Chapter 1
Introduction
PURPOSE

The purpose of this Manual is to facilitate the successful implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), School Based Team (SBT), Problem-Solving (PS), and Response to Intervention (RtI) to formalize District wide efforts to promote school wide practices that ensure highest possible student achievement in both academic and behavioral pursuits within the MTSS Framework for ALL students.

Florida students have experienced significant growth in reading as a result of efforts using the key components of RtI through the Reading First Grant, as evidenced by a decrease in special education placement rates of approximately 40 percent (Torgesen, 2007). Florida students have also experienced significant improvements in positive behaviors as a result of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) implementations supported by Florida’s PBS Project. Schools that implemented PBS with fidelity had 40 percent fewer office discipline referrals, in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions in comparison to schools that did not implement PBS with fidelity (Kincaid, 2007).

EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 2001) formerly known as “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB) of 2001 and the reauthorized “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA) of 2004 share a common goal for improved student outcomes which measure school accountability.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2001) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) require the use of evidence-based practices to ensure that all students receive appropriate instruction as well as a contingency requirement for eligibility for special education programs (Specific Learning Disability, Language Impairment, and Emotional/Behavioral Disorders). Therefore, it is both necessary and worthwhile to apply the principles of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), and problem solving (PS) to all school wide academic and behavioral access and acceleration efforts. This Manual provides schools with the critical components, definitions, and applications of MTSS, SBT, PS, and RtI to support the development of an effective school MTSS Framework.

HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a term used to describe an evidence-based model of schooling that uses data-based problem-solving to integrate academic and behavioral instruction and intervention. The integrated instruction and intervention is delivered to students in varying intensities (multiple tiers) based on student need. “Need-driven” decision-making seeks to ensure that District resources reach appropriate students (schools) at the appropriate levels to accelerate the performance of ALL students to achieve and/or exceed proficiency. Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a more accurate term that refers to one seamless system that provides varying levels of academic and behavior supports to students based upon their need. The School Based Team is the
venue where problem solving occurs for individual and groups students. The Response to intervention process is actually the 4th step in the problem solving process.

The first steps towards meeting these statutory demands and Multi-Tiered System of Supports involves the development of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that aligns with the District’s MTSS initiatives (SwPBS, SBT, RtI, FCIM), curriculum, and instruction to teach the Florida Standards, as well as aligns assessments to determine which students have met or exceeded those standards. The next steps, involve identifying the students who have not met or are “at risk” of not acquiring the desired skill or state/national identified standards. Determining what skills students need, and providing additional supports or instruction to assist them to be successful, is essential. To meet these requirements the following should be in place:

- Research-based/evidenced-based core curriculum (academic & behavioral)
- Highly Qualified Teachers
- Universal screening of all students
- Data analyzed on a regular basis (district, schools, grade levels, classrooms)
- Progress monitoring of student interventions

Schools continuously examine their infrastructure (Tiers: core, supplemental, intensive) for responding to students with academic or behavioral difficulties. Research shows that the most effective strategies involve applying intensive services within the general education. Language in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), as well as Elementary, Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 2001) is clearly intended to promote this shift. Some regulations require that there is extensive effort to remediate skill deficits prior to consideration for special education services.

MTSS allows for the following:

- Early intervention to address the learning and behavioral needs of children, which, if effective, will reduce the need to label these children as being learning disabled, language impaired, or emotional/behavioral disordered.
- A response to intervention approach to assist in determining who should be considered for Exceptional Student Education (ESE)
- Students should not be considered for ESE if their problems are due to “lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction, instruction in math, or limited English proficiency.”
- Prior to or as part of the referral process, the child was provided appropriate high-quality, research-based instruction, and “data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, was provided to the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s).”

**MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS**

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework - basic components are:
Using a problem-solving model at all levels (core, supplemental, and intensive) of problem identification.

Utilizing research/evidence-based interventions proven to be effective for the identified deficiency (school-wide, classroom, group, or individual)

Organizing the corrective services into supports of increasing intensity

The School Based Team monitors the intervention progress and gathers data to determine child responsiveness to the provided intervention

Interventions are implemented with fidelity

MTSS involves the systematic use of multi-source assessment data to most efficiently allocate resources in order to improve learning for all students, through integrated academic and behavioral supports.

To ensure efficient use of resources, schools begin with the identification of trends and patterns using school-wide and grade-level data (Core, Tier 1, i.e. SwPBS, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Math).

Students who need instructional intervention beyond what is provided universally for positive behavior or academic content areas are provided with targeted, supplemental interventions delivered individually or in small groups at increasing levels of intensity (Supplemental, Tier 2, i.e. iii, intensive reading, mentoring, behavior contract and replacement behavior instruction, anger management group, grief counseling).

MTSS is characterized by a continuum of integrated academic and behavior supports reflecting the need for students to have fluid access to instruction and supports of varying intensity levels. School Based Team is the venue where individual student problem solving occurs as well as discussion and progress monitoring of the RtI process.

Within PCSD system – the following would be additional supports offered to students, i.e. (iii, intensive classes, tutoring, Check-In Check-Out, counseling, etc.)

School Based Team

The problem solving team for individual students who are having academic and/or behavioral deficits will be referred to the School Based Team. The School Based Team will facilitate the problem solving process for any student.

Students with IEPs who are in need of explicit interventions requiring services above what “at-risk” students in general education need will to have their problem solving and response to intervention facilitated through a combination of the School Based Team and IEP Team.

Response to Intervention Process
Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a more accurate term that refers to one seamless system that provides varying levels of academic and behavior supports to students based upon their need. **Response to intervention is actually the 4th step in the problem solving process.** When incorporating the RtI process into the MTSS Framework, the following core beliefs must be held:

1. Highly effective personnel deliver scientific, research-based instruction and evidence-based practices.
2. Evidence-based curriculum and instructional approaches have a high probability of success for most students.
3. Instruction is differentiated to meet individual learning needs.
4. Reliable, valid, and instructionally relevant assessments include the following:
   - Screening Measures: Assessment tools designed to collect data for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of core instruction and identifying students needing more intensive interventions and support.
   - Diagnostic Measures: Formal or informal assessment tools that measure skill strengths and weaknesses, identify skills in need of improvement, and assist in determining why a problem is occurring.
   - Progress Monitoring Measures: Ongoing assessment conducted for the purposes of guiding instruction, monitoring student progress, and evaluating instruction/intervention effectiveness.
   - Formative Measures: Ongoing assessment embedded within effective teaching to guide instructional decisions.
   - Summative (Outcome) Measures: Typically administered near the end of the school year to give an overall perspective of the effectiveness of the instructional program.
5. Ongoing, systematic planning/problem solving is consistently used by teams including parent(s)/guardian(s) and educators, from enrollment to graduation for all students, to make decisions across a continuum of student needs.
6. Student response to instruction/intervention (RtI) data is used to guide meaningful decision making.
7. Job embedded, on-going, professional development and follow-up coaching with modeling is provided to ensure effective instruction at all levels.
8. Actively engaged administrative leadership for data-based decision making is inherent to the school culture.
9. All students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are engaged in one proactive and seamless educational system

**Response to Intervention/Tiers of Support**

**Core - Tier 1 (universal instruction)** consists of scientific, research-based CORE instructional and behavioral/social emotional methodologies, practices, and supports designed for all students in the general education classroom.
Core - Tier 1 includes:

- Core curriculum that is effective for 75-80% of all students on a campus includes high quality of instruction for all students
- Universal screening to monitor progress, revise instruction, and identify at-risk students
- Differentiated and/or scaffolding of instruction
- Decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and school-wide strategies are made by being responsive to the performance of students and their needs
- Early intervention provided
- School wide Positive Behavior Support plans, universal guidelines
- Core curriculum and services are based on the needs of students in a particular school. Some schools require more time and focus than other schools in particular core curriculum based on student demographics (readiness, language) and student performance levels to ensure that all students reach and/or exceed state proficiency levels.

Supplemental - Tier 2 interventions consist of instruction and interventions that are provided in addition to and in alignment with effective CORE instruction and behavioral supports. It is provided to groups of targeted students who have not been successful with core instruction alone. It is what “some” students receive in addition to Core/Tier 1 instruction.

Supplemental - Tier 2 interventions include:

- Evidence-based interventions matched to students’ deficiency
- Smaller group instruction
- More intensive services, (more time, narrow focus of instruction/intervention) than the Core (Tier 1)
- More frequent progress monitoring and data collection (bi-weekly or monthly)
- Additional instructional time in deficient area of need
- Tier 2 services can be provided by a variety of professionals (must possess FLDOE certification) and in many different settings (general education class, separate class)

Intensive - Tier 3 academic interventions are designed for students with low academic skills and a substantial lack of adequate progress when provided with supplemental interventions (Tier 2). Intensive instruction (Tier 3) is provided in addition to and in alignment with effective core instruction and supplemental interventions with the goal of increasing an individual student’s rate of progress. Intensive/Tier 3 is what “few” students receive and are the most intensive service level a school can provide a student.

Intensive - Tier 3 behavioral interventions should include a Behavior Management Plan that is completed after a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) has been conducted by a trained school staff member.

Intensive - Tier 3 interventions include:

- Evidence-based interventions matched to students’ deficiency
Smaller group (smaller than Supplemental/Tier 2) instruction

More frequent progress monitoring and data collection (weekly)

Additional instructional time in deficient area of need (in addition to Core/Tier 1 and Supplemental/Tier 2)

Intensive/Tier 3 services require more time and a more narrow focus of instruction/intervention than Tier 2 services.

Intensive/Tier 3 services require effective levels of collaboration and coordination among school staff (general and special) providing services to the student.

The expected outcome of Intensive/Tier 3 services, combined with Core (Tier 1) and Supplemental (Tier 2) is that the student(s) will achieve Core/Tier 1 proficiency levels (academic and/or behavioral)

How do we differentiate between Core, Supplemental, and Intensive Instruction (Tiers 1, 2, and 3)?

The Tiers are differentiated by the intensity of the services provided. Intensity is defined as the number of minutes and the focus of the instruction/intervention. An increase in the number of minutes of exposure to quality instruction/intervention and/or the narrowing of the focus of instruction would be defined as “more intensive instruction”. Therefore, supplemental and intensive Tiers (Tiers 2 and 3) are defined with the context of the Core (Tier 1). The number of minutes of instruction and the breadth of that instruction that defines Core (Tier 1) in a school will be the basis for the criteria for supplemental and intensive Tiers (Tiers 2 and 3). For instance, if all students receive 90 minutes of reading instruction in the Core (Tier 1) and that instruction includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, then supplemental (Tier 2) would be defined as additional minutes of quality instruction and/or intervention that focus on one or more of the five areas of reading, but not all. The “focus” would be in the area of greatest need for the student. In general four questions should be considered when defining and differentiating the Tiers:

How much additional time will be need?

What will occur during that time?

Who is the most qualified person to deliver the instruction/intervention?

Where will that additional instruction/intervention occur?

DATA AND PROGRESS MONITORING

Student achievement data is an essential component to a team’s successful problem solving process. The frequency of data and the kind of data will vary according to the type of deficiency, the severity of the problem, and the nature of the students’ response. There are three major categories of student achievement data:

Baseline data that compares the student’s current level of functioning to performance standards and/or the performance of his/her peers;

Progress monitoring data that tells us a student’s rate of learning; and

Diagnostic information that will provide information about specific skill acquisition.
Baseline data is best if it includes information about:

- The gap between the student’s current performance and the performance standard; this is information about how far below the standard the student is.
- Information that compares the targeted student’s level of skill with others in his/her class.
- NOTE: If the majority of the class falls below the standard, then the School Based MTSS Leadership Team and the teacher need to look at fidelity of the core curriculum instruction, not an individual student.

Unlike the baseline data, which is a static picture of a child’s performance at a point in time, progress monitoring is:

- A measure of rate
- A measure of change
- It includes multiple opportunities of assessment of a child’s performance.