Multi-tiered System of Supports

MTSS Summary Guidance Document

Purpose

This document provides a foundational understanding of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS defines the implementation of the OUSD Strategic Plan, our Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Goals (specifically, High Quality Instruction and Whole Child).

Mission: Opportunities for learning are timeless. The Orcutt Union School District's mission is to nurture, educate, empower, and inspire our children to successfully navigate and thrive in an ever changing world.

Vision: As the heart of the communities we serve, the Orcutt Union School District will foster high levels of student success through multiple pathways of learning. By offering a world-class education, our district will lead the way in innovation and creativity, and will be known for its caring, collaborative and inclusive culture.

Core Values:

WE BELIEVE

>Kids come first

>Student safety is paramount

>All students can learn at high levels

>In meeting the needs of the whole child

>Results Matter

OUR SUCCESS IS ASSURED THROUGH

>Fostering a community of learners

>Equal access for all students

>Quality instruction with rigor and relevance

>Effective dynamic leadership

>Mutual respect

>Cultural understanding and tolerance

>Clear and open communication

>Parent/community partnerships

>Continuous improvement

>Data-driven decision-making

Accountability of all stakeholders

Goals:

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION

We will provide and support engaging, high quality instruction, which promotes active learning and maximizes student achievement.

- Implementation of Common Core
- REsponse to Intervention
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Targeted Intervention
- Professional Development
- Assessment

21st CENTURY SKILLS

We will provide students with an innovative 21st century curriculum that will enable them to compete in a global society.

- Creativity and Innovation
- Collaboration
- Communication Skills
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Citizenship
- Character Development
- Cross-Cultural Understanding

FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

We will create flexible learning environments that will encourage new delivery models and expand students' opportunities for learning.

- Instructional Time
- New Curriculum Delivery Models
- Career Pathways
- Extended Learning Opportunities
- Creative Spaces

WHOLE CHILD

We will provide a rich and diverse curriculum in a positive and safe atmosphere to address the needs of the whole child.

- Social Emotional Support
- School-wide Positive Behavior Support
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Physical Education
- Wellness
- Safe Environment

RESOURCES

We will utilize our existing and future resources and explore new avenues to support the goals of our district.

- Finances
- Facilities
- Personnel
- Time

Description

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is the integration of evidence-based instruction, interventions, and assessments to address the full range of student academic and behavioral needs present in today's classroom. In MTSS, the needs of **all** learners are identified and supported early through increasing levels of instructional intensity and time. By using performance data and through monitoring learning rates and social-emotional-behavioral development of students, school staff make important instructional decisions to meet the needs of all of our learners (e.g., students from different backgrounds, levels of language proficiency, and students who already know the content and need acceleration).

MTSS encompasses both the academic and social-emotional-behavioral demands of learning. The Orcutt School District has made an intentional shift in terminology to a "multi-tiered system" to emphasize the integration of both academics, social/emotional well-being and behavior as uniformly critical to student success. MTSS also encourages focus to be on the cohesive systems of support, rather than just intervention.

MTSS is a key part of the broader OUSD strategic framework to support all learners and ensure equitable access to a robust, high quality education. MTSS provides the structure for the OUSD community to prioritize the academic and behavioral needs of all students, including our Students with Disabilities (SWDs), students with advanced learning needs, and English Language (EL) Learners. In other words, our MTSS is for every student in our district.

MTSS implementation is a shared responsibility and ownership of all OUSD educators, staff, families, and communities. MTSS provides the structure and process to address these key questions in data-based decision making environment: (1) What do we want all students to learn and be able to do? (2) How do we know if students have learned the information? (3) What do we do if students have already learned the information? (4) What do we do if students don't know the information? In Professional Learning Communities, staff plans, teaches, reflects, and adjusts as they analyze student data (performance/assessment results).

Results Oriented * Focus on Student Learning

What do we want all students to learn and be able to do?

How do we know if students have learned the information?

Plan
Teach
Reflect & Adjust

What do we do if students already know the information?

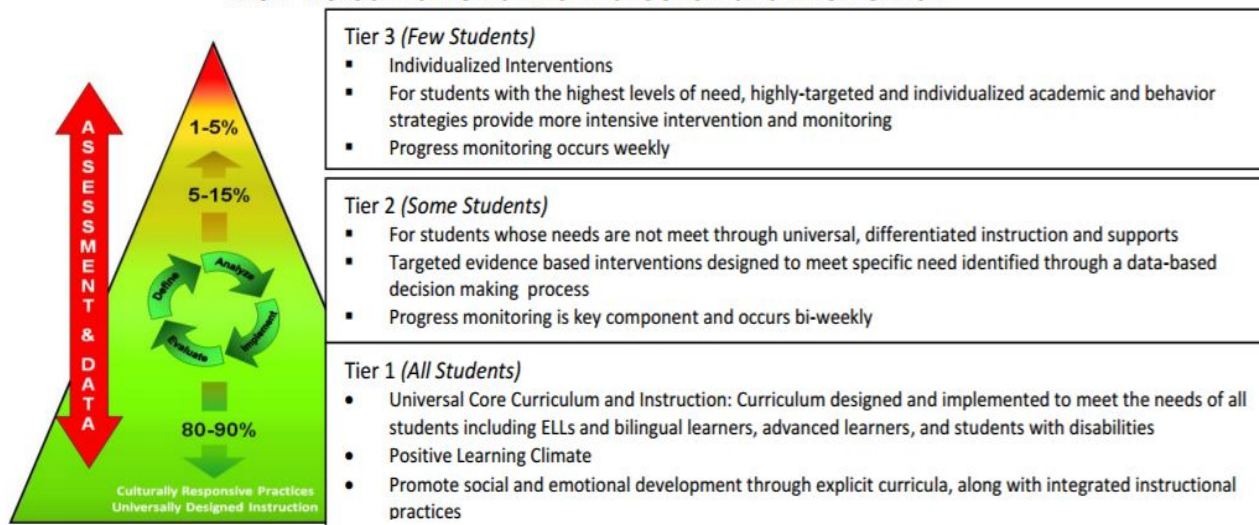What do we do if students don't know the information?
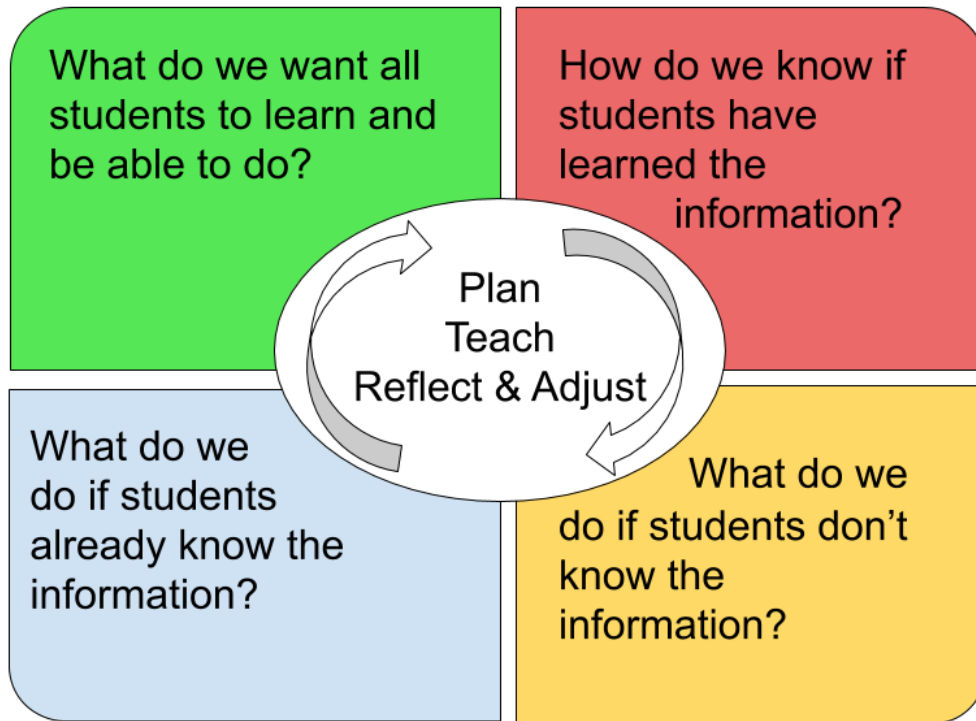
Core Components

At the core of MTSS are four essential elements: (1) A Multi-Tiered Framework for Instruction and Intervention, (2) Academic Engaged Time, (3) Data-Based Decision Making, and (4) Professional learning. Each essential area is briefly defined below.

1. Multi-tiered Framework for Instruction and Intervention

In a multi-tiered system of instruction and support, teachers provide quality instruction across three tiers that is universally designed, differentiated, culturally and linguistically responsive, and aligned to grade-level content standards. MTSS is a framework that provides equitable access to high-quality, grade-level academic and behavioral instruction and supports for all students.

Multi-Tiered Framework for Instruction and Intervention

Tier 3 (Few Students)
- Individualized Interventions
- For students with the highest levels of need, highly-targeted and individualized academic and behavior strategies provide more intensive intervention and monitoring
- Progress monitoring occurs weekly

Tier 2 (Some Students)
- For students whose needs are not meet through universal, differentiated instruction and supports
- Targeted evidence based interventions designed to meet specific need identified through a data-based decision making process
- Progress monitoring is key component and occurs bi-weekly

Tier 1 (All Students)
- Universal Core Curriculum and Instruction: Curriculum designed and implemented to meet the needs of all students including ELLs and bilingual learners, advanced learners, and students with disabilities
- Positive Learning Climate
- Promote social and emotional development through explicit curricula, along with integrated instructional practices

Tier 1: Core Instruction and Systems of Support- Great Teaching for All

Tier 1 is Core instruction aligned to content standards. All students, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), students in early childhood programs, and advanced learners are expected to reach grade-level academic standards and develop positive social-emotional skills and proficiencies for healthy living. We expect that the majority (e.g., 85%) of students receiving core instruction will achieve mastery of the content standards when robust core instruction is in place. For behavior, this also means all schools have structures in place to support positive behavior and social-emotional learning in all settings. Core instruction is linguistically appropriate for ELLs and is universally designed for all students. For ELLs, this means achieving mastery in the standards at a rate that is commensurate to their language proficiency. For students in TK and preschool, this means progress across developmental areas with developmentally appropriate instruction and activities.

Differentiation of behavior and academic instruction begins in Tier I and continues across the tiers. Differentiation requires teachers to recognize students' varying levels of readiness, interests, background knowledge, language, and culture. When teachers differentiate, they respond and proactively plan for differing abilities in the same classroom. Differentiation can occur through modifications to the content (what is taught), process (how it is taught), product (how learning is shown), and/or resources available in the classroom (core curriculum or supplementary materials). To differentiate instruction to maximize student growth, teachers can add depth and complexity to the curriculum, scaffold lessons, pre-assess students to form flexible groupings, implement interest and/or learning centers, employ questioning strategies, allow for independent study, preview, review, reteach, and front load content. Differentiation in the core curriculum is also supportive of students in TK and preschool classes.

Routines need to be in place that allow school systems to identify the needs of all students throughout the school year, based on multiple measures. Teacher teams analyze data related to academic, behavior, attendance, language proficiency, and then differentiate instruction. Teacher teams regularly review and monitor student

progress through interim and formative assessments to determine learning trends and patterns to reinforce or emphasize in subsequent instruction. Teacher teams plan, teach, reflect and adjust as they make instructional decisions. School Leadership Teams as well as School Grade Level teams regularly review systems level data (e.g., whole school and grade level summative and interim data) to make decisions about overall effectiveness of instruction. When assessment measures indicate that a student needs more instruction and intervention to access the core curriculum, then educators provide Tier 2 supplemental supports.

Robust Tier 1 Instruction is about:

- Aligning high quality core instruction to standards
- Implementing instructional practices that support all learners
- Maximizing student growth by using differentiation strategies such as:
  - Adding depth and complexity to the curriculum
  - Scaffolding lessons
  - Pre-assessing students to form flexible groupings
  - Implementing interest and/or learning centers
  - Employing questioning strategies
  - Facilitating independent study that emphasizes students' areas of interest
  - Previewing, reviewing, re-teaching, and frontloading
  - Providing small group instruction focused on student needs
- Providing structures and systems for creating a positive school/classroom climate as well as explicit and integrated instruction of social-emotional skills (SEL)
- Collaboration among educators (e.g., principals, general educators, Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs), special education teachers, interventionists, etc.) to ensure that all students' needs are met
- Providing sufficient time and language attentive instruction for our English Learners, which includes strategies such as use of visuals, repetition, vocabulary front loading, and grouping strategies.
- Implementing developmentally appropriate TK and preschool practices for students, such as play-based learning and routine-based instruction that support all areas of development

Tier 2: Strategic Intervention – Supplemental Support

OUSD Educators provide Tier 2 interventions, known as "Strategic or Supplemental Intervention," **in addition to** high quality Tier 1 core instruction. Teachers use strategic Intervention for approximately 10-15% of students that need additional time, intensity, and/or type of instruction to achieve desired grade level benchmarks. Staff provide strategic interventions to give students more time to learn by using an instructional strategy used in the core instruction (Tier 1) or a different instructional pedagogy - whichever benefits the student more. Strategic interventions include more intensive instruction (time and focus) aligned to students' instructional needs based on data from multiple measures and includes ongoing progress monitoring. Fluent and ongoing use of data allows teacher(s) to determine if the student is making expected rate of progress

and growth.

Tier 2 Strategic Intervention and Support is about:

- Aligning and integrating Core instruction, school-wide academic and behavioral supports, which means:

  In addition to Core instruction (Tier1), teachers provide supports that include intensifying evidence-based core strategies or use other evidence- based instructional strategies and/or programs.

- Matching interventions to student needs.

- Using data to provide more time and intensity of instruction and support (e.g., preview, review, frontload academic or other content, and provide more opportunities to learn) while regularly monitoring student(s) progress bi-weekly.

Tier 3: Intensive Intervention

Tier 3, often also known as intensive intervention, is targeted intervention provided in language(s)of instruction for a few (1-5%) students who, after receiving high quality, language attentive core instruction (Tier 1) and strategic intervention (Tier 2), still need increased time and intensity of instruction and/or behavioral supports. Tier 3 instruction focuses on a more narrow set of academic and behavioral skills. Tier 3 **is not** special education.

Progress monitoring at Tier 3 occurs more frequently; typically data is collected weekly. These assessments provide information about a student's instructional needs and are used to identify academic skills gaps. Student performance is monitored closely to evaluate progress and the effectiveness of instruction and intervention, which allows for adjustment of instruction when needed. Intensity, frequency, duration of support, and student-teacher ratio change as students move through the tiers, as does the frequency of progress monitoring.

Tier 3 Intensive Instruction and Intervention is about:

- Extending beyond Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and/or behavioral supports
- Increasing time and instructional intensity on a narrowly focused set of skills for academics and/or behavior
- Integrating Tier 3 instruction and supports with Core (Tier 1) classroom instruction.
- Using frequent data in collaboration with a team to regularly monitor student progress
- Collaborating among all adults involved in the student's learning (families, classroom teacher, interventionist, TOSA, principal, etc.)

Given the individualized nature of Tier 3, schools identify teachers who are highly trained and have demonstrated expertise to support our most vulnerable learners. It is a best practice for Tier 3 support to include interventionists in addition to the classroom teacher.

Other Considerations:

This multi-tiered framework is a continuum of instruction and intervention where an individual student may simultaneously receive differentiated instruction in varying intensity in Tiers 1, 2, and 3 in order to match learning supports to both academic and behavioral/social-emotional needs.

For ELLs, it is essential that the teacher team consider the expected rate of language acquisition (i.e. typically 5-7 years to reach academic language in English on par with monolingual learners) for our language learners as they assess their progress. Interventions need to be provided in the language of instruction.

Tier 3 supports are **not** synonymous with special education services nor an automatic placement for ELLs, but rather a critical step in providing intensive intervention so that students have an additional opportunity to close gaps so that they can meet expected grade level benchmarks and language proficiencies.

2. Academic Engaged Time

Academic Engaged Time (AET) is an essential aspect of a robust MTSS and is the highest priority for every school and every student. AET is the number of minutes each day/week that students receive quality academic instruction and demonstrate academic and social-emotional behaviors that reflect active engagement in instruction. Effective use of instructional time, specifically, academic engaged time, is one of the strongest predictors of student achievement at all levels. Instructional leadership and guidance can help ensure that teachers have time to collaboratively plan how to spend instructional time, minimize transition time, and maximize student engagement. Effective instruction and high-quality teacher-student interaction are key elements in this work across all tiers. AET is supported by clearly defining behavioral expectations, teaching and reinforcing routines and appropriate student behaviors, and correcting students calmly and efficiently. Creating schedules based on student needs and maximizing AET is a critical component to an effective MTSS. To summarize, Academic Engaged Time is: **Targeted Instruction + Time = Learning.**

3. Problem Solving & Data-Based Decision-Making Process
Problem-Solving Overview

The problem solving process is an important vehicle to continuous school improvement. With access to relevant data, teams can use the problem solving process to examine the data for large groups of students (district or school-wide), smaller groups of students (grade level or classroom), or individual students. The purpose of the problem solving process is to ensure that data are used to inform decision-making and action planning at these different levels. For example, data analysis and problem solving may inform school improvement planning, flexible grouping of students across classrooms, small group core instructional or intervention decisions, or whether to refer a student to the Student Study Team. Success hinges on true collaboration among a multi-disciplinary team of professionals that use data to identify the problem, think about <u>why</u> the

problem is occurring, identify research-based instruction/interventions that address the specific problem, and evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction/intervention.

The process also provides the structure to monitor fidelity of instruction/interventions as well as monitor the progress of students' responses. The problem solving process is ongoing and cyclical; it is cyclical in order to achieve the best outcomes for all students. This process is strongly supported by both the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), legislative actions that support learning of all students regardless of their status in general or special education.

Problem-Solving within the Context of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

An essential component of the multi-tiered framework for instruction and intervention is consistent, step-by-step problem solving that occurs within the context of overall school planning, during teacher team meetings when teachers reflect and adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their students. The problem solving process within a MTSS helps to ensure that all factors have been thoroughly examined to inform strategies and modifications to instruction/intervention. A student's failure to learn should not be automatically attributed to a disability or within-child problem. It is imperative to collect and analyze robust data on instruction, intervention, and supports to help determine why a student is not progressing at the same rate as peers. Additionally, family engagement is an important aspect of this process as it will likely increase success for student outcomes.

The problem-solving process is used systematically throughout the school year at multiple levels (e.g., school, grade, class, and individually) and across all tiers to determine the appropriate level of intensity and service necessary for individual students to be successful in achieving grade level standards.
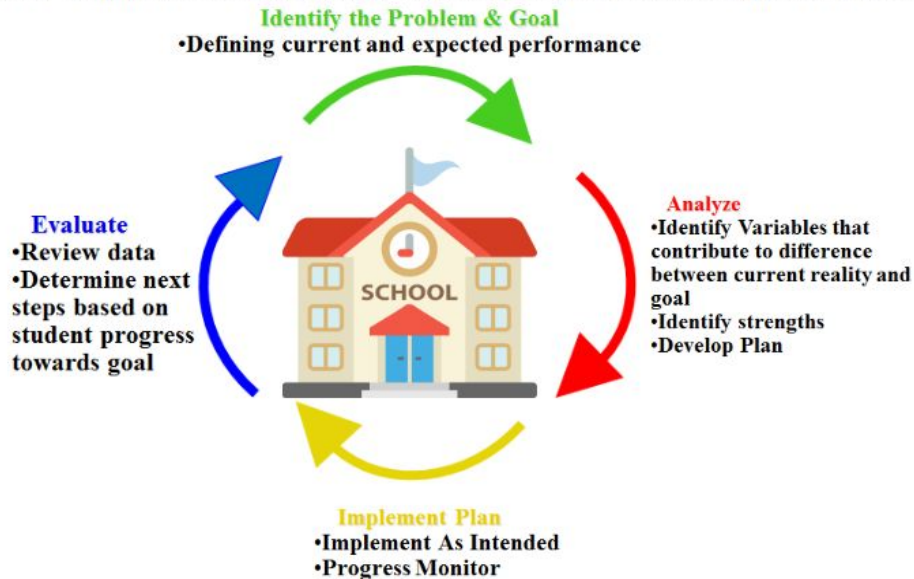
The basic problem-solving process utilizes the following four phases and questions:

> **1. Problem Identification/Desired Goal:** Is there a discrepancy between expected and current performance? What does the data show?
>
> **2. Problem Analysis:** Why is the student(s) not achieving the academic and/or behavioral benchmark?
>
> **3. Plan Implementation:** What are we going to do to address the concern?
>
> **4. Evaluation:** Did our instruction/intervention work? What is the response to instruction and intervention?

Data based decision making through the use of systematic problem solving is an essential component of the multi-tiered framework for instruction and intervention that is consistently and continually used throughout the school year to determine the appropriate frequency, time, and intensity of instruction and support necessary for student success. The process is based on the careful analysis of multiple measures of academic, behavioral, and language proficiency data including: State and district-wide assessments, informal local measures, response to behavior intervention, and attendance. It is imperative to collect and analyze robust data on language, instruction, intervention, and behavior supports to help determine why a student is not

progressing at the same rate as peers.

The four step problem-solving and data-based decision-making process in MTSS:

Identify the Problem & Goal
•Defining current and expected performance

Analyze
•Identify Variables that contribute to difference between current reality and goal
•Identify strengths
•Develop Plan

Implement Plan
•Implement As Intended
•Progress Monitor

Evaluate
•Review data
•Determine next steps based on student progress towards goal

1. Identify the Desired Goal: What is it we want student(s) to achieve?

In the area of academics, the "what do we expect all students to learn and do" is driven by the Common Core State Standards and English language development standards for ELLs, both of which guide instruction at each grade and relevant subject area.

In the area of behavior, what we expect students to know and do is guided by social-emotional learning skills, age-appropriate student engagement behaviors and the pro-social behaviors that support a positive school climate.

At this stage, it is important for the team to articulate whether they are identifying a problem at the school level, grade/department level, small group of students, or an individual student level. This identification is important as it will lead to different types of

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instructional or intervention decisions. For example, if the team is working with school level data, the intervention may be school-wide such as re-teaching hallway expectations and behaviors. These data may also inform additional problem solving at Tier 2 or Tier 3 (i.e., is there a small group of students who need additional intervention?).

2. Analyze: Why is there a gap between current and expected achievement?

Effective analysis provides the foundation for the rest of the data-based decision making process.

The goal of this analysis is to answer these questions:

- *Why is the gap occurring?*

- *Why are students not achieving the desired academic or behavioral outcomes?*

- *What are the strengths that can be used to leverage support?*

- *What are the possible barriers to the student(s) doing and/or knowing what is expected?*

During this analysis, the team uses data to generate hypotheses, or possible root causes, that are grounded in evidence and focus on alterable variables related to the domains of Instruction, Curriculum, Environment or Learner (ICEL). Additional data may be gathered to either confirm or disprove the hypotheses [Review, Observation, Interviews, Tests (RIOT)]. From this, the team selects an instruction/intervention strategy that is best matched to the student(s) needs identified through this phase.

3. Implement the plan

During this step of the process, the team develops a plan to enable the school, grade, small group, or individual student to reach the goal. During this step, details are essential as the team must outline the specifics of the plan including data collection on how the student(s) will be monitored (progress monitoring) as well as a plan for monitoring the fidelity of the instruction/intervention.

A good plan:

- Incorporates the strengths of the system and the student(s)

- Explicitly states what will be taught/focus of instruction/intervention

- Focuses on measurable objectives

- Defines specifically who is responsible for each action and a timeline

- Describes a plan for measuring and monitoring the effects of the instruction/intervention; a quantifiable baseline and target goal is identified

- Describes a plan for monitoring/ensuring fidelity to the plan

- Has a time set for the team to revisit the plan

- Identifies resources available for implementing the plan

4. Evaluate the plan: How have student(s) responded to our plan?

This last step in the data based decision making process requires the team to use data gathered from progress monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented instruction or intervention.

The team meets on scheduled, regular intervals to ask:

- *Is the plan moving the student toward intended goal/desired outcomes?*

- *If not, how will the planned instruction/intervention be adjusted to better support the student, group of students, or whole class progress? Do we need to consider fidelity?*

- *If yes, should the plan continue? Should we fade the instruction/intervention? (e.g., systematically withdraw the intervention while planning for generalization and maintenance of the newly acquired skills or knowledge).*

If instruction/intervention is not producing the desired results, a first step is to evaluate whether the instruction/intervention is being implemented as designed. If not, adjustments should be made to ensure fidelity. Teams should also consider whether the intensity of an intervention needs to be increased by either; 1) reducing the size of the group; 2) increasing the amount of time/frequency that the intervention is delivered or 3) narrowing the focus of the instruction to more specific skills.

Through this process, teachers and teacher teams make decisions regarding appropriate and necessary instructional practices and targeted interventions for **individual students**.

Within data-based decision making is the strategic use of **assessment**. It is critical that instruction and/or behavior decisions are based on multiple and varied assessment measures. Early identification of student needs can prevent learning gaps, provide additional time for instruction/intervention, and promote student potential.

Data are first collected early in the year and utilized to inform teacher and support staff decisions at each tier of support. Fluent and ongoing use of assessment data allows teacher(s) and support staff to determine if the Tier I instruction is meeting the needs of at least 85-90% of the students in the class. Then by analyzing performance of specific students who are not achieving success, ask if the student should remain with current program supports, modify current supports, lessen supports, or intensify supports.

 The effective use of formative assessments within the context of problem solving is crucial to help educators determine the appropriate intervention for students. Technically adequate (i.e., reliable and valid) progress monitoring assessments can be administered frequently and are sensitive to small increments of growth over time. These assessment results provide guidance in making decisions that promote student achievement and achieving grade level benchmarks and beyond.

4. Professional Learning

The fundamental purpose of MTSS is to improve the educational outcomes for each student in all content areas, including behavior. Students must have equitable access to the highest level of instructional expertise and pedagogy in all tiers of support. For this

to occur, ongoing professional learning is essential to ensure that teachers are prepared and supported to meet the needs of all students, through a system of assessment, instruction, and intervention.

Professional development in OUSD should embed and align core concepts of MTSS outlined in this document, ensuring that differentiated teaching strategies are developed for content across the tiers.

District and school-based resources must be dedicated to building the capacity of teachers and leaders to effectively reach all students.

Summary
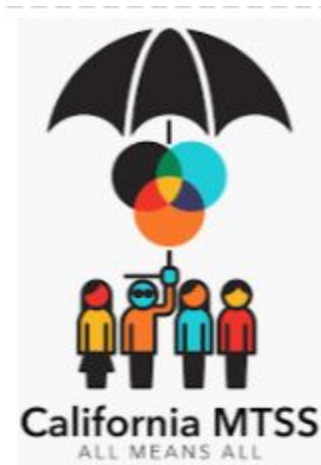
MTSS is a student-centered, evidenced based framework that maintains an intentional focus on the needs of all learners. MTSS ensures consistent and systematic articulation of student needs and strengths, the alignment of instruction and resources, and improved academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

(Adapted from mtss.madison.k12.wi.us - Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, WI)