



Multi-Tiered System of Support

Nebraska Framework Document



NeMTSS
FRAMEWORK

**Nebraska Department of Education
University of Nebraska
Lincoln and Omaha**

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Table of Contents

PART I

NEBRASKA MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (NeMTSS)

Introduction and Overview

Problem Solving / Decision Making Model

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF NeMTSS and ALIGNMENT TO AQuESTT TENETS

Shared Leadership

Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships

Evidence-Based Practices: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention and Assessment

Building Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation

Layered Continuum of Supports

Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making

PART I REFERENCES

PART II

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

PART III

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

APPENDIX/RESOURCES

NeMTSS Self-Assessment

NeMTSS Assurances Document

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Published August 2018

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NEBRASKA MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (NeMTSS)

Multi-Tiered System of Support to Prepare all Nebraskans for Learning, Earning, and Living

Introduction and Overview

NeMTSS is a framework that promotes an integrated system connecting general education and special education, along with all components of teaching and learning, into a high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention system that is matched to a student's academic, social-emotional and behavior needs.

The **purpose** of this document is to provide an overview for MTSS practices in Nebraska. As such, it will chart the course for school-wide implementation from Pre-Kindergarten through graduation. The document is devoted to explaining the **essential elements** of MTSS and the **systematic implementation** in schools. It is intended to help the reader increase understanding of the various aspects of the system and to identify areas that warrant future professional development within a school setting. **It is not intended, however, to be a substitute for training.** Professional learning, along with ongoing district or Educational Service Unit (ESU) level coaching, is required to implement MTSS. Readers are encouraged to pursue supplementary training in each of the elements and processes discussed in this document.

The development of an MTSS framework begins by establishing a **strong core** of literacy, mathematics, and behavior, PreK-12, for all students which provides the foundation of prevention within the entire system. **Universal screening processes** measuring fluency and accuracy of critical early skills that are *predictive* of future student skill attainment are used to identify students who may need additional support. **Evidence-based interventions** are implemented to provide a layered continuum of supports matched to student need. Ongoing **progress monitoring** data are used to determine student response to intervention and is essential to the data-based problem-solving process to determine next steps for fading, exiting, or intensifying interventions for students (**see Figure 1**). Data from MTSS can be used as part of the process for the identification of students with exceptionalities (See the Special Education Eligibility Determination section of this document); however, in no way should NeMTSS delay the initial evaluation of a student that is suspected of having a disability.

NeMTSS is an essential component of the Continuous Improvement Process and should not be seen as a stand-alone initiative. Local school districts and ESUs are a critical part of the NeMTSS network. Each school district and ESU is charged with multiple improvement efforts, have a variety of local expertise, and possess unique context. Making natural connections between the **essential elements** of the NeMTSS framework and other efforts that the school district or

ESU are involved with, such as continuous improvement, will be beneficial.

The NeMTSS framework encompasses the concepts of response-to-intervention (RtI), positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), and special education eligibility determination. The framework is an educational systems change paradigm (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, Annual 2008; Shores & Chester, 2009) that provides a construct for supporting students and staff as part of school improvement.

KEY TO NeMTSS SUCCESS - The Problem-Solving Process

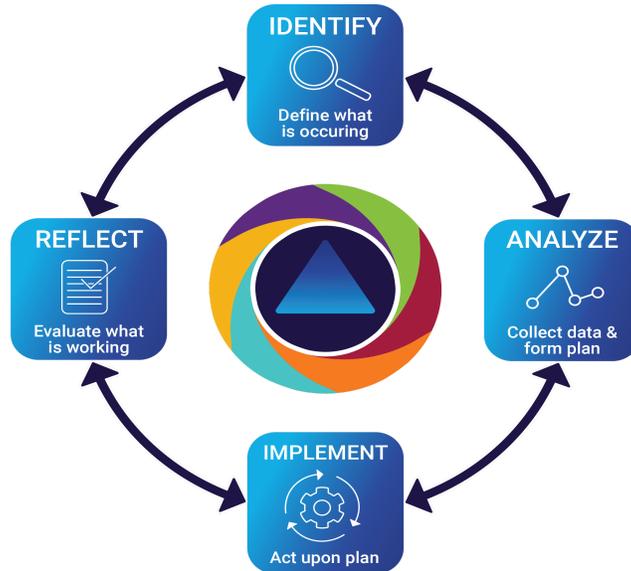
NeMTSS relies on teams utilizing data to guide decision making at all levels (i.e., district, school, grade, classroom, individual) of support. Some important things to consider when using a data-based problem-solving model:

- A problem-solving model provides the structure to identify, develop, implement and evaluate strategies to improve the performance of ALL students.
- The use of scientifically based or evidence-based practices must occur.
- The effectiveness of the problem-solving process is based on both fidelity of the problem-solving process itself and fidelity in the implementation of the instruction/intervention plan.
- The problem-solving process is applicable to all tiers of instruction/intervention and can be used for problem solving at the community, district, school, classroom and/or individual student levels.
- The problem-solving process is iterative. Teams may need to cycle through the problem-solving process multiple times to find successful solutions.

Adapted from Florida's, *A Multi-Tiered System of Supports Implementation Components: Ensuring Common Language and Understanding*.

More information can be found in the **Data-Based Decision Making** section within this document.

Figure 1. Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Model



THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF NeMTSS and ALIGNMENT TO AQUEST TENETS

MTSS has been defined by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) as “the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions.” Following are NeMTSS Essential Elements as defined by Nebraska stakeholders:

- ▶ **Shared Leadership**
- ▶ **Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships**
- ▶ **Evidence-Based Practices: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention and Assessment**
- ▶ **Building Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation**
- ▶ **Layered Continuum of Supports**
- ▶ **Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making**

Shared Leadership



OVERVIEW

Shared Leadership and a culture of collaboration are essential to the success of an MTSS Framework. This is not a process led by special education, nor is it led by general education; rather, it is a joint effort of problem solving on behalf of districts, schools, classrooms, and individual students. To have a strong MTSS Framework, districts must have an effective leadership team, as well as school level support teams. These teams allocate resources and develop a plan for MTSS implementation. Examples of potential teams include:

District leadership teams are typically made up of a varied group of people which may include administrators, teachers, specialists, and parents.

School level support teams typically include clearly defined roles and regularly scheduled meetings to ensure quality and fidelity of instruction and interventions. School teams review and discuss a variety of data sources to ensure timely instructional decisions. School teams frequently include the principal or designee, grade level classroom teachers, instructional coaches, school psychologists, social workers, counselors, parents, and whomever else has expertise related to the specific goal.

Classroom/student level support teams typically include teachers, paraeducator interventionists, and other specialists who have expertise related to the specific student. Classroom teams review and discuss student data and student attendance in class or interventions to ensure timely instructional decisions.

Some examples of the potential roles of educators, specialists, parents and students in NeMTSS can be found here: nemtss.unl.edu

WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

When a district has a system for shared leadership, these teams are highly effective, and communicate regularly with one another to ensure MTSS implementation occurs at all levels. All teams must embrace and utilize a data-based model for problem solving and decision making. Leadership is critical when selecting, utilizing, and sustaining a problem-solving model. DuFour et al. (2004) encourages teams to ask three critical questions: 1) exactly what do we want our students to learn? 2) how will we know when the student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?, and 3) what happens in our schools when a student does not learn?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some guiding questions that teams may consider during the MTSS development or refining process. These questions are intended to drive team member dialogue, reflect on current practice, and determine future action steps.

What is/are:

- the desired or intended future of MTSS in your district?
- the teaming structure(s) utilized within your MTSS framework ([Teaming Structures for MTSS](#))? Does team membership reflect representation of all necessary groups and include persons with decision-making authority?
- the responsibilities of teams (e.g., district team, school team, grade level team) within your MTSS framework? For what tasks is each team held accountable? Are there specific responsibilities of certain team members (administrator, directors, coaches, teachers, etc.)?
- the plan for MTSS team meetings (e.g., frequency, topics, documentation, notes, decision making, implementation monitoring)?

CONNECTION TO NeMTSS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The specific items related to **Shared Leadership** on the **NeMTSS Self-Assessment** include:

1. There is a representative district and building leadership team.
2. Staff have consensus and engage in MTSS Implementation.
3. Resources available to support MTSS implementation are identified and allocated.
4. A plan for MTSS implementation is developed and aligned with the school improvement plan.



Essential Element: Shared Leadership-Leadership and a culture of collaboration are essential to the success of an MTSS Framework. This is not a process led by special education, nor is it led by general education; rather, it is a joint effort of problem solving on behalf of districts, schools, classrooms, and individual students. To have a strong MTSS Framework, districts must have an effective leadership team, as well as school level support teams.

AQUESTT Tenet: Educator Effectiveness-Educator effectiveness ensures that students are surrounded by effective educators throughout their learning experiences such that schools and districts develop effective teachers and leaders who establish a culture of success by focusing on the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework, professional development, building leadership supports and effective local policy makers and superintendents.

Link to NeMTSS Website resources related to Shared Leadership: nemtss.unl.edu

Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships



OVERVIEW

There must be school-wide awareness, understanding, and knowledge of the rationale for and structural elements of MTSS. As stated in the introduction of this document, NeMTSS is a framework that promotes an integrated system connecting **general education and special education**, along with all components of teaching and learning, into a high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention system that is matched to a student's academic, social-emotional and behavior needs. As such, **ALL staff**, at some point, may be directly involved in a problem solving and decision-making process and must have understanding of the MTSS systems, as well as all available data and resources. The integration of continuous improvement processes (CIP), district strategic plans, targeted improvement plans (TIP), MTSS, and other improvement efforts will result in more seamless efforts for all stakeholders.

To develop true collaboration, parents and families must be fundamentally involved in the entire educational experience. Schools should acknowledge that families are active partners with educators to support children's learning. Additionally, partnering with community resources contributes to a student's success and should be strategically tied to specific school and family needs. Families of each student in the school, along with community resources, are key partners in all aspects of MTSS, but their roles may shift at each level of support. At the universal or core tier, they can be involved in determining what constitutes high-quality instruction, collaborating on the development of instructional practices, and provide ideas for culturally responsive materials. Also, families can reinforce classroom behavior and academic expectations, partnering with teachers at the universal level. At more advanced levels of support, families are active participants in the evaluation of data and in the design, implementation, and monitoring of interventions. Throughout the process, their expertise regarding the individual student is vital as they provide unique information and participate in home-school coordinated learning. When there is evidence that a student may have an educational disability, active partnership allows for seamless teaming during the eligibility and IEP process, with a continual emphasis on a continuum of learning supports focused on student success (US Department of Education, January 2014).

WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

It is beneficial to have a process established for all stakeholders to systematically provide feedback on procedures, implementation issues and successes. This

can be done through an item at the end of a school/classroom level meeting agenda with those notes on feedback being shared with the district/building level teams. Parent surveys are also of benefit. Feedback can be useful for teams in updating MTSS procedures, identifying areas in which additional information sharing is necessary to provide rationale for certain procedures (continuous buy-in activities), identifying implementation barriers that require problem solving and planning for improvement, and highlighting successes.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some guiding questions that teams may consider during the MTSS development or refining process. These questions are intended to drive team member dialogue, reflect on current practice, and determine future action steps.

What is/are:

- the communication plan to share decisions, procedures, etc. and receive feedback from stakeholders (who is responsible, what information should be communicated, what is the feedback loop with stakeholders)?
- the process to provide stakeholders with access to student, classroom, and/or districtwide implementation and outcome data?
- strategies to engage family and the school community within MTSS?

CONNECTION TO NeMTSS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The specific items related to **Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships** on the **NeMTSS Self-Assessment** include:

1. Staff are provided data on MTSS implementation fidelity and student outcomes.
2. Staff are provided information on MTSS procedures and a process for communicating implementation issues with the MTSS team for problem solving.
3. Family engagement with MTSS is planned and feedback on engagement is used for continuous improvement.



Essential Element: Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships-Communication, collaboration, and partnerships are essential to the success of the MTSS framework. All staff should have an understanding of the MTSS system, as well as data and resources, that is matched to the students' academic, social-emotional and behavior needs. Communicating and partnering with families and community resources contributes to student success and should be strategically tied to specific school and family needs. Throughout the system, communication is clear and transparent, and partnerships are intentional.

AQUESTT Tenet: Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success-This three-part tenet supports schools and districts to implement best practices in student, parent/guardian and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities by focusing on individualized or personalized learning plans, attendance and participation, community and support services.

Link to NeMTSS Website resources related to Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships: nemtss.unl.edu

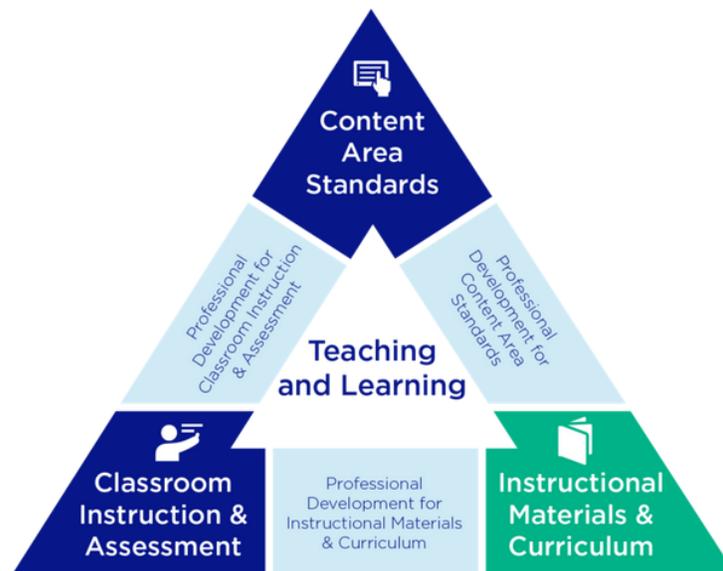
Evidence-Based Practices: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention, and Assessment



OVERVIEW

Within a strong MTSS framework, all instruction, intervention and assessment practices are evidence based. Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are instructional techniques with meaningful research support that represent critical tools in bridging the research-to-practice gap and improving student outcomes (e.g., Cook, Smith, & Tankersley, in press; Slavin, 2002 as cited by Cook & Cook, 2011). To be considered evidence based, a practice must have multiple demonstrations of effectiveness for the population intended from high quality experimental studies. Although a thorough explanation of how to determine if a practice is evidence based is beyond the scope of this document, additional resources can be found by using the website link at the end of this section.

Figure 2. In Nebraska, effective teaching and learning requires the following key components:



Content Area Standards

Content area standards describe what students are expected to know and be able to do. Content area standards outline the content and process skills students will learn in grades PreK-12. Nebraska content area standards include two components: standards and indicators. A [Content Area Standards Reference Guide](#) provides more information about Nebraska's Content Area Standards, the processes used to develop content area standards, and a checklist that is used to ensure Nebraska's Content Area Standards meet expectations for quality.

Curriculum

A curriculum is determined locally and reflects “how” teachers help students learn the content within content area standards. A curriculum outlines the intended outcomes, content, experiences, assessments, and resources for measuring student learning, and it also includes the scope and sequence of what is taught in grades PreK-12. Decisions about curriculum are made locally by individual school districts and classroom teachers. The Nebraska Department of Education does not mandate the curriculum used within a local school.

An effective curriculum is designed to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge that align with content standards (<https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/>), that is, what students need to learn. Curriculum is the what and how lessons are planned, designed, and constructed to address standards. An evidence-based curriculum consists of practices that have been vetted through rigorous research. The curriculum should be selected after a thorough assessment to ensure that the following criteria have been met: it aligns with standards; research of sufficient quality and quantity is available; levels of competency are defined; high rates of responding are embedded; opportunities for providing feedback for correct answers is addressed; corrective feedback and remediation are designated; scope and sequencing that lead to increasing levels of difficulty are spelled out; mastery-based instruction is required; and formative assessment is specified. In the end, for maximum effectiveness, lessons need to be linked to “big ideas,” those core concepts, principles, theories, and processes that provide meaning and context to instruction. (The Wing Institution: Evidence-Based Curriculum, 2018)

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials are the tools and resources that are used as part of a locally-determined curriculum.

The Nebraska Department of Education has developed a resource to support districts in the selection of high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials and curricula. The Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative

<https://nematerialsmatter.org/> highlights high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials and offers Nebraska-specific guidance documents to ensure materials meet the expectations of Nebraska's Content Area Standards. The website also includes suggested steps and sample timelines for the instructional materials selection process and provides additional resources to support instructional materials selection and implementation for English Language Arts, mathematics, and science.

Classroom Instruction

During classroom instruction, a teacher implements the locally-determined curriculum, including instructional materials, and uses evidence-based teaching methods and strategies to engage students to support student learning of content area standards.

Instruction is the way the curriculum is delivered to students. Core academic and behavioral programs provide a foundation for the use of evidence-based instruction. Core programs and curriculum materials that are aligned to standards and based in research, and that are integrated within the framework of a well-designed instructional model and implemented with fidelity, support student learning. The thoughtful use of evidence-based instruction and high-quality materials are key components in creating strong core instruction, increasing achievement, and decreasing the likelihood that some students will need targeted interventions. When selecting evidence-based instructional practices and strategies in the context of a high-quality curriculum and core instructional model, consider the following:

- Scope, sequence, and pacing of instruction
- Differentiated materials
- Alignment to Nebraska content area standards
- Opportunities for small, large-group, and individualized instruction
- Monitoring and evaluation of fidelity of implementation
- Professional development needs of teachers and building leaders

The use of evidence-based instruction consists of a complex interaction between the curriculum, instructional materials, the classroom environment, and the needs of individual students. Therefore, context, purpose, and timing of such practices must be considered.

Evidence-based Intervention

Even with high quality, evidence-based core instruction, there will be some students who need additional supports to be successful behaviorally and/or academically. MTSS leadership teams should identify evidence-based intervention programs and practices, provide guidance around delivery and use of interventions, including matching intervention to student need, and, ensure a systematic process for monitoring intervention delivery, and examining effectiveness of interventions for individuals and groups of students to plan for

next steps (e.g., discontinuing intervention, continuing intervention as is, modifying intervention, intensifying intervention, or fading intervention). When considering the use of additional evidence-based interventions for students who need additional support and extensions from the core curriculum, districts need to consider how to identify and select evidence-based interventions that will:

- Establish a schedule of interventions
- Address the identified needs
- Provide professional development and coaching for staff to implement the intervention effectively
- Assess the fidelity of implementation as part of ongoing implementation
- Develop guidelines for intervention delivery
- Develop guidelines for documenting intervention delivery
- Develop guidelines for reviewing program-embedded intervention data
- Develop guidelines for intensifying interventions

Once a district has determined which evidence-based curriculum, instruction and interventions to implement, they must pair materials with evidence-based assessment to continue to monitor student skill development and growth.

Evidence-based Assessment

Assessments are the multiple measures (formative, interim, and summative) used to gather evidence of student learning relative to content area standards.

Student data are used in the decision-making process at multiple levels and for a variety of purposes within an MTSS (e.g., evaluating overall effectiveness of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports for all students; determining which students need to receive intervention support; intervention planning for individual students; monitoring effectiveness of interventions and planning next steps for students). To provide high-quality data for decision making, MTSS teams develop a comprehensive assessment system. A comprehensive assessment system includes a collection of **reliable and valid**, assessment data (both formative & summative) for the following purposes:

- **Universal screening process:** administering assessments and/or collecting existing data to answer questions related to overall effectiveness of the MTSS and to identify students who may need intervention supports.
 - Components of a universal screening process include:
 - **Skills-based screeners:** assessments conducted typically 3 times per year to assess relevant skills and concepts. Skills measured will depend upon the grade level and time of the year.
 - **Social-emotional behavior screeners:** measures completed to

assess student risk for social, emotional and behavioral problems.

- Historical academic and behavioral data: data from outcome measures and previous screening, and progress monitoring are utilized along with grades (course failure) in a multi-step system to identify students in need of intervention supports.
 - Behavioral data: data collected through Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs), suspensions and expulsions, attendance, behavior rating scales, etc..
- **Diagnostic measures**: formal and informal tools used to assess specific academic skills or examine functions of behavior.
 - Uses of diagnostic data include: identifying specific skill needs to best match students to academic intervention supports and developing hypotheses about why problems may be occurring to best match behavior intervention strategies, determine appropriate lesson placement within intervention programs, and determine appropriate level at which to set goals and monitor progress (e.g., survey-level assessment).
 - Diagnostic assessments are typically administered for students for whom the universal screening process did not provide enough data to guide intervention planning or for students who have not been making expected progress in the current intervention and more information is needed to guide next steps with instruction.
 - **Progress-monitoring measures**: assessment tools utilized to examine effectiveness of interventions and guide decision making. *Progress monitoring data should be collected for all students receiving intervention supports and represented graphically.*
 - There are two main types of academic progress monitoring tools used within an MTSS process.
 - Mastery monitoring: data on mastery of discrete skills (often collected from assessments embedded within intervention programs) used to make day-to-day decisions regarding instruction (e.g., a need to reteach a skill or concept, a need to move placement within intervention lessons, etc.).
 - General Outcome Measures (GOMs): ongoing progress monitoring of broader academic skills utilized to make decisions regarding effectiveness of the intervention and guide decision making related to continuing intervention, fading/discontinuing intervention, or intensifying intervention
 - General Outcome Measures should be:
 - Efficient/brief to administer

- Repeatable
- Sensitive to growth over time
- Have alternate forms with equivalent difficulty to allow for frequent administration
- Valid and reliable for the purpose of progress monitoring
- Measure accuracy and automaticity with skills
- Curriculum independent measure of broad skills within a particular content domain
- GOM data can be utilized to make decisions regarding effectiveness of the intervention supports at the **system level** such as:
 - Are students receiving intervention meeting grade level goals at the school and/or district level?
 - Are there certain interventions that are providing higher rates of growth than other interventions?
- GOM data can be utilized to make decisions regarding effectiveness of the intervention for an **individual student** such as:
 - Is the intervention working (i.e., the student is progressing at an appropriate rate of improvement) and should continue as is?
 - Did the intervention work and the intervention support can be faded or stopped (i.e., the student met grade level goals)?
 - Is the intervention not working (i.e., student has not met grade level goals and is not making an appropriate rate of progress) and needs to be adjusted or intensified?
- Progress monitoring of behavioral and social-emotional skills
 - Measures used to assess student acquisition and use of behavioral or social-emotional skills will depend on the focus of the intervention (i.e., target behavior and/or replacement behavior).
 - As with academic progress monitoring data, behavioral data collection should be repeated over time and graphically represented to aid in use of data in evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention.
 - Some examples of sources of progress monitoring data for behavior may come from direct observation of the target behavior and/or replacement behavior, office discipline referrals, intervention artifacts (e.g., results of behavior charts or daily behavior report cards).

The *National Center for Intensive Intervention* has a Tools Chart providing

information on various progress monitoring tools [here](#).

Outcome measures -- Summative measures (typically administered near the end of the school year) that provide an overall look at the effectiveness of instructional supports in various content areas. When examined over time, these data may be helpful in answering questions such as:

- Are students (including various subgroups of students) meeting standards?
- Is our overall instructional program effective for all groups of students?
- Were pre-established goals met at various levels (grade, school, district) for various groups of students?
- Is change needed?

Too often collection of assessment data takes away from valuable instructional time for students. It is important in building and/or refining a comprehensive assessment system that schools are not over-assessing students. Schools should be collecting the least amount of student data necessary to provide accurate, high-quality information for decision making. It may be helpful for districts/schools to take stock of current assessment practices ([sample activity for taking stock of current assessments](#)) to ensure they have technically adequate assessments for all purposes, but aren't collecting more data than necessary for good decision making.

In addition to identifying which assessments will be used in a district or school, the comprehensive assessment plan should provide guidance for training and support for administration and scoring of assessments; how data will be collected (frequency, by whom, when, where); managing/storing the data so it can be quickly and easily accessed by all who need to use it; and use of the data for decision making. It may be helpful for district or school teams to create an assessment matrix outlining the tools as well as guidelines for collection of the data, data storage, and data use to ensure valid and reliable data are collected for all purposes and readily available for teams to utilize in problem solving ([sample data collection matrix](#)).

Fidelity of Evidence-based Practices

A critical aspect of the use of EBPs is fidelity of implementation. Fidelity is the degree to which a program, curriculum or intervention is implemented as designed through research or as developed by a problem-solving team. This includes the amount of time provided (e.g., 10 minutes, 3 times per week) and the quality of the delivery (e.g., each step of a protocol, behavior plan, or lesson plan).

While program fidelity of all critical components is necessary to establish the effectiveness of an MTSS, accurate implementation of EBPs across the

continuum of support is vital to obtain desired student outcomes. A large body of research indicates that EBPs are less effective, or not effective at all, when not implemented with fidelity (Nelson, Oliver, Hebert, & Bohaty, 2015). In practice, before a student or students are deemed unresponsive to core instruction, fidelity of the core curriculum should be evaluated and corrected if necessary. Likewise, before a student is deemed unresponsive to increasing layers of support, fidelity of intervention implementation needs to be assessed and corrected.

It is recommended that fidelity be collected across evidence-based curriculum, instruction, intervention and assessment. Fidelity can be collected through permanent products (e.g., lesson plans, logs of intervention delivery) and directly through observations of implementation. Many programs or curriculum have fidelity measures already developed, however, fidelity measures may need to be developed for things such as individual behavior support plans. More information about importance of fidelity to determine eligibility for special education under the category of Specific Learning Disability is provided in the accompanying section/document entitled *Determining Special Education Eligibility for Specific Learning Disabilities*.

Guiding questions addressing fidelity include:

- Were the important pieces of the intervention delivered?
- Was the instruction consistent with the scope and sequence of the intervention?
- Did students receive the recommended amount and types of instruction?
- What was the nature of the delivery and teacher/student interactions?
- Did the teacher provide the instruction in the manner expected?
- Did the students follow the directions and complete the activities as expected?

WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

The use of EBPs with fidelity increases the likelihood that students will have positive outcomes. When schools do not consider the research supporting a practice, they are taking a chance that the time and resources put into the practice will be wasted on ineffective practices that do not lead to desired outcomes. Although not every evidence-based practice will work for every student, quality MTSS implementation uses EBPs, implemented with fidelity, and assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of the practice and select different EBPs or change frequency or duration as needed.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some guiding questions that teams may consider during the MTSS development or refining process. These questions are intended to drive team member dialogue, reflect on current practice, and determine future action steps.

What is/are:

- ❑ the instructional materials, instructional model, and expectations for instruction (e.g., materials used for core instruction, expectations for core instruction, schedule, small group, pacing, etc.)?
- ❑ the materials to be used for intervention; expectations for intervention (e.g., schedule, group size, pacing/lesson progress targets, minimum dosage (duration & frequency), etc.)?
- ❑ the process your district uses for approving materials to supplement core instruction, including the process for selecting new core and intervention materials?
- ❑ intervention documentation (e.g., how each intervention group will be documented, when, and by whom using what form)?
- ❑ the information to be included on intervention documentation forms (e.g., date, duration, absences, difficult activities/skills for the group, individual student struggles, behavior issues)?
- ❑ the review of intervention documentation data (collected when, by whom, and reviewed when and by whom)?
- ❑ the technically adequate assessment tools used and for what purposes (e.g., screener, progress monitoring, diagnostic, outcome) within your MTSS framework?
- ❑ the guidelines for administering assessments (e.g., administration schedule (frequency), administered to whom and by whom, plan for collecting reliability checks, data management system used to enter data and who will enter data)?

CONNECTION TO NeMTSS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The specific items related to **Evidence-Based Practices: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention and Assessment** on the **NeMTSS Self-Assessment** include:

1. Evidence-based programs and practices are implemented with fidelity.
2. Most teachers are consistently implementing effective instructional practices (as outlined in district instructional model) to teach critical content.
3. School schedules aligned to support multiple levels of intervention are consistently implemented.
4. There is a systematic screening process and staff engage in ongoing professional learning for administration of assessments and use of data within the screening process.
5. Student progress specific to academic, behavior, and social-emotional goals specified in intervention plans are monitored.



Essential Element: **Evidence-Based Practice: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention and Assessment Practices**-Implementation of an effective MTSS process ensures that the instruction being provided reflects a strong core curriculum including evidence-based strategies that are utilized to enhance student learning and engagement coupled with effective professional development opportunities that secure fidelity of implementation.

AQUESTT Tenet: **Educational Opportunities and Access**-Successful implementation of instruction ensures access to comprehensive opportunities and differentiated instruction for every student. An MTSS blends academic, social-emotional, and behavior problem solving processes and varied levels of support.

Link to NeMTSS Website resources related to Evidence-Based Practices: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention and Assessment: nemtss.unl.edu

Link to NDE Website resources related to Evidence-Based Practice: Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention and Assessment: education.ne.gov/tl/

Building Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation



OVERVIEW

Several **elements of the district and school infrastructure must be in place to implement and sustain MTSS** including strong leadership, professional learning, and coaching.

Adapted from Florida's, *A Multi-Tiered System of Supports Implementation Components: Ensuring Common Language and Understanding*.

Effective, actively involved, and **strong leadership** that demonstrates connections between the MTSS framework with the district strategic plan, school mission statements, and organizational continuous improvement efforts must be evident. There must be alignment of policies and procedures across classroom, grade, building, and district levels with ongoing facilitation and use of a problem-solving process to support planning, delivering, and evaluating the effectiveness of services. Strong, positive, and ongoing collaborative partnerships, with all stakeholders who provide education services or who benefit from increases in student outcomes, are key for deep implementation and sustainability. Comprehensive, efficient, and user-friendly data systems for supporting decision making at all levels, from the individual student level to the aggregate district level, should provide accurate and timely data for decision making.

Strong, targeted, comprehensive **professional learning opportunities** are required to create and ensure implementation of a successful MTSS framework.

WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

Professional learning is a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improve teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (Hirsh, S., & Killion, J., 2009). This type of support for educators fosters collective responsibility, is related to standards and school improvement goals, is facilitated by leaders, and informed by educator and student data within a continuous improvement and problem-solving model.

The length and focus of professional learning opportunities directly impact teaching quality and student outcomes. When teachers are provided an average of 49 hours of professional learning a year related to the curriculum they teach, student outcomes increase 21 percentile points (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley, 2007). Professional learning that includes collaboration

and teamwork facilitates collective responsibility for ALL students rather than feelings of responsibility for only some students. Team-based professional learning fosters shared responsibility among stakeholders. Ongoing data-driven professional learning (PL) plans and activities that align to core student goals and staff needs are integral to the success of the state, district, and building level MTSS. Communicating outcomes with stakeholders and celebrating success frequently is essential at all levels of the infrastructure and framework.

Relationship Between Professional Learning & Student Results



Florida, MTSS (2013)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some guiding questions that teams may consider during the MTSS development or refining process. These questions are intended to drive team member dialogue, reflect on current practice, and determine future action steps.

What is/are:

- the process for making decisions regarding PL and how decisions will be made for determining what PL experiences you will hold in your district and/or send staff to attend?
- the training needs related to core and intervention instruction, assessment, coaching, leadership, and data-based decision making?
- training for teachers, paraprofessionals, special education staff, administrators, coaches, and new staff each year considered?
- the plan for coaching to support implementation of core instruction and

intervention (coaching process, time for coaching, documenting coaching supports, evaluating the effectiveness of coaching supports)?

- ❑ the indicators of implementation of core and intervention supports?
- ❑ the process for collection and use of fidelity data for core and intervention (on which practices will you monitor fidelity for core and intervention; who collects fidelity data/observes to collect instructional data; what format is used to collect fidelity data; who will collect the data for whom and with what frequency; how will fidelity data be used (e.g., to assist with identifying professional learning needs, ensuring students received the appropriate amount and quality of intervention support)?

CONNECTION TO NeMTSS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The specific items related to **Building Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation** on the **NeMTSS Self-Assessment** include:

1. The leadership team facilitates professional development and coaching for staff members on data-based problem solving relative to their job roles and responsibilities.
2. The leadership team facilitates professional development and coaching for all staff on multi-tiered instruction and intervention relative to their job roles and responsibilities.
3. Coaching is used to support MTSS implementation (systems level coaching).
4. Fidelity data are collected and used to inform decision making (e.g., identifying additional professional learning needs for staff; determining effectiveness of interventions).



Essential Element: **Building Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation**-The development of knowledge, resources, and organizational structures necessary to operationalize all elements of MTSS to meet the established implementation goals.

AQuESTT Tenet: **Educational Opportunities and Access**-When professional learning is standards-based, it has greater potential to change what educators know, are able to do, and believe. When educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions change, they have a broader repertoire of effective strategies to use to adapt their practices to meet performance expectations and student learning needs. When educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results. When student results improve, the cycle repeats for continuous improvement. This cycle works two ways: If educators are not achieving the results they want, they determine what changes in practice are needed and then what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to make the desired changes. They then consider how to apply the standards so that they can engage in the learning needed to strengthen their practices.

Link to NeMTSS Website resources related to Building Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation: nemtss.unl.edu

Layered Continuum of Supports



OVERVIEW

Improving learning outcomes for every child requires a continuum of supports that provides high quality core curriculum and instruction with increasingly intensive interventions for some students. As such, supports are layered on to core instruction with increasing intensity based on student need.

- **Core (every student)** is the first level of prevention and it should be the focus of instruction, providing a strong foundation. Students will receive high quality instruction using evidence-based curriculum and instructional practices aligned to grade-level Nebraska State Standards (See Evidence-based Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention, and Assessment Practices). Highly qualified teachers implement best teaching practices to ensure the academic success of all students. Effective core curriculum and instruction ensures that at least 80-85% of the students will be successful without additional intervention. Universal screenings and ongoing assessments are conducted to identify students at risk for academic failure and to evaluate if students are benefiting from instruction.
- **Intervention (some students)** addresses the needs of struggling students by matching high-quality intervention to students' needs when students are not making adequate gains from **core** alone. **Intervention is in addition to core** and may be appropriate for approximately 10-15% of students who require additional support. Students should receive additional intense small group attention in the specific area of need. Progress monitoring of specific skills will provide evidence if a student does or does not make sufficient progress. Data from assessment and progress monitoring are used to determine how to intensify interventions for those not making adequate progress. (See the Data-Based Decision Making section).

WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

With ongoing collaboration, evidence-based instructional practices, and data review procedures within an MTSS framework, students will benefit from a consistent system of increasingly intensive supports.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some guiding questions that teams may consider during the MTSS development or refining process. These questions are intended to drive team member dialogue, reflect on current practice, and determine future action steps.

What is/are:

- ❑ the proficiency percentage of all students within the core? Are 80-85% of students successful without additional intervention?
- ❑ the practices used to determine the evidence and the potential success of core instruction and interventions?
- ❑ the decision-making rules to determine movement from core to intervention and back to core?

CONNECTION TO NeMTSS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The specific items related to the [Layered Continuum of Supports](#) in the **NeMTSS Self-Assessment** include:

1. Core academic practices exist that clearly identify learning standards, school-wide expectations for instruction that engage students, and school-wide assessments.
2. Core behavior and social-emotional practices exist that clearly identify school-wide expectations, social-emotional skills instruction, classroom management practices, and school-wide behavior and social-emotional data.
3. Supplemental academic intervention practices exist that include strategies addressing integrated common student needs, are linked to core instruction, and are monitored using assessments/data sources tied directly to the academic, behavior, and social-emotional skills taught.
4. Supplemental behavior and social-emotional intervention practices exist that address integrated common student needs, are linked to core instruction, and are monitored using assessments/data sources tied directly to the skills taught.
5. Support teams use a systematic problem-solving process to plan interventions for students.
6. Interventions are intensified, as appropriate for select students, using evidence-based programs, practices, or strategies.



Essential Element: **Layered Continuum of Supports**-The culturally and developmentally relevant practices, layered from universal instruction (for every student) to intervention (for some/few students).

AQUESTT Tenet: **Educational Opportunities and Access**-Successful implementation of an MTSS ensures access to a full continuum of supports (Pre-K through graduation) for academic, social-emotional, and behavioral growth in preparation for postsecondary education and career goals.

Link to NeMTSS Website resources related to Layered Continuum of Supports:
nemtss.unl.edu

Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making



OVERVIEW

An effective MTSS relies on teams utilizing data to guide decision making at all levels (i.e., district, school, grade, classroom, individual) of support. In building, implementing, evaluating, and refining an MTSS, teams examine data within a systematic decision-making and problem-solving process (see Figure 1). Teams also examine data within this process to guide instructional and intervention decisions for individual students and groups of students. Within this process, the following questions are answered:

- At the **systems level** to evaluate/continuously improve the overall MTSS ([link for more on data based decision making at the systems level](#)):
 - Are core supports being implemented as designed and is the core working for students?
 - Are intervention supports being implemented as designed and are intervention supports working for students? Are certain interventions producing better results than others?
- At the **individual student level** ([link for more on data based decision making at the individual student level](#)):
 - Which students need intervention?
 - Is the intervention effective for an individual student/group of students?
 - How do we intensify intervention when needed?
 - Do we need to evaluate for special education?

Two broad domains of data important to the process are **student data** and **implementation data**. *Student data* refer to academic, behavioral, and social-emotional data collected. *Implementation data* refer to data collected on “what the adults are doing” and how well outlined/defined elements of MTSS are being carried out (e.g., fidelity of schedule for core instruction, fidelity to use of explicit instructional practices during intervention delivery, reliability of administration and scoring of assessments, fidelity to dosage (e.g., frequency, duration, etc.) of intervention, fidelity and effectiveness of coaching supports provided for teachers, whether utilized evidence-based programs and practices, etc.).

WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

Data and research should guide decision making in design of an MTSS (e.g., selection of programs, practices and assessments), the allocation of resources based on need (within buildings or across buildings in districts), and the planning for implementation support to ensure supports are built to address the unique

needs of individual districts and schools.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some guiding questions that teams may consider during the MTSS development or refining process. These questions are intended to drive team member dialogue, reflect on current practice, and determine future action steps.

What is/are:

- the decision rules for identifying students for intervention (what assessment data will be used at each grade level, criteria for determining need at various points across the year, procedures for validating the data (if needed), date(s) by which intervention will begin after data determining need, who will apply the decision rules)?
- the process for matching students to interventions and forming intervention groups?
- the guidelines for monitoring student progress in intervention and setting goals (what measures are used for progress monitoring at each grade level), procedures for determining if you will monitor students off grade level, procedures for setting goals other than the grade level goal?
- the decision rules for examining intervention effectiveness and making decisions for students receiving intervention (who analyzes intervention data for decision making, what data analysis procedures will be used to determine student progress, what are the criteria for determining when to intensify supports, fade supports, discontinue supports, re-enter intervention, initiate individual student problem solving)?
- the process for documenting intervention decision making (which students are receiving intervention and decisions made regarding progress), where/how are the data documented (e.g., a spreadsheet of students receiving intervention; within the data management system for your progress monitoring tool, etc.), who is responsible for keeping the data up-to-date)?
- the guidelines for intensification when an intervention is not working to support students in meeting goals/making adequate progress?

CONNECTION TO NeMTSS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The items specific to **Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making** within the **NeMTSS Self-Assessment** include:

1. Integrated data-based problem solving for student academic, behavior, and social-emotional outcomes occurs across content areas, grade levels, and continuum.
2. MTSS Leadership Team uses student data and implementation data to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.
3. There are pre-established guidelines for decision making for identifying students to receive intervention support.

4. There are pre-established decision guidelines for evaluating effectiveness of interventions for individual students



Essential Element: Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making-An effective MTSS relies on teams utilizing data to guide decision making at all levels (i.e., district, school, grade, classroom, individual) of support. In building, implementing, evaluating, and refining an MTSS, teams examine data within a systematic decision-making and problem-solving process. Teams also examine data within this process to guide instructional and intervention decisions for individual students and groups of students.

AQUESTT Tenet: Assessment-The results of multiple assessment sources (national, state, and classroom-based) should be used to measure student achievement of college and career ready standards, and be used as an integral part of the instructional process through the use of individual adaptive assessments, classroom based assessments, state assessments, and national/international assessments.

Link to NeMTSS Website resources related to Data Based Problem Solving and Decision Making: nemtss.unl.edu

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NeMTSS Glossary of Terms

Assessment: Assessments are the multiple measures (formative, interim, and summative) used to gather evidence of student learning relative to content area standards.

Benchmark: A standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed.

Classroom Instruction: During classroom instruction, a teacher implements the locally-determined curriculum, including instructional materials, and uses evidence-based teaching methods and strategies to engage students to support student learning of content area standards.

Content Area Standards: Content area standards describe what students are expected to know and be able to do. Content area standards outline the content and process skills students will learn in grades K-12. Nebraska content area standards include two components: standards and indicators.

Continuous Improvement Process (CIP): Typically associated with school improvement activities.

Curriculum: A curriculum is determined locally and reflects “how” teachers help students learn the content within content area standards. A curriculum outlines the intended outcomes, content, experiences, assessments, and resources for measuring student learning, and it also includes the scope and sequence of what is taught in grades PreK-12.

Decision Rules: The systematic procedures by which patterns of data are analyzed. This data analysis assists in making a decision about the effectiveness of an intervention.

Implementation Fidelity: The degree to which an intervention is delivered as intended and is critical to successful translation of evidence-based interventions into practice.

Instructional Materials: Instructional materials are the tools and resources that are used as part of a locally-determined curriculum.

Intervention Response Rules: The systematic procedures by which patterns of data are analyzed to assist in making decisions about the effectiveness of an intervention for an individual.

Leadership Team: A team that utilizes data analysis to provide infrastructure and professional development plans for the strategic implementation of MTSS at a system-wide level.

NeMTSS or MTSS: A service delivery system based on a concept that ALL students require early and powerful general education instruction with the potential for interventions of increasing intensity.

MTSS Implementation: The process of integrating and supporting a system of evidence-based curriculum, instruction, intervention, and assessment to meet the needs of all students through a tiered system of support.

MTSS Team: A group of individuals who analyze individual student data and participate in progress monitoring to make decisions about the effectiveness of instruction for a student or group of students.

Professional Development (PD): A broad term that describes processes used to build skills needed for one's job expectations within education, and is also called *Professional Learning, Continuous Learning, Continuing Education, and Staff Development*.

Progress Monitoring: A process used to assess student's academic performance, to quantify a student rate of responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

Response to Intervention (RtI): Practices consistent with MTSS used to determine eligibility for special education or a specific learning disability.

Tier 1 - CORE (ALL STUDENTS): The key component of tiered instruction; all students receive instruction within an evidence-based, scientifically-researched core program.

Tier 2 - INTERVENTION (SOME STUDENTS): Some children who fall below the expected levels of accomplishment (benchmarks) and are at some risk for failure, but who are still above levels considered to indicate a high risk for failure. Instruction is provided in smaller groups or individually supplementing and supporting the Core Program.

Tier 3- INTENSIFIED INTERVENTION (FEW STUDENTS): Few children who are considered to be at high risk for failure and were not responsive to previous instruction, according to expected levels of accomplishment (benchmarks) and require more intensive individualized instruction to supplement and support Tier 1 and/or Tier 2 programs.

Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP): Should be aligned to a district's school improvement plan.

Universal Screening: Screening conducted to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes.

APPENDIX/RESOURCES

[NeMTSS Self Assessment](#)

[NeMTSS Assurances Document](#)

[NeMTSS Funding Document](#)

[NeMTSS SLD Verification Q and A](#)



NeMTSS FRAMEWORK



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