



COLORADO
Department of Education



Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (CO-MTSS) Initiative Inventory Technical Guide

Adapted from the Technical Guide for Alignment of Initiatives, Programs and Practices in School Districts, National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. (2017). Eugene, OR: Retrieved from www.pbis.org

Introduction

As educators work to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states and school districts will be working with increased focus on school climate, social behavioral health, school safety and the impact of an integrated whole child approach on academic outcomes. In many districts and schools, educators are faced with the challenge of having to implement, sustain, and evaluate several different innovations, initiatives, programs or practices at the same time. In many districts, various initiatives (e.g., PBIS, RtI, literacy strategies, numeracy strategies, mental health, bullying & violence prevention, restorative practices, state standards, trauma-informed care) are being concurrently implemented and/or new ones are being adopted without recognition of the potential for redundancy, misalignment, ineffective implementation, and/or cost (funding and effort). In some instances, new or existing initiatives may actually be in conflict with each other philosophically, creating confusion and dissonance among leaders and practitioners.

Due to the complexity of implementing several initiatives at once or adopting new ones in the context of existing practices, the Multi-Tiered System of Supports in BOCES, district, or school must be organized in a manner that is highly strategic, efficient, relevant, and effective. Ensuring sustainability and efficiency requires heightened attention on knowing what is being implemented across the system and the effective alignment and coordination of the systems that support the implementation including leadership teams, evaluation structures and professional development. Often districts have more

programs or initiatives or practices than can be implemented well (Domitrovich et al., 2010; Sugai, & Horner, 2006) without a formal process to guide decisions about selecting new initiatives or abandoning existing programs. McIntosh et al., (2013) has reported one of the primary variables impeding sustained implementation of effective practices is the introduction of new initiatives that either (a) compete with resources needed for sustained implementation or (b) contradict existing initiatives.

In the absence of a clear system-wide response to student and adult needs, a BOCES, district, or school cannot ensure that it's initiatives, programs and practices, are adequately aligned, prioritized, and integrated. Implementing various initiatives in silos can strain the limited resources of any district, resulting in less than acceptable levels of fidelity and impact for each initiative. Therefore, educational leaders need to assess existing and potential efforts carefully to ensure investments in professional development and instructional resources have a high likelihood of achieving desired outcomes.

To guide an outcome-driven view for integrating initiatives, programs, or practices across multiple sites, it is important to start with the end-in-mind: high fidelity implementation and improved student outcomes. Classrooms are the primary context where students should perceive a seamless system of supports as educators braid or merge several different evidence-based practices within the learning environment. Therefore it is essential that BOCES and district level

teams work side by side with school level staff members to ensure a manageable number of evidence-based practices are used and matched to student need with consideration of the larger school community. In this context, informed decisions regarding what to integrate (target), how much to integrate (interdependence), and for what purpose (goal) to integrate can occur at the school and district levels.

The purpose of this technical guide is to provide a structured alignment process with concrete steps to assist educational leaders as they:

- Examine current practices across educational units and systems (instruction, support, improvement, special education, mental health, justice);
- Consider the extent to which current practices are implemented with fidelity and produce meaningful academic and social/behavioral outcomes, and
- Establish support systems to select install and implement new practices.

Targeted users of this guide include state, district or school level MTSS leadership teams that have responsibilities for the selection and implementation of initiatives, programs or practices related to maximizing positive student behavior, as well as, academic outcomes. In some cases, formalizing the alignment process will be an additional function for the leadership team to consider as it works to improve the fidelity of program implementation, eliminate redundancy and streamline efficient implementation practices to improve school and student performance. The alignment process builds on implementation science (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005) by focusing on both the evidence of the initiative, program, or practice as well as the implementation processes and is organized around the core features of the Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

Using Multi-Tiered System of Supports to Organize the Alignment Process

MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) is a framework that guides the selection and implementation of best practices for improving student outcomes. Through this framework, leadership teams across all implementation levels (state, BOCES, district, and school) use five essential components to improve the learning environments of all students. A continuum of tiers is used to ensure supports are in place for students who may require more targeted or intensive approach.

The Colorado MTSS framework has five essential components (<https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss>):

1. Team-Driven Shared Leadership
2. Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making
3. Family, School, and Community Partnering
4. Layered Continuum of Supports
5. Evidence-Based Practices

MTSS helps promote a new efficient way of working and can serve as the conceptual “umbrella” providing the general process for conducting system-wide alignment and integration.

The Alignment Process

The general process of conducting a system-wide alignment and integration process is summarized in the CO-MTSS Initiative Inventory Activity Protocol, which includes guiding prompts for each step. In addition, three different versions of the Initiative Inventory can be used to guide teams through the analysis and decision-making as they complete the alignment of targeted initiatives. Local context should guide decisions about what, if any, adjustments or additional steps may be needed to support planning activities and implementation procedures.

References

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