Caldwell County Schools Multi-Tiered System of Supports Guidebook

Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of Caldwell County Schools Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). The intended use is for educators to build a common understanding of MTSS that will lead to the thoughtful implementation of MTSS in the school. The audience for this MTSS guide includes principals, assistant principals, school improvement team members, teachers, counselors, content specialists, school psychologists, behavior specialists, school social workers, district-level staff, and parent and community stakeholders.

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+OVERVIEW OF MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MTSS)

MTSS refers to a framework for support at all levels of instruction that is systematically in place to help all students succeed. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) defines NC MTSS as “a school improvement framework which encompasses academic, behavioral, and social and emotional instruction and support.” NC MTSS employs a systems approach using data-driven problem-solving to maximize growth for all.

The Essential Components of MTSS* comprise a framework of support systems for all learners. The components are briefly summarized:

Essential Components of MTSS	
Leadership	Leadership is key to successful implementation of any large-scale innovation. The building principal, assistant principal(s), and school leadership team are critical to implementing MTSS at the school level. They engage staff in ongoing professional development on MTSS, plan strategically for MTSS implementation, and model a problem-solving process for school improvement. The school principal and school leadership team also support MTSS by communicating a vision and mission to school staff, providing resources for planning and implementing instruction and intervention, and ensuring that staff have the data needed for data-based problem-solving.

Building the Capacity/ Infrastructure for Implementation	School-wide capacity and infrastructure are required in order to implement and sustain MTSS. This capacity and infrastructure usually include ongoing professional development and coaching with an emphasis on data-based problem-solving and multi-tiered instruction and intervention, scheduling that allows staff to plan and implement instruction and intervention, and processes and procedures for engaging in data-based problem-solving.
Communication and Collaboration	Ongoing communication and collaboration are essential for successful implementation of MTSS. Many innovations fail due to a lack of consensus, lack of feedback to implementers to support continuous improvement, and not involving stakeholders in planning. In addition to including stakeholders in planning and providing continuous feedback, it is also important to build the infrastructure to communicate and work with families and other community partners. These practices increase the likelihood that innovative practices will be implemented and sustained.
Data-Based Problem Solving	The use of data-based problem-solving to make education decisions is a critical element of MTSS implementation. This includes the use of data-based problem-solving for student outcomes across content areas, grade levels, and tiers, as well as the use of problem-solving to address barriers to school wide implementation of MTSS. While several models for data-based problem-solving exist, the four step problem-solving approach includes: 1) defining the goals and objectives to be attained, 2) identifying possible reasons why the desired goals are not being attained, 3) developing a plan for implementing evidence-based strategies to attain goals, 4) evaluating the effectiveness of the plan.
Three Tiered Instructional/ Intervention Model	The three-tiered instructional/intervention model is another critical element of MTSS implementation. In a typical system, Core (Tier 1) includes the instruction all students receive; Supplemental (Tier 2) includes intervention provided to students not meeting benchmarks; and Intensive (Tier 3) includes intense, small group or individual interventions for students showing significant barriers to learning the skills required for school success. It is important to consider both academic and social-emotional/ behavioral instruction and interventions when examining this domain.
Data-Evaluation	Given the importance of data-based problem-solving within an MTSS model, the need for a data and evaluation system is clear. In order to do data-based problem-solving, school staff need to understand and have access to data sources that address the purposes of assessment. Procedures and protocols for administering assessments and data use allow school staff to use student data to make educational decisions. In addition to student data, data on the fidelity of MTSS implementation allow school leadership to examine the current practices and make changes for improving MTSS implementation.

**North Carolina's critical components were adapted from collaboration with Florida's MTSS work. July 2019*

It is critical to note that intentional instructional practices are evident for all students. Core instruction does not discontinue with the provision of targeted or intensive interventions. Core instruction continues and students receive additional layered support of explicit intervention.

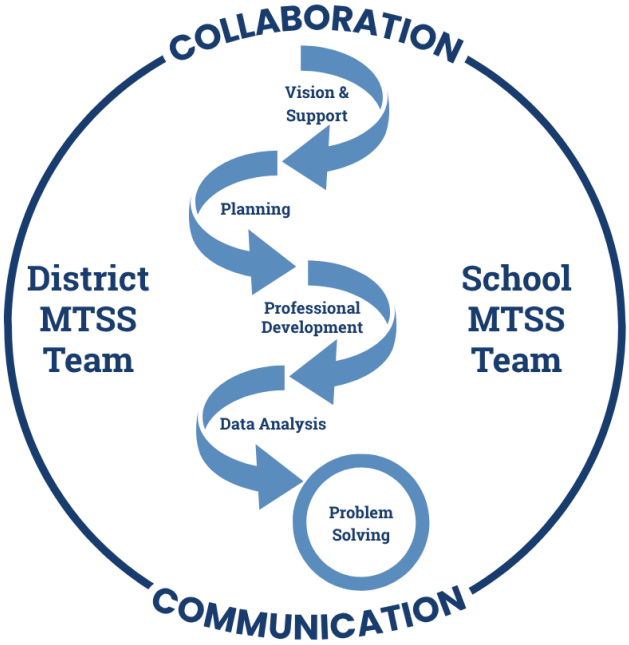
Caldwell County Schools MTSS Expectations
Multi-Tiered System of Supports encompasses academics and social emotional/behavioral instruction and support within a school improvement model. The following expectations provide guidance for the district and school-level teams as we lead staff in MTSS/school improvement.
• Alignment of policies and procedures across the district, schools, grades, and classrooms • Ongoing efficient facilitation and accurate use of a problem-solving process for planning, implementing, and evaluating effectiveness of instruction and support • Comprehensive and efficient use of data for supporting decision-making at all levels • Strong, positive, and ongoing collaboration and communication with all stakeholders • Collaborative coaching and professional development to implement components of MTSS framework

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING AND MTSS

The MTSS framework is synonymous with school improvement. The school's improvement planning should incorporate goals created through the analysis of data and problem-solving that happen within the MTSS framework. The NC School Improvement Process as documented in NCSTAR serves as a comprehensive process to organize the work through data analysis, goal setting, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEVEL TEAMS

District and school level teams facilitate school improvement and the MTSS framework within the school and across the district. This graphic outlines the ongoing collaboration, coordination, and communication that must take place between the district and schools to increase the effectiveness of MTSS across the district.



District MTSS Team	
Purpose	The District MTSS Team ensures implementation capacity is developed at the school level through the work of school-level teams and builds the infrastructure needed to sustain MTSS across the district. The District MTSS Team analyzes district-level data across the domains of academics, behavior, and social-emotional learning in addition to effectiveness and fidelity data.
Membership	Assistant Superintendent, Level Directors, Curriculum Coordinators, Student Support District Staff, Exceptional Children's Department Director, AIG/ESL Director, Principal Representatives, School Psychologist
Meetings	Scheduled quarterly with monthly check-ins as needed.

School MTSS Team	
Purpose	The School MTSS Team facilitates school-wide implementation of MTSS. The team examines school-wide attendance, academic, and behavioral/social-emotional data to determine the needs of their students, develops a plan to address those needs, and then monitors progress towards improvement goals.
Membership	Cross-disciplinary representatives including principal, general and special education teachers, content area experts, student support personnel. The School MTSS team could be ● The same as the school improvement team ● A subset of the school improvement team ● A separate team but needs to report monthly to the school improvement team
Meetings	● Core review of school-wide academics and behavioral/social-emotional 3 times per year (concurrent with benchmark assessments at BOY, MOY, and EOY) ● Ongoing meetings based on implementation and effectiveness data

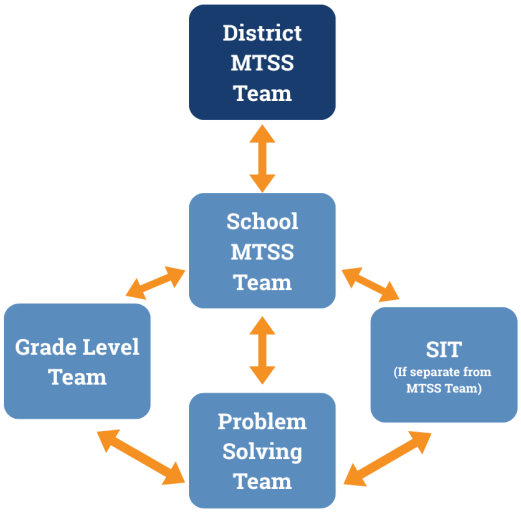
Grade Level Team	
Purpose	The grade level team reviews grade level data in order to evaluate effectiveness of core instruction and what, if any adjustments are needed, and is responsible for matching students they serve to supplemental interventions, as defined by the Standard Treatment Protocol (STP).
Membership	● Elementary Schools - grade level team or grade level PLC ● Middle Schools - team of teachers that share the same group of students ● High Schools - team of teachers looking at grade level specific data
Meetings	● Informal weekly meetings ● Quarterly review of grade level academics and social emotional/behavior utilizing the most current core data (EOY previous year, BOY, MOY, and EOY current year) ● Quarterly analysis of Tier 2/Supplemental implementation and effectiveness data

	○ Additional meetings may be needed based on implementation and effectiveness data

Student Problem Solving Team	
Purpose	In conjunction with the grade level team, the student problem solving team reviews supplemental intervention data in order to evaluate effectiveness of intervention and what, if any adjustments are needed, and is responsible for matching students they serve to intensive interventions, as defined by the Standard Treatment Protocol (STP).
Membership	Grade level teachers and support personnel **as needed**. Support personnel could include but are not limited to: ● special education teachers ● content area experts ● school psychologist ● nurse ● counselor ● social worker
Meeting	● Quarterly review of Tier 2/Supplemental implementation and effectiveness data ● Quarterly Tier 3/Intensive planning, analysis, and review ○ Additional meetings may be needed to accommodate for factors including but not limited to: ■ Changes in student enrollment ■ Significant individual student trends

COMMUNICATION

Across the various teams at the district and school level, communication is a critical element to the success of MTSS. Communication should be bi-directional at all levels. Reciprocal communication is important to increase buy-in and support for MTSS. Below is a graphic representation.



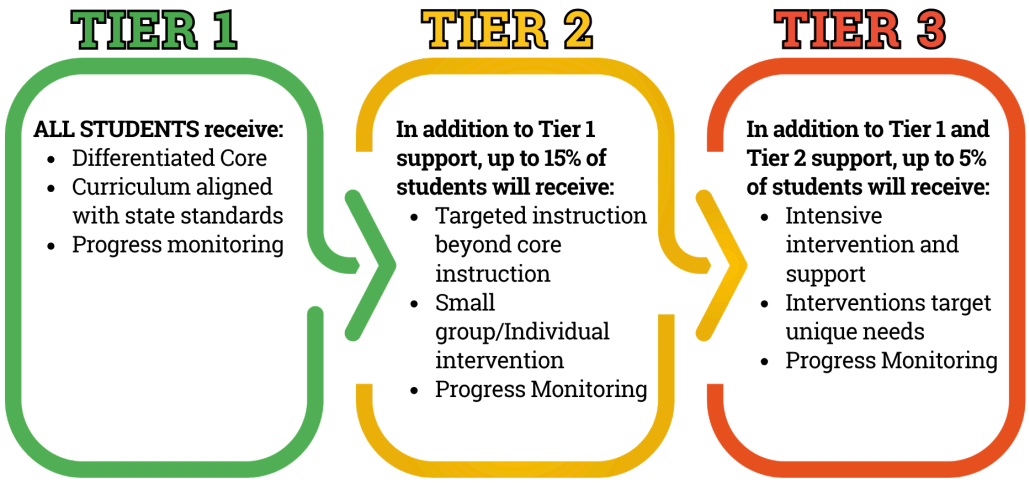
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MTSS

It is essential that the school leadership team utilizes data, pulling from the data sources of the school's balanced assessment system to conduct regularly scheduled reviews of MTSS effectiveness and impact.

The Facilitated Assessment of MTSS - School Level (FAM-S) is a tool that measures school level progress toward full implementation of the six critical components of MTSS. School MTSS teams complete the FAM-S each spring as one measure of evaluating the effectiveness of MTSS. The FAM-S should be used in conjunction with the School Improvement Plan when completing the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) in May each year.

Similar to the FAM-S, the District MTSS Team completes the Facilitated Assessment of MTSS - District Level (FAM-D) each school year. This assessment helps the district to determine areas of strengths and areas for improvement as Caldwell County Schools continues to move forward with MTSS.

OVERVIEW OF OF THE THREE TIERED MODEL OF INSTRUCTION



Commonly Used Terms	
Core Instruction	Core or universal instruction (Tier 1) refers to general academic and social emotional/behavior instruction and support that is designed and differentiated for all students in all settings.
Differentiated Instruction	Differentiated instruction is the way in which a teacher anticipates and responds to a variety of student needs in the classroom. To meet student needs, teachers differentiate by modifying the content (what is taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning).
Supplemental Interventions and Support	Targeted supplemental interventions (Tier 2) are the individual or small group strategic instruction/interventions and supplemental supports, in addition to and aligned with Tier 1 academic and behavior instruction and supports.
Intensive Interventions and Support	Intensive intervention and support (Tier 3) is the most intense instruction/intervention levels, which is based on individual student needs, is provided in addition to and aligned with Tier 1 and 2 academic and behavior instruction and supports. Intensive interventions are characterized by

	increased intensity (increased time, narrowed focus, and/or reduced group size).
Progress Monitoring	Progress monitoring is the ongoing assessment conducted for the purpose of guiding instruction, monitoring student progress, and evaluating instruction/intervention effectiveness.
Universal Screener	Academic-Academic universal screening is a systematic process for assessment of all students within a given grade, school building or district on critical academic skills. Universal screenings are assessments or inventories focused on target skills that are highly predictive of future outcomes. Behavior- Behavioral universal screening refers to the informal inventories of behaviors (internalizing and externalizing) to indicate if students need additional support in specific behavior skills.

TIER 1: CORE INSTRUCTION

Within the MTSS framework, Tier 1 refers to ***differentiated***, core instruction that encompasses ***academic and social emotional/behavior for all students***. Receiving high quality, core instruction, 75%-80% of students are expected to demonstrate adequate progress towards grade level expectations as defined by state, district, and/or school.

Teachers provide high quality, differentiated instruction that integrates ***evidence-based instructional practices for all students***. School administrators conduct ***classroom observations*** to ensure quality instruction is taking place in all school settings. District staff provide support to ensure alignment of curriculum with state standards and promote fidelity of implementation.

Each school ***analyzes academic data and social emotional/behavior data*** from universal screeners to determine instructional needs and goals. Consideration is given to ***instruction, curriculum, and environment (ICE)***. Data is collected and monitored in a system that is accessible by all faculty and staff.

The district provides a timeline for administration of universal screeners or other relevant student data. Allotting adequate time and resources, the school administrator schedules time for school staff to ***collaborate and review data***. The School Improvement Team uses academic and social emotional/behavioral data to identify core needs and creates a plan to address those needs to align with the school improvement process.

Based on classroom observations and academic and social/emotional behavior data, school administration and staff provide ***feedback and coaching*** for improvement. District staff support teachers and administrators to promote consistent evidence-based practices across the district for all students. District staff and school administration collect feedback from school leadership teams to determine school and district professional development needs.

Tier 1- Core Instruction	
What	School MTSS Teams and Grade Level Teams ● determine the needs of all students ● develop a plan to address those needs ● and monitor progress towards improvement goals
How	Review and analyze ● school-wide attendance data ● academic data ● social-emotional/behavior data
When	● Core review of school-wide academics and social-emotional/behavior at least 3 times per year (concurrent with benchmark assessments at BOY, MOY, and EOY) ● Ongoing meetings based on implementation and effectiveness data

TIER 2: SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVENTION

Supplemental, targeted intervention and support, Tier 2, is **aligned with core curriculum** and intended for learners who require ***support beyond Tier 1*** to meet academic and social emotional/behavioral grade level expectations. Tier 2 should serve approximately 15% of the school population.

The goal of Tier 2 Intervention is to **remediate** academic and social emotional/behavior ***skill deficits*** so students will be successful in Tier 1 core instruction. Tier 2 interventions are clearly planned, implemented with fidelity, and evidence-based. Tier 2 interventions can be provided to students by a classroom teacher, qualified interventionist, or support personnel.

Tier 2 Intervention:

- Provides direct, explicit instruction
- Aligns to the Standard Treatment Protocol (STP) to select appropriate interventions for specific skill deficits based on data collected
- Follows a plan based on identified goal(s) to include all components of instruction, curriculum, and environment (ICE)
- Includes a system to regularly collect skill specific data (progress-monitoring)
- Monitors implementation fidelity and effectiveness

Tier 2 -Supplemental Intervention	
What	Student Problem Solving and Grade Level Teams ● determine the needs of students who are not meeting Tier 1 grade-level expectations ● develop a plan to address those needs using the Standard Treatment Protocol ● and monitor progress towards improvement goals
How	Review and analyze ● Progress monitoring data to determine progress toward improvement goals ● Implementation fidelity data
When	Quarterly analysis of Tier 2/Supplemental implementation and effectiveness data ● Additional meetings may be needed based on implementation and effectiveness data

TIER 3: INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

Intensive, targeted intervention, Tier 3, is intended for learners who require ***support beyond Tier 2*** in order to make adequate progress towards academic and social emotional/behavioral grade level expectations.

The goal of Tier 3 Intervention is to ***remediate*** academic and social emotional/behavior skill deficits so students can ***make progress towards grade level expectations***. Tier 3 interventions are clearly planned, implemented with fidelity, and evidence-based. Tier 3 interventions can be provided to students by a classroom teacher, qualified interventionist, or support personnel.

Tier 3 Intervention:

- **Intensifies direct, explicit instruction** by one or more of the following instruction, curriculum, or environment (ICE) components:
    - Increased frequency and/or duration of instruction
    - Curriculum is specifically designed for skill deficit
    - Smaller group size or individual
    - Increased progress monitoring with explicit feedback
- Aligns to the Standard Treatment Protocol (STP) to select appropriate interventions for specific skill deficits based on data collected
- Follows a plan based on identified goal(s) to include all components of instruction, curriculum, and environment (ICE)
- Includes a system to regularly collect skill specific data (progress-monitoring)
- Monitors implementation fidelity

Tier 3 - Intensive Intervention	
What	Student Problem Solving and Grade Level Team ● determine the needs of students who are not demonstrating adequate progress towards the goals defined in the Tier 2 supplemental plan ● modify Tier 2 plan to intensify interventions based on the Standard Treatment Protocol ● and monitor progress toward improvement goals.
How	Review and analyze ● Progress monitoring data to determine progress toward improvement goals ○ Increased frequency of progress monitoring provides additional data for analysis that is used to determine whether to continue or modify the Tier 3 support ● Implementation fidelity data
When	Quarterly Tier 3/Intensive planning, analysis, and review ● Additional meetings may be needed based on implementation and effectiveness data

TIP: *Look for these “practice” tables throughout the guidebook for applications specific to Caldwell County Schools.

Caldwell County Schools - Practices

DATA AND HOW IT IS USED

Data-Based Problem Solving

The use of data-based problem-solving to make education decisions is a critical element of MTSS implementation. This includes the use of data-based problem-solving for student outcomes across content areas, grade levels, and tiers, as well as the use of problem-solving to address barriers to school wide implementation of MTSS. While several models for data-based problem-solving exist, the four step problem-solving approach includes:

- defining the goals and objectives to be attained
- identifying possible reasons why the desired goals are not being attained
- developing a plan for implementing evidence-based strategies to attain goals
- evaluating the effectiveness of the plan

Three Tiered Instructional/Intervention Model

The three-tiered instructional/intervention model is a critical element of MTSS implementation. In a typical system, Tier 1 includes the Core instruction all students get; Tier 2 includes supplemental intervention provided to groups of students not meeting benchmarks; and Tier 3 includes intensive, small group or individual interventions for students showing significant barriers to performing the skills required for school success. It is important to consider both academic and social emotional/behavioral instruction and interventions when examining this domain.

Data Evaluation

Given the importance of data-based problem solving within an MTSS framework, the need for a data and evaluation system is clear. In order to engage in data-based problem solving, school staff need to understand and have access to data sources that address the purposes of assessment. Procedures and protocols for administering assessments and data use allow school staff to use student data to make educational decisions. In addition to student data, data on the fidelity of MTSS implementation allow school leadership to examine the current practices and make changes for improving MTSS implementation.

Caldwell County Schools - Use of Data Practices			
DISTRICT			
WHAT	**PURPOSE**	**DECISION OPTIONS**	**HOW OFTEN**
Screening and Benchmarks (academic and social emotional/behavioral)	Analyze Core instruction	Instruction/Curriculum ● Materials ● Training/Coaching	3 times per year
EOG/EOC results Final benchmark results (academic and social emotional/behavioral)	Evaluate overall Core instruction proficiency	Resource allocation Instruction/Curriculum ● Materials ● Training/Coaching	Once a year
PRINCIPAL/SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM			
WHAT	**PURPOSE**	**DECISION OPTIONS**	**HOW OFTEN**
Screening and Benchmarks (academic and social emotional/behavioral)	Analyze Core instruction	Instruction/Curriculum ● Materials ● Training/Coaching	3 times per year
EOG/EOC results Final benchmark results (academic and social emotional/behavioral)	Evaluate overall Core instruction proficiency	Resource allocation Instruction/Curriculum ● Master Schedule ● Materials ● Training/Coaching	Once a year
GRADE LEVEL			
WHAT	**PURPOSE**	**DECISION OPTIONS**	**HOW OFTEN**
Previous cohort data (i.e. EOG, EOC)	Establish Core baseline	Goal summary trends	Once a year
Screening and Benchmarks (academic and social emotional/behavioral)	Evaluate overall Core grade level instruction proficiency Identify groups of students in need of intervention	Core grade level instruction planning Intervention group planning	3 times per year
NC Check-Ins Common Formative Assessments	Analyze Core grade level instruction Identify skills mastered and skills in need of additional instruction	Core grade level instruction planning	Quarterly Unit-based
CLASSROOM TEACHER			
WHAT	**PURPOSE**	**DECISION OPTIONS**	**HOW OFTEN**

Instructional/diagnostics from screening and benchmarks (academic and social emotional/behavioral) NC Check-Ins Common Formative Assessments Classroom assignments	Analyze Core classroom instruction Identify skills mastered and skills in need of additional instruction	Core classroom planning Differentiated group instruction in Core classroom	Ongoing
PROBLEM-SOLVING TEAM			
WHAT	**PURPOSE**	**DECISION OPTIONS**	**HOW OFTEN**
Progress monitoring ● Group response ● Individual student progress	Analyze group effectiveness Analyze individual students' response	ICE adjustments to Tier 2 and 3 groups Individual student problem-solving	Quarterly

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

Norm-referenced versus Criterion-referenced

- norm-referenced assessments compare a student's performance against the performance of their peers
- criterion-referenced assessments compare a student's knowledge and skills against a predetermined standard, cut score, or other criterion

Universal Screening Assessments

Universal Screening Assessments are characterized by the administration of quick, low-cost, repeatable testing of age-appropriate skills to all students. These assessments are typically administered three times a year. These assessments yield two important pieces of information. First, they provide evidence to help assess how functional the core curriculum, environment, and instruction are in the school. Approximately 75-80% of all students in the school should be showing adequate progress in a particular curricular element or program. If more than 20-25% of the students are not making acceptable gains in an area, the school must focus on improving the core curriculum and/or instruction. Secondly, universal screening identifies those students who *may* not be making expected progress and who *may* need additional diagnostic assessment and/or intervention. Common characteristics of universal screening assessments are:

- Accessible to all students
- Assess critical skills and concepts
- Brief; easy to administer and score
- Given to all students
- Quick turn-around time of aggregated and disaggregated data to classroom teachers
- Repeatable
- Reliable
- Valid
- Often norm-referenced

Caldwell County Schools - Universal Screening Practices			
Grade	**Skill**	**Assessment**	**Frequency**
K-1*	Literacy	STAR Early Literacy***	3 times per year

2**-8	Reading	STAR Reading***	3 times per year
transition K	Early Numeracy	NCENSI	2 times per year
1-8	Math	STAR Math***	3 times per year
9-12	Progress toward Graduation	Credits earned	2 times per year
K-12	Attendance	% Attendance Chronic Absenteeism	At least 3 times per year
K-12	Behavior	Tiered Behavior Data Office Disciplinary Referrals	At least 3 times per year
K-12	Social Emotional	*	As administered

**Students move from STAR Early Literacy to STAR Reading at a 852 scale score (unified). However, all 1st grade students that have not yet met this criteria should still take STAR Reading at EOY to establish a Reading baseline.*
***All 2nd grade students regardless of STAR Early Literacy score should take STAR Reading as their Universal Screening. STAR Early Literacy could be administered as a diagnostic assessment.*
****Use the largest norm comparison group to pull scores. This will be "District" for STAR EL and "State" for STAR Reading and Math.*

Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic Assessments are used to aid educators in understanding the causes of student performance. They help teachers identify where a student's understanding breaks down. This information is used to plan, modify, and/or differentiate instruction/intervention. Other tools that provide diagnostic information (i.e. analysis of student work, teacher observations, and student/family interviews) are important to include in the diagnostic process in order to triangulate data. This helps educators determine the accuracy of any one assessment. Common characteristics of diagnostic assessments are:

- Given to selected students
- Reliable
- Valid
- Often criterion-based

Caldwell County Schools - Diagnostic Assessment Practices		
Skills & State Assessment		**Frequency**
K-5 mCLASS (big 5 areas of reading)		3 times per year
Elementary		
Skill*	**Assessment**	**Frequency**
Phonemic Awareness	● Phonemic Awareness Inventory ● Phonological Awareness Skills Test	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Phonics, Spelling, and Fluency	● Core Phonics Survey ● Phonics Inventory	once to design instruction and/or intervention

	● Spelling Inventory (LETRS Spelling Screeners) ● Oral Reading Fluency Analysis ● Fundations Intervention Placement Inventory ● STAR CBM (passage oral fluency)	
Vocabulary & Comprehension	● STAR Diagnostic and/or Instructional Planning Student Report ● Reading Running Records ● DIBELS 8th Edition (MAZE) ● mCLASS - Vocabulary Assessment ● Schoolnet	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Written Expression	● Embedded writing samples dictated by curriculum (Arts & Letters samples) ● Student writing samples	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Number Sense	● Number Knowledge Test ● STAR Early Literacy Diagnostic Report (sub-domain skill set) ● NCDPI Assessments (K-2) ● STAR CBM (Number Recognition, Quantity Comparison)	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Computation	● Number Knowledge Test ● NCDPI Assessments (K-2) ● STAR Math Instructional Planning Student Report ● Schoolnet	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Math Fluency	● NCDPI Assessments ● STAR Math Instructional Planning Student Report ● Schoolnet ● NCENSI (access key: mathisfun)	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Proportional Reasoning, Algebraic, and Geometric Thinking	● NCDPI Assessments (K-2) ● STAR Math Instructional Planning Student Report ● Schoolnet	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Social Emotional/Behavior	● 6+ days unexcused absences ● 3+ consecutive days absent without parent contact ● Absences impact on grades ● Analysis of disciplinary referrals ● Mental health screener ● Analysis of school behavior plan incidents	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Middle & High		
Skill*	**Assessment**	**Frequency**

Word Study	● STAR Reading Instructional Planning Report
	● Core Phonics Survey
	● Spelling Inventory (as appropriate)
	  ○ Grade 3
	  ○ Grade 4
		once to design instruction and/or intervention

	• Grade 5 • Grades 6-9	
Vocabulary	• DIBELS 8th Ed - Maze (K-8) • Maze Generator • CommonLit	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Fluency	• CommonLit • STAR Instructional Planning Report	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Comprehension	• CommonLit • STAR Instructional Planning Report • DIBELS 8th Ed - Maze (K-8) • Maze Generator	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Written Expression	• Embedded writing samples dictated by curriculum • Student writing samples	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Calculation	• STAR Instructional Planning Report • HMH Benchmark Data • Delta Math	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Problem Solving	• STAR Instructional Planning Report • HMH Diagnostic Benchmark Data • Delta Math	once to design instruction and/or intervention
Social Emotional/Behavior	• 6+ days unexcused absences • 3+ consecutive days absent without parent contact • Absences impact on grades • Analysis of disciplinary referrals • Mental health screener • Analysis of school behavior plan incidents	once to design instruction and/or intervention

**Refer to CCS Standard Treatment Protocol for drill-down by individual skills.*

Progress monitoring assessments are used to regularly assess students in specific academic and social emotional/behavior areas in order to determine the efficacy of and inform instruction/intervention and to make effective decisions regarding the instructional/intervention needs of a class, small group or individual student. The group's or student's current level of performance is determined and a goal that is aligned to the relevant standard(s) is set. Progress is measured regularly, with the frequency depending on the intensity of instruction/intervention, to see if the rate of learning matches the expected growth rate. Based on the results, changes in curriculum, instruction and/or environment are made to match student needs. Common characteristics of progress monitoring assessments are:

- Administered at regular intervals, with increasing frequency as the intensity of the intervention increases
- Rates of improvement specified
- Reliable
- Sensitive to improvement/small increments of growth
- Sufficient number of alternative forms of equal difficulty
- Valid
- Often criterion-based

Caldwell County Schools - Progress Monitoring Practices		
Elementary		
Skill*	**Assessment**	**Frequency***
Phonemic Awareness	• DIBELS 8th Ed. probes -PSF • STAR CBM (Phoneme Segmentation)	approximately every 10 instructional sessions
Phonics, Spelling, and Fluency	• DIBELS 8th Ed. probes NWF, WRF, DORF • STAR CBM (Letter Naming, Letter Sounds, Receptive Nonsense Words, Expressive Nonsense Words, Passage Oral Reading) • Easycbm.com (Proficient Reading)	approximately every 10 instructional sessions
Vocabulary & Comprehension	• DIBELS 8th Ed. probes -MAZE • mCLASS Vocabulary Assessment • Easycbm.com (Proficient Reading)	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Written Expression	• On demand writing assessments** • Written expression probe generator** • Correct word sequences** • Standardized rubrics**	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Number Sense	• STAR CBM (Number Recognition, Quantity Comparison) • easycbm.com • NCENSI (K-5) (access key: mathisfun) • SchoolNet** • Acadience (DIBELS) Math • Intervention Central**	approximately every 10 instructional sessions
Computation	• STAR CBM (Addition, Subtraction, Mixed, Multiplication) • easycbm.com • NCENSI (K-5) (access key: mathisfun) • SchoolNet** • Acadience (DIBELS) Math • Intervention Central** • Timed Curriculum based measures	approximately every 10 instructional sessions

Math Fluency	● STAR CBM (Addition, Subtraction, Mixed, Multiplication) ● easycbm.com ● NCENSI (K-5) (access key: mathisfun) ● SchoolNet** ● Acadience (DIBELS) Math ● Intervention Central** ● Timed curriculum based measures	approximately every 10 instructional sessions
Proportional Reasoning, Algebraic, and Geometric Thinking	● easycbm.com ● SchoolNet** ● Acadience (DIBELS) Math ● Intervention Central** ● Timed Curriculum based measures	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Social Emotional/Behavior	● Attendance data ● Grades ● Health/Medical incidents ● Attendance CICO data ● Weekly check ups provided by the program ● Why Try? session attendance ● Classroom observations ● Group (generalized) Daily Behavior Report (based on schoolwide expectations) ● PBIS or school-based behavioral data ● CICO card (Daily Behavior Report) ● Disciplinary referrals ● Suspension data	Daily to weekly depending on support plan
Middle & High		
Skill*	**Assessment**	**Frequency**
Word Study	● DIBELS 8th Edition ORF ● easyCBM	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Vocabulary	● MAZE - paper format ● easyCBM	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Fluency	● DIBELS 8th Edition ORF ● easyCBM ● STAR CBM (Middle Only)	approximately every 10 instructional sessions
Comprehension	● DIBELS 8th Edition MAZE ● easyCBM	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Written Expression	● On demand writing assessments ● Standardized rubrics** ● Written expression probe generator**	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Calculation	● easyCBM ● IXL ● RTI Delta Math Quick Checks	approximately every 10 instructional sessions
Problem Solving	● easyCBM ● IXL ● RTI Delta Math Quick Checks	approximately every 15 instructional sessions
Social Emotional/Behavior	● Attendance data ● Grades	Daily to weekly depending on support plan

	• Health/Medical incidents • Attendance CICO data • Weekly check ups provided by the program • Why Try? session attendance • Classroom observations • Group (generalized) Daily Behavior Report (based on schoolwide expectations) • PBIS or school-based behavioral data • CICO card (Daily Behavior Report) • Disciplinary referrals • Suspension data	

**Refer to CCS Standard Treatment Protocol for drill-down by individual skills and progress monitoring schedule*
***Limited usage for LD (no growth rates)*

INTERVENTION GOAL SETTING

Caldwell County Schools - Intervention Goal Settings Guidelines	
Goals should be created as SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goals and based on the parameters of the tiers.	
Tier 1 Core	75%-80% of students reach/maintain proficiency level on Universal Screeners by end of year TEMPLATE Core Plan (Fillable Document)
Tier 2 Supplemental	Students reach benchmark level on Universal Screeners and/or Progress Monitoring by end of year *Exceptions may apply if the rate of improvement is unattainable based on intervention plan*
Tier 3 Intensive	Students make adequate progress towards benchmark on Progress Monitoring by end of year *Adequate progress defined by accelerated growth rate based on intensity of intervention plan*

*Each assessment tool should be referenced for benchmark levels and growth expectations

DATA DECISION RULES GUIDELINES

Data decision rules are formal procedures that inform our actions around data. Data can be adult or student based and implementation or outcome based. We set ***data decision rules*** to provide a framework for our teams and practitioners to interpret data. Some ***data decision rules*** can be extracted directly from research and they are presented here in that way. There are some times however, when schools and districts will need to design their own rules based on best practice and their unique circumstances.

Caldwell County Schools - Data Decision Rules Guidelines

How do we know if instruction/intervention is effective?	What data do we use?
Tier 1/Core (ALL STUDENTS)	
75-80% of students score at or above proficient level on Universal Screeners *OR* % of students scoring at or above proficient level on Universal Screeners is increasing at a rate that will reach 75-80% by end of year *OR* 70-80% of students' growth rate exceeds standard growth	See CCS Universal Screening Practices
Tier 2/Supplemental (GROUP EFFECTIVENESS)	
70-80% of students in targeted intervention meet plan established goal	Progress monitoring data as suggested by STP and prescribed on intervention plan Formula: # of students that met goal divided by # of students in group = % Group Effectiveness

Additional Tier 2/Supplemental Data Decision Rules

*Employ the Review-Interview-Observation-Test (RIOT) framework to problem-solve around the factors of Instruction-Curriculum-Environment (ICE). **Possible use** of Walk Through Form.*

Group Effectiveness <50%	Group Effectiveness 50-70%	Group Effectiveness 70%+
Discuss group ONLY Instruction (I) Curriculum (C) Environment (E)	Discuss group and *students* *not as individual, non-responding students, but as group participants	Discuss non-responding students ONLY

Group Effectiveness	Impact
70-80% of group meet goal	**IT'S WORKING!** ● Keep doing what you're doing. Don't change anything. ● Monitor for goal accomplishment.
50-69% of group making progress but not at rate to meet goal	**SOMETHING IS WORKING, BUT NOT ENOUGH.** ● Consider ICE through the RIOT framework. ● Most likely the curriculum and instruction is effective, but needs to be intensified so consider intensification to Environment (E).

	● Monitor for increased response. Suggested walkthrough by admin/team.
Less than 50% of group making progress	**IT'S NOT WORKING.** ● Consider ICE through the RIOT framework. ● The cause for lack of effectiveness could be within any of these factors. Attempt to make change to only one factor at a time. ● Monitor for change to positive response. Admin/team to complete Walkthrough Form (quarterly)
Tier 3/Intensive (INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS)	
Individual students meet or make adequate progress towards plan established goal	Progress monitoring data as suggested by STP and prescribed on intervention plan
Additional Tier 3/Intensive Data Decision Rules	
Individual student trends should only be analyzed when group response is established as effective. ● Never make decisions based on one piece of data. Instead triangulate multiple sources of data. ● Look for trends. A ***minimum of 3 data points in the same direction*** can establish a trend. However, if the data points are not in the same direction then a ***minimum of 7 data points*** are needed to establish a trend. ● Employ the Review-Interview-Observation-Test (RIOT) framework to problem-solve around the factors of Instruction-Curriculum-Environment-Learner (ICEL). Required use of Walk Through Form.	
Individual Student Data Trend	**Impact**
Data trend upward at a rate that is closing the gap towards meeting goal, exceeding risk, and/or proficiency.	**IT'S WORKING!** ● Keep doing what you're doing. Don't change anything. ● Monitor for goal accomplishment.
Data trend upward, but at a rate that is not closing the gap towards meeting goal, exceeding risk, and/or proficiency.	**SOMETHING IS WORKING, BUT NOT ENOUGH.** ● Consider ICEL through the RIOT framework. ● Most likely the curriculum and instruction is effective, but needs to be intensified so consider intensification to Environment (E). ● Monitor for increased response.
Data trend is flat.	**IT'S NOT WORKING.** ● Consider ICEL through the RIOT framework. ● The cause for lack of effectiveness could be within any of these factors. Attempt to make change to only one factor at a time. ● Explore Learner (L) variables if flat trend continues after plan adjustment(s). ● Monitor for change to positive response.
Data trend is downward.	**IT'S NOT WORKING.** ● Consider ICEL through the RIOT framework. ● The cause for lack of effectiveness could be within any of these factors. May require change to multiple factors. ● Explore Learner (L) variables.* ● Monitor for change to positive response.

**Learner Variables - hearing, vision, engagement, communication. Parent/Guardian consent should be obtained.*

CHILD FIND AND SUSPECTED DISABILITY

Project Child Find is an effort coordinated by the local school system and N.C. Exceptional Children Division aimed to:

- Locate and identify children and youth ages birth through 21 with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services.
- Inform parents and/or guardians of the services available from their local school system and other state and community agencies.

Caldwell County Schools - Child Find/Suspected Disability	
State Resources NC Project Child Find NC Policies Governing Students with Disabilities	**District Resources** LD 2020 Areas of Exceptionality Guiding Parameters

TOOLS FOR ADMINISTRATORS & TEACHERS

Review - Interview - Observation - Test (RIOT)

R	Review	Review historical and/or current records and products
I	Interview	Interview of key stakeholders (face-to-face, phone, zoom, email, etc)
O	Observe	Observe performance in real time functional settings
T	Test	Test of variables within ICEL

Instruction - Curriculum - Environment - Learner (ICEL)

I	Instruction	Instruction is how the curriculum is taught and can vary in many different ways including: level of instruction, rate of instruction, and presentation of instruction.
C	Curriculum	Curriculum refers to what is taught. Curriculum would include scope, sequencing, pacing, materials, rigor, format, and relevance.
E	Environment	The environment is where the instruction takes place. Variables in the environment include classroom expectations, beliefs/attitudes, peers, school culture, facilities, class/group size, attendance/tardies, and management.
L	Learner	The learner is who is being taught. This is the last domain that is considered and is only addressed when the curriculum and instruction are found to be appropriate and the environment accommodating. Variables include motivation, prerequisite skills, organization/study habits, abilities, impairments, and history of instruction.

See specific examples and learn more about the RIOT/ICEL Matrix here and here.

Standard Treatment Protocol

A standard treatment protocol is a system in which all students receiving Tier 2 interventions are provided with the same research-based intervention. Standard treatment protocols include:

- entry data source and criteria
- intervention instruction, curriculum, and environment
- progress monitoring data source and schedule

Caldwell County Schools - Standard Treatment Protocols						
Caldwell County Schools created a menu of research-based interventions by content/skill areas to guide Tier 2 interventions and provide plans for intensification. The Caldwell County Schools Standard Treatment Protocols linked below are living and flexible documents that may be adjusted at the district level based on core standards, resources, and research.						
Slide Deck Introduction						
K-5 Literacy	K-5 Math	6-8 Literacy	6-8 Math	9-12 ELA	9-12 Math	K-12 Attendance Behavior Social Emotional

Core and Intervention Observation - Walk-throughs

Observation data is intended to inform MTSS implementation and problem solving. Core instruction and intervention groups should be observed and documented using the walk-through form at least once per semester. Walk-throughs should be unannounced to ensure validity of the results. Some groups may require more observations depending on the progress of the students, fidelity of implementation, and/or needs of the students. Teachers and intervention facilitators should receive timely feedback regarding the walkthrough data.

Caldwell County Schools - Walk-through Practice		
Procedure	**Frequency**	**Form**
Core instruction and intervention groups Unannounced	Once per semester	Walk-through Form

Documentation System

Caldwell County Schools Documentation	
Caldwell County Schools will maintain documentation of all MTSS interventions and supports. The MTSS documentation process aligns with the North Carolina MTSS Framework by emphasizing collaborative team problem-solving to reduce the burden on individual teachers and ensure timely, effective responses to students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.	
How/when do we notify parent(s)/guardian(s)?	DPI parent notification letter (English/Spanish) Letter required when a child enters, changes, or exits a tier Paper copy kept in students' MTSS (Purple) folder.

MTSS Folder Expectations (Purple Folder)	The primary purpose of the active MTSS Purple Folder is to serve as a continuous, centralized record for any student receiving **Tier 2 (Supplemental)** or **Tier 3 (Intensive)** interventions. Maintaining this documentation across grades K–12 ensures smooth transitions between classrooms, grade levels, and schools, preventing receiving educators from having to "start from scratch" or disrupt ongoing student support. **1. MTSS Folder Checklist** The **MTSS Folder Checklist** acts as the required cover sheet for every student's physical MTSS "Purple Folder". Teachers and teams use this checklist across grades K–12 to verify that all mandatory documentation is actively collected and up to date. Key required items logged on the checklist include: ● Parent notification and consent forms. ● Supplemental (yellow) and Intensive (red) intervention plans (TIPS paperwork) with measurable goals. ● Progress monitoring graphs and trend lines. ● Vision/hearing screenings and intervention attendance records, where applicable. ● Intervention Attendance - This may be kept on paper or digitally for Intervention Groups. Make sure to add this document to the Shared School Folder. **2. MTSS Roster & Meeting Notes** The **MTSS Roster** serves as the central hub for tracking Tier 2 and Tier 3 students and capturing real-time collaborative decision-making. School-level teams use the roster during data-based problem-solving meetings to: ● Print and maintain basic student demographic details. ● Record meeting notes (TIPs Sheet) and updates regarding whole intervention groups or individual students as needed. ● Document progress reviews, plan adjustments, and tier movement. **3. Shared School Folder (Digital Documentation)** To support digital organization and team access, documentation collected on the MTSS Roster and individual intervention plans is stored within a **Shared School Folder, Located in the CCS MTSS Hub**. Storing electronic records, data graphs, and meeting notes digitally ensures seamless collaboration among team members, prevents receiving teachers from having to "start from scratch," and maintains an

	uninterrupted intervention history as students transition across grade levels and classrooms.

COMMON MYTHS

MYTH	TRUTH
One size fits all.	Ever changing, ever growing. Requires ongoing reflection, evaluation, and adaptation.
MTSS only happens three times a year.	MTSS is a whole school improvement model that involves thoughtful resource allocation (people, money, time, materials), professional development, and focus on ALL children.
MTSS is just meetings and paperwork.	Paperwork is secondary. Instruction and problem solving are primary.
MTSS can happen in isolation.	MTSS is all about collaboration. Problem-solving improves in a team.
Our entire grade level is low. Everyone needs a purple folder.	Let's explore Core. "Biggest Bang for the Buck" Analyzing and making adaptations to Core instruction, curriculum, and environment yields the best outcome and reduces the demands of additional support layers. Schools cannot support and sustain large amounts of resources on individual deficits. Differentiated core is key!
No interventions until Core is solid.	Solid Core is the primary goal, but we must intervene with students' needs. Balance of looking at the whole without losing sight of the individuals.
MTSS is just for students who are struggling.	Tiered instructional supports should focus on growth for all students. Remediation - Maintenance - Enrichment
If a student shows up "red" or "Tier 2" on an assessment, they have to have "red paperwork" or "Tier 2 paperwork".	Multiple data points are used to determine instructional supports for any group/child. One data point is only a snapshot.
MTSS is a pathway to special education.	MTSS is a beneficial framework that supports pathways towards proficiency for *all* students. Interventions are required for special education identification and is primary in the identification and eligibility of LD, but mindset of growth for ALL then those distinctions and requirements will be naturally occurring rather than the intent.
All layers of instructional support can stand alone.	Tiered instructional supports are relative to, but not a replacement of each other. There should be blending rather than edges. It is often not appropriate to have 2 separate interventions that may be teaching skills with conflicting language and strategies.
Movement through tiers is always sequential.	Intensity of intervention should match intensity of need.

	Do not perpetuate a “wait to fail” model. If intervention groups are fluid, then levels of supports and adjusted with data analysis. Every year is not starting over.
Tutors are the best instructors for children. Computer programs are the best instructors for children.	YOU are the best instructor for your students. Research does show that self efficacy is one of the highest predictors of student success. Teachers have the greatest Knowledge of the Grade Level Content - NCSCOS. Computers are only as effective as the teacher behind it - teachers must actively monitor the usage and intervene.
MTSS is complicated - NOT busted!	It is complicated and hard work...but with teamwork, it is attainable and best for students.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What are interventions?
Interventions are supplemental learning activities that hold a reasonable potential to accelerate learning for students who struggle. Interventions will have a scientific research base and are provided by special and general educators. Examples of interventions can range in intensity with regard to duration, frequency, and group size. Interventions are designed to improve performance toward a specific, measurable goal.

How are students identified for interventions?
A major feature of the MTSS Model is the use of data to drive the decision-making process at the school, classroom, and individual student levels. Data is used to identify students as early as possible who are at risk, or already experiencing difficulties and need extra instruction or intensive interventions. Additionally, students who have reached benchmarks are identified for enrichment to achieve beyond standards.

Why are there tiers of interventions?
Research shows that a Multi-tiered System of Support relies on a strong instructional base, or core, and additional levels of intervention to meet the needs of all students. It is a model intended to address academic and behavioral needs through prevention and early intervention to provide students who are struggling with the support they need immediately to reach standards. The continuum outlines a range of interventions from the relatively simple to more intensive learning activities.

What is the purpose of a problem-solving model?
Each school is expected to create and support an MTSS leadership team that utilizes the Problem Solving process to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. MTSS is a framework that is used for all team based educational decision making.

What does MTSS stand for?
MTSS is an acronym for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.

How is MTSS different from RtI?
While Response to Intervention (RtI) and MTSS are both structured into tiers and sometimes used interchangeably, RtI has traditionally referred to academic interventions while PBIS referred to behavior interventions. MTSS is a comprehensive system that includes consideration of the whole child—academically, socially, and behaviorally.

Addressing the needs of the whole child are necessary: students whose academic needs are not addressed may display behavior issues to mask those needs, and students whose behavior needs are unaddressed may begin to develop academic concerns. It’s important to consider both facets to address all students most effectively.

What is student progress monitoring?
NCRTI defines student progress monitoring as repeated measurement of performance over time to inform instruction of individual students. Progress monitoring is conducted at least monthly to measure rates of improvement and identify students who are not showing adequate progress.

What is differentiation?
Teachers use student assessment data and knowledge of student readiness, learning preferences, language and culture to offer students in the same class different teaching and learning strategies to address their needs. Differentiation can involve mixed instructional groupings, team teaching, peer tutoring, learning centers, and accommodations to ensure that all students have access to the instructional program. Differentiated instruction is NOT the same as providing more intensive interventions to students with learning problems.

Is MTSS primarily for students who may need a special education evaluation?
No. The purpose of MTSS is to engage in a continuous cycle of problem-solving based on data to provide immediate support to meet students where they are right now.
When effective, MTSS reduces the need for more restrictive educational placements for many students by intervening early. All school staff (teachers, administrators, counselors, interventionists, etc.) should work together to implement the MTSS for the benefit of all students on a campus.

What is a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)?
MTSS emphasizes the principle that all teachers can differentiate instruction to enhance the learning of all learners. The framework emphasizes early intervention and the use of a multi-tiered system of research-based interventions. The framework also emphasizes a problem-solving and decision-making approach that depends on the use of reliable data and the progress monitoring of learners to assess the effectiveness of interventions.

Is MTSS really special education under another name?
MTSS is not a special education program. The model does promote early intervention for students who may struggle with core academic learning and/or behavior and attempts to close achievement gaps so that the gaps do not become pronounced as students advance through school.

Can students move in and out of interventions during the course of a school year?
Yes, students can move in and out of interventions during the course of a school year. Interventions are designed to narrow achievement gaps. When interventions are effective, students perform in a way that is more consistent with the average for their peers and they should continue to thrive within the core curriculum. In addition, signs of a learners' academic struggle may emerge as a school year progresses, and a Problem Solving Team would examine the nature of the struggle and develop or identify appropriate interventions to meet the students' needs.

When a teacher recognizes that a student's skills are significantly discrepant from his or her peers, must the student receive supplemental support before receiving intensive, Tier 3 intervention?
A teacher will collaborate with their school's Problem Solving Team. The team will analyze assessment results and classroom performance. The team will determine the appropriate steps to take to serve the needs of the child and inform parents/guardians about intervention plans. In some cases, the analysis might suggest that learning challenges are so significant that intensive Tier 3 interventions are necessary immediately.

How does someone decide that a student should move from a Tier 1 to a Tier 2 intervention or from a Tier 2 to a Tier 3 intervention?
Teachers and other MTSS Team members will monitor students' progress to measure the effect of interventions. When progress monitoring and classroom performance results indicate that a student has made adequate progress and is no longer discrepant from peers, the student will no longer receive supplemental intervention, thereby receiving Tier 1

(Core) instruction only. If a student's progress monitoring results and classroom performance indicate little progress, the student will receive more intensive intervention to try and reduce the discrepancy.

How are parents involved in the MTSS process?

Parents are an important part of the MTSS process. Universal screening data will be shared with parents three times a year when graphs are sent home. If a student is recommended to receive an intervention, parents will be notified of that recommendation through a letter. In addition, student progress will be shared with parents regularly. When a student is referred for Individual Problem Solving after limited progress has been noted despite intervention, the parent will be notified and their input will be gathered. Parents may be invited to participate in the problem solving process. If a decision is made to conduct an evaluation for the purpose of determining eligibility for special education services, the problem solving team will notify the parent and hold a domains meeting to obtain written consent for the special education evaluation.

How long should a student receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports?

A student should receive intervention as long as there is a demonstrated need. Some students will require intervention for a short period and return to Tier 1 supports. Other students may need Tier 2 or even Tier 3 interventions for a long time. One of the main components of an effective MTSS system is the on-going cycle in which school staff engage in a continuous process of problem-solving based on data. As students receive interventions, teachers periodically collect data to measure their response.

For students who are performing below grade-level – when data indicates a student has reached a proficiency level that no longer needs the current intervention, the school team will implement a less intensive intervention or return the student to Tier 1 supports only. If data indicates the student is making reasonable, slow, or no progress, the team will continue or intensify interventions. There are no set time limits for receiving interventions.

Can students receive different levels of support in different areas at the same time?

Students should move back and forth across the levels based on their demonstrated success or difficulty at the intervention level, based on data. Also, students can receive intervention at one level while also receiving intervention or instruction at another level in a different area. For example, a student may receive Tier 2 intervention for reading, Tier 1 instruction for math, and Tier 3 behavior support.

Is MTSS a process where students progress sequentially from tier to tier?

Movement among tiers should be fluid and based on level of need. A student with acute needs does not have to progress through the tiers to get intensive, individualized support. The level of intervention should match the level of need.

What are the benefits of an MTSS intervention?

Research-based interventions provide specific instruction at the student's current level to enhance the academic and/or behavioral needs of the student. The MTSS framework involves the student, parents, and staff. It allows for continual documentation and discussion of progress in planning for future courses.

Who do I talk to if my child needs help?

All schools have an MTSS team who reviews relevant student information and uses that information to suggest appropriate educational support in order to help students reach grade level expectations. Parents are invited to visit with their child's teacher, counselor, or administrator to discuss concerns.

Attributions for FAQs

Families and a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) (July 1, 2026)
RISD MTSS FAQs (July 1, 2026)

What is MTSS? FAQ (July 1,2026)

GLOSSARY

Accommodations: Accommodations are changes to instruction or assessment administration that are designed to increase students' access to materials or enable them to demonstrate what they know by mitigating the impact of their disability. They also are designed to provide equity, not advantage, for children with disabilities.

Aim Line: The aim line, which is sometimes referred to as the goal line, represents the target rate of student progress over time. The aim line is constructed by connecting the data point representing the student's initial performance level and the data point corresponding to the student's year-end goal. The aim line should be compared to the trend line to help inform responsiveness to intervention and to tailor a student's instructional program.

Baseline data: Baseline data is the data that is collected before an intervention or program change begins.

Behavioral Expectation: Behavioral expectation is the specific, positively stated behavior of all students that are explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced school-wide.

Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP): A behavioral intervention plan (BIP) is developed and implemented by a collaborative team, which includes the student and the parent. The plan includes positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), identified skills for school success, and specific strategies for behavioral instruction. Best practice is for a team to use a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) to create the plan.

Benchmark Assessment: Benchmark assessment is an assessment administered periodically throughout the school year at specified times during a curriculum sequence to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to an explicit set of longer-term learning goals. The design and choice of benchmark assessments is driven by the purpose, intended users, and uses of the instruments. Benchmark assessments can inform policy, instructional planning, and decision making at the classroom, school, and/or district levels.

Benchmark Line: straight line on a graph showing performance of student peer group or typical student progress during the same time period as the individual student's graphed data; this may be graphed as a horizontal line showing where most students perform at time of baseline or a diagonal line connecting where most students begin to where most students perform at the end of the same time period. Graphs may or may not contain this information depending on team preference.

CASEL: The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) developed an SEL framework used in schools to foster knowledge, skills, and attitudes to establish equitable learning environments that advance students' learning and development. The five competencies are: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

Child Find: Under federal law, public schools must look for, find, and evaluate children who need special education. It covers children from birth through age 21 and covers all children, including those who are homeschooled, attend private schools, and those who are homeless.

Chronically absent student: A student who is enrolled in a North Carolina public school for at least 10 school days at any time during the school year, and whose total number of absences is equal to or greater than 10 percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year. This definition applies to all students enrolled in a school, including those who have not reached the compulsory attendance age, as well as those who have reached or exceeded the compulsory attendance age.

Comprehensive Assessment System: A comprehensive assessment system is a coordinated system of multiple assessments, each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be

used. The system organizes information about the process and context of children's learning and development and provides a comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of students' academic and/or behavioral knowledge, abilities, and dispositions in order to help educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions at different times in the learning process.

Core Instruction: Core or universal instruction (Tier 1) refers to general academic and behavior instruction and support that is designed and differentiated for all students in all settings.

Criterion-Referenced Test: an assessment that can be used to measure or determine a student's performance based on a set of fixed and predetermined criteria or written descriptions of what the student is expected to know at that particular stage in their academic life.

Culturally Appropriate: Culturally appropriate describes a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.

Curriculum: Curriculum means an evidence-based written plan that describes program practices for supporting the learning of each child based on the child's individual developmental levels. Curriculum is aligned to state standards and adopted at the local level.

Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA): Curriculum-Based Assessment is an assessment that has three components: (1) measurement materials that are aligned with the annual curriculum, (2) measurement that occurs frequently, and (3) assessment data that are used to formulate instructional decisions. CBA is an umbrella term that includes curriculum-based measurement.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM): Curriculum-Based Measurement is an approach used to screen students or to monitor student progress in mathematics, reading, writing, spelling, and other content areas. CBM is a distinctive form of curriculum-based assessment because of three additional properties: (1) Each CBM test is an alternate form of equivalent difficulty; (2) CBM measures are overall indicators of competence in the target curriculum; and (3) CBM is standardized, with its reliability and validity well documented. These properties allow teachers and schools to look at student growth over time.

Data Decision Rules: formal procedures that inform the team's actions around data; teams set data decision rules to provide a framework for teams and practitioners to interpret data; when used in determining how to address student risk, the rules are sometimes called "intervention entry rules."

Developmentally Appropriate: Developmentally appropriate describes any activity involving children that is based on knowledge of the age and stages of child development, while understanding that each child is unique.

Diagnostic Assessment: Diagnostic assessment is used to diagnose strengths and areas of need in students. Diagnostic assessment involves gathering and carefully evaluating detailed data involving students' knowledge and skills in a given learning area.

Differentiated Instruction: Differentiated instruction is the way in which a teacher anticipates and responds to a variety of student needs in the classroom. To meet student needs, teachers differentiate by modifying the content (what is vexing taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning).

Evidenced-Based: Evidence-based refers to scientific, research-based methods that exhibit substantial evidence of effectiveness through multiple outcome evaluations. In other words, programs, strategies, and assessments shown to

have had positive outcomes with a given population.

Exclusion Factors: Exclusion Factor is a condition that excludes a student from being determined eligible as a student with a specific learning disability (i.e., vision, hearing, or motor disability; mental impairment; behavior/emotional disorder; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficient).

Explicit Instruction: Explicit Instruction is a structured, systematic approach that includes a set of delivery and design procedures derived from effective schools research merged with behavior analysis; Explicit Instruction is characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for the learning, clear explanations and procedures in small steps, checking for student understanding, and achieving active and successful participation by all students.

Every Child Accountability & Tracking System (ECATS): ECATS is a web-based system for districts and schools implementing an Multi-Tiered System of Support framework. ECATS provides an early warning system for identifying students at risk, captures all general education interventions and facilitates the analysis of that data to make efficient and effective decisions.

Facilitated Assessment of MTSS - School Level (FAM-S): An assessment to measure the implementation of MTSS at the school level. It includes essential features for academic and behavioral support for students across three tiers of instruction. Schools complete the assessment yearly in the spring. FAM-S replaced SAM (Self-Assessment of MTSS) in 2019.

Fidelity of Implementation: Fidelity of implementation refers to the application of an intervention, program, or curriculum according to research findings and/or to a developer's specifications.

Formative Assessment: Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provide feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievements of intended instructional outcomes. (CCSSO, FAST, SCASS, 2007)

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): Functional behavioral assessment is the process used to identify problem behavior, determine the function or purpose of behavior, and develop interventions to teach acceptable alternatives for the behavior.

Gap Analysis: Gap Analysis is a method for measuring the difference between the student's current level of performance and benchmark expectations.

Goal: A goal is a desired outcome or result. Goals should be written in the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) format.

Goal Line: The goal line, also known as the aim line, represents the expected rate of student progress over time. A goal line is constructed by connecting the data point representing the student's initial performance level and the data point corresponding to the student's year-end goal. The goal line should be compared to the trend line to help inform responsiveness to intervention and to tailor a student's instructional program.

High Quality Instruction: includes differentiated core instruction and, when appropriate, supplemental and/or intensive interventions, that is appropriate for the student's age or state-approved grade level standards. It should be effective for the majority of students receiving it.

ICEL: Instruction - Curriculum - Environment - Learner

Individualized Education Program Team (IEP Team): The problem-solving team to which a student is referred when a

disability is suspected, or a parent requests a formal evaluation. This team will engage in the problem-solving necessary to determine if a formal evaluation for special education and related services will occur and ensure that the appropriate procedures and documentation are completed in compliance with federal regulations and state policies. The implementation of interventions prior to a referral to the IEP Team is not required if a disability has been suspected by the parent or school staff or a parent or teacher has requested a formal evaluation in writing. However, interventions may need to be implemented concurrently with the formal evaluation timeline in order to provide the IEP Team a required component of a comprehensive evaluation at the time eligibility for special education and related services will be determined.

Informal Diagnostic Assessment: Informal Diagnostic Assessment refers to data that may be used to identify a student's specific skill deficits and strengths. These data may be derived from standardized measures, error analysis of progress monitoring data, student work samples, and behavior rating forms, among other tools. Use of informal diagnostic assessment should allow teachers to identify a student's specific area(s) of difficulty when lack of progress is evident. This assessment also can inform decisions about how to adapt and individualize interventions for students.

Instruction: Instruction requires teachers to understand the standards and expectations, along with the essential concepts and skills, and to utilize a variety of methods and strategies to teach and reinforce the desired academic or behavioral outcome(s). It includes providing access to the general education curriculum for all students. Effective instruction engages teachers in a process that uses student data and assessment data to make sound instructional decisions to meet the needs of individual students.

Integrated Academic and Behavior Systems (IABS): A division of NC Department of Public Instruction that supports the work of implementing and sustaining a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework through the lens of data, systems, and practices for all students.

Intensive Interventions and Supports: Intensive intervention and support (Tier 3) is the most intense instruction/intervention levels, which is based on individual student needs, is provided in addition to and aligned with Tier 1 and 2 academic and behavior instruction and supports. Intensive interventions are characterized by increased intensity (increased time, narrowed focus, and reduced group size).

Intervention: Intervention is the systematic and explicit instruction provided to accelerate growth in an area of identified need. Interventions are provided by general education teachers, reading interventionists, trained paraprofessionals or the special education teachers. This instruction is designed to improve performance relative to specific, measurable goals. Interventions are based on valid information about current performance, realistic implementation and include ongoing student progress monitoring data.

Leadership Team: Leadership team is a group of teachers and administrators that work toward implementing and sustaining a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) for academics and behavior.

Least Restrictive Environment: As defined in IDEA 2004, the least restrictive environment indicates that to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities (including students in public or private institutions or other care facilities) are educated with students who are not disabled; special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Local Education Agency Representative (LEA Rep): an integral member of the IEP. The LEA Representative is responsible for ensuring that the district or school is complying with the procedural and substantive requirements of the IDEA, and that students are receiving a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

mCLASS®: Integrated formative, diagnostic reading assessment system administered universally to kindergarten to third

grade students. The system provides benchmark and progress monitor assessment data and aligned instructional materials to support readers from beginning reading levels through sixth grade reading levels. This assessment is required under North Carolina legislation.

Modification: A modification is an adaptation to instruction or the administration of an assessment that changes, lowers, or reduces performance expectations for demonstration of a learning outcome.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): NC MTSS is a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a coherent continuum of system-wide, data-based problem-solving practices supporting a rapid response to the academic and behavioral needs of all students. This comprehensive system of supports includes an assessment system (universal screening, diagnostic assessment, progress monitoring, formative assessment, and outcome), research-based instruction, and interventions. This instruction/intervention is delivered across multiple tiers dependent on the individual student needs identified by student outcome data.

Norm-Referenced Test: a test designed to rank and compare students with one another by comparing their scores to a group of selected test-takers. The scores are generally displayed as a percentile ranking or percentage. Also referred to as a standardized test.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS): Positive behavioral Intervention and support is an implementation framework that is designed to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students by emphasizing the use of data for informing decisions about the selection, implementation, and progress monitoring of evidence-based behavioral practices.

Problem-Solving Team: This term is an umbrella term used to describe groups of individuals that meet to analyze data and determine solutions to problems. In an MTSS, there can be multiple problem-solving teams. Professional Learning Communities, Intervention Teams, and Student Support Teams are all examples of teams that generally meet to discuss school-wide areas of concern related to the environment, instruction and curriculum for all students or groups of students.
Specialized teams, such as the IEP Team, are also problem-solving teams; however, its purpose is initiated for individual students who are suspected of a disability or who have already been identified with a disability and is coordinated according to the regulatory requirements of the IDEA.

Progress Monitoring: Progress monitoring is the ongoing assessment conducted for the purpose of guiding instruction, monitoring student progress, and evaluating instruction/intervention effectiveness.

Public School Unit (PSU): A public school unit is a public board of education legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of or to perform service functions for public elementary or secondary schools. Used to be known as a Local Education Agency (LEA).

Rate of Improvement/Progress: Rate of progress is a student's progress toward grade-level achievement goals. Rate of learning is determined by reviewing assessment data as plotted on graphs.

RIOT: Review - Interview - Observe - Test

Scaffolding: Scaffolding is the systematic sequencing of prompted content, materials, tasks, and teacher and peer support to optimize learning. Students are given support until they can apply new skills and strategies independently.

Scientific, Research-Based: Scientific, research-based is a term used to describe reliable, trustworthy, and validated practices and programs that have been thoroughly and rigorously reviewed to determine whether they produce positive educational results in a predictable manner.

Specific Learning Disability: Specific Learning Disability refers to a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations and may result from conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Standard Treatment Protocol: Use of some empirically validated intervention for all students with similar academic or behavioral needs; facilitates problem solving instructional or intervention decisions; assures equity across the district.

Summative Assessments: Summative assessments are tests administered after the conclusion of instruction to provide information regarding the level of student, school, or program success.

Supplemental, Targeted Instruction/Intervention: Targeted supplemental interventions (Tier 2) are the individual or small group strategic instruction/interventions and supplemental supports, in addition to and aligned with Tier 1 academic and behavior instruction and supports.

Trend Line: A trend line is a line on a graph that presents the line of best fit drawn through a series of data points. The trend line can be compared against the aim line to help inform responsiveness to intervention and to tailor a student's instructional program.

Universal Screening, Academic: Academic universal screening is a systematic process for assessment of all students within a given grade, school building or district on critical academic skills. Universal screening are brief assessments or inventories focused on target skills that are highly predictive of future outcomes.

Universal Screening, Behavior: Behavioral universal screening refers to the informal inventories of behaviors (internalizing and externalizing) to indicate if students need additional support in specific behavior skills.

Attributions for Glossary

NCDPI Integrated Academic & Behavior Systems
https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/district-and-regional-support/integrated-academic-behavior-systems (July 1,2026).

NC MTSS DPI Glossary https://www.livebinders.com/media/get/MTUwMzM2MTc= (July 1,2026).

NC MTSS Implementators Google Site https://www.livebinders.com/b/2957986 (July 1, 2026).