


Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Office of Learning Supports



What is Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

July 2024, Version 1

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (COMTSS) is a prevention-based framework using team-driven leadership and data-based problem solving to improve the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnerships, comprehensive assessment, and a layered continuum of supports. Implementation science and universal design for learning are employed to create one integrated system that focuses on increasing academic and behavioral outcomes to equitably support the varying needs of all students.

According to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), a multi-tiered system of support is “a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students’ needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision making.”

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports Components

The COMTSS framework consists of five components which represent the integration of existing evidence-based educational reform initiatives, Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (McIntosh, Goodman, 2016). The COMTSS Components are:

- [Team-Driven Shared Leadership](#)
- [Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making](#)
- [Family, School, and Community Partnerships](#)
- [Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System](#)
- [Layered Continuum of Supports](#)

When Colorado regions, districts, and schools fully embrace and embed these components into their organizational structure, the outcome is a whole-school, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems.



The success of an COMTSS framework is dependent on the effective interaction of three guiding principles:

- Using data to inform decision making.
- The use of evidence-based practices.
- Effective systems to support the implementation of practices.

Why is the Multi-Tiered System of Supports Important?

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is grounded in decades of research. Numerous studies have found that MTSS, when implemented as a school-wide model, can result in sustained high academic performance (Burns, Appleton & Stenhower, 2005; Hattie, 2017), positive effects on students' behavior and social-emotional functioning (Bradshaw, Waasorp, & Leaf 2012), as well as a reduction of need for additional learning supports (Burns et al., 2005; Dexter, Hughes, & Farmer, 2008).

By systemically evaluating and analyzing student progress through ongoing universal screening and progress monitoring, educators can more efficiently use their available resources to improve student performance. Information yielded by these data sets allows teams to problem-solve less severe educational challenges in the general education environment and preserve additional resources for students who require more targeted and intensive instruction and intervention to achieve educational benchmarks.

Leadership in the Initiation and Continuous Improvement of a Colorado Multi-Tiered System of supports Framework

Effective implementation of a COMTSS framework requires leaders across the organization to create and communicate a shared vision for positive student outcomes, ensure commitment to the work, and allocate resources needed to reach full implementation of the framework. Leaders communicate a collective responsibility for improved student outcomes to all stakeholders and ensure an appropriate fit of curriculum, instruction, and environment to enable student learning.

To begin the process of implementation, leaders must establish implementation teams at the regional, district and school levels. These teams function to ensure effective implementation at and across all levels through the establishment and scaling-up of systems and environments as well as the ongoing review and evaluation of data. Leaders should expect the process to reach full implementation to take 3-5 years.

More Information

For more information, including [Online Academy learning modules](#), [Practice Profiles](#) for implementation of the five components at the regional, district and school level, as well as additional tools and resources, please visit our website at [Colorado Department of Education MTSS](#) or contact us at COMTSS@cde.state.co.us.

