What is *MTSS* in Colorado?

Introduction

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a systemic, continuous-improvement framework in which data-based problem solving and decision-making is practiced across all levels of the educational system for supporting students. The framework of MTSS is a "way of doing business," which utilizes high quality evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices to ensure that every student receives the appropriate level of support to be successful. A Multi-Tiered System of Supports helps schools and districts to organize resources through alignment of academic standards and behavioral expectations, implemented with fidelity and sustained over time, in order to enable every child to successfully reach his/her fullest potential.

Definition (2016)

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

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

CO MTSS Components

The Five Essential Components are:

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

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

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

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

Creating a Problem Solving Culture

By systemically evaluating and analyzing student progress through ongoing universal screening and progress monitoring, school systems are able to more efficiently use their available resources and to improve student performance. Information yielded by these data sets allows educators to problem-solve less severe educational challenges in the general education environment and preserve additional resources for students who require more targeted and intensive instruction and intervention in order to achieve educational benchmarks. This type of structured problem-solving process meets the mandates of both ESEA (2002) and IDEA (2004). CO MTSS also supports the Colorado educational legislation priorities SB 10-191 (Educator Effectiveness), HB12-1238 (READ Act), SB08-212 (CAP4K), HB11-1254 (Bullying in Schools), and SB13-193 (Parent Engagement in Schools) and contributes to legislated considerations in the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS).

CO MTSS implementation is dependent upon effective use of data and information to make decisions about student-level and system-level progress. In order for districts and schools to function as a problem-solving culture, a shift in thinking must take place. The shift is the recognition that student achievement comes from a collective responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure an appropriate fit of curriculum, instruction, and environment that enables student learning. Effective leadership facilitates the building of systems and atmosphere to support and encourage educational stakeholders to problem solve at all levels and more efficiently meet student needs.

Leadership for CO MTSS

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

Implementation is a Science

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

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

Where can I learn more?

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

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (CO-MTSS) is:

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

MTSS and Essential Components

Essential Components:

Team-Driven Shared Leadership

Teaming structures and expectations distribute responsibility and shared decision-making across school, district, and community members (e.g. students, families, generalists, specialists, district administrators, etc.) to organize coordinated systems of training, coaching, resources, implementation, and evaluation for adult activities.

Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision-Making

A consistent process is used by stakeholder teams and applied at multiple levels to analyze and evaluate relevant information to plan and implement strategies that support sustainable improved student and system outcomes.

Family, School, and Community Partnering

The collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district, and state outcomes.

Layered Continuum of Supports

Ensuring that every student receives equitable academic and behavioral support that is culturally responsive, matched to need, and developmentally appropriate, through layers that increase in intensity from universal (every student) to targeted (some students) to intensive (few students).

Evidence-Based Practices

Approaches to instruction, intervention, and assessment that have been proven effective through research indicating improved outcomes for students.

For more information:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss

Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (CO-MTSS)
Initiative Inventory
<u>Technical Guide</u>

Adapted from the Technical Guide for Alignment of Initiatives, Programs and Practices in School Districts, National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. (2017). Eugene, OR: Retrieved from www.pbis.org

Introduction

As educators work to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states and school districts will be working with increased focus on school climate, social behavioral health, school safety and the impact of an integrated whole child approach on academic outcomes. In many districts and schools, educators are faced with the challenge of having to implement, sustain, and evaluate several different innovations, initiatives, programs or practices at the same time. In many districts, various initiatives (e.g., PBIS, RtI, literacy strategies, numeracy strategies, mental health, bullying & violence prevention, restorative practices, state standards, trauma-informed care) are being concurrently implemented and/or new ones are being adopted without recognition of the potential for redundancy, misalignment, ineffective implementation, and/or cost (funding and effort). In some instances, new or existing initiatives may actually be in conflict with each other philosophically, creating confusion and dissonance among leaders and practitioners.

Due to the complexity of implementing several initiatives at once or adopting new ones in the context of existing practices, the Multi-Tiered System of Supports in BOCES, district, or school must be organized in a manner that is highly strategic, efficient, relevant, and effective. Ensuring sustainability and efficiency requires heightened attention on knowing what is being implemented across the system and the effective alignment and coordination of the systems that support the implementation including leadership teams, evaluation structures and professional development. Often districts have more

programs or initiatives or practices than can be implemented well (Domitrovich et al., 2010; Sugai, & Horner, 2006) without a formal process to guide decisions about selecting new initiatives or abandoning existing programs. McIntosh et al., (2013) has reported one of the primary variables impeding sustained implementation of effective practices is the introduction of new initiatives that either (a) compete with resources needed for sustained implementation or (b) contradict existing initiatives.

In the absence of a clear system-wide response to student and adult needs, a BOCES, district, or school cannot ensure that it's initiatives, programs and practices, are adequately aligned, prioritized, and integrated. Implementing various initiatives in silos can strain the limited resources of any district, resulting in less than acceptable levels of fidelity and impact for each initiative. Therefore, educational leaders need to assess existing and potential efforts carefully to ensure investments in professional development and instructional resources have a high likelihood of achieving desired outcomes.

To guide an outcome-driven view for integrating initiatives, programs, or practices across multiple sites, it is important to start with the end-in-mind: high fidelity implementation and improved student outcomes. Classrooms are the primary context where students should perceive a seamless system of supports as educators braid or merge several different evidence-based practices within the learning environment. Therefore it is essential that BOCES and district level

teams work side by side with school level staff members to ensure a manageable number of evidence-based practices are used and matched to student need with consideration of the larger school community. In this context, informed decisions regarding what to integrate (target), how much to integrate (interdependence), and for what purpose (goal) to integrate can occur at the school and district levels.

The purpose of this technical guide is to provide a structured alignment process with concrete steps to assist educational leaders as they:

- Examine current practices across educational units and systems (instruction, support, improvement, special education, mental health, justice);
- Consider the extent to which current practices are implemented with fidelity and produce meaningful academic and social/behavioral outcomes, and
- Establish support systems to select install and implement new practices.

Targeted users of this guide include state, district or school level MTSS leadership teams that have responsibilities for the selection and implementation of initiatives, programs or practices related to maximizing positive student behavior, as well as, academic outcomes. In some cases, formalizing the alignment process will be an additional function for the leadership team to consider as it works to improve the fidelity of program implementation, eliminate redundancy and streamline efficient implementation practices to improve school and student performance. The alignment process builds on implementation science (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005) by focusing on both the evidence of the initiative, program, or practice as well as the implementation processes and is organized around the core features of the Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

Using Multi-Tiered System of Supports to Organize the Alignment Process

MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) is a framework that guides the selection and implementation of best practices for improving student outcomes. Through this framework, leadership teams across all implementation levels (state, BOCES, district, and school) use five essential components to improve the learning environments of all students. A continuum of tiers is used to ensure supports are in place for students who may require more targeted or intensive approach.

The Colorado MTSS framework has five essential components (https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss):

1. Team-Driven Shared Leadership
2. Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making
3. Family, School, and Community Partnering
4. Layered Continuum of Supports
5. Evidence-Based Practices

MTSS helps promote a new efficient way of working and can serve as the conceptual "umbrella" providing the general process for conducting system-wide alignment and integration.

The Alignment Process

The general process of conducting a system-wide alignment and integration process is summarized in the CO-MTSS Initiative Inventory Activity Protocol, which includes guiding prompts for each step. In addition, three different versions of the Initiative Inventory can be used to guide teams through the analysis and decision-making as they complete the alignment of targeted initiatives. Local context should guide decisions about what, if any, adjustments or additional steps may be needed to support planning activities and implementation procedures.

References

Domitrovich, C.E., Bradshaw, C.P., Greenberg, M.T., Embry, D., Poduska, J.M. & Ialongo, N.S.(2010). Integrated models of school-based prevention. *Psychology in the Schools. 47(1)*. 71-78.

Fixsen, D., Naoom, S., Blase, K., Friedman, R., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature.* Tamps, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, National Implementation Research Network.

McIntosh, K.& Goodman, S. (2016). Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Blending RTI and PBIS. New York: Guilford Press.

McIntosh, K., Mercer, S. H., Hume, A. E., Frank, J. L., Turri, M. G., & Mathews, S. (2013). Factors related to sustained implementation of School-wide Positive Behavior Support. *Exceptional Children, 79*, 293-311.

Sugai G, & Horner R. (2006). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining school-wide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review.* (35). 245–259.

For information regarding MTSS in Colorado, please visit: http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss

Practice Profile for the Essential Components of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
Family, School, and Community Partnering

COLORADO
Department of Education

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Colorado has defined Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) as a prevention-based framework of team-driven, data-based problem solving for improving the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnering and a layered continuum of evidence-based practices applied at the classroom, school, district, region, and state level.

Essential Components of MTSS Implementation

Colorado has identified **five Essential Components** fundamental in implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework.

The five components are:

1. Team-Driven Shared Leadership
2. Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision-Making
3. Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP)
4. Layered Continuum of Supports
5. Evidence-Based Practices

These components are complementary and iterative. They are neither mutually exclusive nor hierarchical.

If the components are integrated and effectively-implemented, student outcomes will improve.
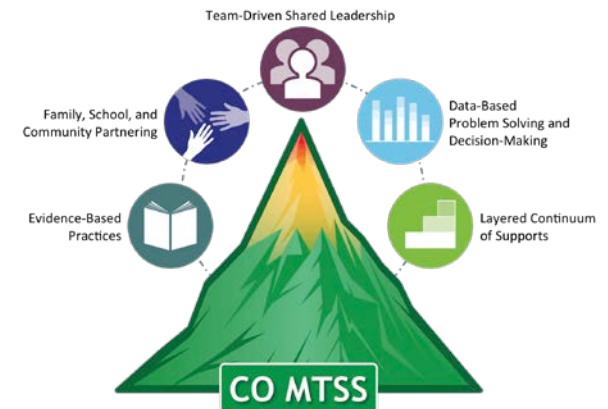
Purpose of this Practice Profile

A Practice Profile is utilized to support the adoption and implementation of an innovation; in this case, the innovation referred to is the MTSS framework, with each profile representing one of five Essential Components. A Practice Profile is an instrument used to operationalize the features of a practice, program, and/or system. This Practice Profile defines the guiding principles and critical components of **Family, School, and Community Partnering**, an Essential Component of MTSS implementation. It defines this Essential Component according to the ideal or "gold" standard of implementation, acceptable variation, and unacceptable variation. The content for this profile is adapted from the *National Family-School Partnership Standards* (National PTA, 2008) and the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework* (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Family, School, and Community Partnering Defined

The collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district, and state outcomes.

	Ideal "Gold Standard"	Acceptable Variation	Unacceptable Variation
Welcoming All Families	Families are active participants in the educational system, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to staff, and to what students are learning and doing. Positive relationships exist. The school community respects and includes every family.	Relationships have been established *between* families and between *families and educational staff*. Families feel comfortable attending school/district activities, at school(s) and in the community.	Families feel intimidated by the school(s). Some families are not included in efforts to partner effectively. Relationships are not established.
Communicating Effectively	Families and staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. Communication is timely and reciprocal, authentic inquiries are made of families, and staff members are responsive. Multiple methods of communication ensure access and equity. Communication is ongoing.	Plans for multiple methods of communication are being developed and implemented. Staff members share information on relevant topics (e.g., instruction, issues, and decisions). Families are encouraged to initiate communication.	Communication is one-directional. Information is infrequent &/or minimal. Only one communication method is used. Content is rarely related to student learning. Access and equity are not considered.
Supporting Student Success	Families and staff continuously collaborate as active partners to support students' learning at home and at school through a tiered system of supports. Information is shared about student-level and system-level progress.	School-based learning activities are known and supported by families and staff. Student-level progress data is consistently shared with each family.	There is no home and school coordination for student learning and progress. Learning is school-owned. Progress data is not known by all.
Speaking Up for Every Child	Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure fairness and access. Families know how school systems operate, how to raise questions, and what their rights and responsibilities are.	Families feel empowered to advocate for their own children. Every family has awareness of family rights and responsibilities.	Families feel discouraged from asking questions or advocating. Families are not aware of their rights or how school systems operate.
Sharing Power	Families and staff are partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs. Family voice *and* family leadership are evident. Shared responsibility is exhibited in problem solving processes.	Select policies, documents, and procedures are results of partnering. Common language but inconsistent protocols are used in problem solving and decision-making processes.	Family voice is absent from individual and system-wide decision-making. Strategic, inclusive problem solving is not taking place.
Collaborating with Community	Families and educational staff mutually collaborate with community partners (e.g., businesses, organizations, institutions of higher education) to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.	Links to community resources exist. The school/district has a place in the life of the greater community.	Families, educational staff, and community partners do not collaborate on projects. There is no mutual commitment between stakeholder groups to support student learning.
Dual Capacity - Building	Evidence-based adult learning principles are applied in an enabling context to provide varied opportunities (e.g., side-by-side workshops, online modules, forums, academies, etc.) to support the capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence of families and educators to partner effectively throughout a multi-tiered framework.	Learning approaches, language, and content are considered when planning for adult learners. Tiered supports for families and educators are evidence-based. Delivery methods are limited.	Adult learning principles are not considered. Partnering content and/or skill development is not available. A single delivery method or stakeholder group is served. Multi-tiered partnering is not visible.

What are you "planning" to impact? (individually)
What would you like to see "in place"? What is the desired outcome?
Note if it is a PERSONAL (P) action step or a SYSTEM (S) action step.

30 Days	P or S	60 Days	P or S	90 Days	P or S

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Data-Based Action Plan Template

School/District Agency:		Planning Date:
Staff Member:		1st Progress Review Date:
		2nd Progress Review Date:
		Evaluation Date:

1. **DEFINE:** Identify the problem using data.	Strengths:	Concerns:	Data Source(s):
STANDARD(S) addressed:	Problem Statement (with specific and measurable language):		

2. ANALYZE: State Root Cause; include relevant data and protocol used for Root Cause Analysis (RCA):

3. **IMPLEMENT:** State Prioritized Measurable Outcome for the PLAN.	Responsibilities "Who Will Do It?"	Resources Funding, Time, People, Materials	Timeline By When Day/Month	Data Tool Measure to Be Used	Target(s) or Criteria Benchmark(s)
Prioritized Measurable Action Step #1					
Prioritized Measurable Action Step #2					
Prioritized Measurable Action Step #3					
Prioritized Measurable Action Step #4					

4. EVALUATE: Effectiveness of Data Points > **Outcome?_____** Action Step #1?_____ Action Step #2?_____ Action Step #3?_____ Action Step #4?_____

Was the plan implemented as described?	YES	NO	Comments:
Were there sufficient data?	YES	NO	Comments:
Was the specific measurable outcome reached?	YES	NO	Comments:
Were the essential knowledge/skills demonstrated?	YES	NO	Comments:
Were resources appropriately allocated?	YES	NO	Comments:

DECISION - Next Steps: