Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MiMTSS)
Frequently Asked Questions

Updated – July 2020

Introduction

Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recognizes the necessity of supporting Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for successful learner outcomes. To ensure the availability of high-quality professional learning and technical assistance to support MTSS implementation as defined by MDE's MTSS Practice Profile, MDE has established Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MiMTSS). This list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) has been developed to answer questions about MTSS, the MDE MTSS Practice Profile, and the MiMTSS System of Support.

The MiMTSS FAQ is organized by the following categories:

- MTSS Purpose, Partners and Outcomes
- MTSS, Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan and Legislative Alignment
- MDE MTSS Practice Profile
    - Five Essential Components
- MiMTSS, Professional Learning and Technical Assistance
- For More Information

MTSS Purpose, Partners & Outcomes

1. **What is MTSS?**

   MDE defines MTSS as a comprehensive framework comprised of a collection of research-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child at all achievement levels. 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. Implementation of the essential components as intended provides educational settings with a framework to organize the strategies and processes needed to eliminate barriers to learning and support successful learner outcomes.

2. **What is the purpose of MTSS?**

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

3. What are the guiding principles of MTSS?

MTSS is guided by the following principles:

- 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

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

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. **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/centers. 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 from 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 does address the larger district system and includes the process of RtI.

5. 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 an LEA 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 learner need.

6. Why does MDE refer to a system versus 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.

7. What partners should LEAs engage in MTSS?

It is imperative that LEA's focus on what families, schools/centers, and communities can do together to support positive learner, family, and community outcomes.

Learners: As supports are designed to enable each learner to meet their learning potential, learners should be provided opportunities to have a voice in their own education. Being engaged in the process to identify and understand their needs, develop goals and plans to meet those needs, and monitor the progress being made, learners take ownership of their own learning and success. "Nothing about us without us!"

Families: Learner outcomes improve considerably when schools/centers and families collaborate on individual learner needs, goals, programs, and progress. So, it is important that LEA's engage families as meaningful stakeholders in the implementation of MTSS through effective home to school collaborations that support the continuity of learning and outcomes for learners and families. LEAs also need to ensure that families are invited to partner on leadership teams and committees that make systemic decisions and together inform and influence the creation and selection of policies, practices, and programs.

For more information about what high-impact family engagement looks like, please visit: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MIFamily_Family_Engagement_Framework_683447_7.pdf

Community: The community can help expand learning opportunities, provide additional services and supports, and facilitate civic participation on socially significant outcomes that are relevant to the community. Through collaboration with community partners, LEAs can leverage these additional resources to support improved learner and family outcomes. Like families, community partners should be invited to partner on leadership teams and committees that make systemic decisions and together inform and influence the creation and selection of policies, practices, and programs.

8. 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
- Professional learning and coaching that is 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., State-ISD-LEA-School/Center-Classroom)

9. How is the effectiveness of MTSS implementation evaluated and communicated to stakeholders?

The following six evaluation functions are needed within organizations across the education system (MDE, Regional, ISD, LEA, School/Center, Grade, Individual Student) to support MTSS implementation.

- Design and monitor the overall evaluation process for adherence with standards and best practices
- Support development of the data system and companion resources
- Monitor data collection per the defined schedule
- Summarize data in usable formats
- Review data and use it for continuous improvement purposes and learning
- Communicate and share results with stakeholders based on what they need to know and do with the information

The following types of data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of MTSS implementation and inform decision making:

- Capacity data are used to enhance leadership, organizational and competency drivers within the district wide system.
- Fidelity data are used to improve supports to ensure implementation as intended (e.g., staff selection, training, coaching supports).
- Scale/Reach data are used to examine the extent implementation is occurring across the district and to inform the differentiation of plans for schools/centers based on their current stage of implementation (i.e., exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation).
- Impact data are used to determine whether learner, staff, and community outcomes are improving (e.g., attendance rates, test scores, graduation rates, perception surveys, community data).

MTSS, Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan and Legislative Alignment

1. **How does MTSS connect to Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan?**

   Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan was updated and approved at the August 2020 Michigan State Board of Education meeting. Within the plan there are eight goals to support learning and learners. Five of the eight goals have direct connections with MTSS, such as expanding early childhood learning opportunities and improving early literacy achievement. The strategic plan is both directional and aspirational and is intended to focus education efforts across Michigan. The updated plan is clearer and more streamlined, includes current and relevant language, and has metrics identified for each goal area to monitor progress.

2. **Where does MTSS appear in State and Federal Law?**

   MTSS implementation is noted and assigned funding in various sections of the State School Aid Act of 1979. For example, an LEA implementing MTSS K-12 is part of the assurance of funding for the State School Aid Act of 1979, Section 31a At-risk. For an outline of where MTSS appears in the law, please see the MTSS in Michigan's State School Aid Chart.

   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 MTSS 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]

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

MDE MTSS 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 by creating clearly defined standards or expectations for what an innovation looks like in practice. A practice profile also identifies developmental and unacceptable variations for each essential component (i.e., what it does not look like in practice). It is a tool used by educators and leaders to promote competency and confidence in the effective use of a practice or innovation.

   The MDE MTSS Practice Profile clearly defines standards or expectations for what MTSS looks like in practice and provides guidance for implementation of MTSS as indicated in Michigan's state law. It describes specifically what actions educators and leaders take when implementing an MTSS framework as intended. The tool identifies the five essential components of MTSS as well as its underlying philosophy, expected outcomes, and research base for the framework. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile guides and informs the development and/or refinement of the necessary supports and resources for MTSS implementation, such as professional learning, coaching, identification of fidelity measures, a state-level evaluation plan, and necessary changes in procedures and policy. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile is reviewed regularly for its effectiveness and improved over time based on feedback from use within Michigan's education system.

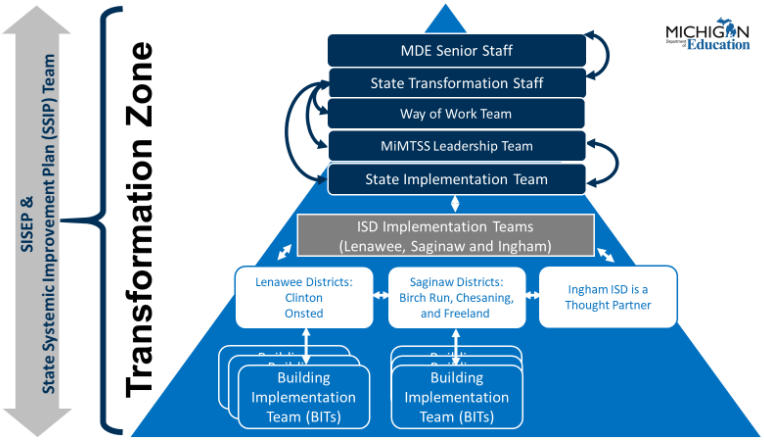
2. **How was the MDE MTSS Practice Profile developed?**

   The MDE MTSS Practice Profile was initially developed by the MDE MTSS Practice Profile Design Workgroup 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, research literature, fellow states' guidance, and collecting feedback from small group interviews with stakeholders sharing various perspectives. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile is a research-informed document. Citations of current research are included for each component. Explicit care was taken to build coherence and cultivate consensus through shared work within the education field of Michigan. By using the research-based development process, efforts were taken to ensure that the MTSS framework is teachable, learnable, doable, and useable. Support and guidance for this process was provided by a national technical assistance center, the State Implementation and Scaling up Center of Evidence Based Practices (SISEP).

3. What informed the improvements made to the MDE MTSS Practice Profile version 5.0?

Improvements made to the MDE MTSS Practice Profile version 5.0 are consistent with the MTSS research that informed the original practice profile and support the five essential components identified by Michigan. The essence of each section and essential component remain the same. The changes improve the practice profile by aligning language, reorganizing content, and reducing redundancy, while also making some content more explicit and actionable. These improvements were informed by:

- **MDE's testing of the MDE MTSS Practice Profile in the Transformation Zone.** The Transformation Zone represents a vertical slice of Michigan's education system from the practice level to the policy level (e.g., from the classroom to the Capitol) with participating entities from MDE, ISDs, districts, schools and classrooms that characterize the larger education system. Lenawee and Saginaw ISDs, along with five of their local districts, have partnered within the Transformation Zone to serve as the first cohort to participate in a systemic change process and test how useful the MTSS practice profile is as district guidance for implementation. Ingham ISD also serves as a thought partner in the process. The MTSS practice profile informed the development and refinement of resources designed to support the districts' implementation of MTSS with fidelity (e.g., professional learning, coaching, identification of fidelity measures, a state-level evaluation plan, necessary changes in procedures and policy). In turn, the ISDs and districts provided feedback on how the practice profile informed their practice and opportunities to improve its use. A key purpose of this work is to build MDE's capacity to support statewide implementation of MTSS, while the usability testing improves the effectiveness of the MDE MTSS Practice Profile.



- **Capacity Assessments and Fidelity Measures.** The MDE MTSS Practice Profile was used to inform MDE's selection of the District Capacity Assessment, Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory, and School-wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory. These tools provide additional guidance to support implementation of the five essential components within schools. A crosswalk was conducted between the MDE MTSS Practice Profile and these additional tools to ensure alignment and consistency of messaging.

- **National Research and Resources.** Seeking to make specific "expected use in practice" indicators in the practice profile more explicit and actionable, resources were leveraged from national partners to add context that will support implementation (e.g., implementation science, taxonomy of intervention intensity).
- **Other MDE Initiatives.** To ensure alignment and consistency of messaging, other MDE initiatives were consulted to align practice and language where necessary (e.g., Comprehensive and Balanced Student Assessment System definitions, Equitable Education, Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process).

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 (e.g., Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory, School-wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory). Given the availability of fidelity measures at the school level, and the need to define the role of the district, the practice profile was developed to specify the actions of a district implementation team in supporting effective and sustained use of the MTSS framework. While the District Capacity Assessment (DCA) specifies the work of a district implementation team, the assessment is designed to be used with any effective innovation. The MDE MTSS Practice Profile and the DCA can be used together to operationalize a district infrastructure specifically for MTSS.

5. How should LEA's be using the MDE MTSS Practice Profile?

The MDE MTSS Practice Profile defines standards or expectations for what MTSS looks like in practice and provides guidance for implementation of MTSS as indicated in Michigan's state law. It describes specifically what actions educators and leaders take when using an MTSS framework as intended. As such, LEAs are to actively implement the five essential components and use the information in the practice profile to inform the professional learning and technical assistance that they provide. The State School Aid Act of 1979, Section 31a program monitoring indicators and companion guide rubrics are also available to districts to refine their district framework to meet state and federal legislative assurances.

Please note, the MDE MTSS Practice Profile is a guide to inform district implementation of MTSS. It should not be used for the purposes of staff performance evaluations.

6. **In "The Evolution of MTSS" section of the MDE MTSS Practice Profile, it states that the practice profile is forward thinking and designed to support a.) all learners within the prenatal through post-secondary system, b.) the whole child (cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, and emotional), and c.) a growth mindset. Are LEAs required to have all of this in place right now?**

   Since 2015-2016, an LEA implementing MTSS K-12 is part of the assurance of funding for the State School Aid Act of 1979, Section 31a At-risk and Section 35a Early Literacy. More specifically, 31a indicates that a district or public-school academy, must implement an MTSS to integrate academic and behavioral instruction, and shall use resources to address early literacy and numeracy for at least grades K to 12. The MTSS described in the law must also include all five of the essential components identified in the MDE MTSS Practice Profile. While Section 31a outlines the minimum requirements by law, the practice profile encourages districts to be forward thinking in how they will expand their MTSS overtime to meet the needs of all learners inclusive of early childhood and whole child needs. Meanwhile, MDE recognizes that the implementation and expansion of MTSS with fidelity is a developmental process. LEAs across the state, and even schools within an LEA, will likely be at different stages of implementation (i.e., exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation) for their initial implementation of the MTSS framework and subsequent areas of focus. What is important is that the LEA is actively engaged in MTSS implementation and continuous improvement efforts to meet the individual needs and assets of all learners in a sustainable way.

MDE MTSS Practice Profile – Five Essential 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 supports, remove barriers, coordinate, and evaluate activities for the district in alignment with the broader education system.

   B. **How does a 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 education 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. 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.

For more information about supporting gifted learners, please see the Guidance for Academic Acceleration:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/6.6.19_Acceleration_Guidance_May2019_657153_7.pdf

D. What is meant by tiered delivery?

A responsive framework that provides research-based instruction, interventions, and supports intended to meet the needs and assets of the whole child. Based on an aligned curriculum, the instructional practices, interventions and supports are organized along a continuum to meet the needs of each and every learner. Tiers are intended to be layered with intensification of supports matched to learner need.

- Tier 1 is the universal instruction and differentiation intended to meet the needs of all learners.
- Tier 2 is an intervention platform consisting of supplemental, targeted interventions intended for some learners who require support or extension beyond tier 1.
- Tier 3 supports provide intense individual interventions, building on Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2 intervention, for learners with highly accelerated, or severe and persistently challenged, academic and/or non-academic needs.

E. How do we describe the supports being provided to learners within an MTSS framework?

Within an 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 support" in a particular content area rather than saying "a Tier 3 student". We label the category of the support not the learner.

3. Selection and Implementation of Instruction, Interventions and Supports

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

Instructional practices, interventions and supports are chosen because there is evidence that indicates expected success for the identified need. The selection and alignment process considers a whole child approach, the population of learner(s) being served, and alignment with the district's existing philosophy, programs, and initiatives. Selection also considers the resources and capacity needed to support MTSS implementation with fidelity.

4. Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System

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

A comprehensive assessment system is a coordinated system of multiple assessments and measures each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used. The system is designed to help educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions and provides information about the needs and assets of each and every learner from a whole child perspective. The data acquired through the system are used to systematically evaluate the quality, equity, and efficiency of instruction, interventions and supports and create a responsive system that enhances individual learner outcomes. A comprehensive assessment system includes:

1. A balanced student assessment system (e.g., formative, progress monitoring, universal screeners, diagnostic, benchmark/interim, and summative). https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Comprehensive_and_Balanced_Student_Assessment_System_Definitions_643701_7.pdf
2. System assessments (e.g., capacity, fidelity)

5. Continuous Data-Based Decision Making

A. What does data-based decision-making mean in an MTSS framework?

The utilization of all relevant whole child and system data to analyze, evaluate, and plan strategies that support sustainable systemic improvement and whole child learner outcomes. Data-based decision making is inclusive of efficient data collection practices for multiple data sets and a formal continuous improvement process. Data used are timely, valid, reliable,

accurate and reviewed in ongoing cycles. The roles and responsibilities for data-based decision making within the system are clearly defined and executed.

B. How does data-based decision-making contribute to the desired outcome?

Data analysis allows for evidence to guide decision making for both the effectiveness of the system and for whole child needs of all learners, with explicit consideration for special populations. Examination of data trends as they are disaggregated by group may surface and provide insight into systemic issues that may be disproportionality impacting specific populations of learners. Data-based decisions should ensure that all learners are provided an appropriately challenging learning environment designed to accelerate their growth.

MiMTSS, Professional Learning and Technical Assistance

1. What professional learning and technical assistance does MDE offer to support the implementation of MTSS as defined by the MDE MTSS Practice Profile?

MDE ensures high-quality professional learning and technical assistance is available to support the implementation of MTSS through MiMTSS.

MiMTSS includes:

- MDE's MiMTSS Leadership Team
- MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center (MiMTSS TA Center, formally known as MIBLSI)
- MiMTSS Data System

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.

2. What is MDE's MiMTSS Leadership Team?

MDE's MiMTSS Leadership Team is comprised of sixteen members, from seven offices across all three divisions of MDE, that provide direct support or incorporates MTSS within their work to support the field. The mission of the MiMTSS Leadership Team is to provide coordination and oversight of MDE's efforts to support educators' effective implementation of MTSS with fidelity so that all learners can be successful. The vision for their work is a responsive and comprehensive, tiered service delivery system aligned through state and local capacity that is sustainable and scaled across Michigan to meet the needs of all learners.

For more information, please visit: www.Michigan.gov/MTSS

3. What is the MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center?

Michigan's MTSS Technical Assistance Center (MiMTSS TA Center), previously Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MIBLSI), works on behalf of MDE to provide a continuum of technical assistance to ISDs, LEAs, and schools in an MTSS framework. The TA center's mission is to improve outcomes for all learners by assisting educators in developing infrastructures to support high-quality and sustained implementation of effective, data-driven practices within an MTSS framework. There are three categories of MTSS support provided through the TA center. These categories are provided on a continuum of intensity based on the supports provided and the effort required with accessing those supports. The TA support categories include:

- **Universal Support** involves information provided to educators that is primarily accessed through their own accord or in connection to larger district efforts. Examples include conference presentations provided by MiMTSS TA Center staff, the annual MTSS conference and other learning opportunities available to all Michigan educators, as well as newsletters, guidebooks, and briefs, available on the MiMTSS TA Center website.

- **Targeted Support** involves services developed based on needs common to multiple recipients and not extensively individualized. This includes one-time events, such as facilitating strategic planning or hosting a series of state or regional conferences on specified content to meet an identified need. A letter of agreement is included in the partnership. Examples include events that extend over a period of time, such as facilitating a series of conference calls on single or multiple topics that are designed around the needs of the recipients.

- **Intensive Support** involves services often provided in-person/virtually and includes mutual commitments from the TA center and local educators. The TA center helps LEAs in the intensive technical assistance programs to increase effectiveness by focusing on outcomes, implementation teams, procedures, resources, data for improvement, and implementation with fidelity. A letter of agreement defines the partnership with the focus of improving learner outcomes. LEAs interested in intensive technical assistance need to apply through an annual application process.

For more information, please visit: https://mimtsstac.org/

4. **What is the MiMTSS Data System?**

The MiMTSS Data System is a free-access web-based data system designed for LEAs, ISDs and MDE to gather and analyze data that is critical for the continuous improvement of MTSS in Michigan. The data system is an example of MDE's commitment to create a systemic infrastructure that supports the needs of the field by reducing burden and creating integration with existing local data systems.

The MiMTSS Data System provides educators with:

- a place to collect data not captured elsewhere related to MTSS inputs, implementation, and outcomes (e.g., personnel, training records, partners, capacity assessments, fidelity assessments).
- data presented in a common format, so they are easily understood across all levels of the education system (e.g., school/center, LEA, ISD and State).
- dashboards and reports designed for use during the continuous improvement process.
- school-level data that are immediately accessible to LEAs and ISDs as they are entered.
- a system that is designed based on the principles of effective data visualization, has undergone multiple cycles of usability testing, and is continuously improved based on user feedback.

For more information, please visit: https://mimtsstac.org/evaluation/mimtss-data-system

For More Information

For more information, please visit: www.Michigan.gov/MTSS

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