

# Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework (MTSS)

MTSS is a term that is being used with increasing frequency across the country to define a proactive prevention framework that organizes district and building-level resources to accommodate all students via early identification of learning and behavior challenges. This early identification allows for timely intervention services for students who are at risk of not meeting grade-level benchmarks, and it identifies students in need of advanced academic services. A Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework is an integrated, multi-tiered **system of instruction, assessment, and intervention** designed to meet the academic achievement and behavioral needs of all students. Although not all MTSS structures use three tiers, it is easy to think of “**All**” (Core) students, “**Some**” (Strategic) students and “**Few**” (Intensive) students. The Washington State Comprehensive Literacy Plan ([CLP](#)) recommends a multi-level plan for literacy instruction. This recommended model is aligned with the National Center on Response to Intervention and uses **differentiated instruction** with flexible grouping. The plan also includes specific district, school, and classrooms practices within the following components (CLP 2012, p. 26-33).

- **Core Program:** All students receive quality core instruction covering all areas of literacy development.
- **Strategic Instruction:** Supplemental instruction in small groups in addition to Core instruction.
- **Intensive Intervention:** Targeted intervention to help make breakthrough progress towards state content standards for students needing additional support students.

An MTSS framework is an evidenced-based process that emphasizes **data-based decision-making**. The **instruction, assessment, and intervention** are delivered to students with **varying intensity** based upon **student need**. As an Issue Brief from National Center for Learning Disabilities (n.d.) notes, “Research and current practices show that schools and districts engaging in aligning resources, promoting greater collaboration, and striving to serve students through a rigorous MTSS when they first struggle academically and behaviorally leads to gains in reading... scores for all students” (p. 1). Further, a meta-analytic study of four approaches to MTSS (Burns, et al., 2005) indicated that this kind of instructional framework has a positive effect on student achievement.

An effective MTSS is instrumental in the development of a systematic K-4 approach to support struggling students. MTSS offers a framework for coordinating core and supplemental instruction based on evidence-based practices to meet the needs of each student. A good MTSS includes **strong initial core instruction** with ongoing and **frequent monitoring** of student progress through a **comprehensive assessment system**.

## [Evidenced-Based Practices/Curriculum/Instructional Materials](#)

An effective MTSS system is grounded in starting with **strong core instruction** for all students meeting the instructional needs of at least 80 percent of students. It is committed to establishing and sustaining a positive school climate.

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## Data-Based Decision Making

Decisions are based upon **evidence**. This includes decisions about individual students and how the MTSS is developed and implemented. There needs to be a **feedback process** developed that routinely reviews the effectiveness of MTSS.

## Comprehensive Assessment System

The components of a comprehensive assessment system include: **universal screening** (benchmark assessments), **progress monitoring**, **diagnostic assessments**, and strong **formative assessment** processes. For each of these components, it is important that **established protocols** are followed for all formal assessments, that **decision rules** are in place for students not making satisfactory progress, and that instructional/data teams receive **sufficient training to support for implementing all components** of the process and associated assessments.

As per the National Advisory Panel convened by the [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium](#), formative assessment, "...is a deliberate process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides actionable feedback that is used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve students' attainment of curricular learning targets/goals." The **formative assessment process** should consist of four critical attributes that operate in a cyclical process:

- clarification of intended learning;
- elicitation of evidence;
- interpretation of evidence; and
- acting on evidence.

## MTSS Implementation Fidelity

For successful implementation of MTSS, intervention(s) must be **well defined** and **planned**. The following acts as a guide for implementation: training for implementers, coaching for implementers, measure of fidelity (checklist), and use of fidelity data (in written report) for review of program(s).

"Fidelity of implementation" addresses the question of whether the **intervention strategy was delivered as it was intended** (according to the implementation plan, not a specific program). The components of fidelity include **intensity**, **duration**, and **frequency**. Fidelity has been increasingly emphasized and is now viewed as an essential component to successful implementation of an initiative or program. Without attention to fidelity of implementation, "it cannot be determined whether the outcomes are attributable to the intervention, influences of unknown variables, or the failure to implement the intervention as designed" (Dumas et al., 2001). Additionally, there is increasingly clear evidence that interventions implemented with fidelity are associated with better outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).