



## Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

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### How do schools use an MTSS Framework to support the whole child?

Dr. Rob Horner, Professor Emeritus and Director, Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, University of Oregon, during his closing remarks at the 2018 PBIS Forum in Chicago, Illinois, stated, "If we are committed to educating all students, then we are logically obligated to provide multiple tiers of support." Consistent with the approach of many districts in Washington, Kent McIntosh and Steve Goodman in their book, *Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Blending RTI and PBIS*, describe MTSS as "the integration of multiple-tiered systems into once coherent, strategically combined system meant to address multiple domains or content areas in education." To successfully meet the needs of the whole child we need a well-defined operating system to run all the programs, practices, initiatives, supports within to connect and integrate the support to students as a seamless whole, instead of viewing tiered systems separately and fragmented.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's Menu of Best Practices includes an entry in the front matter of the publication of all three menus (Math, ELA, and Behavior) on MTSS. MTSS is a service delivery framework focused on problem solving and prevention for all students. MTSS connects all of the academic and nonacademic interventions, supports, and services available in schools and communities to support instruction and eliminate barriers to learning and teaching. Multiple levels of instruction, assessment, and intervention are designed to support the academic and non-academic needs of ALL students within the MTSS framework. The essential components identified in the Washington MTSS Framework include core instruction, a tiered continuum of evidence-based interventions and supports (Tier 1, 2, 3), universal screening and progress monitoring, data-based decision making, family engagement and community partnerships and creating and maintaining the infrastructure to support an integrated MTSS Framework.

Within an MTSS framework, educators use data-informed practices to support student outcomes while also establishing and sustaining a positive school climate. An MTSS framework should be designed to promote collaboration among educators and professional learning across schools/districts. While the number of tiers of support outlined for any given MTSS model may vary, a three-tiered theory of action framework is standard. Common tiered frameworks in Washington include Response to Intervention (RTI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Within a multitiered framework, the tiers refer to supports students receive rather than students. In a three-tiered framework, all students receive tier 1 instruction, some students receive tier 2 services/support, and a small number of students receive tier 3 services/support. Normally, tier 3 academic services in an MTSS model are for both highly capable students and students who have not yet met grade-level expectations.

Tier 1 is for all students and is designed to meet the needs of at least 80 percent of the student population. Differentiated instruction during core learning time is the first response for students who have not yet met academic and non-academic goals. Tier 2 is for students who need additional support to meet academic and nonacademic goals. A standard assessment plan and clear criteria are necessary for successfully entering and exiting students from tier 2 interventions. Supports should be designed to quickly screen for and target students who need extra instruction or services to get back on track. This level typically addresses the needs of

around 15 percent of a student population. Tier 3 is for interventions that are individualized and intensive. Tier 3 interventions may take longer for students to meet learning goals. When tier 1 and tier 2 are implemented well, tier 3 typically addresses the needs of about five percent of a student population. Tier 3 supports are available for ALL students, as opposed to the common misunderstanding that they are reserved for students in special education.

An effective MTSS system is grounded in strong evidence-based instruction that is designed to meet the educational needs of at least 80 percent of students. If more than 20 percent of students are not meeting grade-level education expectations, then core instructional design and strategies should be re-evaluated. When students are not meeting their learning goals in the general education classroom, school improvement teams meet to discuss the best approach to provide effective differentiated instruction in the core curricula and interventions through a systematic support framework.

A comprehensive assessment system includes universal screening, diagnostic data collection, formative assessment processes, and progress monitoring. For each of these components, it is important to ensure protocols are followed for all formal assessments, decision rules are in place for students not making satisfactory progress, and training is sufficiently delivered to instructional/data teams to support implementation of the comprehensive system. It is also important to recognize that different types of assessments are useful for different purposes. The key is to ensure the results of an assessment are used for the intended purpose and not extrapolated or misused otherwise. For example, confusion between universal screening and diagnostic assessment can lead to misuse of results from screening measures. For more information about a comprehensive assessment system see [OSPI's Menu of Best Practices](#).

There are many approaches to support student achievement and eliminate barriers to learning and teaching. To effectively, efficiently, and equitably meet the unique and multiple needs of students, it is important to have a coherent, unified system that takes a holistic approach to simultaneously address the academic and non-academic (such as physical, behavioral, social, and emotional) needs of students. Integrated approaches reduce silos and duplication while making better use of resources and ensuring students experience support seamlessly.

## References

Horner, R. (2018, October). *Closing Remarks on a New Beginning*. Plenary Session at the 2019 PBIS Leadership Forum, Chicago, Illinois.

McIntosh, K., & Goodman, S. (2016). *Integrated multi-tiered systems of support: Blending RTI and PBIS*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

## Resources:

OSPI Menus of Best Practices: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SSEO/Menus.aspx>

OSPI MTSS Resource Page: <http://k12.wa.us/MTSS/Resources.aspx>

National Center for Intensive Intervention: [www.intensiveintervention.org](http://www.intensiveintervention.org)

Comprehensive, Integrated Three-tiered Models of Prevention: [www.ci3t.org](http://www.ci3t.org)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support: [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

Mental Health Integration into Schools - Interconnected Systems Framework:

<http://www.midwestpbis.org/interconnected-systems-framework>

Technical Guide for Alignment of Initiatives, Programs and Practices in School Districts:

<https://www.pbis.org/Common/Cms/files/pbisresources/Alignment%20Brief.%20for%20posting.1.16.17.docx>



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