

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Guidance Document

(Revised January 2024)

SECTION 1 - Background & Purpose

Through 2022, Gloucester County Public Schools utilized the Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) as a comprehensive, multi-tiered, standards-aligned process designed to enable early identification and intervention for students. The Virginia Department of Education has since clarified for school divisions that VTSS describes “who we are” whereas MTSS (i.e., Multi-Tiered System of Supports) accurately defines “what we do.” The *MTSS* process allows educators and teams to identify and address academic, behavioral, social-emotional wellness, and attendance difficulties **prior** to student failure. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2019) describes tiered instruction as follows:

“The heart of any Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model lies in the use of tiered instructional processes. Although the assessment components of RTI (universal screening and progress monitoring) are essential elements of implementation, it is the instruction that occurs as a function of the outcomes of the assessments that truly drives the changes we hope to see in students who are identified as being at some level of risk for not meeting academic expectations. Tiered instruction represents a model in which the instruction delivered to students varies on several dimensions that are related to the nature and severity of the student's difficulties.”

MTSS utilizes a problem-solving framework to identify and address academic and behavioral difficulties, social/emotional wellness, and attendance concerns for all students using scientific, research-based instruction. In general, MTSS incorporates three components: (1) providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to all students' needs; (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions to guide instruction (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). MTSS practices are proactive, incorporating both prevention and intervention, and are effective at all levels from early childhood through high school.

Recent research shows that the use of multi-tiered models is an effective educational practice within schools to bring high-quality instruction to **all** students. According to the Virginia Department of Education (2019), the essential elements of the MTSS framework are as follows: aligned organizational structure; data-informed decision-making; evidence-based practices; family, school, and community partnerships; monitoring student progress; and evaluation of outcomes and fidelity. The MTSS concepts presented in this document make use of a three-tiered approach that incorporates the aspects of a personalized education.

Instruction is standards-based, student-centered, and rooted in data-driven assessment with the consistent use of best instructional practices and materials that are grounded in research. A holistic approach to problem solving is used with each child, taking into account cultural, social, and oral language factors, as well as trauma-informed practices. Parents are partners with the school when making MTSS decisions about their children.

The purpose of this manual is to provide information, guidance, and resources for schools to implement MTSS in Gloucester County.

MTSS Framework Components

GCPS has defined its MTSS framework around six major components as described below:

- **Standards-aligned Instruction:** All students receive high-quality, research-based instruction in the general education standards-aligned system. Instruction is differentiated and provided with fidelity in flexible groups.
- **Universal Screening:** Screening of all students is conducted three times a year to identify or predict individuals who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes.
- **Shared Ownership:** All staff (administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, Title I, EL, paraprofessionals, and specialists) assume an active role in students' assessment and instruction in the standards-aligned system.
- **Data-informed Decision Making:** A team of educational professionals analyzes student-performance data and guides school decisions on instructional changes, choices of interventions, and appropriate rates of progress. Data sources can include benchmark assessments, outcome assessments, and progress monitoring data.
- **Tiered Intervention and Service Delivery System:** Students receive increasingly intense levels of targeted, scientifically, research-based interventions with proven effectiveness dependent upon student need.
- **Parental/Family Engagement:** Parents and families are an integral part of their children's education. They will receive detailed information regarding the following: 1) their children's strengths and needs; 2) the type, frequency, and delivery of intervention expected; and, 3) rate of progress.

Anchor Requirements ([Expectations for Implementation](#))

- Grades K-8 in all schools will conduct Universal Screening (US) three times a year as defined by the established Resource Maps (i.e., English Language Arts, Math, Social-Emotional Learning).
- Teachers will utilize high quality, research-based instruction.
- Implement Core SEL curriculum.
- Implement best practices in accordance with Effective Classroom Systems (ECS).
- All schools will use a problem-solving model for communication and collaboration.
- Instructional planning by all teachers will be data-driven.
- Teachers/teams will use MTSS forms approved at the division level.
- Progress-monitoring data will be collected at least every 10 days for all students receiving intervention.

Standards-Aligned Instruction

The most critical element in the MTSS framework is the provision of high-quality, standards-aligned instruction to all students using scientific, research-based instruction and intervention delivered with fidelity in all areas of instruction and at all tiers. This means that what students are taught (Core curriculum), how students are taught (instructional practices), and how students are assessed are aligned to Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) and SEL Guidance Standards.

Aligned instruction comprises the following activities:

- Teaching topics that are aligned with the standards to ALL students.
- Ensuring an appropriate level of challenge.
- Focusing teaching based on the learning needs of each student.
- Implementing instructional strategies that 'scaffold,' or build on each other, to help students achieve the standards.

- Ensuring that the practices and curriculum have demonstrated validity.
- [2022 Elementary ELA “Look-fors”](#)
- [2022 Evidence-based strategies for quality Math instruction](#)
- [GCPS Lesson Planning Expectations.](#)

The alignment of standards-based curriculum, effective instructional practices, and aligned assessments form the foundation for MTSS and is critical to improve student results. In turn, all staff must have the knowledge and skills necessary to identify the standards being taught, administer aligned assessments, review data to make informed instructional decisions, deliver instruction with the most effective practices, and maintain high expectations. A commitment of time and identification of needed professional development is required.

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is a nationally-recognized approach to supporting positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. Through focused attention on data collection and analyses, PBIS provides a framework of proactive, evidence-based prevention and tiered behavioral intervention strategies that aid schools in defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors in a positive school culture.

PBIS helps school staff learn about and implement new techniques that reduce disruptive student behavior and increase time on task and student engagement. PBIS utilizes a positive approach to discipline that impacts the culture of the school by shifting attention to positive behavior and successful learning systems for children and school staff.

A representative team is established at each school and may include an administrator, school psychologist, school counselor, representatives from general education, special education, and support staff. Teaming structures may vary at each school and are guided by the [GCPS Anchor Requirements](#). PBIS team members have strong behavior management and communication skills and are regarded by building level staff as positive leaders. A problem solving process should be utilized to modify current schoolwide practices and to identify and provide additional tiered support for students in need of targeted behavioral/social-emotional instruction.

Universal Screening

MTSS requires Universal Screening of *all* students to assess the strength and alignment of Core practices, and to determine current performance levels, identify learning needs and social-emotional functioning, and to proactively identify those students in need of additional support. Results are analyzed by classroom teachers and the grade-level data team and are used to determine appropriate instructional groupings and to design appropriate intervention. Additionally, results are reviewed by division-level teams to determine school needs for additional support.

Screening tools provide an early opportunity for identifying students’ needs. Tools should be research-based, brief, and easily administered. Screening must be highly correlated to skills assessed and should have benchmarks that are predictive of future performance.

Screening measures must be administered efficiently, consistently, and with fidelity. It is imperative that, for screening to have true meaning, all staff administering and interpreting screening assessments be thoroughly trained and retrained as needed. Schools may opt to solely utilize their own staff or may call on other support personnel to administer universal screening measures if such personnel are available. These must be well planned as even the most subtle issue may undermine the efficiency and efficacy of the MTSS system.

Screening results are of little value unless a mechanism is in place to allow classroom teachers to analyze screening results as soon as possible after administration. Teams should generate grade or classroom-wide implications for addressing instructional (Core) deficits before identifying individual students for further assessment. Teams should also keep in mind that screening data is only one data point and that multiple data points should be used

in identifying students in need of interventions. Once students are identified, further diagnostic assessments may be necessary to inform interventions. Screening data should be shared with the parents of all students within two weeks of the screening process.

Shared Ownership

The MTSS framework, by design, promotes shared ownership of student learning across staff and programs. All staff (general, special, Title 1, EL, paraprofessional, etc.) assume an active role in each level of tiered instruction. *All staff share all students.*

- General educators provide Tier 1 Core instruction in the general education classroom, and may have an active role in Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions and monitoring activities. Although specialists, interventionists, and paraprofessionals may be utilized to assist Core instruction when available, the responsibility of the Core instruction belongs to the general educators. Sufficient Tier 1 Core instruction is provided with differentiation and the use of smaller, flexible groups within the Core. All staff can be used to help scaffold and differentiate instruction and to ensure that additional opportunities to learn are available to students through the tiered service delivery system. Paraprofessionals provide key support to students with reinforced learning, instructional practice, and fluency tasks.
- Although all staff can be involved in the delivery of Tier 2 and 3 interventions, most supplemental instructional activities and data gathering will be provided by staff with specific expertise. • Common planning time to enable collaborative practices is necessary at all grade levels. Teachers and specialists must operate with the belief, “We have a shared responsibility for all students.”

The principal’s role is critical in developing shared ownership and in ensuring all role changes are strategically planned and supported with appropriate training and coaching. The allocation of instructional resources is vital to MTSS implementation and will require shifts in time allocation, scheduling, and staffing patterns. Guiding principles include:

- School resources and staff expertise are allocated based on student need. *Expert teachers and specialists are assigned to the students with the greatest need.*
- Adjustments to the infrastructure are made to provide flexible schedules, grouping options, time for teacher collaboration around student learning (data analysis teaming), and flexible staff assignments.
- The MTSS framework requires competency and fidelity of implementation, which demands staff development. Training and support are critical as staff assume nontraditional roles in the MTSS process.

MTSS may require the realignment of existing resources and not always the acquisition of additional resources.

Data-Informed Decision Making

Data-informed decision-making drives the MTSS framework. Staff members use data to monitor student achievement and set achievement goals. Student performance is monitored on an established, ongoing basis to determine the program and instructional adjustments needed to ensure student success. data-informed decision making determines the appropriate instructional grouping, curriculum, tiered interventions, instructional strategies, and the assessment procedures needed to improve student achievement, attendance, and social emotional and behavioral functioning.

Data-informed decision-making is accomplished through an efficient process of gathering data **and** developing processes to analyze the data and adjust instruction. Teachers must be trained in both these processes and in understanding the instructional implications of each data source.

Tiered Intervention & Service Delivery System

MTSS incorporates a multi-tiered model of service delivery in which each tier represents an increasingly intense level of services associated with increasing levels of learner needs. GCPS has adopted a three-tiered framework that provides standards-aligned instruction and intervention support to all students. The framework is implemented within the general education program and cannot be used to deny parents the right to an evaluation for special education services. In a MTSS system, all students receive instruction in the Core curriculum (Tier 1), which may be supplemented by strategic (Tier 2), and/or intensive (Tier 3) interventions for individual students as needed. Therefore, all students, including those with high-incidence disabilities, may be found in Tier 1 (with the exception of some students who have low-incidence disabilities). Important features, such as universal screening, progress monitoring, fidelity of implementation and problem solving occur within each tier.

In MTSS, *services* are tiered--not students.

Teaming [Meeting Types](#)

Parental/Family Engagement

Parental and family engagement is an important factor in improving student achievement, and it is a key aspect of a successful MTSS program. GCPS recognizes the critical role of parents in the MTSS process. Schools should develop specific strategies/activities to engage parents in all phases of MTSS.

The school should provide [written information](#) to all parents regarding the MTSS process. This can be addressed in a pamphlet, parent letter, at PTA meetings, and/or in the school newsletter. Parents should be provided an overview of the MTSS framework, tiered instruction, types of programs used, and tips to support their children at home and at school. The overview should include timelines, explanation of interventions, and possible outcomes. Also, student data collected (e.g., student universal screening results) during MTSS implementation should be shared with parents on a routine basis.

Parents can provide a critical perspective on students, thus increasing the likelihood that MTSS interventions will be effective. For this reason, schools must make a concerted effort to involve parents as early as possible, beginning with instruction in the Core curriculum. This can be done through traditional methods such as parent teacher conferences, regularly scheduled meetings, or by other methods.

Specifically, parents will be invited to participate in decision-making meetings. They must receive ongoing and precise information regarding their child's interventions and progress. This information should include but not be limited to:

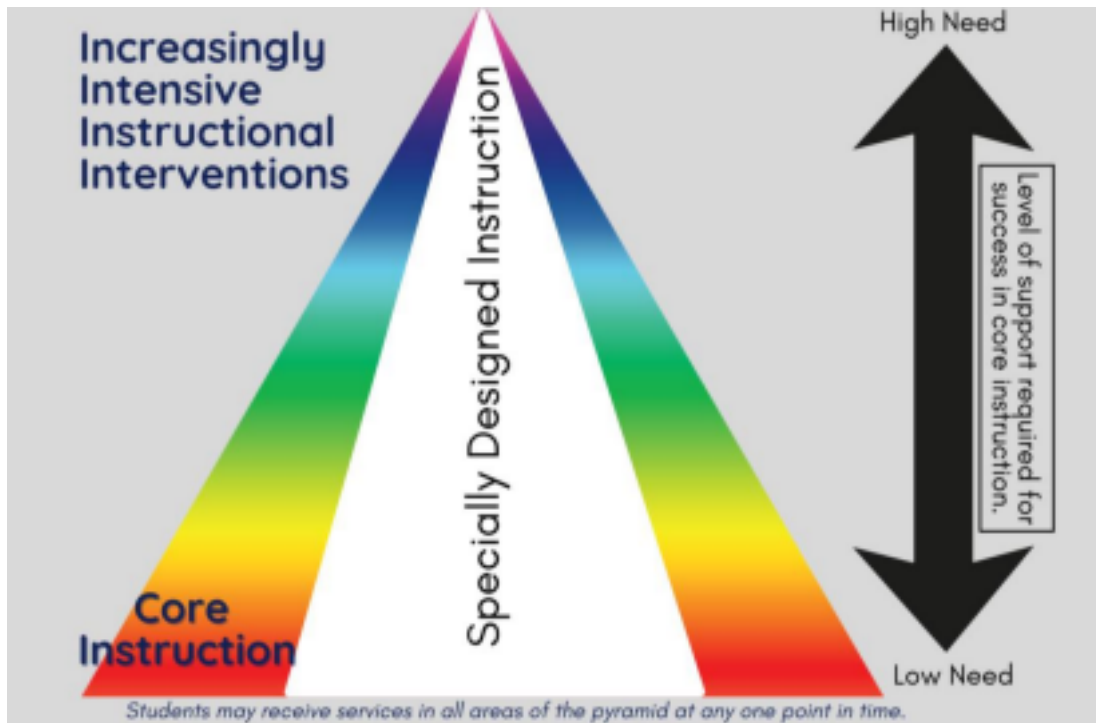
- Their child's needs
 - A description of the specific intervention and who is delivering instruction
 - Clearly stated intervention goals and academic progress expected for their child
- Regular progress reports
- The right to request a special education evaluation at any time

Parent conferences at schools implementing MTSS are data driven and are designed to keep parents abreast of their child's progress. Student data from universal screening and progress monitoring will be included with all parent/teacher conferences.

MTSS is a process of delivering the general education curriculum for all students, written consent is not required before administering universal screenings, CBMs, and targeted assessments within a multi-tiered MTSS system when these tools are used to determine instructional needs. However, when a student fails to respond to interventions and the decision is made to evaluate a student for special education eligibility, written consent must be obtained in accordance with [VDOE special education regulations](#) and GCPS procedures.

SECTION 2 - Tiered Intervention & Services

The MTSS approach incorporates a multi-tiered system of service delivery addressing academics, behavior, social emotional learning, and attendance in which each tier represents an increasingly intense level of services. The MTSS approach uses a problem-solving process to identify the problem, why it is occurring, how to intervene, and then determine if the intervention is working. Using evidence-based practices, MTSS teams can address needs and implement a fluid, tiered system of support. Regularly revisiting progress toward goals is essential to determine if progress is being made or if a change in support is warranted. Each Tier's interventions should be aligned so that the supports build upon each other. The MTSS model is designed so that Tiers I-III are available for all students including students with IEPs.



Tier 1 - Core (All students)

In the MTSS framework, all students receive Tier 1 services in academic, behavioral, and social-emotional standards. Tier 1 services incorporate high-quality, research-based, standards-aligned instruction in the Core curriculum. The Core curriculum provides the foundation for instruction upon which all strategic and intensive interventions are formulated.

Highly effective instruction at Tier 1 includes:

- High expectations
- Active student engagement
- Universally designed and differentiated instruction
- Cultural awareness and responsiveness
- Trauma-informed practices
- Use of the MTSS problem-solving process
- High impact classroom strategies; including Effective Classroom Systems (ECS)

In Tier 1, universal screenings are administered three times a year—fall, winter, and spring. Individual scores are used to determine whether a student’s performance and progress meet grade level benchmarks and expectations. Overall student performance on universal screenings are a health indicator of the Core curriculum. An eighty percent or higher proficiency rate on the universal screener indicates effective Core instruction. The eighty percent proficiency rate needs to be considered for *all* students **and** when examining student subgroup proficiency rates. The GCPS academic Core standard is that eighty percent of students at each grade level in reading and math will achieve at or above the 25th percentile cut point. When there is evidence that instruction is not effective, schools must examine whether the deficiency is occurring school-wide, grade level, or class-specific problem. If the core is found to lack sufficiency, then those deficiencies are addressed. If the Core is found to be sufficient, then school-based teams determine which students receive Tier 2 interventions.

Tier 2 - Strategic (Some students)

At Tier 2, academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions are designed for *some* students who are not achieving the desired standards through the core curriculum alone, despite differentiated, high-quality instruction. Strategic interventions at Tier 2 are designed to *supplement* and *build upon* Tier 1 instruction. Tier 2 typically consists of 10-15% of the student body. Strategic interventions are intended to be short-term and are put in place for immediate implementation. While no specific time frame is mandated, interventions should be in place for six to eight weeks. This will allow the teams to make data-informed decisions. Strategic interventions are provided in smaller groupings (e.g. 3-6 students) and are progress monitored at least every 10 days of intervention.

At Tier 2, progress monitoring involves reviewing existing data of the student's performance using CBM tools and other assessments as deemed necessary by the MTSS team. Progress monitoring is done more frequently at Tier 2 than Tier 1. Data gathered through Tier 2 progress monitoring inform the MTSS team of modifications needed to student intervention plans.

In general, students are considered to make insufficient progress if four out of six data points fall below the aimline. When this occurs, the grade level data team will determine any changes needed for group intervention and instruction. These changes could include an increased degree of intensity and/or frequency of the intervention or new strategic interventions can be added. If students are still not progressing toward the target after adjustments to the Tier 2 intervention, then the MTSS team should consider Tier 3 individualized interventions. Students who no longer require Tier 2 interventions and may return to Tier 1 *with differentiation*.

Tier 3 - Intensive (few students)

Tier 3 interventions are designed for a *few* students who are significantly below established grade-level benchmarks and who have not adequately responded to high-quality interventions provided at Tiers 1- 2. Intensive interventions at Tier 3 are designed to accelerate a student's rate of learning. This is done by increasing the frequency and duration of individualized interventions based on targeted assessments that analyze the lack of responsiveness to the interventions provided at Tier 1 and Tier 2. Intensive interventions at Tier 3 are supplemental to core (Tier 1) and strategic (Tier 2) interventions and are targeted to specific individual student needs.

Typically less than 5% of the student body would require Tier 3 interventions. Intensive interventions are usually delivered in groups of approximately 1-3 students. Progress monitoring at Tier 3 is at least on a weekly basis. In addition to the interventions the student is receiving in the core curriculum and Tier 2, he/she may need even more additional time or modifications for success.

Prior to selecting intensive interventions, targeted assessments are typically conducted when a student begins receiving Tier 3 interventions. These assessments use direct measures in addition to analysis of MTSS data to provide more in-depth information about a student's specific instructional needs and to identify the student's skill deficits. Targeted assessments may be administered by specially trained general education teachers, reading specialists, school psychologists, or other specialists including special education teachers depending on their area of expertise. Targeted data collection includes the use of interviews, observations, error analysis techniques, CBM's (in this case targeting a very narrow skill), other standardized assessments, and/or functional behavioral assessments.

The decision points in Tier 3 are the same as in Tier 2. After adjustments in the Tier 3 intervention without demonstrated improvement, the student may be referred to the school's staffing team. Students who are successful at Tier 3 and no longer need intensive individualized interventions will be returned to Tier 2.

Problem-Solving Process

Problem solving is a data-informed decision making process that is used to identify needed interventions for students in Tiers 1, 2, and 3. Decisions are made by MTSS Teams that are composed of a multidisciplinary team of professionals who are able to allocate resources that are necessary to achieve goals. As a general rule, the composition of a MTSS Team changes by adding instructional expertise as students move from tier to tier. MTSS Teams should always include the student's general education teacher(s). The MTSS Team participants also may include: parent, reading specialist/coach, school administrator, counselor, English Learner (EL) representative, school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, special education teacher, additional general education staff, paraprofessionals, and other specialists. The technology specialist may be involved to consult regarding data collection and reporting methods.



When problems and needs are identified across the tiers, utilize problem-solving steps, using the following approach:

Step 1 - Define the problem

When a concern is raised, the MTSS Team should first review existing data to determine the significance of the problem. Does the data indicate a school-wide, classroom-based, or small group/single student problem? Is the problem related to behaviors, academics, or perhaps both? The team must narrow the problem based upon the available data.

Step 2 - Analyze the cause

Once the problem is defined, the MTSS Team needs to develop a hypothesis as to why the problem is occurring and continuing. This involves analyzing variables which may be altered through instruction (i.e., fidelity, skill deficits, motivational factors, and/or lack of exposure to the general curriculum) in order to find an instructional solution. The team should focus on explanations of the problem that can be addressed through instruction or positive behavioral supports. In addition to the cause of the problem, the team needs to consider other factors such as rate of learning and learning trends (e.g., progress) in the areas identified by the MTSS Team. The team should also compare the progress over time.

Step 3 - Develop and implement a plan

Once the problem has been analyzed, the team identifies interventions that are evidence-based and that target the deficit area. The team does this by developing a plan that includes:

- a problem statement
- expected outcome(s) with a specific goal criterion based on severity of need (e.g. rate of improvement and percentile rank of achievement)
- the frequency of the interventions (how often the intervention will be provided and for how many minutes per week)
- who will provide the intervention (e.g. classroom teacher, reading specialist, etc)
- a timeframe to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention

To ensure fidelity, qualified staff must deliver the interventions according to the prescribed process and prescribed timeframe. Schools should document delivery of the interventions using multiple sources (e.g. observation notes, lesson plans and grade books, student work reflecting instructional elements, and graphs of student progress, attendance, etc.). The data must be charted or graphed. The frequency of progress monitoring depends on the tier, but in all cases, the process is similar.

Step 4 - Evaluate the plan

In order to determine if the intervention is working, the team must analyze the data collected through progress monitoring. Current performance and progress is compared to the projected aimline. If performance falls below the aimline four out of six monitoring periods, the MTSS Team then revisits the intervention plan to make appropriate modifications or revisions. If four out of six monitoring points are above the aimline, the team may decide that the intervention was successful.

Progress Monitoring (PM)

Progress monitoring is the use of assessments that can be conducted frequently and quickly. Progress monitoring is sensitive to small changes in student academic and/or behavioral performance that is being targeted through interventions. Data collected through progress monitoring will allow the MTSS Team to evaluate both the effectiveness of tiered instruction as well as to determine whether changes in the instruction, or in the goals are needed. Informed decisions about the success of the intervention require frequent data collection to provide reliable measures of progress. Various curriculum-based measurements are useful tools for monitoring students' progress. At Tier 1, the universal screening or benchmarking data may serve as the progress monitoring data in conjunction with other classroom performance data. However, as the intensity of the interventions, and movement through Tiers increases, so too must the frequency of progress monitoring. Unless the MTSS Team deems it necessary to progress monitor within a different timeframe, students receiving Tier 2 interventions will be monitored every ten days of intervention and students receiving Tier 3 interventions will be monitored at least weekly.

The person providing the intervention will be the individual responsible for progress monitoring. However, if more than one person is intervening with a student, it is necessary to decide before intervention begins who is going to progress monitor so that there will be no duplication of monitoring. Progress monitoring data is to be shared with the problem-solving team as it is collected.

Progress monitoring will be conducted using data collection techniques deemed necessary by the MTSS Team and in accordance with the GCPS Resource Maps.

General education teachers are in a vital position to work with interventionists to design and provide, aligned, high-quality, differentiated instruction that integrates some of the interventionists' strategies. Classroom

teachers are responsible for monitoring student progress in the classroom using formative and summative assessments as well as progress on district and state assessments. Likewise, interventionists' progress monitoring of students who are receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions should be accompanied by assessment of student progress against grade level standards in the general education curriculum (Tier 1).

MTSS teams should provide tiered supports based on guidelines outlined in Appendix

Fidelity of Implementation

Fidelity of implementation is achieved through adherence to program design that includes: time allocation, adequate intervention intensity, qualified and trained staff, as well as sufficient materials and resources. Fidelity of implementation is vital to instructional delivery, universal screening, and progress monitoring. Successful MTSS systems must consistently measure the fidelity of implementation in all aspects of the intervention process. Checks must be in place to determine if intervention plans are applied consistently and accurately. It is the responsibility of the building administrator to ensure fidelity by monitoring the delivery of instruction. The District MTSS Team members can assist the administrator in monitoring both instructional and data collection practices and supporting staff members.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Glossary

Appendix B – Tiered

Instruction Appendix C – Roles

Appendix D – FAQs

Appendix E – Types of Meetings

Appendix F – Forms

Appendix G – Other Documents

Appendix A - Glossary

Accommodation: Changes made to the way instruction is delivered or to the way curriculum is accessed by the student. *What* the student is learning is *not* changing at all, but *how* the student is learning it is changed. This does not mean that the teacher is making the content “easier;” rather, it means that the instructor is making the content easier *to understand* for that particular student – by accommodating *how* the instruction is delivered.

Action Planning: a tool used to align academic, school improvement, and/or strategic goals and plans (completed after the TFI).

Aimline: On a progress monitoring chart, a line that connects a student’s baseline performance level with a goal performance level to indicate an expected rate of growth over time.

Algebra Readiness: The degree to which students demonstrate success with prerequisite skills in algebraic concepts.

Baseline Data: Basic information on a student’s current performance level, which is gathered before a program or intervention begins. It is the starting point to which a student’s rate of growth will be compared and from which the Aimline will be drawn.

Behavior Matrix: Visual display of measurable and observable, behavioral expectations that is posted in applicable locations in the school building.

Behavior Specific Praise Statement (BSPS): Verbal/written feedback that is descriptive, specific, and delivered contingent upon student demonstration of expected behavior.

Behavioral Expectations: Desired behaviors that are defined, modeled by staff, and taught, reviewed and positively reinforced with students throughout the school year.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A data-driven, comprehensive plan that supports a student’s success in the school environment, which can include transportation, and before- and after-school programming. Most often, a functional behavior assessment will be conducted prior to developing and implementing a BIP.

Chronic Absenteeism: one of Virginia’s “School Quality Indicators,” defined as when a student is absent (for any reason) 10 percent or more of his/her available days in a school year .

Comprehension: Understanding and applying strategies to construct explicit and implicit meaning from text.

Computational Fluency: Efficient and accurate methods for computing. These methods may include, but are not limited to, mental computation, pencil and paper computation, and estimation.

Computational Mastery: The automaticity for recalling basic math facts.

Content: (within Differentiated Instruction) What the student will learn or how he or she will access new information.

Core Curriculum: The intended learning outcomes in a content area that are aligned with [Virginia Standards of Learning](#). The Core Curriculum is considered essential, as it provides a common set of knowledge, skills, and understandings. It is defined and designed outside the classroom.

Core Instruction: The differentiated instructional strategies that are used to teach the core curriculum.

Correct Writing Sequence (CWS): One Correct Writing Sequence is scored whenever two adjacent units of writing (e.g., two words appearing next to each other) are found to be correct in their punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and syntactical and semantic usage.

Critical Thinking: The ability to conceptualize, apply, process, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to improve the quality of one's own thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM): A concise (one to ten minutes) instrument used to directly assess students' educational progress in the basic skills that are needed for success in the academic areas of literacy (reading, spelling, and writing) and numeracy (number sense and computation), school readiness skills, and behavior.

Data-Informed Decision-Making: The use of student data to guide the planning, implementation, monitoring, and adjustment of instruction.

Division Capacity Assessment (DCA): A tool that's completed by the MTSS Division Leadership Team during midyear data collection in order to monitor progress towards division, regional, and state capacity goals.

Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA): The DESSA allows educators to measure, strengthen, and support social-emotional competencies in youth, grades K-12. The DESSA System includes a suite of strength based social emotional learning (SEL) assessments, a universal screener that can be administered in less than a minute, foundational practices, and growth strategies to strengthen social and emotional competencies. DESSA is a primary screening tool to measure social-emotional competencies.

Differentiated Instruction: The use of high-quality curriculum and varied instructional strategies to respond to students' learning differences at their instructional level. The four elements of differentiated instruction are Content, Process, Product, and Learning Environment.

Effective Classroom Systems: High impact evidence-based practices and the development of effective systems that support their implementation in the classroom including: arranging the physical environment, active supervision, defining classroom expectations, routines and procedures, opportunities to respond, formative assessment, scaffolding, acknowledgement and behavior specific praise, error correction, and building community through feedback.

Enrichment: Enhanced learning opportunities/experiences that build on the core curriculum to extend student learning.

Explicit/Direct Instruction: Instruction in content knowledge or skills that is clear, deliberate, and visible. Explicit instruction can be delivered individually or in small or large groups.

Fidelity: The use of a program, method of instruction, or assessment measure as it is intended to be used.

Flexible Grouping: The ability for students to move among different groups based upon their performance and instructional needs.

Fluency: The rate and automaticity with which an individual can complete a given task. (e.g. reading fluency, math fluency, writing fluency, academic fluency)

Formative assessment: Formal and informal assessments used during the learning process to modify instruction (i.e. assessment *for* learning).

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): A team problem-solving process that utilizes a variety of techniques and strategies to identify the reason or reasons behind inappropriate or unacceptable behavior and ways to deal with the behavior. Most often, a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) will be developed after an FBA.

Grammar: The rules that govern written and oral language.

Intensive Intervention (Tier 3): Instruction delivered with increased opportunities for practice, opportunities to respond, and teacher feedback.

Intervention: Direct and explicit instruction provided in a small group (strategic or Tier 2) or one-on-one (intensive or Tier 3) setting to target a specific, identified skill or knowledge deficit that impedes progress at grade level.

Learning Environment: (within Differentiated Instruction) The way the classroom works and feels; how students are organized for learning experiences.

Mindfulness: A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

Minor Incident Referrals: Written documentation, provided to parents and school based PBIS teams, of a non office managed behavior problem.

Modification: Changes made to the content or curriculum that the student is expected to learn. *What* the student is learning is changed.

Multiple Opportunities to Respond (MOTR): Teacher behaviors that allow for increased opportunities for students to respond (verbal, written, gesture).

Number Sense: Good intuition about numbers and their relationships to each other. Number sense develops gradually as a result of exploring numbers, visualizing them in a variety of contexts, and relating them in ways that are not limited by traditional algorithms.

Numeracy: The ability to understand and work with numbers.

Office Discipline Referral (ODR): Written documentation of an administrator managed incident related to a Code of Conduct violation which results in an administrative response. Administrative responses could include conference, loss of privilege, detention, in and out of school suspension or recommendations to the division hearing officer for long term suspension or expulsion.

Outcome Assessment: The measurement of how students have performed at the end of planned instruction or at the end of the year (e.g., summative assessment, post-assessment).

Parental Engagement: The meaningful and active involvement of parents and family members in the educational process of their child.

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to notice, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken syllables.

Phonological awareness: Conscious awareness of all levels of the speech sound system, including word boundaries, stress patterns, syllables, onset-rime units, and phonemes.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: A preventative and proactive approach to discipline that results in improved social competence, increased instructional time and academic performance, and decreased problem behavior.

Pre-assessment: Initial assessment information gathered prior to the implementation of instruction. It is the starting point to be used to compare a student's rate of growth.

Pre-correction: Modification of the environment, antecedents to behavior, or routines that prevent the occurrence of predictable problem behaviors and facilitate the occurrence of more appropriate replacement behaviors.

Process: (within Differentiated Instruction) Learning experiences in which the student will engage to make sense of or master the content.

Product: (within Differentiated Instruction) Culminating projects that ask the student to rehearse, apply, and extend what he or she has learned in a unit.

Progress Monitoring: The use of ongoing assessment and comparison of student learning to relevant data to determine progress toward targeted skills in order to appropriately adjust instruction (e.g., formative assessment).

Prosocial Behaviors: Behavior directed toward other people that involves effective communication skills, cooperative acts, self-control in difficult situations, and empathetic or supportive responses to others who experience a problem.

SBAR: Student Behavior Administrative Response System utilized by VDOE to categorize behaviors related to Code of Conduct violations. There are six categories to include Behaviors that impede Academic Progress (BAP), Behavior related to School Operations (BSO), Relationship Behaviors (RB), Behaviors of a Safety Concerns (BSC), Behaviors that Endanger Self or Others (BESO), and Persistently Dangerous (PD).

Remediation: The effective *reteaching* of material not previously mastered when it was originally taught.

Research-Based Interventions: Instructional strategies, methods, and materials that have been proven to work through reviewed, evidence-based research.

Routines and Procedures: Predictable practices that are defined and taught to increase the probability that

students will demonstrate the expectations that are taught.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (see [Virginia's SEL Guidance Standards](#)).

State Standards: Also referred to as [Virginia Standards of Learning \(SOL\)](#), these standards are what students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate at grade level.

Standards Aligned: The process of matching curriculum and instruction to the Virginia Standards of Learning (what students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate).

Strategic Intervention (Tier 2): Explicit instruction delivered by trained personnel tailored to meet the identified needs of struggling students.

Structured Literacy: Pedagogy and practices proven by extensive research to effectively teach children how to read. In Gloucester, LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teaching Reading and Spelling) is the foundational training framework that teachers follow in accordance with the science of reading.

Summative Assessment: An assessment at the completion of an instructional unit to determine students' level of mastery of intended learning outcomes (i.e. assessment *of* learning).

School-wide Information System (SWIS): A reliable, confidential, web-based information system to collect, summarize, and use student behavior data for decision making. School staff enter minor incident referrals online and data are summarized to provide information about individual students, groups of students, or all students over a given period of time.

Star: A computer adaptive measure of reading and math skills from *Renaissance* that allows educational staff to learn what students already know and what they are ready to learn next, to monitor student growth, and to determine which students may need additional help. Star is a primary screening tool for reading and math.

Systematic Instruction: Integrated and sequential learning experiences based on the identified strengths and needs of students.

Targeted Instruction: Teaching that is focused on an identified goal and based on the identified strengths and needs of a student.

Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI): A tool used to provide a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of the extent school personnel are applying the core features of school-wide MTSS.

Universal Screening: The periodic assessment (3 times per year) of all students compared to age or grade level standards (Note: This is different from Quarterly/Benchmark content assessments designed to assess specific skills and standards.)

Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program: A comprehensive readiness assessment. In connection with Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), which assesses students' literacy skills, VKRP expands the assessment to add a focus on mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills.

Vocabulary: All words used in understanding the context and content of written and spoken language.

Word Study: A multi-sensory developmentally appropriate instructional method in phonics, spelling, and vocabulary features based on the science of reading.

Writing: Composing text to communicate ideas and thoughts.

Appendix B - Tiered Instruction

TIER 1: Core Instruction

Defined:	All students receive high-quality scientific, research-based standards-aligned instruction from general education teachers in the core curriculum . The core curriculum provides the foundation for instruction upon which all strategic and intensive interventions are formulated. While Tier 1 instruction occurs in the general education setting, it is not necessarily grade level instruction but rather <i>differentiated instruction</i> . Core instruction should meet the needs of at least 80% of the students (as well as subgroups) in the classroom.
Curriculum and Instruction	It reflects explicit instruction designed to teach the state standards.
Number of Students in Group	Whole class
Time	Daily instruction in reading, writing, and math, and ongoing for social-emotional learning and behavior.
Assessments	Examples: Star Reading/Math, CBMs, PALs, writing rubric, high frequency word/phrase list, math and reading unit tests, DESSA, IXL, IXL Diagnostic, 9-week benchmark assessments for content common assessments, Quick Checks, Growth Assessments
Progress Monitoring	Multiple data points from assessments
Entry Criteria to Tier 2	Consider multiple data points for students who performed below the 25 th percentile on universal screening (e.g. PALS, SOL scores, benchmark assessments)
Staff	Classroom teacher, specialists
Setting	General education classroom
Fidelity Monitoring	Administrator/trained observer conduct observations and walkthroughs
Parent / Family Engagement	Back to school night, parent conferences, parent communication, parent support groups

TIER 2: Strategic Intervention for Identified Students

Defined:	Interventions designed for <i>some</i> students who are not achieving the desired standards through the core curriculum alone, despite differentiated, high-quality instruction. Strategic interventions at Tier 2 are designed to supplement (not replace) the instruction in the core curriculum and should be targeted at identified student needs. Students who receive Tier 2 intervention should only represent between 10–15% of the core classroom.
Curriculum and Instruction	Intensive, evidence-based programs delivered by trained staff.
Number of Students in Group	3-6 (or as defined by program)
Time	30+ minutes 3 to 5 times weekly (or as defined by program)
Assessments	Examples: Star Reading/Math, writing rubric, Correct Writing Sequences-Intervention Central, program assessments, DESSA, IXL, informal assessments, benchmark tests, common assessments, AR Formative Assessments, Just In Time Quick Checks
Progress Monitoring	At/after 10 days of intervention
Exit Criteria to Tier 1	Consideration of those above the 25th percentile, 80% or above on benchmark tests or common assessments, progress monitoring goal achieved (i.e. 4 out of 6 data points at or above the student's aimline) Note: If student achieves goal but is not meeting grade level expectations, increase goal.
Entry Criteria to Tier 3	Consideration of those remaining below the 10 th percentile, and/or lack of progress on progress monitoring schedule (i.e. 4 out of 6 data points below the student's aimline) despite changes in Tier 2 interventions
Staff	Classroom teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals
Setting	General education classroom, designated rooms for intervention
Fidelity Monitoring	Administrator/trained observer conduct observations and walkthroughs
Parent / Family Engagement	Tier 2 parent meeting with school team, parent notification, and parent training on specific interventions.

TIER 3: Intensive Intervention for Identified Students

Defined:	Interventions designed for a <i>few</i> students who are significantly below established grade-level benchmarks and who have not adequately responded to high-quality interventions provided at Tier 1 and Tier 2. Intensive interventions at Tier 3 are supplemental to Core (Tier 1) and strategic (Tier 2) interventions and are targeted to specific individual student needs. Students who receive Tier 3 intervention should only represent 3–5% of the core classroom
Curriculum and Instruction	Intensive, evidence-based programs delivered by trained staff
Number of Students in Group	1–3 (or as defined by program)
Time	Student-specific, as determined by the team
Assessments	Examples: Star Reading/Math, program assessments, writing rubric, Correct Writing Sequences-Intervention Central, informal reading assessments, DESSA, IXL, informal math assessments, benchmark tests, common assessments
Progress Monitoring	Weekly
Exit Criteria to Tier 2	Makes adequate progress on benchmark checkouts, progress monitoring goal achieved (i.e. 4 out of 6 data at or above the student's aimline) Note: If student achieves goal but is not meeting grade level expectations, increase goal
Continued Lack of Progress at Tier 3	If a student fails to meet progress monitoring goal after changes to intervention, the student may be referred for a staffing
Staff	Classroom teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, who have received specialized training unique to the intervention
Setting	General education classroom, designated rooms for intervention
Fidelity Monitoring	Administrator/trained observer conduct observations and walkthroughs
Parent / Family Engagement	Documented on-going communication with parent in addition to Tier 1 and 2, Tier 3 parent meetings

Appendix C - Roles

School-Based Personnel

MTSS/Leadership Team (School)

- Hold at least monthly meetings to include a regular format/agenda, minutes, defined roles, and current action plan
- Keep staff informed of new MTSS information
- Train staff on tiered practices
- Using multiple data sources, employ data informed decision making to identify students in need of tiered supports, to enhance or modify tiered supports, or to refer students for a staffing

Principal/Assistant Principal

- Choose MTSS team members, including facilitator(s), data coach, and recorder
- Assign MTSS member to each grade level for data discussions
- Provide support for the team
- Develop and maintain communication with team members
- Work with MTSS Division team on determining appropriate professional development
- Share with other schools success that might be replicated, as well as interventions that do not work as well as needed
- Create a schedule that supports MTSS and promotes best use of personnel
- Review, present, and discuss data with appropriate staff to monitor and adjust the school's instructional program

MTSS Facilitator

- Request agenda items from team and discuss agenda with administrators
- Send out agenda to team prior to scheduled meetings
- Facilitate team's discussion, ensure that the team remains task-oriented and work to promote team's goals
- Communicate with administrators and team members
- Participate in division level MTSS team meetings and related trainings

Recorder

- Record meeting minutes
- Make meeting minutes available to team members

Data Coach

- Become familiar with different data sources and their purposes in order to facilitate conversations
- Prepare and analyze reports by school, by grade level (and by classroom, if necessary)
- Summarize and disseminate information to MTSS team
- Assist grade level teams with asking and attempting to answer the "WHY" questions

Media Specialist

- Assist staff in creating testing groups/reports from assessment tools

- Assist teachers and students who lock themselves out or forget their passwords

Division-Level Personnel

MTSS Team (Division)

- Review MTSS guidance document annually and make necessary changes
- Review universal screening data
- Discuss school data results (e.g. STAR, PALS, SOL, SWIS, DESSA, etc.) as they relate to core instruction as well as interventions
- Review, present, and discuss data with appropriate staff to monitor and adjust the schools' instructional program
- Keep abreast of current MTSS trends and issues
- Attend appropriate trainings as they become available
- Serve as coaches/communication liaisons to schools as assigned
- Develop and monitor division MTSS goals
- Adhere to state requirements
- Complete annual DCA and action plan

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support

PBIS Team

- Hold at least monthly meetings to include a regular format/agenda, minutes, defined roles, and current action plan
- Plan professional learning for staff
- Support/acknowledge staff; promote positive school climate
- Develop a formal system for acknowledging student behavior
- Utilize a formal system for teaching students expected academic and social behaviors
- Using multiple data sources, employ data informed decision making to identify students in need of tiered supports, to enhance or modify tiered supports, or to refer students for a staffing
- Share schoolwide data with faculty at least four times per year
- Seek input from staff and student/family/community stakeholders at least once per year
- Complete mid-year and end-of-year evaluations
- Complete annual TFI and action plan

Principal/Assistant Principal

- Choose PBIS team members, including facilitator(s), data coach, and recorder
- Provide protected time for meetings and team training
- Attend PBIS meetings but does not facilitate the meetings
- Develop and maintain communication with team members
- Work with MTSS division team on determining appropriate professional development
- Share with other schools success that might be replicated, as well as interventions that do not work as well as needed

PBIS Team Facilitator

- Request agenda items from team and discuss agenda with administrators

- Send out agenda items to team members prior to scheduled meeting
- Facilitate team's discussion, ensure that the team remains task oriented and work to promote team's goals
- Communicate with administrators and team members

Recorder

- Record meeting minutes
- Make meeting minutes available to team members

PBIS Data Coach

- Summarize and disseminate information to the PBIS team for analysis

Appendix D - FAQs

1. Question: Do MTSS Teams replace Pre-Referral Teams (CST)?

Answer: No. The purpose of the MTSS Student Team is to work as a small group of professionals to determine needs of individual students regarding academic or behavioral areas of concern. The team will analyze data regularly; make recommendations for changes as appropriate; and bring the student to the school level MTSS Team when changes have been made as described earlier in this text for a staffing meeting. The MTSS Team may refer the student to the Pre-Referral Team (CST) for a full evaluation.

2. Question: Is there a MTSS curriculum?

Answer: No. MTSS is a process and not a program. MTSS incorporates sound instructional practices in a standards-aligned curriculum for core instruction with strategic (small group) or intensive (individualized) interventions provided to those students who are not successful in core instruction alone.

3. Question: Is MTSS intended to replace Special Education?

Answer: No. The purpose of MTSS is to prevent academic and/or behavioral failure early in a student's academic career by identifying and intervening so as to ensure success.

4. Question: Is MTSS meant for only the struggling students?

Answer: No. MTSS is also meant to address the needs and differentiated instruction of high achieving students as well as struggling students.

5. Question: Isn't MTSS just another initiative?

Answer: No. MTSS is a framework that can be used as an organizing tool for all of our work in education. The main intent of MTSS is to ensure students receive targeted instruction early so all students can be successful. In MTSS, measurement and data systems are integrated to focus instruction by using a problem solving process. These components are the framework. If student achievement (both academic and behavioral) is the main goal of schools, then most school initiatives should fit well into this framework.

6. Question: Can a school district use MTSS data to support the decision that a student has a disability in a special education disability category other than SLD?

Answer: Yes. MTSS data may be included when considering criteria in other categories. However, the information included in the evaluation report must be comprehensively sufficient to address each area of suspected disability. Therefore, MTSS data may not be the sole source of information but may supplement information provided for suspected disabilities in all categories.

7. Question: Can students who are already identified for special education services be included in the MTSS framework?

Answer: Yes. Students with disabilities will also benefit from MTSS interventions and progress

monitoring. Tiered instruction and the IEP can coexist for the improvement of a student's academic and behavioral functioning.

8. Question: Why is it necessary for a student to continue to receive Tier 1 instruction if it has been determined that he/she is in need of Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 interventions?

Answer: Given that Tier 1 represents the instructional processes delivered as part of the core instruction program, **all** students, including those in Tier 2 and Tier 3, receive Tier 1 instruction. Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction are **always** supplemental to core instruction (Tier 1), and **never** supplant Tier 1 instruction.

9. Question: Whenever a new student is enrolled at my school, am I responsible for determining whether that student needs to be in a tiered intervention?

Answer: Yes, utilizing standardized screening tools as well as reviewing the student's cumulative record will help guide the determination in a timely manner.

10. Question: If I already have tiered interventions in place, can I assign a new student to a pre-existing group?

Answer: Possibly. The assigned intervention must match the student's need. Thus, intervention is targeted to the specific area of concern, and is designed to address what type of weakness is evident.

Appendix E - Types of Meetings

[Meeting Types](#) - use this chart to help guide your teaming decisions.

Appendix F - Forms

[Math Data Reflection Protocol](#)

[Reading Data Reflection Protocol](#) - use this protocol to:

- examine and discuss **group**-level performance at Tiers I-II
- action-plan for **groups** of students not making expected progress in Tiers I-II
- [Secondary Data Reflection Protocol \(with Unit Assessment Sample\)](#)
- Secondary Data Reflection Protocol (with Universal Screening Sample)

[Individual Problem Solving Meeting Minutes](#) - use this protocol to:

- examine and discuss the performance of a **specific student** at Tiers II-III
- action-plan for a student not making expected progress in Tiers II-III, including decisions about staffing and/or referral for Pre-Referral
- [Individual Problem Solving Example-Elementary](#)
- [Individual Problem Solving Example - Secondary](#)

Appendix G - Other Documents

1. [MTSS Flowchart](#)
2. [MTSS Brochure](#)
3. [Evidence Based Practices Selection Tool](#)
4. [STAR Accommodations Chart](#)
5. [Tier II Parent Letter](#)

For more information or for clarification, contact Dr. Patricia McMahon (804) 693-7951, or any of the school psychologists at (804) 693-7880.

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