Instructional teams analyze student learning and intervention data to determine the need for additional supports and/or opportunities for enrichment, including referrals to special education (e.g., Response to Intervention, Multi-tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS), etc.). (3661)

**Explanation:** When looking for a way to support all students in the areas of academics and behavior, teams may choose to implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports to meet the needs of all students. Even with the best of intentions, educational systems are not always as cohesive as desired. In many instances, educators and parents have been frustrated by the process of accessing support for students who are advanced learners as well as those who are struggling. A significant aspect of changing to a multi-tier system involves a shift in thinking about how a system responds to student needs. In this type of multi-tiered system thinking shifts from matching students to programs to becoming focused on understanding student needs and designing services and supports to meet those needs. In a Multi-Tiered System of Supports a framework based on prevention, early intervention, and support for all students is created. This approach is not tied to a specific content or curriculum. However; the curriculum, programs, instructional practices, or assessments chosen by schools must be supported by the highest quality of research available.

A multi-tiered system is designed to be a coherent continuum of evidence-based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs. Frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision making which empowers each student to achieve high standards.

The process of creating a multi-tiered system of support is neither a quick fix nor the adoption of new rhetoric. It is a thoughtful and intentional redesign of educational practices and supports provided by general education and entitlement programs, such as Title I and special education, to ensure that the individual needs of all students are being met in the most effective and efficient way possible. The design and implementation of the MTSS is a multi-year process.

In a multi-tiered system of supports committed building and/or district leadership teams must focus on the alignment of all available resources and practices within a building or district. To achieve this, MTSS requires leadership teams to agree to the following non-negotiable conditions:

- There must be a district leadership team if the MTSS effort is district driven.
- Active participation of the building administrator on the building leadership team is necessary to provide leadership, support, and authority to the team.
- Membership of the leadership team includes individuals with decision-making authority over curriculum, instruction, and assessments. This enables teams to have discussions and take action as opposed to having to require external approval of their work to move forward.
- The MTSS needs to be designed to support the learning of all students, not only students who are struggling to learn.
- The acceptance and use of the required practices for the MTSS Implementation of the content area chosen must be embraced by all school staff.
**Question:** Has the multi-tiered system built in time for collaborative instructional teams to meet frequently to review student data and make instructional decisions in a systematic way (e.g. using established decision rules)?

Data-based decision making and the use of a problem-solving process are inherent within a well-functioning multi-tiered system. Buildings and districts are encouraged to utilize a problem-solving approach as they use data to guide decision making when creating, implementing, and refining as MTSS. An MTSS framework must have integration and sustainability, so that all aspects of the system support and sustain student learning.

Progress monitoring is conducted within the multi-tiered system to inform staff of students’ growth in content knowledge and skills. Monitoring progress regularly and using the data to make instructional decisions results in students making more academic progress than when teachers do not use progress monitoring. Teachers’ accuracy in judging student progress increases when progress monitoring is used consistently (Stecker & Fuchs, 2000).

In MTSS students in the core (Tier 1), are progress monitored through the use of common formative assessments administered throughout the year. These assessments are tied to content area instruction and help teachers determine whether students have learned the concepts and skills taught so that instruction may be adjusted to re-teach concepts or provide additional practice on skills not yet mastered. For students receiving supplemental (Tier 2) and intensive (Tier 3) instruction, progress-monitoring data are collected much more frequently and are used to chart the growth of individual students. Progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental or intensive instruction answers two questions:
1. Is the instructional intervention working?
2. Does the effectiveness of the intervention warrant continued, increased, or decreased support?

The tools recommended for progress monitoring include the same tests as the universal screener that was originally used to identify students requiring interventions (Torgesen, 2006). These curriculum-based measurements (CBM) are recommended because they (1) measure small increments of change, (2) have sufficient multiple forms to allow for frequent (weekly or bi-weekly) administration (20 to 30 alternate forms is sufficient), and (3) provide data that may be used to create growth charts of the students’ learning over time. Evidence also indicates strong effects on students’ reading, spelling, and mathematics achievement when teachers rely on CBM for progress monitoring, especially when teachers graph scores to help plan instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2002). Having students chart their own progress can also increase motivation and participation (Bos & Vaughn, 2006). The ultimate goal of the MTSS is to return the student to a less intensive level of support as soon as possible while continuing to monitor the student’s progress in case the need for additional supports re-emerges.

Progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental and intense instruction is critical so that teachers can determine if the intervention is working or needs to be adjusted. The assessment instrument chosen for progress monitoring must be able to measure the reading skills being taught in the intervention being provided. Therefore, appropriately matching the progress-monitoring measure and the intervention is critical to ensuring student progress. Collecting and graphing progress-monitoring data over a series of weeks will provide a visual pattern of skill acquisition for students receiving additional support. Most recommendations on the frequency of progress monitoring indicate the need to collect data every two to three weeks for students receiving supplemental instruction and weekly for students receiving intense instruction.
References and Other Resources:


