What is MTSS?
One Framework for All Students

Lisa Webb, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Michigan Alliance for Families
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MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center

What is MTSS?
One Framework for All Students

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MICHIGAN Department of Education

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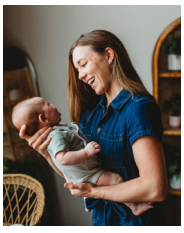
About Me

- K12 Literacy Dyslexia Consultant
- Classroom Teacher and 5/6 Special Education Teacher
- Masters in Special Education Leadership: MTSS
- West Michigan
- A tired new mom



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Acknowledgments

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- Nancy Rotarius (MDE-OSE)
- Lisa Webb (MiMTSS TA Center)
- National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII)

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Purpose

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is not a specific program, but a framework for organizing instruction, intervention, and supports to meet the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of all learners. In this session, participants will explore what MTSS is, why it matters, and how students with disabilities fit within an integrated MTSS framework.

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Agenda

1.0 Defining MTSS: Why is it Important?

2.0 MTSS and Special Education

- Data-Based Individualization (DBI)
- Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

3.0 Myths & Best Practices

4.0 MiMTSS Supports

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Defining MTSS

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

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MTSS Definition

"MTSS is a comprehensive framework comprised of a collection of evidenced-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child." (MCL 380.1280f)

MTSS integrates various levels of support, from whole-class instruction to targeted interventions, to build upon students' assets and to address individual needs.

The MDE MTSS Practice Profile was developed to provide further definition of the framework.

(MCL 380.1280f) K-12 Literacy Dyslexia Law)

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MTSS Myths

- MTSS does not include parents, caregivers, families, or staff
- If an eight-grade student has not yet learned to read, they are too old to benefit from MTSS
- MTSS primarily focuses on supporting students with the most significant behavior challenges
- MTSS is a program for elementary students
- MTSS is designed for the remediation of academic or behavioral skills

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MTSS Essential Elements

- Team Based Leadership
- Tiered Delivery System
- Selection and Implementation of Instruction, Intervention and Supports
- Comprehensive Screening & Assessment System
- Continuous Data-Based Decision Making



MDE MTSS Practice Profile (2020)

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Team-Based Leadership

- Team-based leadership ensures that MTSS implementation is guided by a representative group of educators and leaders who share responsibility for planning, problem-solving, and monitoring progress.
- Teams meet regularly to review data, coordinate supports, and make informed decisions that strengthen instruction and interventions across the system.

MTSS 101: An Introduction to Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Framework

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Selection & Implementation of Instruction, Interventions, and Supports

- Schools and districts select evidence-based instructional practices, interventions, and supports that align with student needs.
- Implementation is monitored to ensure practices are delivered consistently and effectively so that students benefit from high-quality instruction at every tier.

MTSS 101: An Introduction to Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Framework

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Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System

A coordinated assessment system that includes

- universal screening
- progress monitoring
- diagnostic assessments

These tools help educators identify student needs early, track progress over time, and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and interventions.

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Continuous Data-Based Decision Making

- Data are used regularly to guide instructional planning, intervention adjustments, and system improvement.
- Teams analyze multiple data sources to determine whether students are responding to supports and to make timely decisions that improve outcomes for all learners.

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Tiered Delivery System

- A flexible framework that provides layered supports—universal, targeted, and intensive—to meet the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students.
- Instruction and supports become increasingly individualized across tiers to ensure students receive the level of support necessary for success.

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The MTSS Tiers

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

MDE MTSS Practice Profile

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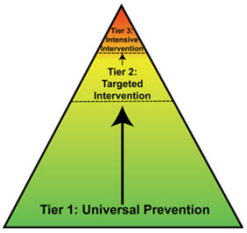
Traditional Approach

- You need a strong Tier 1 before you can work on Tier 2 (or 3).
- Students are placed in Tiers.
- The general education teacher is responsible for Tiers 1 & 2.
- Special education (services & staff) often are outside of the MTSS model
- Tier 3 is rarely fully implemented as intended



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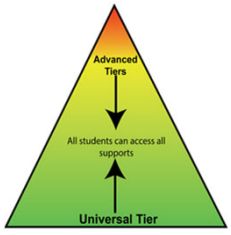
Bidirectional Approach



- Students flexibly move within varying levels of instructional/behavioral support.
- All students access the supports they need when they need them.
- Focus on instructional problem-solving, not a deficit student problem solving.
- Students with IEPs are fully integrated.

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One Framework for All Students

Special education is not a Tier!

"Tiers are intended to be layered with intensification of supports matched to learner need."

MDE MiMTSS FAQ, 2020

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MTSS & RtI

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- MTSS is a comprehensive framework supporting instruction for all students.
- Utilizes intervention, assessment, staff selection and development, leadership, resource allocation, effective communication, and system processes and protocols.
- PBIS and RtI are part of this system.

Response to Intervention

- 2004 IDEA reauthorization, identified RtI as a way for districts to use data to identify students who might have learning disabilities based upon lack of growth when provided with high-quality, evidence-based instruction and interventions.
- RtI does not address the larger district system

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MTSS & Special Education

Data-Based Individualization (DBI) & Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

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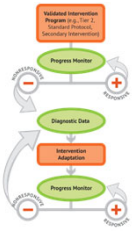
Data-Based Individualization



- DBI is a structured, data-driven process that guides the intensification of intervention.
- Evidence-based practice
- Ensures that interventions are individualized and responsive to student progress.

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Who Benefits from DBI?

DBI is intended to help a small subgroup of students who:

- Are not making adequate progress in their current intervention program (often, a Tier 2, evidence-based intervention)
- Are not meeting individualized education program (IEP) goals
- Have persistently low academic achievement
- Have high-intensity/frequency behavior

What is Data-Based Individualization?, NCII

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How DBI Supports Special Education

- DBI may play an important role in supporting the evaluation process to determine eligibility for special education services.
  - Provides schools with a validated approach for identifying and supporting students with severe and persistent learning and behavior problems, including students who may require special education.
  - Data collected through the DBI process can assist teams in assessing the need for specialized instruction, which is one of two requirements for determining eligibility for special education.

Intensive Intervention & Special Education, NCII

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DBI & Special Education

- Providing specially designed instruction based on student need
- Writing ambitious but realistic individualized education program (IEP) goals
- Evaluating progress toward IEP goals
- Intensifying specialized instruction for students who are not making adequate progress
- Planning for the whole child

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Specially Designed Instruction Defined

Adapting as appropriate the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction:

- to address the unique needs of a child that result from the child's disability; and
- to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the same educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children

IDEA 34 CFR §300.39(b)(3)

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Specially Designed Instruction Is…

- In addition to general education core instruction, not in lieu of (supplemental).
- Supplemental to tiered intervention, not in lieu of.
- Individualized to the unique needs of the student.
- Based on teaching specific skills a student does not have.
- Unique instruction written into the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Intended to help the student achieve IEP goals.
- Instruction that allows students with disabilities to access and make progress in the general education curriculum meaningfully.

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Specially Designed Instruction is Not…

- In place of general education core instruction.
- A schedule or place.
- A commercial program.
- A restatement of the grade-level content standards being taught.
- Lowering expectations or teaching below grade level.
- Homework completion.

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Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

How does MTSS support LRE?

- Reinforces and celebrates students with disabilities receiving services to the maximum extent appropriate alongside their nondisabled peers.
- LRE is a principle to guide a student's education program, not a place.
- Supports (evidence-based interventions, instructional tools, strategies, and resources) are classified by Tier based on the intensity of intervention.

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MTSS, DBI, & Special Education

MTSS	DBI	Special Education
All students can access all tiers (universal & advanced).	Any student not meeting grade-level benchmarks.	Legally required for students with identified disabilities.
All students with disabilities included.	**Many** students with disabilities.	**Only** students with disabilities included.

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Myths & Best Practices

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Special Education is Separate from MTSS

- Integrated within all Tiers of the MTSS framework
- Students **do not** move through the Tiers and end at a Special Education evaluation **and** students already identified with a disability continue to access Tier 1 and Tier 2 and/or 3 supports
- Special Education services are accessed as designated through their IEP.
  - Services & supports are intensified (DBI) when needed.

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Special Education Occurs Only at Tier 3

- Tier 3 represents the most intensive **level of support** but it is not synonymous with Special Education.
- Special Education services can be delivered across all Tiers.
- Students without disabilities may also receive intensive, individualized support at Tier 3 if data indicate a need.

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Students Receiving Special Education Services are Not Eligible for Additional Interventions

- Interventions can be provided in addition to the Specially Designed Instruction outlined within the IEP, but cannot supplant the provision for a Free and Appropriate Public Education.
- Instructional approaches or interventions used with same-aged peers can also be considered for a student with an IEP.
- Interventions available to the broader student population **can also** qualify as SDI if they are customized to meet a student's unique needs.

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Students with an IEP Need Entirely New Interventions

- Many of the interventions used for all students within MTSS can be intensified for students with disabilities.
- New interventions aren't always necessary.
- Should be robust & evidence-based program or practice.
- Specially Designed Instruction should inform the content, methodology, and/or delivery of instruction to meet the student's unique needs related to their disability and IEP goals.

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Only Special Education Teachers Can Provide Interventions

- The IEP team is responsible for overseeing a student's progress, but a team approach is critical to success.
- General education teachers, special education teachers, other ancillary/support staff should collaborate to provide interventions.
- Intervention may be provided by someone other than the special education teacher. This would be **in addition** to the SDI outlined in the student's IEP.

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Special Education Must Be Provided in a Separate Setting

- Special education services can be delivered within the general education environment.
- Collaboration ensures students receive support in the Least Restrictive Environment.
- School staff should consider how students receiving interventions are grouped & who provides intervention.
- Intervention *may* occur outside the general education classroom, but it is not always necessary.

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MiMTSS Supports

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Michigan's MTSS (MiMTSS) Technical Assistance Center

- State and federally funded project that helps intermediate and local school districts implement and sustain a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in their schools to improve student outcomes in behavior and learning. MTSS focuses on providing high quality instruction and interventions matched to student needs.
- Supports educators in building their knowledge and skills to serve all students equitably using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework.

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Professional Learning Topics

- District MTSS
  - Infrastructure
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Integrated Model (Academic & Behavior)
- Early Childhood
- Family Partnerships
- Literacy: Elementary, Secondary
- Social, Emotional, Behavioral Health

Aligning to and supporting the K-12 Literacy Dyslexia Law (PA 146)

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State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

- Local Education Agencies and Public School Academies who want to systematize MTSS implementation supports for preschool and early elementary settings to accelerate literacy, social, emotional, behavior outcomes.
  - Use DBI to intensify literacy intervention instruction for students with disabilities in 1st/2nd grade
  - Increasing interventionist fidelity of implementation
  - Provide funding to schools for ongoing technical assistance to support MTSS implementation efforts
  - Increase the percent of target students with significant reading needs who make greater progress from fall to spring

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Specialized Technical Assistance

- Direct support for districts and/or schools
  - Identify school-level MTSS implementation strengths and gaps by administering the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI)
  - On-site coaching support for teachers & grade-level or department-level teams
  - Job-embedded professional development
  - Consultation
- Elementary Integrated Tier One Literacy, Social-Emotional Behavioral MTSS Framework (Grades K-5)
- Secondary Integrated Tier One Literacy, Social-Emotional Behavioral MTSS Framework (Grades 6-12)

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State-Wide Offerings

Summits & Conferences

- MTSS Annual Conference: November 19-20, 2026
- Dyslexia Summit: March 19, 2027
- Student Attendance & Engagement Summit

Networks

- Explicit Instruction Facilitator Network
- Literacy Dyslexia Research Network
- Professional Learning Facilitator Networks
  - SEBH
  - Early Childhood PBIS
- Integrated MTSS Research Network

Special Events

- Building Strong Spellers Series with Pam Kastner
- District Central Office Leadership Academy

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Professional Learning Supports: Asynchronous

- Edupaths
- YouTube
- Microlearning

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Resources

- Special Education within MTSS: One Framework for All Students
- MDE Practice Profile
- Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MiMTSS) Frequently Asked Questions
- National Center on Intensive Intervention: Taxonomy of Intervention
- Least Restrictive Environment Guide

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Resources

- IEP Development: Supplementary Aids and Services
- Special Education & IEP Resources: Intensive Intervention | NCII
- Letter to Chambers, May 9, 2012 (Office of Special Education Programs)

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MiMTSS Presentation Attendance Log

- We would like to know who attended today!
  - Used for internal purposes only
  - You can be added to our listserv and get updates about upcoming events and services

(https://tinyurl.com/MiMTSSPresentationLog)

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In collaboration with The Arc Michigan

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