

## What is MTSS?

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a systemic, continuous-improvement framework in which data-based problem-solving and decision making is practiced across all levels of the educational system for supporting students. The framework of MTSS is a “way of doing business” which utilizes high quality evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices to ensure that **every** student receives the appropriate level of support to be successful. A Multi-Tiered System of Supports helps schools and districts to organize resources through alignment of academic standards and behavioral expectations, implemented with fidelity and sustained over time, in order to accelerate the performance of every student to achieve and/or exceed proficiency.

### Definition of MTSS

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

## Essential Components

In Colorado, the essential components of an MTSS framework represent the integration of existing evidence-based educational reform initiatives, Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The MTSS Essential Components are:

- Shared Leadership
- Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Layered Continuum of Supports
- Evidence-Based Instruction, Intervention, and Assessment Practices
- Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring
- Family, School, and Community Partnering

When schools and districts 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 MTSS framework is dependent on the effective interaction of **student outcomes**:

- the **data** used for decision making,
- the use of **evidence-based practices** to get to student outcomes, and
- the **systems** which adults need in order to support the implementation of the practices.

## Why Is MTSS Important?

By systemically evaluating and analyzing student progress through ongoing universal screening and progress monitoring, educators are able to more efficiently use their available resources and to improve student performance. Information yielded by these data sets allows educators 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 in order to achieve educational benchmarks. This type of structured problem-



solving process meets the mandates of both ESEA (2002) and IDEA (2004). MTSS also supports the Colorado educational legislation priorities SB 10-191 (Educator Effectiveness), HB12-1238 (READ Act), SB08-212 (CAP4K), HB11-1254 (Bullying in Schools) and SB13-193 (Parent Engagement in Schools).

## Leadership for MTSS

Shared leadership within MTSS exists at both the district and school level. For MTSS implementation to be successful, it is critical to establish leadership teams at each level of the system. The function of these teams is to ensure effective implementation across all levels of the system, including district, school, classroom, and individual student. Initially, the team creates a common vision and common language in order to clarify purpose and desired outcomes. System support needs are determined through a data-based problem solving and decision making process utilizing school-level progress data. Leadership teams engage in on-going review and evaluation of progress data to determine how to best allocate funding and available resources, including evidence-based professional development for educators.

## Creating a Problem-Solving Culture

The success of an MTSS framework is dependent upon effective use of data and information to make decisions for student progress and success. In order for districts and schools to embrace and function as a problem-solving culture, a shift in thinking must take place. The shift is the recognition that student achievement comes from a collective responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure an appropriate fit of curriculum, instruction, and environment that enables student learning. Effective leadership facilitates the building of systems and atmosphere to support and encourage educators to problem solve at all levels and more efficiently meet student needs.

## Getting Started with MTSS

Effective implementation of an MTSS framework takes time. In order to reach the stage of full implementation, leaders should expect the process to take 2-4 years. The Office of Learning Supports at CDE provides support to district and school-level leadership teams demonstrating readiness for implementation of MTSS.

Readiness activities include:

1. Form a district-level leadership team.
2. Conduct a district systems needs assessment to answer the following critical questions:  
Where are we now? Where do we want to be? What are our strengths? Where are our gaps?
3. Determine readiness for change within the district or school.
4. Assess and determine the feasibility of establishing an MTSS organizational framework.
5. Identify priorities for change (no more than 3-4) and create an action plan.

\*Contact the Office of Learning Supports at CDE for assistance with getting started.

## Where can I learn more?

- Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports: [www.cde.state.co.us/mtss](http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss)
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit: [www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs](http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs)