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MTSS & HAL: A Natural Connection

Sheyanne Meadows
High Ability Learning Specialist
Nebraska Department of Education

**What do you think of
when you hear High
Ability Learner?**



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Setting the Stage: The Problem

Definitions of High Ability Learner

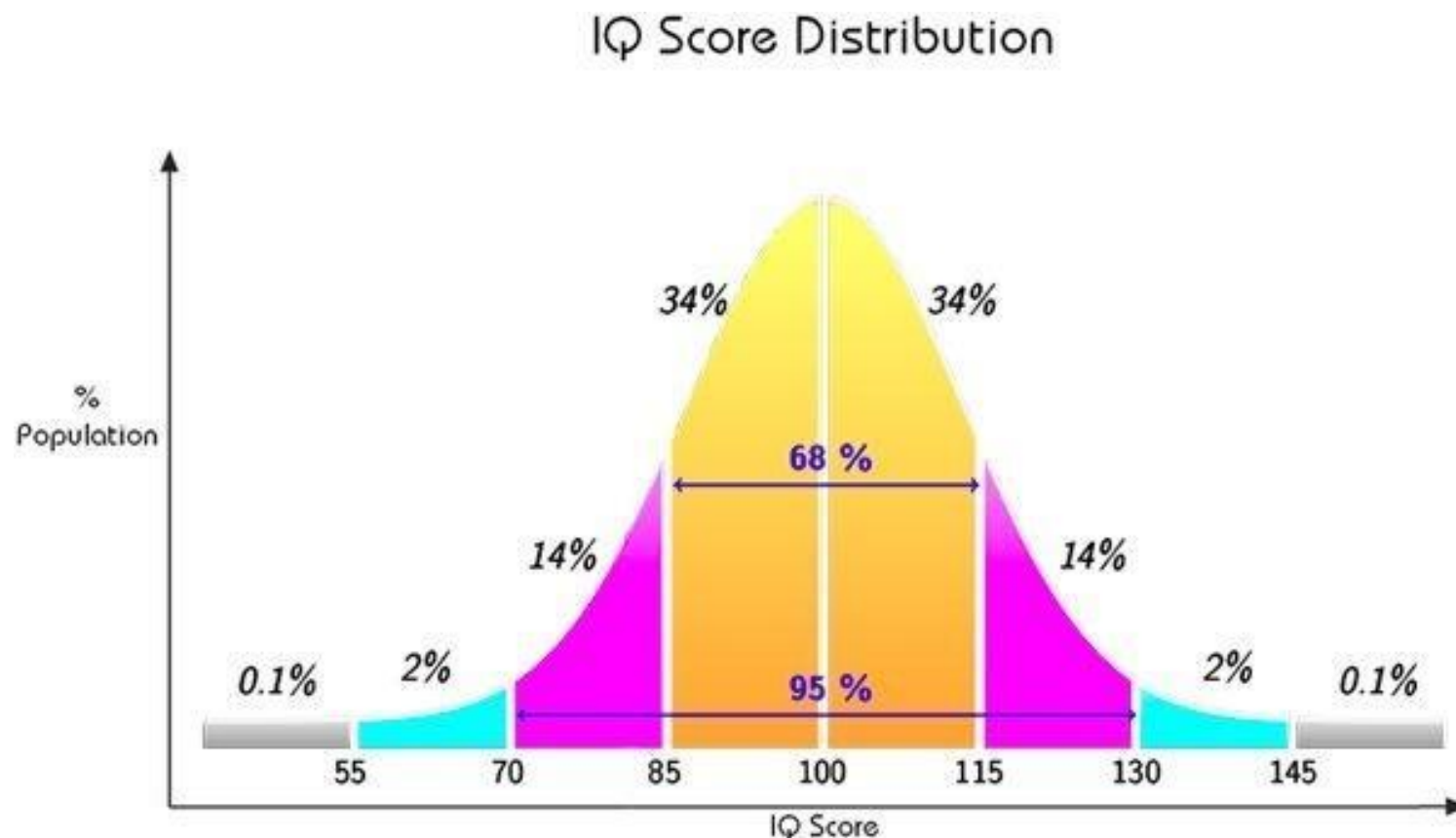
- **Nebraska:**

“Learner with high ability means a student who gives evidence of high performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, or artistic capacity or in a specific academic fields and who requires accelerated or differentiated curriculum programs in order to develop those capabilities fully.” (Rule 3)

- **National Association for Gifted Children**

“Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential...”

Intelligence Distribution



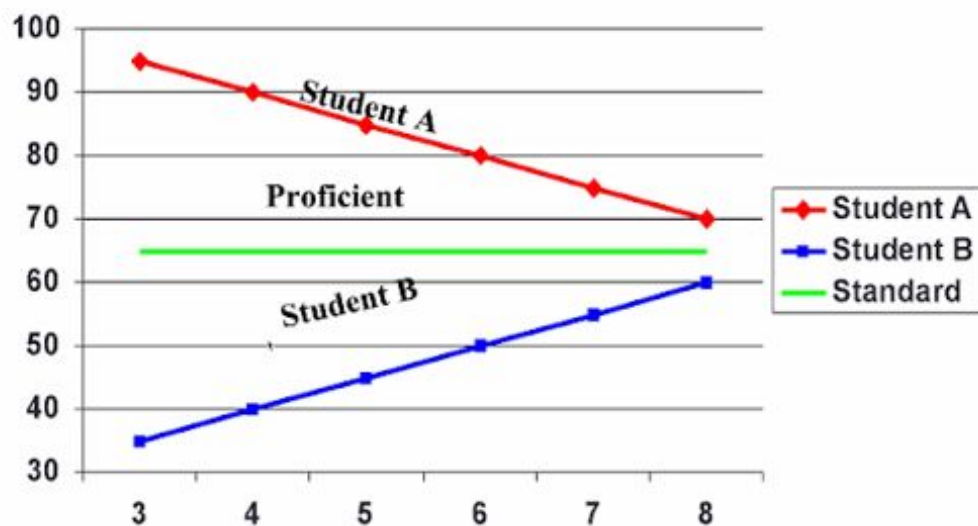
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Why is this important?

- Students who perform at the highest levels make little to no growth.
- “Gifted students have special needs; they are at risk of learning the least in the classroom.”

Choice & Walker, 2017



Battelle for Kids, 2008;
Stambaugh, 2020



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Implications of Unmet Needs for HALs

- Underachievement
- Negative attitude toward school
- Disruptive behavior
- Neurotic perfectionism
- Unclear sense of identity
- Poor self-concept
- Low self-esteem



High Ability Learner Myths

- ***Gifted students don't need help—they will be fine on their own.***
 - High ability learners need challenge and support to reach their full potential. Most high ability students know roughly half of the grade-level curriculum before the year begins. Boredom can cause frustration and behavioral issues.
- ***A student is not gifted if they are receiving poor grades.***
 - Some students may become bored or frustrated in class and lose interest. For some students, they may perform poorly to gain acceptance of their peers. These scenarios may cause poor grades.
- ***Gifted programs are elitist.***

“Contrary to popular public opinion, when gifted students are placed in classes together, they do not come to the conclusion that they are ‘better than’ everyone else.’ Rather, they are humbled by finding their peers who know more than they do.”



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Common Practices in HAL Programs

- Single, high stakes test score identification
- One or two entry points
- Pull-out programs
- Same decisions/services for all HAL students; not responsive
- Seen as “separate”



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Turn and Talk:

**What does your district currently do
for HAL students?**



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**The Solution:
MTSS/HAL Systemic
Integration**

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- Meeting the needs of ALL students includes High Ability Learners
- Streamlining systems
 - HAL is often seen as separate or “one more thing”
- Responsive practices will improve student outcomes
- Build capacity and efficacy of educators



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Substantial Theoretical Framework

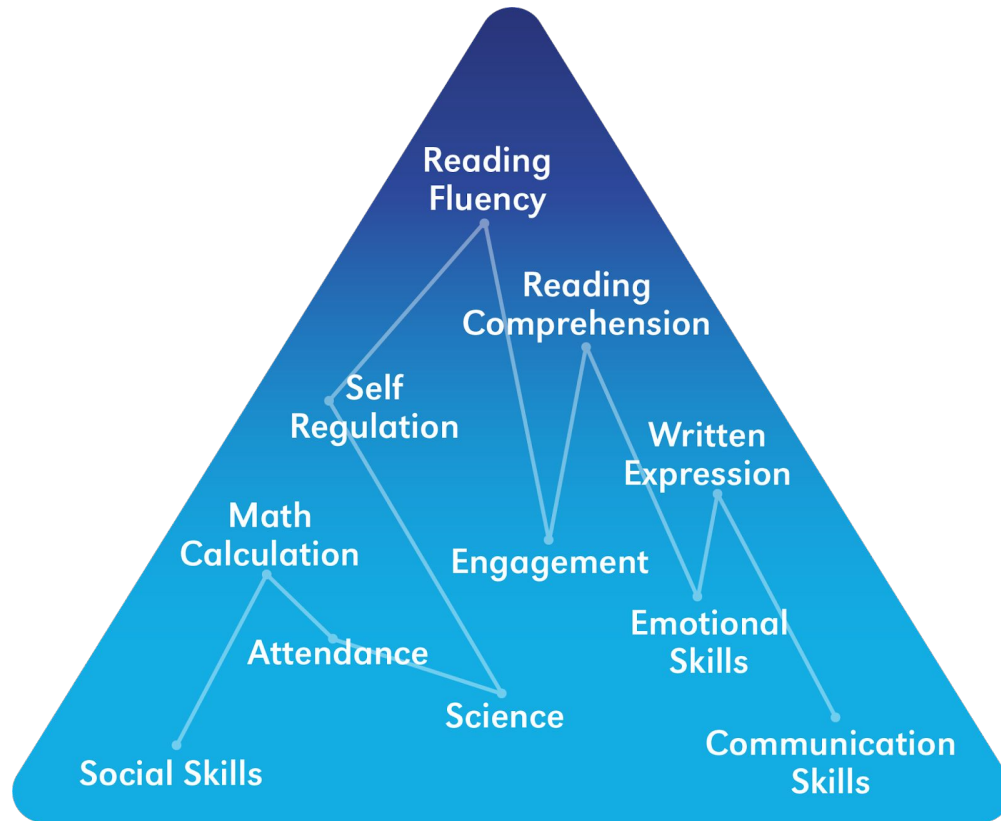
- The traditional screening process flags students who score low and may warrant additional intervention. Similar attention should be paid to those who score above the average
- Roughly the top 25% of students in the classroom could benefit from additional challenge. The top 5-10% (usually identified HAL) may need more intensive interventions.
- Responsive to the student—NOT the label
 - “A label is not required for students to receive interventions and support. The responsibility for student success becomes shared responsibility within a supportive professional environment”



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HAL students are NOT necessarily good at everything!



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Diversity of Needs

- **HAL students may not be strong in all areas!**
 - Gifted students have domain-specific talents and interests
 - Twice-Exceptional students
 - Low income and minority students

“Young people who may not be outstanding performers across the board but who demonstrate domain-specific talents and achievements would have a chance to experience an education tailored to eliciting optimal performance.”

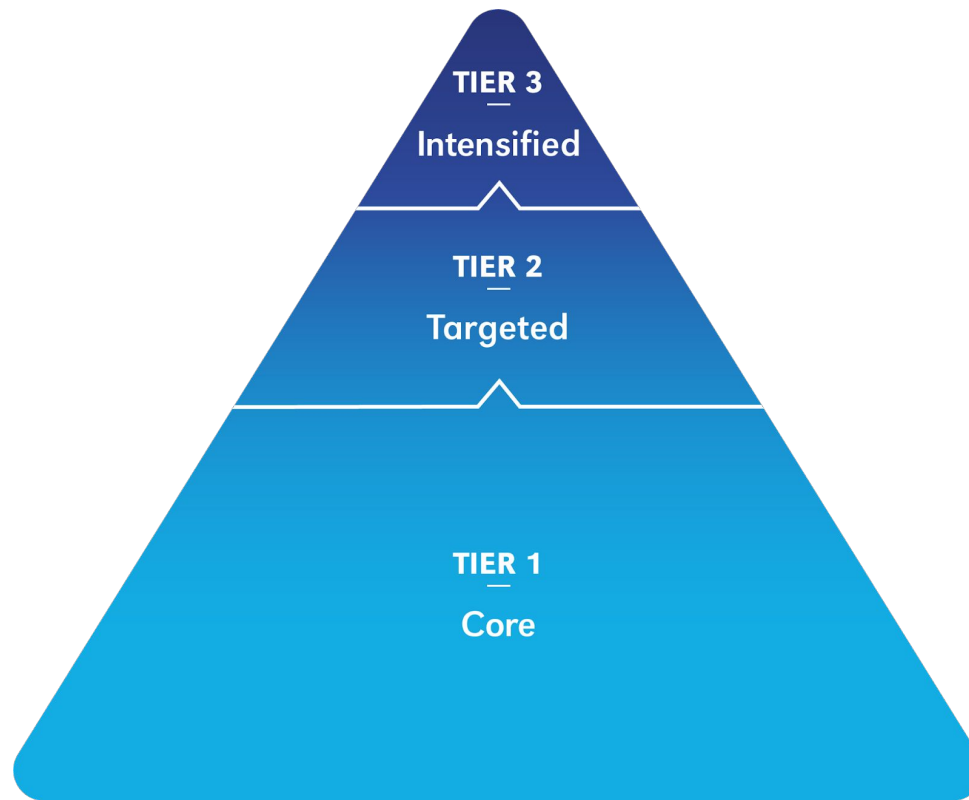
Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011



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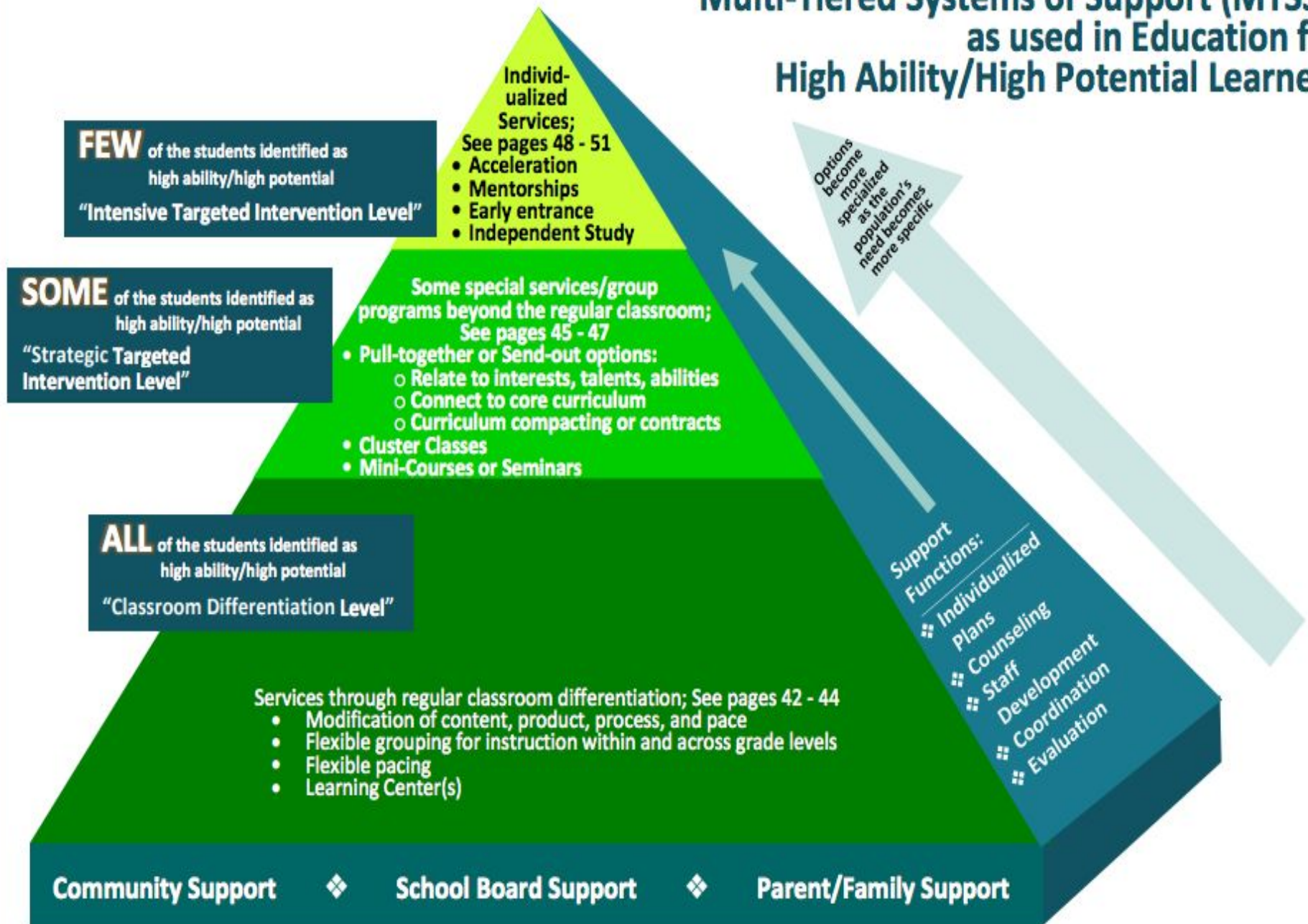
HAL students are CORE students FIRST!



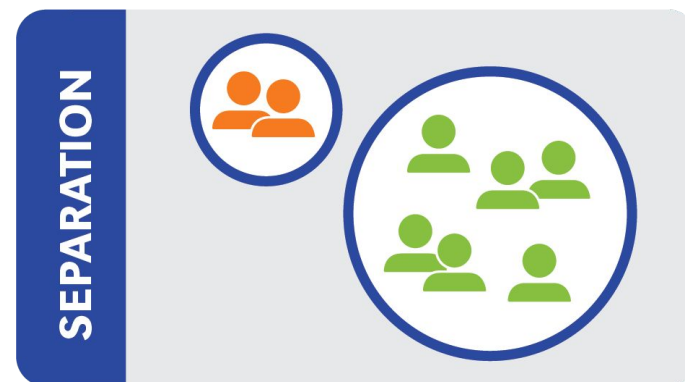
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Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)* as used in Education for High Ability/High Potential Learners



Moving Toward Inclusion



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More Equitable Identification

- Front-loading is an evidence-supported method for identifying HAL students from historically marginalized populations
- More opportunities and access for more students
- MTSS encourages a whole-child, team approach versus single score identification



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Discuss:

**What pieces of HAL/MTSS integration
make the most sense to you?**

**What pieces do you still have
questions about?**



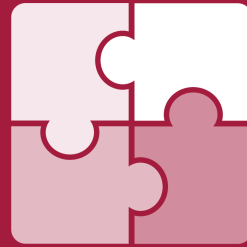
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**The How:
The NeMTSS Essential
Elements**



Shared Leadership



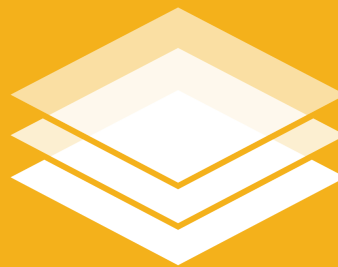
**Communication,
Collaboration & Partnerships**



**Evidence-Based
Practices**



**Building Capacity & Infrastructure
for Implementation**



**Layered Continuum
of Supports**



**Data-Based Problem-Solving
& Decision-Making**

Shared Leadership

- Strong implementation starts with strong leadership
- Leveraging ALL stakeholders
 - Families, students, teachers, administrators, counselors, Etc.
- Teaming and communication is critical to creating a strong foundation for identification and services for all students



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Communication, Collaboration, and Partnership



- Ensure all staff members are aware of the problem solving process
- Visibility and awareness
- Shared responsibility
- Engage inside and outside of the school
- Community and family partnerships provide continuous feedback



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Evidence Based Practices

- Curriculum, Instruction, Intervention, Assessment
- For HAL, evidence based practices look different from general education practices, and some HAL students may receive no services
- Many studies have indicated that little to no differentiation for high ability students happen within the regular classroom
- Systemic differentiation for all--gifted students are gifted all day



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Building Capacity and Infrastructure for Implementation

- 65% of teachers report that they had little to no preparation for meeting the needs of students who have mastered grade-level content
 - Farkas & Duffet, 2012
- Build knowledge about gifted and talented students
- Use MTSS infrastructure to build capacity regarding HAL



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Layered Continuums of Support



- Even when students are identified as gifted, they still have a wide range of performance levels and needs
- Tiered programs allow the needs of gifted learners to be met by considering their strengths, weaknesses, domains, and performance levels


Data Based Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

- Missing from gifted education
- Ensure appropriate and effective program choices
- Monitoring progress for HAL students requires different kinds of assessment and data points
- Continual feedback loop



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What you do
every day matters
more than what you
do once in a while.

GRETCHEN RUBIN

The Next Chapter: The HAL/MTSS Pilot Project

Pilot Overview

- One cohort of current 4th grade HAL students, 5th grade teachers, HAL teachers/coordinators, MTSS coordinators, and administrators
- Engage in a professional learning sequence:
 - Appropriate, rigorous CORE instruction for HAL students
 - Using the NeMTSS problem solving model for HAL
 - Integrating HAL into all 6 NeMTSS Essential Elements
 - Co-planning & coaching
 - Tier 2 & 3 HAL supports
- Apply strategies with continued support (coaching, additional PL opportunities, virtual professional learning community, etc.)
- True integration; academic and affective growth for students; improved educator efficacy (individual & collective)



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Year One PL Sequence

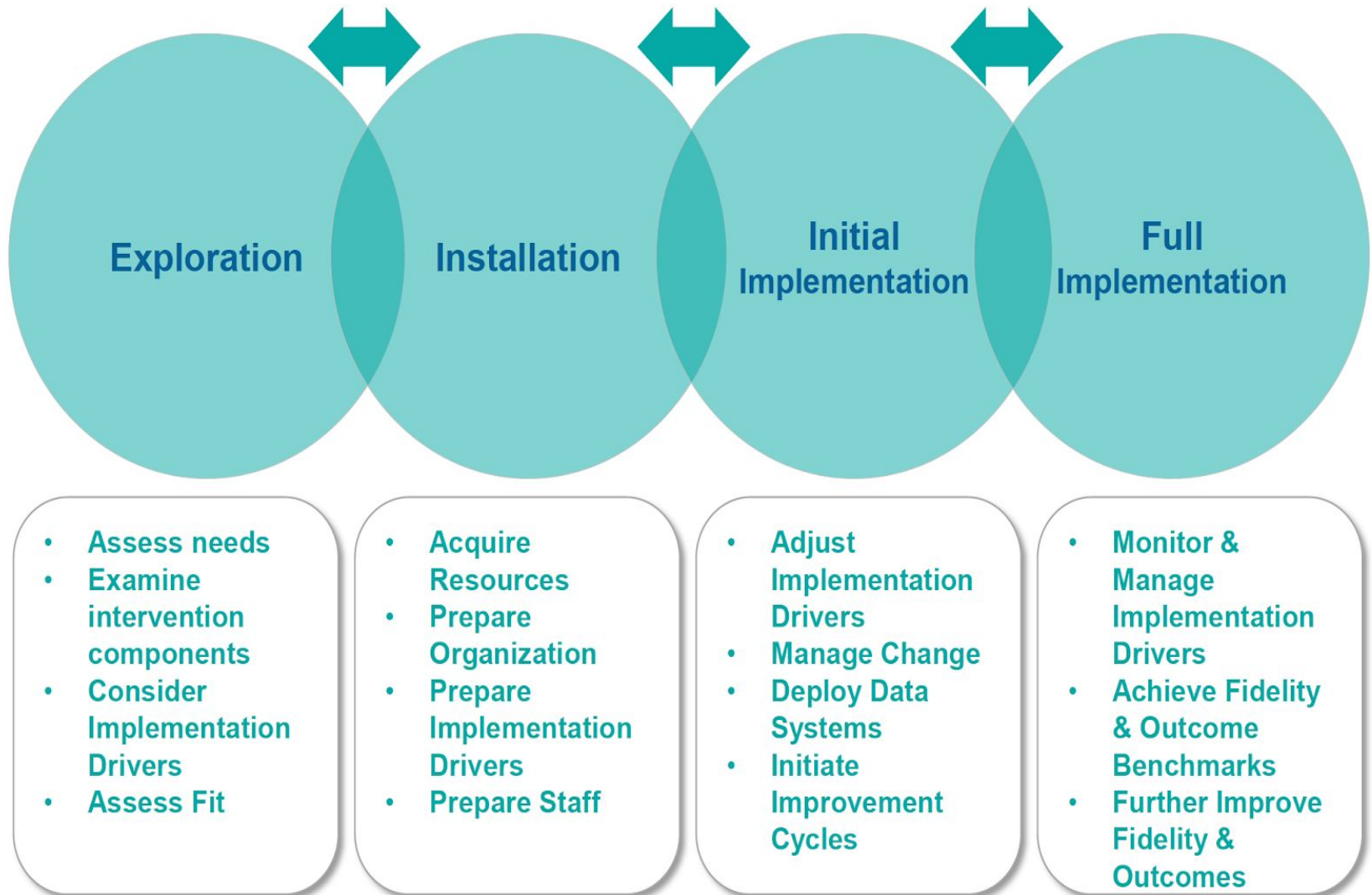
- Alternating in-person and modules
- Topics:
 - High Ability Learners, MTSS, and Systemic Integration
 - Identification of HALs
 - Introduction to Differentiation & Differentiation Strategies
 - Curriculum Compacting & Grouping
 - Differentiation Strategies 2
 - Co-Planning & Teaming
 - Social-Emotional Needs



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Implementation Stages



2-4 Years

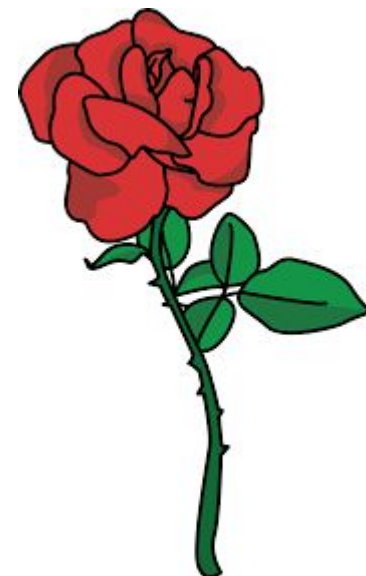
National Implementation Research Network

What's Next?

- After the pilot, we will:
 - Understand what it takes to integrate HAL programs into existing MTSS systems
 - Scale up to other districts and other grades
 - Have professional learning modules to assist schools with HAL/MTSS systemic integration
 - Provide coaching and technical assistance

Final Reflection

- **Rose:** Positive things and a win you experienced
- **Bud:** New ideas you are excited to explore
- **Thorn:** Obstacles or problems you faced



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sheyanne.meadows@nebraska.gov



2022 NeMTSS SUMMIT

CREATING COHERENCE

October 13-14, 2022



WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

Scan the QR code to complete a brief evaluation after each session throughout the summit.