



# **Multi-Tiered System of Supports Process Guide**

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## How to Use This Guide

This is the Rochester Public Schools (RPS) Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process guide. RPS implements an equity-centered MTSS framework aligned to the Minnesota MTSS (MnMTSS) Framework. The guide outlines specific processes, practices, and tools to support consistent, full, and sustained implementation of MTSS. It is not intended to be a substitute for training, but rather to increase understanding of the various aspects of MTSS and to promote consistency across a wide and varied organization.

RPS is committed to implementing MTSS with fidelity. In striving for continuous school improvement, we understand that this will be an evolving process as we respond to the needs of our students, staff, families, and community members.

This guide will be reviewed and updated annually by the District MTSS Leadership Team.

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## Definition of MnMTSS

MTSS is a cohesive framework used to align and organize district resources with a focus on meeting optimal educational outcomes for each student. It includes a continuum of evidence-based, system wide practices to support a timely response to academic and social-emotional needs. It is not a stand alone initiative or program, but rather is an organizational framework. In the world of education, our understanding of how to best support each and every learner has come a long way. Previously, the educational paradigm focused on categorizing students as either typically developing or at-risk, often segregating them into distinct categories of general education or special education. However, it is now evident that we can better address the needs of all students by offering a progressive continuum of services that span across both general and special education, leading to more effective, efficient, and ethical educational practices.

The Minnesota Department of Education has adopted a model of MTSS that guides the practical implementation for all districts. Minnesota MTSS (MnMTSS) is a systemic, continuous improvement framework for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental and

academic outcomes for every student. MnMTSS provides access to layered tiers of culturally and linguistically responsive, evidence-based practices and relies on the understanding and belief that every student can learn and thrive. In addition, it engages an anti-bias and socially just approach to examining policies and practices and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunity.

The MTSS framework at Rochester Public Schools has 5 core components:

1. Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement
2. Collaborative Linked Teams
3. Multi-Layered Practices and Support
4. Assessment
5. Data-Based Decision Making

## INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Infrastructure refers to the collection of physical, relational and procedural mechanisms in a system that supports staff, students, families and community members as they coordinate and work efficiently together. This section describes the knowledge, resources, and organizational structures necessary to operationalize all core components to achieve full implementation of our MTSS framework.

### **RPS Mission & Vision**

At Rochester Public Schools our mission is to equip every student with the knowledge, independence, and resilience to pursue a fulfilling path. Our vision is that every student thrives in school and in life.

These commitments are grounded in the core values that guide our work and decision-making as a district. They are:

#### **Providing Exceptional Opportunities to Succeed**

We offer an extraordinary level of opportunities, classes, and experiences. Our standard of excellence ensures more than one path to success.

#### **Building Belonging and Connection**

By celebrating differences and embracing individual perspectives, we cultivate a vibrant sense of community and culture that benefits students, staff, and families.

#### **Ensuring Excellence Through Evidence**

Guided by research and data, we enrich student learning and wellbeing through intentional decisions supported by proven practices.

### **Supporting the Whole Student**

Through nurturing social skills and emotional wellbeing, we meet each student's needs to help them flourish on their unique path.

### **Digging Deeper for Real-World Application**

We go beyond convention by fostering critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and deeper learning for success here in Rochester and beyond.

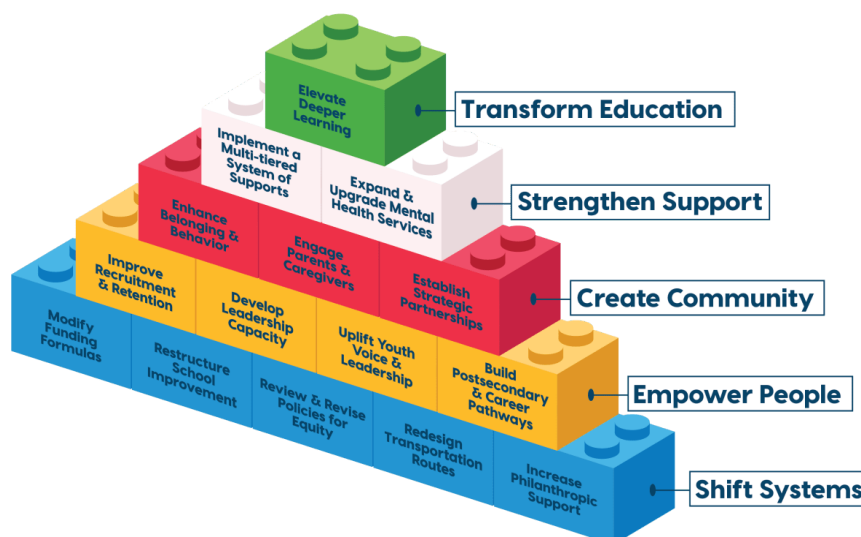
### **Investing in Our Community's Future**

As the heart of a community focused on lifelong learning, we prepare the next generation of thinkers and doers.

## **RPS Strategic Plan**

In June of 2022, the 2022-2025 strategic action plan was approved unanimously by the Rochester Public Schools Board. This plan was developed based on a highly engaged and data-informed process, including input from 75 people in 26 action working group meetings between September 2021 and April 2022. During a seven-month planning period, we listened to staff, students, families and advisory groups to inform these strategies.

The RPS strategic plan has fifteen essential objectives, each of which is a building block of the world class school system we are creating.



### *Transform Education*

- We will **Elevate Deeper Learning** to provide every student with an education characterized by the three elements of deeper learning that have been identified by researchers Jal Mehta and Sarah Fine: *mastery, identity, and creativity*.

#### *Strengthen Support*

- We will implement a **Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS)** to provide all students with access to a strong core curriculum and to give students who struggle the additional resources they need to succeed.
- We will **Expand and Upgrade Mental Health Services** for students and staff by screening for those who need support and by expanding options for treatment.

#### *Create Community*

- We will **Enhance Belonging and Behavior** so that all students feel accepted and safe at school.
- We will **Engage Parents and Caregivers** to help families support students' academic, social, and emotional development.
- We will **Establish Strategic Partnerships** that enable RPS to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan and that also advance the priorities of our partner organizations.

#### *Empower People*

- We will **Improve Recruitment and Induction** processes to enable RPS to attract and retain talented staff, especially in hard-to-fill positions and from backgrounds that are underrepresented in our schools.
- We will **Develop Leadership Capacity** to equip staff at multiple levels of the school district with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to guide our work.
- We will **Uplift Youth Voice and Leadership** so that issues that matter to students can be articulated and addressed and so that young people can contribute to their schools and our community.
- We will **Build Postsecondary and Career Pathways** that help all students develop a vision for life after high school and take steps toward realizing that vision throughout their progress through Rochester Public Schools.

#### *Shift Systems*

- We will **Modify Funding Formulas** to provide schools with greater flexibility to allocate staff time and other resources in ways that meet student needs.
- We will **Restructure School Improvement** processes to continually analyze and improve student outcomes.
- The Rochester School Board will **Review and Revise Policies for Equity** and make changes as needed to ensure that students from marginalized communities have the

support they need to thrive in RPS schools.

- We will **Redesign Transportation Routes** to increase service to early childhood programs and to enable elementary schools to begin at times that optimize learning for younger students while preserving the benefits of later start times for older students.
- We will **Increase Philanthropic Support** to advance implementation of the RPS strategic plan and to promote innovation across the district.

## Connection to Federal Law

The MTSS model has been widely embraced in the field of education due to an established research base demonstrating the positive effects it has on students and districts. However, the implementation of MTSS is not driven exclusively by research support; there are numerous requirements in federal and state law which direct our practices at RPS. Many of the practices referenced in this document are driven by two federal mandates: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was updated and reauthorized in 2004, and the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1965, re-named as Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). In Minnesota, there are also related state statutes supporting districts' use of the essential components of MTSS, since 2020.

### *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA; originally issued in 1974 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and most recently amended in 2004) mandates a free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities, and ensures the delivery of special education and related services to children with disabilities. The IDEA governs how states and local educational agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services such that schools are required to use "scientifically-based instructional practices... to the maximum extent possible." Section 300.111 of IDEA mandates that schools develop practical methods for identifying students who may need special education and related services. This is known as the ["child find" mandate](#).

### *Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CEIS)*

These are services provided to students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment. Found in section 613(f) of the IDEA (20 U.S.C. §1413(f)) and the regulations in 34 CFR §300.226, school districts are permitted to use a portion of their federal IDEA funding allocation to develop and provide CEIS for students. The rationale provided for using IDEA funds for CEIS is based on research showing that the earlier a child's learning problems or difficulties are identified, the more quickly and effectively the

problems and difficulties can be addressed and the greater the chances that the child's problems will be ameliorated or decreased in severity.

### ***Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)***

The [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA) explicitly states the use of evidence-based assessments and interventions to identify at-risk students and meet their educational needs. There are over fifty references to the use of “evidence-based” interventions and strategies in ESSA. It defines evidence-based interventions as: “practices or programs that have evidence to show that they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented.” Interventions are required to have strong, moderate, or promising evidence to support them. When identifying evidence-based practices, schools should consider the level of evidence, relevance of the evidence, and resources dedicated for implementation.

### ***Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) / Federal Title Programs***

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently authorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, is federal legislation that promotes student achievement through school and district reform. ESSA requires each state to develop and implement a system for holding all districts and schools accountable for the education of students. Nested under the this act are the following federal title programs:

- Title I, Part A: The purpose is to raise the achievement of students not meeting standards in schools with high percentages of low-income children.
- Title I, Part C: The purpose is to ensure all migratory children and youth reach academic standards and graduate.
- Title I, Part D: The purpose is to support dropout prevention and education continuity for neglected, delinquent or at-risk youths.
- Title II, Part A: The purpose is to improve the academic achievement of all students by increasing access to effective educators through professional development, recruitment and retention of effective teachers, or class size reduction.
- Title III, Part A: The purpose is to ensure the civil rights of English learners to attain English proficiency, receive a public education and meet state academic standards. It supplements the state English learning program required by Minnesota Statutes, sections 124D.58-65
- Title IV, Part A: The purpose is to expand student support and academic enrichment by increasing student access to a well-rounded education, improving school conditions for safe and healthy student learning, and improving the effective use of technology
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: The purpose of the competitive grant is to ensure that students experiencing homelessness receive appropriate public education.

## **Connection to State Law**

The state of MN has five statutes and rules requiring schools to program for early intervention services, and to provide alternative instruction to support students in meeting grade level standards. These statutes and rules are dedicated to ensuring academic proficiency for every student, closing racial and economic achievement gaps, and promoting high school graduation.

### **Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness**

The World's Best Workforce (WBWF) was developed in 2013 under Minnesota Statutes § 120B.11. In the 2024 legislative session this was renamed to Comprehensive Achievement & Civic Readiness (CACR). The goals of CACR means striving to: 1) Meet school readiness goals; 2) Close the academic achievement gap among all racial and ethnic groups of students and between students living in poverty and students not living in poverty; 3) Have all students attain career and college readiness before graduating from high school; and 4) Have all students graduate from high school.

Under the legislation, school boards adopt a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan to support and improve teaching and learning that is aligned with both supporting students in academic achievement and preparing them to be active members of their community post graduation. The school board publishes an annual report and holds an annual public meeting to review goals, outcomes and strategies.

### **Minnesota Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act**

The goal of this legislation is to have every Minnesota child reading at or above grade level every year, beginning in kindergarten, and to support multilingual learners and students receiving special education services in achieving their individualized reading goals. The READ Act replaces the Read Well by Third Grade (RWBTG) Act effective July 1, 2023. The Read Act requires mandatory screening of every child in kindergarten, first, second, and third grade at least twice per year using a screening tool approved by the Department of Education. Students in grades 4 and above, including multilingual learners and students receiving special education services, who do not demonstrate mastery of foundational reading skills must be screened using a screening tool approved by the Department of Education for characteristics of dyslexia. In addition to screening, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will generate a list of at least five approved core literacy curricula and supporting materials. MDE will also identify literacy intervention materials for use with students in Kindergarten through grade 12.

### **Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services**

To support districts in their efforts to meet the requirements to provide interventions, districts have the option to apply for state funding in order to implement prevention services (i.e., ADSIS

programming) for students who need additional academic or behavioral support to succeed in the general education environment and who may eventually qualify for special education if the intervention services were unavailable. Schools that receive funding for Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services (ADSIS) programming must establish student selection criteria and procedures, including assessment measures for determining eligibility. ADSIS requires academic and behavioral progress monitoring of the students being serviced to be reported to help determine the impact of the program.

#### **Alternate Instruction Required Before Assessment Referral**

Before a student is referred for a special education evaluation, the district must conduct and document at least two instructional strategies, alternatives, or interventions using a system of scientific, research-based instruction and intervention in academics or behavior, based on the student's needs, while the student is in the general education classroom. School districts must use a system of scientific, research-based instruction and intervention when providing support. This same statute also requires progress monitoring (i.e., “the frequent and continuous measure of a student’s performance”) appropriate to the student.

#### **Identifying Students with a Specific Learning Disability**

IDEA 2004 allows states to use a process based on a student’s “response to scientific, research-based intervention” to determine if the child has a specific learning disability (SLD). In an MTSS framework, a student’s response to or success with instruction and interventions received across the levels of MTSS would be considered as part of the comprehensive evaluation for SLD eligibility. Per MN Rule 3525.1341, approved in 2008, a minimum of 12 data points are required from a consistently implemented intervention in order to establish the rate of progress.

### **Equity**

The Minnesota Department of Education describes educational equity as the condition of justice, fairness, and inclusion in our systems of education so that all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential. Equity is different from equality. Equality demands that everyone be treated at the same level, while equity is a principle that is based upon justice and fairness. The pursuit of educational equity recognises the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their races, income, and other social conditions. Eliminating these structural and institutional barriers to educational opportunities requires systemic changes that allows for distributions of resources, information, and other support depending on the students situation to ensure an equitable outcome.

### ***Equity Belief Statements***

On September 15, 2020 the Rochester Public School Board adopted the following equity statement:

We acknowledge that Rochester Public Schools (RPS) sites are situated on ancestral lands of the Dakota people. We acknowledge and honor the Dakota Nations and the sacred land of all Indigenous peoples.

We believe equity is a lens through which all decisions should be made.

We believe in the use of people-first and asset-based language. Our emphasis lies on the person, whereas their social identities are secondary. We promote language that raises the visibility of personal stories, creates empathy, and recognizes the diverse assets that difference brings.

We believe the practices used in recruiting, interviewing, hiring, supporting, and promoting staff must include and honor, at every level, those who represent the diverse identities of our schools and community.

We believe it is the collective responsibility of all RPS staff to be actively and intentionally anti-racist, both individually and collectively, and work to undo historical and current racist policies or actions both inside and outside the classroom. This responsibility involves critical self-awareness and self-reflection; recognizing and addressing bias; dismantling racist cultures, practices, and procedures; and increasing one's cultural responsiveness and cultural awareness.

We believe that all staff and students deserve a space to be their authentic selves. We have a collective responsibility to ensure our schools provide a caring, supportive, and anti-oppressive environment. School communities should support the healthy, positive development of students and help them grow their unique gifts and talents.

We believe that one's gender and sexuality are important parts of one's identity which deserve to be genuinely accepted and valued. We believe that every student and staff member has the right to grow in a safe space and to be addressed by their preferred name and by pronouns which correspond to their gender identity.

We believe that communities, parents/caregivers, teachers, and community-based organizations have unique and important solutions to improving outcomes for our students and educational systems. True partnership with families and the community includes engaging them

with respect, listening authentically, and having the courage to share decision-making, control and resources.

We believe that speaking a language other than English is an asset. Our educational system must celebrate and enhance this ability while providing appropriate and culturally responsive support for emerging bilingual and multilingual students and families. Students' English development is stronger when home language maintenance is encouraged and facilitated. Community partnerships are essential in providing multicultural and multilingual language support for students and families.

We believe students receiving special education and gifted services are an integral part of our educational responsibility, and we must welcome the opportunity to be inclusive, make appropriate accommodations and celebrate their assets.

We believe we must remove barriers that prevent students from one or more historically marginalized groups from attaining high levels of academic achievement and growth. Barriers include inequitable access to gifted services and other academic programming as well as over-representation in special education and other intervention programs.

### ***Office of Equity and Engagement***

The Equity and Engagement Department of Rochester Public Schools is cultivating a just and inclusive educational environment where every student, regardless of background or circumstance, can excel and flourish through deeper learning. We commit to dismantling systemic barriers, fostering cultural competence, and promoting equitable access to resources, rigorous education, and enriching experiences. By valuing diversity and honoring each individual's unique strengths, we strive to create a community that celebrates equity, embraces differences, and prepares all students for success in an ever-evolving world. We can accomplish this in partnership with our students, staff, families, and the Rochester community.

### **[Office of Equity and Engagement](#)**

### ***Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Materials***

Rochester Public Schools is committed to providing students with instructional materials that honor and reflect their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. To ensure this commitment, the district uses a curriculum review tool when selecting instructional resources. This tool guides the curriculum articulation process by evaluating whether materials are culturally and linguistically sustaining, supporting equitable access to high-quality learning for all students.

## **School Climate**

The National School Climate Center describes School Climate as the quality and character of school life, particularly as it relates to patterns of students', caregivers', and school staff members' experiences. School climate reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and leadership practices and organizational structures anchored in culturally sustaining and linguistically responsive practices.

### ***5Essentials Survey***

Rochester Public Schools measures school climate and culture through the annual administration of the University of Chicago's 5Essentials Survey. Specifically, the 5Essentials is a survey with research-tested scoring and interactive reporting that provides insights into schools' organizational strengths and areas of opportunity across the five essential factors for school improvement: Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment, and Ambitious Instruction. The 5Essentials Survey is administered one time per year to all students grade 3-12, teachers, and student families.

## **Family & Community Engagement**

Family Engagement is a process and a practice rooted in relational-trust which creates opportunities for equitable partnerships between families and school and district staff. These partnerships, from birth to graduation, nurture shared responsibility for students' academic and social success and honor the lived experiences, expertise, and cultural knowledge of all stakeholders--students, teachers, staff, families, and communities.

[Office of Family Engagement and Youth Empowerment](#)

## **COLLABORATIVE LINKED TEAMS**

Collaborative linked teams are a critical part of the infrastructure that makes effective implementation possible. This approach involves a systematic process in which educators work interdependently to analyze and improve their professional practice, ultimately achieving better outcomes for students, teams, and schools. Each team has a distinct purpose and clearly defined roles; however, they do not operate in isolation. Instead, they function as interconnected components of a unified system.

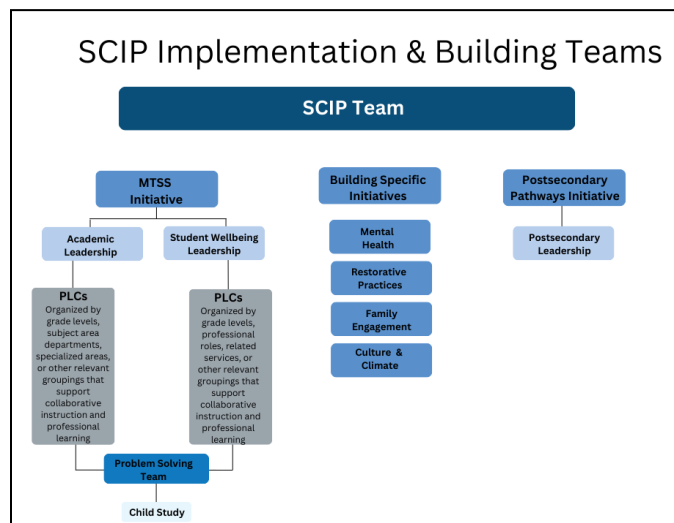
These collaborative linked teams include:

- District MTSS Leadership Team

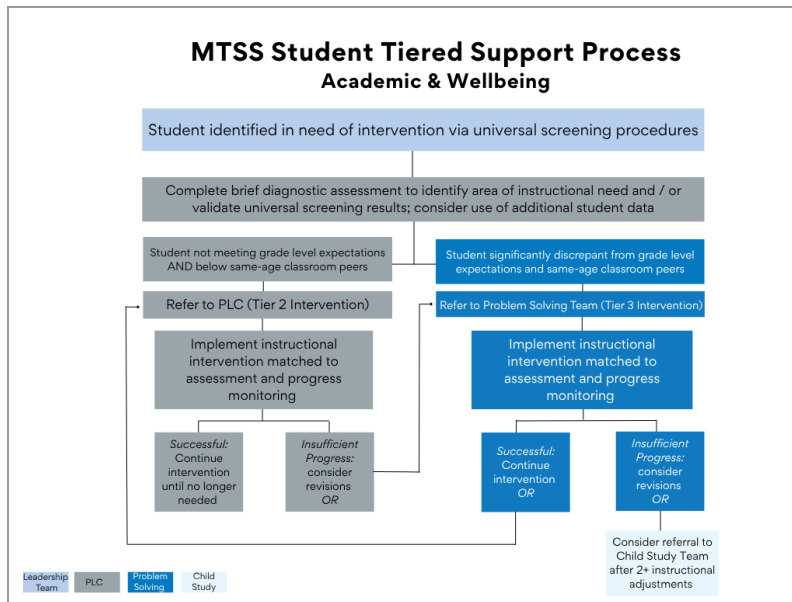
- School Continuous Improvement Planning (SCIP) Teams
- Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Teams
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Problem-Solving Teams & Child Study

| School Continuous Improvement Planning Team                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Team                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Problem Solving Team                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Purpose:</b><br>Sets building goals, guides improvement, and uses data to drive coherent, strategic decisions that support students and staff.                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Purpose:</b><br>Uses data to guide supports, align resources, and ensure instruction and interventions support school goals and student success.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Purpose:</b><br>Collaboratively analyze evidence of student learning using common assessment data to adjust instruction, meet individual needs, and improve student achievement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Purpose:</b><br>Problem solving unit responsible for the design, delivery, and monitoring of intensive interventions at Tier 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a clear, unified school vision</li> <li>• Set measurable school improvement goals</li> <li>• Implement and monitor key initiatives</li> <li>• Develop and refine the building professional development plan relating to goals</li> <li>• Regularly evaluate progress and impact</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide building resources, structures, and training for MTSS</li> <li>• Set and manage the building-wide assessment calendar</li> <li>• Review and analyze universal screening data for themes and needs</li> <li>• Establish entry criteria for each tier of support</li> <li>• Support PLCs with data protocols and tools</li> </ul> | <div> <b>Tier One</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan instruction using best practices &amp; curriculum fidelity</li> <li>• Use data to target grade level needs</li> <li>• Differentiate for diverse learners</li> <li>• Monitor learning with common assessments</li> <li>• Collaborate to improve instruction</li> </ul> </div> <div> <b>Tier Two</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify students needing Tier 2 support</li> <li>• Group students for intervention by skill needs</li> <li>• Set goals &amp; track progress</li> <li>• Adjust instruction based on data</li> <li>• Ensure intervention fidelity</li> </ul> </div> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze student data to identify trends, strengths, and needs</li> <li>• Develop individualized interventions that detail the conditions for intensified instruction</li> <li>• Track student progress and adjust supports as needed</li> <li>• Ensure fidelity and collaborate with key staff</li> <li>• Review Tier 3 system effectiveness schoolwide</li> </ul> |

The collaborative linked teams are arranged to support each other in the following way:



The graphic below depicts the process by which students receive tiered supports through interconnected teams that collaborate to address individual student needs:



## Organization of Collaborative Linked Teams

### *District MTSS Leadership Team*

#### *Purpose & Function*

The District MTSS Leadership Team provides direction and coherence for a Multi-Tiered System of Supports that serves all schools and students across the district. The team defines and communicates a cohesive vision for MTSS, ensuring alignment across all tiers of support including Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, and Special Education. It strengthens the district's infrastructure and builds staff capacity through clear structures, effective processes, professional learning, and strategic resource allocation to support consistent and sustainable implementation of MTSS practices.

**Subteams:** Considering the extensive workload of the District Leadership team, it may prove beneficial to establish specialized satellite teams or temporary work groups for task delegation, including ad hoc members. When duties are assigned to such satellite teams or temporary groups, they operate under the guidance of the primary leadership team. Close communication channels are essential for these subteams to adhere closely to the goals of the District MTSS Leadership Team.

#### *Responsibilities*

- Clearly articulate the vision for MTSS and set specific, measurable implementation goals that drive continuous system improvement.
- Lead districtwide planning and implementation efforts to strengthen MTSS structures and practices.

- Provide ongoing professional learning, coaching, and support to build staff capacity across all levels of the system.
- Allocate Office of Academic Services' resources strategically to align with district and school MTSS priorities.
- Coordinate and guide district teams and task-specific workgroups to ensure coherence and progress toward shared goals.
- Routinely review a wide range of data—including universal screening, student outcomes, fidelity measures, and stakeholder feedback—to monitor effectiveness and guide decision-making.
- Balance districtwide consistency with school-level flexibility, using data to inform differentiated support.
- Serve as the district-level decision-making body for MTSS priorities and ensure clear designation of responsible decision-makers.
- Lead and oversee districtwide MTSS initiatives, ensuring alignment between district decisions and site-level practices.
- Communicate regularly with stakeholders to share progress, identify challenges, and outline next steps.
- Foster transparency, collaboration, and engagement across departments and schools to sustain a culture of continuous improvement.
- Conduct an implementation self evaluation at least annually using the SEMI-DLT, set improvement goals, and record progress.

### *Decision Making Focus*

The lens through which this team operates is described as "data-driven decision-making with organizational authority." This means they prioritize using data to inform their problem-solving processes and have the autonomy to make significant decisions that impact the organization as a whole when overseeing processes and allocating resources within the MTSS framework.

### *Membership*

The District Leadership Team is led by the Chief Academic Officer and the Coordinator of Tiered Supports. Members include representation of district staff responsible for the following areas: curriculum and instruction, mental / behavioral health, special education, research and assessment / evaluation, multilingual learners, and leadership development. To ensure clear communication and support effective problem solving and decision making, additional areas represented may include: family & community engagement, student discipline and restorative practices, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and site administrators.

### *Schedule*

The District Leadership Team should meet a minimum of monthly, but may consider more frequent meetings as needed in order to ensure timely review of implementation efforts and monitoring of progress toward short- and long-term goals.

### ***School Continuous Improvement Planning Team (SCIP)***

#### ***Purpose & Function***

This group of individuals operates at the site level, leading and supporting the ongoing district developed improvement process across the entire school. The SCIP team sets long-term building goals aligned with the district's strategic plan, prioritizes areas for continuous improvement, and evaluates progress and outcomes to guide resource allocation and school-wide decision-making. This team ensures that improvement efforts are coherent, data informed, and responsive to student and staff needs. They establish the framework for evaluating and improving their school system at large, while also defining objectives and aligning priorities within the specific school building.

#### ***Responsibilities***

- Ensure an effective & unified vision for the building (SCIP process) based on District vision.
- Set measurable school improvement goals
- Implement and monitor key initiatives
- Develop and refine the building professional development plan relating to SCIP goals and based on the district PD plan
- Establish bi-directional communication processes and feedback loops between the various levels of building teams, families, students, and district leaders
- Regularly evaluate progress and impact using the data review process
- Based upon evaluation results, update the following:
  - School improvement plan
  - Communication plan
  - Professional learning & coaching plans
  - Allocation of school resources
- Identify, communicate, and celebrate achievements

#### ***Decision-Making Focus***

The lens through which the SCIP team operates is described as "data-driven decision-making with school based authority." This means they prioritize using data to inform their problem-solving processes and have the autonomy to make decisions that impact the school building as a whole when overseeing processes and allocating internal building resources. Additionally, they implement within their building the vision and direction set forth by the district team. Decisions made by SCIP teams only affect their own building. Their authority does not extend to impacts beyond their school.

### *Membership*

The lead principal of each school must be an active member of that school's SCIP Team. Lead principals should recruit and select the other members of the school's SCIP Team to guide the development and revision of SCIPs. Members of each SCIP Team should include staff with responsibility for at least the following three areas: general education, special education, and student support services. Lead principals are encouraged but not required to consider including parents/caregivers on their SCIP Teams.

Schools with fewer than 500 students must have at least five people on their SCIP Teams. Schools with between 500 and 1000 students must have at least seven people on their SCIP Teams. Schools with more than 1,000 students must have at least nine people on their SCIP Teams.

### *Schedule*

The SCIP team should meet a minimum of monthly, but may consider twice-monthly to ensure timely review of implementation efforts and monitoring of progress toward short- and long-term goals. SCIP teams should have a year-at-a-glance strategic calendar that provides a broad overview of activities and priorities of the team.

### [SCIP Team Year at a Glance Calendar](#)

## ***Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Teams***

### *Purpose & Function*

The leadership teams serve as the building's primary bodies for guiding and overseeing the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction, ensuring that resources, supports, and practices are aligned with school goals and student success. Grounded in data-based decision-making, the Academic Leadership Team focuses on strengthening the building's improvement goals in literacy and/or numeracy. This includes managing standard operating procedures such as organizing and facilitating regular data review cycles for universal screening, diagnostic assessments, interventions, and progress monitoring. Similarly, the Student Wellbeing Leadership Team advances goals related to students' social, emotional, and behavioral well-being by reviewing relevant data and coordinating the delivery of interventions and supports. Together, these teams ensure that instruction and intervention decisions are responsive, data-informed, and consistently aligned with the priorities outlined in the building's SCIP plan.

[MTSS Academic Leadership Team Year at a Glance](#)

[MTSS Team Functions Description](#)

### *Responsibilities*

- Provide resources, structures, and processes including assessment, referral systems, data collection & review, etc as aligned to district guidance
- Work with the District Leadership team and utilize the district MTSS process guide to

- promote alignment of the MTSS framework
- Establish and regularly use a procedure to assess building level outcomes, including disaggregated student data, following all universal screening windows
- Review and analyze universal screening data for themes and needs
- Establish entry and exit criteria for each tier of support
- Support PLCS with data protocols and tools
- Monitor internal and external barriers & threats to implementation and plan/adjust accordingly
- Conduct a team self evaluation review at least annually, set MTSS implementation improvement goals, and record progress

### *Decision Making Focus*

The lens through which the Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Team(s) operate is described as "data-driven decision-making with school based authority." This means they prioritize using data to inform their problem-solving processes and have the autonomy to make decisions that impact the school building as a whole when overseeing processes and allocating resources within the MTSS framework. Their authority does not extend to impacts beyond their school.

### *Membership*

Members of the Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Team(s) should include a building administrator, an instructional or wellbeing coach, and a general education representative who is actively responsible for implementing interventions in their classroom and/or setting. Membership should be thoughtfully considered, as this team is not only responsible for designing and managing processes but also for providing training and overseeing implementation. Additionally, members should maintain a strong connection to the PLC work team

### *Schedule*

The Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Team(s) should meet a minimum of monthly, but may consider twice-monthly to ensure timely review of implementation efforts and monitoring of progress toward short- and long-term goals. Leadership teams should have a year-at-a-glance strategic calendar that provides a broad overview of activities and priorities of the team.

### [SLT self evaluation tool](#)

## ***Professional Learning Community (PLC)***

### *Purpose and Function*

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a team of educators who meet regularly to analyze evidence of student learning and adjust instruction to meet individual needs and improve achievement. PLCs ensure high levels of learning for all students by using assessment data to guide Tier 1 instruction, differentiate as needed, and identify and support students requiring Tier 2 interventions. Through collaborative inquiry and action research, PLCs engage in

continuous improvement cycles and measure their effectiveness by results, making improved student learning the shared responsibility of everyone in the school.

PLCs are structured to focus on collaborative discussions about student learning at the group level, using evidence from common assessments and other student learning data. These meetings are not intended for lesson planning, preparing materials, or general grade-level or departmental organizational tasks. Instead, teams are organized around shared goals for which members are mutually accountable. Please refer to membership for examples of ways teams can be structured.

### *Responsibilities*

#### **Tier One Instruction**

- Plan instruction using best practices & curriculum fidelity
- Use data to target grade level needs
- Differentiate for diverse learners
- Monitor learning with common assessments
- Collaborate to improve instruction
- Ensure curricular fidelity

#### **Tier Two Instruction**

- Analyze data to identify students in need of support
- Schedule & assign student grouping(s) for intervention by skill needs
- Set student goals & monitor progress
- Adjust instruction and make decisions regarding instructional intensification using data
- Ensure intervention fidelity

### [PLC Self Evaluation Tool](#)

### [MTSS Team Functions Description](#)

### *Decision Making Focus*

The PLC operates through a dual lens, focusing both on organizational aspects at the classroom level and on student-level outcomes. They exercise autonomy in pivotal decisions concerning student instruction and support. Furthermore, the team implements the overarching vision and directives outlined by the Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Teams, ensuring cohesion between district-wide objectives and the unique needs of their school and classroom community.

### *Membership*

Structures of PLCs should support the analysis of evidence of student learning, identifying patterns and needs, and adjusting instructional practices to improve results. Common PLC structures include:

- **Horizontal Teams:** Educators teaching the same grade level or course (e.g., 4th grade, 9th grade ELA)
- **Vertical Teams:** Educators teaching the same content across multiple grade spans (e.g., K–2 or 3–5 teams, Spanish I–IV, ELA 9–11)

- **Interdisciplinary Teams:** Educators from different subjects working toward common outcomes (e.g., improving non-fiction writing across all content areas)
- **Job-Alike Teams:** Educators with similar roles pursuing the same learning outcomes (e.g., special education teachers, music or physical education specialists)
- **District or Regional Teams:** Educators collaborating to align outcomes across schools or regions

### *Schedule*

This group should meet a minimum of weekly. The optimum duration of 60 - 90 minutes is considered best practice.

### ***Problem Solving Team***

#### *Purpose and Function*

The Problem-Solving Team is responsible for intensive, individualized problem solving for students whose needs exceed what is provided through Tier 1 instruction and targeted Tier 2 interventions. This team designs, delivers, and monitors intensive Tier 3 interventions, ensuring implementation fidelity and tracking student progress. Students may require Tier 3 support if they do not make adequate progress with Tier 2 interventions or show significant skill deficits requiring immediate intervention based on assessment data. In addition to planning for individual students, the team monitors the overall Tier 3 system to ensure access for students who need support, evaluate outcomes, and make data-driven adjustments to improve effectiveness.

#### *Responsibilities*

- Analyze student data to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need
- Develop individualized Tier 3 interventions with specific conditions for intensified instruction
- Set individual student goals and monitor progress
- Ensure fidelity of intervention implementation and collaborate with key staff
- Make data-based decisions to intensify, maintain, or fade supports
- Review and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Tier 3 system schoolwide, making adjustments as needed
- Carefully consider a suspected disability and, when appropriate, refer to the building Child Study Team to initiate a special education evaluation in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.111 (Child Find) requirements.
  - Child Study Team: The team that considers the needs of a student who is suspected of having a disability in order to determine if the student is in need of special education services, including the planning and coordination of the evaluation process.

#### [MTSS Team Functions Description](#)

### *Decision-Making Focus*

The student problem-solving team prioritizes data-driven decision-making for individual students, determining appropriate levels of instructional intensity and intervention delivery models. They hold decision-making authority to ensure equitable access to support for students requiring Tier 3 interventions, with a focus on their overall success.

### *Membership*

Membership on the team that engages in intensive problem solving for individual students should include:

- General education teacher(s)
- School administrator
- Academic content specialist(s)
- Mental health/ behavioral content specialist(s)
- Special education staff and anyone who might have expertise in determination of a suspected disability

Family engagement is also critical at this stage and the team may include a parent / guardian when discussing needs of an individual student.

### *Schedule*

This team meets as needed to process referrals from Tier 2, develop individual intervention plans, review academic and behavior data, follow up on student progress in response to intervention, adjust intensity as needed, and monitor and support the fidelity of intervention implementation.

## **Essential Teaming Characteristics**

Teaming is the behavioral and emotional functioning of a team as they work together to accomplish tasks. However, building effective teams is not easy. To build effective teams, educators can rely on a well-documented science of teams and teaming that informs and guides the formation and improvement of team functioning. There are six essential characteristics of effective teams: shared psychological safety; shared trust; shared clarity of purpose, roles, structure, and processes; shared mental models; collective efficacy and shared situational awareness. These six essential characteristics are the foundation for an effective team culture.

### ***Shared Psychological Safety***

Psychological safety is the belief that an individual team member can apply themselves during team activities without fear of negative consequences to self, image, social status or career.

Psychological safety involves being able to make contributions and disagree when appropriate without fear of making mistakes.

### ***Shared Trust***

The mutual awareness that each team member is dependable, capable of following through on assignments, and can be counted upon. In addition, when people feel others have care and concern for them, they develop an openness that yields genuine trust.

### ***Shared Clarity of Purpose, Roles, Structure, & Process***

Effective and efficient teams know what each team member does, how the team is organized and the typical team routines. When team members are confused about their role or the role of others both communication and collaboration are hampered. When teams do not know why they are a team, who is in charge, what needs to be accomplished, or how to accomplish an assigned task, inefficiency and dissatisfaction increases.

### ***Shared Mental Models***

The quality of a team's thinking and decision-making depends on the shared mental models used by the team. A mental model is a representation of how something works. For educators, mental models include representations of how students learn, how curricula are organized, how instruction is to be delivered, etc. When team members share mental models about how teaching and learning occurs, how challenges (problems) are defined, how root causes are determined, how decisions are made and implemented, team members are "thinking on the same page."

### ***Collective Efficacy***

When all team members perceive confidence in solving simple and complex problems and meeting the needs of students, families and educators a foundation is built for sustained activities. As a team experiences success and satisfaction working together, collective efficacy emerges. Teams with collective efficacy report greater satisfaction with their work in general and students achieve better outcomes.

### ***Shared Situational Awareness***

Shared situational awareness occurs when team members have a common understanding of what is happening within the team, how the team's work fits into the broader building, district, or department context, and the scope of their decision-making authority. In essence, shared situational awareness means the team shares a clear mental model of their environment, responsibilities, and priorities, enabling coordinated action and informed decisions.

Individually, team members are aware of themselves, their roles, and how they contribute to the school as a whole. At the team level, situational awareness encompasses understanding the team's specific charge, as well as key processes such as communication, coordination, and workflow. It also involves recognizing relevant changes in school climate and culture, district

initiatives, funding or staffing shifts, evolving student needs, and upcoming events or celebrations. By maintaining sensitivity to these factors, teams can adjust their communication and collaboration in real time, ensuring their actions remain aligned with the team's responsibilities and the broader context, thus demonstrating effective situational awareness.

## Practices of Effective Teams

Considerable literature exists about the practices of effective teams, their structure, teaming and the processes that teams use to solve problems. By studying how teams form and perform over time and the degree of their effectiveness, a number of practices of effective teams have been identified.

### *Planful Agenda*

The team meeting holds potential for effective problem solving or cathartic problem admiration. How time is used in team meetings becomes a metric for how team members evaluate their satisfaction in being a team member. The team leader, as steward of members' time, plays a critical role in planning and executing meetings to achieve productive outcomes. A written agenda, distributed in advance, serves as both a guide and an accountability tool.

Essential information to be included in an agenda are:

- Meeting time and duration
- Location or link
- Team's consensus purpose (repeated and reviewed each meeting)
- Topics/issues to be addressed
- Expected outcomes
- Check-ins on progress from previous assignments
- Post-meeting follow-up assignments

### *Explicit Process Roles*

The team leader—whether permanent or rotating—is central to team functioning, ensuring psychological safety, reinforcing norms, and fostering trust. While designating a leader for the team is an obvious decision, other roles take on importance during team meetings. These include:

- **Note taker:** documents discussions, decisions, and follow-up assignments, creating a shared memory of the team's work.
- **Timekeeper:** monitors time and keeps the meeting on schedule.
- **Focus monitor:** keeps discussions on topic and mitigates cognitive and implicit biases.
- **Data specialist:** prepares and interprets data, guiding root cause analysis.

Because MTSS teams focus on tasks and outcomes, all members must actively participate; team leaders should monitor engagement to prevent passive spectatorship.

### ***Healthy Conflict Management***

Teams that foster respectful skepticism and deeper discussion of assumptions operate more effectively over time. Healthy conflict (Aguilar, 2016; Lencioni, 2002) is essential; suppressing conflict weakens thinking and problem-solving. Leaders must encourage open dialogue where disagreements are explored and perspectives fully understood. Shared trust allows members to safely challenge assumptions, data quality, and other factors affecting problem-solving. Teams foster healthy conflict by encouraging challenges to assumptions while respecting each member's humanity, which is essential for achieving a thorough and unbiased understanding of a problem. The focus monitor can help by questioning mental models, identifying fears or discomforts, and naming power dynamics or biases in discussions.

### ***Communication Routines***

Teams should establish clear internal procedures for communication, such as sending agendas in advance and distributing detailed minutes to absentees or stakeholders. Assigning communication tasks ensures consistency and organizational stability.

A team's relationship to other teams and to the organization as a whole reinforces the stated and implicit purpose of the team. Articulating how teams are related to each other is the responsibility of leadership. Organizational charts that depict teams and how these are related to the organization and to each other form the rationale for how teams should communicate and relate to each other. Leadership is responsible for reinforcing communication routines among teams and coordinating the work.

### ***Periodic Self-Evaluation***

Critical reflection and collective evaluation are essential for long-term team functioning. Short-term implementation fidelity measures and medium-term progress monitoring provide meaningful evaluation of performance. An independent process observer can support this self-review. Without regular reflection, teams risk repeating ineffective processes, causing unresolved problems and member frustration. Continuous improvement should apply to both team functioning and student outcomes. Asking "What went well?" and "How could things be improved?" fosters constructive growth.

Equally as important to examining outcomes is pausing for reflection on the community created by the team. Reflection respects the humanity and psychological needs of team members. It creates space for the team to name the impact they are having on each other. As difficult as these conversations can be, the return on investment leads to a more productive, satisfied team.

## **Data Based Problem Solving**

This is a continuous improvement process used by teams to collect, analyze, and evaluate information in order to inform decision making at the system and student level. When used at the systems level, it is a way of evaluating and continuously improving infrastructure and systems-level student outcomes. When used at the student level it is a way of guiding

instructional decisions for individuals and groups of students. The data based problem solving lens for each type of collaborative linked team are:

- District MTSS Leadership Team: Systems level-district
- School Continuous Improvement Planning Team (SCIP): Systems level-building
- Academic & Wellbeing Leadership Team: Systems level- building
- Professional Learning Community (PLC): Systems level-classroom; Student level
- Problem Solving Teams: Student level

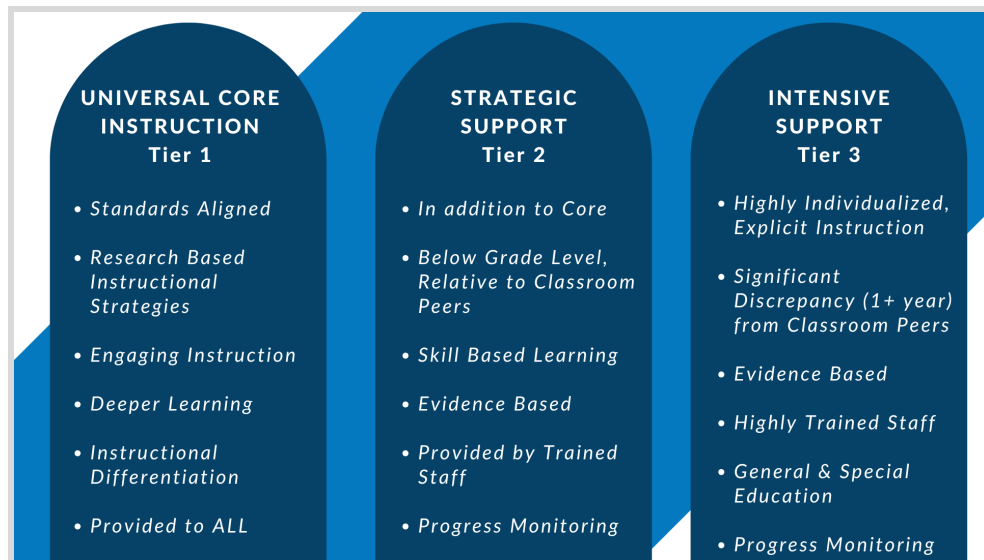
For further guidance on the steps of Data-Based Problem Solving, please see the [Decision Making Process](#) subsection within the [Data-Based Decision Making](#) section

## MULTI-LAYERED PRACTICES AND SUPPORT

The overarching aim of this multi-tiered framework is to provide a continuum of high-quality instruction and resources tailored to individual student needs. As students' needs intensify, the level of instruction and support also increases, ensuring that each student achieves rigorous and meaningful learning benchmarks. Rochester Public Schools offers multi-layered instructional services structured into three tiers. Each intensifying tier of instruction and support are offered to a student in addition to high-quality, tier 1 universal core instruction. The first tier encompasses universal core instruction, the second tier provides strategic support, and the third tier offers intensive support. It's important to note that these tiers pertain to the levels of support provided to students rather than categorizing students themselves.



Students may receive varied intensity of instructional support across different content areas. For example, a student may receive Tier 1, universal core instruction in reading and more intensive, Tier 3 instruction in math. Movement between tiers of instruction is based on student needs and data. Elevation to higher tiers of instruction indicates an opportunity for additional intensive and tailored support to enhance skill development, while movement down tiers reflects progress and the ability to succeed with less intensive support.



## Research and Evidence-Based Practices & Programs

Rochester Public Schools is committed to providing instruction and interventions grounded in both research and evidence-based practices. *At Tier 1, all students receive high-quality, research-based instruction.* Research-based practices are developed from the best available knowledge in the field and reflect strategies and techniques that have been shown to be effective, even if a complete program has not been formally validated through rigorous studies. This ensures that every student benefits from strong, scientifically informed instruction in the core classroom setting.

*At Tiers 2 and 3, students who need additional or more intensive support receive evidence-based interventions.* Evidence-based practices go beyond research-informed design; they are backed by rigorous studies demonstrating their effectiveness in improving student outcomes when implemented with fidelity. In alignment with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Rochester Public Schools selects and implements interventions that meet established standards of evidence. This guarantees that additional supports are not only aligned to student needs but also proven to produce positive, measurable results.

By differentiating between research-based Tier 1 instruction and evidence-based Tier 2 and 3 interventions, Rochester Public Schools ensures that every layer of support reflects both the best available research and practices with demonstrated effectiveness in advancing student success.

## Tier 1: Universal Core Instruction

Universal Core Instruction is the essential set of learning opportunities and support that every student in a school receives. This includes academic subjects, social and emotional learning, and positive behavior supports. Instruction at this level is built to be inclusive and responsive to students' cultures and languages, aligned to state standards, and flexible enough to meet a range of student needs.

Because it serves as the foundation for all learning, Tier 1 instruction must use research-based curricula and practices, as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Tier 1 is considered effective when:

- At least 80% of students are showing proficiency on school-wide assessments.
- At least 95% of students are able to maintain grade-level performance over time.

Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Tier 1 instruction provides the base level of learning for all students and creates the conditions for accelerated growth.

For additional information:

[Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards](#)

RPS Literacy Tier 1 Instructional Definitions [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#)

### *Universal Core Instructional Materials*

The following instructional materials have undergone a sequential review process and are currently in use for Tier 1 Universal Core instruction in Rochester Public Schools:

| Content             | Grade Level  | Curricular Materials                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy Elementary | Kindergarten | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Wit &amp; Wisdom</li><li>● Geodes by Great Minds</li><li>● Really Great Reading Countdown</li></ul> |
|                     | 1st          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Wit &amp; Wisdom</li><li>● Geodes by Great Minds</li><li>● Really Great Reading Blast</li></ul>     |
|                     | 2nd          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Wit &amp; Wisdom</li><li>● Geodes by Great Minds</li><li>● HD Word</li></ul>                        |
|                     | 3rd -5th     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Wit &amp; Wisdom</li></ul>                                                                          |

|                                 |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 |                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functional Phonics &amp; Morphology</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Literacy<br>Secondary           | 6th- 11th                                | Standards-based scope and sequence developed based on quarters. Common assessments developed based on MN state standards.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                 | 12th                                     | Elective courses developed based on Minnesota state standards. These are: Adventure Literature!, Contemporary Novels, Creative Writing, Digital Media, Humanities-Search for Meaning, Humanities Philosophical Thinking through Literature, Yearbook and Print Media, AP English Language and Composition I & II, Reading and Writing Critically I & II, Drama, AP US Government |
| Math<br>Elementary              | K-5th                                    | Everyday Math 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                 | K-5th<br>(Washington<br>Elementary Only) | Bridges in Mathematics Version 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Math<br>Secondary               | Grade 6 Math                             | Big Ideas 6: <i>Cengage</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                 | Pre-Algebra                              | Big Ideas 7: <i>Cengage</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                 | Linear Algebra                           | Algebra 1: <i>Holt McDougal</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                 | Intermediate<br>Algebra                  | Algebra 1: <i>Holt McDougal</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                 | Geometry                                 | Glencoe Geometry: <i>McGraw Hill</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                 | Algebra 2<br>Advanced<br>Functions       | Algebra 2: <i>Holt McDougal</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Social<br>Emotional<br>Learning | EC-5th                                   | Second Step Digital Version                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### [Elementary Instructional Minutes Guidance](#)

#### ***Instructional Practices***

To meet the learning needs of students, teachers implement a variety of instructional practices. Below are several key instructional practices used to promote student success within Tier 1.

##### ***Re-teaching***

Re-teaching means going back to important material to make sure students fully understand it, especially when concepts are difficult. It is not just repeating the same lesson again. Instead,

effective re-teaching uses a variety of strategies and approaches to help all students, whether the content is something they have seen before or are still learning for the first time. It is personalized and responsive, designed to match the needs of specific student groups and to honor different learning styles. It often includes giving students new explanations, extra instruction, and additional practice so they can reach mastery of the learning goals.

### *Scaffolding*

Scaffolding is a teaching approach where educators actively guide students' learning by breaking skills or concepts into smaller, more manageable steps. Teachers provide support—like graphic organizers, glossaries, or demonstrations—to help students build understanding. Scaffolding is especially helpful when introducing new ideas or when students need extra help mastering a skill. As students gain confidence and ability, these supports are gradually removed so they can work independently.

Teachers often use three main types of scaffolding:

1. *Content scaffolding*- teacher carefully selects what content and how the content is delivered.
2. *Task scaffolding*- teacher provides temporary support by verbalizing and modeling specific steps in completing a task or acquiring a strategy.
3. *Material scaffolding*- teacher provides temporary tangible, visual aids or cues to help students perform the task or acquire the skill in order to demonstrate their knowledge.

### *Differentiation*

Differentiation is the practice of adjusting curriculum, instruction, and classroom structures so that all students have meaningful learning experiences that meet their individual needs. It recognizes that students have different interests, readiness levels, and ways of responding to the core curriculum, and it requires teachers to plan responsively. Differentiation is not a single strategy—it's an approach that uses research-based practices to address student differences. Teachers can differentiate in four main areas:

1. *Content* – What students need to learn and how they access that information.
2. *Process* – The design of lessons and learning experiences that help students engage with and make sense of content.
3. *Products* – How students demonstrate what they know and can do.
4. *Learning Environment* – The classroom's structures, routines, and overall climate that shape how students feel and learn.

## *Accommodations*

Accommodations are changes to instruction or assessment that help remove barriers so students can access learning and show what they know. These adjustments do not change the learning standards or lower expectations—they simply provide equity, not advantage.

Accommodations may involve changes in:

- *Presentation* – how information is given (e.g., read aloud, larger print).
- *Response* – how students show their learning (e.g., verbal answers instead of written).
- *Timing* – allowing extended time.
- *Scheduling* – breaking tasks into shorter sessions.
- *Setting* – changing the location or environment for learning or testing

When chosen carefully, accommodations can reduce or even remove the impact of a student’s disability without changing the expectations for what they are expected to learn. Importantly, they do not make assessments invalid.

## *Tier 1 Interventions*

Tier 1 Intervention is an instructional approach used when a large portion of students in a grade or class—typically around 70%—are not meeting benchmark expectations. Instead of focusing only on individual students, the teacher develops and delivers a plan that addresses the shared needs of the group.

This type of intervention provides targeted instruction for all students in the class, usually on skills they were expected to have already mastered. It is provided in addition to the tier 1 core curriculum to strengthen essential skills and ensure students can continue making progress toward grade-level standards. Because tier 1 interventions are an extension of universal core instruction, teachers do not need to conduct individualized progress monitoring for every student.

### **Tier 1 Instructional Practices**

|                   | What is it?                                                                                                       | How does it look in the classroom?                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Reteaching</b> | Revisiting and reinforcing previously taught concepts or skills that students have not fully grasped or mastered. | Providing additional instruction, explanation, or practice opportunities to ensure that students achieve understanding and proficiency in the targeted learning objectives. |

|                            |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Scaffolding</b>         | Segmenting learning tasks into smaller blocks and providing temporary instructional aids.                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Content</i>: Starting with easy and familiar concepts and building to complex concepts</li> <li>• <i>Task</i>: Think-aloud modeling to teach metacognitive skills</li> <li>• <i>Material</i>: Use of story maps to teach about story elements</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Differentiation</b>     | Instruction that offers multiple avenues and modes for students to acquire skills and demonstrate their learning.                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Content</i>: Varying the vocabulary used to prompt students' engagement in depth of knowledge level 4 questions</li> <li>• <i>Process</i>: Students completing assignments at their own pace with structured check-in points</li> <li>• <i>Products</i>: Offering students different modes for final exams (e.g., written exam, developing a game, or oral presentation)</li> <li>• <i>Learning environment</i>: Structuring different spaces for students to study/read independently</li> </ul> |
| <b>Accommodations</b>      | Adaptations that increase access to how students learn and engage the curriculum without altering expectations.                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pairing visuals with step-by-step instructions</li> <li>• Providing preferential seating</li> <li>• Using a classroom microphone so that voices can be projected without straining vocals</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Tier 1 Intervention</b> | Instructional programs delivered to the entire class with instruction focused on standards and skills students should have already mastered. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a reading comprehension intervention to all students in period 3 of 9th grade English Language Arts.</li> <li>• Providing a self-regulation intervention to a 4th grade classroom.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## Tier 2: Strategic Support

Tier 2 Instruction is supplemental, strategic instruction for students who are performing below grade-level expectations and who have not fully responded to Tier 1 instruction. A general guideline for determining Tier 2 needs is that a student is below grade-level targets compared with same-age peers in the same classroom setting.

The goal of Tier 2 instruction is to prevent students from falling further behind by addressing specific skill gaps and supporting mastery of grade-level standards. In a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), about 12–15% of students may require this level of support because their needs go beyond what Tier 1 alone can address. Tier 2 interventions are delivered *in addition to*

*core instruction* and provide focused, strategic support to help students succeed. Ideal group sizes are fewer than 8 students at the elementary level and fewer than 15 students at the middle and high school levels.

Interventions provided within Tier 2 are systematic and explicit instruction provided to accelerate growth in an area of identified need. Interventions may be delivered by general education teachers, support staff (including ESPs), and specialists who are trained in the specific intervention methods. They are designed to improve performance relative to a specific, measurable goal. Interventions are based on valid information about current performance, realistic implementation, and include ongoing student progress monitoring.

### ***Tier 2 In Secondary***

Tier 2 Interventions in Secondary Schools are designed for students who show significant gaps in their academic performance. Historically, these students were often only able to access support through special education programs. With MTSS, however, schools can provide a range of interventions tailored to student needs—both inside and outside of special education.

While the core components of MTSS remain consistent across grade levels, Tier 2 supports at the secondary level look different from those at the elementary level. They must be adapted to fit the unique structures and demands of middle and high schools.

A key feature of secondary Tier 2 interventions is that they are designed to build skills students should have already mastered, while at the same time ensuring they remain engaged in their Tier 1 grade-level courses. Students continue to move forward in the core curriculum while also receiving targeted support to fill in learning gaps from earlier grades. This approach helps students strengthen foundational skills without slowing their progress toward graduation requirements.

The defining features of Tier 2 support at the secondary level are outlined in the graphic below:



### ***Tier 2 Evidence-Based Instructional Materials and Programs***

Tier 2 interventions are built around standardized, written procedures or programs that require specific training before implementation. These are often called Standard Treatment Protocols (STPs), which are structured interventions that can be used consistently across multiple students with similar needs (IRIS Center, 2007).

At the elementary level, Tier 2 interventions typically focus on foundational reading and math skills that align closely with essential early learning standards. In upper elementary and secondary schools, the focus shifts to filling in missing prerequisite skills that students need in order to succeed with grade-level content. These are no longer grade-level standards themselves, but the essential building blocks needed to access them.

STPs are delivered in small, targeted groups with clear guidelines for instructional procedures, duration, and frequency—usually four or more times per week (NCRTI, 2010). Ideal group sizes are fewer than 8 students at the elementary level and fewer than 15 students at the middle and high school levels.

Using evidence-based interventions with written protocols and proper training ensures that instruction is delivered with fidelity. This makes it possible to rule out poor instruction as the cause if students do not make sufficient progress, and instead determine whether more intensive support may be needed.

### *Secondary Interventions: Common Learning Strategies*

Like in elementary settings, secondary Tier 2 interventions are designed to address students' skill or performance gaps using evidence-based practices. These supports prioritize explicit, systematic instruction that is tailored to each student's specific needs.

One key difference at the secondary level is the focus on applying common learning strategies across multiple classes. By using consistent approaches in different academic settings, students get repeated exposure and practice throughout the school day. This consistency allows students to focus their energy on mastering the targeted skills, rather than constantly adjusting to new instructional methods.

The following instructional materials have undergone a process of review and are currently available for use in Tier 2:

| Content Area | Materials                             | Description of Use                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy     | <a href="#">Literacy Resource Map</a> | A guide of the evidence-based reading strategies organized by the Five Pillars of Reading (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension). Start by identifying the area of instructional need within a pillar—look for the "Start Here" label. From there, choose a strategy that matches your students' needs. Each strategy is linked directly to curricular resources, showing exactly where it appears, with clickable links to the teacher's guide and student materials. |

### ***Instructional Intensification***

Intervention Intensity refers to how strongly and specifically an intervention is designed and delivered to give students the support they need. The more intense an intervention, the more it is tailored and powerful in helping students close learning gaps. Researchers (Fuchs et al., 2017) have identified seven dimensions that can be adjusted to increase intensity:

1. **Strength** – How effective the practice or program has been shown to be.

2. **Dosage** – How much practice and feedback students get, which can be increased by making groups smaller, meeting more often each week, or spending more time in each session.
3. **Alignment** – Ensuring the instruction focuses directly on the skill gaps preventing the student from meeting grade-level standards.
4. **Transfer** – Helping students apply what they learn in the intervention to their regular classroom work and other settings.
5. **Explicitness** – Teaching in clear, direct steps (e.g., “I do it, we do it, we do it together, you do it”).
6. **Motivational Support** – Using strategies like reinforcement, encouragement, and culturally relevant practices to keep students engaged.
7. **Individualization** – Using progress monitoring and data to adjust instruction to each student’s needs.

### *Tier 2 Dosage*

Because Tier 2 interventions often follow validated programs or protocols, it is critical to pay attention to dosage—the amount of support students receive. The key question is: *Are students getting enough of the intervention to benefit from it?* Dosage is shaped by two primary factors: duration and frequency.

- **Duration** – This refers to how long a student participates in an intervention, from start to finish. In some cases, the timeline is predetermined based on research (e.g., a three-month program to build emotional regulation skills). More commonly, the duration depends on student progress. An intervention may conclude when a student reaches a specific goal (such as meeting a reading benchmark or consistently completing 90% of independent work). If progress is insufficient, the team may decide to continue the intervention or adjust the level of support based on need.
- **Frequency** – This refers to how often an intervention is delivered within a given time period. It is guided by the program’s recommended schedule, which is based on research, and adjusted as needed to ensure most students make meaningful progress. While it’s important to follow the program’s guidelines, ongoing monitoring of student data helps confirm that the intervention schedule is effective for the group.

### ***Tier 2 Staffing***

In general, Tier 2 interventions should be delivered by staff who are well trained in the program or practices being used. This may include:

- Classroom teachers who have been trained in the intervention.
- Content experts, such as reading specialists, math interventionists, or social workers.
- Other staff, such as paraprofessionals or volunteers, provided they are engaged in ongoing training and receive coaching from a content expert in academics or behavior.

If the classroom teacher is not the one delivering Tier 2 instruction, collaboration is essential. The teacher and interventionist should meet regularly for planning and reviewing student data to ensure the skills targeted in Tier 2 align with and are reinforced during Tier 1 classroom instruction.

### ***Goals & Progress Monitoring***

To ensure Tier 2 interventions are effective and matched to student needs, clear goals must be set and progress monitoring data must be collected for all students receiving support.

- **Goal Setting** – A goal statement should be developed before the intervention begins, describing the specific change expected. Goals should follow the SMARTIE framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
- **Progress Monitoring** – Students receiving Tier 2 support should have their progress checked more often than in Tier 1—a minimum of twice per month, and often more frequently. This allows educators to know quickly if the intervention is working.

If a student is not making adequate progress, several factors may need review:

- The intensity of the intervention may not be sufficient.
- The intervention may not be targeting the right skills.
- The progress monitoring tool may not measure the skills being taught.
- The intervention may not be implemented with fidelity

For more detailed guidance, see the **Assessment** section of this manual (for information on progress monitoring tools) and the **Data-Based Decision Making** section (for using student data to adjust instruction).

### **Tier 3: Intensive Support**

Tier 3 instruction provides personalized, intensive support for students who need substantial help to meet grade-level expectations, often performing a year or more below their peers. This level of support is for students who require significantly more intensive instruction than Tier 2 can provide. The goal of Tier 3 is to help students catch up to grade-level standards through

targeted, explicit teaching that addresses both specific skills and underlying learning gaps. Within an MTSS framework, Tier 3 is typically reserved for about 5–8% of students.

Tier 3 interventions are highly individualized, informed by diagnostic assessments, and monitored frequently to ensure each student responds to the intensified instruction. Groups are usually very small, ideally 1–3 students. However, in secondary settings where interventions may be delivered within the context of a class period, groups may extend to 8–10 students. This allows instruction to remain targeted while accommodating scheduling realities. Tier 3 interventions are provided in addition to universal core instruction (tier 1) and strategic supports (tier 2); they do not replace them. All Tier 3 interventions are evidence-based and are selected based on the student’s demonstrated needs. For guidance on matching interventions to student needs, see the [Data-Based Decision Making](#) section of this manual.

At Rochester Public Schools, Tier 3 instruction can support students in general education who need individualized intensive instruction as well as students receiving special education services. Special education is tied to a student’s identified disability and their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Depending on the student’s needs, support may be provided entirely through general education interventions, special education, or a combination of both.

### ***Tier 3 Evidence-Based Instructional Materials and Programs***

Tier 3 interventions provide highly personalized, intensive support for students who need substantial help to succeed. These interventions use evidence-based strategies and continuous assessment to target each student’s specific learning needs. They rely on structured procedures and require proper training for educators to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

Tier 3 interventions are guided by previous intervention data, diagnostic assessments, and other formative information to identify the specific skills and areas where support is needed. A customized intervention plan is then created, which includes:

1. Validated, evidence-based instructional practices targeting the root causes of the student’s learning challenges.
2. Proven strategies to strengthen the identified skills or areas of need.

The plan is regularly reviewed and adjusted based on student progress, with any individual modifications documented to maintain consistent implementation.

Because Tier 3 interventions are highly individualized, they are typically delivered in one-on-one sessions or very small groups of fewer than three students. In secondary settings, where interventions may need to fit within a class period, group sizes can extend to 8–10 students. Tier 3 support is generally provided at least four times per week. Research indicates that more

frequent, shorter sessions in small groups are more effective than fewer, longer sessions. Educators should aim for a total duration of 30 minutes or more, which can be split into multiple shorter sessions. This structure ensures students receive enough practice and exposure to targeted strategies to accelerate learning and effectively close skill gaps.

The following instructional materials have undergone a process of review and are currently available for use in Tier 3:

| Content Area | Materials                             | Description of Use                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy     | <a href="#">Literacy Resource Map</a> | A guide of the evidence-based reading strategies organized by the Five Pillars of Reading (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension). Start by identifying the area of instructional need within a pillar—look for the "Start Here" label. From there, choose a strategy that matches your students' needs. Each strategy is linked directly to curricular resources, showing exactly where it appears, with clickable links to the teacher's guide and student materials |

### ***Instructional Intensification***

Intervention Intensity refers to how strongly and specifically an intervention is designed and delivered to give students the support they need. The more intense an intervention, the more it is tailored and powerful in helping students close learning gaps. Researchers (Fuchs et al., 2017) have identified seven dimensions that can be adjusted to increase intensity:

1. **Strength** – How effective the practice or program has been shown to be.
2. **Dosage** – How much practice and feedback students get, which can be increased by making groups smaller, meeting more often each week, or spending more time in each session.
3. **Alignment** – Ensuring the instruction focuses directly on the skill gaps preventing the student from meeting grade-level standards.
4. **Transfer** – Helping students apply what they learn in the intervention to their regular classroom work and other settings.

5. **Explicitness** – Teaching in clear, direct steps (e.g., “I do it, we do it, we do it together, you do it”).
6. **Motivational Support** – Using strategies like reinforcement, encouragement, and culturally relevant practices to keep students engaged.
7. **Individualization** – Using progress monitoring and data to adjust instruction to each student’s needs.

### *Tier 3 Dosage*

Because Tier 3 interventions often follow validated programs or protocols, it is essential to consider dosage—the amount of intervention students receive to ensure it is effective. The key question is: *Are students getting enough of the intervention to benefit from it?* Dosage is determined primarily by two factors: duration and frequency.

- **Duration** – This refers to the total length of time a student receives a specific intervention, from start to finish. Some programs include a recommended timeline based on research—for example, a three-month program to build emotional regulation skills. More often, duration depends on student progress. An intervention may end once a student achieves a specific goal, such as reading at grade level or consistently completing independent work. In some cases, the team may decide to continue the support or transition to a more intensive intervention based on student needs.
- **Frequency** – This refers to how often the intervention is delivered within a given period. Frequency is influenced by two factors: the program’s recommended schedule and the needs of the students. Following the program’s research-based guidance is important, but schools should also review student data to ensure the intervention is producing the intended outcomes.

For more information on using data to guide intervention decisions, see Chapter 5, [Data-Based Decision Making](#).

### ***Tier 3 Staffing***

Because Tier 3 interventions are complex and require careful adjustment based on student response, they should be overseen by highly trained staff. Research (Reeve, 2009b) indicates that one of the most effective strategies is to assign expert educators to work closely with students who are most at risk.

Tier 3 instruction is typically delivered by content specialists or special education teachers. When classroom teachers are involved in delivering Tier 3 support, collaborative planning and

regular data reviews with specialized interventionists are essential. These practices help ensure that interventions are implemented with fidelity and allow educators to monitor student progress effectively.

### ***Goals & Progress Monitoring***

To ensure Tier 2 interventions are effective and matched to student needs, clear goals must be set and progress monitoring data must be collected for all students receiving support.

- **Goal Setting** – A goal statement should be developed before the intervention begins, describing the specific change expected. Goals should follow the SMARTIE framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
- **Progress Monitoring** – Students in Tier 3 should have their progress monitored at least once per week, or more frequently as needed. Frequent progress monitoring is critical because students with significant skill gaps may make progress more slowly or inconsistently. By collecting more data points, teachers can make timely instructional adjustments based on how each student is responding to the intervention. Progress monitoring in Tier 3 should include both:
  - A general outcome measure to track overall growth
  - A master measure to evaluate the specific skill(s) a student is actively working on

If a student is not making adequate progress, several factors may need review:

- The intensity of the intervention may not be sufficient.
- The intervention may not be targeting the right skills.
- The progress monitoring tool may not measure the skills being taught.
- The intervention may not be implemented with fidelity

For more detailed guidance, see the [Assessment](#) section of this manual (for information on progress monitoring tools) and the [Data-Based Decision Making](#) section (for using student data to adjust instruction).

### ***Suspicion of a Disability***

A student receiving Tier 3 interventions may be referred to the building level Child Study Team for a possible special education evaluation if data show that the student is not making expected progress, even with intensive, targeted support. This is determined by comparing the student's growth to the rate of progress expected for same-age peers, regardless of whether the skill is typically already mastered at that age.

Before a referral is considered, it is required that the student has experienced at least two instructional interventions delivered with high fidelity, or that an aligned intervention has undergone at least two adjustments in intensity based on progress monitoring data. These steps ensure that all reasonable instructional strategies have been implemented before moving toward a special education evaluation.

## Implementation Fidelity

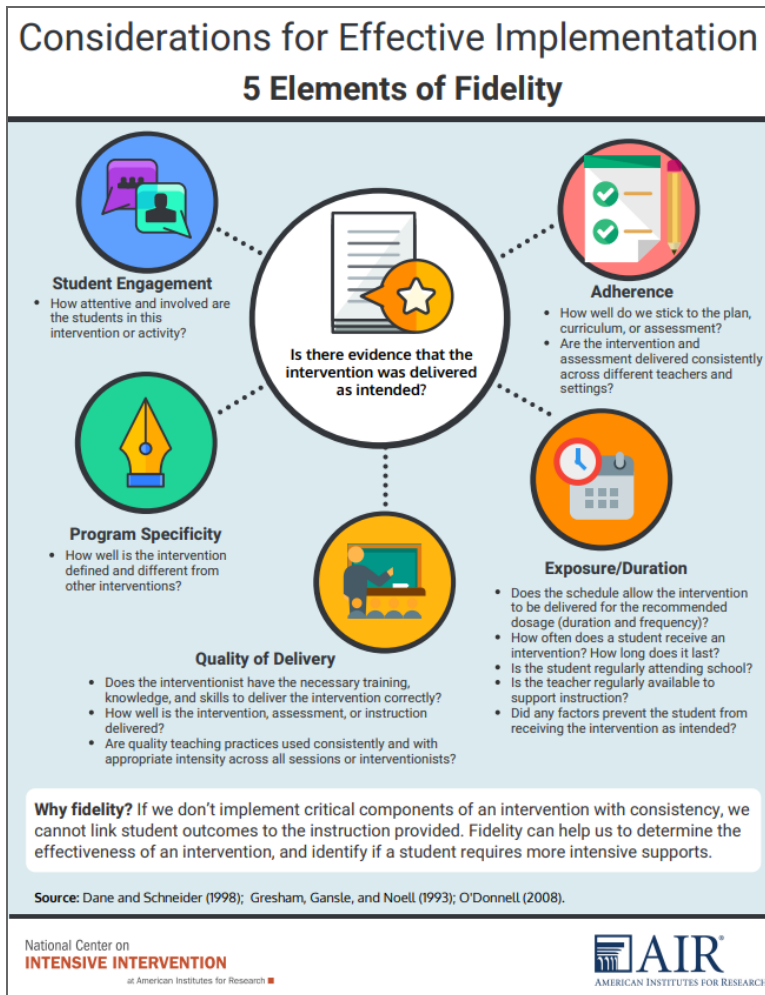
Fidelity refers to the consistency and accuracy with which an intervention or instructional practice is delivered as it was designed. Implementing all critical components of an intervention consistently is essential because, without fidelity, we cannot accurately link student outcomes to the instruction provided.

Monitoring fidelity helps educators:

1. Determine whether an intervention is effective.
2. Identify students who may need more intensive or targeted support.
3. Ensure instructional practices are being delivered as intended across classrooms and settings.

There are five key elements that measure implementation fidelity, which is the degree to which a program or intervention is delivered as intended. These key elements are:

1. **Adherence:** The extent to which an intervention is delivered according to the prescribed procedures or components. It answers the question: *Are we following the program as designed?*
2. **Exposure / Duration:** The amount of the intervention that students actually receive, including the frequency, length, and total time. This ensures students have sufficient opportunity to benefit from the instruction.
3. **Quality of Delivery:** How well the intervention is implemented, including the instructor's skill, clarity, and effectiveness in delivering the content. High-quality delivery increases the likelihood of positive student outcomes
4. **Program Specificity:** The degree to which the intervention targets specific skills, behaviors, or objectives as outlined in the program design. This ensures that instruction is focused and purposeful.
5. **Student Engagement:** The level of active participation and involvement by students during the intervention. Engaged students are more likely to learn and retain the targeted skills.



## ASSESSMENT

In a MTSS framework there are five purposes of assessment: screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, outcomes evaluation, and systems evaluation. This section describes the purpose of assessments in addition to describing the tools and data sources used to inform data-based decision making.

[District Annual Assessment Calendar](#)

### Universal Screening

**Universal screening** is a short and timely assessment given to all students that shows how they are performing compared to grade-level expectations. Screeners help identify which students are on track, excelling, or may need extra support in areas such as reading, math, behavior, or social-emotional skills. They also give schools important information about how well their

universal core (Tier 1) instruction and supports are working, helping guide decisions about resources and interventions.

### **Universal Screening Tools**

#### **Universal Screening Assessments**

| Content             | Grade Level | Frequency                                                                                      | Assessment Platform | Description of Skills Assessed                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy Elementary | K           | 3x/ Year                                                                                       | FastBridge          | Concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                     | 1st         | 3x/ Year                                                                                       | FastBridge          | Concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                     | 2nd-3rd     | 3x/ Year                                                                                       | FastBridge          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad reading ability and overall reading level</li> <li>Oral reading fluency with connected grade level text</li> </ul>                                                                     |
|                     | 4th -5th    | 3x/ Year                                                                                       | FastBridge          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automaticity with phonics, spelling, and vocabulary skills</li> <li>Broad reading ability and overall reading level</li> <li>Oral reading fluency with connected grade level text</li> </ul> |
| Literacy Secondary  | 6th-8th     | 3x/ Year                                                                                       | FastBridge          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automaticity with phonics, spelling, and vocabulary skills</li> <li>Broad reading ability and overall reading level</li> </ul>                                                               |
|                     | 9th         | Fall Only<br><i>*Students not proficient in fall continue to screen in winter &amp; spring</i> | FastBridge          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automaticity with phonics, spelling, and vocabulary skills</li> <li>Broad reading ability and overall reading level</li> </ul>                                                               |
|                     | 10-12th     | 3x/ Year<br><i>*All students not previously screened as proficient</i>                         | ReadBasix           | Word recognition & decoding, vocabulary, morphology, sentence processing, reading efficiency, and reading comprehension                                                                                                             |

|          |         |                                                                                                |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Numeracy | K       | 3x/Year                                                                                        | FastBridge | Matching quantities, number sequencing, numeral identification, decomposing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|          | 1       | 3x/Year                                                                                        | FastBridge | Decomposing, number sequencing, numeral identification, place value, story problems                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|          | 2-8th   | 3x/Year                                                                                        | FastBridge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluency with arithmetic facts, including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division</li> <li>• Broad math abilities including counting and cardinality, operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations, operations with fractions, measurement and data, and geometry</li> </ul> |
|          | 9th     | Fall Only<br><i>*Students not proficient in fall continue to screen in winter &amp; spring</i> | FastBridge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluency with arithmetic facts, including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division</li> <li>• Broad math abilities including counting and cardinality, operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations, operations with fractions, measurement and data, and geometry</li> </ul> |
|          | 10-12th | 3x/ Year<br><i>*All students not previously screened as proficient</i>                         | FastBridge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluency with arithmetic facts, including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division</li> <li>• Broad math abilities including counting and cardinality, operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations, operations with fractions, measurement and data, and geometry</li> </ul> |

|               |      |           |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------|------|-----------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mental Health | K-12 | 2x / year | BASC3-BESS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad-based mental health screener that identifies social, emotional, and behavioral concerns, including risk factors for internalizing and externalizing disorders as well as issues with personal adjustment.</li> </ul> |
|---------------|------|-----------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

[Staff Fastbridge sign in](#)  
[Literacy Annual Administration Cycle](#)  
[Numeracy Annual Administration Cycle](#)

### ***Universal Screening Procedures***

Universal screening assessments are given to all students three times a year unless otherwise stated—once in the fall, again in the winter, and finally in the spring. These screenings typically take place within the first few weeks of school, several weeks after winter break, and during the final month of the school year. In grades K–1, screenings are usually done one-on-one between the teacher and student. In grades 2–12, students complete the majority of the assessment independently using a school-issued device. The screening data is combined with any diagnostic information to help schools understand which students may need additional support.

After screenings are completed, schools hold data meetings to review the results and identify patterns before sharing information with grade-level or content-area teams for deeper problem solving. In addition to identifying individual student needs, schools also use the overall results to determine the best *delivery model* for interventions by deciding how support will be provided based on the needs of the entire school. This helps schools use their available staff and resources efficiently while ensuring that as many students as possible receive the help they need.

## Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic assessments are tools used in education to help teachers understand exactly what a student knows and where they may need extra support. Unlike tests that are given to all students, diagnostic assessments are usually given only to students who show signs that they might be struggling. These assessments look closely at specific skills—such as reading comprehension or math concepts—to find out which skills a student has already learned and which ones they still need to work on.

The purpose of a diagnostic assessment is to give teachers detailed information they can use to adjust how they teach or what kind of intervention a student might need. It helps answer questions like: *What's getting in the way of this student's learning? What skills are missing? What strengths can we build on?* In short, diagnostic assessments help make learning more personalized, so each student gets the support they need to move forward.

### Diagnostic Assessment Tools

#### Diagnostic Assessments

| Content  | Purpose                             | Assessment                        | Grades | Target Population                                                                                             | Skills Assessed                                                         |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy | Dyslexia Assessment per MN READ Act | FastBridge Nonsense Words subtest | 2-3    | Students identified on FastBridge reading as high or some risk, and / or less than 95% accuracy on CBMreading | Ability to read words phonetically using English phonics rules          |
|          | Dyslexia Assessment per MN READ Act | Capti ReadBasix                   | 4-12   | Students identified on FastBridge reading as high or some risk on aReading subtest                            | Word recognition & decoding, vocabulary, morphology, reading efficiency |

| Content | Purpose                                                                                          | Assessment                            | Grades | Target Population                                                                                                                                      | Skills Assessed                                                                                                       |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | Determine strengths and weakness in reading speed, accuracy, and expression                      | CBMreading                            | 2-12   | Students identified as high or some risk in Fastbridge AUTOREading, or low average / weak in ReadBasix decoding or reading efficiency                  | Oral reading fluency including accuracy, rate, and prosody                                                            |
|         | Determine strengths and weaknesses in specific phonics skills                                    | RPS Phonics Diagnostic V5             | K-12   | Students as high or some risk in FastBridge phonics & fluency or phonemic awareness; students with less than 95% accuracy on the CBMreading assessment | Phonemic awareness, alphabetic skills and letter sounds, decoding single syllable words, decoding multisyllabic words |
|         | Determine strengths and weaknesses in specific phonics skills including both decoding & encoding | Functional Phonics Spelling Inventory | 3-5    | Students identified as high or some risk in FastBridge phonics & fluency or phonemic awareness; or ReadBasix WRD cut score of between 220-250          | Phonemic awareness, phonics patterns, syllable types, word structure, encoding /decoding, high frequency words        |
|         | Determine strengths and weakness in phonics and decoding                                         | SPIRE Sounds Sensible                 | K-5    | Students receiving special education reading supports in alignment with their Individualized Education Plan (IEP)                                      | Special Education teachers administer these assessments to inform individualized and small group instruction.         |

### ***Diagnostic Assessment Procedures***

Diagnostic assessments are typically administered on an individual basis and, especially in the early grades, often require one-on-one interaction between the teacher and the student. Each assessment comes with specific protocols that must be followed carefully to ensure accurate and reliable results. While any staff member trained in the administration procedures may give

the assessment, the results should be interpreted by someone with expertise in the subject area—such as a classroom teacher or instructional specialist.

Once completed, the data from diagnostic assessments help teachers identify the specific skills each student needs to develop. This information is used to determine the most appropriate intervention and to group students for targeted small-group instruction that matches their learning needs. Teachers review this information both individually and in collaboration with their grade-level or content-area teams (PLCs) to determine the right level, or tier, of instructional support for each student.

## Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is the ongoing process of checking how students are improving over time. It helps educators determine whether the instruction or intervention a student is receiving is effective and whether any changes are needed to better support learning.

### Tier 1 (Core Instruction for All Students)

- Progress monitoring is more informal
- Teachers use classroom-based tools such as student work samples, benchmark or interim assessments, and common rubrics aligned to the curriculum
- This information helps guide day-to-day instruction and identify students who may need additional support.

### Tier 2 and 3 (Strategic and Intensive Supports)

- Progress monitoring is more formal and occurs more frequently.
- Standardized, research-based tools are used because they are sensitive to student growth
- These tools help educators quickly determine if supplemental instruction is making a meaningful difference.

### *Types of Progress Monitoring at Tiers 2 and 3*

- **General Outcome Measures (GOMs):** These assess a student's overall progress toward long-term goals using standardized tools. GOMs help determine how close a student is to closing the achievement gap compared to grade-level expectations.
- **Mastery Measures (MMs):** These focus on whether a student has learned specific short-term skills or instructional objectives. MMs help track immediate learning and guide day-to-day instructional planning.

| Feature         | General Outcome Measure (GOM)                            | Mastery Measure (MM)                                                     |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus           | Overall, long term progress towards goals                | Specific, short-term progress towards objectives                         |
| Assessment Type | Standardized, repeated across time                       | Skill specific, administered until mastery                               |
| Frequency       | Regular, spaced intervals (i.e., 2x/month, weekly, etc.) | Frequent, within units of study (i.e., 1x/week, multiple times per week) |

|          |                          |                                        |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Purpose  | Monitor overall progress | Ensure mastery of skills               |
| Data Use | Track growth over time   | Guide timely instructional adjustments |

### ***Progress Monitoring Tools- Tier 2 & 3***

| <b>Instructional Domain</b>           | <b>Platform</b>                    | <b>Assessment Name</b>                         | <b>Grade Level</b> | <b>Type of Measure</b>                                                                                                     | <b>Subtests Available</b>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy-Phonemic Awareness & Phonics | FastBridge                         | earlyReading English                           | K-12               | Mastery,<br><i>if skill is below grade level</i><br><br>Outcome,<br><i>if skill is at grade level</i>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Onset Sounds</li> <li>Word Blending</li> <li>Word Segmenting</li> <li>Letter Names</li> <li>Letter Sounds</li> <li>Nonsense Word Fluency</li> <li>Decodable Words</li> </ul> |
|                                       | FastBridge                         | AUTOREading                                    | K-12               | Mastery,<br><i>if skill is below grade level</i><br><br>Outcome,<br><i>if skill is at grade level</i>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word Identification</li> <li>Decoding</li> <li>Encoding</li> </ul>                                                                                                           |
|                                       | RPS Created Materials (eduCLIMBER) | RPS Phonics Diagnostic V5 Skill-Based Measures | K-12               | Mastery                                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Literacy-Fluency                      | FastBridge                         | earlyReading-English                           | K-12               | Mastery                                                                                                                    | earlyReading Sight Words                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                       | FastBridge                         | CBMreading-English                             | 1-12               | Mastery<br><i>If passage is at Instructional / Independent Level</i><br><br>Outcome<br><i>If passage is at grade level</i> | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                       | RPS Created Materials (eduCLIMBER) | Prosody Rubric                                 | K-12               | Mastery                                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| <b>Instructional Domain</b>      | <b>Platform</b>                    | <b>Assessment Name</b>                  | <b>Grade Level</b> | <b>Type of Measure</b>                                                                                                                    | <b>Subtests Available</b>                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literacy-Vocabulary              | FastBridge                         | AUTOreading                             | 2-12               | Mastery                                                                                                                                   | Vocabulary                                                                                                                                     |
| Literacy-Comprehension           | FastBridge                         | CBMreading-English                      | 1-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If passage is at Instructional / Independent Level</i><br><br><b>Outcomes</b><br><i>If passage is at grade level</i> | Recall & Questions                                                                                                                             |
|                                  | RPS Created Materials (eduCLIMBER) | Maze Passages                           | 1-12               | Mastery                                                                                                                                   | N/A                                                                                                                                            |
| Numeracy-Number sense            | FastBridge                         | earlyMath                               | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If skills are at instructional / independent level</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>If skills are at grade level</i>  | Numeral Identification<br>Number Sequencing<br>Match Quantity<br>Decomposing -1<br>Quantity<br>Discrimination -<br>Most & Least<br>Place Value |
| Numeracy-Whole Number Operations | FastBridge                         | CBMmath Automaticity                    | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If Single skills</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>If mixed skills</i>                                                 | N/A                                                                                                                                            |
|                                  | FastBridge                         | CBMmath Process                         | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If Single skills</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>If mixed skills</i>                                                 | N/A                                                                                                                                            |
| Numeracy-Rational Numbers        | FastBridge                         | CBMmath Concepts and Applications (CAP) | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If skills are at instructional / independent level</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>if skills are at grade level</i>  | N/A                                                                                                                                            |

| <b>Instructional Domain</b>                       | <b>Platform</b> | <b>Assessment Name</b>                  | <b>Grade Level</b> | <b>Type of Measure</b>                                                                                                                   | <b>Subtests Available</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Numeracy-Measurement                              | FastBridge      | CBMmath Concepts and Applications (CAP) | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If skills are at instructional / independent level</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>if skills are at grade level</i> | N/A                       |
| Numeracy-Geometry                                 | FastBridge      | CBMmath Concepts and Applications (CAP) | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If skills are at instructional / independent level</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>if skills are at grade level</i> | N/A                       |
| Numeracy-Algebra                                  | FastBridge      | CBMmath Concepts and Applications (CAP) | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If skills are at instructional / independent level</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>if skills are at grade level</i> | N/A                       |
| Numeracy-Data Analysis, Statistics, & Probability | FastBridge      | CBMmath Concepts and Applications (CAP) | K-12               | <b>Mastery</b><br><i>If skills are at instructional / independent level</i><br><br><b>Outcome</b><br><i>if skills are at grade level</i> | N/A                       |

### [Literacy Progress Monitoring Tool Guidance Doc](#)

### ***Progress Monitoring Procedures***

All student progress monitoring data for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are to be recorded and maintained within EduClimber. Progress monitoring is typically conducted one-on-one between the student and the instructor to ensure accuracy and provide targeted support. In some cases, computerized programs may be used to allow students to complete progress monitoring tasks independently.

Progress monitoring is a systematic process used to track and evaluate a student's progress toward specific learning or behavioral goals. The procedure includes several key steps:

1. **Defining clear goals** based on the student's area of need.
  - A solid goal statement is written in a way that frames the outcomes clearly and measurably. A clear description of the desired change, written using the SMARTIE framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable) A sample goal stem is:

“By [timeframe], [student/group] will [increase/decrease/improve/achieve] [specific skill or behavior] as measured by [assessment or tool], with [specific level of accuracy/percentage/criterion].”

For example, “By the end of the 1st semester, 80% of 3rd grade students will improve reading fluency to at least 110 words per minute as measured by weekly CBM measures.”

2. **Selecting appropriate assessment tools**, including either general outcome measures (GOMs) or mastery measures (MMs), or both depending on the purpose of the monitoring.
3. **Collecting data regularly**, according to the recommended minimum frequency for the intervention.
  - Tier 2:
    - General Outcome Measures (GOM): 1 time per month
    - Mastery Measure (MM): 2 times per month
  - Tier 3:
    - General Outcome Measures (GOM): 1-2 times per month
    - Mastery Measure (MM): 1 time per week
4. **Analyzing the data** to determine whether the student is making sufficient progress.
5. **Making instructional decisions** based on the results, such as continuing, adjusting, intensifying, or fading the intervention.

### ***Graphing Student Progress***

Equal interval line graphs are used to visually represent student progress over time. They help teachers quickly see trends, make data-based decisions, and communicate progress to students, families, and teams. Common graphing conventions are outlined below:

| Element | Guidance |
|---------|----------|
|---------|----------|

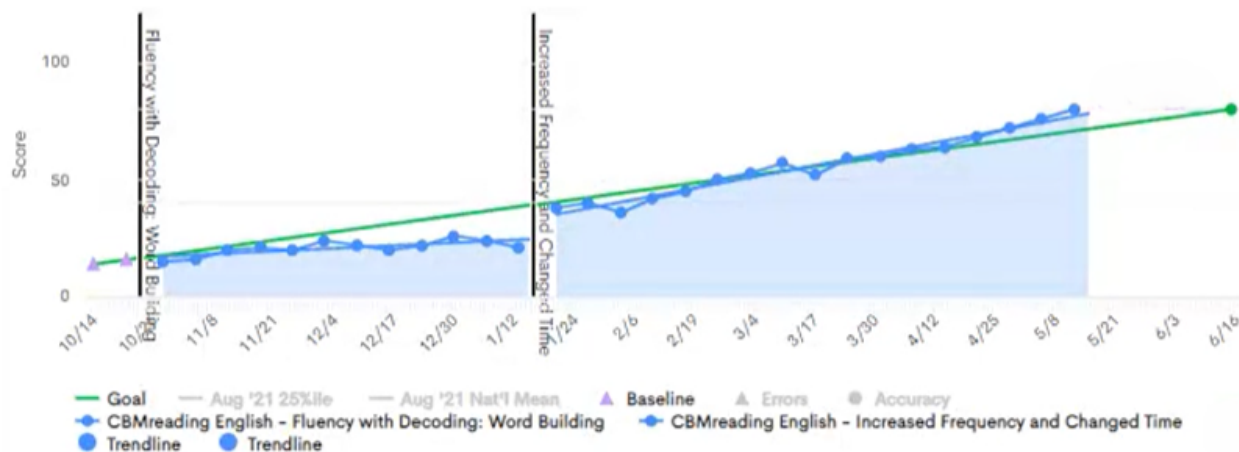
|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title                        | Provide a general description of the skill being monitored; may also include the student's name or ID.<br><i>Example: "Reading Fluency – Words Correct Per Minute, S. Student"</i>                                                                                |
| Horizontal or X-Axis (Time)  | Labeled with equal intervals of passage of time (day, week, month, etc.)                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Vertical or Y-Axis (Measure) | Use equal value intervals (increments by 1, 5, 10, etc). Start at zero if possible.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Baseline Phase               | Display pre-intervention data. Separate from the intervention phase using a dashed vertical line.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Intervention Phase           | Display data collected during intervention. Mark the start of the phase with a dashed vertical line labeled "Intervention Begins."                                                                                                                                |
| Data Points                  | Plot scores accurately. Connect consecutive points with solid lines, including across intervals where data was not collected.                                                                                                                                     |
| Goal Line                    | Connect from the last baseline data point to the end goal. Labeled clearly.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Trend Line                   | Use a dashed line to show the overall trend or trajectory of student performance.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Phase Line                   | Use a dashed vertical line to indicate a change in conditions, such as when an intervention or instructional approach changes in a meaningful way (e.g., new strategy, adjusted frequency, or medication change). Label each phase line with a brief description. |

Additional Guidance:

- Maintain equal spacing for time intervals on the X-axis.
- Do not use only intervention sessions or data collection days as intervals—this skews the trend line's slope
- Keep consistent Y-axis scales across graphs; start at zero when possible.
- Clearly label all phases, goal lines, trend lines, and axes.
- Do not connect data points across phase lines with a solid line—each phase should have its own connected data path.
- Use phase lines only when there is a meaningful change in intervention conditions; avoid overuse.

An example of an eduCLIMBER graph including all of the necessary elements is shown here:

2nd Grade Fluency - CBM Words Per Minute, S. Student



### ***Documenting Diagnostic Assessments In eduCLIMBER***

All diagnostic assessment data are part of the student's official record and must be documented in EduClimber. Maintaining this information ensures historical data are preserved and accessible to instructional teams as students transition to different sites or levels of programming within the district. Any data entered directly into the FastBridge platform will automatically transfer to eduCLIMBER.

This document includes tutorials for step-by-step guidance on how to enter and access diagnostic assessment scores within the eduCLIMBER system.

[eduCLIMBER Tutorials](#)

### **Outcomes Measures (Curriculum-Based Assessment)**

Outcomes assessments measure how well students have learned the intended instructional targets, such as mastery of grade-level standards. They also provide insight into how effectively educational systems are supporting all student groups. These assessments are often referred to as curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) because they are directly tied to the school's curriculum.

#### **Key Features of Curriculum-Based Assessments:**

- **Direct Link to Curriculum:** CBAs evaluate student performance against the specific content and skills outlined in the curriculum.
- **Focus on Mastery:** The goal is to determine a student's mastery of specific knowledge and skills, rather than general understanding.
- **Inform Instruction:** CBAs provide data that help teachers adjust teaching strategies to meet student needs effectively.
- **Formative and Summative:** CBAs can be used formatively (to guide learning) or summatively (to evaluate overall learning), but their core purpose is always tied to the curriculum.
- **Separate from Grades:** CBAs are not the same as student grades. Traditional grades often reflect a broader scope, including homework, projects, effort, attitude, or participation, in addition to mastery of content.

#### **Types of Curriculum-Based Assessments:**

- **Formative Assessments:** Track learning as it is happening. Teachers and students use this information to guide instruction and adjust learning strategies in real time.
- **Summative Assessments:** Evaluate retained learning over a series of lessons or an instructional unit. They provide evidence of how well students have mastered the standards over time.

#### **Power Standards / Curriculum Based Assessments**

| Grade        | Literacy                                                                                               | Numeracy | Science | Social Studies |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|----------------|
| Kindergarten |  Kindergarten 25... |          |         |                |
| 1st          |  1st Grade 25-2...  |          |         |                |
| 2nd          |  2nd Grade 25-2...  |          |         |                |
| 3rd          |  Grade 3 25-26 ...  |          |         |                |
| 4th          |  Grade 4 25-26 ...  |          |         |                |
| 5th          |  5th Grade 25-2...  |          |         |                |
| 6th          |  Grade 6 English... |          |         |                |
| 7th          |  Grade 7 English... |          |         |                |
| 8th          |  Grade 8 English... |          |         |                |
| 9th          |  Grade 9 English... |          |         |                |

|      |                                                                                                      |  |  |  |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 10th |  Grade 10 Englis... |  |  |  |
| 11th |  Grade 11 Englis... |  |  |  |
| 12th |                                                                                                      |  |  |  |

## Systems Evaluation

Systems evaluation within MTSS is essential for understanding how well the district’s educational practices are meeting the needs of *all* students—academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. This process goes beyond measuring student achievement; it reflects the overall health, equity, and effectiveness of the system.

A strong systems evaluation process helps ensure that MTSS is:

- Equitable – serving diverse student populations fairly
- Data-informed – grounded in meaningful evidence
- Continuously improved – adjusting supports to meet changing need

To evaluate MTSS system performance, schools and districts regularly examine the following:

1. Fidelity of MTSS Implementation: Are schools using evidence-based practices as intended and with consistency?
2. Functioning of Teams: How effectively do leadership and problem-solving teams operate at both the district and building levels?
3. Student Outcomes and Opportunity Gaps: What trends exist in achievement, engagement, and behavior—and do outcomes differ across demographic groups?
4. Support Structures: Is additional coaching, training, or resourcing provided where schools need it most?

### ***Data-Driven, Equity-Centered Systems Evaluation***

Evaluating systems through an equity lens requires disaggregating (breaking down) data to answer: *Who is benefiting from our current system? Who is not—and why?* Data should be reviewed at the district, building, grade, and classroom level and disaggregated by relevant student groups, including but not limited to:

- Racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse populations
- Students with disabilities
- Gender

- Economic opportunity (e.g., students experiencing poverty, homelessness, etc.)
- Intersections of these identities

Examples of data sources to evaluate include:

- Academic data: State assessments (e.g., MCA), universal screening, progress monitoring
- Behavioral data: Discipline referrals, attendance, school climate surveys
- Engagement data: Student and family surveys, program participation rates
- Implementation data: Fidelity checks of MTSS practices including instruction

### *Using Systems Data for Improvement*

Evaluating systems performance ensures that MTSS is not just a set of practices, but a responsive and reflective framework that evolves with the needs of students, staff, and families. In this way, system outcome evaluations act as a compass—helping educators stay aligned with their goals, respond to emerging needs, and continuously strengthen the MTSS framework for every student. System outcome evaluations serve several key purposes for improvement:

- Inform Resource Allocation: Data guide decisions about how to equitably allocate staff, time, and materials to meet the needs of each school community.
- Monitor Progress Toward District Goals: Outcome data help track how well the district is meeting strategic goals and where adjustments may be necessary.
- Support Continuous Improvement: By embedding evaluation into the MTSS continuous improvement cycle, teams can make timely, informed decisions about programs, practices, and policies across Tiers 1, 2, and 3.

## DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

In MTSS, data is more than numbers on a page—it is the foundation for solving problems and making informed decisions that directly impact students’ academic growth, behavior, and social-emotional well-being. When used effectively, data creates a continuous cycle of improvement, helping schools strengthen educator support, refine policies, and enhance instructional practices.

A variety of data sources can inform decision making, including:

- Academic and demographic records – such as state assessments, grades, and enrollment data
- Survey and interview feedback – from students, families, and staff
- Classroom observations – capturing instructional practices and student engagement

- Program, policy, and process data – showing how systems are working at both the building and district levels
- Fidelity data – indicating whether practices are being implemented as intended
- Student mastery data – evidence of how well students are meeting grade-level standards or progressing on targeted skills within interventions (e.g., progress monitoring, skill-based assessments, etc.)

By weaving these data sources together, educators gain a clearer picture of both student needs and system effectiveness. This ensures that decisions are not only evidence-based, but also equitable, timely, and responsive to the realities of the classroom.

## Data System

Rochester Public Schools uses eduCLIMBER, an integrated data system that helps teams collect, access, and analyze educational data in one place. The system supports a whole-child view by combining academic, behavioral, and social-emotional information, allowing educators to track student progress across grades, subjects, and tiers of support. eduCLIMBER also makes it easier to examine data for different student groups, monitor trends over time, and ensure equitable outcomes. By providing a clearer picture of student learning and well-being, the system helps teams make more informed decisions.

[Staff EduClimber Login](#)

## Decision Making: The 4-Step Problem Solving Process

Rochester Public Schools uses a structured 4-Step Problem Solving Process to guide decision making and improve student outcomes. This process provides a clear framework for teams to identify student needs, plan supports, and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

The steps are cyclical, meaning that data are collected, plans are monitored, and strategies are continually refined and evaluated. By following this process, schools engage in ongoing reflection and action, ensuring that improvement is not a one-time event but a sustained effort that adapts to the evolving needs of students.



## [Data based problem solving examples](#)

### ***Step 1: Problem Identification***

The first step in the 4-Step Problem Solving Process is clearly defining the problem or challenge. A problem represents the gap between what is expected—or the desired outcome—and what is actually happening. To ensure shared understanding, team members should collaboratively write and agree on a problem statement.

Problem statements should be observable and measurable, grounded in data and evidence. This step involves analyzing available information to answer the question: *“Is there a problem?”*

It is important to emphasize that the focus is on practices and systems, not on individual students. The “problem” does not lie with the student; rather, it resides in the environmental factors, instructional practices, or systems that are currently supporting—or failing to support—student success. By clearly defining problems in this way, teams can identify actionable steps that target the root causes rather than placing blame on students.

### ***Step 2: Problem Analysis***

In the second step of the 4-Step Problem Solving Process, the focus shifts to analyzing the problem and identifying its root causes. This involves gathering and examining data to understand *how, when, and why* current practices or systems are not producing the expected outcomes.

Problem analysis addresses the question: *“Why is the problem occurring?”* Teams look for patterns, contributing factors, and gaps in support or implementation.

By the end of this step, the team formulates a hypothesis about the root cause. This hypothesis guides the next step, where teams develop and implement targeted plans designed to address the underlying factors rather than just the symptoms of the problem.

#### *ICEL/RIOT Matrix*

When conducting problem analysis in the 4-Step Problem Solving Process, teams can use the ICEL/RIOT matrix as a structured way to organize and examine data from multiple sources. This framework helps teams efficiently identify what information to collect and ensures that data are comprehensive and balanced. It is important to note that the

matrix itself is *not a data collection tool*, but rather an organizing framework designed to increase confidence in both the data collection process and the findings that emerge.

The ICEL portion of the matrix focuses on the four key domains that impact learning: Instruction, Curriculum, Environment, and Learner.

- Instruction – This domain refers to *how* teaching occurs, including the ways teachers engage students with content, organize time, and structure learning activities.
- Curriculum – Curriculum represents *what* students are expected to learn. It includes the full set of academic skills and content knowledge that students should master at a given point in time.
- Environment – This domain encompasses any factors in the school, home, or community that may support or hinder student success. It includes physical, social, and emotional conditions that influence learning.
- Learner – The learner domain focuses on student-specific qualities, such as strengths, traits, and capacities. This domain is considered last, after confirming that instruction and curriculum are appropriate and the environment is supportive.

The RIOT portion of the matrix guides teams in identifying multiple sources of data:

- Review – Examine past or present records, student work, assessments, and other relevant documentation.
- Interview – Gather insights from key stakeholders, including students, teachers, and families.
- Observe – Watch performance or behaviors in real-time, functional settings to see how learning occurs.
- Test – Use appropriately matched measurement tools and assessments to gather evidence of student learning or skill development.

By combining ICEL and RIOT, teams can systematically consider all possible explanations for a problem, organize their data collection efficiently, and develop a deeper understanding of the factors affecting student outcomes. This structured approach ensures that problem analysis is thorough, evidence-based, and focused on actionable solutions.

[ICEL / RIOT Sample matrix](#)

[Blank ICEL / RIOT matrix](#)

### **Step 3: Plan Development & Implementation**

In Step 3 of the 4-Step Problem Solving Process, teams design a plan to address the problem that has been identified and analyzed. This step answers the question: *“What are we going to do about the problem?”*

When developing a plan, strategies are carefully matched to the hypothesized root cause and grounded in both research and professional expertise. During implementation, teams continually ask: *“Are we doing what we planned? How do we know?”*

A strong plan typically includes the following components:

- Goal Statement – A clear description of the desired change, written using the SMARTIE framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable). See [Progress Monitoring Procedures](#) for more information on goal writing.
- Evidence-Based Strategy or Intervention – The selected approach should directly address the identified root cause and have a strong research or practice foundation.
- Action Details – Clearly specify *what* will be done, *by whom*, and *when*.
- Progress Monitoring – Define how improvement will be tracked and measured. Whenever possible, use standardized tools that specifically assess the action taken to address the root cause.
- Checkpoints – Depending on the timeline, include formative checkpoints to gather information and make adjustments before final summative evaluation.
- Fidelity Measures – Determine the evidence needed to ensure the plan is implemented as intended.

### **Step 4: Evaluation**

In Step 4 of the 4-Step Problem Solving Process, teams review the data collected during the implementation period to answer the critical question: *“Is it working?”* This step also includes examining fidelity data to ensure that the plan was carried out as intended.

Teams reflect on the results to determine whether the goal was achieved. This reflection includes considering both successes and challenges, identifying what worked well, and recognizing areas that may need adjustment or continued monitoring.

If the review indicates that changes are needed—or if a new concern emerges—the problem-solving process begins again at Step 1, using the newly defined problem as the starting point. This cyclical approach ensures that teams continually refine practices, interventions, and systems to better support student learning and outcomes.

## Applying the Problem Solving Process Across Instructional Tiers

The 4-Step Problem Solving Process can be applied at all tiers of instruction to guide data-driven decision making. By using this structured approach, teams ensure that supports are targeted, evidence-based, and responsive to student needs at every level of instruction.

Sites conduct data review cycles *at least three times per year*, following the protocols outlined in the MTSS Data Meetings Guides. During these cycles, teams analyze student data, identify gaps, and make decisions to strengthen interventions and instruction. Explore the [MTSS Data Meetings folders](#) for more tools to support building level teams.

| Problem Solving Step                       | Tier 1                                                                                                    | Tier 2                                                                                                                    | Tier 3                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Problem Identification</b>              | Is the core program sufficient?                                                                           | For which students is the core program not sufficient?                                                                    | For which students is the core program and Tier 2 not sufficient?                                                                        |
| <b>Problem Analysis</b>                    | If the core program is not sufficient, why is it not?                                                     | Why is the core program not sufficient for the identified students? What specific strategic Tier 2 instruction is needed? | Why is the core program and Tier 2 not sufficient for the identified students? What specific Tier3 individualized instruction is needed? |
| <b>Plan Development and Implementation</b> | How will the need identified in the core be addressed? How will the effectiveness be monitored over time? | How will strategic Tier 2 instruction be delivered? How will the effectiveness be monitored over time?                    | How will individualized Tier 3 instruction be delivered? How will the effectiveness be monitored over time?                              |
| <b>Evaluation</b>                          | Has improvement to core instruction been effective?                                                       | Has the intervention been effective? Which students require adjustment or additional support?                             | Has the intervention been effective? Which students require adjustment or additional support?                                            |

## Determining Responsiveness to Tiered Instruction

Across all tiers of instruction, data are used to identify gaps between expected and current student outcomes in academics, behavior, and social-emotional growth. When determining a

student's responsiveness to instruction, teams consider both performance level and rate of growth.

Using these two indicators together provides a fuller understanding of student progress. Performance level reflects a student's achievement at a single point in time (for example, universal screening or benchmark cut-offs), while rate of growth shows progress over time (such as average weekly improvement). By examining both grade-level expectations and growth, teams gain a comprehensive picture of whether students are responding to instruction and whether the gains are educationally meaningful.

All decisions regarding student responsiveness should be documented in eduCLIMBER to ensure clear communication and continuity of support.

When reviewing progress over time, there are various ways that teams can analyze progress monitoring graphs:

- Consecutive Data Rule: Allows for quicker decisions using fewer data points.
- Trend Line Rule: Considers more data points, reducing the influence of short-term fluctuations and providing a more stable view of student progress
- Median of Last Three Data Rule: Focus is on the median of the last three data points to summarizing the most recent evidence of progress when there are many data points

### ***Consecutive Data Rule***

The consecutive data rule is a method used to assess student performance levels by examining a sequence of consecutive data points on progress monitoring graphs. Before applying this rule for decision-making, teams should allow for an initial period of instruction—typically at least 3 weeks and/ or 6 data points—to give students time to respond to the intervention.

When evaluating progress, the focus is on the last 3–5 consecutive data points following this initial instruction period. This approach helps teams make timely decisions about a student's responsiveness to instruction while ensuring that early fluctuations in performance do not unduly influence conclusions.

**Above the Goal Line:** If a student has 3-5 consecutive data points above the goal or aim line, it indicates that the student is performing better than expected. In this case, educators might consider increasing the goal or reducing the level of intervention since the student is making strong progress.

**Below the Goal Line:** If a student has 3-5 consecutive data points below the goal or aim line, it suggests that the student is not meeting expectations. This might prompt educators to change or intensify the intervention to better support the student.

**Consistent with the Goal Line:** If a student has 3-5 consecutive data points that are consistent with the goal or aim line, it shows that the student is meeting the expected progress. In this case, the current intervention is considered appropriate and should be intensified to increase the rate of progress.



### ***Trendline Analysis***

A trend line, or slope, represents the rate at which a student is making progress toward closing the gap between current performance and expected outcomes. This rate of improvement can be calculated on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. To create a trend line, each student's score is plotted against the calendar days, and a line of best fit is drawn through the data points.

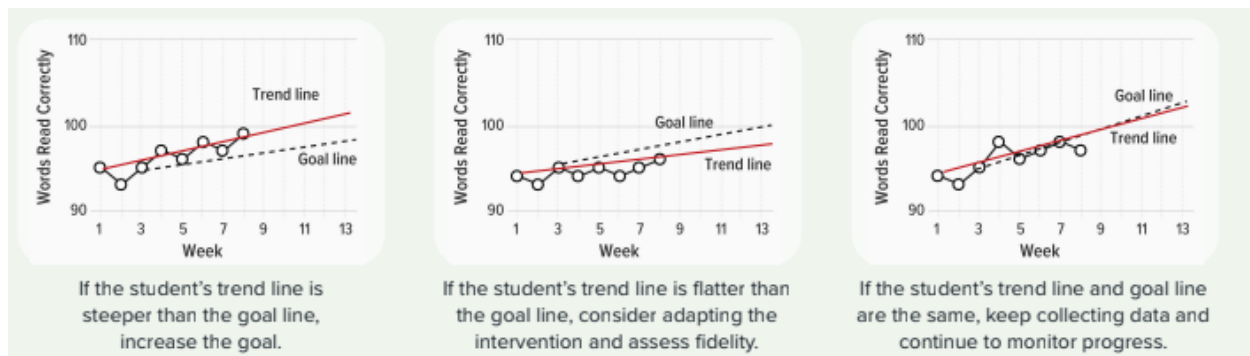
Trend line analysis involves comparing the slope of the trend line to the slope of the goal line to determine whether the student is closing the gap, maintaining progress, or falling further behind. Trend lines are primarily used to assess rate of growth rather than a single point of performance.

A minimum of three data points is required to calculate a trend, though trend lines are most reliable when based on seven or more data points. Before applying this rule for decision-making, teams should allow for an initial period of instruction—typically at least 4 weeks and/or 8 data points—to give students time to respond to the intervention.

**Above the Goal Line:** If the trendline is above the goal or aim line, it indicates that the student is performing better than expected. In this case, educators might consider increasing the goal or reducing the level of intervention since the student is making strong progress.

**Below the Goal Line / Flat line:** If the trendline is below the goal or aim line or indicates flat progress, it suggests that the student is not meeting expectations. This might prompt educators to change or intensify the intervention to better support the student.

**Consistent with the Goal Line:** If the trendline is consistent with the goal or aim line, it shows that the student is meeting the expected progress. In this case, the current intervention is considered appropriate and should be maintained or intensified to increase the rate of progress.



### ***Median of Last 3 Data Rule***

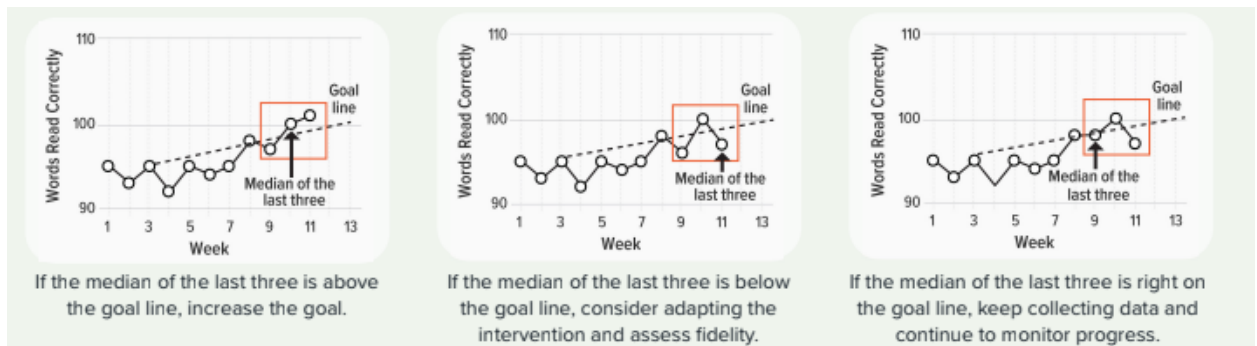
The median of the last three data points is a method used to assess student performance levels by summarizing the most recent evidence of progress on a progress monitoring graph. Before applying this rule for decision-making, teams should allow for an initial period of instruction—typically at least 4 weeks and / or 8 data points—to give students time to respond to the intervention.

When evaluating progress, the focus is on the median of the last three data points following this initial instruction period. Using the median helps reduce the influence of temporary fluctuations in performance and provides a stable indicator of recent student achievement.

**Above the Goal Line:** If the median of the last three data points is above the goal or aim line, the student is performing better than expected. Educators might consider increasing the goal or adjusting the level of support, as the student is making strong progress.

**Below the Goal Line:** If the median of the last three data points is below the goal or aim line, it indicates that the student is not meeting expectations. This may prompt educators to adjust or intensify the intervention to better support the student's learning.

**Consistent with the Goal Line:** If the median of the last three data points falls at or near the goal or aim line, the student is meeting expected progress. In this case, the current intervention is considered appropriate and should be continued or adjusted to ensure steady growth toward the goal.



|                                           | Consecutive Data Rule                                                                                                 | Trendline Analysis                                                                                                        | Median of Last 3 Data Rule                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>How many weeks of data are needed?</b> | 3                                                                                                                     | 4                                                                                                                         | 4                                                                                                                              |
| <b>How many data points are needed?</b>   | 6                                                                                                                     | 8                                                                                                                         | 8                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Recommended Use</b>                    | When there are limited outliers & you don't have a system that calculates a trend line.                               | When you have a system that will calculate a trendline for you.                                                           | When you need quick data analysis that limits the influence of outliers.                                                       |
| <b>Advantages</b>                         | Simple & quick, easiest method to visually analyze                                                                    | Highly accurate, easy to interpret when you have enough data                                                              | Quick to analyze, reduces outlier impact, allows for timely instructional adjustments                                          |
| <b>Considerations</b>                     | May be less accurate as it relies on consecutive data points; outliers in the last 4 points can impact interpretation | Requires enough data for reliability and can be influenced by outliers. Involves calculations or a system that calculates | May miss trends if data varies widely, becomes more accurate with more data, must have at least 4 weeks or 8 total data points |

## Implementation Fidelity for Decision Making

When reviewing intervention data, it is important to consider not only *what* students are learning but also *how* the intervention is being implemented. One reason a student may show slow or limited progress is that the intervention is not being delivered with full fidelity. Fidelity data allow teams to determine whether lack of responsiveness is due to the student's needs or to gaps in implementation. By monitoring the key elements, educators can rule out issues such as insufficient time, skipped components, or low engagement as reasons for lack of progress. This ensures that any decision to adjust, intensify, or change an intervention is based on accurate data—both about student performance and the integrity of the instruction provided.

The key components of fidelity include:

- **Adherence:** Are we following the program as it was designed, without omitting or changing critical steps?
- **Exposure / Duration:** Are students receiving the right amount of instructional time, in terms of frequency, length, and total sessions?
- **Quality of Delivery:** Is the instruction delivered clearly, effectively, and in an engaging manner?
- **Program Specificity:** Does the intervention directly target the skills or behaviors it was designed to address?
- **Student Engagement:** Are students actively participating and invested during the intervention?

### *Measuring Fidelity of Intervention Implementation*

The fidelity rubric is a tool to help teams determine whether an intervention is being delivered as intended before making decisions about a student's responsiveness.

| Component           | Indicator                    | Poor Fidelity                | Moderate Fidelity                                               | High Fidelity                                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Program Specificity | Student Need is Well-Defined | Targeted skill area is vague | Targeted skill are is generically specified and operationalized | Target skill area is clearly specified and operationalized |
| Exposure /          | Student                      | < 80%                        | 80 - 89%                                                        | > 90%                                                      |

|                            |                                   |                                                                                           |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Duration</b>            | Attendance                        |                                                                                           |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Engagement</b>          | Student Participation             | Low to no engagement                                                                      | Passive engagement                                                                              | Active engagement                                                                                                     |
| <b>Adherence</b>           | Intervention Procedural Adherence | <70%                                                                                      | 70-79%                                                                                          | >80%                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Quality of Delivery</b> | Clear and effective instruction   | Instruction unclear or inconsistent; little to no engagement; frequent loss of attention. | Instruction generally clear; some effective strategies; pacing uneven; engagement inconsistent. | Instruction consistently clear and well-paced; effective strategies throughout; active monitoring and high engagement |

#### Step 1: Review Fidelity Ratings

Examine each component of fidelity (adherence, exposure/duration, quality of delivery, program specificity, and engagement).

#### Step 2: Address Areas of Concern

If any area is rated as *poor* or *moderate*, these issues must be addressed before concluding that a student is unresponsive. Develop and implement a plan to strengthen fidelity in the identified areas.

#### Step 3: Continue Current Intervention

Maintain the current intervention plan while implementing the fidelity improvements. Collect data over time to confirm that the intervention is now being delivered with greater consistency and quality.

#### Step 4: Review Student Progress

Once *high fidelity of implementation* is established across all areas, review progress monitoring data. At this point, teams can determine whether the student is truly unresponsive to the intervention and, if needed, make changes to the program.

## Instructional Intensification

According to Fuchs et al. (2017), utilizing student data to determine if an intervention needs intensification involves a structured approach that aligns with the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity. This taxonomy outlines seven dimensions—strength, dosage, alignment, attention to transfer, comprehensiveness, behavioral support, and individualization—that can be adjusted to enhance intervention effectiveness.

### *Guidance for Using Student Data to Determine Intensification*

1. **Monitor Progress Regularly:** Employ reliable and sensitive progress monitoring assessments to track student progress frequently. This allows for timely identification of students who are not making adequate progress.
2. **Analyze Data to Identify Needs:** Examine the collected data to pinpoint specific areas where the student is struggling. This analysis helps in understanding whether the issues lie in the intervention's design, delivery, or the student's engagement and response.
3. **Apply the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity:** Based on the identified needs, consider adjustments in the following areas:
  - *Strength:* Evaluate if the intervention is effective for students with intensive needs.
  - *Dosage:* Determine if the student is receiving sufficient opportunities to respond and receive feedback.
  - *Alignment:* Ensure the intervention matches the student's specific skill deficits.
  - *Attention to Transfer:* Focus on teaching students how to apply skills in different contexts.
  - *Comprehensiveness:* Assess if the intervention addresses all necessary components of the skill.
  - *Behavioral Support:* Provide strategies to enhance student engagement and motivation.
  - *Individualization:* Tailor the intervention to meet the unique needs of the student.

Resources for applying the seven dimensions of intensification can be found in this folder: [Instructional Intensification](#)

4. Implement Adjustments: Based on the analysis, make informed changes to the intervention. This may involve increasing the frequency or duration of sessions, modifying instructional strategies, or providing additional support.
5. Review and Monitor: After implementing the adjustments, continue to monitor the student's progress. If improvements are observed, maintain the current intervention plan. If progress remains insufficient, further intensification may be necessary.

## APPENDIX

[Glossary of Terms](#)