



## What is *MTSS* in Colorado?

### Introduction

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 enable every child to successfully reach his/her fullest potential.

### Definition (2016)

In Colorado, a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is defined as:

**a prevention-based framework of team-driven data-based problem solving for improving the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnering and a layered continuum of evidence-based practices applied at the classroom, school, district, region, and state level.**



## CO MTSS Components

The Five Essential Components are:

- Team-Driven Shared Leadership
- Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision-Making
- Family, School, and Community Partnering
- Layered Continuum of Supports
- Evidence-Based Practices

The CO MTSS framework in Colorado is comprised of these Essential Components, which form a foundation for creating a sustainable system of supports.



When schools and districts fully-embrace and embed these components into their organizational structure, systems alignment and substantive improvement can occur. An enabling context is established so that systems-level and stakeholder-level innovations can be initiated, implemented with fidelity, and maintained successfully over time. The goal and primary purpose of CO MTSS implementation is to improve outcomes for students, using:

- **data** for decision making,
- **evidence-based practices** for student outcomes, and
- **systems** which adults need in order to support implementation efforts.



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## Creating a Problem Solving Culture

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By systemically evaluating and analyzing student progress through ongoing universal screening and progress monitoring, school systems 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). CO 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) and contributes to legislated considerations in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS).

CO MTSS implementation is dependent upon effective use of data and information to make decisions about student-level and system-level progress. In order for districts and schools to 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 educational stakeholders to problem solve at all levels and more efficiently meet student needs.

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## Leadership for CO MTSS

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Shared leadership within CO MTSS exists at all levels (school, district, region, and state). For MTSS implementation to be successful, it is critical to establish leadership teams at each level of the system; these teams will ensure effective implementation across all levels of the system (district, school, classroom, and individual student). Initially, the team creates a common vision and establishes common language in order to clarify purpose and desired outcomes. Through data-based problem solving and decision-making, system support needs are identified, and plans are constructed. Leadership teams engage in ongoing review and evaluation of progress data to determine how to best allocate funding and available resources.

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## Implementation is a Science

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Effective implementation of an MTSS framework—building both individual stakeholder capacity and the system’s collective capacity—takes time. In order to reach *full implementation*, implementers should expect the process to take 2-4 years. An MTSS framework unifies complex inputs within an organizational frame contingent on the interaction of interdependent supports including: administrative and distributed leadership, teaming structures, use of a problem-solving process, coaching, operating routines, embedded and continuous personnel development, and action planning.

The Office of Learning Supports (OLS) at CDE provides support to leadership teams demonstrating readiness for implementation of MTSS. Readiness may be evident through activities such as: composition of a district-level leadership team; systems assessment (revealing strengths/gaps); and feasibility of establishing an MTSS framework locally, with identified priorities, planning, and procedures for evaluation.

### Where can I learn more?

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss>