

WHAT IS MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MTSS)?



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A Leader's Quick Reference

1 Tier 1

Tier 1 represents the foundation of MTSS and includes the high-quality, grade-level instruction that every student receives in the general education classroom. This instruction should be aligned to state standards, culturally responsive, and delivered through evidence-based practices. Universal screenings—administered multiple times per year—help identify students who may need additional support, while consistent classroom routines and clear expectations promote academic and behavioral success for all learners.

2 Tier 2

Tier 2 is designed for students who need more focused support beyond the core curriculum. These interventions typically occur in small groups and address specific skill gaps identified through assessment data. They are often delivered during designated intervention time or as part of differentiated instruction. Progress is monitored frequently to ensure students are responding effectively, and interventions are adjusted based on need.

3 Tier 3

Tier 3 provides the most individualized and intensive level of support within the MTSS framework. It is reserved for students who demonstrate significant difficulties despite receiving Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. These supports may include one-on-one instruction, highly specialized interventions, and collaboration with support personnel such as ESE teachers, counselors, or behavioral specialists. Tier 3 requires detailed documentation and careful progress monitoring to inform next steps, which may include evaluation for special education services.

4 Inspect What You Expect

Strong Tier 1 instruction is the cornerstone of MTSS. If core instruction is inconsistent or ineffective, more students will require additional supports, which can overwhelm intervention systems. School leaders must focus on ensuring that all classrooms are delivering rigorous, standards-aligned lessons with consistent instructional practices and appropriate differentiation. Ongoing professional development, classroom walkthroughs, and coaching can support this effort.

5 Progress Monitoring

Regular data collection is essential for determining the effectiveness of interventions at all tiers. Leaders should implement a consistent progress monitoring system that includes validated assessment tools aligned to targeted skills. Data should be reviewed in short cycles (e.g., biweekly or monthly) to evaluate student growth and make timely adjustments. These reviews should include clear documentation of student response, fidelity of implementation, and next steps.

6 School-Based Team

A multidisciplinary MTSS team should meet regularly (typically every 4–6 weeks) to analyze student data, determine intervention placements, and ensure that interventions are being implemented with fidelity. Team members may include administrators, instructional coaches, ESE coordinators, school psychologists, counselors, and general education teachers. The team is also responsible for documenting supports, tracking progress, and communicating with families as needed.