

North Dakota's Multi-Tier System of Supports

North Dakota's Multi-Tier System of Supports (NDMTSS) is a framework to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed academically and behaviorally in school. NDMTSS focuses on providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.

Why We Do It

The Students

Students fall through the cracks every year because we have pockets of excellence but are lacking a systems approach in many schools. Students who read at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to graduate on time.¹ Freshman year is key to predicting who will graduate from high school. Failing one semester course decreases the likelihood of graduating from 83% to 60%; two semester Fs decreases the likelihood to 44%; three reduces that to 31% chance of graduating. More than 7,000 students drop out of high school every school day. 85 percent of all juvenile offenders rate as functionally or marginally illiterate. Students in the lowest 25 percent of their class in reading are 20 times more likely to dropout and 75% of those end up incarcerated.² 70 percent of prisoners in state and federal systems can be classified as illiterate while 43 percent of those whose literacy skills are lowest live in poverty.³

Significant and persistent academic and/or behavioral difficulties can limit success in school and postsecondary opportunities. For some students, the typical evidence-based instruction and behavioral supports provided in the classroom are not sufficient to address their educational needs or prepare them for postsecondary opportunities. They will need individualized, more intensive intervention composed of practices that are evidence-based. Recent research on integrating academic and behavioral interventions has demonstrated promise for improving student outcomes.⁴

The Teachers

Research has identified numerous components within schools' systems of instruction and intervention that can make an intervention more or less effective and sustainable. For example, the need to improve educators' knowledge and use of evidence-based interventions through teacher preparation⁵ and professional development⁶ has been well documented.

The Schools

The leadership and organizational supports, such as scheduling, roles of staff, adequate planning time, professional development structure, evaluation, leadership support, policies, and funding,⁷ can also facilitate or impede the effectiveness and sustainability of the system of instruction and intervention. Addressing academic and behavioral difficulties separately, instead of using an integrated approach, may result in inefficiencies in coordinating intervention. By using a more integrated approach, limited resources can be maximized and organizational structures and efficiency can be improved.⁸

The State

If North Dakota increased its overall graduation rate to 90%, the economic benefits from these **300** additional graduates would likely include as much as⁹:

- **\$2.3 million** in increased annual earnings and **\$200,000** in annual state and local tax revenues;
- **20 new jobs** and a **\$2.8 million** increase in the gross state product;
- **\$3.1 million** in increased home sales and **\$400,000** in increased auto sales

¹ Hernandez, D. Double Jeopardy: *How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

² Alliance for Excellent Education, *High School Graduation Gains Equal Economic Success*. 2013

³ National Institute for Literacy

⁴ Algozzine et al., 2012; Chaparro, Smolkowski, Baker, Hanson, & Ryan-Jackson, 2012; Stewart, Benner, Martella, Marchand-Martella, 2007

⁵ Ciullo et al., 2015; Gable, Tonelson, Sheth, Wilson, & Park, 2012; Kern, Hilt-Panahon, & Sokol, 2009

⁶ Bambara, Goh, Kern, & Caskie, 2012; Ciullo et al., 2015; Debnam, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2012; Kern, Hilt-Panahon, & Sokol, 2009; Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015

⁷ Bambara et al., 2012; Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012

⁸ Chaparro et al., 2012; Lane, Oakes, & Menzies, 2014; McIntosh, Bohanon, & Goodman, 2010

⁹ Alliance for Excellent Education. *High School Graduation Gains Equal Economic Success*. 2013

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What We Believe (Cultural Changes Necessary to Implement)

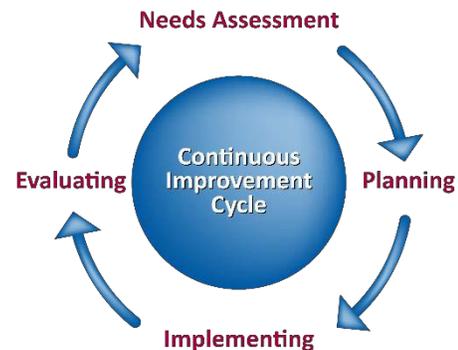
- Effective teachers create environments where **all** students can learn and improve
- Effective schools maintain and communicate a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.¹⁰
- Effective systems support both teachers and students by outlining evidence-based instruction and interventions while ensuring appropriate access to resources and supports

How We Got Here

Several acronyms have been utilized during the development of what we now refer to as Multi-tier System of Supports (MTSS). Originally developed from a Response to Intervention (RtI) focus on early intervention services in behavior and academics, this work has been named many things: Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), RtI -Academic (RtI-A) and RtI-Behavior (RtI-B). As research continued nationally, ND shifted to a more encompassing definition of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to ensure that the infrastructure and focus on developing the system would be created that encompassed both behavior and academics.

Continuous Improvement

NDMTSS recognizes that providing all students with the best opportunities to succeed academically and behaviorally requires a constant focus on improvement. This is done through needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Like any school improvement process, the continuous improvement cycle empowers systems to effectively plan and implement initiatives while accumulating and analyzing data in order to apply necessary changes to improve practice.



What NDMTSS Is Not

To further clarify the definition, it is important to recognize what MTSS is NOT. MTSS (RtI) cannot be a verb, time, program, or place. It is not an identification system for special education or Title 1. It is not 'just for some students'. It cannot be done by a small group of educators. It is not content-specific. Students cannot "be RtI'd", "test into or exited from RtI" or be "done with RtI."

Essential Components

1. Assessments
2. Data-Based Decision Making
3. Multi-level Instruction
4. Infrastructure and Support Mechanisms
5. Fidelity and Evaluation

For detailed descriptions and clarity, the state has adapted the AIR [Fidelity Rubric](#) and [Worksheet](#) and created a [summary document](#) outlining the Essential Components.

NDMTSS Alignment to AdvancEd

- Standard 1 – NDMTSS Definition
- Standard 2 – Infrastructure and Support Mechanisms
- Standard 3 – Assessments; Data-Based Decision Making; Multi-level instruction
- Standard 4 – Infrastructure and Support Mechanisms
- Standard 5 – Fidelity and Evaluation

¹⁰ AdvancEd. [Standards for Quality Schools](#). 2011

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How Do NDMTSS and Special Education Work Together [NDCC 67-23-06](#)

School districts in North Dakota are permitted to use a process that determines how a student responds to scientific, research-based interventions (RtI) when determining whether that student is or continues to be eligible for and entitled to special education services under the category of specific learning disability. North Dakota has developed Administrative Rules that outline how a school can utilize MTSS (RtI) in its determination process for special education. Additional documents to assist schools in meeting the requirements of NDCC 67-23-06 can be found at ND DPI [website](#).

North Dakota MTSS Project Overview

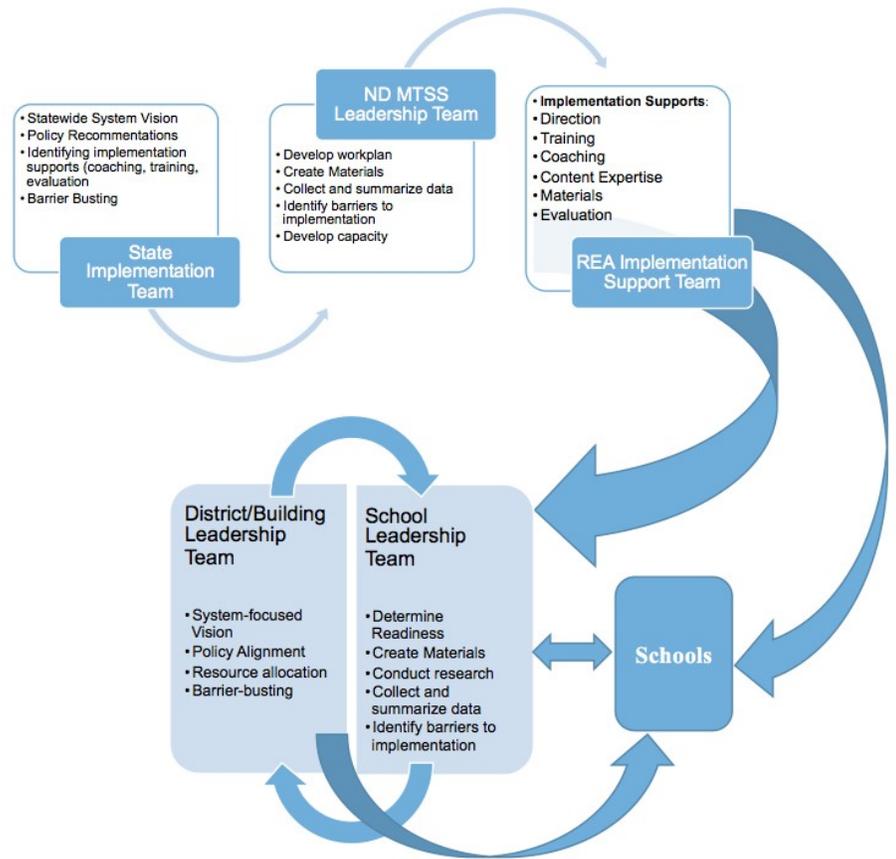
North Dakota's Multi-Tier System of Supports Project is led by the North Dakota Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services through a State Personnel Development Grant from U. S. Department of Education - Office of Special Education Programs. This project is designed to help schools develop school-wide support systems in academics and behavior. NDMTSS project collaborators include the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative (MDEC), South East Education Cooperative (SEEC), the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS.org) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN).

REA Implementation Support Team

The purpose of the REA Implementation Support Team is to plan for conditions that make implementation of effective practices with fidelity reasonable, practical and doable, through a collaborative process. ND MTSS project staff will work with the REA implementation team to effectively deliver supports to school teams in North Dakota. REA staff conducts a gap analysis of their region's desired state and current state of implementation (needs analysis), and uses it to develop a plan for training, coaching, technical assistance and distribution of materials, based on their region's needs (planning). Once the plan is created, the implementation team manages implementation efforts (implementation). Adjustments to the plan are based on data to ensure successful outcomes (evaluation). It is also the responsibility of this team to embed this work with existing district initiatives (e.g., school improvement).

REA Implementation Support Team Responsibilities

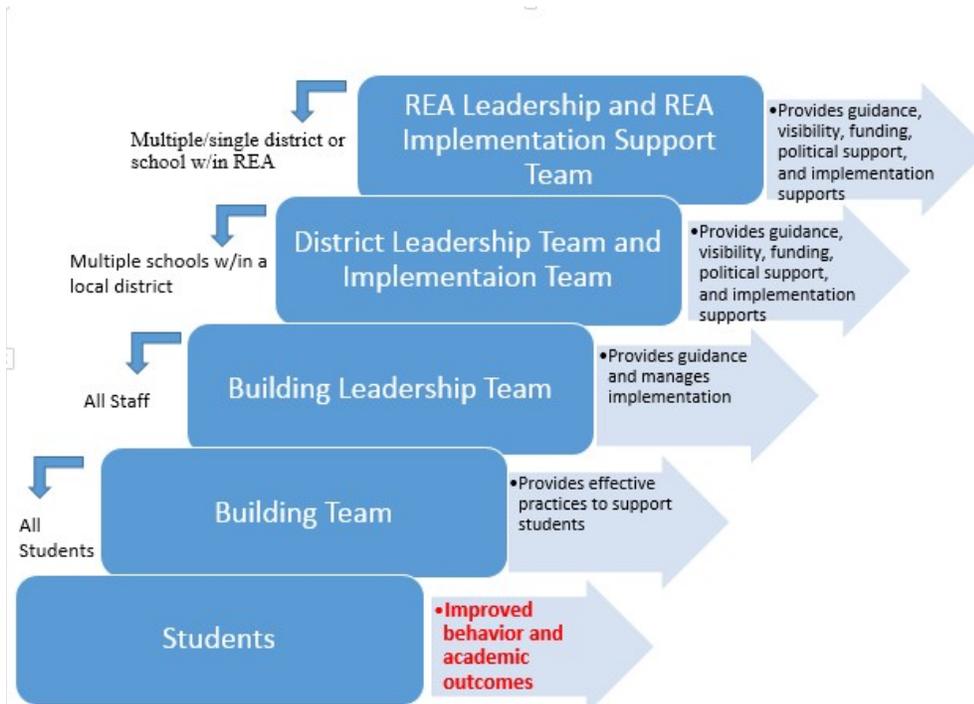
- Develop REA implementation support plan (resources and supports for districts/schools)
- Provide districts/schools guidance and assistance to integrate new and existing initiatives
- Support school/district development MTSS implementation plan and monitor periodically
- Provide supporting documents, examples, tools, and materials to help facilitate implementation
- Collect and summarize training and implementation data
- Identify barriers to implementation



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Access to Effective Practices

Training is one way to get effective practices into the hands of educators. *The unit of implementation is at the school level*, however the challenge for a school implementation team is to be able to provide training based on the many different components that must be addressed in each school. Therefore, a regional approach creates efficiencies, a more developed support system, and increases collaboration among schools with a shared focus on implementation of MTSS.



Example: Coaching takes place at each level of the cascading model of supports

The goal...

To create capacity for an integrated MTSS *system* that can be implemented with fidelity, is sustainable over time and utilizes data-based decision making at all levels of implementation support.

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