

# Road to 2028: Leadership Matters

December 11, 2024

Special Education Administrator Academy

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# Agenda

- Why? Background and the Problem
- Washington State and IDEA 2004
- District Steps for Readiness
- DBDM
- Teaming Structures
- Resources

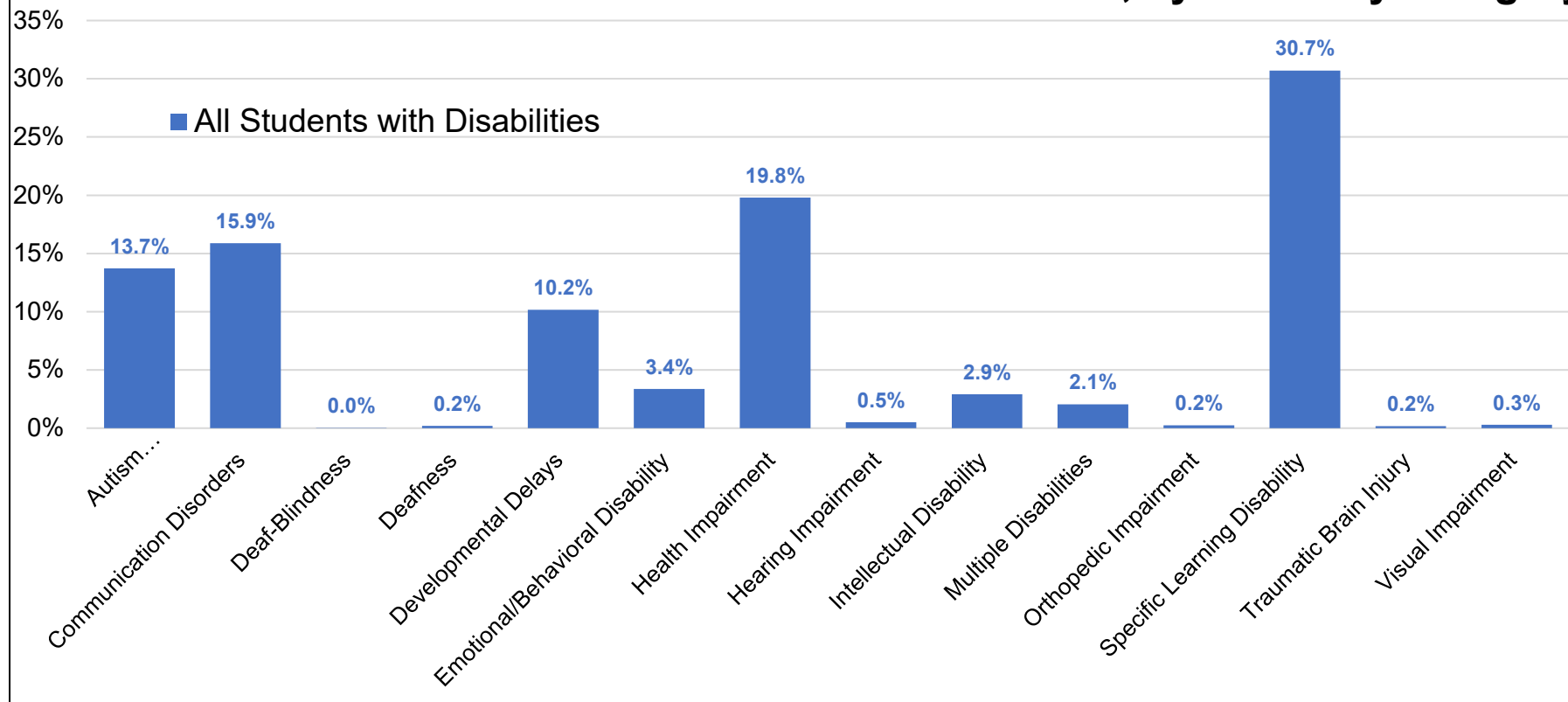




# Why?

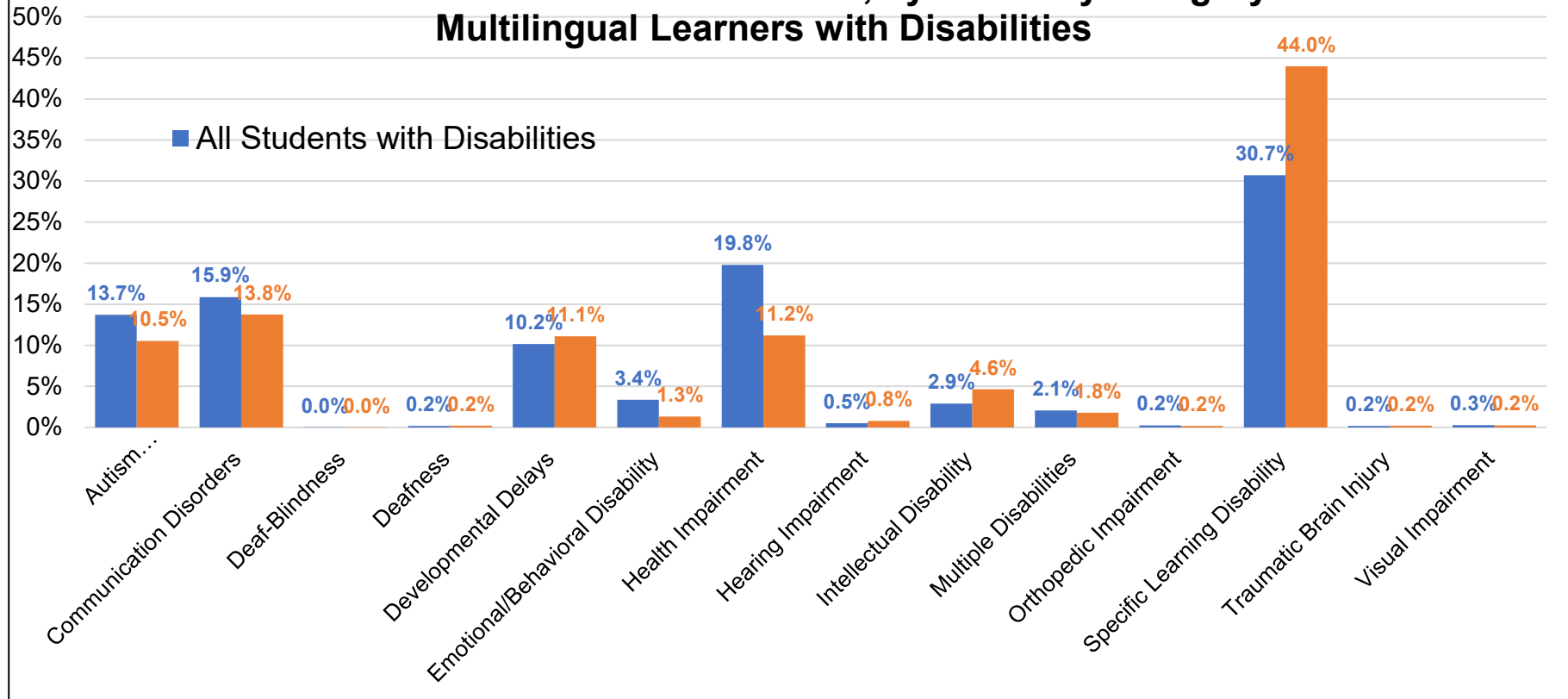


## 2023-24 K-12 Students with Disabilities, by Disability Category



Source: OSPI. (2023). [Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\) and Child Count Data](#).

## 2023-24 K-12 Students with Disabilities, by Disability Category and Multilingual Learners with Disabilities



Source: OSPI. (2023). [Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\) and Child Count Data](#).

# Multilingual Students

- Growing Population of students identified as ML in WA:
  - 2020-2021: 12.1% (132,833)
  - 2023-2024: 14% (154,026)
- 2.12% of Washington State ML students were identified as having a disability (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2023).
  - may be under-identified in special education services
  - are **over-identified in the category of SLD**.
- 30.7 % of Washington's students are identified as SLD
- 44% of ML students are identified as SLD



## Phasing out Severe Discrepancy for Identification of Specific Learning Disability

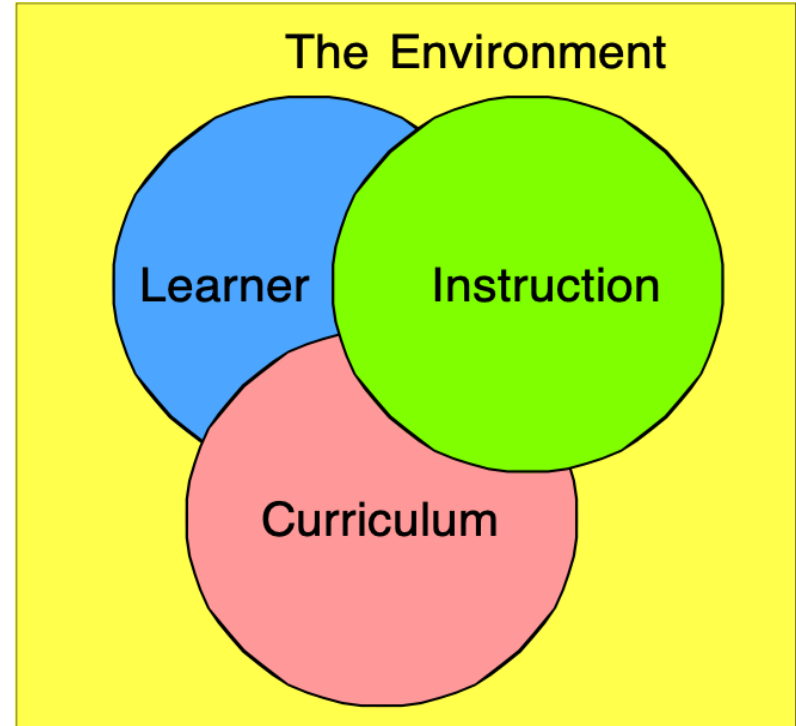
Implementation Timeline: 2019 – 2028

<p><b>Spring – Fall 2019</b> <b>Phase I: Cadre Formation Completed</b></p>	<p>OSPI Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore national data and practices on Specific Learning Disability (SLD)</li> <li>• Interview state leads</li> <li>• Goals and scope of the work established</li> <li>• Form a cadre of stakeholders</li> <li>• Cadre explores topic</li> <li>• Exploration of national practices, research, Individual with Disabilities Education Act regulations, and evaluation methods</li> <li>• Presentations and feedback (i.e., surveys, input from professional organizations)</li> </ul>
<p><b>OSPI Team Leads:</b></p> <p><b>Liz Stewart, Ed.D.</b> Program Specialist - OSPI Special Education</p> <p><b>Bill Elvey,</b> Program Supervisor - OSPI Dispute Resolution</p> <p>For additional information regarding this initiative, please email <a href="mailto:Speced@k12.wa.us">Speced@k12.wa.us</a></p>	
<p><b>SLD Cadre Members:</b></p> <p><b>Sarah Butcher,</b> Attorney/Parent Advocate</p> <p><b>Jo Callaghan,</b> Director of Itinerant Support Services, Edmonds School District</p> <p><b>Zac Carpenter,</b> Director of Special Education, Richland School District</p> <p><b>Joseph Engler, Ph.D.,</b> Director of School Psychology, Gonzaga University</p> <p><b>Steve Gill,</b> School Psychologist, Sumner School District</p> <p><b>Steve Hirsch,</b> Ph.D. School Psychologist, Shoreline School District</p> <p><b>Jeffrey Niess,</b> Executive Director, ESD 112</p> <p><b>Ashli Tyre,</b> Director of School Psychology, Seattle University</p> <p><b>Briley Proctor, Ph.D.</b> Associate Professor, Eastern Washington University</p> <p><b>Susan Ruby, Ph.D.</b> Director of School Psychology, Eastern Washington University</p>	

<p><b>Fall 2020</b> <b>Phase II: Feedback &amp; Revisions Completed</b></p>	<p>The cadre drafted recommendations for phasing out severe discrepancy.</p> <p>Feedback gathered from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency partners</li> <li>• Families/Parent Advocacy</li> <li>• Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL)</li> <li>• Education Service Districts</li> <li>• Dyslexia Advisory Council</li> <li>• School District Personnel</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spring 2021</b> <b>Phase III: Recommendations</b></p>	<p>SLD Cadre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviews feedback from stakeholders and revise recommendations</li> <li>• Submit revised report to asst. superintendent of special education</li> <li>• SLD Cadre work completed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spring 2021 – Spring 2022</b> <b>Phase IV: Policy Review</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSPI begins SLD rules review</li> <li>• Dyslexia Advisory Council (DAC) collaboration</li> <li>• Rules changes drafted and finalized</li> <li>• SLD Handbook revisions committee recruited, and revisions initiated</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fall 2022 - 2023</b> <b>Phase V: Multi-year Implementation &amp; Transition</b></p>	<p>SLD Handbook revisions continue.</p> <p>An implementation workgroup including intra- and inter-agency personnel, district/school personnel will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide implementation</li> <li>• Identify professional development and resource needs</li> <li>• Assist with development of implementation materials</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spring 2023-2028</b> <b>Phase VI: Multi-year Statewide Implementation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation approaches are implemented</li> <li>• Continuous improvement (guidance revisions, feedback, and support activities)</li> <li>• SLD Handbook finalized</li> <li>• <b>Discrepancy phased out state-wide by 2028</b></li> </ul>

**Professionally, after 40 years we know this is not a processing deficit...**

**Learning problems result from a complex interaction between curriculum, instruction, the environment and learner characteristics (e.g., Howell, 1993)**



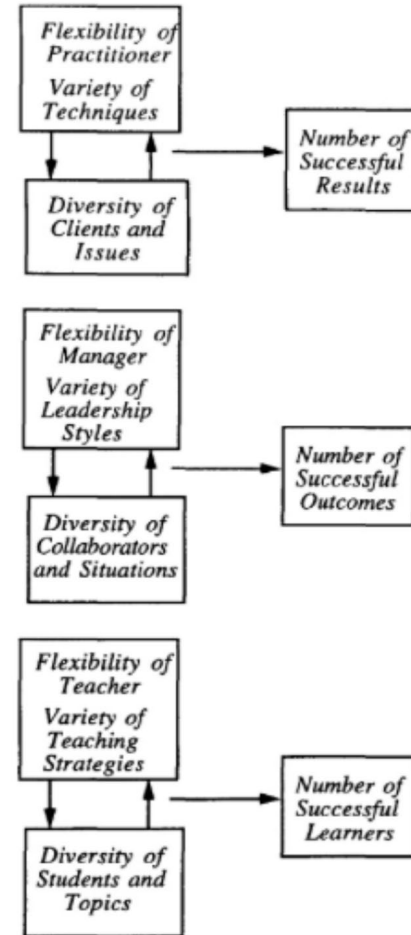


Effective Teaching Variable	Effect Size	Other Variables	Effect Size
Collective Teacher Efficacy	+1.57	Socioeconomic Status	+0.57
<b>Response to Intervention</b>	+1.29	Parental Involvement	+0.51
Formative Evaluation	+0.90	Social Skills Programs	+0.39
Reciprocal Teaching	+0.74	Retention	-0.32
Feedback	+0.70	Mainstreaming/Inclusion	+0.27
Scaffolding	+0.82	Whole Language	+0.06
Direct Instruction	+0.60	Co or Team Teaching	+0.19

# Law of Requisite Variety

(W. Ross Ashby)

Outcomes are  
dependent on the  
ability to address a  
variety of different  
needs and situations



# The Values Guiding Special Education Leadership Practice

Equitable Access

Individualization

Student and Family Influence

Effective and Accountable Evidence-Based Services

Inclusionary Practices





# Washington State & IDEA 2004



# Washington State's Response to IDEA 2006 Options

- May permit OR prohibit severe discrepancy.
  - > **WA will prohibit severe discrepancy in 2028.**
- May permit OR require RTI
  - > **WA will require RTI beginning the 2028-2029 SY.**
- May permit OR require “Other alternative research-based procedure.”
  - > **WA will not require but will permit additional assessment as determined by evaluation teams (beyond the RTI process).**

# MTSS: OSPI and Center on MTSS Frameworks

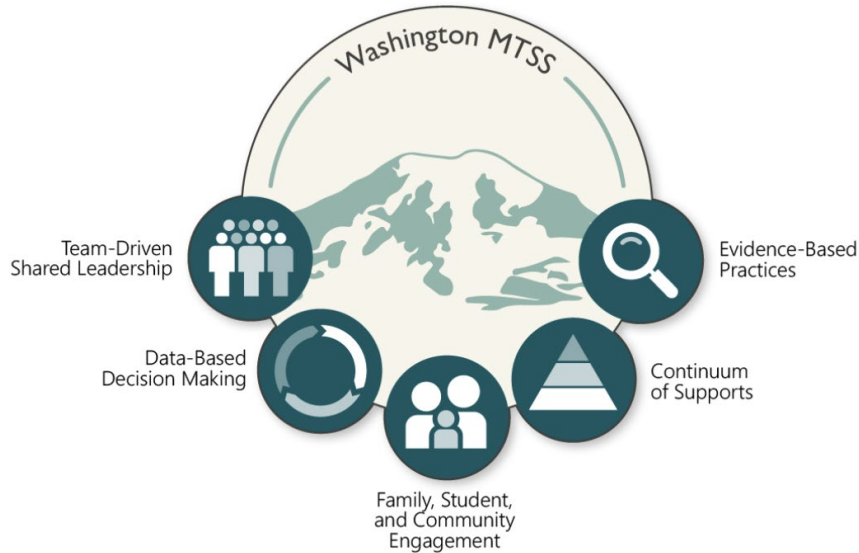
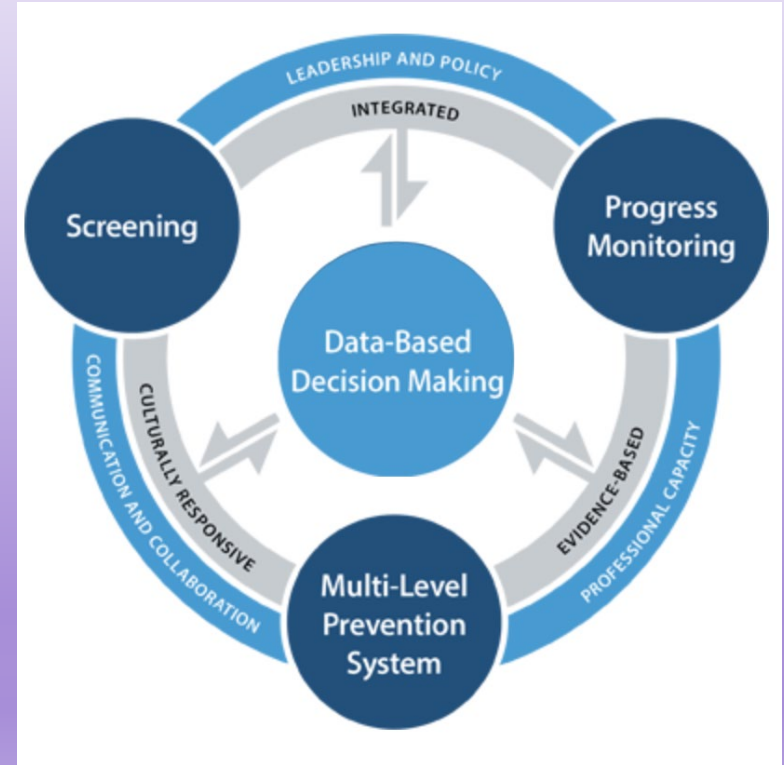
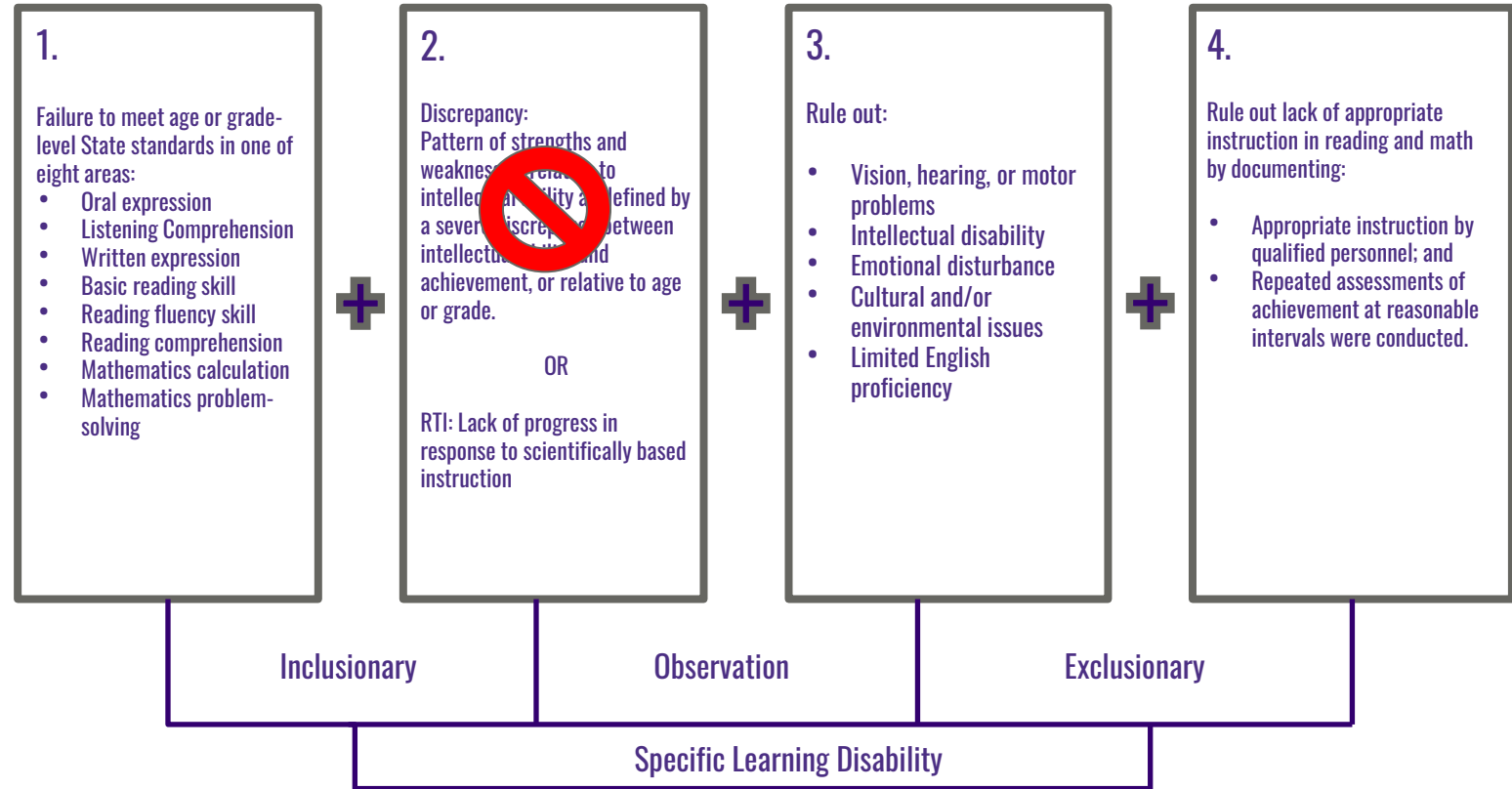


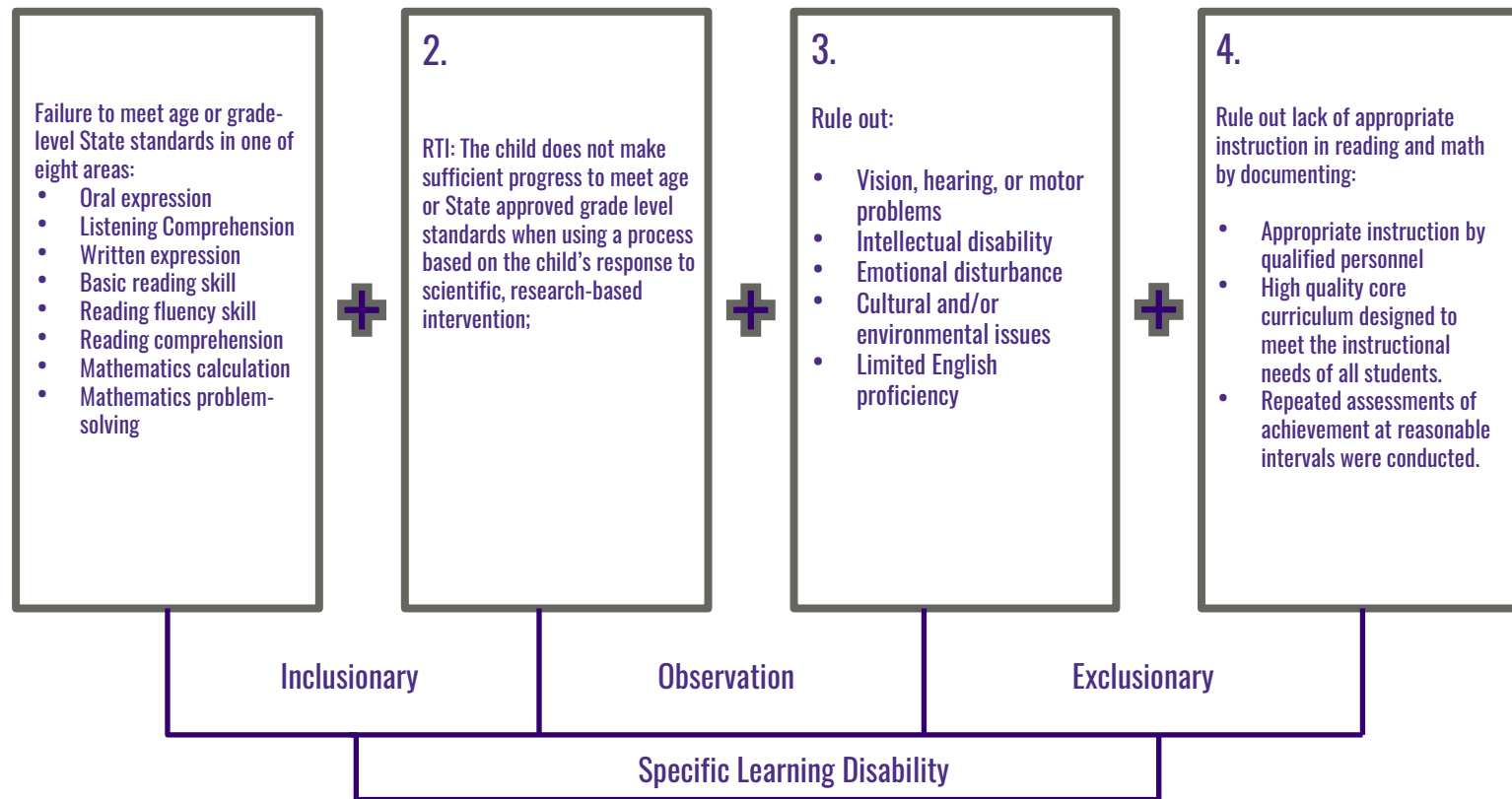
Figure 1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports, from OSPI.

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/multi-tiered-system-supports-mtss/mtss-components-and-resources>



<https://mtss4success.org/essential-components>







# Important Change - Dual Discrepancy

School districts will adopt procedures for use of response to scientific, research-based interventions for determination of specific learning disability.

- 1. Inadequate Achievement** – student's level of performance: the student exhibits a gap between actual and expected performance, a performance discrepancy as evidenced by progress monitoring scores at or below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile when compared to same grade peers on a standardized norm referenced assessment (curriculum-based assessment, individual assessment, or state assessment).
- 1. Insufficient Progress** - the student did not sufficiently respond to scientific, research-based interventions at a rate of improvement that reduces risk, in a reasonable amount of time. The student's rate of Improvement is significantly lower than grade level rates of improvement that would be necessary to meet established goals set to meet grade level minimum standard.

# Four Key Questions (RTI)

*Low Skills*

*Slow Progress*

*Instructional Need*

=

*Special Education  
Eligibility Decision*

Are the student's skills *significantly below* (age & grade level standards)?

Does the student make *less than adequate* progress despite interventions?

Does the student need *specially designed instruction*?

**Are there any exclusionary factors that could be contributing to the student's performance?**

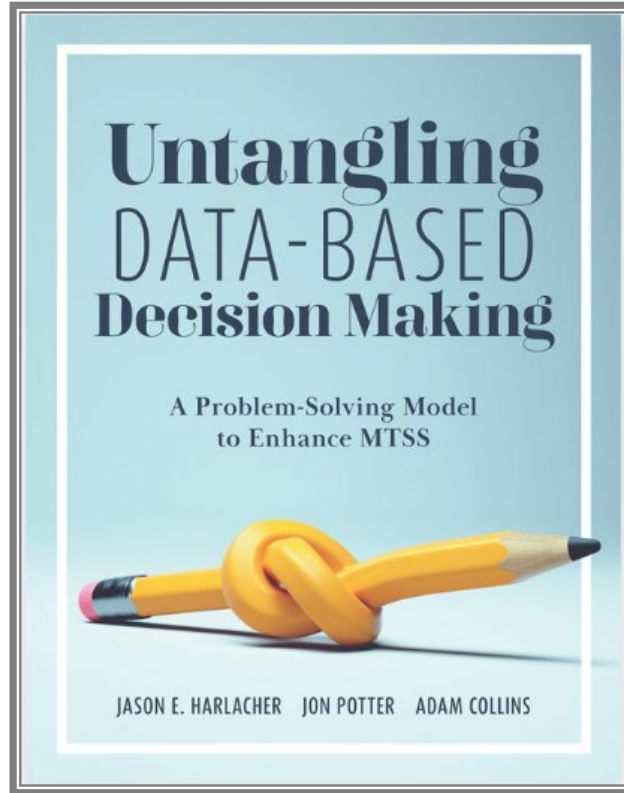


# DBDM and Teaming Structures



# Question to Data

Not: Data to Question



# Tenets of DBDM

- Be objective
  - Data should be accurate, reliable, and valid
- Focus on what's alterable and relevant.
- A Team is Mightier!
- No one person has all the resources, time, or expertise.
- Being part of a team diversifies perspectives.



## Examples of Data Gathered to Assist DBDM in RTI/MTSS

(Harlacher, Potter, and Collins, 2024. Page 7)

Relevant Information	Less Relevant Information
The types of practices used for instruction.	Cognitive processing scores (such data make high inference assumptions)
The number of opportunities to respond during instruction.	Student's siblings or familial order (this information doesn't impact instruction)
The scope and sequence of the curriculum.	Student's state test scores from several years ago (data are not relevant)
The mastery of student skills relative to the items taught in the curriculum.	Leveled reading assessments that assign students a reading level (such assessments have poor predictability, reliability, and instructional utility)
The explicitness of schoolwide expectations.	Published norm-referenced tests (they often are not instructionally relevant and may be invalid data because of cultural biases or poor administration)
The quality and number of relationships the student has	
Learner characteristics that impact learning (hearing, vision, energy level, medical conditions...	



# Decision-Making Process

The mechanism for making decisions about the participation of students in the instruction/intervention levels meets all of the following criteria:

- The process (1) is data-driven and based on validated methods;
- (2) involves a broad base of stakeholders; and
- (3) is operationalized with clear, established decision rules (e.g., movement between levels or tiers, determination of appropriate instruction or interventions).

Center on  
**Multi-Tiered System of Supports**

at the American Institutes for Research® ■

<https://mtss4success.org/resource/essential-components-mtss-rubric>



# Teaming Structures

(Harlacher et al., 2024)

Team	Example Names	Purpose	Example Questions
Leadership Team	School-wide team, MTSS team, admin team	Examine school wide trends and resolve any equity concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are at least 80% of our students successful with core supports alone?</li><li>• Do we have equitable outcomes for all students?</li></ul>
Tier 1 Team	Grade-level team, department-level team, professional learning community, core review	Ensure all students meet grade-level standards or expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are at least 80% of our students achieving grade-level standards?</li><li>• Who's the core working for?</li><li>• Who's it not working for?</li></ul>
Tier 2 Team	Intervention team, Tier 2 support	To review and provide supports to students who need supplemental or targeted support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which students are at risk?</li><li>• Who is tier 2 working for?</li><li>• Who is it not working for?</li><li>• Which students are not achieving sufficient growth?</li></ul>
Tier 3 Team	Intensive intervention team, individualized problem-solving team, instructional assistance team	Review and provide supports to students who need intensive support and data-based individualization (DBI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which students need intensive support?</li><li>• Who is tier 3 working for?</li><li>• Who is not working for?</li><li>• Which students are not achieving sufficient growth?</li></ul>





# Big Ideas about Role of District Leadership Team

**Dr. Caryn Ward**

Associate Director of  
Education and Measurement  
National Implementation  
Research Network



Kelcey Schmitz



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# How Does this Apply to the WACs?



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## WAC 392-172A-03060 Process based on a student's response to scientific research-based intervention.

(1) School districts using a process based on a student's response to scientific, research-based interventions to determine if a student has a specific learning disability shall adopt procedures to ensure that such process includes the following elements:

- (a) Universal screening and/or benchmarking at fixed intervals at least three times throughout the school year;
- (b) A high quality core curriculum designed to meet the instructional needs of all students;
- (c) Scientific research-based interventions as defined in WAC 392-172A-01165 are identified for use with students needing additional instruction;
- (d) Scientific research-based interventions used with a student are appropriate for the student's identified need and are implemented with fidelity;
- (e) A multi-tiered model is developed for delivering both the core curriculum and strategic and intensive scientific research-based interventions in the general education setting;



## WAC 392-172A-03060

- (f) Frequent monitoring of individual student progress occurs in accordance with the constructs of the multitiered delivery system implemented in the school consistent with the intervention and tier at which it is being applied; and
- (g) Decision making using problem solving or standard treatment protocol techniques is based upon, but not limited to, student centered data including the use of curriculum based measures, available standardized assessment data, intensive interventions, and instructional performance level.

(2) Such policies and procedures outlined in subsection (1) of this section shall be designed so that districts can establish that:

- (a) The student's general education core curriculum instruction provided the student the opportunity to increase her or his rate of learning;
- (b) Two or more intensive scientific research-based interventions, identified to allow the student to progress toward his or her improvement targets, were implemented with fidelity and for a sufficient duration to establish that the student's rate of learning using intensive scientific research-based interventions in the general education setting, in addition to or in place of the core curriculum, did not increase or allow the student to reach the targets identified for the student;
- (c) The duration of the intensive scientific research-based interventions that were implemented was long enough to gather sufficient data points below the student's aim line to demonstrate student response for each of the interventions through progress monitoring to determine the effectiveness of the interventions.



# District Readiness



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# District Steps for Readiness



- Convene a District Team

- District Level Collaboration
- Special Education Department

- Conduct Needs Assessment

- MTSS Rubric
- Develop a plan
- Last Mile Project Developing a WAC-Based Checklist

- Support Adoption of EBP (Core and tiered supports/interventions)
- Invest in Leader Development
- Review Policies 2161 and 2163
- Review Procedures 2161P



# Lessons Learned

- Change takes time (and sometimes much more time than you think it should)
  - These are really big philosophical shifts for many people
  - These may be new practices
- Admin support and teacher buy-in is necessary for implementation
- Don't wait for it to be perfect - Prioritize and pick your battles
  - MTSS doesn't appear overnight. It's always evolving and feels scary to use RTI for SLD as MTSS is getting going.
  - Common sense - we don't need X number of data points or X failed tier 2 interventions etc. to do what's best for kids



# Leaders communicate a climate for implementation by...

1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>What leaders pay attention to, measure, and support on a regular basis</b>	<b>How leaders react to obstacles/ critical issues and persevere through ups and downs</b>	<b>How leaders allocate resources and support efforts to learn and use the practice</b>	<b>Deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching and have knowledge of the practice</b>	<b>How leaders recognize and appreciate efforts to use the practice</b>	<b>How leaders recruit, select, promote staff</b>

Caryn Ward, PhD, NIRN, 2024



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# 1 & 2 Proactive Leadership Examples

## Establishing clear standards for implementation

- Is it in your school's or district's strategic plan?
- Is it in your leader's performance goals?

## Developing a plan to facilitate implementation

- "Living - functional" plan versus "in cloud" plan

## Removed obstacles to implementation

- De-implementation of competing priorities
- Changes to procedures, processes, & policies

## 2 Perseverant Leadership Examples (Caryn Ward PhD, NIRN 2024)

- **Keeps going through up and downs of implementing**
  - Identifies “quick wins”
  - Persist through “implementation dip”
- **Reacts to critical issues**
  - Seeks and uses data and multiple critical perspectives

# 4 Knowledgeable Leadership Examples

- Know what they are talking about when it comes to specific innovation
  - Able to answer staff, student, and family questions about effective literacy instructional practices
  - Not only answer but seek input/feedback
- Can model and provide feedback of use of effective practices
- Highlight bright spots using data



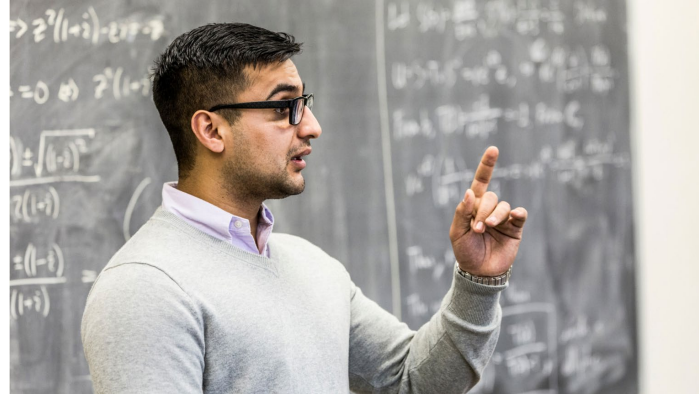
# Supportive Leadership Examples

- **Select staff intentionally for their knowledge and skills**
- **Support staff efforts to learn effective literacy instructional Practices**
  - Allocate resources for professional learning & coaching
- **Support staff efforts to use the instructional practices**
  - Change master schedule, staff allocations
- **Recognize and appreciate staff efforts**
  - Formal such as through promotions and informally



# A Lesson Learned for Implementation Infrastructure

## Champions



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# Reflection

***What is one leadership action you can take to communicate a culture for implementation of RTI for SLD Identification?***

1	2	3	4	5	6
What leaders pay attention to, measure, and support on a regular basis	How leaders react to obstacles/ critical issues and preserve through ups and downs	How leaders allocate resources and support efforts to learn and use the practice	Deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching and have knowledge of the practice	How leaders recognize and appreciate efforts to use the practice	How leaders recruit, select, promote staff



# Districts Must Develop Collaborative Systems with Key Components:

- Continuum of supports to meet the needs of all students;
- Comprehensive district assessment system that includes screening, progress monitoring, informal diagnostic measures, and fidelity of implementation data for decision making;
- Teaming structures;
- Data-based decision making to evaluate instructional effectiveness, determine movement within and through the continuum of supports, and identify students with disabilities.

\* District and school infrastructure and support mechanisms including knowledge, resources, and organizational structures are necessary to operationalize and implement all components of MTSS in a unified system (Center on MTSS, 2023).

# Break-out Groups

Where is your district on this path?

Where is your influence or leverage?

What is your next step?





# Resources



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# Communication Sheet

Please see the following communication sheets:

OSPI Webpage, houses all Fact Sheets:

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/special-education>

Superintendent Fact Sheet


Principal Fact Sheet

School Staff

Higher Education/Pre-service Training

Parents & Families





## 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.



## Information for Superintendents & District Administrators

### State-Level Actions & Supports

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). OSPI is partnering with higher education and professional organizations to develop resources for district MTSS implementation and RTI evaluations for SLD evaluations. The Washington Administrators for Improving MTSS (AIMS) project at UW Bothell's Goodlad Institute is completing a guidance document and supporting technical assistance papers to assist districts in using an RTI approach for SLD identification. OSPI is also partnering with the Washington State Association of School Psychologists (WSASP) on training for school psychologists around SLD evaluations using RTI data.

### What Should Districts Do Right Now?

Districts are encouraged to begin planning professional development for general and special education staff around implementing an MTSS framework, tiered interventions, and utilizing intervention and progress monitoring data to inform SLD evaluations and determinations.

Districts should also consider options to redistribute, braid, and blend funding to build staff capacity for MTSS implementation and RTI for SLD evaluation and eligibility determinations.

### Resources

[Washington State Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#)

[Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports](#)

[UW Bothell: Administrators Improving Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(AIMS\)](#)

[National Center on Intensive Intervention: MTSS](#)

[National Center on Intensive Intervention: Data-Based Individualization](#)

[Unlocking Federal and State Program Funds to Support Student Success](#)

# List of the SLD TAPs and QR Code

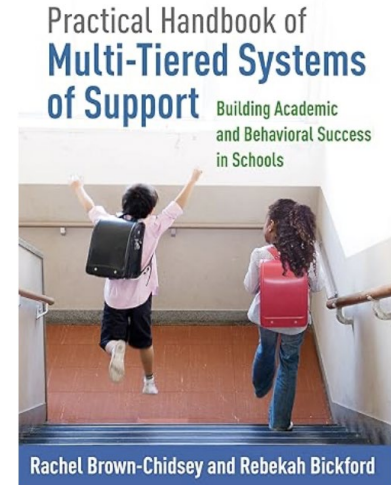
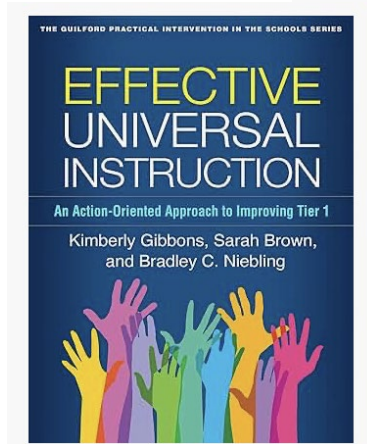
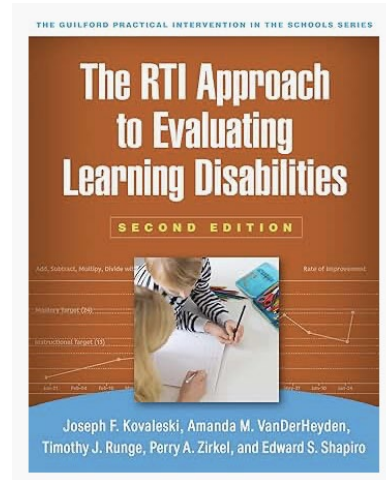
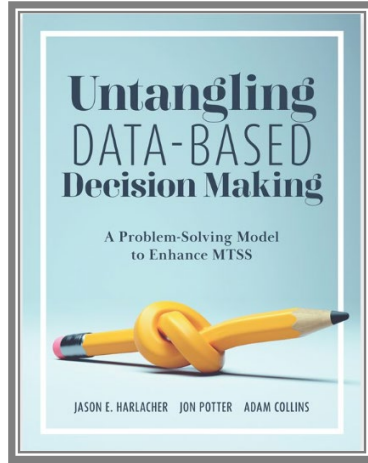
- [SLD TAP #1: Inadequate Achievement](#)
- [SLD TAP #2: Insufficient Progress](#)
- [SLD TAP #3: Ruling Out Alternative Primary Factors](#)
- [SLD TAP #4: Ruling out Inadequate Instruction](#)
- [SLD TAP #5: Observation of Students Suspected of Having a SLD](#)
- [SLD TAP #6: Conducting Comprehensive Evaluations for SLD Eligibility](#)



## WSSDA Policy 2163 Response To Intervention

1. It is the district's policy to ensure that all students receive high quality, scientific, research- based general education core instruction and, as appropriate, strategic and intensive intervention supports matched to student needs. The district utilizes the core principles of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, which combines systematic assessment, decision-making, and a multi-tiered services delivery model to improve educational and behavioral outcomes for all students.
2. The district's process identifies students' challenges early and provides appropriate instruction by ensuring that students are successful in the general education classroom. In implementing the RTI process, the district will:
  - a. Apply scientific, research-based interventions in the general education setting;
  - b. Measure the student's response to intervention; and
  - c. Use RTI data to inform instruction.
3. The superintendent or designee will develop procedures to implement student interventions and use teacher observations and classroom, school, or district assessments to identify students who are at risk of academic or behavioral problems and thereby in need of research-based interventions. Interventions will consist of three levels of assistance that increase in intensity. The four necessary RTI components will include:
  - a. Universal screening;
  - b. A multi-tiered system of support including classroom interventions, small group interventions, and evidence-based intensive interventions;
  - c. Progress monitoring; and
  - d. Data-based decision making.





# Our Ask of You...

- Build your own capacity to implement
- Talk to your superintendent about 2028
- Convene a team
- Ask to do a board presentation
- Encourage and support innovation
  - A team approach and an instructional approach
- Speak with your colleagues in other districts.
- Change of this kind is not easy and it is complex but we know this can be done.
- Thank you!

