA Reading, Math, Writing; 10 – FCAT Reading; FSA Writing, Math, Science. Students in grades 11 and 12 who have not passed the FCAT are also included in reading assessments other than FCAT.

## **Progress Monitoring**

Progress Monitoring is essential to effectiveness and to the implementation of programs and instruction with fidelity. The district will meet with each principal to assess progress monitoring procedures and outcomes. Principals are charged with providing data which demonstrates progress monitoring,

interventions and outcomes. Data may be collected from a variety of courses i.e. individual teacher, grade group meetings, MIS, reports from computer assisted instruction, counseling data.

**Universal Instructional strategies comprises TIER I Academics:**

**Core Curriculum**

- District Reading Curriculum K-5 (Harcourt)
- District Literature and Language Arts 6-12
- District Math Curriculum
- District Science
- District Writing

**Whole Class Teaching Strategies**

- Differentiated Instruction
- Math Manipulatives
- Direct Instruction
- CRISS
- Cooperative Learning
- Homogeneous Grouping
- Small Group Instruction
- Comprehensive Reading Plan Activities
- Flexible grouping (interest, readiness levels, student choice, processing styles, random order)

**TIER I Universal Behavioral Strategies**

- School-wide Discipline Code
  - Rules and Expectations
  - Positive Behavior Support
  - Character Education – District approved curriculum

**Social Skills**

- Teach acceptable alternatives for getting attention
- Teach appropriate communication skills
- Teach how to ask for help when presented with new or difficult task

## **Classroom Management Techniques**

- Greet students by name
- Provide frequent positive attention
- Ignore inappropriate behavior while reinforcing a peer who is practicing positive behavior
- Focus on future behavior rather than on past behavior
- Provide reinforcement for the absence of problem behaviors
- Build “wiggle” breaks into schedule
- Develop a clear system for complete and incomplete work
- Identify the causes of inattentive or disruptive behavior and match response to perceived cause
- Clearly articulate a range of consequences for unmet expectations based on the quality, intensity and frequency of the action
- Stay focused on learning: don’t let “off the mark” behavior or backtalk take you off track: notice and deal with it when it fits your agenda
- Wait to hold discussions about inattentive or disruptive behavior or unmet expectations until both teacher and student are calm.
- Build on student interests.

If data collected shows insufficient response to **Tier I** and consensus is gained between the teacher and the principal that student response is questionable, then progress to **Tier II**.

Academic: Strategic Interventions for students not responding to the core curriculum; Small group, Targeted Instruction or Technology Assisted

### Small Group:

- Barton Multisensory Reading System
- Harcourt Vocabulary Kit
- Performance Coach
- Simon Sound it Out
- Sing, Spell, Read
- Literacy Center
- Comprehensive Reading Plan
- Additional small group instruction in reading and/or math (30 minutes)
- REWARDS
- REWARDS PLUS

### Targeted:

- Reading comprehension and fluency Interventions (Repeated reading, Summarizing, paraphrasing)
- Math manipulatives
- Precision Teaching
- Leap Frog Materials
- Literacy Center
- Cover, Copy, Compare
- Extended instruction time with a specialist or extend class time to two periods for reading and/or math

## Technology Assisted Instruction and Assessment Reports

CEI  
Success Maker  
Study Island  
Inspiration  
CIM  
Edhelper  
Renaissance  
Skills Tutor

<https://fsassessments.org/students-and-families/practice-tests/> for FSA preparation

### **TIER 2:** Behavioral – Targeted Group Interventions: Some at risk students

#### Small Group Counseling

Provided by guidance counselors, or school psychologist

Topics: Bullying, criticism, coping with anger, teasing, self-esteem, grief, social skills, divorce  
30 minutes per week for 6-12 weeks

#### Conflict Resolution – curriculum provided by

[www.technology.com/teachers/lesson\\_plans/health/conflict](http://www.technology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/health/conflict)

#### Small Group Behavior Intervention Plan

School-based positive behavior support system targeted interventions  
Teach social skills with board games in small groups  
Bullying prevention curriculum (Be Cool: Coping with Bullying)  
Anger Management (Be Cool: Coping with Anger)

If collected data shows insufficient response to **Tier II** interventions and there is consensus among the stakeholders, teacher, principal, guidance counselor, parent, other support personnel that student response to intervention is poor, then progress to **Tier III**.

### **TIER 3:** Academic

Intensive Interventions: Students not responding to Tier 2 – Increase frequency, duration and monitoring  
– Individual student or small group (2-3)

#### Specific Intensive Interventions

Increase frequency, duration, monitoring of Tier II interventions  
Saxon Phonics  
Reading Mastery/Corrective Reading  
Leap Track  
Great Leaps  
Literacy Centers during iii time  
Tutoring by a paraprofessional or volunteer  
Increased reading and math time with reading/math specialist  
Formal peer tutoring in class

Reading and/or math coach suggested interventions  
Jamestown  
Elkonin Boxes  
Musical Games  
Specific Skills Series

### **TIER 3: Behavioral**

Intensive Interventions: Individual students and small groups (2-3)

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) based on formal functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) data

#### Individual Counseling

Provided by guidance counselor/school social worker/licensed mental health counselor  
Topics: Anger management, divorce, grief, self esteem, social skills, personal or family-related issues, teasing, bullying, criticism, hurricane recovery  
Regularly scheduled targeted counseling – individual or small group

#### Individual interventions

Students earn time to visit preferred adults on campus  
Provide earned time to share with the class  
Student check in the morning with an adult to establish goals, review homework and again in the afternoon to review work, accomplishments and expected behaviors  
Select a peer buddy to work with or play a game – add additional students one at the time  
Share control by offering choices  
Mental health counseling  
School-based positive behavior support system interventions

If data collected shows insufficient response to **Tier III** interventions and there is consensus among all stakeholders, then progress to determining ESE eligibility.

### **Evaluation**

After analyzing data collected at each school, the district will be poised to evaluate the implementation of the plan. Data such as promotion/retention, discipline, attendance, number and types of interventions, student portfolios, number of referrals for ESE testing, standardized test results should show positive outcomes.

**Professional Development:** The district will provide and support on-going staff development to not only up-date teachers and to train new teachers, but to ensure their professional development is in areas that may be an instructional or classroom management challenge.

Each teacher's Individual Professional Development Plan must address meeting the goals and objectives of the School's Improvement Plan which always focuses on areas of academic weakness. By completing an Individual Needs Assessment, teachers recognize their personal professional development needs and should include this information as they develop their IPDP in collaboration with their principal. Staff development is targeted to individual teacher needs, student needs, and school needs.

## Academic Interventions

Academic interventions address the specific academic problems that a student is having in relation to his/her grade level peers. The following case study includes the components of a valid intervention.

### Case Study:

#### **Tier 1**

Universal Screening using DIBELS indicated to Ms. Williams, Jason's teacher, that Jason was functioning in the High Risk range in Oral Reading Fluency. Ms. Williams identified specific areas to target during the 90-minute reading block. The universal interventions that the teacher implemented included:

- ✓ **Using the core reading curriculum with intervention & supplemental materials**
- ✓ **Placing Jason in her most intensive reading group**

Progress monitoring using fluency probes done by Ms. Williams over several weeks indicated that Jason was not responding to the oral reading fluency intervention and needed more intensive interventions.

#### **Tier 2**

During the problem-solving process in the grade level team meeting (or at an MTSS Team meeting), it was determined that Jason's sight-word vocabulary was poor and was the suspected cause of his difficulties in reading. Assessment of Jason's sight-word vocabulary indicated that his baseline was 10 sight-words out of 40 grade level sight-words.

A research-based intervention plan was developed to improve his sight-word vocabulary. This included:

- ✓ **The Folding-In Strategy, which is a structured flash card strategy that utilizes repeated practice. In this case, the repeated practice was with three unknown words mixed with seven known words in order to help Jason learn sight-words. See the Intervention tab in the Appendices for a script of this strategy.**

The intervention plan indicated who, what, where, and how frequently the intervention was delivered. Ms. Williams decided to complete the Folding-In Intervention one-on-one with Jason three times a week for ten minutes in his general education classroom.

A goal for the intervention was developed. Ms. Williams determined that Jason would increase his sight-word vocabulary from 10 sight-words to 30 sight-words after 10 weeks of intervention.

A plan for monitoring Jason's response to the intervention was developed. Ms. Williams assessed Jason's progress every Friday for 10 weeks by having him read aloud from the sight-word list. Ms. Williams graphed progress monitoring data in order to determine Jason's progress toward his goal. The collected data was examined after a few weeks to make sure Jason was progressing at an acceptable rate. If not, the intervention should be adapted or changed before the 10 weeks are completed.

**\*\*Remember**, the goal is to help Jason read better. If Jason does not appear to be responding to the intervention after the first few weeks, it is best to change the intervention rather than wait 10 weeks. This is valuable time that Jason and his teacher cannot get back!

### **Tier 3**

Progress monitoring data indicated that at the end of 6 weeks Jason knew 13 sight-words from the list of 40. Due to the lack of progress toward the goal, the IAT decided to provide a more intensive intervention. This included:

- ✓ **Placing Jason in the Great Leaps program for 15 minutes daily in addition to the 90-minute block with the intensive reading group. A para-professional listened to Jason read and he charted his own progress.**

The Folding-In intervention was discontinued due to Jason's lack of response to that intervention.

Progress monitoring of Jason's sight-word recognition was charted daily. Jason's goal was adjusted such that Jason would increase his sight-words from 13 to 29 by the end of the 8 week period. The intervention data would continue to be graphed and evaluated; and the intervention revised if necessary.

**\*\*Remember**, if the MTSS Team determines Jason is not showing expected progress at the end of the 8 week intervention period, a referral for a psycho-educational evaluation to assist in determining if ESE services may be necessary.

## Behavioral Interventions

Behavioral interventions address the specific behavioral problems that a student is having in relation to his/her grade level peers. The following case study includes the components of a valid intervention.

### Case Study:

#### **Tier 1**

School-wide discipline data indicated to Mr. Smith, Brandy's teacher, that Brandy was having problems with disruptive behaviors, including talking out and leaving her assigned area without permission. Mr. Smith identified specific times and locations these behaviors were occurring, such as in the morning and in the classroom. The universal interventions that Mr. Smith used included:

- ✓ **Providing more frequent positive attention to decrease the disruptive behaviors**
- ✓ **Ignoring the disruptive behaviors while reinforcing a peer who was displaying non-disruptive behaviors.**

Progress monitoring done by Mr. Smith indicated that Brandy was not responding to the universal interventions and needed more intensive ones.

#### **Tier 2**

Brandy was still having disruptive behavior problems and the problem-solving process at the grade level team meeting (or at an MTSS Team meeting) has indicated that her disruptive behaviors occurred more often during independent tasks. Assessment of Brandy's behaviors indicated that on average she exhibited three incidents of disruptive behaviors during 15 minutes of independent seatwork.

A research-based intervention plan was developed to improve her behaviors. A Reinforcer Survey was completed to determine Brandy's preferred reinforcers. Examples of research-based interventions for improving disruptive behaviors during independent tasks include:

- ✓ **Reminding the student to ask appropriately for assistance before giving her independent tasks**
- ✓ **Shortening independent tasks**
- ✓ **Providing the opportunity to complete tasks in a small group.**

The intervention plan indicated who, what, where, and how frequently the intervention would be delivered as well as how reinforcers would be earned. Mr. Smith decided to provide Brandy with more opportunities to complete tasks in a small group one time daily and to shorten independent tasks in the general education classroom.

A goal for the intervention was developed. Mr. Smith determined that Brandy would decrease the number of incidents of talk outs and out-of-seat behaviors from three times per 15 minutes to zero times per 15 minutes after 10 weeks.

A plan for progress monitoring the intervention was developed. Mr. Smith tallied Brandy's non-disruptive behaviors in intervals of five minutes during independent seatwork and small group activities daily for 10 weeks. Mr. Smith graphed the progress monitoring data in order to determine Brandy's progress toward her goal. Mr. Smith examined the data after a few weeks to make sure Brandy was progressing at an acceptable rate. If not, the intervention should be adapted or changed before the 10 weeks are completed.

**\*\*Remember**, the goal here is to help Brandy have fewer incidents of disruptive behavior. If Brandy does not appear to be responding to the intervention after the first few weeks, it is best to change the intervention rather than to wait the full 10 weeks. This is valuable time Brandy and her teacher cannot get back!

### **Tier 3**

Progress Monitoring data indicated that at the end of 6 weeks Brandy still was having two incidents of talking out and out-of-seat behaviors during 15-minute periods of independent seatwork. Due to the lack of progress toward the goal, the IAT decided to provide a more intensive intervention. Therefore, a **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) was conducted and a positive Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) was developed and implemented based on the FBA data collected.** The primary function of Brandy's disruptive behaviors was to gain attention from her teacher. Therefore,

- ✓ **The BIP determined that Brandy had to earn time with Mr. Smith by exhibiting non-disruptive behaviors during the 15-minute periods of independent seatwork**
- ✓ **Mr. Smith will provide positive attention to Brandy every five minutes during those 15-minute periods of independent seatwork.**

Progress monitoring of Brandy's non-disruptive behaviors continued daily. Brandy's goal was adjusted such that Brandy would decrease the number of disruptive behavior incidents from two times per 15 minutes to zero times per 15 minutes after 8 weeks of intervention. The intervention data would continue to be graphed, evaluated, and the intervention revised if necessary.

**\*\*Remember**, if the MTSS Team determines Brandy is not showing expected progress at the end of the 8 week intervention period, a referral for a psycho-educational evaluation to assist in determining if ESE services may be necessary.

## THE MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS TEAM (MTSS)

The multi-tiered system of supports team (MTSS) is a multi-disciplinary, school-level team utilized to provide teachers with support when students are not successful in the classroom setting. An MTSS Team shall exist in each school and serve as the primary problem solving team for all types of referrals, including those for Exceptional Student Education.

### GOALS

- **Prevention** – The MTSS Team is accessible to all school personnel and all parents to prevent problems or resolve them in their early stages.
- **Problem Solving** – The MTSS Team will apply a problem solving approach by clearly defining the problem and identifying the needs of students who are experiencing difficulties in maximizing their educational opportunities.
- **Intervention** – The MTSS Team will develop and implement, based on the defined problem, appropriate interventions and will monitor progress to evaluate the results.
- **Collaboration/consultation** – The MTSS Team will coordinate school and community resources to meet the individual needs of students.
- **Training** – The MTSS Team will facilitate training for school personnel and parents regarding the Intervention Assistance Team model.

The MTSS Team is comprised of the following individuals:

- **Parents** – Parents are a vital part of the MTSS Team Process. In addition, IDEA 2004 legislation requires that parents be involved with the intervention process. Therefore, it is district policy to invite them to attend and fully participate in MTSS Team meetings. A Notice of Conference form is used to notify parents of meeting dates and times.
- **Student's classroom teacher(s)**
- **Administrator** – Curriculum Coordinator or Principal
- **Guidance Counselor and/or MTSS Team Chair**
- **School Psychologist**
- **ESE Representative** (if ESE housed in school) – VE, Speech and Language, etc.
- **Another classroom teacher/resource teacher/Reading Coach** (standing member – may be rotated depending on the academic level of the child – consider one primary and one intermediate teacher).
- **Other persons who have a legitimate educational interest in the case** (e.g., school nurse, Title I, school social worker, and agency personnel)

## **INTERVENTION ASSISTANCE TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

In addition to every member assisting with the problem solving process, the following descriptions provide examples of the types of data and expertise that each participant may typically bring to the team's collaboration. Actual responsibilities may vary depending upon the school.

### **Parent(s)**

- Provides relevant home/community information
- Provides relevant medical/social information
- Accesses appropriate community resources
- Collaborates with school personnel in implementing interventions

### **Student's Classroom Teacher**

- Completes teacher checklist – prior to meeting
- Consults with grade level team
- Reviews checklists, interventions, background, baseline and monitoring data
- Collaborates with student services personnel and/or other teachers on data presentation

### **Administrator**

- Provides incentives for participation on the MTSS Team (e.g., covering class, providing release/compensation time, inservice points for training if written into the district master plan)
- Provides adequate location within the school facility and allocates appropriate time during the school day for the meeting.
- Secures resources for interventions

### **Guidance Counselor**

- Administers screening tests and reports findings to the MTSS Team
- Assists the teacher in data collection for presentation to the MTSS Team
- May assist the teachers with interventions and be available for consultation

### **School Psychologist**

- Contributes expertise in evaluation of outcomes, data collection, data analysis
- Identifies strategies, materials, and resources for interventions
- Provides guidance in decision-making regarding assessment issues
- May assist with collecting diagnostic information, provides input in developing interventions and progress monitoring tools

### **Another Classroom or Resource Teacher/Reading Coach/ESE Representative**

- Contributes information regarding instructional methodologies and curriculum
- Assists in developing interventions from their area of expertise (may be rotated depending on the needs of the child)
- Provides support for interventions to the student's classroom teacher

## **Parent Liaison**

- Serves as a resource person regarding referrals to appropriate community and mental health agencies
- Serves as a liaison between school, family, and community
- Provides guidance in implementing family and social interventions

*Other persons may be invited to provide educationally relevant information given their area of expertise.*

## ASSIGNED ROLES AND DUTIES OF TEAM MEMBERS

In order for MTSS Team meetings to run efficiently and effectively, the team selects members to serve in the following roles, each with specific assigned duties. Each school may choose how to assign these roles and whether or not the roles rotate from meeting to meeting.

### **MTSS TEAM Chair**

- The only non-rotating role
- Coordinates completion of required MTSS Team documentation, providing support to referring teacher when necessary
- Notifies MTSS Team members of dates, times, and locations of MTSS Team meetings
- Outlines the MTSS Team meeting agendas
- Coordinates class coverage for teachers attending MTSS Team meetings
- Coordinates completion of referral paperwork **if** an ESE referral is appropriate
- Updates MTSS Team and faculty on status of MTSS Team cases and ESE referrals

### **Facilitator**

- Establishes and maintains a supportive atmosphere
- Keeps the meeting goal oriented by following agenda
- Pays special attention to group problem solving process issues
- Attempts to elicit appropriate level of agreement during the process
- Helps resolve conflicts in the group

### **Recorder**

- Keeps an accurate and concise record of the MTSS Team meeting
- Asks for clarification about key information
- Assures all relevant information is obtained and recorded

### **Time Keeper**

- Monitors how far a team has progressed given the guidelines in the “MTSS TEAM MEETING FORMAT” section
- Prompts the team to remain focused on the issue at hand
- Helps the team come to closure when time is running out

### **Intervention Liaison**

- Consults with referring teacher about types of classroom-based assessment techniques that might be useful
- Assists the referring teacher, when necessary, to collect baseline data prior to first MTSS Team meeting
- Consults with the teacher regarding intervention(s) and progress monitoring being implemented that were planned at the first MTSS Team meeting
- Assists in evaluating intervention and progress monitoring fidelity (i.e., implemented as designed) and effectiveness (i.e., whether student made progress)

## MTSS TEAM MEETING FORMATS

### Initial Meeting Agenda

- I. Introduction (~2 min)
  - A. Team members introduce themselves
  - B. Facilitator reviews meeting agenda
- II. Inventory Student Strengths and Talents (~3 min)
  - A. Team discusses student's strengths, talents, and positive qualities
  - B. Team identifies rewards or incentives that motivate the student
- III. Assess Referral Concern(s) (~3-5 min)
  - A. MTSS Team Chair, Facilitator, Teacher, or Parent (if s/he is the referral source) summarizes referral concerns
  - B. Team members share any additional concerns
  - C. Team members review relevant background information, including academic, attendance, behavioral, home and mental or physical health
- IV. Review Baseline and Intervention Data (~3-5 min)
  - A. Teacher and Intervention Liaison present baseline data collected prior to MTSS Team meeting
  - B. Teacher summarizes interventions (developed by teacher or grade-level team) implemented prior to MTSS Team meeting and results obtained
- V. Set Academic and/or Behavioral Goals (~5 min)
  - A. Team members select and define the top 1-2 referral concerns in easily observable and measurable terms
  - C. Team members set ambitious but realistic, observable, and measurable goals for improvement (for each of the top 1-2 referral concerns) that are attainable in 6-8 weeks
- VI. Design an Intervention Plan (~5-10)
  - A. Team members develop at least one intervention that addresses each of the top 1-2 referral concerns
  - B. Team members select at least one method or tool to monitor student progress for each intervention being implemented
  - C. Recorder documents the plan, including series of specific teacher-friendly intervention steps, when and where it will be implemented, materials required, measures to monitor student progress, how frequently progress data collected, and people responsible for intervention and progress monitoring
- VII. Share Information with Student's Family (~2 min)
  - A. Team members determine who will contact student's family to share the referral concerns and intervention plan if family not at MTSS Team meeting
- VIII. Review Intervention Plan
  - A. Recorder reviews main points of documented intervention plan
  - B. Facilitator elicits any final concerns or questions regarding the plan
  - C. MTSS Team Chair schedules follow-up MTSS Team meeting with team members (usually within 6-8 weeks of the initial MTSS Team meeting)

## Follow-Up Meeting Agenda

- I. Introductions (~2 min)
  - A. Team members re-introduce themselves
  - B. Facilitator reviews meeting agenda
- II. Review Referral Concerns (~3 min)
  - A. Recorder briefly reviews initial MTSS Team meeting documentation
  - B. Facilitator elicits any updated background information since the initial meeting occurred
- III. Debrief on Implementation of Intervention Plan (~5-10 min)
  - A. Teacher and Intervention Liaison discuss implementation issues and progress monitoring data
  - B. Team members ask any questions necessary to clarify information
- IV. Evaluate Plan Effectiveness (~5 min)
  - A. Team members evaluate academic and/or behavioral progress by comparing progress monitoring data collected to the goals set in the initial MTSS Team meeting
  - B. Team members determine if student showed no progress toward, only minor progress toward, promising progress toward, met, or exceeded these goals
- V. Decide on Next Steps (~5-10 min)
  - A. Team members determine whether to modify and continue implementing intervention plan, whether the student requires a Section 504 Plan, or whether a referral for an ESE evaluation is necessary.
    1. If modifying plan, Team members discuss modifications, Recorder documents new plan and reviews it with team members, and MTSS Team Chair schedules 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting with team members
    2. If Section 504 Plan required, team members develop plan using the appropriate Section 504 Plan forms
    3. If ESE evaluation necessary, MTSS Team Chair completes consent form and parent signs it at the meeting (if present)
  - B. Team members also may determine the need for a referral to community resources, including social work, medical, or psychiatric services

# PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURES

**Student Not Doing Well**  
 (Determined by universal screen or *other indicators*)

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

**THE PARENTS**

**PROGRESS MONITORING**

TIER 1

1. Define problem
2. Identify goal
3. Complete additional diagnostic
4. Use available strategies: targeted instruction, small group
5. Match strategies to problem

1. Discuss Problem
2. Discuss School's Responses and Interventions
3. Develop a Plan with the parent (perhaps the AIP)

1. Baseline Data
2. Work Samples
3. Test Data
4. Intervention Data (progress monitoring)
5. Evaluate effectiveness

TIER 2

1. Review teacher data
2. Reassess problem
3. Apply Grade-Level Team Responses:
  - a. Smaller Groups
  - b. More Time
  - c. New Intervention

1. Keep Parent Informed:
  - a. School to Home Notes
  - b. Phone Calls
  - c. Face to Face Meetings
2. Share progress monitoring data
3. Was the intervention effective?

1. Progress Monitoring is more frequent
2. FAIR Probes
3. Behavior Charts
4. Intervention Plan
5. Increase:
  - a. frequency
  - b. intensity
  - c. duration

TIER 3

1. Review Progress Monitoring Data
2. Review records, diagnostics, FAIR, parent concerns
3. Develop individually targeted intervention
4. Assess Progress

1. Parent present
2. Parent collaborates with plan development

1. Weekly progress
2. Assess rate of progress
3. Assess how far behind Target
4. Assess position in class
5. Will they catch up?
6. Was the progress at the same rate as others?

## I. Teacher Problem Solving

- A. When the teacher, parent, or other staff member recognizes a student problem or need, problem solving steps are initiated.
- B. Review the student's cumulative record and other pertinent background information. Define the problem in behavioral/observable/measurable terms. Identify the student's strengths and reinforcers. Begin collecting frequent progress monitoring data to determine whether or not the student is responding to the curriculum and/or behavioral expectations of the classroom (3 to 5 data points for a baseline). Identify the replacement behavior(s)/academic skill(s) and the rate of progress required to reach the goal.
- C. If the data confirms that the student is performing below classroom expectations and that his/her rate of progress is not sufficiently closing the gap, a parent conference must be scheduled.
- D. Teacher or other school personnel must confer with parent(s) regarding the nature of the concern, sharing the data collected, the student's strengths, the plan for intervention, and how results will be measured and communicate to the parent(s). This communication can be accomplished face-to-face, by letter, or phone. This step will be documented. The Academic Success Plan (if not already in place) should be completed at this meeting. Suggesting ESE testing or diagnosing the problem (e.g. SLD, EBD) must be avoided.
- E. Interventions targeted to the identified behavior(s)/skills gap(s) are implemented with integrity, and frequent progress monitoring continues to assess the impact of the intervention(s).

## II. Grade Level Team Problem Solving

- A. Should the intervention(s) fail to improve student behavior(s)/skill(s) at a rate of progress that will catch up to classroom expectations, the teacher will meet with grade level team.
- B. At the grade level team, briefly provide the background, the defined problem(s), interventions implemented, and data measuring current performance and rate of progress. Identify modifications to current interventions and/or additional scientific research based interventions, who what when where and for how long they will be implemented, and who what when where and how progress will be monitored and displayed.
- C. After a specified time (usually 6 to 8 weeks), reconvene with the Grade Level Team to review data. Determine with the team whether or not the intervention has been effective, whether or not the intervention(s) need to be adjusted, and whether or not the goal(s) needs to be modified.

### III. MTSS Team Problem Solving

- A. The MTSS Team meets regularly with a core of team members. It is imperative that the student's teacher be in attendance. The student's parent(s) will always be invited to attend. Some time models for scheduling MTSS Team meetings may include before or after school or during the day with classroom coverage provided for the teacher.
- B. Teacher notifies the MTSS Team Chairperson of the case he/she wishes to bring to MTSS Team.
- C. An MTSS Team member meets with the teacher to complete an Academic and/or Behavior Problem interview.
- D. The Chairperson should set the team agenda and notify participants in advance of the meeting.
- E. A record-keeping system needs to be established. Information should be documented by an appointed recorder and should include:
  - ❖ definition of the problem (condition under which it exists, e.g., what?, when?)
  - ❖ measurement of the behavior
  - ❖ discrepancy between current and expected behavior
  - ❖ suspected reason why the student is not successful
  - ❖ intervention strategy designed to address the problem
  - ❖ person(s) responsible for intervention and follow-up
  - ❖ evaluation method to determine whether intervention was successful/set criteria for success
  - ❖ follow-up date
  - ❖ results of follow-up
- F. If a referral for ESE assessment is to be made, the MTSS Team Chair will gather the needed collateral and requirements in accordance with ESE procedures.

## FORMS

- #1 Checklist**
- #1A Parent Notification of the Right to Request and Evaluation**
- #2 Record Review Form**
- #3 Parent Contact Log**
- #4 Observation Checklist**
- #5 Academic Intervention Plan**
- #6 Intervention Documentation for Individual Student**
- #7 Request for Intervention/Child-Study Team Meeting**
- #8 Meeting Invitation**
- #9 Parent Notification for Consent for Intervention Activities**
- #10 Social/Developmental History Interview**
- #11 Parent Conference or Intervention Notes**
- #12 Anecdotal Recording Form**
- #13 Screening Report**
- #14 Behavior Checklist**
- #15 Consent for Evaluation**
- #16 Functional Behavior Assessment**
- #17 Positive Behavioral Intervention Plan**
- #18 Meeting Participation Statement**
- #19 ESE Evaluation Referral Form**