

2014-16 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Implementation Survey Results

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) promotes the use of Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in K-12 schools to increase the number of students meeting grade-level standards and graduating with skills for further education and work careers. MTSS is an integrated system of high quality, standards-based instruction and interventions matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. With effective implementation, students receive targeted, evidence-based instruction and interventions to meet grade-level academic standards.

Since 2014, Wilder Research has been hired by MDE to conduct an annual survey of Minnesota K-12 schools to assess MTSS implementation. The survey measures supports and implementation of MTSS at three tiers, comprising core instruction (Tier 1) and supplemental and intensive intervention (Tiers 2 and 3).

School leaders and stakeholders can use these results to improve organizational supports and instruction, particularly for students who are at risk of not meeting academic standards. The survey results also help highlight trends, get a point-in-time picture of progress toward statewide implementation, and learn about opportunities for improvement. The results can inform MTSS framework implementation in general, as well as ELA standards implementation specifically, at the level of the state, school districts, and schools.

Methodology

Wilder Research sent a survey to all school principals of Minnesota K-12 schools. We asked the principals to convene a school-wide team to complete the survey together. The teams rated a set of activities that correspond to MTSS implementation stages (ranging from not in place to full implementation).

More than 600 schools completed the survey every year from 2014-15 to 2016-17, representing 39-49 percent of Minnesota's elementary, middle, high schools, and charter schools.

2014-16 results

Items in the survey are rated as:

- Not in place
- Exploring
- Installing infrastructure
- Partial implementation
- Full implementation

The section shows the results of all schools that participated in each survey administration year. The survey results over the past three school years show very little changes in terms of the overall proportion of schools that are fully implementing the various component of MTSS. Only 17-20 percent of participating schools each year report they are in the "full implementation" stage. The rate of full implementation is higher in elementary schools than in middle and high schools, and similar in charter and elementary schools.

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Every year, 39-41 percent of reported a key member of the school leadership and implementation team had turned over in the past 9 months.

1. Schools in “full implementation” in 2014-2016

Area of implementation	2014 (N=711-723)	2015 (N=584-591)	2016 (N=716-721)
Overall	17%	20%	20%
Leadership supports	19%	23%	23%
Core instruction	18%	20%	19%
Supplemental and Intensive intervention	20%	23%	21%

Note. At least 70 percent of the items within the area have to be completed.

Recommendations

The results of the survey provide schools and districts with an opportunity to consider challenges to implementation and identify resources to move forward.

First, we recommend considering factors that respondents identified as barriers to implementation.

- High turnover rate of key staff
- Lack of staff capacity to implement MTSS
- Difficulty in scheduling in general (for meetings of staff across functions and subject areas, coordinating multiple interventions for students, staff training)
- Lack of professional development opportunities
- Funding
- Lack of staff buy-in

School and district leaders should take steps to:

- Use survey results (and other data) for action planning
- Join the MTSS Community of Practice

MDE has developed the following **general guidance for schools that are at various levels of implementation of MTSS.**

2. MDE guidance for improving or sustaining full implementation

Leadership support

If your school is at...

Exploring or Installing Infrastructure	Partial Implementation	Sustaining Full Implementation
Establish a leadership team.	Ensure your school's data system generates reports and visualizations in time for making decisions.	Review progress in all action items that have to do with using data to make improvements.
Establish goals for every team, and define the work and relationship to other teams responsible for instruction and improvement.	Establish walkthrough protocols and measures to gather data on the degree of implementation and next steps for staff professional development.	Prevent loss of capacity by action planning to provide supports for training new staff and sustaining coaching for staff not yet fluent in practices and use of data.
Clarify the role and function of the leadership team. Be sure everyone knows the purpose, their role, and expectations for follow-through on action items.	Use the authority given to adjust schedules, allocate staff resources, and provide training and coaching to staff who have not yet mastered critical features of practices.	Refine and further integrate initiatives by regularly reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development and making necessary adjustments.

Core instruction (Tier 1)

If your school is at...

Exploring or Installing Infrastructure	Partial Implementation	Sustaining Full Implementation
Clarify critical features of core literacy/math instruction, define what to look for so that staff are clear on what is expected.	Measure results of professional development and staff's first efforts to implement what they learned in training.	Analyze student results and fidelity data to make decisions on continuing to focus on improving fidelity and organizational supports.
Ensure staff understand the assessments and how to translate performance into planning instruction.	Ensure staff are including critical teaching behaviors. Provide coaching for any instruction that doesn't include critical components.	Disaggregate student results and verify that instruction is delivered with fidelity to subgroups of students.
Gather data on what teachers know and do to inform and design professional learning opportunities.		Analyze current results for ALL and subgroups of students and use data to identify additional evidence-based practices that will add value and growth for groups of students whose needs are not currently being addressed with existing practices.

Supplemental and Intensive intervention (Tiers 2 and 3)

If your school is at...

Exploring or Installing Infrastructure	Partial Implementation	Sustaining Full Implementation
Establish Tier 2/3 problem-solving team, protect time to meet, clarify roles and expectations for follow-through on action items.	Monitor effectiveness of the team and consistent use of data for decision-making.	Verify students who are receiving interventions are making progress and the alignment of interventions allows for release and success within core instruction.
Identify patterns in achievement that need to be addressed with an additional intervention using data on which students are not making progress. Select evidence-based practices that will address the patterns.	Establish procedures for matching students to the intervention.	Review results of students referred to more intensive levels of support for additional patterns and opportunities to increase efficiency and effectiveness of procedures and practices.
Train staff to implement the identified practices with fidelity.	Monitor fidelity of interventions. Protect the time, scale, scope, and delivery of interventions, so that the projected results can be achieved.	
	Use progress monitoring to adjust student groupings, intensity of interventions, and organizational supports	

Source. Minnesota Department of Education, April 2017.

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