

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and the MDE MTSS Practice Profile Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a comprehensive framework comprised of a collection of research-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child. MTSS intentionally interconnects the education, health, and human service systems in support of successful learners, schools, centers, and community outcomes. The five essential components of MTSS are inter-related and complementary. The MTSS framework provides schools and districts with an efficient way to organize resources to support educators in the implementation of effective practices with fidelity so that all learners succeed.

The MDE recognizes the importance and necessity of supporting all districts/public school academies (LEAs) in understanding and implementing a MTSS framework. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile was developed using the following guiding principles to meet this need:

- A collective responsibility for ensuring growth and success for all learners is assumed by each person within the system (educators, learners, families, and community)
- A proactive approach to ensuring that each and every learner experiences a quality education designed to expand learners' potential
- A commitment to use a systematic problem-solving process to improve outcomes of all learners
- A commitment to ongoing, effective support for educators and leaders including professional learning, feedback, and coaching
- A commitment to use data as a basis for information gathering and to avoid making assumptions
- Attention to fidelity of implementation, honoring both qualitative and quantitative measures
- An investment in systems to promote durability and the scaling up of MTSS

The MDE MTSS Practice Profile is based upon current research and was developed through an evidence-based process with guidance from the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) staff.

The MTSS and MDE MTSS Practice Profile FAQ is organized into the following categories:

- Practice Profile
- MTSS Purpose & Outcomes
- Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan and Legislative Alignment
- Timeline for Implementation & Technical Assistance
- MTSS Practice Profile Components
- MTSS Practice Profile - Miscellaneous

Practice Profile

1. What is a practice profile?

Practice profiles enable a selected evidence-based innovation to be teachable, learnable, doable and assessable in typical service settings. The practice profile creates shared understanding and clearly defines standards or expectations for what the innovation looks like in practice. Practice profiles also identify developmental and unacceptable variations of each essential component (i.e., what it does not look like in practice). The MDE selected MTSS as an innovation to define using the methodology to create a practice profile. The MDE MTSS practice profile will guide and inform the development and/or refinement of the necessary supports and resources needed for MTSS such as professional learning, purposeful coaching, identification of fidelity measures, and necessary changes in procedures and policy. The MTSS practice profile will be reviewed regularly for effectiveness and improved over time. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile is **not** a rubric and should **not be** used for the purposes of staff performance evaluations.

2. What is the alignment between the MDE's MTSS Practice Profile and the MDE's previous guidance?

The Michigan Department of Education's MTSS Guidance document released in 2011 (formally posted to the web-site) contained information regarding 11 Essential Elements. To stay current with research and to provide greater guidance, the MDE MTSS Practice Profile process was used to refine, update, and further define the essential components of MTSS. This process resulted in five essential components of MTSS to be supported in practice. The original 11 essential elements from the 2011 guidance are incorporated within these five essential components.

The five essential components of the MDE MTSS are the following:

- Team-Based Leadership
- Tiered Delivery System
- Selection and Implementation of Instruction, Intervention, and Supports
- Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System
- Continuous Data-Based Decision-Making

3. How was the MDE MTSS Practice Profile developed?

The MDE MTSS practice profile was developed by the MDE MTSS team with input from educators, leaders, researchers, MDE staff, and other stakeholders in the field of Michigan. Specifically, the team engaged in the key activities of reviewing current legislation and policy documents (N = 6), research literature (N = 24 empirical articles within the last ten years), other state's guidance (N= 6), and collecting feedback from small group interviews with stakeholders (n = 19 groups with 80 participants) sharing various perspectives. The MTSS Practice Profile can be referred to as a research-informed document. Citations of current research are included for each component.

4. Why was the MDE MTSS Practice Profile developed at the district level?

Currently in the field, school-wide fidelity measures exist that align with the MDE MTSS five essential components. Given this availability of fidelity measures at the school level and the need to define the role of the District, the MDE MTSS team developed the practice profile for the district level. The MDE MTSS Profile at the district level specifies the actions and supports of a District Implementation Team to support effective and sustained use of the MTSS framework.

5. Why is the MDE MTSS Practice Profile content neutral?

The MDE MTSS Practice Profile was developed to be content neutral for the following reasons:

- To address the needs of a district wide system (e.g., processes and procedures).
- To be applicable throughout P-20 (prenatal to post-secondary) education settings
- To address the needs of the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social and emotional) both academic and non-academic

MTSS Purpose & Outcomes

1. What is the purpose of MTSS?

The purpose of MTSS is to address the needs of the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional) in an efficient and effective manner. Implementation of the essential components as intended provides educational settings with a framework to organize the strategies and processes needed to support successful student outcomes.

2. What are the expected outcomes of MTSS?

- Supports that are designed to enable each and every learner to meet their learning potential
- An education system that fosters family engagement and community partnerships
- Supports that are available to ensure development of competent and effective staff/workforce
- Sustainable and scalable structures that are created as host environments to support implementation of MTSS
- An outcomes-driven approach with a meaningful evaluation component that indicates a commitment to continuous improvement
- An efficient and effective system that informs the district improvement plan
- Alignment across all levels of the education system (e.g., MDE-ISD-District-School/Center-Classroom)

3. What is the difference between MTSS, RtI, and PBIS?

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a comprehensive framework supporting instruction for a full range of learners from the struggling to the accelerated, utilizing intervention, assessment, staff selection and development, leadership, resource allocation, effective communication, and system

processes and protocols. As depicted in the visual below, **Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)** and **Response to Intervention (RtI)** are part of this system.

PBIS is a proactive, team-based framework for creating and sustaining safe and effective schools. Emphasis is placed on prevention of problem behavior, development of pro-social skills, and the use of data-based problem solving for addressing existing behavior concerns. School-wide PBIS increases the capacity of schools to educate all students utilizing research-based school-wide, classroom, and individualized interventions.

RtI originated out of special education. There was a need for a data-driven process to identify students with learning disabilities. In the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), RtI was named as a way for districts to use data to identify students who might have learning disabilities based upon their lack of growth when provided with high quality, evidence-based instruction and interventions. RtI did not, however, address the larger district system, whereas MTSS includes the process of RtI.

4. Why is MTSS referred to as a framework rather than an intervention or a program?

MTSS is referred to as framework that is comprised of multiple research- and evidence-based practices, including interventions. The term "framework" solidifies the communication that MTSS is not just one practice or initiative that a district or school would support; rather that it is a structure that is designed to organize the district-wide systemic infrastructure resulting in effective and efficient use of practices and initiatives matched to student need. The framework is intended to eliminate barriers to learning.

Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan and Legislative Alignment

1. Where does MTSS appear in The Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan?

Collectively, the MDE and many stakeholders worked together in 2016 to shape the foundation for Michigan becoming a Top 10 education state in 10 Years. The State Board of Education approved the Goals and Strategies initially developed and the MDE has worked to make the plan actionable by synthesizing the seven goals and 44 strategies into four Focus Areas: Learner-Centered Supports, Effective Education Workforce, Strategic Partnerships, and Systemic Infrastructure. The MTSS is an integral part of Michigan's Top 10 in 10 strategic plan, specifically:

- Goal 2: Implement, with strong district and building leadership, high-quality instruction in every classroom through a highly coherent, child-centered instructional model where students meet their self-determined academic and personal goals to their highest potential.
- Strategy 2.2: Establish and implement with fidelity a high-quality Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

2. Where does MTSS appear in State or Federal Legislation?

All LEAs receive State funding to support improved At-risk student achievement through Section 31a and Section 35a of the PA 94, “The State School Aid Act of 1979.” To maintain this funding stream, LEAs must implement MTSS [Section 31a (3) (a-j)]. LEAs also have access to [Section 35a (4)] (Literacy Coaching) funds for ISD early literacy coaches who are knowledgeable about MTSS. [35a (5)] provides additional instructional time funds and schools must define their MTSS framework to receive that funding.

At the Federal level, ESSA also places an emphasis on high-quality instruction, professional development for teachers and other staff, and comprehensive learning supports based on the unique needs of the school community. ESSA promotes a multi-tiered system of support as a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students’ needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision making. [Title IX, Sec. 8002 (33)]¹

3. What is the alignment between Section 31a and Section 35a MTSS criteria and the MDE MTSS Practice Profile Essential Components?

The ten criteria listed in [Section 31a (3)] and [Section 35a (5) (a) (i)] are aligned within the five Essential Components of the MDE MTSS Practice Profile. At a minimum LEAs will find alignment in the following manner.

MDE MTSS Practice Profile Essential Component	Section 31a and Section 35a Alignment	Embedded Throughout All Essential Components
Team-Based Leadership	<p>Uses a collaborative problem-solving model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (j)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (J)] 	<p>Engages families and the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (g)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (G)] <p>Implements instruction and intervention practices with fidelity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (i)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (I)] <p>Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (12)]
Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System	<p>Monitors pupil progress to inform instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (d)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (D)] <p>Uses assessments including universal screening, diagnostics, and progress monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (f)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (F)] 	
Selection and Implementation of Instruction, Interventions, and Supports	<p>Implements evidence-based, scientifically validated, instruction and intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (h)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (H)] 	
Tiered Delivery System	<p>Implements effective instruction for all learners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (a)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (A)] <p>Intervenes early.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (b)] 	

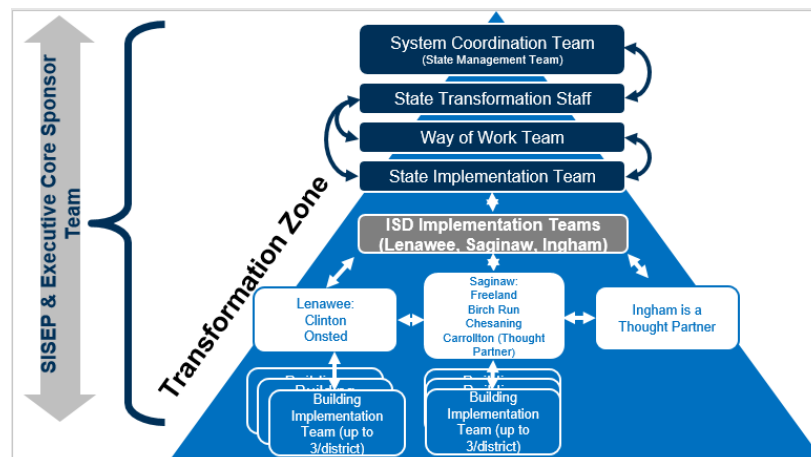
¹ *References to Multi-Tier System of Support, Every Student Succeeds Act: Summary of Key Provisions, Myrna R. Mandlawitz, Esq., CASE Legislative Consultant*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (B)] <p>Provides a multi-tiered model of instruction and intervention that provides the following: a core curriculum and classroom interventions available to all pupils that meet the needs of most pupils; targeted group interventions; and intense individual interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (c) (i) (ii) (iii)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (C)] <p>Monitors pupil progress to inform instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (d)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (D)] 	
<p>Continuous Data-Based Decision Making</p>	<p>Monitors pupil progress to inform instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (d)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (D)] <p>Uses data to make instructional decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Section 31a (3) (e)] [Section 35a (5) (a) (i) (E)] 	

Timeline for Implementation & Technical Assistance

1. How is the MDE MTSS Practice Profile being implemented?

The MDE is using a Transformation Zone to test the MTSS Practice Profile. A Transformation Zone represents a vertical slice of the Michigan education system from the practice level to the policy level (e.g. from the classroom to the Capitol). The participating entities (e.g. MDE, ISDs, districts, schools, classrooms) are representative of the larger system. Partners within the transformation zone serve as the first cohort to participate in the systemic change process and usability testing of the MTSS practice profile. Lenawee and Saginaw ISDs, and their five identified districts, are participating in the Transformation Zone for full implementation of MTSS as defined by the MDE MTSS practice profile. Ingham ISD is also a thought partner for the work. The Transformation Zone uses the MDE MTSS Practice Profile to inform the necessary supports for use of a MTSS as intended in participating local education agencies. A key purpose of this work is to build the MDE’s capacity to support statewide implementation of MTSS, while the usability testing improves the effectiveness of the MDE MTSS Practice Profile.



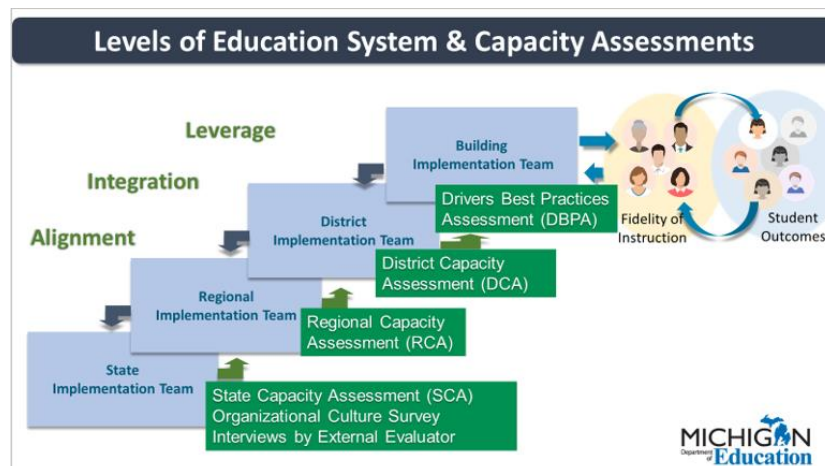
2. When will the MDE MTSS Profile be available to all LEAs and what is the expectation for using it?

The current MDE MTSS Practice Profile DRAFT is now available for all LEAs to use in aligning their MTSS implementation. The MDE does not foresee changing the five Essential Components from usability testing in the Transformation Zone, rather refinement of language related to each of the Essential Components and the professional learning and technical assistance designed to support MTSS implementation. As such, LEAs not in the Transformation Zone can begin to familiarize their LEA staff and community with the Essential Components, how each looks in practice, how their LEA’s current practices align, and use this information to inform the professional learning and technical assistance that they provide.

3. What does professional learning and technical assistance look like in relation to the MDE MTSS Practice Profile?

The MDE has identified a cascading approach to Professional Learning/Technical Assistance (PL/TA) as the most effective and efficient manner to provide needed assistance statewide. The objective is to build capacity at all ISDs within the State, so that ISDs can meet the needs of their respective LEAs, who then in turn can meet the PL/TA needs at the building level. To accomplish this vision, the MDE has established a State Implementation Team that supports a cascade of Regional Implementation Teams, District Implementation Teams and Building Implementation Teams to develop and foster the PL/TA capacity for MTSS within the Transformation Zone.

The PL/TA for MTSS in the Transformation Zone is being developed by a workgroup of the MDE including stakeholders with fluency and expertise in MTSS. Specifically, the PL/TA content and methods are being designed to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to use the MDE MTSS essential components as intended. As the PL/TA work within the Transformation Zone progresses, it will stream out Statewide via the ISDs and State TA partners. Many LEAs across the State receive PL/TA via State TA partners, MiBLSI and MI Excel. These partners are members of the MDE workgroup developing the PL/TA to ensure that MiBLSI and MI Excel content aligns with the MDE MTSS Practice Profile. LEAs using other non-MDE funded organizations to support their implementation of MTSS will want to ensure that the content aligns with the MDE MTSS Practice Profile.



MTSS Practice Profile Components

1. Team-Based Leadership

A. How does the MDE MTSS Practice Profile define team-based leadership?

An active, organized, knowledgeable and representative group exists to provide whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional) supports, remove barriers, coordinate and evaluate activities across the system.

B. How does this Team-Based Leadership approach contribute to the desired outcome?

Teams (district, building, and educator) that collaborate and communicate contribute to the alignment and cohesion across the multiple levels of the system. The alignment and cohesion of leadership teams creates sustainable, scalable and engaging school climates to support successful implementation of MTSS and learner achievement.

2. Tiered Delivery System

A. Is MTSS only for behavior and reading?

No, MTSS is a responsive framework that provides instruction, interventions and supports intended to meet the needs of the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional) within a district-wide system.

B. Which learners does MTSS support?

Based on an aligned curriculum, the instruction, interventions and supports are organized along a continuum to meet the needs of each and every learner. Educators address a range of learning needs that span from struggling to accelerated.

C. What is meant by tiered delivery?

Tiers are intended to be layered with intensification of supports as matched to the needs of the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional).

- Tier 1 is the research-based instruction and classroom interventions that will be available to all learners and effectively meet the needs of most.
- Tier 2 are supplemental, targeted interventions intended for some learners who require support or extension beyond Tier 1.
- Tier 3 supports provide intense individual interventions for few learners with highly accelerated, or severe and persistently challenged, academic and/or non-academic needs.

3. Selection and Implementation of Instruction, Interventions and Supports

A. What is considered in choosing appropriate instruction, interventions and supports?

The selection process considers a whole child approach (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional), the population of learner(s) being served, and alignment with the district's existing philosophies and initiatives. Selection also considers the resources and capacity needed to support MTSS implementation with fidelity. Selecting programs that are compatible to the local context and learner need increases the probability that interventions and supports will be successful, as demonstrated by improved outcomes for individuals within the local system.

4. Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System

A. What are the components of the comprehensive screening and assessment system?

Comprehensive screening and assessment systems includes:

1. Balanced assessment system (formative, benchmark/interim, summative)
2. Universal screening measures and decision rules for using those data
3. Progress monitoring assessments and decision rules for using those data
4. Diagnostic assessment process

5. Continuous Data-Based Decision Making

A. What does Data-based decision-making mean in this MTSS framework?

Data-based decision making is inclusive of the comprehensive needs assessment, efficient data collection practices for multiple data sets, and a formal improvement process. Data used are timely, valid, reliable, accurate and reviewed in ongoing cycles. Data analysis allows for evidence to guide effective decision making for both the effectiveness of the system, and for the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional) needs of all learners, with explicit consideration for special populations.

MTSS and MDE MTSS Practice Profile – Miscellaneous

1. How does MTSS support gifted and talented students?

MTSS is a framework designed to support all learners, including those performing above grade level. With supports provided to the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, emotional) based upon individual needs, gifted and talented learners are supported academically through acceleration options, while their non-academic needs are also considered to help them continue to learn and grow at a pace that is appropriate for them.

2. What’s the role of the family in an MTSS framework?

Families are active participants in the MTSS framework and are empowered to be advocates for learner success. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile identifies family representation on leadership teams as well as subgroups and committees. LEAs are to ensure family involvement with the school, district, and community in support of their learners by offering a variety of engagement opportunities.

3. How will effectiveness of MTSS implementation be evaluated in the Transformation Zone?

An evaluation plan is being developed by a workgroup of the MDE and stakeholders with fluency and expertise in MTSS and program evaluation. The evaluation plan will answer questions using multiple sources and types of data within the following domains:

- Capacity
- Fidelity
- Scale
- Impact

4. Why does the MDE refer to a system vs. systems within the Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

The use of system as singular expresses the MDE MTSS as one comprehensive system with many supports that are connected and aligned to create conditions where all learners can thrive.

5. How do we describe the supports being provided to learners within the MDE MTSS framework?

Within a MTSS framework, we describe the supports being provided by the Tier as determined by the level of intensity (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3). We state that “a learner is receiving Tier 3 supports” in a particular content area rather than saying “a Tier 3 student”.

6. Who should I contact with further questions?

MDE MTSS Webpage:

https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_65803_86454---,00.html

Questions regarding MTSS, the MDE MTSS Practice Profile or the MDE Transformation Zone may be sent via email to MDE-MTSS@michigan.gov