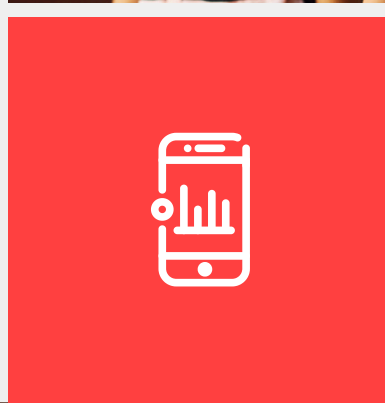


Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Establishing a seamless
system of support for all
students



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Overview

This guide aims to support schools and systems implementing integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports Frameworks (I- MTSS). Foundation to I-MTSS is the guiding principle that all schools provide safe and supportive environments where students receive high quality pedagogy. This pedagogy is responsive to both students' academic and wellbeing needs. I-MTSS also acknowledges that all young people will require fluid access to instructional, wellbeing and mental health support throughout the course of their schooling. I-MTSS provides a coherent framework for schools to proactively use data, make decisions and provide support all students.

There is a collective acknowledgement across education stakeholders that there are many dimensions to educating and supporting the academic engagement and wellbeing of young people in schools. However, there has historically been a division of labour between advancing students academically and supporting their wellbeing. This is despite the fact that we have known for some time that these two dimensions of student development are inextricably linked (White, 2020).

A framework that has persisted in aligning supports for learning and wellbeing with evidence-based intervention is Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS is an umbrella term for any preventative framework that involves school wide universal supports, screening, data-based decision making, progress monitoring and multiple tiers of intervention that increase with intensity to meet students' need.

MTSS, developed in the United States, has traditionally comprised of two core frameworks. Response to Intervention (RTI): to identify and support students with literacy and/or numeracy difficulties and Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (PBIS): focused on improving student behaviour.

In recent years there has also been presentations of MTSS for mental health (Collins, et. al. 2019) and also attendance (Kearney & Graczyk, 2022). Whilst there has been widespread adoption in Australia of MTSS for learning (RTI) and behaviour (PBL), Australia is still maturing in its shared theoretical understanding of how these frameworks might be integrated across different contexts.



What is a Multi- Tiered System of Supports Framework?

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework (MTSS) is a proactive approach to academic and wellbeing support for all students. MTSS is an umbrella term for any program that involves multiple tiers of intervention. The framework is generally represented as a three tiered triangle. Most MTSS frameworks incorporate the following:

- An evidence based set of proactive universal practices at tier one that support academic engagement, positive behaviour and wellbeing.
- Screening at tier I of all children to identify those at risk;
- A problem solving approach whereby school and system teams use data to determine need and match this need with evidence based supports.
- A process and measures for monitoring progress and determining response to supports.
- A multi-tiered response to need with increasing intensity of supports at Tier II and Tier III to remediate or address challenges for those children who are not responding.



Thoughts so far?

- **Connect** - What do you already know about MTSS
- **Extend**- What have you learnt so far?
- **Explore** - what questions do you want to explore further?



Essential Elements of all Multi-Tiered System of Supports

All MTSS framework are made up of four essential components (Figure 1). (1) universal screening, (2) progress monitoring, (3) multi-tiered response to need, and (4) data-based decision making.

Universal Screening

Universal Screening is a proactive and systematic process for identifying students who may require more support for academic, behavioral, social, emotional and attendance needs. Universal screening can also be used to identify whole class, year group or even school need when large numbers of students (up to 80%) are identified. The universal screening process relies on valid screening tools, access to accurate data that is collected and analysed periodically.

Multi- Tiered Response to Need

The multi-tiered response to need generally includes three tiers of support. Foundation for all MTSS frameworks are evidence based universal practices that both prevent and support students across academic and wellbeing domains at tier 1. Tier 2 support is both complimentary and supplementary to the universal supports that students receive at tier 1. Tier 2 does not replace universal tier 1 supports. Instead tier 2 supports provide students with more intensive opportunities to develop the skills that all students receive at tier 1 (Barker, 2023). Tier 3 supports are more intensive and individualised than tier 2. Tier 3 supports often involve supports beyond the school, more intensive case management and wraparound models of care.

Progress Monitoring

Once an intervention has been established schools continually monitor progress. Schools and systems use progress monitoring data to make decisions regarding the effectiveness and the student's response to the intervention. There are clear measures and criteria for progress monitoring across the MTSS dimensions that are documented.

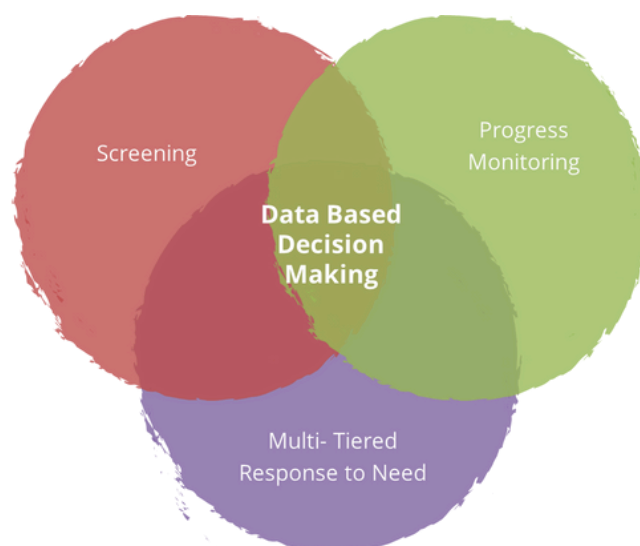


Figure 1

Data Based Decision making

No decision is made within the MTSS framework without data. The analysis of data to make evidence informed decisions takes place at all levels of the MTSS framework. Schools use screening and progress data to make decisions about applying or intensifying supports. Data can also be used for the identification of students with disability (e.g. school may use data to support NCCD evidence for the need to apply adjustments). All decisions made depend on established data analysis processes within a problem-solving model. This ensures schools develop sound hypothesis regarding the problem and match the right evidence based intervention.

Discussion points

- What might each of these elements look like in your setting?
- What element could your school already build upon?

An Integrated Multi- Tiered Systems of Support Framework.

As greater focus has been placed on supporting the 'whole child', researchers have proposed a more blended approach towards supporting the academic and wellbeing needs of all students. Integrated Multi- Tiered System of Supports (I-MTSS) approaches work to blend academic and social emotional- behavioural (i.e. wellbeing) MTSS frameworks to cohesively address a broader range of need. These integrated models have developed to address the increasing number of barriers that young people face towards accessing education (e.g. mental health, behaviour, disability, attendance etc.).

MTSS has traditionally comprised of Response to Intervention (RTI): to identify and support students with literacy and/or numeracy difficulties and Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (PBIS): focused on improving student behaviour. In recent years MTSS frameworks have been presented supporting attendance and mental health. However, we know that many problems faced by young people at school are multi-dimensional. For example, there is much evidence supporting links between students behaviour, mental health, attendance and their academic outcomes (Kearney et. al. 2019)

A significant development of multi-tiered service delivery models within schools has been to consider a nuanced three-dimensional perspective that integrate supports with increasing intensity as and when required (Figure 2). Kearney and Graczyk (2020) argue that flat two dimensional triangle models ignore the heterogeneity of young people, instead reinforcing the requirement for students to adapt to the 'one size fits all approach' towards supports as opposed to tailoring the supports for the students through a problem solving approach.

To achieve an integrated model it is necessary to view support as multidimensional. In this model, multiple tiers of support are integrated across multiple domains (e.g. mental health, learning, behaviour etc) so that simultaneous and yet nuanced strategies may be used for each domain (Dulaney et al. 2013).

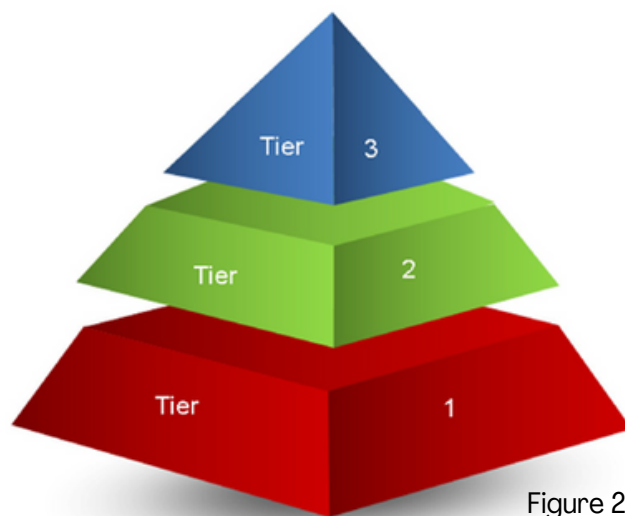


Figure 2

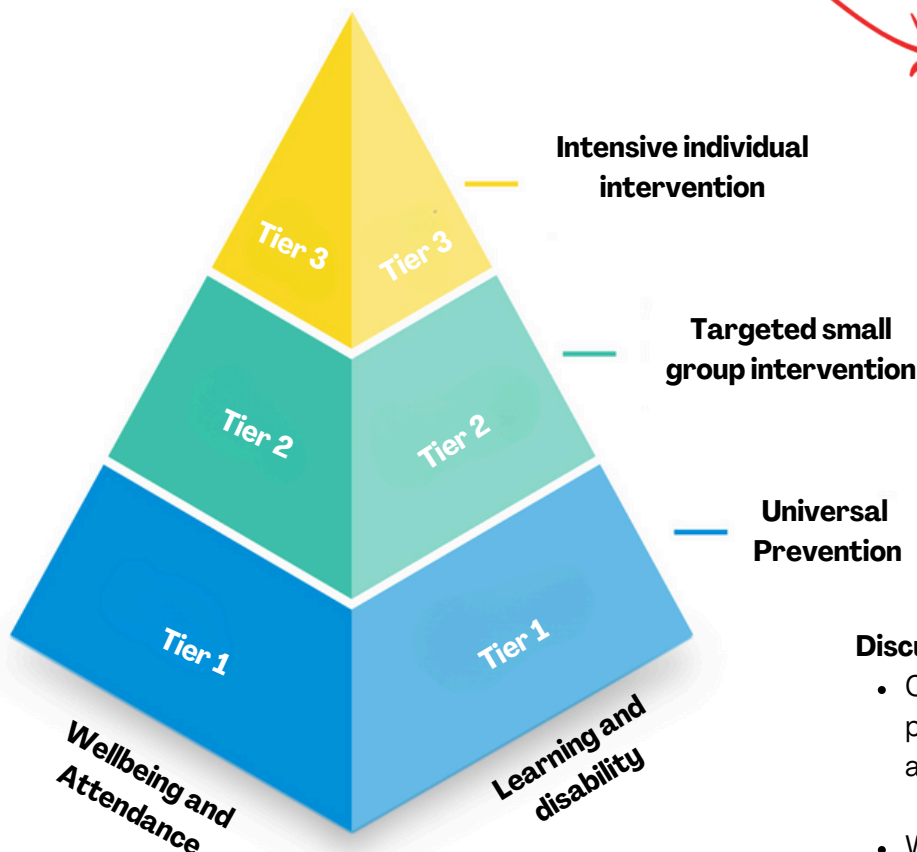
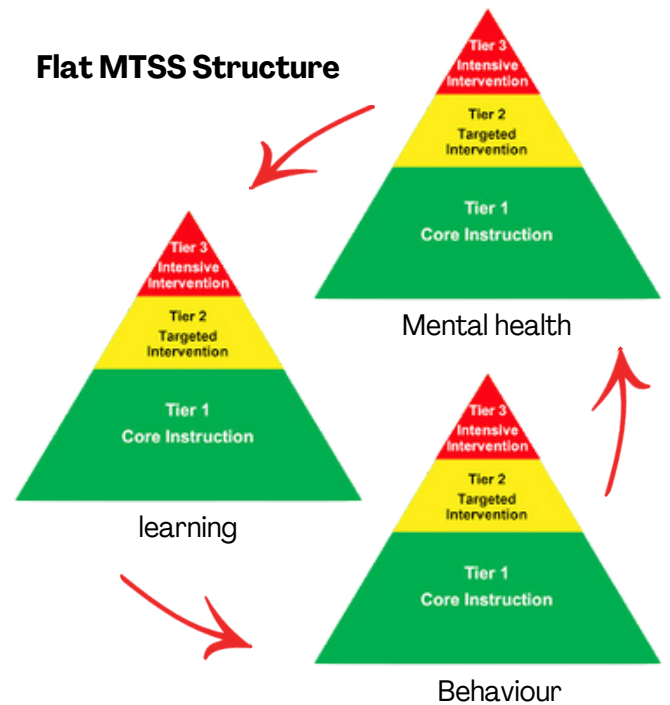


Integrating the Multi-Tiered Dimensions

To achieve an Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports (I-MTSS) it is necessary to view the support provided to all students as multi-dimensional. In this model, multiple tiers of support are integrated across multiple domains (e.g. wellbeing, learning, behaviour etc) so that simultaneous and yet nuanced strategies may be used within and across each domain (Dulaney et al. 2013).

An integrated MTSS framework entails embedding evidence based intervention in each domain and integrating practices across domains (e.g., embedding a check in check out system for students struggling with attendance and learning) (Figure 3). Integration of academic, behavioral, wellbeing and attendance support is critical, as academic, behavioral and attendance needs are interconnected: Behavior impacts access to instruction, and quality instruction influences behavior. Both can be a catalyst for school engagement and attendance. Lastly, an integrated MTSS is not so much about the supports that are offered but the cohesive manner in which they are offered.

Flat MTSS Structure



Discussion Points

- Can you identify any universal practices that are common across all dimensions?
- What are some practices in one domain that compliment the practices in another (e.g. learning and behavior)?

Figure 3

Multi- Tiered System of Support for Attendance

Attendance issues are multidimensional. Therefore, the integrated MTSS framework lends itself to understanding, supporting and addressing school attendance problems. According to Kearney and Graczyk (2020) an attendance MTSS framework could include the following:

“A contemporary prevention science framework for school attendance and its problems, an orientation for developing, testing, and utilizing interventions that target essential levers of change.....blend theory with seamless implementation and problem-solving action to enhance the framework’s practicality, utility, and acceptability” (p.317).

Core components of an Attendance Multi- Tiered System of Supports Framework

Universal supports, monitoring of progress and determining attendance concerns.

Within a three dimensional attendance MTSS model universal supports would span across the domains that may impact on student attendance. This does not mean schools need to reinvent their current practices and supports. Instead, developing an attendance MTSS framework involves a reframing (for want of a better word) of current practice and supports. We may question - What universal supports for student attendance (i.e. leadership, monitoring data, following up, welcoming school culture, community partnership, supports for marginalised families, engaging curriculum etc.) do we already have in place? What supports do we need?

Problem solving, identification of the attendance issue and evidence based intervention.

It is widely acknowledge that attendance concerns are heterogenous (i.e. a one- size fits all approach is often inadequate) (Heyne, et. al. 2019). Therefore, schools seeking to adopt a MTSS for attendance will require a sound data based problem solving approach. Schools closely monitor attendance data and employ strategies to support positive attendance. Students who do not respond to this support are identified.

Practitioners through interview, observation and in some cases allied health support seek to identify the cause of the attendance issue. In the initial stages less intensive individualised supports can be administered (e.g. goal setting, mentoring, pick up bus etc.).

Address complex attendance issues early.

Data analysis will determine that some students should automatically progress to Tier III in a problem solving approach. It may be determined that these students require intensive supports. Addressing the attendance issue should be timely and through an evidence based intervention (e.g. cognitive behaviour therapy, family therapy, social work support or psychological/ counsellor support). In complex cases a student may receive multiple supports (e.g. social work, psychological, education) to address barriers to attending school.

Discussion Points

- What are some universal practices that support attendance?
- What are some practices that you may need to develop further?

What is needed for effective Implementation?

Despite the best efforts of school systems, if a new initiative is not implemented with fidelity it will not have the desired effect (Scott, et. al. 2019). The effective implementation formula is defined by the five active implementation frameworks (AIF). This evidence based framework is widely employed throughout the United States (Fixen et. al. 2005) to guide the implementation of MTSS.

Effective Practice



It is essential that leaders understand the evidence based practice and what implementation with fidelity will look like.

Effective Implementation



Implementation must be carried out with fidelity in stages (Figure 4). It is also necessary that competency drivers, organisation drivers and leadership drivers are understood and managed.

Enabling Context



The enabling context requires effective teams and a continual improvement cycle. The implementation team is a group of staff who oversee the key functions of implementation. A continual improvement cycle (plan, do, review and act) will address issues and sustain the change.

Significant Outcomes

Discussion Points

- What resources and structures are already in place?
- How ready is your school or system to move towards implementation?

(SISEP Active Implementation Hub, 2022)

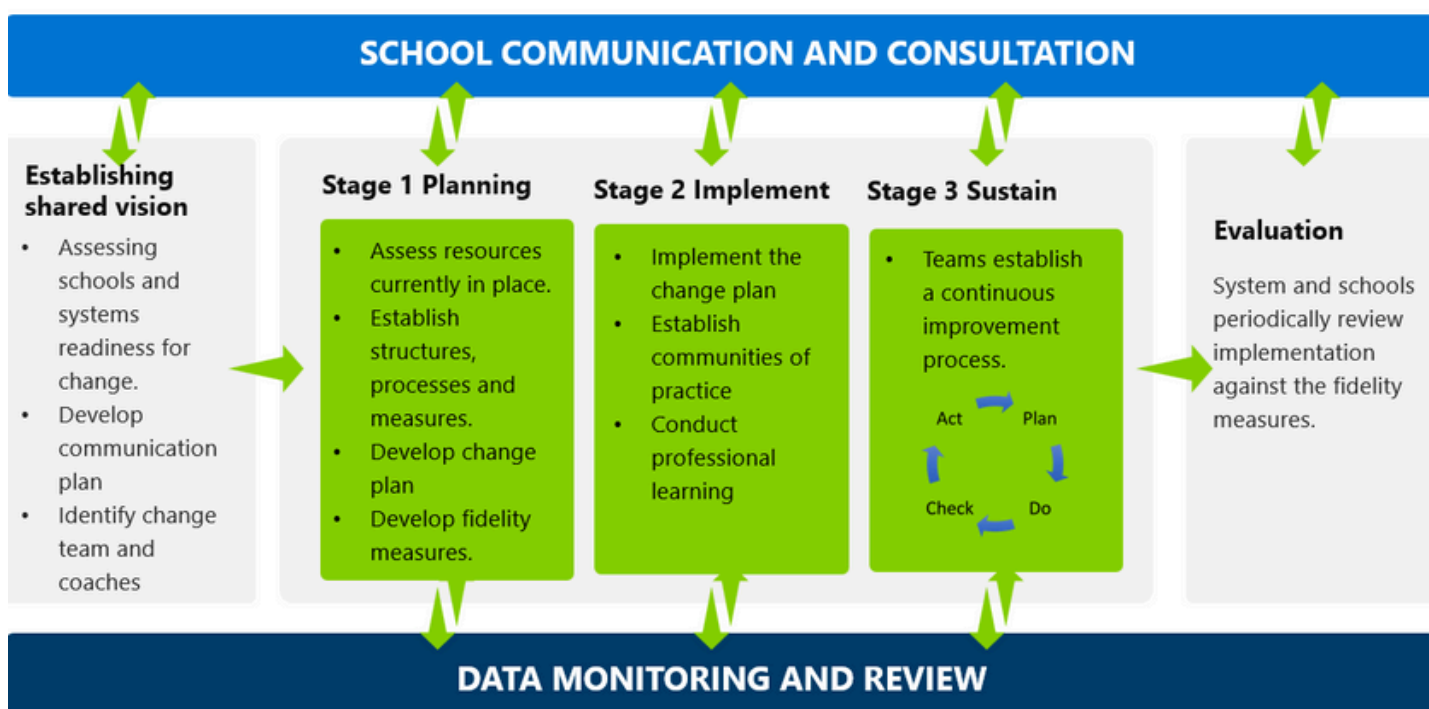


Figure 4 (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Support, 2023)

Next steps

Want to know more? Here are some resources to support your learning and understanding of implementing integrated MTSS.

Websites

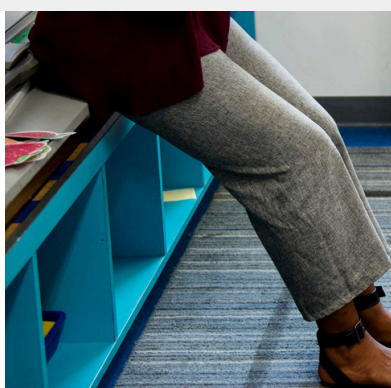
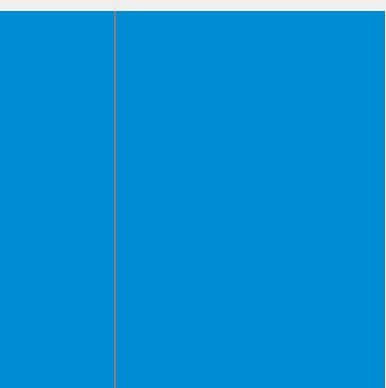
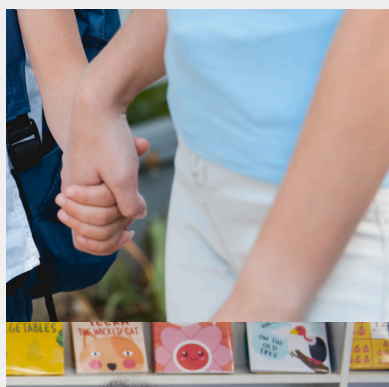
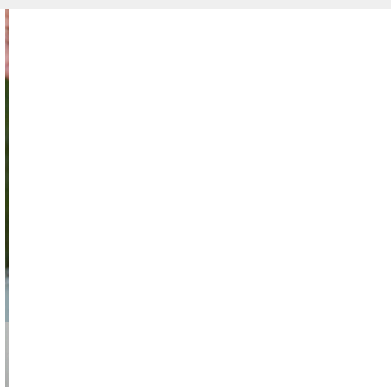
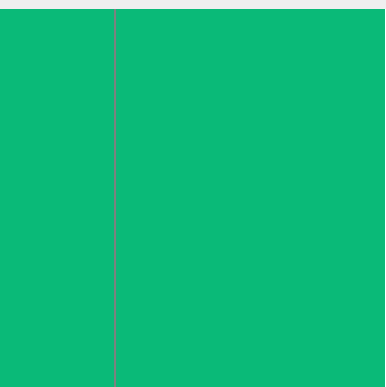
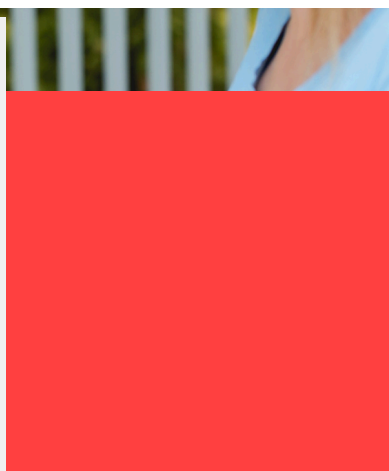
- [Australian Education Research Organisation Guide to Multi- Tiered Systems of Support](#)
- [State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence Based Practices \(SISEP\) – Active Implementation Hub.](#)
- [Centre on Multi- Tiered Systems of Support at the American Institutes for Research](#)
- [The I-MTSS Research Network](#)
- [The National Center on Intensive Intervention](#)
- [Center on Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports](#)
- [Attendance Insights](#)
- [Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#)

Books

- [Barker, K., Poed, S., & Whitefield, P. \(Eds.\). \(2022\). School-wide positive behaviour support: The Australian handbook. Taylor & Francis.](#)
- [Goodman-Scott, E., Betters-Bubon, J., Donohue, P., & Olsen, J. \(Eds.\). \(2023\). The school counselor’s guide to multi-tiered systems of support. Taylor & Francis.](#)

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Thank You

