

The Evolution of RtI in Colorado

Colorado has adopted the *Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)* conceptual framework as a representation of two sustainable systems change frameworks, Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). To better-articulate a focus on equitable and efficient learning environments and high-quality instructional practices, usage of the term MTSS has emerged. Research and lessons learned from schools and districts contributed to the shift to a Multi-Tiered System of Supports as the best description of a continuum of effective academic and behavioral instruction and supports for every student. This document addresses the transition from RtI and/or PBIS implementation to the development of the CO MTSS framework.

Definition of MTSS

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems.

Historical Perspective

In 2004, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), introduced the Response to Intervention (RtI) model, in an attempt to better identify and serve the diverse educational needs of all students. Built upon a broad research base, various RtI models with the following common features have been developed: (1) multiple tiers of intervention service delivery, (2) a problem-solving process, and (3) the use of data collection/assessment to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2006). IDEA 2004 also recognized positive behavior support as an evidence based practice and allowable use for funding to provide prevention and intervention for students with disabilities. In addition, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 2007) recommended the utilization of positive behavior interventions and supports to ensure safe learning environments in schools.

The implementation of RtI was initiated across the state of Colorado in 2006, when a change in legislation occurred in the Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA), regarding eligibility for special education related to the identification of specific learning disabilities. Previous to that, Colorado began district and school-level implementation of PBIS in 2002. Over time, as districts and schools became more fluent with the implementation of both RtI and PBIS practices, the similarities of the two frameworks/systems became apparent.

Current Practice

It is not uncommon to hear the term RtI and MTSS used interchangeably because historically the meaning and applications referred to as RtI have varied. In some instances, the term RtI is used to describe a process for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities, under IDEA. In other situations, RtI is used as a broad term referring to the educational change paradigm, such as a multi-tiered system of supports. The PBIS framework has also been referred to as "RtI for Behavior." Current practice in Colorado reflects a similar variety of implementation practices.

Future Implications

The shift of thinking about Response to Intervention as the identification of specific, individual needs to a more systemic approach involves an examination of the interconnected influences of instruction, curriculum, and learning environment on student success. This shift is the impetus for our future work in districts and schools.

In Colorado, a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is defined as a whole-school, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems. The MTSS framework is a “way of doing business” which utilizes high quality evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices to ensure that **every** student receives the appropriate level of support to be successful. A Multi-Tiered System of Supports helps schools and districts to organize resources through alignment of academic standards and behavioral expectations, implemented with fidelity and sustained over time, in order to accelerate the performance of every student to achieve and/or exceed proficiency.

The MTSS framework in Colorado is comprised of six essential components which form the foundation of creating a sustainable system of supports. The MTSS Essential Components are:

- Shared Leadership
- Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Layered Continuum of Supports
- Evidence-Based Instruction, Intervention, and Assessment Practices
- Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring
- Family, School, and Community Partnering



When schools and districts fully embrace and embed these components into their organizational structure, the outcome is a systemic, continuous improvement framework in which data-based problem-solving and decision making is practiced across all levels of the educational system for supporting students. The success of an MTSS framework is dependent on the effective interaction of: **data** used for decision making; **evidence-based practices** that support student need; and **systems** that facilitate adult implementation of practices. These integrated supports lead to the improved student **outcomes** of social competence and academic achievement.

Where can I learn more?

- Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports: www.cde.state.co.us/mtss
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit: www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs