**Establishing Buy-in for Schoolwide Interventions in Secondary Schools**

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**Montana**

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### **MTSS Implementation Reflection Tool for Staff**

**Based on Nelson & Bohanon, 2025**

#### **Barriers to MTSS Implementation**

| **Barriers** | **Description** | **Connections to My Setting** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Disconnect in Professional Development** | Professional learning content is not tailored to the school’s context, often feeling too remedial or elementary for participants. There is a lack of connection between external and internal coaching—external coaches should support internal experts to ensure effective implementation. Misalignment exists between university preservice and in-service training related to schoolwide approaches. Additionally, an imbalance between in-person and online support can contribute to a lack of buy-in. |  |
| **Disconnect in Accountability** | A gap exists between the school and external networks or agencies that provide accountability for MTSS or other schoolwide processes. This includes issues with selected measures, contextualizing results, and a lack of understanding of the local context by upper administration. The emphasis is often on reporting to network agencies or external coaches rather than focusing on meaningful school-based implementation, leading to disengagement. |  |

#### **Facilitators to MTSS Implementation**

| **Faciltators** | **Desription** | **Connections to My Setting** | **Next Steps: Tomorrow, next week, next month, next semester, next year** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Professional Learning Best Practices** | Incorporating adult learning principles (e.g., addressing needs and interests, leveraging experience, supporting self-directed learning, using real-world problems, and fostering internal motivation). Differentiated learning ensures that all staff engage meaningfully, considering their roles (e.g., actor, influencer, decision-maker, local expert) and implementation timelines (e.g., immediate, short-term, long-term). Content should be explained simply and clearly to all staff. |  |  |
| **Using Data** | Utilizing data to support implementation, professional development, and external accountability. Connecting fidelity and outcome data to the strengths of the school, staff size, and local context, comparing it with similar districts. Ensuring data is framed within the appropriate school, district, regional, or state context. Addressing staff concerns about feeling unheard or invalidated in data reporting by emphasizing building- and district-level implementation. |  |  |
| **Staff Buy-In** | Encouraging learning from peers by filtering content through the lens of local teams. Celebrating successes, recognizing what teams are already doing well, and fostering strategies that help staff take ownership of implementation. Focusing on positive strategies to build buy-in. |  |  |
| **Systems Connection** | Aligning content with the school’s mission, vision, and local improvement plans. Ensuring implementation is practical within the school’s procedures (e.g., master schedule) and team workflows (e.g., time allocation for implementation). |  |  |
| **Student Impact** | Ensuring professional learning leads to immediate, measurable improvements in student outcomes. Staff should see a direct connection between professional development and classroom impact. |  |  |
| **Connecting with Other Schools** | Creating opportunities for staff to engage in discussions with peers from other schools. Providing time to collaborate, not just to receive content, but to share experiences and problem-solve together. Connecting with schools that share similar challenges and building these discussions into professional development schedules. |  |  |

Myths and Facts

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PBIS Myth** | **PBIS Fact** |
| **“PBIS is a program.”** | * PBIS is not a packaged program with a set script, it is a ***framework*** for building behavioral resources, increasing pro-social behavior and enhancing school climate
* PBIS is a prevention-oriented process that supports the needs of a school by assisting school personnel in adopting and **organizing** evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for **ALL** students.
* There are 10 critical components that comprise the PBIS process. These components are individualized by each school to meet the school’s specific needs and culture. The components are customized to ‘fit’ each school and are easily adapted to meet the ever changing needs of a school.
 |
| **“The positive in Positive Behavior Support means that we****give out rewards.”** | * The ***positive*** refers to a change in focus from being reactive and punitive by responding to what students do wrong, to being proactive by teaching and recognizing students when they engage in appropriate behavior.
* PBIS creates a learning environment where students, staff and families feel appreciated, safe, and respected. Reinforcers serve as a teaching tool and assist staff in focusing on pro-social behavior and support students in making better choices.
 |
| **“We do PBIS.****We have posters of our school expectations and give out****Dragon Dollars to attend school events.”** | * Teaching expectations and recognizing students for demonstrating the expectations are just two pieces of Tier 1 PBIS.
* The PBIS framework provides a continuum of behavior supports within the school environment. PBIS is a three-tiered model beginning with **Tier 1** which supports ***all*** students.
* **Tier 2** focuses on ***‘at-risk’*** students who need more than universal supports for behavioral success. Targeted group interventions are provided at Tier 2.
* **Tier 3** provides individualized and intensive supports to a small group of students.
* Administrator support is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of this multi-tiered system of behavioral supports.
 |
| **“If we implement PBIS, we will no longer punish students for****inappropriate behavior.”** | * PBIS ***does not ignore*** inappropriate behavior. Consequences are more than “punishment” and serve to either increase or decrease inappropriate behavior.
* PBIS focuses on developing and consistently implementing effective consequences to alter students’ inappropriate behaviors. Schools develop a plan that matches consequences to the severity of the inappropriate behavior to maintain consistency across campus.
 |

From Florida PBIS: <https://flpbis.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/PBIS_Myths-Facts_July2016.pdf>

**What is needed to implement evidence-based approaches? Think about MTSS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Component** | **In Place/Partially In Place/ Not in Place** | **Result** |
| Support from the administration for the intervention (e.g., principal) |  |  |
| Support from teachers for the intervention (e.g., priority) |  |  |
| Financial resources to sustain the intervention (e.g., FTE) |  |  |
| Training and coaching to increase fidelity of implementation |  |  |
| Alignment of the interventions with the schools’ goals, philosophy, policies, and programs |  |  |
| Program outcomes are visible to all stakeholders |  |  |
| A process is established to address the change in staff and administrators (e.g., plan, manual, specified roles) |  |  |

Bohanon, H., Caputo-Love, L., Morrissey, K. (Accepted). *Preparing secondary school teams to implement systematic interventions.* Routledge Publishing

Forman, S. G., Olin, S. S., Hoagwood, K. E., Crowe, M., & Saka, N. (2009). Evidence-based intervention in schools: Developers' views of implementation barriers and facilitators. *School Mental Health, 1*(1), 26-36. doi:10.1007/s12310-008-9002-5

**Table 5.2**

***Needs Assessment Questions (Based on the Work of Jim Knight)***

**Reflection Task 1**: Briefly respond to each of the questions below on your own or with partners. Complete the reflection activities independently or as a group. If you respond as a group, you just need to focus on one school setting. You can respond individually or as a group. Please include the names of all contributors if you complete this activity as a group.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Response |
| What is going well in your department/school/district for students academically, behavior (e.g., discipline), socially/emotionally, and/or in mental health? |  |
| What are some of the barriers to teaching related to academics, behavior (e.g., discipline), social and emotional learning, and/or mental health? |  |
| What would you like to change about your job around academics, behavior (e.g., discipline), social and emotional learning, and/or mental health? |  |
| Can you say anything about who, when, where, what, and why about problems occur (or what is going well) for students in terms of academics, behavior (e.g., discipline), social and emotional learning, and/or mental health your building? |  |
| What have you liked/disliked about professional development and/or implementing initiatives in the past? |  |

**Questions for Established Teams**

Please answer the questions below about MTSS

1. What do you like MOST about the implementation of MTSS?

2. What do you like LEAST about the implementation of MTSS?

3. How do you feel the implementation of MTSS could be IMPROVED?

4. How often do you deliver acknowledgments?

 Circle ONE: Never Monthly Weekly

5. What suggestions do you have for acknowledgments for students? (Think of things

 that may or may not cost money).

6. What suggestions do you have for reinforcers for teachers whose names are called

 when a student acknowledgement is chosen?

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**More Self-Assessment Tools**

Behavior See: – <http://www.pbisapps.org> see Self Assessment Survey;

Academic and behavior Self-Assessment for Buy-In (Niles West High School): <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?usp=sharing&formkey=dHFnSWtjRzdiY1k4M0w0b2kxWHMwNVE6MA#gid=0>



Adapted from http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/resources/program\_evaluation/ta\_manual\_revised2012/index.html - See Tools for Examining Consensus Development

**Table 5.3**

***Summary of Strengths and Next Steps from Needs Assessment***

**Reflection Task 2:** Summarize the main ideas/themes from your responses in Table 5.2. Identify 1-3 strengths for your school (e.g., what is your school doing now that is effective?). Next, identify 1-3 areas of need (i.e., Next Steps) that are needed to improve your setting.Complete the reflection activities independently, or as a group. If you respond as a group, you just need to focus on one school setting. You can respond individually or as a group. Please include the names of all contributors if you complete this activity as a group.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Next Steps** |
| (Example: Many of our students are exhibiting excellent behaviors related to citizenship and the behavior we expect in our school) | (Example: We do not know the specific number of students who need additional support to improve their behavior in school) |

**Montana Regional Conference MTSS Needs Assessment Summary**

**Based on six in-depth interviews and two survey responses**

**Hank Bohanon**

**Draft 5/16/23**

**Key Ideas**

* Relevance and actionable PD: PD should be relevant to staff work and provide them with actionable strategies to apply immediately.
* Connection between MTSS and content: There is a need to connect MTSS practices with content instruction, braiding them together effectively.
* Challenges and impacts of COVID-19: The impacts of COVID-19 on staff and students are significant, leading to feelings of overwhelm and the need for self-care.
* Differentiated professional development: PD should be personalized and meet the specific needs of teachers, providing deeper experiences and practical implementation strategies.
* Leadership and buy-in: Effective leadership is crucial in driving the implementation of MTSS, and maintaining buy-in from staff throughout the process.
* Data-driven decision-making: The use of data, such as through platforms like Panorama, is important for monitoring progress and making informed decisions.
* Collaborative teams and communication: Establishing district-level and building-level MTSS teams, developing communication plans, and utilizing handbooks and procedures contribute to successful implementation.

**What is working well related to MTSS?**

* Building Intervention Team established, focusing on data analysis and student support
* MTSS team presenting and sharing information with staff, engaging in OPI grant modules
* Implementation of school-wide PBIS program, tracking test results and showing growth
* Awareness of whole child support, resources, and professional development
* Progress in setting up MTSS systems, teams, and communication processes
* Training on academic supports and traction for schoolwide positive behavior support at the elementary level
* Good student-teacher relationships and knowledge of students in smaller schools
* Sports playing a significant role in local communities
* Some schools experiencing fewer behavioral issues
* District-level focus on MTSS implementation
* Grade-specific orientations for new students in some schools
* Emphasis on student relationships and mental health, with part-time counselor and MTSS coordinator support
* Cohesive staff and strong relationships across departments
* Existing MTSS practices, with increased use of terminology
* Community partnerships facilitated by the superintendent
* Focus on inclusivity for students outside the school area
* Support for smaller rural schools
* Buy-in through showcasing good work and veteran teacher observations
* Administrative support and piloting interventions for increased buy-in
* Efforts to promote kindness and improve communication skills
* Shifting away from punitive discipline towards proactive approaches
* Building trust with students by earning it rather than expecting it
* Enhancing existing practices through MTSS implementation
* Flexibility and differentiation already present in multi-grade classrooms
* Rebuilding the master schedule to support all students
* Collaboration for problem-solving
* Daycare in the school attracting capable teachers
* Focus on improving tier two behavior supports
* Adoption of School-wide Information System (SWIS, [link](https://www.pbisapps.org/products/swis)) and use of Google Docs for discipline referrals
* District-wide development of behavioral expectations.

**What are some barriers to academics, behavior (e.g., discipline), whole child learning, and/or school mental health supports?**

* Sustainability of MTSS implementation is challenging due to staff and administrator turnover
* Limited practical resources for mental health support
* Resistance to change and reluctance to address MTSS practices at the secondary level
* COVID highlighted the need for whole child support but also revealed staff sabotage and lack of systematized approaches
* Some perceived student apathy or lack of motivation may stem from underlying learning needs
* Challenges in supporting gifted students and the need for differentiated instruction
* Students may escape or avoid instruction when struggling
* COVID disrupted MTSS implementation and necessitates rebuilding efforts
* Difficulty in finding mental health supports for rural areas, resistance from teachers and administrators, and lack of school board support
* Reluctance to use universal data, but greater acceptance after seeing its usefulness
* Limited use of School-wide Information System for behavior data collection
* Complexities in combining multiple systems for universals
* High turnover of teachers and administrators, low academic and behavior standards prior to MTSS work
* Expansion of whole child supports beyond one person's responsibility
* Challenges in obtaining parent and school board support, impact on turnover
* Newer and growth-focused teachers more open to MTSS, while older teachers struggled with COVID's impact on student connections
* Communication issues among all parties, respect and language considerations, need to honor diverse perspectives
* Need for adaptation and engagement with the community, such as creating industry partnerships
* Importance of hiring people aligned with the mission and effectively articulating it
* Concerns and transition related to behavior tier one practices
* Varied interest in MTSS among newer and experienced teachers
* Limited use of screeners for whole child needs, parent concerns about data usage
* Time and resource constraints, limited mental health supports, and attitudes of "cowboy up" or avoidance towards mental health
* Struggles with small class sizes and low math scores in high school and grades 3-8

**How would your schools like to change their responses to academics, behavior (e.g., discipline), whole child learning, and/or school mental health needs?**

* Emphasize the growth mindset of students and staff, recognizing the importance of continuous improvement and seeing MTSS as a priority.
* Building a culture of using data and improvement can be challenging, as continuous school improvement plans are often seen as consequences for low-performing schools.
* Understanding the application of MTSS in rural schools with limited staff is crucial, including the implementation of positive behavior intervention and support in smaller settings.
* Adopting universal expectations for behavior and achievement can make a significant difference for students, but some schools feel they don't have many behavior problems and may not see the need for MTSS.
* Educating parents about teachers' best efforts and challenges with student accountability is essential.
* Consistency in academic and behavioral support, including positive and corrective consequences, is needed across the board.
* There is a need for comprehensive mental health support and interventions for elementary and secondary students.
* Interventions and support often diminish at the secondary level, requiring more group-level interventions and intensive mental health support.
* Embedding interventions into the master schedule and building strong relationships take time and require risk-taking and community involvement.
* Supporting teachers at tier one, particularly those with more experience, and providing resources and accommodations for differentiation is crucial.
* Addressing staffing challenges and making tier one more effective can help reduce the strain on intensive resources.
* Implementation of MAP growth assessment is planned.
* Differentiating between MBI (Montana Behavior Initiative) and PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports), PBIS offers a continuum of support, but some teachers struggle to provide tier two and tier three interventions.
* Increasing wraparound supports for families, early intervention, trauma-informed training, and structured WIN time at the high school level are areas of focus.
* The school is exploring a new math program for K-8.

**Can you say anything about who, when, where, what, and why problems occur (or what is going well) for students in terms of academics, behavior (e.g., discipline), social and emotional learning, and/or school mental health in your schools?**

* Some schools utilize a dashboard called Panarama for data analysis.
* Access to healthcare can be challenging, with students having to travel long distances, resulting in missed school days.
* There is a growing trend of bringing healthcare resources to schools, including clinics and telemedicine options.
* Middle school can be a difficult transition period for students, especially in smaller schools.
* There is a connection between academic and behavior support; students requiring intensive support often face challenges at home.
* Early childhood referrals are increasing, and some students exhibit disrespectful behavior and struggle with communication skills.
* Interventions are needed for students struggling in math, ELA, and behavior, while the core curriculum appears effective for most students.
* Developing personal skills within the core curriculum is essential for students' success beyond school.
* A tier two reading intervention will be piloted at the junior high school level.
* Efforts have reduced discipline issues, focusing on building well-rounded education aligned with the school's mission and vision.
* Attention is needed for students who struggle with regulation, disrespect, and defiance of authority.
* Trauma-informed understanding is crucial as students often deal with significant challenges outside of school.
* Students exhibit apathy towards academics, discipline, extracurricular activities, and leadership opportunities within the school.

**What are the current expectations for school improvement regarding procedures and processes (e.g., is it required, are teams involved)?**

* Research-based approaches are needed to support students in navigating their world.
* An at-risk plan was developed at the beginning of the year to address dropout rates, but changes in district leadership may impact priorities.
* The MTSS teams at the district and building levels are actively involved in implementing MTSS and working on communication plans and procedures.
* Panorama is being utilized for data analysis.
* Grant work is underway to support the implementation of MTSS, PBIS, and discipline strategies for addressing absences.

**What have your schools liked/disliked about professional development and/or implementing initiatives in the past?**

* Professional development (PD) must be relevant, actionable, and connected to MTSS and content.
* Consider the impacts of COVID on staff and students and incorporate self-care in the PD process.
* Focus on professional growth and provide coaching and follow-up support.
* Offer intensive PD with long-term action plans and coaching.
* Make PD meaningful, individualized, and experiential, showing teachers how to implement interventions.
* Connect behavior training to everyone in the session and provide clear action plans.
* Differentiate training based on schools' readiness and MTSS progress.
* Address buy-in and keep teams motivated to prevent losing momentum.
* Provide feedback on schools' progress and use fidelity data to guide implementation.
* Emphasize practical implementation rather than theoretical concepts.
* Tailor implementation to fit the school's specific needs and size.

**Working Smarter Triangle**

Take a moment to identify at least one intervention, at each level of the triangle, that your school is currently implementing

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Academic** | **Behavioral/Social/Emotional** |
| Tier One (for all students) |  |  |
| Tier Two (focusing on 5-15%) |  |  |
| Tier Three (focusing on 5% < |  |  |

You can transfer this information to a PowerPoint Slide if that is helpful ([link](http://www.hankbohanon.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/working_smarter_triangle_revised_2020-2-3.ppt))

**Effective Behavior Support Self-Assessment Survey**



**PBIS Action and Commitment Tool (PBIS-ACT) by Kevin Filter**

See this link for more information ([link](https://hss.mnsu.edu/academic-programs/psychology/graduate/school-psychology-psyd/people/faculty/kevin-filter/pbis/))

Filter, K. J., Sytsma, M. R., & McIntosh, K. (2016). A Brief Measure of Staff Commitment to Implement School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. *Assessment for Effective Intervention, 42*(1), 18-31.



**Table 5 *Tools You Can Use to Get a Sense of What is in Place around MTSS/MTSS***

| Tool | Focus areas | Developer | Link |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Measuring the 7 Stages of Concern | Determining stakeholders’ concerns about an innovation | American Institutes for Research | https://www.sedl.org/cbam/stages\_of\_concern.html |
| The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool | Evaluate new and existing initiatives – focuses on the program and its fit | State Implementation and Scale-Up of Evidenced-Based Practices | https://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/ |
| North Carolina Self-Assessment of MTSS | Academic and behavior supports | North Carolina Department of Education | www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2052295#anchor |
| Fidelity Integrity Assessment | MTSS, including all students at risk of failure | SWIFT Center | www.swiftschools.org/shelf |
| Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Implementation and Planning Self-Assessment | School climate and positive behavior support | Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support | www.pbis.org/evaluation/evaluation-tools |
| PBIS Action and Commitment Tool | MTSS | Kevin Filter, University of Minnesota, Mankato | <https://hss.mnsu.edu/academic-programs/psychology/graduate/school-psychology-psyd/people/faculty/kevin-filter/pbis/>  |
| Tiered-Fidelity Inventory | MTSS | Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support | www.pbis.org/evaluation/evaluation-tools |
| School-Based Mental Health Capacity Instrument | School-Based Mental Health | [Feigenberg, Watts, and Buckner (2010)](#LinkManagerBM_REF_7D62voJc) | https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12310-010-9041-6 |
| Center for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Self-Assessment Rubric | Whole Child | Center for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning | https://casel.org/guide |
| OPI MTSS Staff Consensus Survey | MTSS | Montant Office of Public Instruction | <https://opi.mt.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=pRYYhm_ske8%3d&portalid=182>  |
| Team Implementation Checklist V | PBIS | Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support | https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-team-implementation-checklist-tic-3-1 |

**Table 5.6**

***What Data already Exists in Each of the 4 Domains of Schools***

**Reflection Task 3:** Take a few minutes to identify any data you might already have in your school related to these areas of an effective school climate. You only need to identify data in areas where you have them. You can respond individually or as a group. Please include the names of all contributors if you complete this activity as a group.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Safety(Example: Discipline reports) | Teaching and Learning(Example: Student grades, visits to nurse) |
| Physical Environment(Example: Observations, maintenance reports) | Interpersonal Relationships(Example: Student surveys, classroom observations) |

**Preparing for Resistance**

**Team Member:** “I think we should review data from our students about their perceptions of school climate”

**Adminstrator Alice Welly (all is well):** “Our programs are well designed, you are implying that we have failed.”

**Attack # 4 based on John Kotter’s Book *Buy-In (***[***link***](https://www.kotterinc.com/book/buy-in/)***)***

**#4 "You're saying we've failed??!!" Attack:** “If this is a problem, then what you are telling us is that we have been doing a lousy job. That's insulting!”

**Sample Response:** “No, we're suggesting that you are doing a remarkably good job without the needed tools (systems, methods, laws, etc) which, in our proposal, you will have.”

**Based on this example response, how would you respond to Alice?**

**See the next page for the team member’s response (after you have tried to respond).**

**Actual Response from Team Member**

**Team Member:** “I think your programs are going very well, given we just need to add systems to help take them to another level.”

**Adminstrator Alice Welly:** “That was the most important thing you have said all day.”

**Activity:** Review “Early Stages for implementation”

Given your current setting –where are you in the Exploration Phase?

What might be some key experiences you can use to bring along your staff?

Link to article <http://ecommons.luc.edu/education_facpubs/17/>

