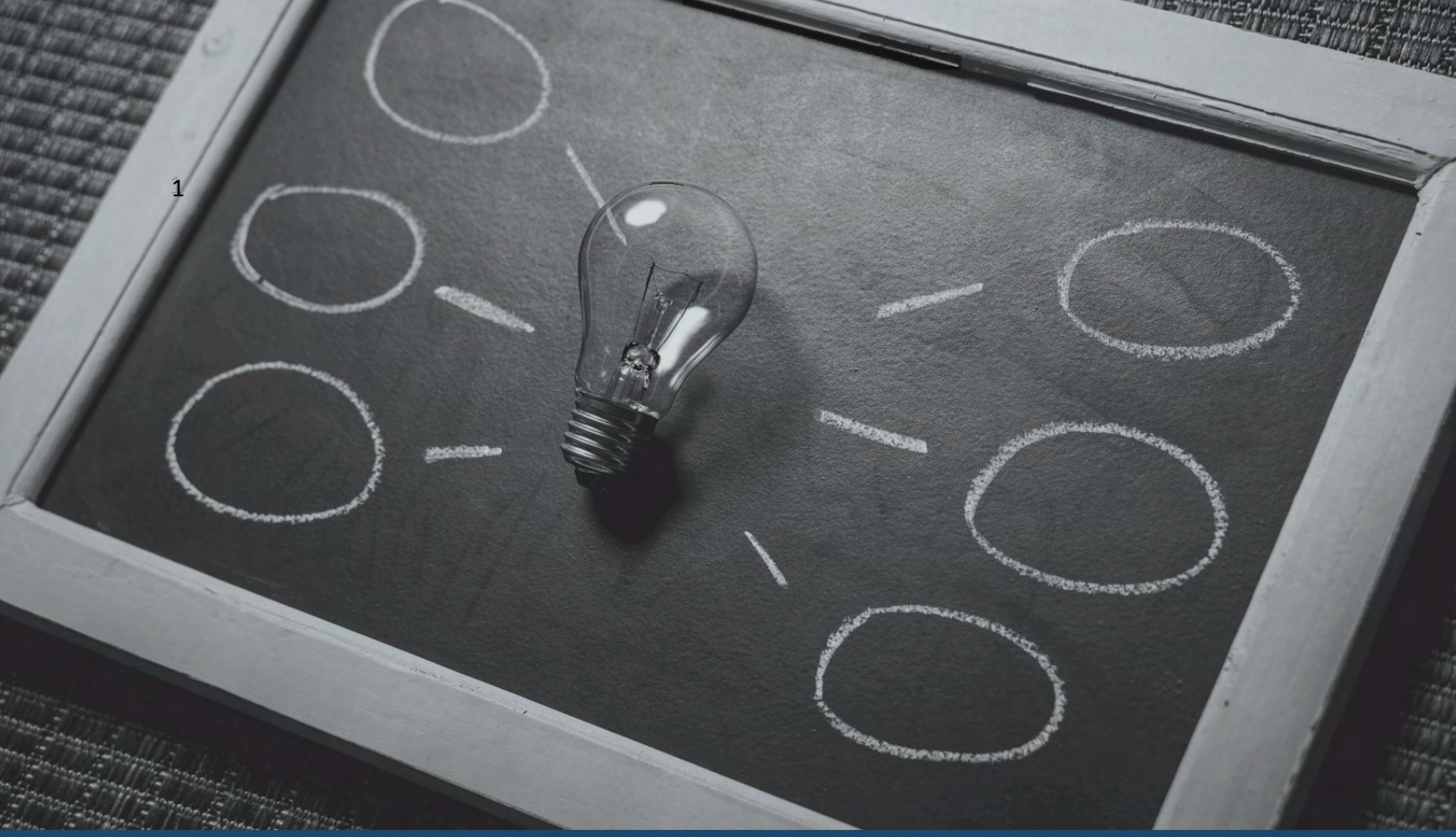

Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools: Strategies from Research and the Field

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The purpose of this brief is to provide high-quality resources and examples to help secondary schools implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The Southeast Region 5 Comprehensive Center (SER5CC) at SERVE at UNC Greensboro developed the current document to update and extend the previous brief on this topic published by SERVE as the Region 6 Comprehensive Center, *Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools: Challenges and Strategies* (2022, revised 2023).

The document begins with a short definition of MTSS, followed by a description of the main challenges secondary schools report facing when implementing MTSS. It then offers strategies that can help schools address some of these challenges. These strategies come both from research and from practice in secondary schools that have implemented MTSS.

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Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools: Strategies from Research and the Field

Introduction

The MTSS Center (formerly the National Center on Response to Intervention) at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) defines MTSS as follows:

> *A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a proactive and preventative framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student achievement and support students' social, emotional, and behavior needs from a strengths-based perspective. MTSS offers a framework for educators to engage in data-based decision making related to program improvement, high-quality instruction and intervention, social and emotional learning, and positive behavioral supports necessary to ensure positive outcomes for districts, schools, teachers, and students.*

MTSS is most often depicted as a three-tiered triangle. The base of the triangle (Tier 1) consists of the core, preventative instruction and programming provided to all students in a school. If this core is strong and working well, about 80% of students should be meeting academic and behavioral expectations without additional support. The middle section of the triangle (Tier 2) is often called "targeted" or "supplemental" intervention or supports. These supports are generally provided to small groups of students and may be required for about 15% of the student body in a school with a strong core. The top section of the triangle (Tier 3) represents individualized or intensive intervention or supports, which may be required by about 5% of students in a school with a strong core. Intervention at this level is individualized to meet the needs of students who require more support than can be offered at Tier 2.

In 2022, the Region 6 Comprehensive Center (RC6) at SERVE at UNC Greensboro published *Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools: Challenges and Strategies*, a brief describing the main challenges of implementing MTSS in secondary schools and offering strategies to help schools overcome those challenges (Durrance, 2022). The brief was updated in 2023.

Since then, the RC6 (2019-2024)—newly awarded as the Southeast Region 5 Comprehensive Center (SER5CC) (2025-2029)—has heard feedback on the 2023 brief's utility from educators at the local and state levels, staff at the U.S. Department of Education, and individuals in institutions of higher education. It is clear that the field needs and values this type of resource. This 2025 document, *Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools: Strategies from Research and the Field*, expands upon the toolkit of strategies offered to schools and districts.

The brief begins with a summary of the main challenges secondary schools report facing when implementing MTSS, as reported by researchers and practitioners. It then offers resources, ideas and examples to help secondary schools address some of those challenges. The document expands upon the content in the 2023 *Challenges and Strategies* brief to include more high-quality resources and examples from the field. It also expands the focus from a using a tiered system of supports to address just students' academic needs to include attendance, behavior, and well-being.

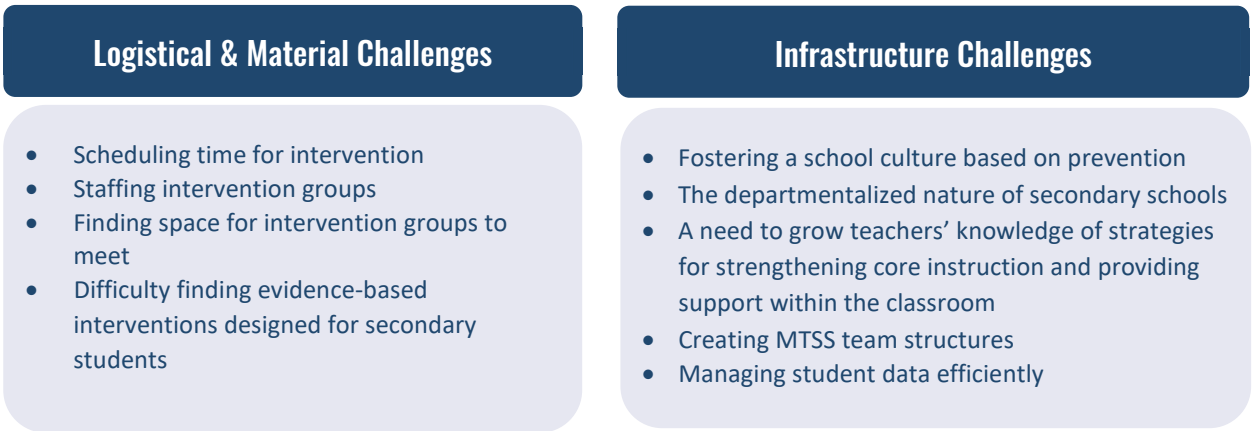
MTSS Challenges in Secondary Schools

As discussed in the 2022 brief, an RC6 review of the literature on MTSS revealed that relatively few resources addressed the specifics and complexities of MTSS practice at the middle and high school levels that comprise secondary education. Compared to elementary schools, secondary schools often serve larger student bodies. This can mean fewer resources for struggling students, making it more difficult to monitor and provide support to all students who need it. Staff may also have multiple responsibilities and lack the time required to systematically address student difficulties (Clark & Dockweiler, 2019). While most elementary schools are similar in their structure and organization, in secondary schools these can vary more widely. The main elements of MTSS may remain the same across grade levels, but implementation must be modified to fit the different contexts of secondary schools (Daye, 2019).

"The biggest single barrier to secondary MTSS implementation is a confused or unclear purpose," according to Jimerson, Burns, and VanDerHeyden (2016, p. 564). Each school needs to determine its purpose and scope for MTSS. For example, the MTSS focus at the secondary level might be academic but not include all students or all content areas (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2021a). An analysis of MTSS implementation in six high schools found that their catalysts and goals for beginning or refocusing MTSS varied, with several focusing first on academic achievement (especially literacy) and later incorporating behavioral, attendance, and well-being supports (Durrance & McColskey, 2024). The overarching goal of MTSS in high schools is often to "serve as a framework for drop-out prevention and content recovery to ensure that students pass core courses and exams and ultimately graduate" (Muoneke & Shankland, 2009). In middle schools, the goal may be to prepare students for high school success.

In 2021, the RC6 conducted interviews with school and district staff in 15 districts across South Carolina to explore their experiences implementing MTSS. The interviewees identified challenges they faced in implementing MTSS at the secondary level. In 2023 and 2024, the RC6 began interviewing schools across Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina and developing short summaries of their MTSS journeys, dubbed MTSS Implementation Stories. The current library of stories includes two middle schools, seven high schools, and one grades 6-12 alternative school. The stories demonstrate how MTSS starting points and implementation trajectories vary by school context.

Figure 1: Main challenges of implementing MTSS in secondary schools



Combined with other challenges reported by researchers, the interviews conducted by the RC6 show that the main barriers to implementing MTSS in secondary schools can be grouped into two categories: logistical and material challenges and infrastructure challenges. Logistical and material challenges center around scheduling and resources, such as space and staffing for intervention, instructional materials, and the time and tools for effective data management. Challenges related to the infrastructure necessary for MTSS include a supportive school culture, departmentalization, teacher knowledge, and teaming structures (Anderson et al., 2021; Epler, 2019a; Marlowe, 2021).

This document synthesizes research, high-quality resources, and examples of MTSS implementation from middle and high schools to outline seven strategies that can help educators address the main challenges identified in Figure 1. The strategies in this brief are as follows:

- Strategy 1: Strengthen core programs to reduce the need for intervention
- Strategy 2: Use data efficiently to identify and group students in need of support
- Strategy 3: Adjust the master schedule to make time for intervention in the school day
- Strategy 4: Create an MTSS team and carefully select intervention teachers
- Strategy 5: Select evidence-based intervention strategies or programs
- Strategy 6: Provide ongoing professional development and supports for MTSS
- Strategy 7: Develop or identify structures and resources to support MTSS

MTSS Infrastructure

The infrastructure of MTSS is "the foundational framework that supports data-based decisions about students on campus" (Clark & Dockweiler, 2019, p. 77). A well-developed infrastructure empowers educators to respond to student needs and addresses any problems that occur proactively, rather than reactively (Clark & Dockweiler, 2019). MTSS is built on the needs of the school and district; therefore, it will look different based on implementation and outcome data. However, the following five ideals for MTSS infrastructure are true across contexts:

- The MTSS framework outlines support for the whole child, including academic, behavioral, social, and emotional support (Sailor et al., 2021).
- The definition and purpose of MTSS, its connection to the school/district mission and vision, and a strengths-based approach to addressing student needs are clear to implementers (Sailor et al., 2021).
- Support is defined across the tiers of instruction and intervention, from classroom instruction to more intensive levels of support. The support available to students is defined, including skills targeted through instruction and intervention, evidence-based practices, intervention entry and exit criteria, and progress monitoring.
- Across all tiers of support, educators know how to implement the selected problem-solving model and how to match needs with support through data-based decision-making.
- The school/district has intentionally planned for collaboration and two-way communication among educators, parents/caregivers, and community organizations (Sailor et al., 2021).

For secondary schools new to MTSS implementation, the MTSS Center at the American Institutes for Research created two documents to help educators think through their school's unique context and the

steps they can take to begin implementing MTSS. These *Considerations for MTSS Implementation* documents consist of one for middle school settings (2021b) and one for high school settings (2021a). Each asks users to consider several dozen guiding questions, such as considering how the school can leverage existing resources to implement MTSS and what supports teachers may need to deliver instruction for Tiers 1, 2, and 3.

Misconceptions about MTSS are common, and they include the idea that the purpose of MTSS is to provide interventions to students and that it is a path to special education for students who are not successful in the general education setting. Schools and districts developing the infrastructure for MTSS need to consider the framework and structures of MTSS as a whole and explicitly conceptualize their support for students as a continuum that starts with core programs and applies to all students, including those with disabilities. MTSS is also not an initiative led solely by teachers of academic subjects and administrators. Student support staff (school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, school social workers, and school mental health therapists) and all instructional staff in the school need to know the roles they play in MTSS implementation.

Integrating MTSS With Existing Frameworks and Efforts

Implementers may already be familiar with other frameworks currently used by their school or district, such as PBIS, the Pyramid Model in Early Education, Community Schools, or the Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) observes, "There is no shortage of frameworks in education, with each seeking to make sense of complex systems in order to provide guidance and drive outcomes" (Colorado Department of Education, 2024b). MTSS is not separate from these efforts; rather, it should serve "as a foundational and interconnected way of addressing all efforts seeking to make improvements in school health, safety, and engagement," as well as efforts in other areas of school improvement. CDE offers descriptions of how the elements of MTSS addressing well-

Educator Well-Being

Implementing MTSS well can be a heavy lift for educators. In the long term, effective and streamlined MTSS implementation should make educators' jobs easier as students' needs are met and they experience greater rates of success. In the short term, learning about MTSS and putting new practices into place requires additional time and effort.

Supporting educator well-being is important for the success of MTSS. "Teacher well-being is [a] primary factor influencing healthy teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management, and effective social-emotional learning, all of which are directly linked to a healthy classroom climate and to students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes" (Dreer, 2023). Yet, teachers continue to report worse well-being than the general population of working adults. Nearly a quarter of teachers nationwide said they would leave their job in 2023 (Doan et al. 2023), and 85% of teachers feel they do not receive sufficient support to avoid stress or burnout (Costa, 2023).

To help districts and schools address the need for increased attention to educator well-being, in May 2024 the REL Northeast & Islands created a *Supporting Educator Well-being Using Evidence-Based Supports* fact sheet. This resource describes the importance of prioritizing educator well-being and provides strategies and resources for districts and schools.

being (called the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging in Colorado) align with a variety of common frameworks implemented in schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2024b; 2024c).

The MTSS framework also integrates well with schools' existing continuous improvement plans, and aspects of MTSS implementation can and should be explicitly woven into these plans since a school's goals often depend on core programs, supports for students who need them, and family and community involvement. For alternative schools and programs, the National Alternative Education Association's Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education (n.d.) effectively situate key practices within the MTSS framework. For more information on MTSS in alternative schools and programs, see Appendix A.

Schools and districts implementing MTSS should also ensure that the appropriate adult practices are in place to support fidelity of implementation. This can be accomplished using tools such as Florida's *Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)*, a detailed rubric to assess a school's fidelity of MTSS implementation (Stockslager, et al., 2016). The North Carolina Department of Education created a district-level version of the SAM called the *NC Facilitated Assessment of MTSS-District-Level (FAM-D)* (n.d.-b). For those who find these more comprehensive tools overwhelming, the Nebraska Department of Education's condensed rubric in spreadsheet form, the *Nebraska MTSS Self Assessment*, may be a more accessible initial lift (n.d.).

Strategies to Address Challenges

Participants in interviews conducted by the RC6 in 15 South Carolina districts in 2021 stressed that they needed secondary MTSS resources to help them with practical and concrete ideas for implementation. They wanted exemplars and strategies they could apply to their schools' specific context (Anderson et al., 2021). Because of this need, this brief focuses on providing high-quality, actionable resources, case studies and examples that offer specific guidance to district and school leaders, and lessons learned from the MTSS Implementation Stories developed by the RC6 from 2022 to 2024. This section is organized by strategy, with additional examples and resources in the appendices.

Strategy 1: Strengthen core programs to reduce the need for intervention

A school cannot provide Tier 2 or 3 intervention to a majority of students. Evidence-based core/Tier 1 instruction is the foundation upon which an effective MTSS framework is built, and schools need to first examine their core programs before turning their attention to intervention efforts. Core programs include academic instruction, behavior expectations and Tier 1 supports, Tier 1 supports for student well-being, and overall school culture. MTSS is a preventative framework, and preventing students from struggling begins with ensuring that the programming available to all students is strong. As Clark and Dockweiler put it, "if the base of the building is unstable then nothing built on top is going to be stable either" (2019, p. 248).

Examining schoolwide student data can help illuminate areas in which core programs can be improved. Several district leaders interviewed as part of an exploration of MTSS implementation in South Carolina realized their schools were struggling to provide consistent and high-quality Tier 1 instruction because large proportions of students required Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention (Anderson et al., 2021). Likewise, high rates of discipline referrals or chronic absenteeism point to a need for a school to implement changes that impact all students, not just those who are absent or receiving the referrals.

The following sections provide considerations and resources for core programs, organized by student well-being, attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. While it can be common to think first of academic achievement when considering MTSS, this order is intentional—students who do not feel safe and connected to their schools, are not present at school, and/or demonstrate disruptive behaviors are not well-positioned to learn academic content. Attention must be paid to the whole child in order to support students in mastering the content and skills they need to be ready for college and careers.

Student Well-being

Student well-being is a sustainable state of positive mood, attitude, and satisfaction with self, relationships, and school experiences, characterized by effective functioning in the educational community, and a balance between academic efforts and life beyond studies (Douwes et al., 2023; Hossain et al., 2023). It directly impacts a student's ability to engage in school and in learning. The REL Northeast and Islands created a series of Fact Sheets for using MTSS to improve student well-being within a cohesive and comprehensive system (2024).

Student well-being begins with basic needs, because students whose basic needs are not met are not ready to learn. These basic needs include physical needs (e.g., food, clothing, housing) and psychological needs (e.g., safety, belonging). To help ensure that students enter school with their most basic physical needs met, schools and districts can engage in community resource mapping and develop a comprehensive list of supports available to students and families (Peck, n.d.-a). These community-based services are sometimes called "wraparound services". Identifying and addressing a student's specific needs for support—from the most basic for living to those related to extracurriculars and postsecondary education—may require asking the student and/or their family to complete a needs assessment and working with them to develop a plan for addressing the needs (Peck, n.d.-b).

Research has found that a sense of safety and belonging is critical for children to be prepared for and ready to engage in learning (Bindreiff, 2023). CASEL asserts that a supportive classroom environment creates "the conditions for belonging and emotional safety by being responsive to students' perspectives and needs, affirming all students' full identities, and establishing structures that create predictability and consistency" (2024). The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments offers training and resources (2024) to help educators create a supportive classroom environment, including a self-study workbook (Diamanti et al., 2018). The U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates* (2023) also offers information on specific evidence-based actions schools can take to create a learning environment that supports student success.

The CDC promotes the importance of school connectedness, which occurs "when students feel that adults and peers in school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. This includes a sense of being cared for, being supported, and belonging at school" (Division of Adolescent and School Health, 2023). Students who feel more connected to school have better attendance, academic outcomes, graduation rates, and post-secondary success rates. The brief *Strengthening School Connectedness to Increase Student Success* outlines and links to resources on evidence-based practices that can increase student connectedness (Balfanz et al., 2024). In a July 2022 Community of Practice meeting hosted by The GRAD Partnership, noted researcher Robert Balfanz led participants in sharing best practices for improving school connectedness.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought attention to the role schools play in supporting the mental health and overall well-being of both students and staff. The CDC outlined strategies schools can implement to help avert mental health issues and enhance students' and staff's overall behavioral and mental well-being in *Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools: An Action Guide for School and District Leaders* (2024). The guide also includes evidence-based classroom and small group programs reviewed by the CDC. Six in-school strategies "that can help prevent mental health problems and promote positive behavioral and mental health of students" are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies to Promote Positive Behavioral and Mental Health of Students

Strategy	Approach (Example Tier Alignment)
Increase Students' Mental Health Literacy	• Deliver classroom-based mental health education curricula (Tier 1) • Use peer-led modeling programs (Tier 1)
Promote Mindfulness	• Deliver classroom-based mindful education (Tier 1) • Dedicate time for students to independently practice mindfulness (Tier 1) • Offer small group mindfulness activities (Tiers 1-3)
Promote Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning	• Provide classroom instruction focused on building social skills and emotional development (Tier 1) • Offer targeted education focused on teaching social skills and emotional development (Tiers 2-3)
Enhance Connectedness Among Students, Staff, and Families	• Provide relationship-building programs (Tier 1)
Provide Psychosocial Skills Training and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions	• Promote acceptance and commitment to change (Tiers 1-3) • Provide cognitive behavioral interventions (Tiers 1-3) • Engage students in coping skills training groups (Tiers 1-3)
Support Staff Well-Being	• Offer mindfulness-based training programs (Tier 1) • Provide therapeutic resources (Tiers 1-3)

Adapted from Division of Adolescent and School Health, 2024.

The Center on PBIS has also created a practice document, *Supporting and Responding to Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs: Evidence-Based Practices for Educators* (2022), which frames support through four steps:

- practices to create a positive classroom environment
- practices to actively promote social, emotional, and behavioral growth
- strategies to monitor fidelity and use data to guide implementation
- strategies to monitor student outcomes and use data to guide response to students' SEB needs

Another key resource for Tier 1 practices that promote a positive and connected school environment is the American Institutes for Research's research-to-practice brief, *Instructional Practices that Integrate Equity-Centered Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning* (Yoder et al., 2021). This brief describes evidence-based practices and provides examples describing how to apply these practices in at different grade levels and for different content areas.

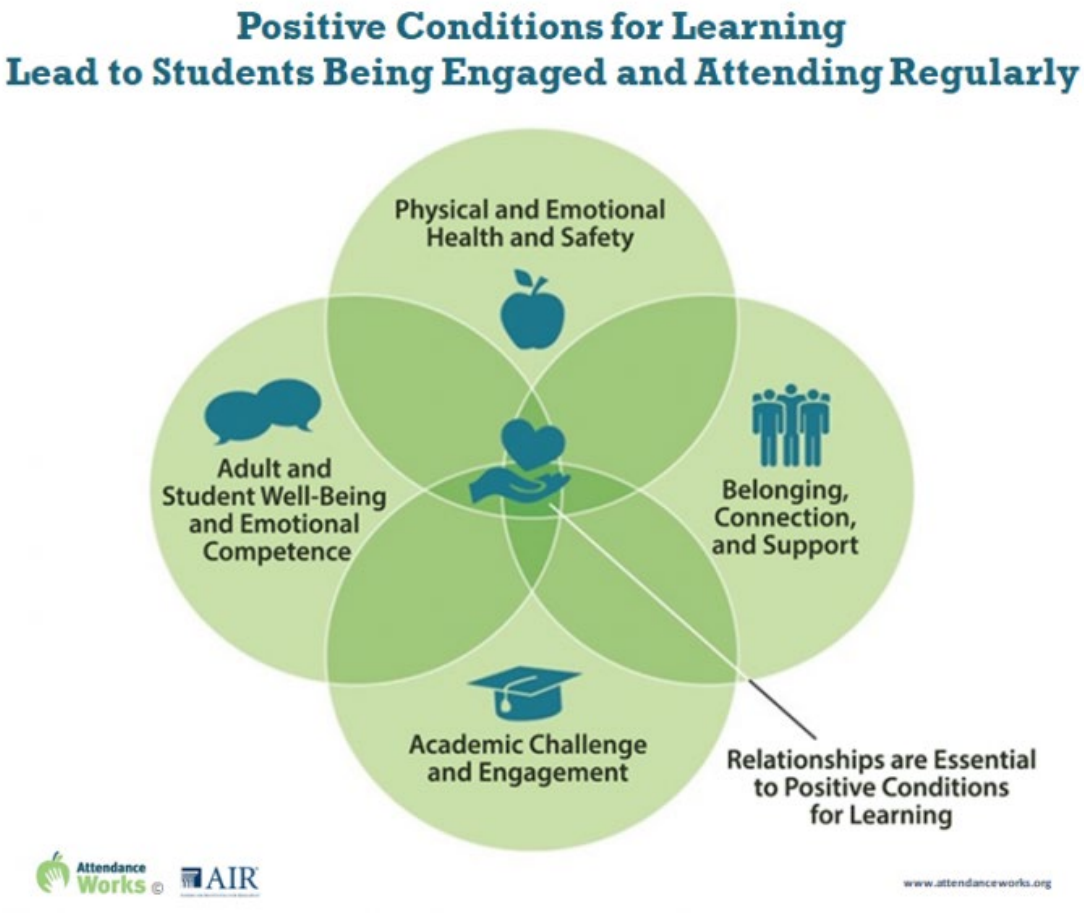
Attendance

Safety, belonging, and school connectedness relate directly to students' desire to attend and participate in school. Chronic absenteeism—the percentage of students absent for 10% or more of the school year—nearly doubled nationwide following the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained high in many locales, at around 28% (Return 2 Learn Tracker, 2024). Schools and other stakeholders cannot control all factors that lead to chronic absenteeism, but they can create conditions that promote regular attendance and work to address barriers to attendance when possible (Attendance Works, 2024; 2022).

At the foundation of Tier 1 supports for attendance are positive conditions for learning, as shown in Figure 2 (2018a). FutureEd's *Attendance Playbook* provides information on specific Tier 1 strategies schools can employ to create an environment that encourages high attendance (Jordan, 2023). These include greetings, school-based health services, and ensuring that students can walk to school safely. Examples of Tier 1 universal supports identified by Attendance Works (2018b) include:

- Clear, concise, and consistent communication about schedules and expectations;
- Routines, rituals, and celebrations related to attendance and engagement;
- Recognition of good and improved attendance; and
- Connection to a caring adult in the school.

Figure 2: Positive Conditions for Learning According to Attendance Works



Source: Attendance Works, 2018

Youth engagement—working collaboratively with students—is gaining recognition as an effective strategy to decrease chronic absenteeism. When young people feel connected to their school community and have a meaningful role, they develop a sense of responsibility towards their peers and learning environment, which motivates them to attend school regularly. The Student Engagement and Attendance Center (SEAC) created a Planning Tool for Youth Engagement, which can be an asset to improving student voice in education and attendance (Long, et al. 2023).

In July 2024 the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) held a webinar, Supporting School Attendance in a Time of Changing Norms, featuring a panel of experts who discussed the causes of the nationwide spike in chronic absenteeism and strategies to reduce it (2024b). Among the resources shared in the webinar and in a summary resource document (2024a) afterward are an explanation of how MTSS can be used to address chronic absenteeism and sample worksheets to help guide schools in developing their plans (Attendance Works, 2018a).

A first step in universal screening for attendance at the school or district level is to use attendance data to examine how many students are chronically absent and who those students are. In *Using Chronic Absence Data to Improve Conditions for Learning*, Attendance Works walks readers through a five-step framework for using data to identify and address factors that affect attendance (Chang et al., 2024). In a presentation at the 2023 National ESEA Conference, representatives from the Utah State Board of Education shared guidance and tools that can assist schools and districts in identifying causes of chronic absenteeism and finding ways to address them (Florence, 2023).

Behavior

Some of the same Tier 1 supports that promote student well-being and attendance also promote positive behaviors. As the South Carolina Department of Education wrote in its *2024 MTSS Framework and Guidance Document*, "Many students need support in learning skills such as self-awareness, managing positive relationships with peers and adults, and making responsible decisions. These skills and others drive behavior and impact school climate."

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered framework that supports students' social, emotional, and mental health and promotes positive behaviors in school settings. As the Center on PBIS describes it, PBIS is "a commitment to supporting all student behavior effectively and efficiently through a team-based approach that prioritizes prevention and responds to needs using data-based problem solving" (2023). The Center's *PBIS Implementation Blueprint* (2023) provides schools, districts, and states with guidance on building and using a PBIS framework.

The Center on PBIS organizes the main principles of effective Tier 1 support for social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) skills using four categories. The first three, *prevent*, *teach*, and *respond*, describe how educators can apply supports in the school environment. They then *decide* whether to maintain or adjust supports. More details on each of these supports and how to implement them can be found in the Center's 2021 guide, *Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in the Classroom* (Simonsen et al.). Table 2 shows how these supports are categorized within Tier 1 of MTSS.

Table 2. Prevent, Teach, and Respond within a MTSS Framework: Tier 1

	Prevent	Teach	Respond
Tier 1 (Universal)	• Effectively design space • Develop & teach predictable routines • Connect with students • Select & define classroom norms and critical SEB skills • Prompt expected SEB skills • Actively supervise • Engage in effective instruction	• Explicitly teach positively stated classroom norms • Explicitly teach SEB skills	• Provide specific positive feedback on SEB skills • Provide supportive corrective feedback to address SEB errors • Maintain a high ratio of positive to corrective feedback

Adapted from Simonsen et al., 2021, p. 5

Schools can start establishing an environment with clear expectations and consequences by creating a schoolwide teaching matrix (Kern et al., 2024) and a plan to teach schoolwide expectations (Center on PBIS, 2024a). They can then move on to supporting teachers in creating classroom teaching matrices (Robbie et al., 2022). The Center on PBIS outlines the steps to classroom-level implementation with a guide summarizing "evidence-based, positive, and proactive practices that support and respond to students' social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) needs in classrooms and similar teaching and learning environments (e.g., small group activity)" (2024b).

Several states and organizations also offer resources to support schools and districts in implementing MTSS for behavior, sometimes called MTSS-B.

- The New Hampshire MTSS-B Technical Assistance Center offers a toolkit organized by implementation phase for addressing behavior within MTSS, including resources specific to district and school levels (2024). Schoolwide and districtwide expectations and the infrastructure for responding to student behavior support schools in providing strong core programs and intervention for those students who need it.
- The Tennessee Multi-Tiered System of Supports Center (now Tennessee Tiered Supports Center) compiled a *Tier I Binder* (2021) to assist schools in implementing core behavioral supports. The guide includes secondary-specific activities and examples for teaching and acknowledging expected behaviors, responding to problem behaviors, and involving stakeholders, as well as resources for teaming, professional learning, and data-based decision making.
- Northeast Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (NEPBIS) manages a PBIS Exemplar Repository containing documents developed by schools, including behavior management processes and flowcharts, student orientation slides, and documents outlining school expectations (2024). The repository can be sorted by school level. An example of a secondary behavior management flowchart can be found in Appendix B.
- The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education published a *Behavioral Support Root Cause Analysis Workbook* to assist schools in reviewing discipline data and identifying areas in which they can improve the quality of their core behavioral supports and behavioral interventions (n.d.).
- The Florida PBIS Project offers middle school and high school problem-solving case studies that can assist educators in applying 4-step problem-solving to their classroom practices to ensure that they are creating a positive environment that supports student behavior (n.d.).

Academic Achievement

Schools seeking to implement MTSS should regularly review the quality, effectiveness, and consistency of their Tier 1 academic instruction—curricula *and* teaching strategies—across classrooms and across content areas. Improving core instruction helps reduce the number of students who require Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. This reduction in the number of students needing intervention, in turn, increases the capacity of a school to provide extra support to those who need it.

Some schools find that implementing common schoolwide strategies in all core and elective classes, such as specific note-taking strategies or explicit vocabulary instruction, can help reinforce learning across content areas and boost achievement (see the MTSS in Practice: Consistent Schoolwide Approaches to Instruction highlight). Schools may also wish to examine their instructional materials and see whether student data points to gaps in instruction that could be addressed with the use of supplemental materials. Sources for high-quality curriculum reviews include EdReports.org and the Louisiana Department of Education's Instructional Materials Reviews (2024)

MTSS IN PRACTICE

Consistent Schoolwide Approaches to Instruction

At Morehead City Middle School in North Carolina, all teaching staff receive Keys to Literacy training and incorporate literacy instruction into their content area. Social studies, science, math, and even elective teachers explicitly teach vocabulary and morphology in their classrooms. The school also prioritizes the use of consistent cross-content note-taking practices, including topic webs and two-column notes. School administrators use walkthroughs to do fidelity checks and ensure that all students are getting the same level of instruction.

School leaders reported that they saw a jump in test scores and growth when teachers incorporated literacy into all content areas. "That's the Tier 1 part of MTSS," they said. "You really need everybody… you really need that literacy focus to come across all subject areas." (For more information, see Morehead City Middle School's MTSS implementation story.)

Research clearly points to specific instructional approaches that are effective for all students and yield significant outcomes for students who need more support. Callender (2014) summarized some of these "fixes" for core instruction in secondary schools (see Figure 3). The Council for Exceptional Children has also identified 12 "high-leverage practices" (HLPs) for instruction that research shows result in better outcomes across curriculum areas (McLeskey et al., 2017). Some HLPs overlap with the approaches identified by Callender.

Figure 3: Instructional Approaches for Struggling Students

Instructional approaches that produce better outcomes for struggling students:

- Include modeling and repetition
- Are explicit, structured, and systematic
- Provide guided and controlled opportunities to practice
- Scaffold learning supports
- Include corrective and immediate feedback

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) has published a variety of practice guides that provide educators with a summary of the best research evidence available on specific instructional topics (2024). The practice guides include recommendations and example activities teachers can use in their classrooms. Evidence-based practices drawn from these guides that secondary teachers in all content areas can use to improve the reading skills of their students include:

- Providing explicit vocabulary instruction across content areas;
- Providing direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction (for example, summarizing and paraphrasing text, using graphic organizers, asking and answering questions, and finding the main idea of text);
- Providing opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation;
- Integrating writing and reading;
- Integrating oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching; and
- Anchoring text in students' experiences and by using visual representation.

The Center on Instruction also offers practice briefs for educators. Table 3 features WWC and Center on Instruction practice guides and briefs that are relevant to secondary literacy and math instruction.

Table 3. WWC and COI practice guides for effective, evidence-based literacy and math instruction

Topic	Practice Guide Title
Literacy	Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices
Literacy	Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively
Literacy	Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School
Literacy	Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents
Math	Developing Effective Fractions Instruction for Kindergarten Through 8th Grade
Math	Improving Mathematical Problem Solving in Grades 4 Through 8
Math	Teaching Strategies for Improving Algebra Knowledge in Middle and High School Students

Strategy 2: Use data efficiently to identify and group students in need of support

Secondary schools generally have a significant amount of student-level data, including GPAs, state and/or end-of-course assessment scores, course grades, attendance and discipline records. These existing data sources can be used to identify students at risk of negative outcomes. Middle schools seeking to fill skill gaps for their students may find that they need additional, skill-specific data to more accurately screen and group students for intervention. These can be obtained from one of many available commercial assessments or from curriculum-based measures. In high schools, preventing students from dropping out or experiencing other negative outcomes is often the main goal of MTSS. For that purpose, the data already available to the school is likely sufficient.

The appropriate cut points for identifying students for academic Tier 2 or 3 intervention will vary by school according to each school's capacity and context. Schools with large proportions of students in need of support may integrate some supports into core instruction and provide Tier 3 intervention to the bottom 10 percent of students rather than the bottom 20 percent, or school-based norms may be used rather than national or screener-specific norms. An example of how benchmark data can be used to group students and determine and serve intervention needs can be found in Figure C2 in Appendix C.

The problem-solving process guides teams in using data to make instructional decisions, which is essential to an effective and efficient MTSS framework. To assist with this, the Center on MTSS released the Problem-Solving Flipbook, which includes four steps for problem solving: problem identification, problem analysis, plan identification and implementation, and plan evaluation.

Selecting Assessment Tools

Secondary schools often struggle to locate assessment tools that are appropriate for older students. Below are several sources that can help schools and districts select tools that are a good fit for their contexts:

- Connecticut's State Education Resource Center (SERC) published an explanation of secondary universal screening vs. diagnostic vs. progress monitoring assessments and includes many sample assessments for each type in the areas of reading, writing, math, and behavioral/social/emotional (2012).
- A collaboration between the Ohio Department of Education, Center for School-Based Mental Health Programs at Miami University and the Ohio Mental Health Network for School Success, the Mental Health, Social-Emotional, and Behavioral Screening and Evaluation Compendium provides lists of open-access mental health, socioemotional, and behavioral screening tools and a wealth of information about each, including the target population (Noltemeyer et al., 2018).
- The Center on PBIS offers a list of universal behavior screeners, some of which also address social and emotional learning (n.d.).
- Along with guidance on systematic screening, Ci3T offers guidance on and links to the Student Risk Screening Scale – Internalizing and Externalizing (SRSS-IE), an open-access K-12 screening tool for behavioral and socioemotional risk factors (2024). Information about other tools is also available.

Both middle and high schools may find that they need tools to collect mental health, behavioral, and/or social and emotional data. Resources with lists of tools—many open-access—are provided in the

"Selecting Assessment Tools" highlight. For more information on implementing universal screening for non-academic areas, see Best Practices in Universal Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Screening: An Implementation Guide (Romer et al., 2020).

Some data sources are better predictors of student outcomes than others, and selected data measures should be triangulated to best identify students in need of support. A school will need to choose the best indicators based on its student body and the focus of its MTSS approach. Early Warning Systems (EWS) are an evidence-based way for schools, LEAs, and SEAs to systematize the early identification of students at risk of poor outcomes. An EWS can be customized to use the best indicators for a given population and given outcomes.

AIR's College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) examined the research behind some common ninth grade early warning indicators, outlined the evidence base behind each; and suggested decision rules, or thresholds, for identifying students who need intervention (2017). A chart with this information can be found in Appendix D. An example of how the best indicators varied between three Ohio school districts and an explanation of why using multiple indicators is important can be found in the REL Midwest's infographic, *Early Warning Indicators: An Introduction* (2021).

The Center on MTSS at AIR offers a series of recently updated guides on implementing an EWS that provide information specific to districts, middle schools, and high schools (2023). An implementation rubric to help school teams guide and assess their current implementation of an EWS was also published by AIR (2015). For a primer on the steps to implementing an EWS, see REL Mid-Atlantic's infographic-style summary (n.d.) of another (older) key implementation document for reference, A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Early Warning Systems (Frazelle & Nagel, 2015).

Adolescent Reading Assessment

Any school seeking to dig deeply into students' reading skills and address gaps can follow the assessment process outlined by The Reading League in its 2024 Adolescent Reading Intervention Evaluation Guidelines (see Appendix E). A tool such as the free Adolescent Assessment of Literacy (AAL) recently developed by the National Center for Improving Literacy and Florida Center for Reading Research for students in grades 3-12 may be helpful for later stages of assessment. Schools and districts can also consider partnering with Stanford University's Reading & Dyslexia Research Program to gain access to its open-access Rapid Assessment of Online Reading (ROAR) tools, which are validated for K-12.

Strategy 3: Adjust the master schedule to make time for intervention in the school day

Modifying a master schedule is no small task, and there are many considerations for scheduling that relate to MTSS. In secondary schools, the master schedule should ensure that time and space are designated both for intervention and for weekly or biweekly MTSS team meetings to review data and problem-solve (Clark and Dockweiler, 2019). Revisions to a master schedule should also consider the importance of collaborative planning time for teachers: staff need time to analyze data and identify students in need of additional support and the type of support they need (Brundage et al., 2016). These and other "big ideas" are summarized in NCDPI's *Scheduling Big Ideas* document (2022).

The National Center on Response to Intervention's 2011 *RTI Scheduling Processes for Middle Schools* (Prewett et al.) information brief, while dated, still contains a wealth of valuable information for middle schools examining how their current master schedules can facilitate MTSS implementation or be improved, with answers to the following questions:

- How do schools get started in creating or modifying their schedules to allow for RTI implementation?
- How do schools find the time for grade level and/or content area meetings?
- How do schools rearrange class schedules to establish intervention classes?
- How do schools manage the staffing necessary for smaller intervention classes?
- How do schools schedule screening and progress monitoring assessments?

Clark and Dockweiler note that it is not sustainable to expect teachers and students to address intervention needs outside of school hours. Intervention that takes place outside of regular school hours can create barriers to student access, namely transportation. Incorporating intervention into the master schedule in one way or another is "the most systematic way" to ensure that both teachers and students are available for additional support (2019, p. 81).

There are several ways to create time for targeted intervention support within secondary school schedules. One is to create a designated block of time for targeted learning support. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends in its Scheduling Guidance for MTSS that school schedules contain a dedicated intervention and/or enrichment block for all students (2020). This block can go by various names, including Flex time, Power Hour, or What I Need (WIN). A daily block creates the opportunity to use some of the time each week for schoolwide Tier 1 behavior, social and emotional, and/or overall student well-being support, which can otherwise be challenging to incorporate into the school day. Example middle school and high school schedules compiled from a variety of sources can be found in Appendix F.

Having a dedicated block for needs-based intervention and enrichment solves several logistical challenges. Since every student is involved in either intervention or enrichment, the school can take advantage of all classrooms and staff. Support staff can assist with intervention to reduce group sizes, thereby intensifying intervention for students with greater support needs. At the middle school level, careful scheduling can even make it possible to group students with similar intervention needs across grade levels (Marlowe, 2021). In addition, a permanent block that runs through the entire school year allows for flexible grouping as students move into or out of intervention groups according to their progress and needs (Clark and Dockweiler, 2019). Some schools use their dedicated intervention time not just for academic intervention, but also for lessons and activities that support students behaviorally and with social and emotional skills (see Belton-Honea Path High School's MTSS implementation story).

> *The master schedule is the administrative commitment to providing time and space for MTSS team functions.*
>
> Clark and Dockweiler, 2019

MTSS IN PRACTICE

Creating Time for Intervention and Collaborative Planning

Flex Time

Belton Honea-Path High School enrolls just over 1,000 students in South Carolina's small, rural Anderson School District 2. The school used 20 minutes of "empty time" at the beginning of the day during which students ate breakfast and shaved 5 minutes off of each class to create a 45-minute Flex Time block four days per week that is used for intervention and enrichment on three of those days. On Fridays, the time is reserved for social, behavioral, and mental health lessons and activities led by teachers. On Wednesdays, there is no Flex Time—the school day ends early, and instructional staff engage in one hour of extra collaborative planning and data analysis time with their departments. Students without alternative transportation are supervised by non-instructional staff until the buses arrive on their normal schedule.

Belton Honea-Path shares a local career center with three high schools in a neighboring district, all of which bus students to and from the career center for classes. To create time for intervention in the master schedule, Belton Honea-Path's school leadership had many conversations with the leadership of the other high schools, the neighboring district, and the career center and created a task force of community members, parents, teachers, students, and administrators to carefully consider the change and all of its impacts. Together, all four high schools ultimately agreed to implement the Flex Time schedule (though each has made the time its own and may call it by different names). Schedules for the schools can be found in Appendix F. Read Belton Honea-Path's full MTSS implementation story here.

Half-Time

Batesburg-Leesville High School in South Carolina's Lexington County School District Three is a small, rural school with about 560 students. The school divides a 50-minute lunch period into two halves; together, this block is called Half-Time. Students eat lunch during one 25-minute half and receive Tier 2 support as needed during the other half from teachers, who hold office hours on specific days of the week. Batesburg-Lee's High School's schedule can be found in Appendix F. Read Batesburg-Leesville High School's full MTSS implementation story here.

Power Hour

In 2014 the principal of West Port High School in Ocala, Florida described how his school used the transition time involved in holding three separate lunches, plus five extra minutes before and after school, to create a "Power Hour." During this hour-long period, all of the school's 2,000 students and its teachers ate lunch and participated in their choice of activities, from making up work to taking extra online courses, forming AP study sessions, and engaging in cocurricular activities. By the end of the first school year with this Power Hour, the school's course failure rate dropped from 37% to 3.8%, cocurricular engagement rose from 10% of students to 60%, and the number of disciplinary referrals was cut in half. The principal attributed this rearrangement of time to not only higher performance, but also a more positive school climate (Ellspermann, 2014).

Note: A 50-minute period called ALPHA Time has replaced Power Hour in the school's current schedule, but the function is the same. A 29-minute School Improvement Time has also been added to the schedule on Thursdays and Fridays. West Port High School's current schedule can be found in Appendix F.

Appendix G provides an example of how intervention at each tier level could be provided in a middle school. Ways to provide a consistent time for intervention during the school day that do not require a schoolwide intervention block include the following:

- Learning labs held as electives or during lunch for reteaching and support in completing work, retaking assessments, and/or study skills.
- Providing a focused lunch period where students eat while receiving tutoring and support.
- Using homeroom time for academic support and behavioral and/or social emotional instruction.
- Using elective time—some students are scheduled for a double block of core instruction (sometimes called "double dosing") or report for intervention in place of an elective class.
- Partitioning instructional time within long class blocks to include both instruction and intervention. This might consist of direct instruction for all students, a quick formative assessment, and targeted reteaching and support for identified students while the rest of the class completes extension activities.

Leaders seeking to create time for intervention should be aware that some solutions bring unintended consequences. For example, using non-credit-bearing elective courses to provide intervention to high school students can impact those students' ability to earn the credits necessary to graduate on time. This could also keep students from being able to take CTE or dual-enrollment courses that could help them graduate with valuable job skills or postsecondary credits. Changes to the master schedule should consider any potential impacts to transportation and students' ability to participate in extracurriculars and off-campus learning opportunities, as described in Belton Honea-Path's experience in the *MTSS in Practice* highlight on page 16.

Schools also need to keep in mind that the data analysis and data-based decision making required for successful MTSS implementation take time and collaboration between educators—two things often in short supply in many schools. Prioritizing both time for student supports and collaborative planning time for teachers while considering changes to the master schedule can be very challenging. An Education

MTSS IN PRACTICE

Partitioning Instructional Time to Include Intervention

Below is an example of how teachers might set aside time for small group intervention in a 70-minute block.

5 minutes	Bell work on the current learning target as students settle into class
33 minutes	Direct instruction for all students
5 minutes	Formative assessment
7 minutes	Teacher reviews formative assessments and identifies those who mastered learning targets and those who need reteaching, as well as specific concepts for reteaching.
20 minutes	Reteach identified concepts to students not meeting learning targets on the formative assessment. Students who met learning targets work on an interdisciplinary stretch project, collaboratively or independently.

Adapted from Brundage, Hardcastle, Justice, & Jenkins (2016), page 40.

Resource Strategies brief, *Finding Time for Collaborative Planning*, includes many examples of schools that rearranged schedules to provide educators with more collaborative planning time (Rosenberg et al., 2018).

Strategy 4: Create an MTSS team and carefully select intervention teachers

However intervention is scheduled, administrators should take care when selecting the appropriate personnel to teach students with academic needs. For attendance, behavior, and well-being supports, all teachers may play a key role in Tier 1 instruction and some Tier 2 interventions, while the expertise of more specialized staff like school psychologists, counselors, social workers, and behavior specialists may be required for other Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

The most experienced teachers in the school tend to be the most effective at providing intervention, especially in academic subjects. Still, less experienced teachers who are committed to learning about their students and the challenges they face both in and out of school may also be good choices. Clark and Dockweiler write that the best intervention teachers are those who "are willing to get to know their students and differentiate their teaching based on student need" (2019, p. 85). In schools where many students need intervention in reading or math, administrators may also want to identify social studies, science, or elective teachers with the knowledge and skills required to provide intervention in reading and math, even though that is not their assigned content area.

MTSS implementation is not just the responsibility of the teachers who provide intervention. The research on MTSS in secondary schools suggests that the whole school needs to be involved in implementation efforts (Fisher & Frey, 2011). The silos often created by departmentalization in high schools can be countered by building the mindset that every student is the responsibility of every teacher and helping staff take ownership of the continuous improvement process (Marlowe, 2021). Every staff member needs to have a clear vision of the school's MTSS model and be willing to put the necessary time and effort into implementing it (Epler, 2019b).

Building a school culture with a readiness mindset for MTSS begins with school leadership and takes time. Secondary schools interviewed by the RC6 for MTSS implementation stories reported that their school leaders had to help staff understand that MTSS was a permanent change, not just the next new initiative. They taught their staff to take a preventative approach to students' difficulties by identifying and addressing the root cause of challenges rather than just responding to the challenges as they occur. They also faced resistance from some staff and parents in establishing a mastery mindset that allows for multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. This requires that staff transition from a traditional mentality of, "We teach it, students either learn it or don't," to, "We teach it, and if they don't get it, we must make sure that they get it" (see MTSS implementation stories for SandHoke Early College High School, Belton-Honea Path High School, and Batesburg-Leesville High School). These changes require consistent effort and a continuous focus on the school's goals for MTSS.

Each district implementing MTSS needs an administrator, typically the curriculum director or director of student support services, who is in charge of MTSS (Polirstok & Hogan, 2024). This district administrator should be the person charged with MTSS program quality, staff training, data analysis and collaboration with the district Director of Special Services (Eaves et al., 2021, as cited in Polirstok & Hogan, 2024). Within a district, each school implementing MTSS should establish a team to guide and champion MTSS

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MTSS Teams and Staff Roles

At Morehead City Middle School in North Carolina, MTSS is led by a team that includes the principal, assistant principal, school counselor, and a school psychologist shared with other schools. Teachers review and monitor the data for students in their homerooms, while the core MTSS team examines all student data for the school and identifies students in need of support. These students are then discussed with grade level teacher teams during their weekly collaborative meetings and matched with the intervention support they need. For students with behavioral concerns, a student support team meeting including the school social worker, nurse, counselors, administrators, and a part-time behavior specialist may also be convened. (For more information about Morehead City Middle School's MTSS journey, read its MTSS implementation story.)

Clover High School, a large, suburban high school near Charlotte, North Carolina, developed an MTSS Committee to oversee the school's MTSS efforts and create buy-in. This committee is comprised of teachers from each department, the school psychologist, administrators, and a technology innovation coach. The MTSS Committee also provides professional learning on MTSS topics to school staff. Student Support Teams led by school administrators use a case management model, with students divided alphabetically into three groups and assigned to one of the three assistant principals. Each assistant principal maintains a spreadsheet with "watch lists" of students in need of or currently receiving support. The Student Support Teams include each administrator, the two school counselors, the social worker, and others as needed, such as the academic interventionist, school resource officer, or mental health counselors. (For more information about Clover High School, read its MTSS implementation story.)

efforts. Clark and Dockweiler suggest that "each MTSS team member has specific responsibilities that contribute to the team's success, and these unique roles each complement one another" (2019, p. 94). In the case manager model they propose, the team might be composed of an administrator, MTSS case manager(s), MTSS chair (and in some cases, co-chair), school counselors, school psychologist, specialists, and teachers, all of whom divide and share the responsibilities of managing the MTSS process.

In the case manager model, specific educators—often one or more per grade level, depending on the size of the school—represent a designated group of students and are responsible for familiarizing themselves with those students' histories, collecting and presenting data on their needs and progress at meetings, and communicating with parents and the teachers providing intervention. The authors write that this model can be very successful in secondary schools because "it creates a focal point in the storm of fast-moving information for student data, observations, and recommendations to be gathered, discussed, and disseminated" (p. 96). One or more MTSS chairs, usually an administrator or other non-instructional staff member with scheduling flexibility, oversee the overall implementation of MTSS and are in charge of MTSS meetings and communications. (For an example of this model, see Clover High School's MTSS implementation story.)

Instead of the case manager model, schools may choose to form several different teams that have more specific functions in order to divide responsibilities for facilitating MTSS implementation. Different sources suggest organizing these teams in slightly different ways, but there tend to be some

commonalities in each team's purpose and suggested membership, as shown in Table 4. Note that while the table reflects suggested team membership based on several different sources—the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2022), Broward County Schools (2018), Brevard County Schools (2022), and Porter (2022)—the best members for a given school team will vary depending on each school's context and organization.

Table 4: A Starting Place for Suggested School Teaming Structures: Differentiated Teams

Team	School Leadership Team	Data Team/Collaborative Problem-Solving Team	Individual Problem-Solving Team
Membership	• Administrator • Teacher leaders • General ed teachers • Special ed teachers • Content experts • Student support personnel	• Administrator • Department or grade level teachers • As needed: special ed teachers, student support personnel	• General ed teachers • Content experts/coaches • Personnel with specialized knowledge • Special ed teachers as needed
Function	School-wide problem solving and MTSS implementation; examines effectiveness of all tiers	Matches students to supplemental interventions; determines intervention effectiveness	Intensive problem-solving at individual student level: determine, implement, and monitor intervention

For additional guidance on and support for creating an MTSS team, the *Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports Team Guidebook* (2022) explains how different teaming structures may be responsible for the design and delivery of instruction at each tier of MTSS and contains tools to assist schools and districts in developing these teams. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides a *Staffing Needs Assessment* document to help school leaders examine their staffing levels and schedules and identify how staffing levels and assignments may be affecting student outcomes.

Strategy 5: Select evidence-based intervention strategies or programs

The student needs identified using data from universal screening and/or a school's early warning system will set the context for the types of intervention strategies and/or programs a school might employ. A basic list of academic and behavioral strategies used as guidance in Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, North Carolina can be found in Appendix H. The Everyone Graduates Center and City Year produced an *ABC Change Package* document full of guidance and resources for improving student attendance, behavior, and course performance outcomes (2023). Information and resources for evidence-based interventions/programs are provided below by type of student outcome (student well-being, attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.

Student Well-being

The CDC-recommended approaches to supporting the mental health and well-being of both students and teachers that are identified in the Strategy 1 section of this brief include approaches for Tier 2 and 3 interventions. These interventions are identified in Table 5.

Table 5. Interventions to Promote Positive Behavioral and Mental Health of Students

Strategy	Approach (Example Tier Alignment)
Promote Mindfulness	• Offer small group mindfulness activities (Tiers 1-3)
Promote Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning	• Offer targeted education focused on teaching social skills and emotional development (Tiers 2-3)
Provide Psychosocial Skills Training and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions	• Promote acceptance and commitment to change (Tiers 1-3) • Provide cognitive behavioral interventions (Tiers 1-3) • Engage students in coping skills training groups (Tiers 1-3)
Support Staff Well-Being	• Provide therapeutic resources (Tiers 1-3)

Adapted from Division of Adolescent and School Health, 2024.

Other sources for Tier 2 and 3 student well-being interventions are listed below:

- The University of Colorado Boulder's Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development project provides "a registry of evidence-based interventions that are effective in reducing antisocial behavior and promoting a healthy course of youth development and adult maturity" (2025). Users can sort programs by outcome type, target population, and program setting, and programs that demonstrate the efficacy needed for large-scale adoption are identified.
- The Texas Education Agency's Texas School Mental Health site offers general intervention suggestions by tier and a School Mental Health Toolkit with resources for schools (2025b, 2025a).
- The REL Appalachia created a Menu of Trauma-Informed Programs for Schools to help educators support students who have experienced trauma. The menu tables organize interventions by tier and include target grade levels and subgroups and other valuable information (2020).

Some interventions for the social and relational aspects of student well-being are also interventions for behavior. Tier 2 supports in these areas can help students develop greater pro-social behaviors and positive academic behavior skills. For example, Milwaukee Public Schools created a full, open-access SAIG (Social, Academic, Instructional Groups) curriculum that includes lessons with all of the resources and activities needed for pre-K through 12th grade (2024). Topics for use with secondary students include academic behavior skills (such as asking for help, refocusing after distraction, and study skills); emotional management skills (such as cooling off when angry); and lessons on attendance and self-care. The curriculum also includes progress monitoring resources. A New York State Education Department presentation for SAIG facilitators provides additional information on implementing SAIG (2023).

Schools need to keep in mind specific requirements for the use of funds when identifying appropriate interventions, as some funding sources require the use of interventions that demonstrate promising, moderate, or strong evidence that they improve outcomes. The tiers of evidence were determined by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) and are summarized in a 2-page document from REL Midwest (2019).

Attendance

Supporting students who experience chronic absences requires an understanding of the root cause(s) of their attendance difficulties. According to Attendance Works (2022), reasons for frequent absences can be organized into the following categories:

- Barriers (e.g., transportation, illness, family responsibilities);
- Aversion (e.g., academic/behavioral struggles, anxiety, social/peer challenges);
- Disengagement (e.g., boredom, lack of meaningful relationships with adults in the school); and
- Misconceptions (e.g., underestimating the impact of absences on learning, not viewing suspensions as an absence).

Attendance Works also offers more information on identifying root causes (2018) and a worksheet (2019) to help educators in understanding these causes. Once root causes are identified, schools can work to address students' identified needs via increased family engagement and communication, assistance from school counselors and/or social workers, and other efforts to increase student engagement.

Evidence-based interventions for chronic absenteeism include mentoring programs, behavioral interventions and "nudges" (like text messages or postcards sent to families of absent students), and Check & Connect (REL Southwest, n.d.). Check & Connect is an intervention commonly used in secondary schools in which trained mentors build relationships with a caseload of students and families (2020). Mentors monitor student performance and implement individualized interventions based on the needs of each student. Studies have shown that it is effective at increasing attendance and high school completion, improving academic performance, reducing disciplinary infractions, and reducing student mobility and high school dropout rates.

Examples of successful local initiatives to address chronic absenteeism can be found nationally. Two are described below:

- A Connecticut initiative called the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) enlisted home visitors across 15 districts to engage with families and support regular school attendance and attendance in learning recovery programs for their students. Attendance rates for grade 6-12 students in the program increased by an average of 16 percentage points nine months after the initial home visit (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2023).
- Plano Independent School District in Plano, Texas implemented tiered supports for attendance and established an attendance review board for students who were going to be referred to truancy court for large numbers of unexcused absences. District staff hold hearings to understand what is causing the student's absences and connect families with interventions and resources. The attendance review boards have significantly decreased the number of students the district refers to truancy court, re-engaging students in their schools and preventing them from entering the juvenile justice system (Will, 2024).

Behavior

As it does with Tier 1 supports, the Center for PBIS provides a helpful resource that organizes the main principles of effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 support for social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) skills using the four categories of *prevent*, *teach*, *respond*, and *decide*. More details on what each of these supports is

and how to implement them can be found in the Center's 2021 guide, *Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in the Classroom* (Simonsen et al.). Table 6 shows how these supports are categorized within Tiers 2 and 3 of MTSS. As previously discussed, establishing a positive learning environment and clear expectations for behavior can help prevent behavior problems and reduce the number of students who require Tier 2 or 3 interventions.

Table 6. Prevent, Teach, Respond, and Decide within a MTSS Framework: Tiers 2 and 3

	Prevent	Teach	Respond
Tier 2 (Targeted)	• Increase structure • Re-teach routines • Increase connections • Target prompts & supervision • Implement targeted antecedent manipulations	• Explicitly teach targeted SEB skills • Connect targeted instruction to tier 1 norms or expectations	• Increase specific positive & supportive feedback • Enhance continuum of recognition strategies • Enhance strategies to decrease SEB challenges
Tier 3 (Individualized)	• Individualize physical design • Individualize routines • Intensify connections • Intensify & individualize prompts for SEB skills • Implement individualized antecedent manipulations	• Individualize & intensify explicit instruction in SEB skills • Individualize & intensify academic instruction • Align individualized SEB skills with classroom and school norms/expectations	• Intensify and individualize specific positive and supportive feedback • Intensify and individualize recognition strategies • Enhance strategies to decrease future SEB challenges

Adapted from Simonsen et al., 2021, p. 5

Several sources for assistance with Tier 2 and 3 behavior intervention include the following:

- The National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) offers many resources for educators, including sample lessons and strategies and a self-paced course called Behavior Support for Intensive Intervention (NCII, n.d.-a; n.d.-b).
- The Tennessee Multi-Tiered System of Supports Center (now Tennessee Tiered Supports Center) created Tier II (2021) and Tier III (2020) intervention binder documents for behavior that contain an array of data and intervention resources for supporting students with behavior needs.
- Missouri School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (MO SW-PBS) created a website that contains information, document templates, and intervention strategies for behavior supports for Tier 2 and Tier 3. Workbooks provide in-depth guidance for implementing support at each tier (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2016-a; 2016-b).

Academic Achievement

Districts and schools may wish to begin or review their efforts to identify and provide appropriate academic interventions to their high school students by reading the REL Southeast's *Self-Study Guide for Implementing High School Academic Interventions* (Smith et al., 2016a). This guide walks educators through the process of planning and implementing interventions. A similar document, the *Self-Study*

Guide for Implementing Literacy Interventions in Grades 3-8, is available for the middle school grade range (Smith et al., 2016b).

A 2022 Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network webinar identifies ways older students with reading difficulties tend to struggle, which are summarized in Table 7 (Diamond, 2022). The webinar also provides recommendations for Tier 2 and 3 reading intervention programs, screening tools, and scheduling time for intervention.

Table 7. Common Reading Challenges for Upper Elementary and Older Students

Word Recognition	Language Comprehension
• May demonstrate multisyllabic word reading difficulties • May have holes in single syllable word decoding skills • Possible phonological difficulties • Insufficient automaticity • Lack of fluency	• Oral language limitations • English language development needs • Lacking general and domain-specific academic vocabulary • Limited understanding of syntax • Difficulty with inferential reasoning • Limited background and world knowledge

Adapted from Diamond, L. (2022).

The Reading League's 2024 *Adolescent Reading Intervention Evaluation Guidelines (Grades 4-12)* provides a wealth of information on what schools and districts should look for—and be wary of—when examining possible reading interventions for their students. Intervention practices that are aligned with the science of reading (also known as evidence-based reading instruction) and "red flag practices" that are not aligned are identified for the areas of word recognition, fluency, language comprehension and reading comprehension, background and world knowledge, vocabulary, knowledge of language structures, literacy knowledge, and writing.

The Center on Instruction recommends that the focus of reading instruction and intervention for adolescents be on advanced word study (decoding multisyllabic words), fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation (Boardman et al., 2008). The REL Southeast's recommendations are similar:

- Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.
- Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.
- Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.
- Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.

Further discussion and examples of how teachers can enact these recommendations can be found in an Improving Adolescent Literacy infographic created by the REL Southeast.

In mathematics, evidence-based recommendations from the What Works Clearinghouse include:

- Interventions in grades 4 through 8 should focus intensely on rational numbers.
- Interventions should include instruction on solving word problems that is based on common underlying structures.
- Intervention materials should include opportunities for students to work with visual representations of mathematical ideas.

- Interventions at all grade levels should devote about 10 minutes in each session to building fluent retrieval of basic arithmetic facts.
- Include motivational strategies in tier 2 and tier 3 interventions.

To support educators in providing and intensifying literacy and math intervention, NCII created a series of literacy sample lessons and mathematics sample lessons, each with additional guides, activities, and instructional videos (n.d.-c; n.d.-d). While the concepts covered by these lessons are generally taught in elementary school, the NCII resources can prove invaluable for secondary teachers who are seeking to fill students' skill gaps but may not have experience teaching foundational reading and math skills. NCII's Taxonomy of Intervention (n.d.-e) resources and the Center on Instruction's *Intensive Interventions for Students Struggling in Reading and Mathematics: A Practice Guide* can also help teachers intensify instruction and intervention (Vaughn et al., 2012).

The What Works Clearinghouse has developed practice guides that discuss best practices in literacy and math intervention. The Center on Instruction also offers practice briefs for educators. Those resources that pertain to secondary students can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. Practice guides for effective, evidence-based literacy and math intervention

Topic	Title
Literacy	Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices
Literacy	Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9
Literacy	Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Practice Guide
Math	Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for Elementary and Middle Schools

There are several helpful sources of information about commercial intervention programs and specific intervention strategies described in Table 9 on the next page. For example, Evidence for ESSA identifies the ESSA evidence tier of an intervention, and the information provided on the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) website can be used to determine a tier of evidence using guidance provided by the WWC (AIR, n.d.). Both allow users to filter interventions by grade band, subject, target student group, and more.

The information found on any one of these four key sites—let alone several of them combined—is a lot for school staff to wade through. These resources might provide the greatest benefit to schools if state- and/or district-level leaders review the information and data available and provide more targeted information to school leaders, or even a curated list of suggested interventions. For more general academic and behavioral needs and interventions, see Appendix E.

Table 9: Key resources for information about effective intervention programs

Evidence for ESSA	https://www.evidenceforessa.org/	Search for and sort programs by topic, grade band, and a variety of other characteristics.
What Works Clearinghouse	https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/	Sorts programs by categories that include academics, behavior, English Learners, and Path to Graduation.
National Center on Intensive Intervention	https://intensiveintervention.org/tools-charts/overview	Provides tool charts for academic and behavior screening, progress monitoring, and intervention. Sort by subject and grade band.
Results First™ Clearinghouse Database	https://evidence2impact.psu.edu/results-first-resources/clearing-house-database/	A filterable and searchable database that allows users to review information on a program's effectiveness, if it has been rigorously evaluated.

Strategy 6: Provide ongoing professional development and supports for MTSS

In schools just starting out with MTSS, professional development on what it is and how to implement it is the first step in building staff capacity (Brundage, Hardcastle, Justice, and Jenkins, 2016). Most states have developed their own version of an MTSS framework and may offer professional learning opportunities either through the state education agency or in coordination with state or regional technical assistance centers. In order to understand and implement MTSS well, staff need detailed, ongoing professional development covering each step in the MTSS process, including strategies for instruction and intervention (Epler, 2019b; Daye, 2019). Examples of what MTSS looks like in actual schools can also be helpful for educators. Schools can provide ongoing professional development via professional learning communities, with a study focus on Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, second language learning, specific learning disabilities, and MTSS as a whole (Castillo et al., 2022; 2024).

While state frameworks vary somewhat in their language and how they organize key components of MTSS, they have more similarities than they do differences, and state-specific MTSS resources can often be useful across state lines. Rhode Island's free online BRIDGE-RI courses and Colorado's COMTSS Online Academy are possible starting places for school staff to begin to build or enhance their knowledge of MTSS implementation (n.d.; 2024a). The courses cover many topics across the three tiers of MTSS. Massachusetts' Multi-Tiered System of Support Mobilization Guide and Tools for Schools resource repository can assist schools and districts in using implementation science to plan for and roll out MTSS implementation.

In districts where specific challenges are widespread—for example, high suspension rates—professional learning on the strategies the district will use to address those challenges might cover the specific roles

> *Because RtI is an ongoing process, professional development about it must be ongoing.*
>
> Epler, 2019b

of school staff and each strategy the district plans to employ. The large, urban Pasadena In dependent School District in Houston, TX shared in a 2019 presentation how it successfully used the MTSS framework to reduce discipline referrals, suspensions, and referrals to the local juvenile probation department between 2012-13 and 2017-18 (Melvin & Rodriguez, 2019). Data from the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department show that by 2023, the number of referrals the school district made had decreased by 52% compared to 2013. The schedule used by the district to train staff in student well-being and behavior supports and the district's MTSS framework can be found in Table H1 in Appendix H.

Epler conducted a case study of middle and high school RTI implementation and compiled a monthly professional development calendar used by the middle school to introduce RTI and to support teachers during the first year of implementation (2019b). A modified version of that calendar and a comparison of the two schools' implementation approaches can be found in Appendix H and Appendix I.

Most secondary teachers are knowledgeable about their assigned content but may not have much training in specific evidence-based teaching practices. Beyond professional development on MTSS itself, teachers and any other staff members providing academic instruction or intervention may benefit from training to support them in improving overall instruction, including literacy strategies that support students with below-grade-level reading skills across content areas. The Kansas Math Project offers a free, self-paced online training course for pre-K through 12th grade teachers covering topics that include systematic and explicit instruction, using data to drive instruction and intervention, and building students' language, understanding, fluency, and problem-solving skills (Kansas Technical Assistance Network, 2025). Training on social and emotional learning is also important if that is an important focus of MTSS in a school (Daye, 2019). Daye notes that high school teachers often don't recognize their role in teaching students useful SEL skills, even though the foundation of SEL support for all students rests in Tier 1.

Strategy 7: Develop or identify structures and resources to support MTSS

Clearly outlining a given school or district's approach to MTSS is important for ensuring that MTSS is implemented consistently across classrooms and schools. Documenting the framework, problem-solving protocol, available interventions and assessments, and decision rules also supports educators in understanding MTSS and implementing it with fidelity.

Syosset Central School District in New York provides an excellent example of a district MTSS plan that provides well-organized and clear guidance for these structures and practices (2021). The content is also organized by grade band to acknowledge implementation differences at each level and facilitate appropriate use.

A case study of MTSS implementation in a middle school describes an array of MTSS structures, resources, and procedures created by the district MTSS team and distributed in an online resource folder (Marlowe, 2021). As capacity to implement MTSS grows, these types of tools can help support staff and ensure consistency of implementation between teachers and grade levels. The tools used in this district included:

- **MTSS protocol documents**: Templates, tier plans, and progress monitoring guidelines.
- **Literacy intervention protocols**: Guidelines for frequency, group size, curriculum, instructional methods, and benchmark scoring.
- **Data decision guide**: Helped teachers understand their student and classroom data and decide on appropriate intervention.
- **Schoolwide data spreadsheet**: Common data management tool for benchmark and progress monitoring data.
- **Professional development**: Courses covering effective practices (generally), Tier 2 and Tier 3 literacy intervention, instructional routines, progress monitoring, benchmarking, and more.
- **On-demand training resources**: Videos and information on implementing core and intervention instruction and understanding assessments.

Developing so many resources in-house may be a lofty goal for smaller or lower-resourced districts. These districts could start by reviewing the resources available from their state and the MTSS Center and reaching out for assistance if necessary. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction maintains a public repository of MTSS resources and supports that may be helpful, and other state MTSS implementation guides are available online. As described previously, Northeast Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (NEPBIS) manages a PBIS Exemplar Repository containing documents developed by schools, including behavior management processes and flowcharts, student orientation slides, and documents outlining school expectations (2024). The repository can be sorted by school level.

While the terms used in MTSS frameworks may vary somewhat across sources, the key components of overall MTSS implementation are generally similar. Pulling resources from a variety of sources can help fill in gaps and create a better overall understanding of implementation requirements and methods.

Summary

This brief provides a wealth of high-quality resources and some examples of strategies that school and district leaders can add to their toolkits for implementing MTSS in secondary schools. Since no two schools are alike, each school's approach to MTSS will vary. The appendices that follow and sources cited throughout the brief contain an array of additional resources that may prove useful as MTSS leaders work to address the MTSS implementation challenges most relevant to their context using the strategies discussed in this brief.

Appendices

The following appendices contain resources to help secondary schools with the "nuts and bolts" of implementing MTSS. They draw on a variety of sources, from research to educator practice, and are closely focused on MTSS implementation in secondary schools. Their contents are as follows:

Appendix A: MTSS in Alternative Schools and Programs. A description of how MTSS applies to the unique context of alternative education and crosswalk of exemplary practices and MTSS components.

Appendix B: Example of Secondary Behavior Management. Example behavior response flowchart showing how a school might respond to different types of student behaviors.

Appendix C: Using Screening and Benchmark Data. General guidance on using data to identify different levels of student need.

Appendix D: Early Warning Indicators and Decision Rules. A list and description of five common ninth grade indicators and suggested thresholds for identifying students who are at risk.

Appendix E: Identifying Reading Intervention Needs for Students in Grades 4-12. A flowchart to assist schools in identifying specific needs for support for older students.

Appendix F: Sample Schedules with Intervention/Enrichment Blocks. Six sets of example schedules demonstrate how middle and high schools fit intervention into the school day.

Appendix G: Intervention Delivery. A table and brief accompanying description demonstrate how reading intervention can be delivered and staffed for each of the three tiers of MTSS.

Appendix H: Example Interventions for Each Tier of MTSS. Tables with ideas for academic and behavioral intervention and support strategies that are divided into each tier of MTSS.

Appendix I: Professional Development for MTSS. A monthly professional development calendar used to introduce RTI and build staff capacity in a middle school.

Appendix J: Comparison of RTI Models in Middle and High School. A comparison of RTI models in a middle and high school.

Appendix A: MTSS in Alternative Schools and Programs

Alternative schooling is designed to provide unique educational opportunities that may include remediation, acceleration, or other modifications for students who are at risk of not graduating from a traditional school program. The National Dropout Prevention Center describes several types and models of alternative schools (2022). Alternative education programs are sometimes viewed as a Tier 3 support for students. However, alternative programs and schools should consider organizing all of the resources and supports for their students within the MTSS framework as well. This includes both the design and implementation of core practices and systems, as well as an intervention system based on the needs of the student body. The National Alternative Education Association's Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education provide examples of what MTSS can look like in an alternative program or school (n.d.).

States are beginning to more fully frame out the various types of programming required to meet student needs within alternative education programs and schools. The Kentucky Department of Education's *Guidance for Alternative Education Programs* (2023) outlines a variety of program types, including an alternative school with virtual options, programs focused on behavioral, social and academic goals; and alternative education programs for English learners who have experienced interrupted schooling, students with persistent behavioral concerns, students needing blended learning opportunities, students who are pregnant and parenting teens.

For alternative programs/schools that are behavior focused, the following resources from the Center on PBIS may be helpful:

- *The Use of Level Systems in Alternative Settings: Fidelity, Design, and Alignment with PBIS*
  This Practice Brief by the Center on PBIS provides recommendations for aligning level systems with PBIS (Wood & Scheuermann, 2021).
- *PBIS Adaptations in Alternative Programs*
  This brief describes how PBIS can be modified to fit the unique needs of alternative programs (Meyer et al., 2023).

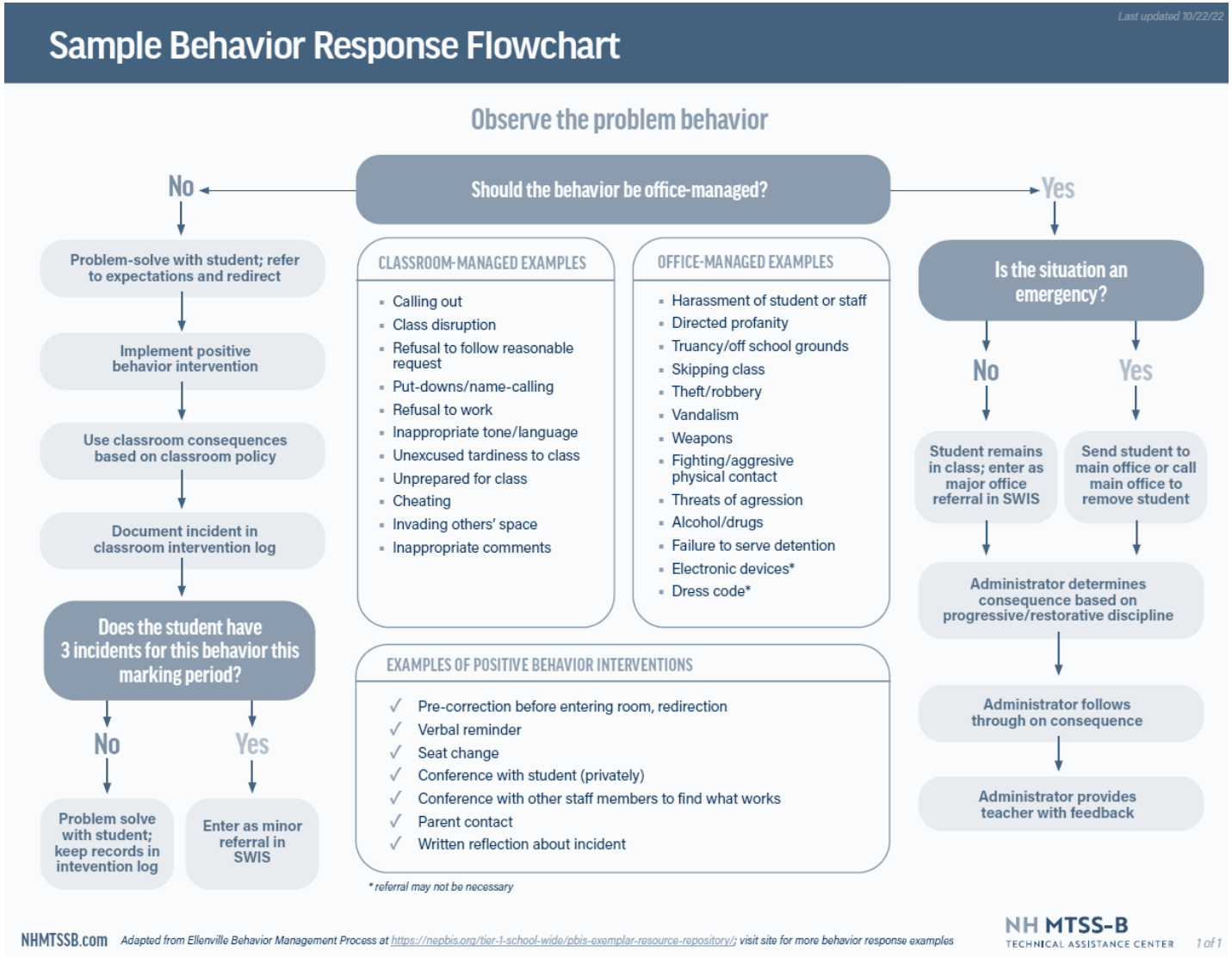
In 2023 SERVE collaborated with NCDPI to crosswalk the Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education with the six "critical components" of North Carolina's MTSS framework. Table A shows how the exemplary practices fit into those areas of the state's MTSS framework. While other state MTSS frameworks may vary, they tend to have similar main components. This crosswalk can serve as a starting point for alternative education programs seeking to examine how their practices align to their own state's MTSS framework.

Table A: Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education and NC MTSS Crosswalk

NC MTSS Critical Components	Exemplary Practices (Alternative Education)
Leadership	EP 1.0 Vision and Mission EP 2.0 Leadership EP 3.0 Climate and Culture EP 4.0 Staffing and Professional Development EP 5.0 Curriculum and Instruction

NC MTSS Critical Components	Exemplary Practices (Alternative Education)
Leadership	EP 6.0 Student Assessment EP 7.0 Transition Planning & Support EP 8.0 Family Engagement EP 9.0 Collaboration EP 10.0 Program Evaluation EP 11.0 School Counseling EP 12.0 School Social Work EP 13.0 Digital and Virtual EP 14.0 Policies and Procedures EP 15.0 Personalized Education Plan
Building Capacity/Implementation Infrastructure	EP 3.0 Climate and Culture EP 4.0 Staffing and Professional Development EP 14.0 Policies and Procedures EP 15.0 Personalized Education Plan
Communication and Collaboration	EP 4.0 Staffing and Professional Development EP 8.0 Family Engagement EP 9.0 Collaboration EP 11.0 School Counseling EP 12.0 School Social Work EP 14.0 Policies and Procedures EP 15.0 Personalized Education Plan
Problem Solving Process	EP 4.0 Staffing and Professional Development EP 6.0 Student Assessment EP 7.0 Transition Planning and Support EP 14.0 Policies and Procedures EP 15.0 Personalized Education Plan
Data/Evaluation	EP 4.0 Staffing and Professional Development EP 6.0 Student Assessment EP 10.0 Program Evaluation EP 13.0 Digital/Virtual Learning EP 14.0 Policies and Procedures EP 15.0 Personalized Education Plan
Multiple Tiers of Instruction & Intervention Model	EP 3.0 Climate and Culture EP 4.0 Staffing and Professional Development EP 5.0 Curriculum and Instruction EP 11.0 School Counseling EP 12.0 School Social Work EP 13.0 Digital/Virtual Learning EP 14.0 Policies and Procedures EP 15.0 Personalized Education Plan

Appendix B: Example of Secondary Behavior Management (link to source)



Appendix C: Using Screening and Benchmark Data

Decision rules for determining which students should receive Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 instruction and intervention vary across different sources. Some sources use the bottom 10th percentile as the cutoff for Tier 3 intervention and say that Tier 2 intervention should be provided to students between the 10th and 25th percentiles (Clark & Dockweiler, 2019). The exact cutoff scores used may depend on a given school's context, but should be explicitly defined to guide decision-making. Callendar provides an example of how a high school might describe its decision rules and use benchmark data to identify and target students' needs for intervention or enrichment (2014, p. 66).

Figure C1: General guidance on decision rules for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3

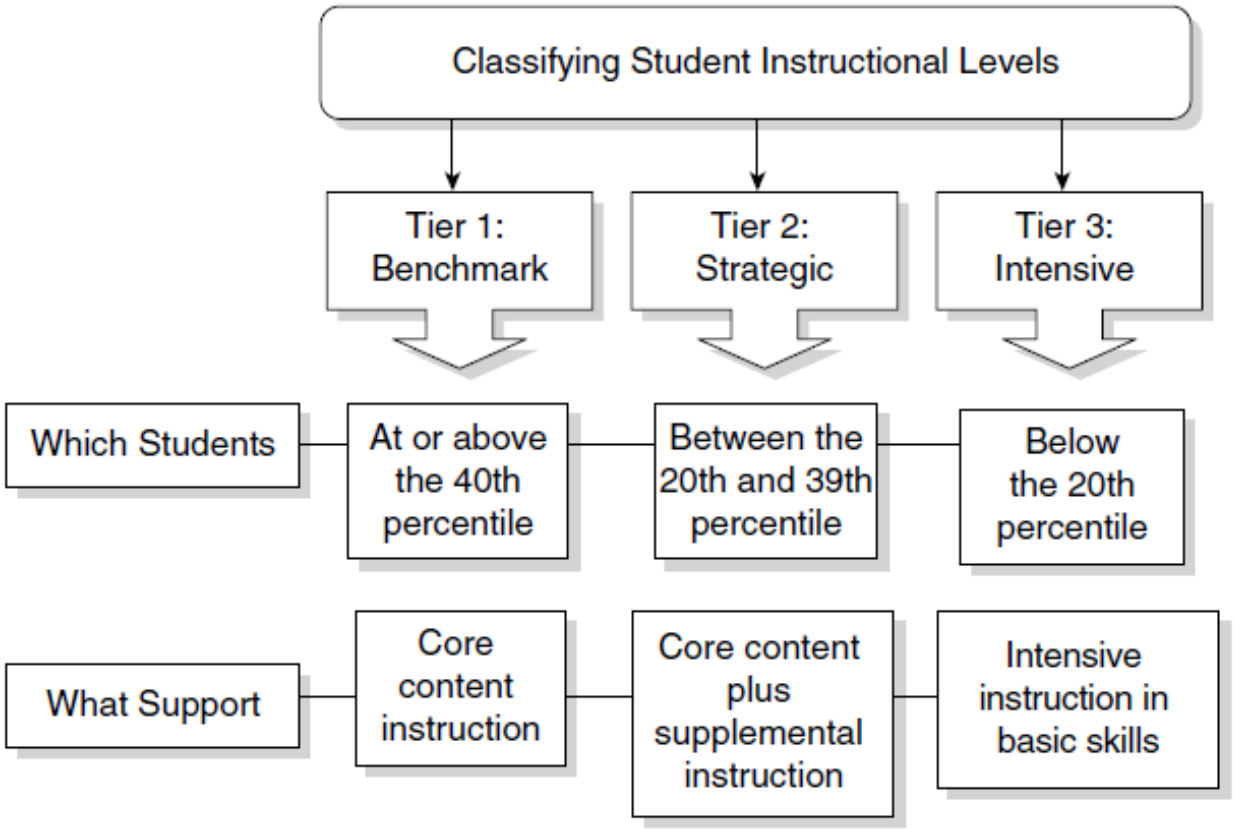


Figure C2: Sample use of benchmark data

Example High School Reading Placement Pathway Plan

Screening	**New students and those below 40th percentile on MAP receive AIMSweb (R-CBM & Maze)**					
Grade-Level Assessments	**Tier III INTENSIVE Below 10th Percentile on AIMS**	**Tier II STRATEGIC 11th–30th Percentile on the R-CBM and/or Maze**			**Tier I BENCHMARK 31st–70th Percentile 41% - 70%ile**	**Tier I ADVANCED 71st–99th Percentile**
Diagnosis: Criteria	At or Below 10th percentile on R-CBM and or Maze	Strategic level reading skills (11th–30th percentile) Fusion placement test			MAP, R-CBM, Maze and/or Easy CBM Fast & Right	MAP, R-CBM, Maze and/or Easy CBM Demonstrates the need for additional challenge and advancement Fast & Right
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Focus	**COMPREHENSIVE**	**PHONICS**	**FLUENCY**	**COMPREHENSION**	**CORE CONTENT**	**ENRICHMENTS**
Focus Skills	Basic reading skills: Letter/sound correspondence, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension	Targeted decoding skills	Automatically decoding words, reading high frequency, and phrasing sentences	Comprehension Skills and/or Strategies	Core coursework	Advanced Content Focus Comprehension Strategies Writing
Intervention	*Core Replacement:* **CORRECTIVE READING** Decoding A, B1, B2, or C Comprehension A, B, or C or **REACH HIGHER**	Fusion Reading or Read to Achieve (Taught by a regular LA teacher) Followed by Read to Achieve (must complete Fusion Reading first)			Regular Core Class	Honors Classes AP Classes Dual Credit Classes
Length of Time	2 Class Periods/day (In place of regular LAs)	1 Class Period/day in addition to a Regular LA. class Semester/Year			Semester/Year	Semester/Year
Verify Progress	Program assessments AIMS	Program assessments AIMS R-CBM and/or Maze			*Performance in Core coursework *Assessments *Grades	*Classroom performance *Rubrics on projects *Grades
Identify Method to Verify Effectiveness	*Percentage of students making adequate progress on AIMS in each support category					

Appendix D: Early Warning Indicators and Decision Rules

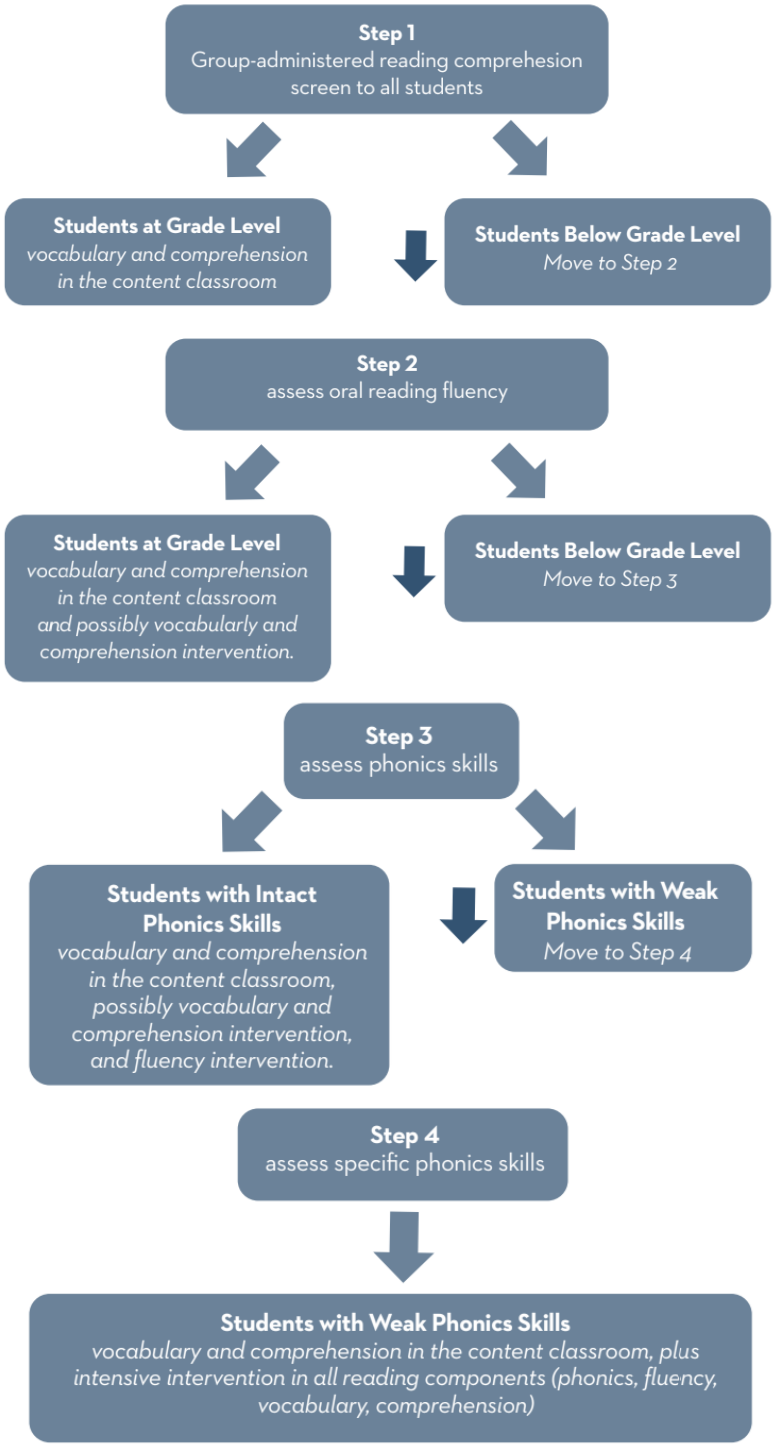
In 2017 the College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research examined the evidence base behind five common early warning indicators used to identify students in need of intervention. These indicators are "highly predictive of student outcomes, such as on-time high school graduation" (p. 2). Thresholds for identifying students as "at risk" are also included below.

Table D1: Frequently Used Ninth-Grade Indicators and Thresholds

Ninth-Grade Indicators	Description	Threshold	Evidence-Based Rating
First 20- or 30-day attendance (Allensworth & Easton, 2007)	The number of absences within the first 20 or 30 days of each grading period is the biggest risk factor for failing ninth grade (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). This indicator is particularly important because the data are available early in the school year, allowing for timely intervention.	Missed 10% or more of instructional time	PROMISING EVIDENCE
Attendance (Allensworth & Easton, 2005, 2007)	Attendance is a frequently used indicator because attendance during the first year of high school is directly related to high school completion rates (Heppen & Therriault, 2008).	Missed 10% or more of instructional time	STRONG EVIDENCE
Course failures (Allensworth & Easton, 2007)	This indicator applies to failures in any subject, not just the core content areas (English, mathematics, science, or social studies). This indicator is strongly related to the next indicator, grade point average (GPA).	Failed one or more courses per grading period	STRONG EVIDENCE
GPA (Allensworth & Easton, 2007)	If using a 4.00 GPA (rather than a weighted average) as the norm, students are considered off-track if they have a GPA of 2.00 or lower following each grading period and at the end of the year. This calculation includes all credit-bearing classes.	2.00 (less than half the maximum attainable GPA)	STRONG EVIDENCE
On-track indicator (Allensworth & Easton, 2007)	This composite indicator is the minimal expected level of student performance (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). To be considered on-track, a student must have accumulated enough credits for promotion to the next grade and have no more than one failing grade in a core subject (English, mathematics, science, or social studies) by the end of the school year.	Either two or more core course failures or a failure to earn enough credits to be promoted to the next grade	STRONG EVIDENCE

Appendix E: Identifying Reading Intervention Needs for Students in Grades 4–12

In new *Adolescent Reading Intervention Evaluation Guidelines* released in October 2024, The Reading League outlines a process for identifying specific reading intervention needs for older students on pp. 10-11. The Step 1 screening can use existing data from standardized state or other assessments.



Appendix F: Sample Schedules with Intervention/Enrichment Blocks

As described in the brief above, Belton-Honea Path High School in South Carolina undertook an immense effort involving other local high schools and the community in order to rearrange its master schedule and create a block of time for intervention. Belton-Honea Path could not do this alone because its school schedule impacted students' ability to attend classes at the career center shared by four high schools, three of which are in a different district entirely. Together, the schools and the career center made changes and each high school adopted a 40- to 45-minute intervention period. The schedules used by the four schools follow.

Sample F1: High school block schedules with a 40- to 45-minute intervention period four days per week and early release on the fifth day for teacher planning

Three lunches:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: Flex/WIN	
1st Block	8:00 – 9:25
2nd Block	9:30 – 10:55
Flex	11:00 – 11:45
3rd Block & Lunch	11:50 – 1:45
1st Lunch	11:55 – 12:25
2nd Lunch	12:30 – 1:00
3rd Lunch	1:05 – 1:35
4th Block	1:50 – 3:15

Wednesdays: Early Release	
1st Block	8:00 – 9:25
2nd Block	9:30 – 10:55
3rd Block & Lunch	11:00 – 1:00
1st Lunch	11:05 – 11:35
2nd Lunch	11:40 – 12:10
3rd Lunch	12:15 – 12:45
4th Block	1:05 – 2:30

Adapted from Belton-Honea Path High School's Bell Schedule, Palmetto High School's Bell Schedule 2022-23, and Powdersville High School's 2022-23 Bell Schedule

Two lunches:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: Flex	
1st Block	8:10 – 9:35
2nd Block	9:40 – 11:05
Flex	11:10 – 11:50
3rd Block & Lunch	11:55 – 1:55
1st Lunch	11:55 – 12:25
2nd Lunch	12:40 – 1:10
4th Block	2:00 – 3:25

Wednesdays: Early Release	
1st Block	8:10 – 9:35
2nd Block	9:40 – 11:05
3rd Block & Lunch	11:10 – 1:05
1st Lunch	11:05 – 11:35
2nd Lunch	11:50 – 12:20
4th Block	1:10 – 2:35

Adapted from Wren High School's Bell Schedule

As described in the brief above, Batesburg-Leesville High School in South Carolina developed a 50-minute Half-Time lunch and intervention period. The school's 50-minute lunch period is divided into two 25-minute halves four days per week, with one half for lunch and the other for support. On the fifth day the school runs a two-lunch schedule.

Sample F2: High school block schedule with a 50-minute split lunch and intervention period

One Lunch Schedule with Half-Time	
1st Block	8:10 – 9:38
2nd Block	9:45 – 11:13
Lunch/Half-Time	11:13 – 12:03
3rd Block	12:08 – 1:35
4th Block	1:42 – 3:10

Two Lunch Schedule	
1st Block	8:10 – 9:38
2nd Block	9:45 – 11:13
3rd Block	11:20 – 1:35
1st Lunch	11:20 – 12:00
2nd Lunch	12:10 – 12:50
4th Block	1:42 – 3:10

Adapted from Batesburg-Leesville High School's 2023-24 Class Times

As described in the brief above, West Port High School in Ocala, Florida saw impressive improvements in student achievement and engagement after implementing a dedicated period for intervention and enrichment. The school's current schedule is below (West Port High School, 2022). Little information is publicly available about the new Student Improvement Time (SIT) period, but it appears to be a time designated for school events and extracurricular lessons—an example is an activity on finding money for college.

Sample F3: Hybrid high school schedule with six classes and 50-minute lunch and intervention period

Monday – Wednesday

1st Period	9:12 – 10:05
2nd Period	10:09 – 11:02
3rd Period	11:06 – 11:59
ALPHA Time	11:59 – 12:49
4th Period	12:53 – 1:46
5th Period	1:50 – 2:43
6th Period	2:47 – 3:40

Thursdays and Fridays use block scheduling, with periods 1, 3, and 5 on Thursdays and 2, 4, and 6 on Fridays.

1st/2nd Period	9:12 – 10:51
3rd/4th Period	10:55 – 12:34
ALPHA Time	12:34 – 1:24
SIT Time	1:28 – 1:57
5th/6th Period	2:01 – 3:40

Early Release

1st Period	9:12 – 9:48
2nd Period	9:52 – 10:28
3rd Period	10:32 – 11:08
4th Period	11:12 – 11:48
5th Period	11:52 – 12:28
6th Period	12:32 – 1:08
Lunch	1:08 – 1:40

The following two sample schedules (F4 and F5) and modified descriptions come from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's *MTSS Resource: Sample Student Schedules*.

Sample F4: Block schedule with four lunches and WIN block

In this sample, WIN Block occurs every day for 31 minutes. Courses had to be decreased from 86 minutes to 78 minutes to ensure the time for WIN Block. C Block has a rotating lunch, so some students may begin C block, break for lunch, and complete C block after lunch.

A Block	7:27-8:45 (78 minutes)
WIN Block	8:49-9:20 (31 minutes)
B Block	9:24 – 10:42 (78 minutes)
C Block	10:46-12:28 (78 minutes + 24 min for rotating lunch)
D Block	12:32 - 1:50 pm (78 minutes)

Sample F5: Middle school (grades 5-8) schedule with recess and WIN block

In this model, WIN Block is 40 minutes in grades 5-6 and increases to 50 minutes in grades 7-8. Given that this is a traditional schedule with seven (7) periods a day, classes were reduced from 58 minutes to 50 minutes each. Integrated arts (IA) courses can be scheduled and switched each quarter or semester to offer students multiple experiences.

Period	Length	Time	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Period 1	50 min	8:08 – 8:58	CORE	CORE	IA	CORE
Period 2	50 min	8:58 – 9:48	CORE	CORE	CORE	IA
Period 3	50 min	9:48 – 10:38	IA	IA	CORE	CORE
Period 4/Lunch	77 min	10:38 – 11:55	Recess (10:38 – 10:50)	Recess (10:38 – 10:50)	WIN (50 min) (10:38 – 11:28)	WIN (50 min) (10:38 – 11:28)
			Lunch (10:50 – 11:15)	Lunch (10:50 – 11:15)		
			Win (40 min) (11:15 – 11:55)	Win (40 min) (11:15 – 11:55)	Lunch (11:28 – 11:55)	Lunch (11:28 – 11:55)
Period 5	50 min	11:55 – 12:45	CORE	CORE	IA	IA
Period 6	50 min	12:45 – 1:35	CORE	IA	CORE	CORE
Period 7	50 min	1:35 – 2:25	IA	CORE	CORE	CORE

Sample schedules F6 and F7 are from pages 44-50 of a 2016 professional learning session led by staff from the Florida Problem Solving & Response to Intervention Project (Brundage, Hardcastle, Justice, and Jenkins).

Sample F6: Middle school schedule with 35-minute Flex period

This middle school with a population of about 700 students, 94% of whom are economically disadvantaged, created a 35-minute school-wide Flex period following homeroom each day. Students are grouped for intervention or enrichment according to their assessment data. Additional intervention is provided to students who need extra support during a Connections period.

Grade Level	1st Period	2nd Period	3rd Period	4th Period	5th Period	6th Period	7th Period	8th Period	9th Period	10th Period
6th Grade Boys	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	Core 1 9:26 – 10:21 (55 min)	Core 2 10:23 – 11:18 (55 min)	Conn. 1 11:20 – 12:02 (42 min)	Conn. 2 12:04 – 12:46 (42 min)	Lunch 12:49 – 1:14 (25 min)	Core 3 1:16 – 2:11 (55 min)	Core 4 2:13 – 3:08 (55 min)	Core 5 3:10 – 4:05 (55 min)
6th Grade Girls	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	Core 1 9:26 – 10:21 (55 min)	Core 2 10:23 – 11:18 (55 min)	Conn. 1 11:20 – 12:02 (42 min)	Conn. 2 12:04 – 12:46 (42 min)	Lunch 12:49 – 1:14 (25 min)	Core 3 1:16 – 2:11 (55 min)	Core 4 2:13 – 3:08 (55 min)	Core 5 3:10 – 4:05 (55 min)
7th Grade Boys	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	Core 1 9:26 – 10:21 (55 min)	Core 2 10:23 – 11:18 (55 min)	Lunch 11:20 – 11:38 (18 min)	Core 3 11:41 – 12:40 (59 min)	Core 4 12:43 – 1:38 (55 min)	Core 5 1:41 – 2:36 (55 min)	Conn. 1 2:39 – 3:21 (42 min)	Conn. 2 3:23 – 4:05 (42 min)
7th Grade Girls	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	Core 1 9:26 – 10:21 (55 min)	Core 2 10:23 – 11:18 (55 min)	Core 3 11:21 – 11:35	Lunch: 11:38 – 11:56 / Core 3: 11:56 – 12:41	Core 4 12:43 – 1:38 (55 min)	Core 5 1:41 – 2:36 (55 min)	Conn. 1 2:39 – 3:21 (42 min)	Conn. 2 3:23 – 4:05 (42 min)
8th Grade Boys	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	Conn. 1 9:26 – 10:13 (47 min)	Conn. 2 10:17 – 11:04 (47 min)	Core 1 11:07 – 12:13 (66 min)	Lunch 12:15 – 12:40 (25 min)	Core 2 12:42 – 1:48 (66 min)	Core 3 1:50 – 2:56 (66 min)	Core 4 2:58 – 4:05 (67 min)	
8th Grade Girls	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	Conn. 1 9:26 – 10:13 (47 min)	Conn. 2 10:17 – 11:04 (47 min)	Core 1 11:07 – 12:13 (66 min)	Lunch 12:15 – 12:40 (25 min)	Core 2 12:42 – 1:48 (66 min)	Core 3 1:50 – 2:56 (66 min)	Core 4 2:58 – 4:05 (67 min)	

	1st Period	2nd Period	3rd Period	4th Period	5th Period	6th Period	7th Period	8th Period	9th Period	10th Period
Connections Teachers	Homeroom 8:30 – 8:45 (15 min)	FLEX 8:48 – 9:23 (35 min)	8th Conn. 1 9:26 – 10:13 (47 min)	8th Conn. 2 10:17 – 11:04 (47 min)	Planning 11:04 – 11:20 (16 min)	6th Conn. 1 11:20 – 12:02 (42 min)	6th Conn. 2 12:04 – 12:46 (42 min)	Planning 12:46 – 2:39 (88 min) / Lunch Duty in Cafeteria (7th) 12:49 – 1:14	7th Conn. 1 2:39 – 3:21 (42 min)	7th Conn. 2 3:23 – 4:05 (42 min)

Sample F7: High school schedule with seven classes and 54-minute lunch and intervention period

In this school, teachers hold office hours during the first half of the lunch/tutoring block — called "Anchor Hour." Check-in stations staffed by guidance counselors, administrators, custodial staff, and PE staff were created at the beginning of lunch to monitor student movement. The school added 10 minutes to the school day and reduced the length of class periods to create the additional time.

Period	Regular Schedule	Activity Schedule	Early Release Schedule
1	8:35 – 9:23	8:35 – 9:14	8:35 – 9:12
2	9:28 – 10:16	9:19 – 9:58	9:17 – 9:54
3	10:21 – 11:09	10:03 – 10:42	9:59 – 10:36
4	11:14 – 12:02	10:47 – 11:26	10:41 – 11:18
Anchor Hour	**12:02 – 12:56**	**11:26 – 12:23**	**11:18 – 12:14**
Office Hours A	12:02 – 12:26	11:26 – 11:53	11:18 – 11:44
Office Hours B	12:32 – 12:56	11:56 – 12:23	11:48 – 12:14
5	12:56 – 1:44	12:23 – 1:02	12:14 – 12:51
6	1:49 – 2:37	1:07 – 1:46	12:56 – 1:33
7	2:42 – 3:30	1:51 – 2:30	1:38 – 2:15

Sample F8: High school schedule with four class blocks and 50-minute lunch and intervention block

Batesburg-Leesville High School in South Carolina divides an extended lunch period into two halves; together, this block is called Half-Time. Students eat lunch during one 25-minute half and receive Tier 2 support as needed during the other half from teachers, who hold office hours on specific days of the week.

Teacher Arrival	7:40
1st Block	8:30 – 9:53
2nd Block	10:00 – 11:23
Half-Time/Lunch	1st Half: 11:25 – 11:50
	2nd Half: 11:50 – 12:15
3rd Block	12:22 – 1:45
4th Block	1:52 – 3:15
Teacher Departure	3:30

Sample schedule F9 comes from Morgan County Middle School in Georgia. The grades 6-8 school has a 45-minute Extended Learning Time (ELT) period at the end of the school day during which students can receive intervention support or participate in clubs and other enrichment activities. The school also has specialized core ELA classes for 6th and 7th graders called Operation Graduation. For more details, see Morgan County Middle School's RC6 MTSS implementation story.

Sample F9: Middle school schedule with a 45-minute intervention and enrichment period (1 of 3)

6th Grade	7:40-8:00	8:00-9:05	9:05-10:10	10:10-11:15	11:15-12:55 (Lunch 11:25-12:00)	12:55-1:40	1:40-2:25	2:25-3:10
Teacher	**Homeroom**	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**6th**	**7th**
ELA 6 Team 1		ELA (Collab)	ELA	ELA (Gifted)	ELA	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
SS 6 Team 1		SS	SS (Gifted)	SS (Para)	SS	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Sci 6 Team 1		Sci (Gifted)	Sci	Sci	Sci (Para)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Math 6 Team 1		Math	Math (Collab)	Math	Math (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
ELA 6 Team 2		ELA	ELA (Gifted)	ELA	ELA	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
SS 6 Team 2		SS	SS	SS	SS (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Sci 6 Team 2		Sci	Sci	Sci (Gifted)	Sci	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Math 6 Team 2		Math (Gifted)	Math	Math	Math (ESOL)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
ELA 6 Team 3		ELA (Gifted)	ELA	ELA (Collab)	ELA (Collab)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
SS 6 Team 3		SS (Para)	SS (Para)	SS (Gifted)	SS (Para)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Sci 6 Team 3		Sci (Para)	Sci (Para)	Sci (Para)	Sci (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Math 6 Team 3		Math (Collab)	Math (Gifted)	Math	Math (Collab)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
SpEd-ELA 6		ELA 1	Resource ELA	ELA 3	ELA 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Para-SS 6		SS 3	SS 3	SS 1	SS 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Para-Sci 6		Sci 3	Sci 3	Sci 3	Sci 1	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
SpEd-Math 6		Math 3	Math 1	Resource Math	Math 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELT
Operation Graduation 6th and 7th Grades	**7:40 – 8:00**	**8:00-9:05**	**9:05-10:10**	**10:10-11:15**	**11:15-12:55**	**12:55-1:40**	**12:45-2:25 (Lunch 12:50-1:25)**	**2:25-3:10**
	Homeroom	7th	6th	6th	Plan	Plan	7th	ELT

Sample F10: Middle school schedule with a 45-minute intervention and enrichment period (2 of 3)

7th Grade	7:40-8:00	8:00-9:05	9:05-10:10	10:10-11:15	11:15-12:00	12:00-12:45	12:45-2:25 (Lunch 12:50-1:25)	2:25-3:10
Teacher	**Homeroom**	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**6th**	**7th**
ELA 7 Team 1		ELA (Collab)	ELA	ELA	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA (Gifted)	ELT
SS 7 Team 1		SS	SS (Gifted)	SS (Para)	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS	ELT
Sci 7 Team 1		Sci	Sci	Sci (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci (Para)	ELT
Math 7 Team 1		Math (Gifted)	Math (Collab)	Math	Common Plan	Common Plan	Math	ELT
ELA 7 Team 2		ELA	ELA	ELA (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA	ELT
SS 7 Team 2		SS (Gifted)	SS	SS	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS	ELT
Sci 7 Team 2		Sci	Sci	Sci	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci (Gifted)	ELT
Math 7 Team 2		Math	Math (Gifted)	Math	Common Plan	Common Plan	Math (ESOL)	ELT
ELA 7 Team 3		ELA	ELA	ELA (Collab)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA (Collab)	ELT
SS 7 Team 3		SS (Para)	SS (Para)	SS	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS (Para)	ELT
Sci 7 Team 3		Sci (Para)	Sci (Para)	Sci (Para)	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci	ELT
Math 7 Team 3		Math (Collab)	Math	Math	Common Plan	Common Plan	Math (Collab)	ELT
SpED-ELA 7		ELA 1	Resource ELA	ELA 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA 3	ELT
Para-SS 7		SS 3	SS 3	SS 1	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS 3	ELT
Para-Sci 7		Sci 3	Sci 3	Sci 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci 1	ELT

Sample F11: Middle school schedule with a 45-minute intervention and enrichment period (3 of 3)

8th Grade	7:40-8:00	8:00-9:05	9:05-9:50	9:50-10:35	10:35-11:40	11:40-1:20 (Lunch 12:10-12:45)	1:20-2:25	2:25-3:10
Teacher	**Homeroom**	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**6th**	**7th**
ELA 8 Team 1		ELA	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA collab (R.G.)	ELA (R.G.)	ELA (Gifted)	ELT
SS 8 Team 1		SS (Collab)	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS	SS (Gifted)	SS	ELT
Sci 8 Team 1		Sci	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci (Gifted)	Sci	Sci (Collab)	ELT
Math 8 Team 1		Math (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	Math	Math (Collab)	Math	ELT
ELA 8 Team 2		ELA	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA (O.G.)	ELA (Gifted)	ELA (R.G.)	ELT
SS 8 Team 2		SS	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS (Gifted)	SS	SS	ELT
Sci 8 Team 2		Sci	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci	Sci	Sci (Gifted)	ELT
Math 8 Team 2		Math (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	Math (ESOL)	Math	Math	ELT
ELA 8 Team 3		ELA collab (O.G.)	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA (Gifted)	ELA collab (R.G.)	ELA	ELT
SS 8 Team 3		SS (Gifted)	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS collab	SS (Collab)	SS (Collab)	ELT
Sci 8 Team 3		Sci (Collab)	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci (Collab)	Sci (Collab)	Sci (Gifted)	ELT
Math 8 Team 3		Math (Collab)	Common Plan	Common Plan	Math	Math (Gifted)	Math (Collab)	ELT
SpEd-ELA 8		ELA 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	ELA 1	ELA 3	Resource ELA	ELT
SpEd-SS 8		SS 1	Common Plan	Common Plan	SS 3	SS 3	SS 3	ELT
SpEd-Sci 8		Sci 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	Sci 3	Sci 3	Sci 1	ELT
SpEd-Math 8		Math 3	Common Plan	Common Plan	Resource Math	Math 1	Math 3	ELT
		8:00-9:05	**9:05-9:50**	**9:50-10:35**	**10:35-11:15**	**11:15-12:00**	**12:00--12:45**	**12:55-1:40**
Connections		Planning	8th	8th	Planning	7th	7th	(10 min. break) 6th

Appendix G: Intervention Delivery

Jimerson, Burns, and VanDerHyden present a table demonstrating how tiered ELA instruction and support could be designed, staffed, and delivered in a middle school (2016, p. 578). They write:

> In this implementation model, tier 2 intervention to below average students would be delivered within the period, circumventing the need for students to miss other classes/courses. Intervention would not simply be reteaching but using carefully selected intervention programs aligned with students' needs. For example, many middle school struggling read[ers] have difficulty with multisyllabic words, vocabulary, and comprehension (Torgesen 2004). A viable solution in this instance could be REWARDS (Archer and Gleason 2001), an intervention program with strengths in these skill areas. Tier 2 intervention would be delivered by language arts teachers. Tier 3 would be targeted to students with severe performance discrepancies in an additional period, using intensive, specially designed curriculum and staffed by special education personnel.

Figure G1: Intervention Delivery Example

Table 5 An option for how tiered reading/language arts services can be delivered

Tier	Program and focus	Staffed by	Amount of time
General education tier 1	Strong, teacher-led, comprehensive language arts program with explicit instruction in comprehending narrative and content textbooks (i.e., *Read to Achieve*) + novel study strongly biased toward nonfiction	Content-area language arts teachers	Double period or block every day
Tier 2	*Read to Achieve,* plus more explicit and targeted intervention + (e.g., *rewards*) + structured outside wide reading	Assigned content-area language arts teachers	Tier 2 delivered within the double period/block
Tier 3 and special education	*Read to Achieve* + explicit and comprehensive intervention (e.g., *REACH* or *Corrective Reading*) + structured outside wide reading	Special education personnel	3 periods

Appendix H: Example Interventions for Each Tier of MTSS

The tables that follow are adapted from a guidance document on scientific research-based interventions (SRBI) created by Guilford Public Schools in Guilford, Connecticut (2021, pp. 21-22). Ideas for academic and behavioral intervention and support strategies are divided by each tier of MTSS. Note that the strategies are additive: Tier 2 includes Tier 1 strategies and Tier 3 includes both Tier 1 and Tier 2. Those included here are strategies that are applicable to secondary settings.

Table H1: Guilford Public Schools Instructional Designs for All Tiers

Academic	Behavioral
• Strategic small group instruction • Workshop model • Differentiation • Priority standards • Student agency	• Strategic small group work • Individualized instruction • Remote options • Executive function skills

Both academic and behavioral:

- High Leverage Practices
- Principles of Learning
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Universal Design for Learning
- Inquiry Based Learning
- Teaching for Robust Understanding (TRU) Framework

Table H2: Guilford Public Schools Suggested Tier 1 Instructional Strategies

Tier 1	
Academic	**Behavioral**
Quality teaching practices: • Differentiated Instructional Practices • Scaffolding (determined by teacher and • student) • Individual Feedback • Alternate assignments/assessments • Self-assessment • Homework accommodations • Assessment accommodations • Technology integration • Extended time/Wait time • Strategic seating • Flexible grouping • Peer support • Use of rubrics and/or learning • progressions • Self monitor/assess work in progress	*Quality management practices:* • Clear classroom/school expectations • Behavior management strategies • Positive feedback • Organizational strategies • Adjusting transition times • Recognition of accomplishment • Goal-setting in small, manageable chunks • Building students' self-monitoring skills • Post daily/weekly schedules (MS) • Parent/guardian communication • Teacher/Student conference • Teacher/Parent conferences • Strategic seating • Monitor absences/attendance/discipline log

Table H3: Guilford Public Schools Suggested Tier 2 and 3 Interventions

Tier 2	
Academic	**Behavioral**
• Push-in supports • Structured, diagnostic, and sequential reading instruction • Academic Labs (HS) • Assistive technology • Specialized software • Varied formats of texts • Flexible schedule • Progress monitoring	• Staff observations • Individual student conferences • Modified arrival/dismissal times • Participation in mentoring program • Social Skills groups • Consult related services staff/specialists • Home visits • Behavior contracts/intervention strategies • Collaboration w/outside agencies • Remote options • Counseling
Tier 3	
Academic	**Behavioral**
• Pull out supports • Intensive small group supports • Supplemental reading/math • Increased progress monitoring • Specialized software • Assistive Technology • Access to Support Services (speech and • language, occupational therapy) • Smaller student to teacher ratio	• Functional Behavior Assessments • Intensive Counseling • Behavioral Intervention Plans • Remote options

Appendix I: Professional Development for MTSS

The Pasadena Independent School District in Houston, TX shared the district professional learning schedule it used to provide training related to student well-being and behavior in a 2019 presentation. The schedule shared has been adapted in the table below.

Table I1: District-Offered Professional Learning Schedule for Student Well-being and Behavior

Time of Year	Title of Training	Topic
Summer	Conscious Discipline Weeklong Training	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Summer	PISD Behavior Management E-Course	PBIS/MTSS Prevention Tier I
Summer	Restorative Circles for Classrooms	Restorative Practices
Summer	Restorative Circles for Administrators	Restorative Practices
Summer	Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)	Mental Health
Summer	Tier 2 Systems and Team Training	PBIS/MTSS Intervention Tier 2/3
Summer	Movement in the Classroom	Kinesthetic Learning
Summer	Suicide Prevention/Threat Assessments	Mental Health
Fall	CBITS/Bounce Back On-line Training	Trauma Informed Care
Fall	Grief/Loss Component Training for Counselors	Grief/Loss Training
Fall	School Climate Conference/Tier I Team Training	PBIS/MTSS Prevention Tier I
Fall	CHAMPS	PBIS/MTSS Prevention Tier I
Fall	Suicide Prevention/Threat Assessments	Mental Health
Fall	Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)	Mental Health
Fall	SEL Module Training: Composure	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Fall	SEL Module Training: Empathy/Encouragement	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Fall	SEL Module Training: Positive Intent/Choices	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Fall	SEL Module Training: Consequences	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Fall	Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)	Mental Health
Fall	Restorative Circles for Classrooms	Restorative Practices
Fall	Restorative Chats for Administrators	Restorative Practices
Fall	Trauma Informed Training for Staff	Trauma Informed Care
Fall	Movement in the Classroom	Kinesthetic Learning
Fall	Tier 2 Team Small Group Intervention Training	PBIS/MTSS Intervention Tier 2/3
Spring	Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)	Mental Health
Spring	CHAMPS	PBIS/MTSS Prevention Tier I
Spring	Grief/Loss Training for Staff (Awareness)	Grief/Loss Training
Spring	Restorative Circles for Classrooms	Restorative Practices
Spring	Restorative Circles for Administrators	Restorative Practices
Spring	SEL for Pre-K/K	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Spring	Tier 2 Team Systems Review and Planning	PBIS/MTSS Intervention Tier 2/3

In a case study of a middle and high school implementing RTI, Epler shared the monthly professional development calendar used to introduce RTI and build staff capacity (2019b). The following year, all topics were covered at staff meetings at the beginning of the school year and were then discussed again as needed throughout the year.

The professional development calendar from Epler has been modified below to reflect a focus on MTSS, not just RTI (p. 243).

Table I2: Sample Professional Development Calendar for MTSS Introduction

Month	Workshop Focus
September	Benefits of MTSS
October	Tier 1 implementation in the general education classroom
November	Tier 2
December	Tier 3
January	Websites and other RTI resources; research-based instructional strategies for implementation within tiers
February	Process of moving from one tier to another
March	Data collection/progress monitoring
April	Data collection/progress monitoring (cont.)
May	Fidelity of implementation

Appendix J: Comparison of RTI Models in Middle and High School

A case study conducted by Epler resulted in the following comparison of RTI models in each of the schools included in the study (2009b, p. 251). This comparison is not an endorsement of either model, but its contents and the contrast between school levels may be helpful to districts seeking to support MTSS implementation in secondary schools.

Table J1: Middle and High School RTI Model Comparison

	Middle School	High School
Number of Tiers	4	4
Diagnostic Practices	• Teacher Recommendations • Report Cards • State Assessments	• Teacher Recommendations • Report Cards • State Assessments • Department-Made Assessments
Data Collection Methods	• State Assessments • Teacher-Made Assessments • Report Cards • Intervention Central Website Methods	• Teacher-Made Assessments • Informal Reading Inventories (e.g., Roe & Burns, 2006) • Research-Based Assessments (e.g., Rasinski & Padak, 2005)
Intervention Strategies* Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3	• Questioning Techniques • Small Group Collaboration • Chunking of Material • Informal Assessments (e.g., exit passes and check points) • Study Skills Course • Reading Classes • One-on-One Tutoring • Credit Recovery Program	• Marzano et al.'s (2001) Instructional Strategies • Summarizing • Note-Taking • Graphic Organizers • APR • Collaboration • Literature Circles • Greek and Latin Roots
Administrative Support	Yes/Sometimes	Yes
Professional Development	Monthly/Ongoing	Infrequent/Sporadic

*Note that in the schools studied, Tier 4 represents special education; strategies for Tier 4 are not included here.

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