Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

www.cde.state.co.us

COLORADO Department of Education

FACT SHEET

Family, School, and Community Partnering

In Colorado, the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework provides a basis for school improvement. As an integrated continuum of academic and behavioral supports intended to improve student outcomes, effective implementation of MTSS consists of six essential components. Of these, the component of Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) is explained in this document to illustrate its contribution to MTSS.

Definition of MTSS

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports *is a whole-school, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems.*

Partnering Rationale

The rationale for family, school, and community partnering comes from over forty years of research that shows that partnering works to improve student outcomes (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Research suggests that students spend more than seventy percent of their waking hours outside school (Clark, 1990; Callender & Hansen, 2004). Partnering is about ongoing, sustainable, and intentional relationships that enable learning to live in the schoolhouse, in the home, and in the community. Positive effects of partnering have been seen for every stakeholder group. These include: (a) higher achievement for students; (b) more engaged families; (c) stronger community support for schools; and (d) improved teacher morale and teacher performance (Esler, Godber, & Christenson, 2008).

In Colorado MTSS, Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) is defined as ***the collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district, and state outcomes (CDE, 2013).*** This definition is an evolution of thinking that reflects a shift in the field. For example, saying "families" instead of "parents" demonstrates some of the change. Efforts are made to be more inclusive of all stakeholders and to honor the varied voices within learning communities. The emphasis is on shared responsibility for student success, and the use of the term "partnering" exemplifies the types of relationships that should be initiated and maintained to meet this goal. Language within federal (ESEA; IDEA) and state (SB 13-193; HB 12-1238; SB 09-90) legislation also heightened the attention focused on partnering. With partnering, the significant adults within a learner's life establish opportunities for coordination between different settings. It is important that each member of the learning community (e.g., staff, family, student, or community liaison) has a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities within the team (Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker, & Ice, 2010).

Partnering Standards

The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008) provide guidance for effective partnering. They are based on research and can be applied at multiple levels and throughout the tiers (Epstein, 1995). According to legislation (SB 09-90), Colorado's State Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) must support the implementation of the National Standards.

Teaching of expectations is assumed within MTSS. These standards can serve as outlines for expectations for FSCP:

- Welcoming All Families
- Communicating Effectively
- Supporting Student Success
- Speaking Up for Every Child
- Sharing Power
- Collaborating with Community

In Colorado, the statewide goals focus on supporting "Every student, every step of the way," and the National Standards can help refine efforts and implement partnering practices to achieve these goals.

Partnering Practices

According to research, children do best academically when the "overlapping spheres" of family, school, and community have collaboratively-developed shared goals (Simon & Epstein, 2001). Many of the practices that benefit partnerships (a) allow for access to resources, training, and materials; (b) demonstrate respect for cultural, linguistic, and learning differences; and (c) focus on results.

Effective partnering includes consistent implementation of these evidence-based practices:

- Ongoing two-way communication: Frequent, systematic, and encouraging
- Supporting learning at home and school
- Jointly developed educational plans
- Flexible hours and meeting times
- Use of partnering vocabulary (i.e., "we" and "our")
- Representative family participation on teams
- Team-based decision-making, action planning, progress monitoring, and evaluation
- Education of all stakeholders in sharing responsibility
- Policies, documents, artifacts, and materials represent partnering principles
- Effective homework design focused on successful completion

Within MTSS, an expectation is that supports are tiered and fluid – but not finite. Similarly, multi-tiered family, school, and community partnering ensures that supports exist at the universal, targeted, and intensive levels. The layers of these supports are available according to identified needs, but they are not permanent. We label the supports, not the individuals, and the supports are provided when matched to need. In multi-tiered partnering (as in MTSS), the problem solving process is transparent, and everyone is "on the team and at the table" (CDE, 2009) sharing information and decision-making.

Where can I learn more?

- Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports: www.cde.state.co.us/mtss
- State Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE): www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

The Colorado Department of Education
201 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203 • 303-866-6262 • www.cde.state.co.us/mtss