




Systems Change and MTSS Implementation: Executive Sponsorship Matters





We would like to begin by acknowledging that we gather today on the ancestral homelands of **The Nimiipuu (Nez Perce)** and **the Palus People** who have lived in the Pacific Northwest, from time immemorial.





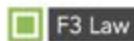
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INTEGRATED MTSS CONFERENCE

Empowering Excellence: Co-Designing
Systems through Instructional Leadership

Sponsored by...



JULY 31 – AUGUST 2, 2024

**Washington State University
Pullman, Washington**

In partnership with...



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**Washington State Association
of School Psychologists**



Washington Statewide
Family Engagement Center
FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, and COMMUNITIES in PARTNERSHIP



This work was developed in collaboration between



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Mindful Moment

Close your eyes or look down

Imagine yourself standing on
this dock

Take 3 deep breaths in through
your nose and out your mouth



Photograph by Tj Holowaychuk

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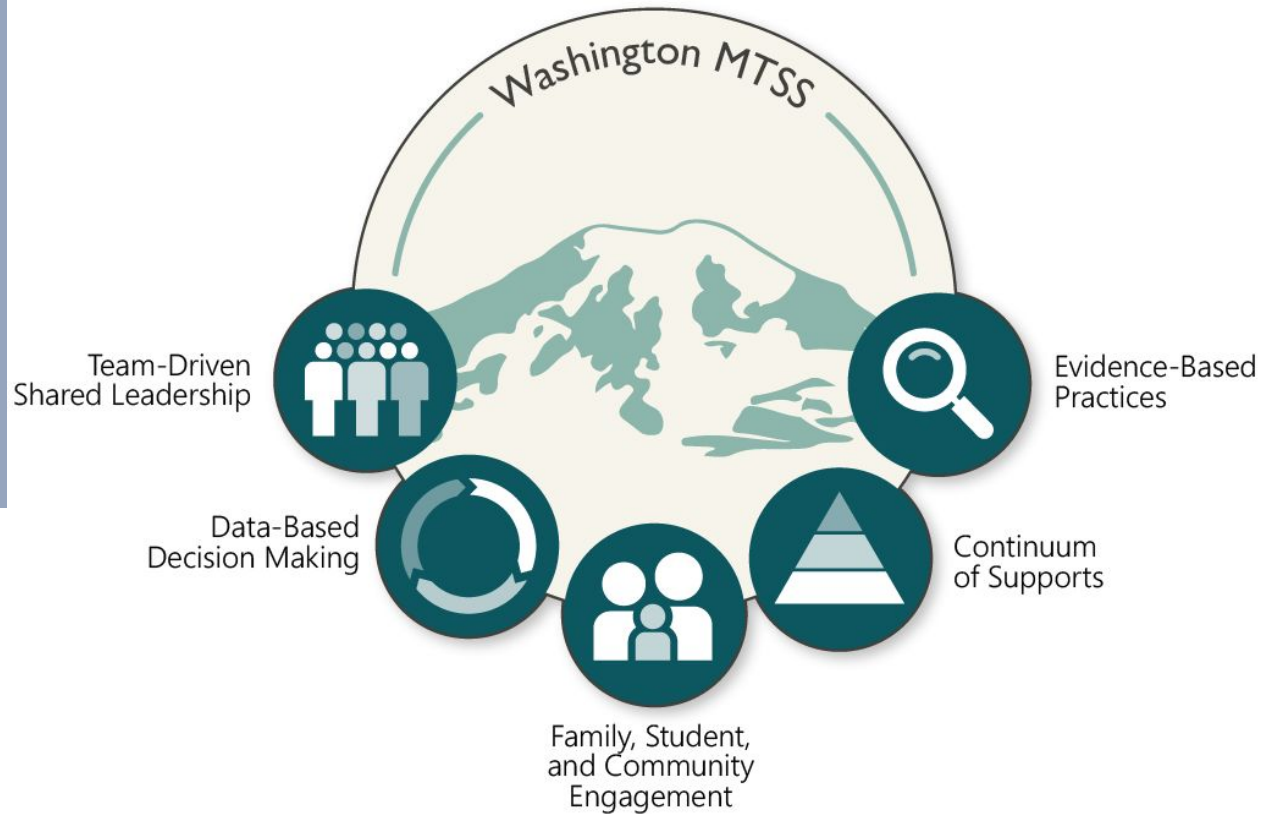
Today's Objectives

Attendees will be able to:

- Articulate why executive sponsorship is necessary for implementing MTSS to promote student outcomes
- Identify leadership strategies or moves that support implementation of MTSS in your local context



Why MTSS?



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Percentage of Fourth Graders at or Above Proficient in Reading and Eighth Graders at or Above Proficient in Math (2000, 2019 and 2022)

POPULATION	FOURTH GRADE READING			EIGHTH GRADE MATH		
	2000	2019	2022	2000	2019	2022
Race and Ethnicity						
TOTAL	28%	34%	32%	25%	33%	26%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5%	20%	18%	13%	15%	11%
Asian American and Pacific Islander	39%	55%	55%	40%	61%	56%
Black	9%	18%	16%	5%	13%	9%
Latino	12%	23%	20%	8%	19%	14%
White	36%	44%	41%	33%	43%	34%
Two or More Races	N.A.	40%	37%	N.A.	36%	27%
Immigration Status Proxy						
English Language Learner	3%	9%	10%	2%	5%	4%
Family Income and Title I Schools						
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch	13%	21%	19%	10%	18%	13%
Attending Title I School	22%	28%	26%	18%	25%	19%

Percentage of Fourth Graders at or Above Proficient in Reading and Eighth Graders at or Above Proficient in Math (2000, 2019 and 2022)

POPULATION	FOURTH GRADE READING		
	2000	2019	2022

Race and Ethnicity

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Asian American and Pacific Islander	39%	55%	55%	
Black	9%	18%	16%	
Latino	12%	23%	20%	
White	36%	44%	41%	
Two or More Races	N.A.	40%	37%	

Immigration Status Proxy

English Language Learner	3%	9%	10%
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Family Income and Title I Schools

Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch	13%	21%	19%
Attending Title I School	22%	28%	26%

Percentage of Fourth Graders at or Above Proficient in Reading and Eighth Graders at or Above Proficient in Math (2000, 2019 and 2022)

State of the Nation - NAEP

POPULATION	EIGHTH GRADE MATH		
	2000	2019	2022

Race and Ethnicity

TOTAL	25%	33%	26%
American Indian or Alaska Native	13%	15%	11%
Asian American and Pacific Islander	40%	61%	56%
Black	5%	13%	9%
Latino	8%	19%	14%
White	33%	43%	34%
Two or More Races	N.A.	36%	27%

Immigration Status Proxy

English Language Learner	2%	5%	4%
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Family Income and Title I Schools

Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch	10%	18%	13%
Attending Title I School	18%	25%	19%

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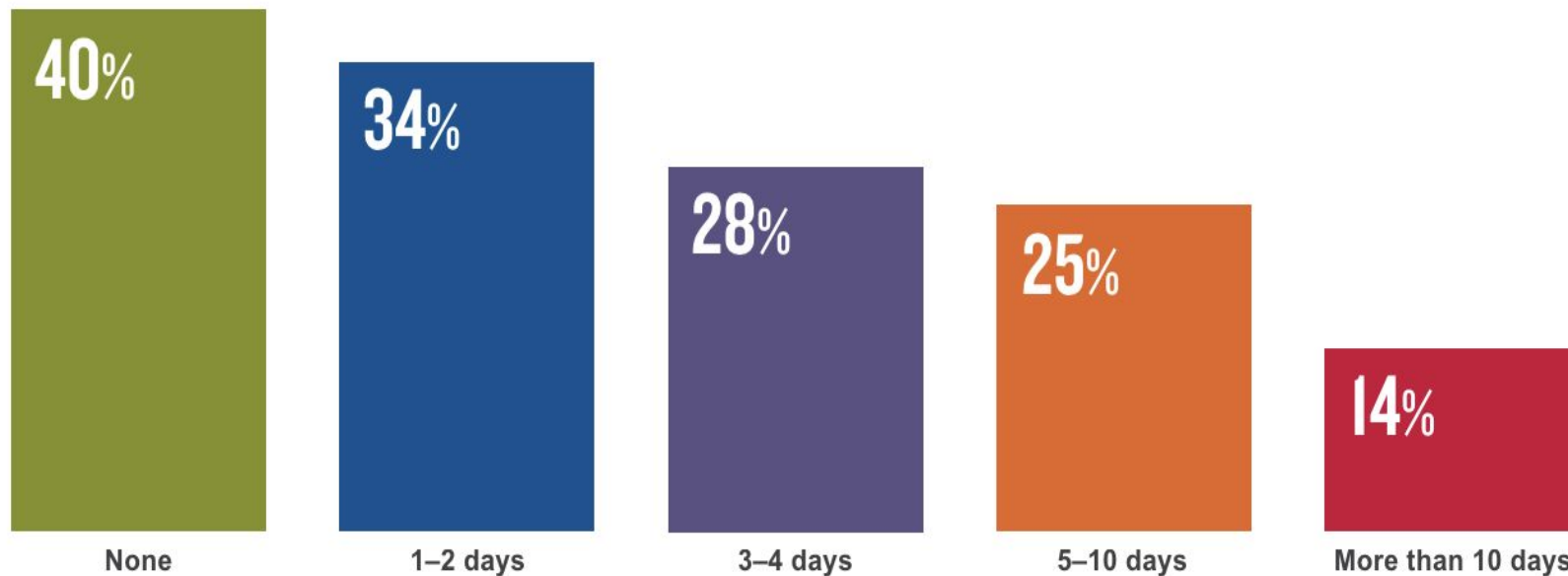
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Percentage of Fourth Grade Students Scoring at or Above Proficient in Reading, by Days Absent From School in the Last Month (2022)

State of the Nation



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[Kids Count 2024](#)

Washington - Percentage of Students Meeting Proficiency

Fourth Grade Reading		
2019	2022	2023

Eighth Grade Math		
2019	2022	2023

Race and Ethnicity

TOTAL	57%	49%	49%
American Indian or Alaska Native	27%	23%	24%
Asian	75%	71%	71%
Black	40%	34%	35%
Hispanic/Latino	39%	31%	31%
White	65%	56%	56%
Two or More Races	60%	53%	54%

54%	32%	32%
26%	12%	12%
77%	62%	62%
35%	14%	16%
37%	17%	17%
61%	38%	38%
56%	32%	33%

English Language Learner	15%	14%	17%
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch	41%	32%	32%
Students with Disabilities	24%	21%	22%

19%	5%	5%
38%	17%	17%
23%	6%	7%

Percentage of Students Who Met Reading Proficiency, 2019 Student Cohort

Washington

	Fourth Grade 2019	Eighth Grade 2023
Race and Ethnicity	2019	2023
TOTAL	57%	49%
American Indian or Alaska Native	27%	23%
Asian	75%	73%
Black	40%	33%
Hispanic/Latino	39%	32%
White	65%	56%
Two or More Races	60%	52%
English Language Learner	15%	7%
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch	41%	33%
Students with Disabilities	24%	13%

Percentage of Students Who Met Reading Proficiency, 2019 Student Cohort

Race and Ethnicity	Fourth Grade 2019	Eighth Grade 2023
	2019	2023
TOTAL	57%	49%

There were **82,593 eighth grade students** who completed the Smarter Balanced ELA Assessment in SY2023.

This means **42,122 students (51% of 8th graders)** entered our high school systems in SY2024 with insufficient reading skills, yet were expected to engage in high school level work.

Students with Disabilities	24%	13%
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“Every System Is Perfectly
Designed to Achieve Exactly the
Results It Gets”

-Berwick & Batalden



We are encouraging you to take a systems approach, systems thinking.



Move from This



Photo credit: Effingham Park District



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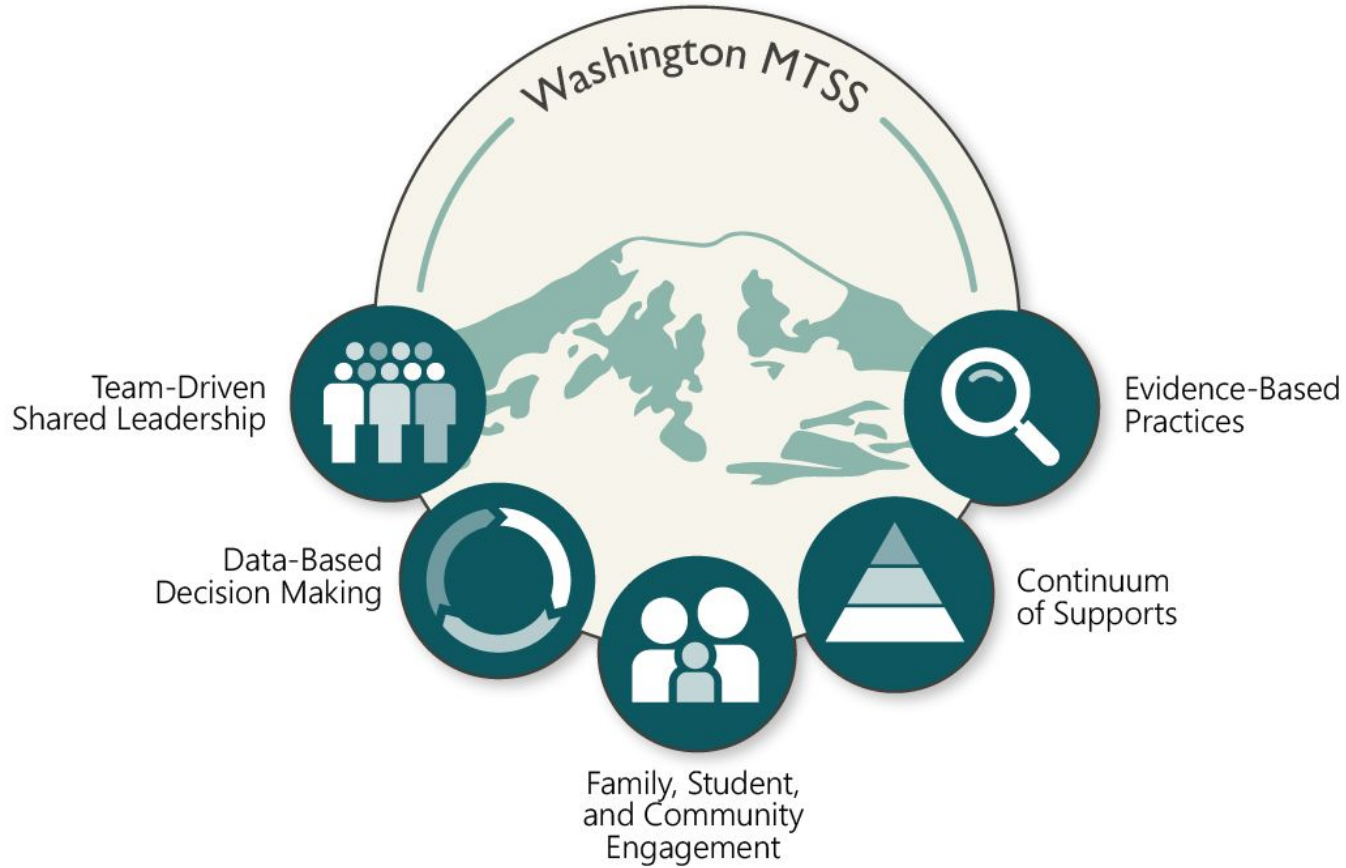
To This

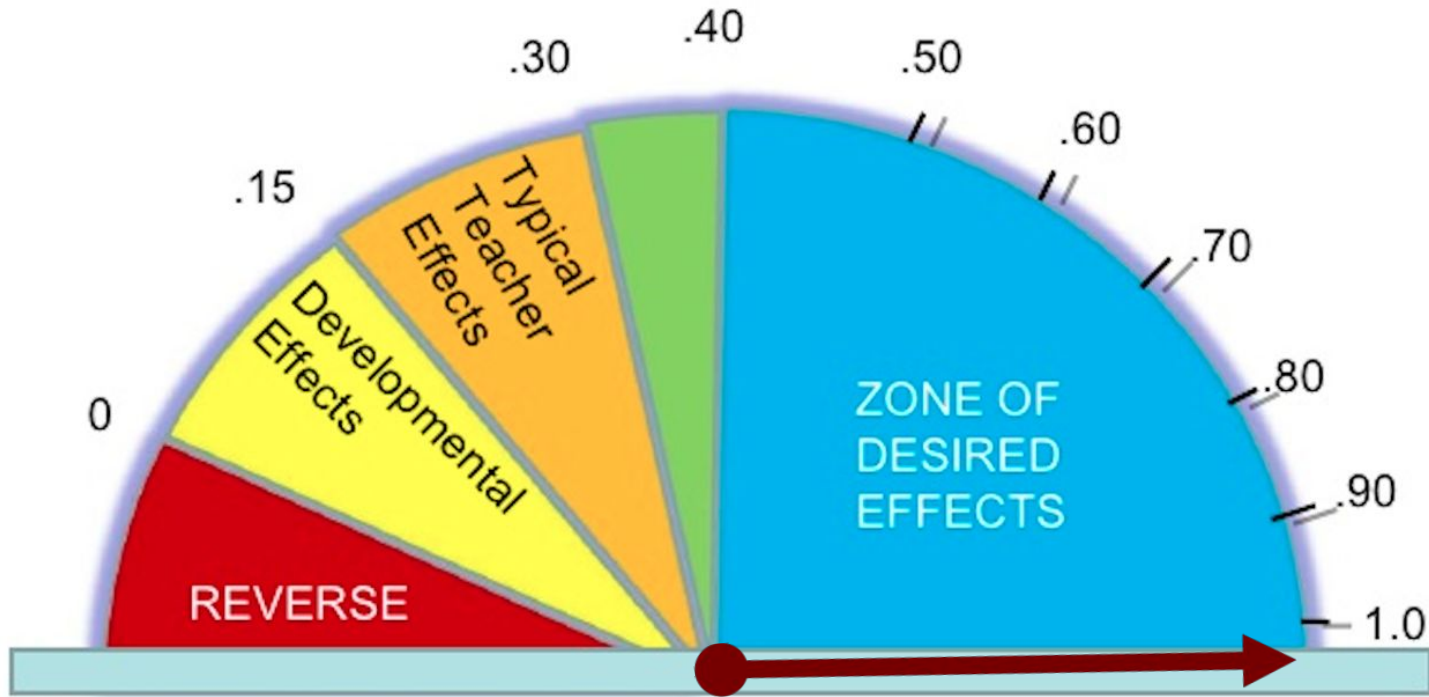


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$$ES = 1.29$$



**Initiatives, Bills,
Guidance, Policy,
efforts that all
reference, require
or leverage a
Multi-Tiered
System of
Supports**

School
Climate

Inclusionary
Practices

Dyslexia
Legislation

Discipline
Reform

Early
Childhood
Supports

Identification
of Learning
Disabilities

Social-Emotional
Learning

Behavioral
Health

Attendance

Washington
Integrated Student
Supports Protocol
(WISSP)

School
improvement

Learning
Assistance
Program

Comprehensive
School
Counseling
Programs (CSCP)

Language
Access



Changes coming to Special Education Eligibility in 2028-29

In 2028-29, OSPI will change the evaluation process to determine student eligibility for special education under the category of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

Washington state currently allows two methods for determining special education eligibility under a Specific Learning Disability: the severe discrepancy method or a process based on scientific research-based methods, which is implemented in many states through a process called Response to Intervention (RTI).

Research has shown that the severe discrepancy method can result in overidentification of students furthest from educational justice, continuing stigma for marginalized communities through the harmful use of intelligence tests.

Response to Intervention (RTI) for SLD Evaluation & Eligibility

The severe discrepancy method relies on cognitive and achievement tests by trained professionals like school psychologists. Additional data are collected from parents, teachers, and providers. However, using standardized cut-off scores for SLD determination can lead to students being misidentified despite significant academic struggles.

By contrast, the Response to Intervention (RTI) method identifies SLD by assessing the student's progress compared to peers and grade-level expectations after tiered interventions are implemented with fidelity.

OSPI is collaborating with the Washington Administrators Improving MTSS (AIMS project at the UW Bothell), Goodlad Institute, and education partners statewide to develop resources and provide professional development supports for districts to adopt an RTI approach for SLD evaluations.

Educator Roles Under an RTI SLD Evaluation

RTI promotes collaborative decision-making for more equitable eligibility determinations. Data based decision making includes both special education and general education staff, who collaboratively assess intervention effectiveness, student level and rate of progress, and determine student eligibility for special education in the category of SLD.

WAC 392-172A-03060 defines the process based on a student's response to scientific research-based intervention (RTI). This approach also enables special education staff to focus on specialized instruction, social-emotional learning, counseling, and consultation. Teams will continue to conduct comprehensive evaluations as outlined in WAC 392-172A-03020.

Phasing Out the SLD Discrepancy Model

Goal



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Why You?

Senior Leadership Role
as MTSS Champion





The Superintendent and Educational Reform in the United States of America

Lars G. Björk, Tricia Browne-Ferrigno & Theodore J. Kowalski

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During the last two decades the intensity and complexity of educational reform in the United States of America have heightened interest among policymakers, practitioners, and professors in large-scale, systemic change. As a consequence, superintendents are being viewed as pivotal actors in the complex algorithm for managing districts and leading policy implementation efforts. The challenges—both perceived and real—have provided grist for national debates on superintendent roles, expectations, and effectiveness as school system leaders. This article presents an analysis of discursive stages in the evolution of the American superintendency in response to external and internal change forces within scho

[Bjork et al., 2014](#)



5 Roles of Superintendents 1850-2014



**Effective
Communicator**

Manager

**Instructional
Leader**

**Statesperson/
Democratic
Political
Leader**

**Applied
Social
Scientist**

Unique Attributes of Senior Leaders as Champions for MTSS



What Can I Do?

Leadership Moves
for MTSS



Photograph by Jehyun Sung



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Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #1: Structural Organization to Promote **SHARED** responsibility for MTSS

Transitioning from individual leadership to shared leadership allows you to leverage collective expertise and commitment of partners to effectively implement MTSS

MTSS is a team sport with a strong leader

Rather than siloing MTSS into its own department, it's owned by all departments





Traditional Way We Have Operated —————> MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens		
1- Traditional Lens	2- Movement is happening	3- MTSS Lens
<p>Single Individual Coordinating MTSS</p> <p>Decisions are made by one or two individuals</p> <p>One individual is responsible for leading and implementing all aspects of MTSS</p>		<p>Distributed leadership model.</p> <p>Form a collaborative District leadership team comprising Superintendent, administrators, teachers, specialists, and support staff and enables the formation of teams across the cascading model.</p> <p>Define roles and responsibilities within these teams, emphasizing collective decision-making and accountability.</p>
<p>One Expert</p> <p>Professional development opportunities are isolated to select roles/individuals.</p> <p>Gatekeeping of knowledge</p>		<p>Team Skill Building</p> <p>Provide professional development opportunities focused on leadership skills, collaborative problem- solving, and MTSS principles for all team members</p> <p>Encourage team members to engage in collaborative team learning around specific aspects of MTSS (data analysis, interventions strategies) to share knowledge effectively.</p>
<p>What is our Vision?</p> <p>Goals and priorities are developed and determined by individual departments or school.</p> <p>Goals and vision, if written, are rarely referenced and only accessed by a few</p>		<p>Shared Vision and Goals</p> <p>Intentionally build and anchor understanding of MTSS goals, priorities, and expected outcomes for all partners.</p> <p>Align individual and team goals with overarching District mission and vision of improving student outcomes through tiered supports</p>



Traditional Way We Have Operated → MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens

1- Traditional Lens

Sporadic Meetings

Leadership team meetings occur occasionally

Team does not use a consistent decision making protocol

Limited time is provided for preparation and reflection because agendas are not available in advance

Meeting focus is not tied to goals/priorities with a lack of progress checks- agendas become the urgency of the day

2- Movement is happening

Regular? Predictable/ Focused Team Meetings

Establish regular meetings for all coordinated MTSS teams.

Team consensus on a team decision making protocol that is used consistently

Agendas are accessible in advanced, and clear meeting structures allow for advanced previewing and prep to collaborate

Agenda items are tied to goals and priorities with progress checks as a standing agenda item

Delegate specific responsibilities and tasks related to MTSS implementation across leadership teams

Encourage autonomy and initiative while ensuring alignment and shared goals and strategies

3- MTSS Lens

Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #2: Clear Communication and Messaging in Support of MTSS

Superintendents drive the culture and communication is a key component to establishing culture. They are the main holders of the message around MTSS.

What you say goes...and that's powerful

Communication must be transparent, bi-directional, consistent, and even intransitive so the goal is clear.

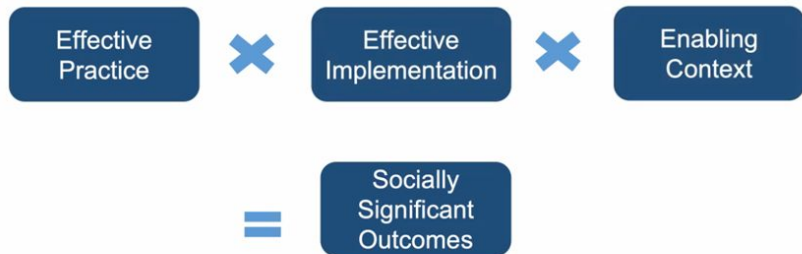


Traditional Way We Have Operated —————> MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens		
1- Traditional Lens	2- Movement is happening	3- MTSS Lens
<p>One Way Communication</p> <p>Communication is shared out from leadership team to partners.</p> <p>Feedback channels are typically in the form of a survey and not enough opportunities for open-ended feedback. Or feedback opportunities do not exist.</p>	<p>Open Communication Channels</p> <p>Establish clear channels for communication and information sharing among all partners</p> <p>Foster an environment where ideas, concerns, and feedback are welcome and addressed collaboratively.</p> <p>Establish infrastructure that supports ongoing feedback and reflection on policies, procedures, practices and leadership structures</p>	
<p>Decision-Making</p> <p>Decisions are made by Leadership in isolation</p> <p>Process for decision-making is unclear and inconsistent</p> <p>Limited input is gathered</p> <p>Few opportunities for reflection and evaluation of successes and areas for improvement to drive future decisions</p>	<p>Transparency in Decision-Making</p> <p>Ensure transparency in decision-making processes. Rationale behind decisions, and outcomes.</p> <p>Solicit input from a variety of partners to ensure diverse perspectives are considered in decision -making.</p> <p>Encourage teams to reflect on successes, challenges, and areas for improvement, and to adapt strategies accordingly</p>	
<p>Same Old Rigid Structures</p> <p>Decisions are based on the “_____ way”</p> <p>Technical fixes are applied across the board</p>	<p>Adaptability and Flexibility</p> <p>Apply flexible and adaptive responses to changing student needs, current research,, and organizational dynamics.</p> <p>Continuously evaluate and refine leadership structures and processes to optimize MTSS implementation</p>	

Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #3: Apply Implementation Science

Effective Implementation



Implementation Science = “the methods or techniques used to enhance the adoption, implementation, and sustainability” of an intervention (innovation). (Powell et al., 2015)

Basically, moving from, hoping it will happen to making it happen

Check out the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) website for tons of resources and information





Traditional Way We Have Operated —————> MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens		
1- Traditional Lens	2- Movement is happening	3- MTSS Lens
<p>Adopting the Newest “Thing”</p> <p>Adopting the same thing as other districts or the current education trend without asking is this right for us and can we do this</p> <p>Post-conference high or one individual selects a passion project</p>		<p>Careful Selection of Effective Innovations</p> <p>A collaborative District leadership team uses a transparent process to determine fit and feasibility (NIRN's Hexagon Tool)</p> <p>While looking at the district's capacity, the team also uses the same process to de-select innovations to maintain focus</p>
<p>Implementation Stalls Out</p> <p>Lots of fits and starts or false starts</p> <p>Everything, everywhere, all at once - too much too quickly</p> <p>Initial excitement without prolonged commitment leading to implementation drift</p>		<p>Full Implementation</p> <p>Careful and intentional short term and long term plan for implementation (marathon, not a sprint)</p> <p>Start slow, getting good at 1 or 2 things before adding additional layers</p> <p>Persistent focus on implementation over time with fidelity checks</p>
<p>Unsustainable</p> <p>Work is dependent on one person and that person leaves</p> <p>Initiative overload</p>		<p>Sustained and Lasting</p> <p>Work is led by multiple, coordinated teams who manualize their work for sustainability and institutionalizing knowledge</p> <p>Scaling out and up is done deliberately over time with demonstration sites</p>

Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #4: Thoughtful Scale-out

Intentionally planning how you will expand each element of the work to attain consistency and fidelity of implementation across the district in a sustainable manner

This work does not bow to the tyranny of the urgent

This includes setting clear goals and timelines for when and where you want to expand the work

Ensure staff competency before adding the next layer



Photograph by Brett Jordan



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Traditional Way We Have Operated —→ MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens

1- Traditional Lens

Everything, Everywhere, All At Once

Full district roll out of new innovations without support, clarity, consideration of implementation science

New expectations are given without clear purpose or vision for how they will be achieved

Limited feedback loops to improve the implementation or installation process

Knowledge and skills to carry out new innovation have not been intentionally developed for staff across the district

The scale of implementation exceeds central office capacity to provide the needed support

2- Movement is happening

Clear, Planned Expansion of Work

A plan is created that clearly outlines what work will be expanding, when, and where

Demonstration sites are selected to carry out the initial implementation of the innovation and when appropriate serve as the model for the next group of implementers

The scale-out plan accounts for how central office staff will be supporting implementation and ensures sustainability of that support

Capacity in the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out the innovation is built over time and aligns with the scale-out

3- MTSS Lens



Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #5: Sustained and Targeted Focus

2-3 areas with a clear purpose that is tied to district needs and captured within a multi-year plan

Perseverance

Limit distractions by avoiding overload and fragmentation



Photograph by Jasper Garratt



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Traditional Way We Have Operated



MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens

1- Traditional Lens

2- Movement is happening

3- MTSS Lens

Stunted and Fragmented Movement

Too many priorities are identified at the same time

Focus and vision are unclear

Implementation takes too long or does not go well and efforts shift to the next educational trend or are abandoned entirely

Institutional knowledge and skills are not built out across the system leaving gaps when staff leave

There is little to no understanding that this is a multi-year effort so when change doesn't occur right away efforts cease

Clear

2-3 clear priorities are identified and fit cohesively with district plans, needs, capacity-building, and resource allocation

There is a clear pathway to achieving goals of the priorities and this vision is coherent to all levels of the system

Plans are made to address barriers as they come up in a timely manner and all efforts are made to limit the distraction of new trends

Capacity is built across all levels of the system so that when staff leave they do not take institutional knowledge and skills with them and the work can continue

Sustained and targeted focus on priorities is included in a multi-year plan and is clearly communicated and understood across the system



Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #6: Be a Lead Learner



Photograph by Ben Iwara

“Lead learners build professional capital across their organizations by modeling learning, shaping culture, and maximizing the impact on learning

(Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 54)”

Actively learn alongside staff

Builds credibility, trust, and knowledge of innovation and what is needed across the system



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Traditional Way We Have Operated

MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens

1- Traditional Lens

2- Movement is happening

3- MTSS Lens

Management Stance

Others are sent to do the learning

Heavy emphasis on staff accountability and evaluation

Little effort is made to anticipate challenges and risk-taking or innovation is not welcomed

Staff are unable to articulate how and why professional learning activities benefit students

Lead Learner Stance

Superintendent actively learns with and alongside staff

Systems and processes are built to support staff inquiry, collaboration, and leadership

An environment and culture that anticipates challenges and works collaboratively to innovate

Relentless focus in conversation and action about high quality learning for students and adults



Local Context Leadership Strategies for implementing MTSS

Move #7: Nimble Allocation of Funding & Resources

Your system comes with the resources it comes with, so let's reimagine **how** we use what we are given

The money bus is not coming, what now?

Braiding and blending funding streams moves us away from a siloed system and provides districts with new opportunities



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Traditional Way We Have Operated → MTSS System Operation- Superintendent Lens

1- Traditional Lens	2- Movement is happening	3- MTSS Lens
<p>Silo Focused Resources</p> <p>Special Program funding is isolated into only certain staff positions and services</p> <p>Other funding is siloed</p> <p>Grant after grant ... “it all sounds so helpful and we need the money”</p> <p>Time and resources are spent where the “fire” is and it seems like there is never enough time</p>		<p>Braided/ Goal Oriented Resources</p> <p>Learning to braid and blend Special Program funds with General Education funds</p> <p>Being nimble-minded and able to think outside the box on how funding can support all students</p> <p>Focusing the majority of resources and funds to strengthen Tier 1 and 2</p> <p>There is a process for selecting and deselecting grants to ensure effort is worth the outcome and aligned to priorities</p> <p>Allocation of funding and resources are proportionate to the level of priority</p>

If we continue to use funding in silos then we continue to perpetuate the system we currently have



Reflection Activity

Find an Elbow Partner or Reflect on Your Own:



Photograph by Ales Krivec

1. What are the top 3 strategies you feel are the most important for your context? What are your next steps?
2. What questions need to be asked? What information/data needs to be collected?



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Warm Closing

“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

- Henry David Thoreau



Photograph by Johannes Kopf



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Resources

WA State Resources

- [Unlocking Federal and State Program Funds](#)
- [Blending and Braiding Funds Powerpoint](#)
- Cindy Hargrave, OSPI Special Education Director of Operations
(cynthia.hargrave@k12.wa.us)
- Special Education Data, Fiscal, and Program office hours are held via Zoom at 1-1:30 pm every Wednesday.

Fidelity Tools

- [Reading Tiered Inventory](#)
- [Tiered Fidelity Inventory](#)

Capacity Assessments

- [District Capacity Assessment](#)
- [University of South Florida skills and capacity assessments](#)