Delaware Multi-Tiered System of Support

Implementation Guide   JANUARY 2021

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A message from the Delaware Secretary of Education:

The Delaware Department of Education wants each student to be prepared for success in college, career, and life. The department will achieve this goal by providing every learner with the highest quality education through shared leadership, innovative practices, and exemplary services.

As part of our own growth mindset, the department evaluates and, when possible, works to streamline initiatives or make other adjustments as needed. We are dedicated to a culture of continuous improvement through a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework. This approach supports the alignment, integration, and improvement of existing efforts, initiatives, and systems across all areas to provide educators and students with seamless services that address the academic and nonacademic needs of the whole child.

According to McIntosh and Goodman (2016), MTSS is the integration of several multiple-tiered systems into one coherent, strategically combined system meant to address multiple domains or content areas in education (e.g., literacy, mathematics, behavior, social-emotional competencies). It is critical that educators support students with quality instruction and effective systems changes that lead to high achievement outcomes for every student.

By collaborating with families, educators, and school leaders, Delaware can offer a multi-tiered system of support designed to be responsive to the needs of the whole child and provide opportunities for every student to reach his or her full potential in an inclusive and equitable learning environment. I am excited about the opportunities this framework provides and look forward to working together to support students, families, and educators in our efforts.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Bunting, EdD

Secretary of Education

Delaware Department of Education

Introduction

The Delaware Department of Education is committed to providing equitable educational opportunities that will prepare all students for success in college, career, and life. One key approach to meeting our vision of equitable opportunities is through Delaware's Multi-Tiered System of Support (DE-MTSS; Figure 1). This guide will assist district, charter, and school teams as they plan for and implement the DE-MTSS framework. The guide aligns with the DE-MTSS regulations and presents key information and actions to support implementation of DE-MTSS in districts, charters, and schools. This guide includes the following sections:

- Overview of the DE-MTSS Framework

- DE-MTSS Essential Components

- Implementing DE-MTSS

- Glossary

Figure 1. DE-MTSS Graphic
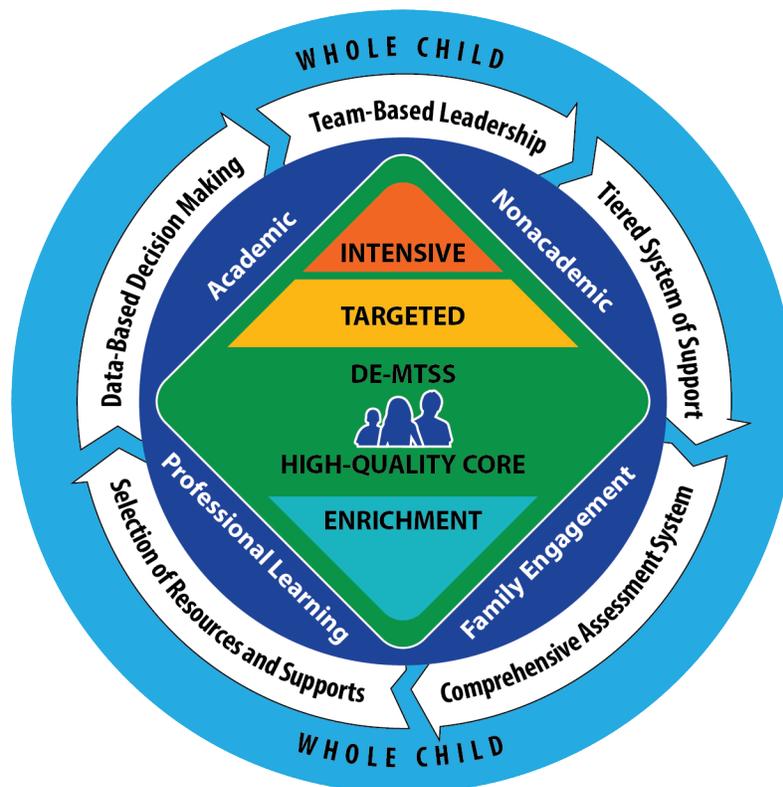
> ### *DE-MTSS Vision*
>
> *DE-MTSS provides a whole-child framework for all students to reach their full potential in a positive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. Through high-quality instruction and intervention — and a culture of collaboration, communication, and flexibility — parents, educators, and leaders work together to develop a responsive system of support that addresses the academic and nonacademic needs of all learners and boosts student performance.*

Overview of the DE-MTSS Framework

The DE-MTSS framework is designed to meet the needs of the whole child through an integrated, multilevel prevention system that optimizes team-based leadership and data-driven decision making to meet the academic and nonacademic[1] needs of all students. Educators provide high-quality, core academic instruction and nonacademic practices as universal supports to all children. School teams use a universal screening process to identify students who need additional help, and they deliver evidence-based interventions and supports that match student needs and are informed by ongoing progress monitoring and additional formative assessments.

The DE-MTSS framework aligns, organizes, and sustains the delivery of evidence-based instruction and interventions. To support improved whole child outcomes, DE-MTSS integrates academic (e.g., reading and mathematics) and nonacademic (e.g., behavior and social-emotional) systems, data, and practices. This integration is important because of the connections among academic performance, behavior, and social-emotional functioning. Furthermore, integrating academic and nonacademic systems increases efficiency, which helps districts, charters, and schools use resources more effectively to support all students and build educator capacity (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

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[1] Nonacademic refers to practices and instruction that contribute to valued outcomes not directly related to academic performance, such as positive behavior, social-emotional competence, mental health, and physical health.

A Whole-System Approach to Support the Whole Child

The DE-MTSS framework is reinforced through engagement with multiple stakeholders and levels of the education system to support all students. This whole-system approach follows the structure shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. DE-MTSS Whole System Approach

Source of technical support: Delaware Department of Education

The infrastructure: Districts and charters

The mechanism for change: Schools

Our purpose: Students and families

Note. Adapted from https://ocde.us/MTSS/Documents/CA%20MTSS%20Guide.pdf.
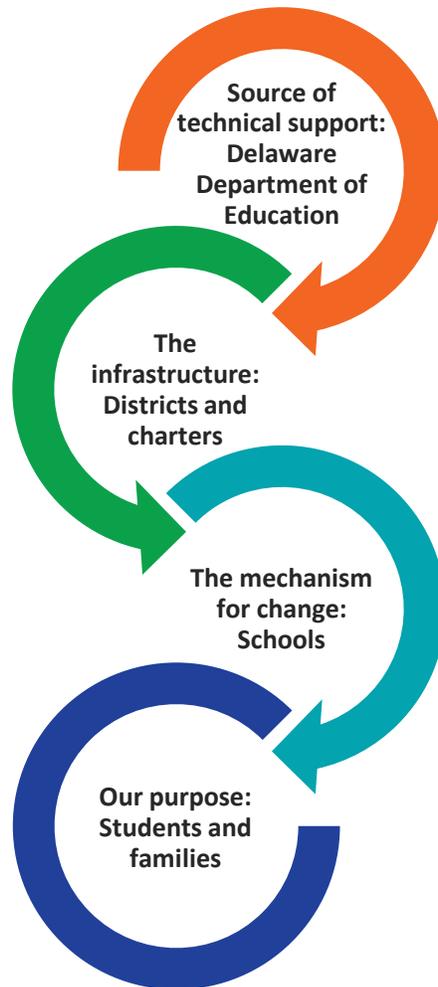
- **The Delaware Department of Education** provides guidance and technical support in the form of professional learning and job-embedded coaching to districts, charters, and schools.

- **Districts and charters** contribute the infrastructure for schools to deliver high-quality instruction and interventions efficiently and effectively. They ensure a sustainable system by setting the vision and goals, allocating resources, and removing barriers to teaching and learning.

- **Schools** deliver high-quality academic and nonacademic instruction and supports to promote positive outcomes for all students.

- **Students and families** are at the heart of the system, and student and family engagement is critical to success. DE-MTSS focuses on improving outcomes for all students and families in Delaware.

Tiers of Support in DE-MTSS

Within DE-MTSS, educators offer a continuum of instruction, practices, and interventions of varying intensity to meet the needs of all students. As shown in Figure 3, practices are organized into three tiers of support. It is important to note that tiers do not refer to a label, placement, or physical location of instruction. Rather, tiers describe a continuum of supports that educators provide to students based on their needs. Students with disabilities, English learners, and gifted students receive supports as appropriate throughout the tiers.

Figure 3. Tiers of Support in DE-MTSS
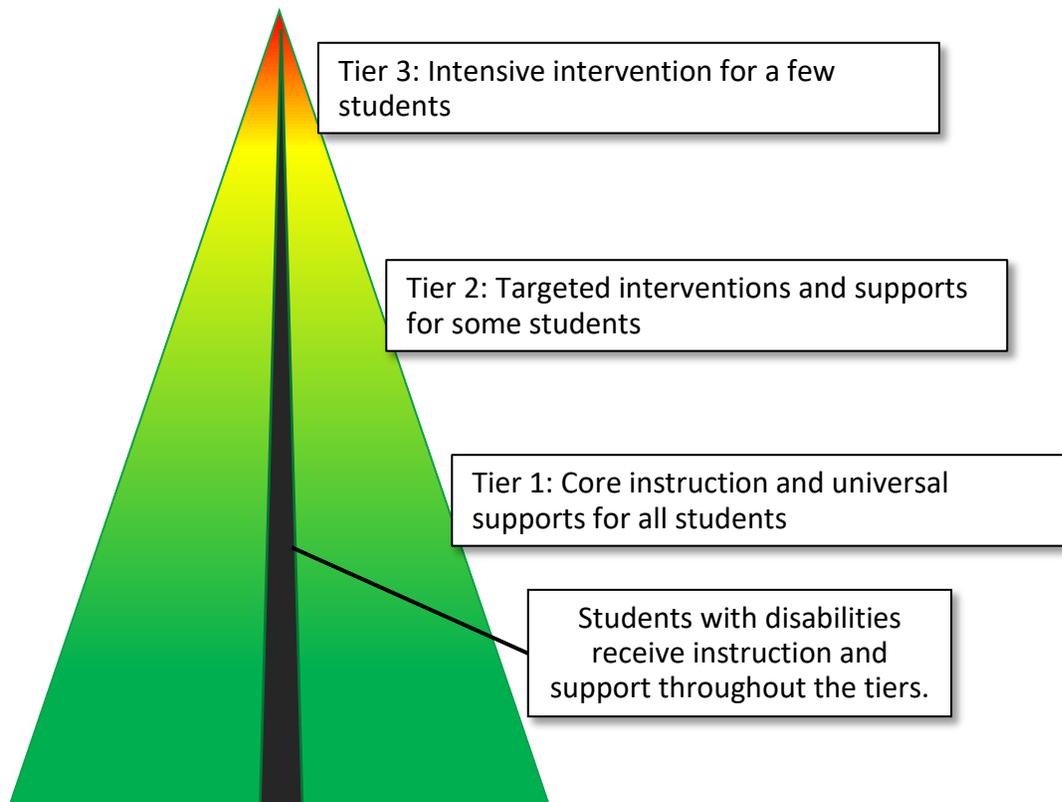
Tier 3: Intensive intervention for a few students

Tier 2: Targeted interventions and supports for some students

Tier 1: Core instruction and universal supports for all students

Students with disabilities receive instruction and support throughout the tiers.

- **Tier 1** is the core academic curriculum and nonacademic support that all students receive. Students with disabilities, English learners, and students who need additional intervention and supports participate fully in Tier 1. Within Tier 1, educators establish the schoolwide expectations for behavior and learning and use high-quality instructional materials and research-based practices that are aligned with state standards and implemented with fidelity. Tier 1 also includes the use of differentiated instruction and scaffolding to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

- **Tier 2** interventions and supports are for students who continue to struggle after receiving high-quality Tier 1 instruction. Tier 2 interventions and supports are targeted to students' needs and provide greater intensity (e.g., smaller group size, more practice opportunities) than Tier 1. Tier 2 supports are research based and delivered with fidelity. If a student's performance improves, the student may no longer require Tier 2 interventions and supports.

- **Tier 3** is for students who need the most intensive supports. Tier 3 interventions are highly individualized and intensive and should be delivered with fidelity. Tier 3 may include increased intensity through smaller group sizes, more instructional time, and increased use of explicit instruction. In Tier 3, educators frequently review progress monitoring data and make changes to the intervention based on what works for the student. If a student's performance improves, the student may no longer need Tier 3 interventions.

Within DE-MTSS, educators offer opportunities for enrichment for students who meet or exceed benchmarks or grade-level expectations for social, emotional, and behavioral skills. Examples of enrichment opportunities include deeper exploration of grade-level content, gifted and talented programs, Advanced Placement and honors coursework, and service projects.

Family Engagement in MTSS

Culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement is an important feature in the successful implementation of DE-MTSS. Research demonstrates that when families are engaged in their child's education, students have more positive outcomes (e.g., Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Including families in decision making at all levels of this system is critical. In some cases, districts, charters, and schools may include family representation on their MTSS leadership teams. These family representatives should represent the needs and priorities of all family members in the community.

The tiers of MTSS provide a structure for planning family engagement. Tier 1 supports for all families include ongoing two-way communication with educators, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and positive relationships with educators. For students requiring Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions, educators partner with families in a problem-solving process to identify student needs and design and deliver effective interventions. Effective supports for families within DE-MTSS include sharing information about the MTSS process with all families, sharing and interpreting student data with families, and giving families resources and assistance to create alignment between home and school. Table 1 describes actions that can support family engagement within DE-MTSS.

Table 1. Family Engagement in DE-MTSS

Element of family engagement	Actions to support family engagement
Family-centered planning	• Plan events with families' needs in mind. • Use a wide range of methods to communicate with families and increase family participation.
Active support from district/charter and school leaders	• Prioritize family engagement and allocate resources to support family engagement. • Include families when developing the district/charter vision for DE-MTSS. • Create family engagement resources and share information about the DE-MTSS framework with families.
Relevant and meaningful use of data	• Evaluate family engagement efforts at the district, charter, and school levels. • Share and interpret academic and nonacademic data with families, including screening and progress monitoring data.
Positive relationships	• Engage in ongoing, two-way communication with families. • Focus on student and family strengths when communicating with families. • Use cultural and linguistic responsiveness when communicating with families.
Multitiered approach	• Identify the supports that all families will receive. • Provide more intensive supports to families who do not respond initially to engagement efforts and for families of students receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. • Engage in collaborative problem solving with families when students experience academic or nonacademic difficulties.

Note. Adapted from https://flpbis.cbcs.usf.edu/foundations/FACE.html.

Universal Screening Process

A universal screening process is an important feature of the DE-MTSS framework that allows schools to proactively identify students at risk for academic and nonacademic difficulties. This process includes all students and should be conducted at least three times per year. Educators collect and review data from multiple sources to determine which students may need Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports. Data contributing to the universal screening process may come from screening measures/tools, grades, attendance, and behavioral referrals, among other sources. Screening measures should be brief, technically adequate, designed for repeated use, and have research-based cut scores for determining which students are at risk. In addition to informing decisions about individual students, school teams can use screening data to establish the overall effectiveness of core instruction and tiered interventions and supports.

The DE-MTSS regulations require school teams to engage in a screening process for all students within the first 4 weeks of the school year or within 4 weeks of the student's entry into school; however, the regulations do not require school teams to use a commercially published screening tool. Although published screening measures may provide educators with useful information to proactively identify students in need of additional supports and guide a range of other decisions, educators may choose to use other data sources to inform the universal screening process. Before purchasing a new academic or nonacademic screening tool, district or charter leadership teams should engage in a process to select and install any new universal screening measure so that it fits the local context and resources are allocated appropriately. For more information about the universal screening process in nonacademic areas, see the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a type of formative assessment that educators use to understand how well individual students or groups of students are responding to instruction or support. Progress monitoring assessments are given frequently, and the data allow educators to make timely decisions about whether an intervention or support is successful or if a change is needed. Progress monitoring tools are brief assessments that are sensitive to student growth; designed for repeated use; and reliable, valid, and evidence based. Academic progress monitoring measures include general outcome measures, such as curriculum-based measures, that assess students' progress on a broad set of skills, as well as single skill measures that assess

discrete skills. Nonacademic progress monitoring tools may include intervention-based measures, direct observations of student behavior, or direct behavior ratings.

It is essential to graph the data from progress monitoring measures to quickly determine if a student is making progress. Figures 4 and 5 present example progress monitoring graphs for academics and behavior.

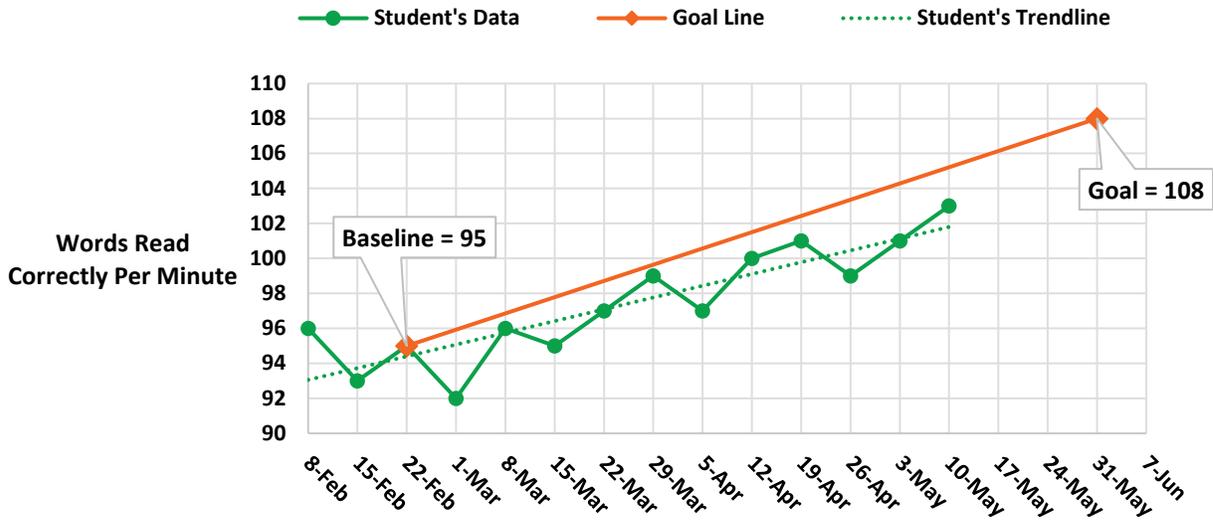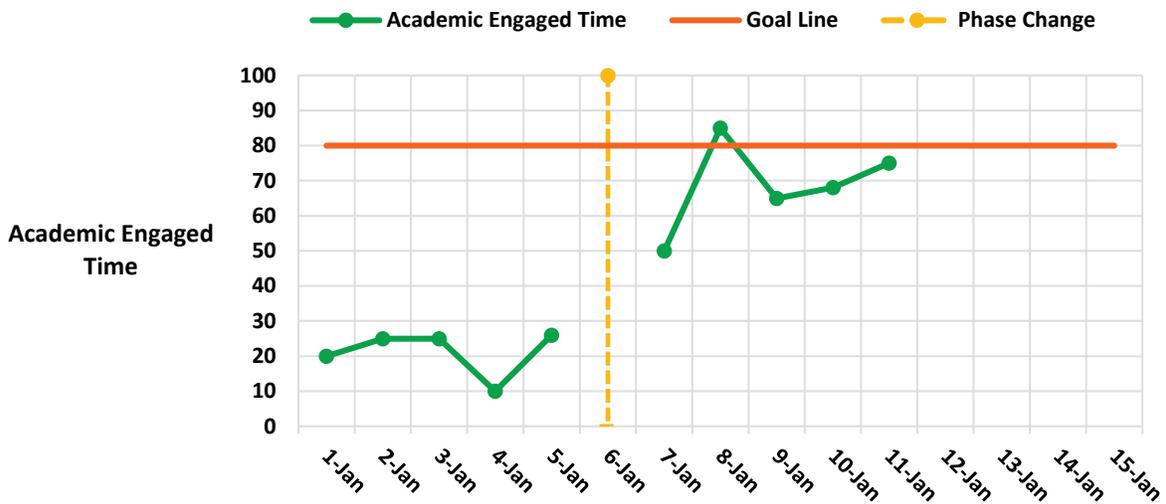**Figure 4. Example Academic Progress Monitoring Graph**

Figure 5. Example Behavior Progress Monitoring Graph

The steps for progress monitoring are as follows:

- **Establish a baseline**. A baseline refers to a student's initial performance on a skill or behavior.

- **Set a goal.** A goal should be set using a validated method and should be quantifiable, observable, and timebound.

- **Analyze data to make decisions.** Educators use decision rules to determine if students are responding to an intervention. An example of a decision rule is as follows: "After six to nine data points have been collected, if the student's trend line is flatter than the goal line, make a change to the intervention."

Fidelity of Implementation

Across the tiers of DE-MTSS, it is important to know if instruction and supports are put into practice as intended. We cannot expect students to benefit from an evidence-based practice if they did not receive it in the way it was shown to be effective in research studies. Fidelity of implementation data helps teams understand how consistently instruction and supports are delivered as intended and may include checklists, teacher logs, and observation tools.

Fidelity of implementation data assists teams with problem solving by allowing the team to exclude ineffective implementation as the cause for poor outcomes. In other words, if data show that a practice or program is implemented with fidelity, but the results are not improving, the team may then focus on other causes for the lack of improvement (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). It is important to remember that fidelity assessments are not evaluations of teachers and have a different purpose than accountability and administrative reviews (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). Fidelity can be assessed at the systems level as well as at the classroom and student levels and may be linked to specific curricula, interventions, or instructional practices.

DE-MTSS Essential Components

DE-MTSS includes the following five essential components:

- Data-based decision making

- Team-based leadership

- Tiered system of support

- Comprehensive assessment system

- Evaluation and selection of academic and nonacademic resources, supports, and interventions

Tables 2–6 present these essential components in more detail. Each table includes a definition and overview of the component as well as actions that school and district teams should consider when implementing DE-MTSS. Each action has two parts: readiness actions, which build the capacity to implement the essential component, and implementation actions, or procedures to support implementation of the essential component. The final section presents supplemental resources that provide more in-depth information about each component.

Table 2. Data-Based Decision Making

Element	Description
Definition	A process that uses all data relevant to the whole child to make informed decisions about academic and nonacademic instruction and supports. Data are used at multiple levels of the system to (a) guide the selection and implementation of core instruction and evidence-based intervention, (b) determine student responsiveness, and (c) guide the adaptation of intervention for students requiring additional supports. Data-based decision making requires a team approach to collect all applicable data and analyze, evaluate, and plan for improvement while engaging families throughout the process.
Overview	What is data-based decision making? • Ensures that all students have an appropriately challenging and culturally relevant learning environment. • Involves a variety of data sources (e.g., screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, fidelity, and outcome assessments) to understand individual and group strengths and needs, how systems operate, and how practices are implemented.

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Element	Description
	• Occurs on an ongoing basis throughout the school year to evaluate the effectiveness of core instruction and universal supports, Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and practices, and school- or districtwide MTSS implementation. • Includes an integrated approach to academic and nonacademic data to ensure that all student needs are considered when developing and implementing instruction, intervention, and supports.
Readiness actions	• Provide ongoing professional learning on collecting and analyzing screening, progress monitoring, social validity, and fidelity data and making decisions with the data (e.g., identifying class- or schoolwide needs, setting individual student goals, determining if a student is responding to an intervention). • Establish data-based decision rules for screening and progress monitoring data in collaboration with district/charter and school leadership teams. • Implement a district-/charter-wide data management system that allows the necessary personnel to access student-level academic and nonacademic data. • Develop processes for reviewing and analyzing data at the district/charter, school, grade, and student levels.
Implementation actions	• Use a problem-solving process that is operationalized with clear, established data-driven decision rules that are based on validated methods. • Analyze schoolwide data (e.g., fidelity data, aggregated student assessment data, school discipline data) at least monthly to determine the effectiveness of instruction and practices across the tiers. • Analyze student-level screening data at least three times per school year to determine which students require additional supports (i.e., Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions) and identify students who would benefit from planned enrichment opportunities and activities. • Review grade-level or content area data at least monthly to identify if changes are needed to core instruction and supports. • Analyze student-level progress monitoring data combined with intervention fidelity data frequently for students receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions to determine if the student is responding adequately to the intervention or if more intensive supports are needed. • Analyze diagnostic and/or functional data for students who require Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention to match the student to an appropriate intervention or identify strategies for intensifying the student's intervention.

Element	Description
Resources	Center on PBIS: Data-based Decision Making
	Data Rich, Information Poor? Making Sense of Progress Monitoring Data to Guide Intervention Decisions
	DE-PBS Program Development and Evaluation Tools
	DE-PBS Project Data Tool Summary
	Tools to Support Intensive Intervention Data Meetings
	Using Office Discipline Referrals as a Behavioral Screener: Considerations from NCII and the Center on PBIS
	Why Is Data and Data-Based Decision Making Such a Critical Part of Instruction and Intervention?

Table 3. Team-Based Leadership

Element	Description
Definition	Districts, charters, and schools use multiple teams and teaming structures to share decision making, distribute responsibility, and organize a coordinated MTSS. Within teams, members have unique roles and rely on data to inform training, coaching, resource selection/allocation, implementation, and the evaluation of educator activities to support the whole child.
Overview	What is team-based leadership within DE-MTSS? • Enhances the sustainability of MTSS implementation by distributing the workload, increasing efficiency, and developing capacity and knowledge among team members. • Occurs at multiple levels and may include the district/charter implementation team, the school leadership team, the grade-level team, and the student support team. • Allows for a collaborative approach to problem solving that accounts for multiple perspectives and increases buy-in from all staff. • Features effective teaming structures, including a clearly defined team purpose, meeting norms, structured agendas, and roles and responsibilities. • Integrates academic and nonacademic personnel when appropriate to ensure a focus on the needs of the whole child.

Element	Description
Readiness actions	• Review the DE-MTSS regulations to ensure that local MTSS practices align with the regulations. • Establish MTSS teams or align existing teams with MTSS priorities and functions (e.g., school improvement teams may take on the functions of the MTSS leadership team). Ensure that teams consist of individuals with the needed expertise and decision-making authority to operate successfully. • Define the purpose of each team and establish teaming structures, including roles and responsibilities, meeting norms, and structured agendas. • Develop processes for communication and collaboration across teams. • Establish problem-solving processes that teams will use to address challenges at both the individual student and the systems levels (i.e., grade level, school level). • Engage in professional learning, including training and coaching, on how to conduct efficient meetings and use a data-driven problem-solving process.
Implementation actions	• Use effective teaming processes (e.g., clear agendas and roles) to support efficient and effective meetings focused on relevant data analysis and decision making. • Use a data-driven problem-solving process to continuously improve implementation of instruction, practices, and supports across the system and guide timely decision making. • Communicate and collaborate with a range of personnel and stakeholders across the system (e.g., share action plan updates, gather feedback from parents, develop materials to support implementation). • Engage in professional learning, including training and coaching, to build awareness, knowledge, and skills related to MTSS.
Resources	Delaware Department of Education MTSS Regulations DE-PBS Program Development and Evaluation Tools Hexagon Tool How Can We Ensure IEP Teams Provide the Most Intensive Supports? Tools to Support Intensive Intervention Data Meetings The Roles and Functions of Leadership Teams Webinar What Building Teams Should Ask of their Districts (SCTG Webinar)

Table 4. Tiered System of Supports

Element	Description
Definition	The DE-MTSS framework includes a multilevel system of response that integrates academic and nonacademic supports to decrease school failure, maximize achievement, and meet the needs of the whole child. This layered approach provides support based on individual student need across three tiers.
Overview	What does a tiered system of support include? • A continuum of supports categorized as Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3; students are not categorized or labeled. • High-quality instructional materials and research-based curricula aligned with Delaware state standards. • Differentiated instruction and flexible grouping to address a range of student needs. • Proactively defined and taught behavioral and social-emotional expectations within a continuum of practices to encourage demonstration. • Evidence-based Tier 2 interventions and supports that are delivered with fidelity to students identified through a screening process as at risk for academic or nonacademic difficulties. • Intensive and individualized Tier 3 intervention for a small number of students who have not responded adequately to core instruction and Tier 2 intervention, as shown through progress monitoring data, or whose data demonstrate a need for Tier 3.
Readiness actions	• Define the systems, practices, programs, and data that will be used across tiers. • Create a plan for how to differentiate instruction and supports to meet the diverse needs of students. • Establish expectations related to instructional and behavioral routines that educators should use across tiers. • Provide professional learning on strategies for intensifying interventions and supports based on students' needs. • Include content-specific professional learning to support teachers in their skillful use of materials and practices. • Develop a two-way process for communicating with families regarding a student's need for, and progress in, an intervention.

Element	Description
Implementation actions	• Provide high-quality, research-based core academic instruction and universal nonacademic supports. • Differentiate academic instruction and nonacademic supports within Tier 1, including planned enrichment opportunities. • Deliver evidence-based interventions and supports with fidelity to students who meet the school's decision rule criteria for Tier 2. • Provide intensive and individualized intervention to students who do not make adequate progress in Tier 2 or meet other criteria for receiving Tier 3 supports. • Communicate with families regarding students' need for interventions and supports and share progress monitoring data with families. • Identify barriers and continuously refine implementation to meet the ongoing needs of students and staff. • Integrate ongoing professional learning and coaching for educators to support their skillful use of materials and practices across tiers.
Resources	Achieve the Core Common Core State Standards DE-PBS Tier 1 (Training / Forms & Tools) DE-PBS Tier 2 (Training / Forms & Tools) DE-PBS Tier 3 (Training / Forms & Tools) Standards-Relevant Instruction & Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Response to Intervention (RTI) Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers Universal Design for Learning What Is Intensive Intervention? What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides

Table 5. Comprehensive Assessment System

Element	Description
Definition	A comprehensive assessment system uses a balance of formative and summative assessments, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring measures, each being valid and reliable for its intended purpose and administered at specific intervals or as needed. All assessments within the system help educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions based on the strengths and needs of the whole child, while providing families with regular updates on student progress.
Overview	What is a comprehensive assessment system? • Produces actionable data to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and the extent to which students are progressing toward academic and nonacademic goals. • Includes both informal assessments and processes (e.g., analysis of existing progress monitoring data) and formal tools (e.g., norm-referenced tools). • Informs programmatic decisions about core instruction and universal practices and interventions. • Provides information to support the identification of students who may be at risk for academic and nonacademic difficulties. • Informs student-level problem solving for students identified as at risk, which may include collecting and analyzing diagnostic data.
Readiness actions	• Develop a screening process for academic and nonacademic outcomes that effectively identifies students who are at risk and require additional support. • Conduct an inventory of current tools and determine if additional measures are needed for an effective screening and progress monitoring process. • Select tools that demonstrate technical adequacy and are appropriate for the context and priorities of the school, district, or charter. • Provide professional learning on implementing assessments with fidelity and periodically offer refresher trainings.

Element	Description
Implementation actions	• Use a universal screening process within the first 4 weeks of the school year, or within 4 weeks of the student's entry into school, to identify students at risk for academic and nonacademic difficulties. • Conduct a second stage of screening to increase the likelihood that students identified as at risk in the first stage of the screening process are truly in need of additional interventions and supports. • Use progress monitoring to determine if students receiving intervention are responding adequately to instruction and supports across tiers. • Include diagnostic and functional assessments to determine specific areas of need for individual students receiving intervention and identify strategies for intensifying their intervention. • Conduct universal screening at least three times during the school year.
Resources	Academic and Behavior Screening and Progress Monitoring Tools Charts Center on PBIS: Assessments Delaware Balanced Assessment System Series Delaware Balanced Assessment System Infographic DE-PBS Top Ten Questions About Universal Screening Diagnostic and Mastery Assessment in Reading Ensuring Fidelity of Assessment and Data Entry Procedures Understanding Screening: What Do the Technical Standards Mean?

Table 6. Evaluation and Selection of Academic and Nonacademic Resources, Supports, and Interventions

Element	Description
Definition	Within a tiered system, district, charter, and school leaders work collaboratively to provide the necessary resources and support for the evaluation, selection, and implementation of high-quality academic and nonacademic instructional resources and evidence-based interventions. The evaluation and selection processes consider student needs and are linguistically and culturally responsive. Throughout the process, established procedures assess effectiveness and alignment with district programs and initiatives. Districts, charters, and schools provide families with information on the tiered system of supports and work collaboratively on ways to support student success.
Overview	What does evaluation and selection of academic and nonacademic resources, supports, and interventions involve? • A range of stakeholders, such as core content teachers, content specialists/coaches, related service providers, families, and interventionists, in the evaluation and selection process. • Resource inventories and needs assessments, which help teams identify areas in which additional resources are needed. • Interpretation and evaluation of research evidence that supports educational materials. • Establishment of the goals and outcomes for resources, supports, and interventions. • Creation of plans for professional learning and coaching to support effective implementation of resources, supports, and interventions.
Readiness actions	• Provide professional learning on the evaluation and selection of resources, supports, and interventions. • Allocate resources needed for evaluating and selecting resources, supports, and interventions. • Conduct an inventory of current programs, practices, interventions, and supports used across tiers. • Review academic and nonacademic data to determine needs and priorities.

Element	Description
Implementation actions	• Engage a range of stakeholders in the process of selecting resources, supports, and interventions. • Consider the alignment of resources with current initiatives and priorities. • Review the evidence of effectiveness of resources, supports, and interventions using tools such as EdReports; What Works Clearinghouse; National Center for Intensive Intervention Tools Charts; the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning; and the Best Evidence Encyclopedia. • Provide training and professional learning, including coaching support. • Develop processes for monitoring and evaluating the fidelity of implementation of selected resources, supports, and interventions.
Resources	Curriculum Support Guide Evidence for ESSA [Every Student Succeeds Act] Hexagon Tool Navigating Evidence-Based Practice Resource Websites Online Module Targeted Nonacademic Interventions Handout • Tier 2 Interventions: General • Tier 2 Interventions: Internalizing Behaviors • Tier 2 Interventions: Externalizing Behaviors

Implementing DE-MTSS

Achieving improved whole-child outcomes through MTSS requires a focus on high-quality implementation as well as the use of effective practices. School and district/charter infrastructure and systems are critical to successfully implement quality instruction, supports, and interventions. The active implementation formula shown in Figure 6 highlights the components necessary to achieve improved outcomes. In addition to effective practices, educators at all levels of the system must focus on effective implementation and enabling contexts to create improved outcomes for students. The multiplication symbols are meant to convey the importance of each component in the formula. If practices, implementation, or contexts equal zero, then it is not possible to have improved outcomes.

Figure 6. Active Implementation Formula

Note. Adapted from https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/module-3/topic-3/function-3.

Implementation Teams

Implementation teams play a significant role in leading MTSS implementation efforts and ensuring that MTSS is implemented with fidelity. Team members work together to coordinate MTSS implementation at the district, charter, school, grade, and classroom levels. Communication and collaboration both within and among teams is essential to effective MTSS implementation. Teams help sustain MTSS by distributing responsibilities among personnel and building the capacity of all team members. Rather than forming new teams, in some cases existing teams may be repurposed to align with the functions of the teams described in this section (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). The number of teams and the membership of each team will vary depending on the needs of the district, charter, and school. Figure 7 shows one possible structure for MTSS teams, wherein the teams are nested within each other to emphasize the collaborative nature of teams within the system.

Figure 7. Sample Structure of MTSS Teams
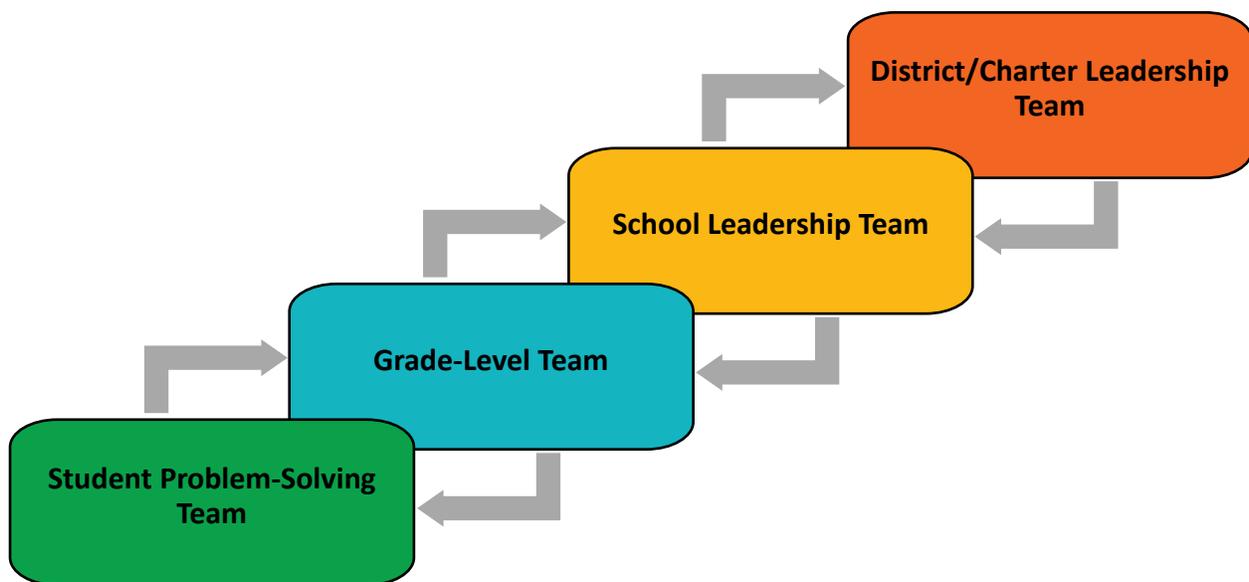
Effective teams use teaming structures that allow for efficient and organized meetings and problem solving. Teams should establish a clear purpose, have meeting norms and agendas, and identify roles and responsibilities of team members.

1. The **district/charter leadership team** provides the vision, long-term planning, and infrastructure to support schools in implementing MTSS. Team members may include district/charter leadership and coaches with knowledge, skills, and experience in implementing MTSS and family and community representatives.

2. The **school leadership team** leads and coordinates MTSS implementation at the school. Rather than focusing on individual student-level problem solving, this team uses data to understand if schoolwide programs and practices are improving academic and nonacademic outcomes for all students. Team members may include the principal, specialists in academic and nonacademic areas, general and special education teachers, and leaders from various grade levels.

3. **Grade-level or content area teams** (also called professional learning communities) focus on using data to inform the instruction and supports that all students receive in that grade level or content area. Grade-level teams may include the principal, instructional coaches, special education teachers, all general education teachers for the grade level, and paraprofessionals supporting the grade level.

4. The **student problem-solving team** focuses on students needing intervention and supports beyond those delivered to all students as part of Tier 1. Team members may include special educators, content specialists, counselors, social workers, English learner teachers, and school psychologists. The team focuses on Tier 2 and Tier 3 systems (e.g., decision rules for determining responsiveness to an intervention) in addition to individual student problem solving (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). This team may include a subcommittee, such as a child study team, that plans and coordinates intervention for individual students with intensive needs.

Table 7 describes the membership and functions of common teams in MTSS.

Table 7. Sample Membership and Functions of MTSS Teams

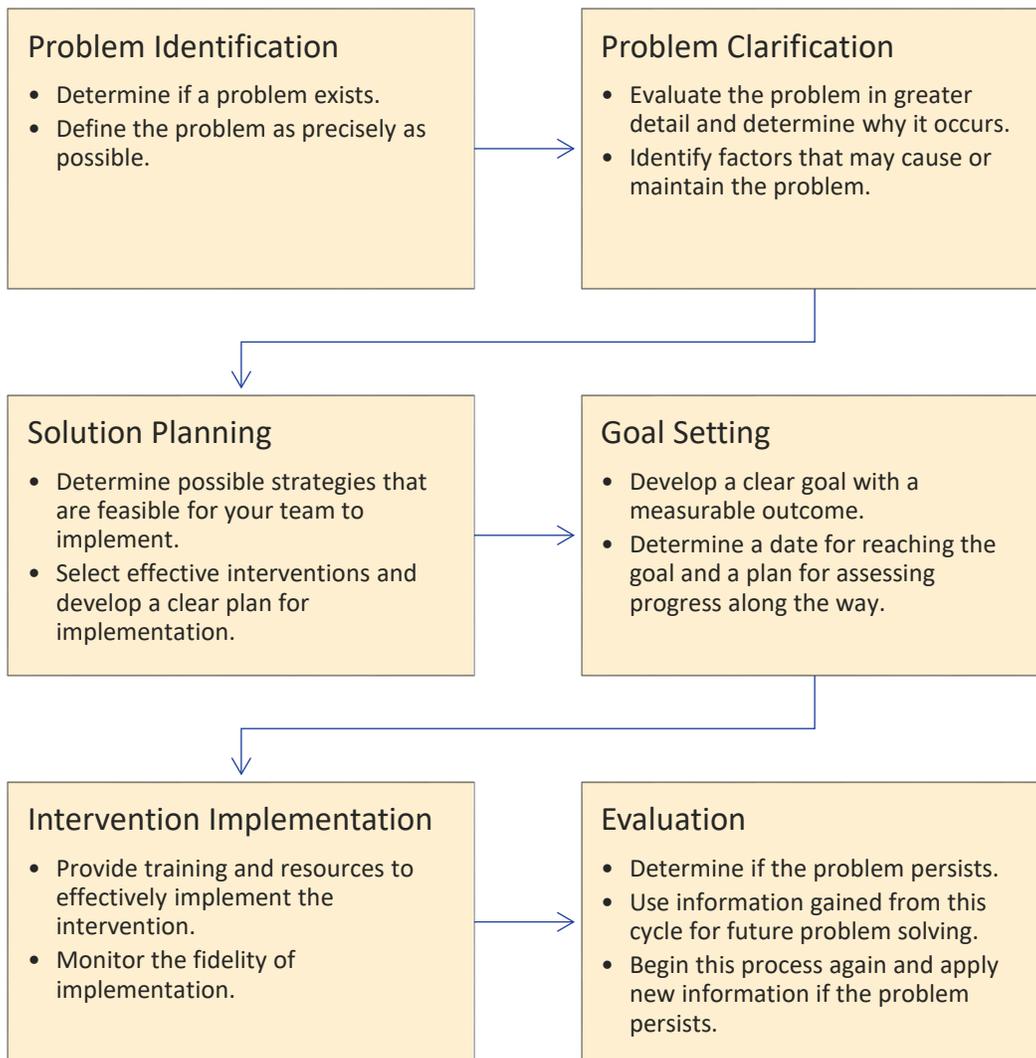| MTSS team	Sample membership	Functions
District/charter implementation team	District/charter leadership and coaches with knowledge, skills, and experience in implementing MTSS and academic and nonacademic expertise	• Use district/charter data to conduct long-term action planning (e.g., 3–5 years). • Evaluate fidelity of MTSS implementation and effects of MTSS systems. • Identify trainers, coaches, data coordinators, and content specialists to support schools. • Secure and allocate resources to support implementation with fidelity. • Ensure communication to the school community and among various teams.
School leadership team	Principal, instructional coaches, general and special educators, English learner teachers, school psychologists	• Work closely with the district or charter MTSS team to identify successes and challenges with MTSS implementation and plan supports at the school level. • Develop and monitor an annual action plan informed by MTSS fidelity of implementation and student outcome data. • Monitor the fidelity of Tier 1 instruction and supports. • Analyze aggregated student data to determine the effectiveness of instruction and supports across the tiers.
Grade-level team	Principal, instructional coaches, special education teacher, general education teachers, paraprofessionals	• Examine screening data at least three times per year and compare the data to grade-level benchmarks to identify class-wide needs that should be addressed through instruction and supports. • Use universal screening data to create flexible groups for differentiated instruction. • Analyze nonacademic data (e.g., office discipline referrals, attendance data) to evaluate the effectiveness of class-wide supports and practices. • Plan modifications to class-wide instruction and supports based on data.

MTSS team	Sample membership	Functions
Student problem-solving team	Special education teachers, classroom teachers, content specialists, counselors, social workers, school psychologists	• Use screening data to identify the students needing intervention. • Design intervention plans for individual students. • Coordinate a student-level team, such as a child study team. • Use individual student progress monitoring data to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention and determine when to make changes to student intervention plans. • Analyze diagnostic and functional data to identify individual student needs as part of the problem-solving process.

Note. Adapted from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/relwestFiles/pdf/UMTSS_Handbook.pdf, https://mimtsstac.org/teams-roles, and McIntosh and Goodman (2016).

Problem-Solving Process

Throughout DE-MTSS, teams use a data-based problem-solving process to continuously improve MTSS implementation and address challenges at the school, grade, and student levels. A continuous improvement process helps teams address barriers to successful implementation of DE-MTSS. A variety of problem-solving models can be used within an MTSS framework, including a Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle and the Team-Initiated Problem Solving model. The process outlined in Figure 8 presents a structure that teams across tiers, grades, and content areas can use in supporting groups and individual students. All available academic and nonacademic data should inform each step of the problem-solving process.

Figure 8. Six-Step Problem-Solving Process

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Problem Identification

- Determine if a problem exists.
- Define the problem as precisely as possible.

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Problem Clarification

- Evaluate the problem in greater detail and determine why it occurs.
- Identify factors that may cause or maintain the problem.

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Solution Planning

- Determine possible strategies that are feasible for your team to implement.
- Select effective interventions and develop a clear plan for implementation.

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Goal Setting

- Develop a clear goal with a measurable outcome.
- Determine a date for reaching the goal and a plan for assessing progress along the way.

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Intervention Implementation

- Provide training and resources to effectively implement the intervention.
- Monitor the fidelity of implementation.

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Evaluation

- Determine if the problem persists.
- Use information gained from this cycle for future problem solving.
- Begin this process again and apply new information if the problem persists.

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Note. Adapted from McIntosh and Goodman (2016).

Implementation Stages

Implementing MTSS is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Research indicates that full implementation of a large-scale effort, such as MTSS, generally requires 3–4 years of focused efforts. Furthermore, implementation moves through defined stages, each with a different focus and associated activities. The five stages of implementation are exploration, installation, initial implementation, elaboration, and continuous regeneration (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Figure 9 shows the stages.

Figure 9. Implementation Stages
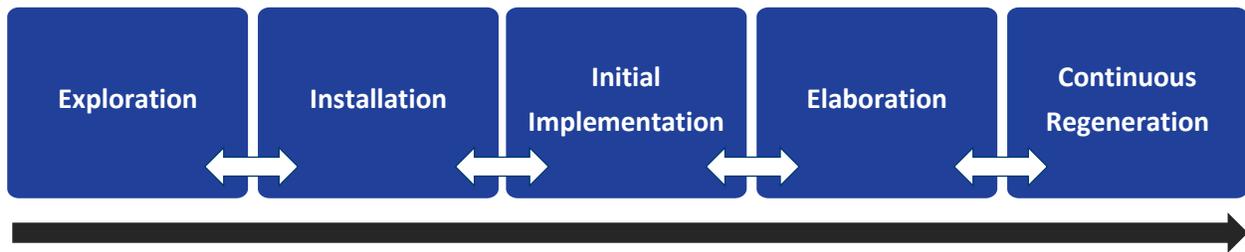
The stages of implementation define activities that should be completed during each stage. In the exploration stage, educators and leaders build readiness and commitment for MTSS within the district, charter, or school and build an understanding of implementation requirements. In the installation stage, educators and leaders form MTSS leadership teams and plan for implementation. In the initial implementation stage, educators and leaders begin implementation on a small scale and offer support to initial implementers. In the elaboration stage, educators and leaders expand practices to new sites, grade levels, or content areas or other domains and make adjustments based on data from initial implementation. In the continuous regeneration stage, educators and leaders focus on establishing more efficient and effective systems and making adjustments to create better alignment with current contexts (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Table 8 describes each stage of implementation and indicates activities that may be completed at each stage.

Table 8. Activities to Support MTSS Implementation Across the Stages of Implementation

Stage of implementation	Sample activities
Exploration	• Review the Delaware MTSS regulations. • Collect and analyze data on current student outcomes to determine needs. • Build an understanding of MTSS practices. • Articulate the district/charter vision for MTSS.
Installation	• Establish leadership teams to engage in data review and action plan development. • Complete an inventory of current teams, instructional materials, practices, and assessment tools in use. • Create a plan to provide professional learning on MTSS. • Develop and/or acquire materials needed for implementation.

Stage of implementation	Sample activities
Initial implementation	• Collect baseline student outcome data. • Build capacity through professional development and resources. • Collect fidelity and outcome data. • Adjust the plan in response to data.
Elaboration	• Identify model sites. • Examine fidelity. • Analyze student outcome data. • Improve practices. • Expand to other content areas and/or grade levels. • Extend to other school sites.
Continuous regeneration	• Use fidelity and outcome data to improve implementation. • Enhance and refine professional development and teaming activities. • Increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Note. Adapted from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/relwestFiles/pdf/UMTSS_Handbook.pdf.

Professional Learning

Ongoing professional learning is essential to support school personnel in effectively implementing MTSS. Professional learning includes both training and coaching with a focus on improving educator capacity to implement effective practices. District and charter implementation teams, rather than school teams, typically organize and coordinate professional learning. Evaluation of professional learning allows leadership teams to use data to inform continuous improvement when planning future professional learning.

Training

Training builds knowledge and awareness of key ideas and develops the initial skills needed to implement a new practice or strategy. Providing targeted training, including a variety of content and varying levels of intensity, will help meet the needs of specific personnel within the system. To build the knowledge and skills needed to implement MTSS with fidelity, leadership teams

▪ allow adequate time for training on MTSS and ensure that professional learning plans align with MTSS;

- provide content- and material-specific training to support the implementation of curricula, supports, and practices;

- conduct district-/charter-wide introductory MTSS trainings for new staff and new administrators;

- ensure that the purposes and outcomes of training are well defined for each training session; and

- ensure that training incorporates principles of adult learning, promotes a positive learning environment, and uses active engagement strategies.

Coaching

Coaching provides in-depth and focused support to enable educators to incorporate the new practices into their own context and gain fluency with the practice. To support effective coaching systems, leadership teams

- coordinate job-embedded coaching to assist educators in implementing MTSS with fidelity;

- ensure that coaches use effective coaching practices, including observation, modeling, performance feedback, and alliance building to support educators in building on strengths and addressing gaps in practice; and

- identify opportunities for coaches to enhance their skills, including through training and collaborating with other coaches.

Table 9 provides criteria for effective professional learning that teams may consider when developing professional learning plans.

Table 9. Criteria for Effective Professional Learning

Component of professional learning	Criteria
Practices	• Focus on evidence-based programs and practices that are effective in the classroom. • Create sufficient capacity for some degree of immediate implementation.
Delivery	• Deliver high-quality professional learning, likely to improve student achievement and nonacademic outcomes, and support improved teacher performance. • Allow adult learners to meaningfully engage with the content presented through exploration of theory, discussion, feedback, reflection, self-assessment, and identification of next steps.
Coaching	• Support the adoption of new skills through ongoing planning and goal setting between the teacher and the coach, with analysis and reflection on effective practices. • Provide feedback and technical assistance on-site and in real time.
Evaluation	• Evaluate participant satisfaction, participant learning, organizational support/change, and participants' use of new knowledge and skills. • Validate effective professional learning efforts to inform improvements.

Note. Adapted from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/relwestFiles/pdf/UMTSS_Handbook.pdf.

Conclusion

DE-MTSS offers a whole-child framework for all students to reach their full potential in a positive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. Implementing DE-MTSS is an ongoing process that requires sustained commitment from personnel at all levels of the system. The Delaware Department of Education is committed to supporting districts, charters, and schools in implementing DE-MTSS to improve academic and nonacademic outcomes for all students. The information in this guide will help district, charter, and school MTSS teams build essential knowledge and create a common language to support MTSS implementation across Delaware.

Glossary

Browse this glossary to learn the vocabulary terms commonly encountered in the implementation of MTSS.

Academic

Academic refers to content areas such as English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Core Instruction and Universal Practices (Tier 1)

Tier 1 is the core academic curriculum and nonacademic support that all students receive. Students with disabilities, English learners, and students in need of additional intervention and supports participate fully in Tier 1. Within Tier 1, educators establish the schoolwide expectations for behavior and learning and use high-quality instructional materials and research-based practices aligned with state standards and implemented with fidelity. Tier 1 also includes the use of differentiated instruction and scaffolding to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Data

Information used to select, monitor, and evaluate outcomes, practices, and systems. Within DE-MTSS, educators use a variety of data sources (e.g., screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome assessments) to understand individual and group strengths and needs, how systems operate, and how practices are implemented.

Diagnostic Assessment

Assessments that provide in-depth information about an individual learner's specific skills, needs, and/or assets for the purpose of guiding future supports. Diagnostic assessment tools can be either informal, which are easy-to-use tools that can be administered with little training, or standardized, which must be delivered in a standard and consistent manner by trained staff.

Equity

The term "equity" refers to the idea that every student in any classroom in any public school in Delaware has the same opportunity as any other student to be taught by a great teacher who is supported by a great leader.

Evidence Based

Evidence-based practices are "practices and programs shown by high-quality research to have a meaningful effect on student outcomes" (Cook & Odom, 2013, p. 136).

Fidelity

Fidelity of implementation refers to the accurate and consistent delivery of instruction or assessment in the way it was designed or prescribed according to research findings and/or developers' specifications. Fidelity measures assess how consistently educators are implementing practices as intended.

Formative Assessment

Assessments used by educators to monitor student progress and guide instructional decision making.

Framework

An essential supporting structure underlying a system. The term "framework" solidifies the communication that MTSS is not just a single practice or initiative that a district or school would support; rather, it is a structure that organizes the implementation of evidence-based practices and high-quality instruction.

Implementation

"A specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions. According to this definition, implementation processes are purposeful and described in sufficient detail such that independent observers can detect the presence and strength of the 'specific set of activities' related to implementation" ([Active Implementation Research Network](), as cited in Fixsen et al., 2005, p. 5).

Nonacademic

Nonacademic refers to practices and instruction that contribute to valued outcomes not directly related to academic performance, such as positive behavior, social-emotional competence, and mental health.

Outcomes

Academic and nonacademic targets that are specified, endorsed, emphasized, and monitored because of their social and educational significance.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring assesses students' performance across time to (a) quantify student rates of improvement, (b) evaluate the effectiveness of instruction or supports, and (c) for students who are least responsive to effective instruction or supports to formulate effective individualized programs.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment evaluates student learning at the end of an instructional unit. Summative assessments occur after instruction has occurred and assess student learning.

Tier 2

Tier 2 interventions and supports are for students who continue to struggle after receiving high-quality Tier 1 instruction. Tier 2 interventions and supports target students' needs and provide greater intensity (e.g., smaller group size, more practice opportunities) than Tier 1. Tier 2 supports are research based and can be delivered with fidelity. If a student's performance improves, the student may no longer require Tier 2 interventions and supports.

Tier 3 (Intensive Intervention)

Tier 3 is for students who need the most intensive supports. Tier 3 interventions are highly individualized and intensive and should be delivered with fidelity. Tier 3 may include increased intensity through smaller group sizes, more instructional time, and increased use of explicit instruction. In Tier 3, educators frequently review progress monitoring data and make changes to the intervention based on what works for the student. If a student's performance improves, the student may no longer need Tier 3 intervention.

Universal Screening Process

A universal screening process will identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor academic and nonacademic outcomes. Teams may use a wide range of data, including existing data, to inform the universal screening process. Data to inform universal screening may come from published screening measures, grades, attendance, and behavioral referrals among other sources.

Whole Child

Educating the whole child means attending to the cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and talent development of children and youth from widely diverse backgrounds.

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