Multi-Tiered System of Support in Seattle Public Schools

Description of the MTSS Approach

MTSS is a term used to describe an evidence-based model of educating students that uses data and problem solving to integrate academic, behavior, and social, emotional instruction and intervention to maximize the success of all students. Instruction and intervention is provided to students across multiple tiers of intensity based on need. Staff make data-based decisions in order for resources (e.g., time, staff, and evidence-based strategies) to reach the students at the appropriate levels to increase the performance of ALL students with the goal of achieving and/or exceeding proficiency. Quality implementation of MTSS is associated with increased likelihood of instruction and interventions leading to successful student outcomes and elimination of achievement and opportunity gaps. Thus, it is important for schools to monitor not only student outcomes, but also how assessments, instruction, interventions, and data-based decision making and action plans are put into place (i.e., the fidelity with which these elements are implemented).

Components of MTSS

1. Leadership, Systems & Structures
2. School Culture, Collaboration and Communication
3. Core, and Tiered Instruction and Supports
4. Assessment, Data & Progress Monitoring

Component 1. Leadership, Structures and Systems of MTSS

Leadership is key to successful implementation of MTSS and is reliant upon innovation, large-scale decision making, and the ability of leadership to influence and guide school climate. The building leaders and school MTSS Leadership team are critical to implementing MTSS at the school level. Roles and responsibilities of MTSS Leadership include engaging staff and establishing a shared vision in support of all students, designing collaborative structures and shared assessment practices, determining and delivering relevant and ongoing professional development, and monitor the fidelity of MTSS implementation to ensure growth and achievement for all students.   The building leaders, in tandem with the MTSS Leadership team(s) support the implementation of MTSS by communicating and modeling a vision and mission to the school staff and community stakeholders, providing resources for planning and

implementing instruction, support and intervention, and ensuring staff have the data needed for instructional planning and decision-making.

Indicators of Component 1 include:

- Shared commitment across the learning community in support of learning for all students
- Equitable access to high quality and customized instruction
- Data Inquiry and decision making processes through collaborative structures
- Provision of relevant and targeted of professional development for staff
- Plans for continuous improvement

Component 2: School Culture, Collaboration and Communication

Communication and collaboration occurring vertically between the leadership team and classroom teachers, as well as laterally across teacher teams, departments and grade levels is critical for successful and sustainable implementation of MTSS. Many well-intended efforts at innovation and implementation of initiatives fail due to a lack of shared vision, consensus, and a lack of communication to and between implementers to support striving toward continuous improvement. In addition to including stakeholders in planning and providing continuous feedback, it is critical to build systems and structures that promote communication and work with families and community partners. Collaborative practices, built upon systematic structures and reliant on consistent and timely communication, increase the likelihood that innovative, relevant and data-based practices such as those found within the MTSS Whole Child Framework will be implemented and sustained.

Indicators of Component 2 include:

- Developing a culture of collaboration and teaming
- Making connections with community partners and stakeholders
- Communication systems that connect and support stakeholders
- School wide positive support and intervention structures addressing the social, emotional and behavioral needs of all students

Component 3: Core, Tiered Instruction and Supports

The three-tiered instructional model of support and intervention is another critical element of MTSS implementation. Tier one, referred to as the 'core[1]' includes social, emotional, behavioral and academic expectations and instruction delivered to all students in a manner designed to differentiate to the needs of the student(s). Tier two, referred to as strategic intervention, is provided to students demonstrating need for additional or alternative instructional methods in order to meet benchmarks. Tier three, or intensive intervention, references small group or individualized instruction for students facing significant barriers to learning the skills required for school and learning success. Across all three tiers, a multi-tiered system of supports considers and assesses academic, behavioral and social-emotional instruction, support and intervention when examining this component.

Indicators of Component 3 include:
- Ensuring access to standards-based, high quality instruction for all students
- Provision of evidence-based instructional practice including support and intervention targeting the individual needs of students

Component 4: Data, Assessment and Progress Monitoring

The use of data to screen, diagnose, problem solve and develop meaningful action for students is a foundational element of MTSS implementation. Data practices include the use of data-based problem solving and decision-making for student outcomes across content areas, grade levels, and tiers, as well as the use of problem solving to address barriers to school-wide implementation of MTSS. Within Seattle Public Schools, data is intentionally reviewed at the classroom level within PLCs or data teams. In addition, leadership teams comprised of a representative team of staff monitor the growth of students and determine the need for redesign of instruction in response.

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[1] Core Instruction is defined as the foundational curriculum and instruction to which all students must have access. Core instruction includes all content areas, as well as social, emotional, and behavioral learning. Within core instruction, content areas include Science, Social Studies, Health, Math, Visual and Performing Arts, PE, ELA and access to technology and information literacy. See RCW 28A.150.211 for state level expectations on basic education. Access to core instruction necessarily includes the use of instructional practices to support English Language Learners, as well as culturally responsive practices, scaffolds, and differentiation strategies that enable every student the opportunity to learn effectively. While differentiated supports can and should occur within Core Instruction, the term "Tiered Instruction" is used to include two additional levels of instructional support in the content areas of Math and ELA (Tiers 2 and 3).

Procedures and protocols for developing and administering shared and common assessments, allow school staff to use student data to design and redesign instruction, support at the core, as well as tiered intervention. In addition to growth and achievement data from students, data on the fidelity of MTSS implementation allow school and district leadership to examine current practices and make changes or initiate supports to professionally develop staff, align practices with current student-based need and thereby make changes to enhance implementation.

Indicators of Component 4 include:

- Standards-based assessment practices embedded in core instruction for all students
- Application of shared assessment practices through a culture of collaboration
- Varied purposes of assessment applied with intention and targeted outcomes
- Use of decision-making protocols to guide design and redesign of instruction