

Analysis of Multi-Tiered System of Supports Programming Across States

Colorado Department of Education

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Executive Summary: Analysis of Multi-Tiered System of Supports Programming Across States

This evaluation analyzed how various states implement their MTSS model in order to compare and contrast the Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) implementation to other states' practices. MTSS data was collected from the following states: Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, Utah, and Washington. Each state's MTSS website was reviewed to collect data, surveys were administered to each state's MTSS representative, and one-on-one follow-up interviews were conducted. The primary survey focus was: MTSS main focus, Tier I, II, and III supports offered, whom MTSS serves, percentage of schools utilizing MTSS, perceived effectiveness, essential features, online platform, implementation tools, communication, training structures, and future partnerships. While the results varied, the most common focus of MTSS is academic and social-emotional supports. Next, there are common themes of MTSS Tier I, II, and III supports, including the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Functional Behavioral Assessments, Behavioral Intervention Plans, Individualized Education Programs, and increasing levels of support based upon data-based decision making. Additional data indicates that states have common themes of essential components to their MTSS frameworks, and a majority of states would like to partner together to expand their MTSS supports and implementation process.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to collect and analyze the information provided from various states on their implementation of MTSS, and compare findings to the Colorado Department of Education's MTSS practices. The goal is to improve collaboration, the sharing of information, and the implementation of MTSS within Colorado and the partnered states.

Background

Every student is unique in their needs to reach their highest academic potential. Some students require more specialized instruction and accommodation. Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework that aids schools and educators in providing targeted support to students. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) defines MTSS as a "prevention-based framework of team-driven data-based problem solving for improving the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnering and a layered continuum of evidence-based practices applied at the classroom, school, district, region, and state level" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016).

Key Findings and Recommendations

There were several significant findings from the project. First, the data indicated that most state's MTSS frameworks focus on academic and social-emotional interventions. Second, the information collected suggests similarities of tiered intervention practices between states. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are used by most states as a universal Tier I support to maintain a strengths-based approach compared to a deficit-based perspective. Tier II primarily focused on providing additional support for students who did not fully benefit from Tier I support. While Tier III supports varied by state, reoccurring support themes include Functional Behavioral Assessments, Behavior Intervention Plans, individualized educational

plans, and providing additional support to students who did not fully benefit from Tier I and II supports. Next, there are a variety of online platforms that are utilized by states. Some states utilize their own developed platform while others use external platforms (i.e. Canvas, Google, Outlook). Additional data indicated that, on average between the states of this study, 50-60% of the schools within the state utilize the MTSS framework. Common themes of essential components include the following: team-driven and shared data, data-based decision making, evidence-based practice, and family, school, and community engagement. The final finding suggests that many states want to increase partnerships with one another to improve their MTSS models. Some indicated partnerships include shared resources and online training platforms.

Following are recommendations for consideration:

- Collaboration could include creating a shared resource library to improve communication of best practices. This may include systems such as online training platforms, professional developments, and assessments.
- States can adopt a problem-solving framework as new student needs are frequently emerging. For example, Design Thinking models are a five-step process to create solutions to new emerging problems.
- Finally, states utilizing the MTSS framework could consider creating and implementing a solid system of communication. This system will reduce communication inefficiencies and allow for strong collaboration efforts. The more effectively states can communicate, the more substantial the likelihood of improvement of MTSS student supports.

Collaborative Analysis of MTSS Across States: Full Report

Introduction and Purpose of Study

Students from the University of Denver partnered with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) in order to collect data on the Multi-Tiered System of Support in the following states: Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, Utah, Washington, and New Jersey. This information was gathered to support the growth of CDE's MTSS practices and online academy. CDE's goal is to learn how other platforms are being used across states for informational purposes, to better understand how platforms are used for training, what has found to be effective, and what is found to be less effective. The purpose of an online academy platform is to build Tier I supports to decrease the need for Tier II and III supports. Additionally, this online academy provides a space for team building through coaching systems and brain storming. The information gathered will be synthesized focusing on MTSS strategies and tiered support offered across states in hopes of streamlining the process of MTSS and partnering with other states. Major findings from the evaluation indicate a desire to streamline across-state partnerships to share practices with such components as (1) team-driven and shared data, (2) data-based decision making, (3) evidence-based practice, and (4) family, school, and community engagement.

Background

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

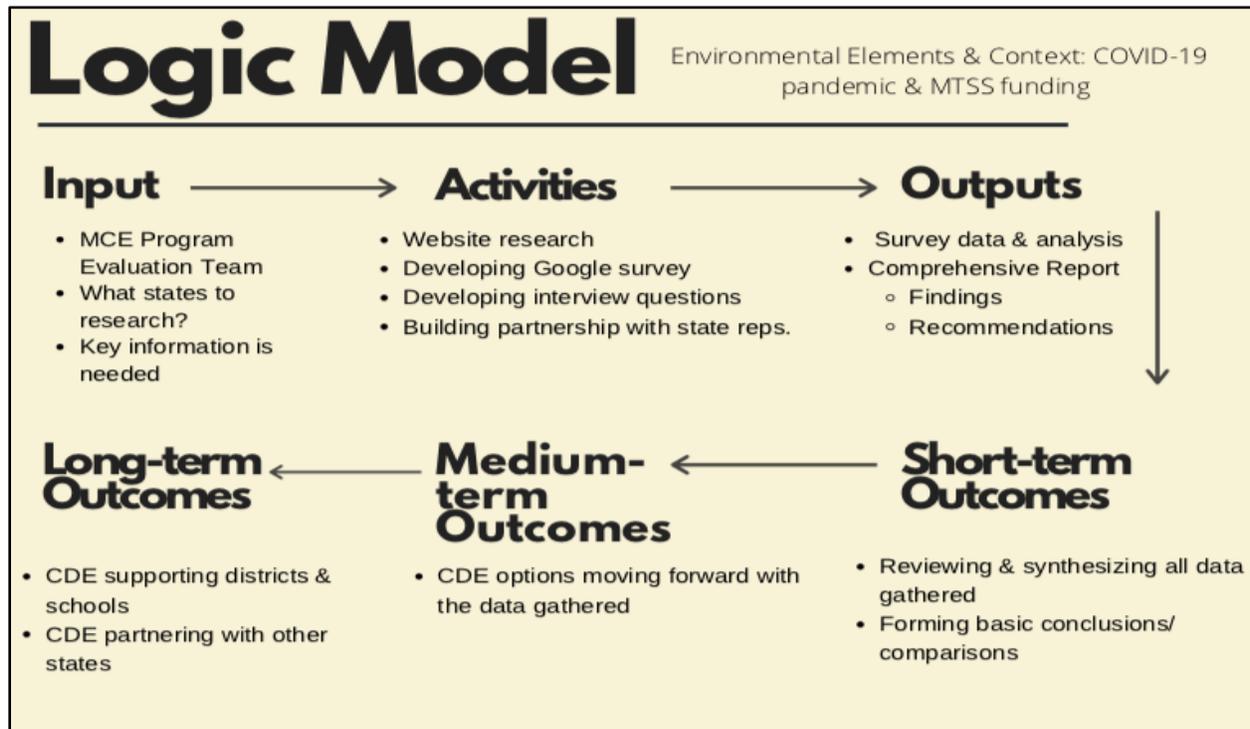
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) was initially created as a school-wide framework with a focus on general education students that were not identified as qualifying for special education services (Thurlow et al., 2020). MTSS emerged from Response to Intervention (RTI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and problem-solving models to provide students with comprehensive supports to address all aspects of development.

Within MTSS, key characteristics of evidence-based methods include key competencies for learners, preventative interventions, instructional approaches at all tiers that maximize engagement, involvement and opportunities to practice what students are learning, keystone behaviors that prompt learning, and monitoring mastery of outcomes (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2015). The most relevant law that governs the implementation of a MTSS is the Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (2004; IDEA). IDEA guarantees children with a disability the right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (IDEA, 2004). Under IDEA states are able to identify students through the response-to-intervention approach (RTI; Averill & Rinaldi, 2011; Mandlawitz, 2007). RTI and PBIS, which is a multi-tiered school wide preventative behavior approach, are the foundation of MTSS (Averill & Rinaldi, 2011).

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) defines MTSS as a "prevention-based framework of team-driven data-based problem solving for improving the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnering and a layered continuum of evidence-based practices applied at the classroom, school, district, region, and state level" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016). MTSS was introduced during the Elementary and Secondary Education/Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA/ESSA) to provide various levels of support depending on the individual needs of the student. Although the framework of a three tiered system is similar throughout the country, each state implements MTSS uniquely.

Following is a logic model to assist in organization and conceptualization of the overall project's goals.

Figure 1. Logic Model



Method

Students proposed to research MTSS in six states based on their online resources. The University of Denver students met with CDE representatives to better understand their goal and potential questions to ask other state departments about their MTSS models. A google survey was created and provided to the six states mentioned above. To collect more qualitative data, an additional interview was proposed. Students then compared and contrasted the quantitative and qualitative data between individual states.

Students completed individual research on the six states that utilize MTSS. Students then met with CDE partners to better understand their goal and develop additional questions. A google survey was sent out to be completed by six state representatives. Three additional interviews were done with available states; Arkansas, New Jersey, Washington. Students then compared the quantitative and qualitative data between individual states. Overall, the completed plan remained consistent with the proposal with the exception of limited survey responses and interviews.

The google survey had 12 focused questions and 3 demographic questions. The google survey's questions encompassed the following topics: MTSS focus, tiered supports, states essential features, MTSS effectiveness, online platforms, implementation tools, training structures, and communication tools. The additional interviews provided opportunity for follow-up questions on the state's survey responses.

The main discrepancy data sources across states. Due to the time constraints of the course, some state officials were unable to complete the survey or participate in an interview. Additionally, typical school years end towards the end of May and therefore, state representatives had other timely deadlines to attend to. Some states' information was collected

solely from their websites and online resources. Lastly, certain state's online resources did not provide specific MTSS practices, but a general overview of MTSS.

This project was on a six week timeline from April 17th to June 7th. A tentative plan was created between April 19th and 23rd. The plan was then shared with the program evaluation class and instructor on April 26th. The plan was shared with the CDE partners the following week (May 3rd). Further modifications were made during an additional meeting with the CDE partner on May 10th. Research on the selected states websites, google survey dissemination, and interview planning was completed between May 8th and 14th. Interviews with available states were conducted between May 15th and 28th. The report was finalized, and findings were presented to CDE on June 7th.

Findings

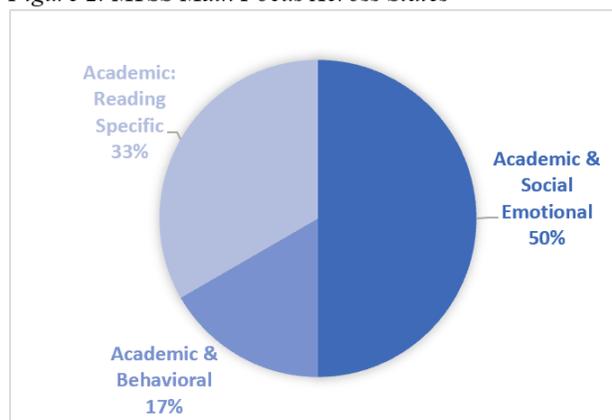
Overall, findings showed a positive response to future partnerships between participating states. Findings also presented commonalities between MTSS implementation related to the main focus of MTSS, Tier I supports, and essential components. These findings can assist with future MTSS implementation across participating states, the development of a needs assessment and resource dashboard, and a collaboration between state MTSS coordinators in understanding what is working well, where are the gaps in service, and what are the best practices moving forward.

The main focus of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) varied across the states assessed. Academic and social-emotional supports were found to be the most common focus, followed by early reading-specific supports, and then behavioral supports. Response to intervention techniques were found to be a common theme across states, but the main focus depended on what was viewed to be that state's students' highest need and which evidence-based interventions were available. One state in particular, has a goal that 90% of the class of 2027 will graduate through one of the support pathways offered. *For more specific state-by-state information see Appendices A and B.*

To evaluate the consistencies and differences at each level of support, individual state data was reviewed. Commonalities within Tier I approaches included assessing all students' needs. Each state's perspective on the greatest need for the most students varied across states; however, the majority of states took a universal Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) approach within classroom instruction. One state stood out in terms of universal supports, as their Tier I heavily focused on early reading initiatives for kindergarten through second grade students; this state noticed a need and is targeting the disproportionality between students' reading skills.

With regard to Tier II and III supports, some of the states were in the process of building supports but have not yet implemented them. Of the states who currently implement Tier II supports, the majority of Tier II supports focus on students who are not fully benefiting from universal supports to increase student success in the general education classroom. Specific

Figure 2. MTSS Main Focus Across States



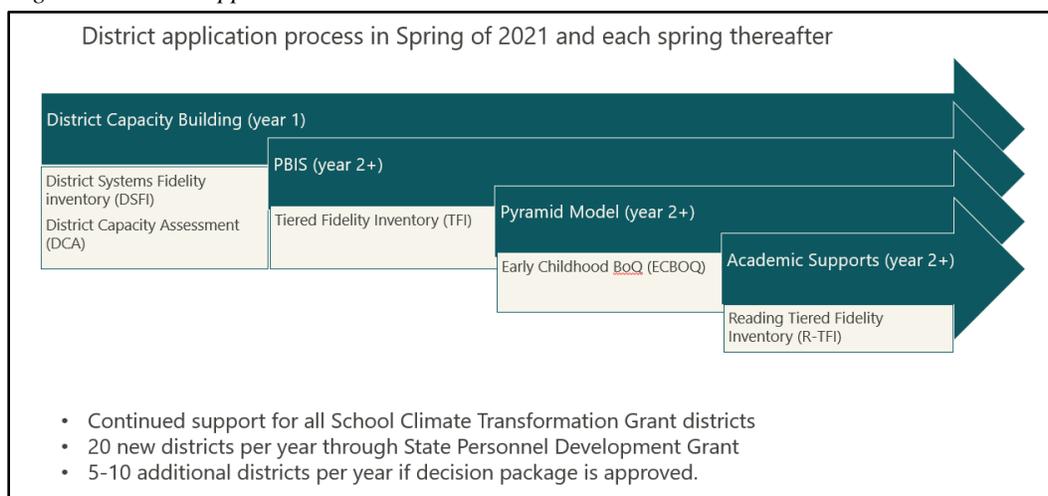
interventions common across states include check-in/check-out, social skills, and progress monitoring. Tier III supports varied across states as intensive needs depended on the state's main MTSS focus. Tiered III supports offered include building legally defensible Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), individualized supports specific to the core curriculum, and systems to identify students at significant risk who are unresponsive to Tier I and II supports. Evidence-based interventions were highly reported across all states.

In regard to 'who we serve,' some states emphasized supporting regional coaches and local education agencies (LEA) while others directly served regions, districts, and schools. Consistently, MTSS is applied and funded by State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) programs. The percentage of schools utilizing MTSS varied across states. The combined average is 50-60% utilization. Though each state encompasses unique essential MTSS components, overlap exists across four domains: (1) team driven and shared leadership, (2) data-based decision making, (3) evidenced-based practices, and (4) family, school, and community engagement. Other critical components included a continuum of supports, professional development, quality instruction, team problem-solving, screening, and progress monitoring.

A common area in which additional support or development is needed was in utilized tools. Although many states employed already established tools for data collection, communication, and strategy implementation; the majority of the partners utilized systems that were either expensive or did not fulfill the full needs of the program. In fact, when asked what platforms were utilized, the majority of the states expressed that they were in the process of creating or already utilizing a fabricated platform of their own. The common use and function of the internal platform was for data collection and to better support the individual needs of the districts implementing MTSS. Other common platforms being used by the states included Moodle, Google, and Canvas. These external programs were commonly used to communicate with school partners and provide a storage space to aggregate the various documentation necessary for the MTSS process.

When discussing the level of training provided to partners, states appeared to have commonalities in the delivery of training options for staff. Most training available to support statewide MTSS initiatives were through webinars, professional development courses designed at the state level, and yearly conferences and seminars. However, there appeared to be a movement towards states' use of trainers to focus on the specific needs of the school districts they support. States utilizing in-person trainers often established a cohort model in which the states would provide access to the trainers to districts who applied and were accepted into the program. Trainers would provide hands-on and virtual support to the districts to ensure that MTSS models were being implemented with fidelity. Although each state provided support at different levels, below is an example of how Washington State plans to utilize their training through a continuous support system with an established focus on building district capacity in the first year and adding continual support in following years.

Figure 3. District Application Process



Future partnerships between the states assessed and CDE were discussed in the 1-on-1 interviews. Overall, there was a positive response related to partnering. Desired outcomes were dependent upon individual state capacity and resources available, but generally, states are interested in expanding their resources related to academic, social-emotional, and behavior intervention strategies and online training platforms, and other state's success with both MTSS and State Personnel Development Grants Programs (SPDG). Lastly, all states who participated requested a copy of the final report to review the findings.

Options

Given the several commonalities between MTSS services across states there is potential for collaboration to improve efficiency in providing MTSS support. Options for how states can collaborate include: sharing resources across states, working together to address new needs, and communicating to overcome problems together. Through collaboration, states will be able to avoid duplicating efforts which will allow them to be more efficient in serving student needs.

The first option states may want to consider in order to improve collaboration is to conduct a needs assessment and then create a shared resource dashboard. Across states, many resources have been created that are used to better support students' needs including training platforms, professional development planning guides, fidelity inventories, assessments, and surveys. It is also beneficial to assess what is working well for states and share effective resources to other states to help fill in gaps. By creating an organized and shared hub of resources, MTSS teams can be more efficient when creating, providing, or searching for resources that will support their students.

In addition to creating a structured format for sharing previously created resources, states may want to consider how they can work together to address future needs as they arise. As the needs of students shift, and the role of MTSS teams changes, new resources will be necessary to support students. If MTSS teams have an established method of collaboration and innovation across states in place, they will be better suited to work together efficiently without duplicating efforts. In order to do this effectively, states may want to consider implementing a process that has already been created or adapting a process to create their own process of collaboration. One method of innovation states may consider implementing, is the Design Thinking models. In

Design Thinking, collaborators implement a five-stage process to come to creative solutions to new problems (Dam & Siang, 2018).

The third option MTSS teams may want to consider putting in place in order to improve collaboration across states is to provide a structure of regular communication that will enable teams to address new challenges and changes as they arise. State feedback showed a positive response to future partnerships, and one way to accomplish this is to hold smaller participant groups in addition to regularly scheduled large scale meetings. Across states, all teams indicated similar MTSS features and functions, while having different gaps in areas of support (i.e. social emotional). By communicating regularly through structured communication, MTSS teams will improve collaboration while reducing the burdens of inefficient communication. MTSS teams will need to work together to establish the method and frequency of communication that works best for their unique needs. Lacerenza (2018) provides team based interventions that may be used to enhance communication and teamwork across MTSS teams.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A. Survey Responses

1. What is your major focus of MTSS?	
Washington	Social Emotional/ Academic
Montana	Social Emotional/ Academic
New Jersey	Academic
Utah	Social Emotional/ Academic
2. What tier I, II, & III supports do you offer?	
Washington	We will offer all tiers over time. We're in our first year.
Montana	<p>Training to districts/schools on all aspects of support.</p> <p><u>*Follow-up response provided 6/7:</u> “We have just developed a new training sequence and training site that is available to the new districts joining our grant this year. The districts will complete several modules a month. Following this pilot year, the trainings will be available to all districts in Montana</p> <p>We also offer courses on our “Teacher Learning Hub” that allows educators to receive continuing education renewal credits. We offer “MTSS Overview”, “Effective Classroom Practices”, “Tier II”, and a “Tier 1-Systems” course that is scheduled to be released soon. We have more courses being developed at this time.</p> <p>Throughout the past year, we also offered webinars and/or virtual trainings on a variety of topics such as “Relaunching After Covid-19 (offered last June)”, Tier II, and lots of webinars on Social/Emotional Learning and support. We will be offering more online this summer, including a 2 day Tier 1 training, and other topics related to MTSS.”</p>
New Jersey	We provide a more intensive focus on Tier I, but we provide Tier II and Tier III supports as well.
Utah	All three
3. Who do you serve (how many)? Regions? Districts? Schools? Teachers? Students? Students with disabilities?	

Washington	We are using SPDG to hire regional coaches who will train and support a) district teams and then b) school teams.
Montana	We have schools and districts in all 5 regions of Montana. Approximately 42 grant districts/schools and 50 non grant schools.
New Jersey	We serve various stakeholders in different ways. We work with cohorts of schools and support school leaders, school-based instructional coaches, interventionists and teachers. Our SPDG aims to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and address disproportionality. We are currently working with 56 schools in 30 school districts.
Utah	33 LEA's across Utah (A mixture of large districts and charter schools)
4. How do you serve these populations?	
Washington	We'll have an application process for districts with a scope and sequence for training and technical assistance from regions to district. The first year a district is in our cohorts, the training will be aligned to the DCA/DSFI. Subsequent years will continue to support districts (to be able to coach schools) and will also include training for school teams. So school teams train and coach staff; staff support students, etc.
Montana	Technical support through training and coaching.
New Jersey	We provide intensive coaching to the cohort schools in the implementation of MTSS to address early reading. In addition, we develop resources that we share online for public consumption.
Utah	USBE support and Coaching Model
5. What percentage of schools do you feel are using MTSS?	
Washington	statewide, we have more schools implementing PBIS than academic systems. Pre-pandemic, we had about 20% of schools in the state using PBIS as measured by TFI. There has not been a consistent training or coaching model in our state, so historically, we haven't had good data or implementation of MTSS in WA. That is what we are trying to address through our SPDG (related to our next question). We are only in the first year of the grant as well, so next

	year will be our first cohort.
Montana	<p>50%</p> <p><u>Follow-up response provided 6/7:</u> “Changes in leadership at the state level and Covid 19 impacted MTSS in Montana. Schools that had a solid Tier 1 in place seemed to fair the best. They were able to leverage what they already had in place and recognize MTSS could help support the huge changes in schools and the switch to remote school.</p> <p>Covid-19 brought school and district “gaps” in implementation to the forefront. Schools that did not have enough staff or administrative buy-in, didn’t have systems firmly in place, or that had not implemented a solid Tier 1, struggled the most. They would often state that they “didn’t have time for MTSS due to covid”, which in itself is very telling.”</p>
New Jersey	60%
Utah	100% of SPDG participates, now the amount of participates that are applying MTSS appropriately is closer to 65%
6. Do you feel your MTSS is effective?	
Washington	2
Montana	4: Mostly Effective
New Jersey	4/5
Utah	5 (effective)
7. What are your state's essential MTSS features? For example, Colorado champions Team-Drive Leadership, Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision-Making, Layered Continuum of Supports, and Evidence-Based Practices.	
Washington	Team Driven Shared Leadership, Data-Based Decision Making, Family/student/community engagement, continuum of supports, evidence-based practices.
Montana	N/A: http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Multi-Tiered-Systems-of-Support/MTSS-Essential-Components
New Jersey	<p>Effective district and school leadership</p> <p>Family and community engagement</p> <p>Positive school culture and climate</p>

	<p>High-quality learning environments, curricula and instructional practices</p> <p>Universal screening</p> <p>Data-based decision making</p> <p>Collaborative problem-solving teams</p> <p>Progress monitoring</p> <p>Staff Professional Development</p>
Utah	<p>UMTSS provides leadership and support for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in sustained implementation of evidence-based Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) practices. UMTSS addresses both academic and behavioral needs of all students through the integration of data, practices, and systems. The coaching and tools provided by UMTSS are intended to guide LEA teams in evaluating and analyzing current practices, establishing supportive infrastructure, and utilizing data to improve student outcomes.</p> <p>UMTSS Eight Critical Components:</p> <p>High Quality Instruction</p> <p>Data-Based Decision Making</p> <p>Team-Based Problem Solving</p> <p>Equitable Education for Each Student</p> <p>College and Career Readiness</p> <p>Proactive School Climate and Structure</p> <p>Parent and Community Involvement</p> <p>Supportive Leadership</p>
8. What online platform do you use (e.g., Moodle, Canvas, other?)	
Washington	Canvas
Montana	<p>Moodle, google sites</p> <p><u>Follow-up response provided 6/7:</u> “Teacher Learning Hub, YouTube and a webpage (under construction). We added YouTube this year, and more courses to the learning hub. We also started a MTSS Community of Practice, which we have held monthly. The community of practice has allowed us to provide hour long webinars on hot topics, and provide a format for our schools to network around MTSS.</p> <p>Due to Covid-19, professional learning opportunities all moved to online webinars and trainings.”</p>

New Jersey	We developed a custom platform for our project schools to input screening and diagnostic data that assisted in grouping students needing common interventions.
Utah	Canvas
9. What implementation tool (s) does your state use?	
Washington	TFI, R-TFI, ECBOQ, DCA, DSFI
Montana	Practice profile, Tiered Fidelity Inventory, State and District Capacity assessments
New Jersey	We use a variety of implementation tools to support districts. That are available online, but these guidelines are our more global implementation tools. https://www.nj.gov/education/njtss/guidelines.pdf
Utah	MTSS Team Practice Profile, High Quality Professional Development Checklists, Professional Development Planning Guides, MTSS Common Language Survey, Fidelity and Outcome Summary
10. How do you communicate your MTSS initiative across the state?	
Washington	website, regional coaches
Montana	Email listserv, CSPD regions, state listserv
New Jersey	We have a website to host resources, we have provided orientation presentations throughout the state, and we continue to recruit new districts annually to participate in the project.
Utah	Email, canvas, Conferences, Trainings, In person where applicable
11. What training structures do you have in place? How do they provide technical assistance?	
Washington	Regional educational service districts (ESDs) have funded positions for training and coaching districts in our cohorts. Each district will have a coaching service delivery plan. training will be monthly through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods with TA check-ins between each synchronous event.
Montana	Synchronous and asynchronous training, coaches attending monthly district and school meetings.

	Follow-up response provided 6/7: “Montana has 13 MTSS Systems Coaches that support individual schools and districts.”
New Jersey	N/A - following up in interview
Utah	Training Request Portal, Coaching, Annual Conference, Fall Training, Newsletters.
12. How would you like to partner with other states?	
Washington	Share resources and ideas
Montana	Share resources and ideas
New Jersey	We are entering the final year of our SPDG. If we're fortunate enough to be awarded a new SPDG, we could think about this a bit further.
Utah	Anyway possible

APPENDIX B. Summary of MTSS Per State

APPENDIX B.1 Arkansas MTSS

Arkansas MTSS

MTSS (Arkansas) Main Focus: academic and social emotional support using response to intervention (RTI) and positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS). RTI is primarily focused on literacy and is aligned with the Arkansas Reading Initiative for Student Excellence (RISE) for meeting literacy needs and scientific reading instruction (Division of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2021).

Tier I, II, III Supports Offered:

Tier I social emotional supports focuses on assessing the level of student need and district PBIS support. Tier II focuses on check-in, check-out, social skills groups, self-monitoring, and mentoring. Tier III focuses on building legally defensible behavior intervention plans and functional behavioral assessments.

Who We Serve: (Regions, Districts, Schools, Teachers, Students, Students with Disabilities)

ARMTSS serves 15 regional cooperatives and 230 districts.

Percentage of School Utilizing MTSS:

Data from previous years suggest that 75-80% of schools are utilizing MTSS.

Arkansas's MTSS Essential Features:

The ARMTSS framework consists of four essential components: screening, progress monitoring, multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision making. Within each component are steps for continuous improvement and adherence to MTSS implementation.

Online Platform:

Arkansas anticipates using a learning management system as they begin building out competency-based micro-credentials. Currently, the online professional development modules by American Institutes for Research (AIR) are being utilized to support RTI implementation.

Implementation Tools:

Implementation components of MTSS include ongoing planning, continuous improvement, and sustaining and expanding efforts. Teams must determine readiness, develop a plan for ongoing professional development, create structures and processes, conduct an ongoing evaluation and review implementation to inform areas of improvement.

Communication Initiative:

Communication efforts are electronic, shared in-person, and in conferences.

ARMTSS Training Structures:

In 2015, the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education partnered with AIR to deliver technical assistance and onsite training to state and district leaders. The Arkansas Department of Education was awarded a State Professional Development Grant (SPDG) to support response to intervention (RTI) initiatives. In addition, the Center for Community Engagement partnered with the SPDG to provide training and support for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Future Partnerships:

Arkansas is limited in their ability to endorse future partnerships due to their involvement with a number of states. However, they are open to expanding their capacity for future partnerships.

APPENDIX B.2 Michigan MiMTSS

Michigan MiMTSS

The following information was collected through the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) MTSS website page and the MDE Multi-Tier System of Supports Practice Profile (Michigan Department of Education, 2020). MDE defines their MTSS model as the following:

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a comprehensive framework comprised of a collection of research-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child. MTSS intentionally interconnects the education, health, and human service systems in support of successful learners, schools, centers, and community outcomes. The five essential components of MTSS are inter-related and complementary. The MTSS framework provides schools and districts with an efficient way to organize resources to support educators in the implementation of effective practices with fidelity so that all learners succeed. MDE's MiMTSS Leadership Team coordinates MDE's efforts to support educators' effective implementation of MTSS with fidelity so that all learners can be successful (Michigan Department of Education, 2020).

The MiMTSS framework was developed through a multi-disciplinary team composed of educators, leaders, researchers, MDE staff, and other stakeholders. The philosophy of the practice is to utilize evidence-based practices to address the needs of the whole child. MDE follows several guiding principles such as ensuring the growth of learners, expanding learning potential, solving systemic concerns, ongoing professional development, using data-based decisions, and attention to fidelity of implementation. The five essential components of MiMTSS include the following: Team-based leadership, tiered delivery system, selection and implementation of instruction, comprehensive screening and assessment system, and continuous data-based decision making. The intended outcomes of the MiMTSS model include supporting every student's learning potential, fostering family engagement, developing competent staff, and evaluating and monitoring outcomes to create improvement. MDE offers several systems of support for its schools and districts. First, the MDE MTSS Practice Profile, a document outlining the philosophy, desired outcomes, and essential components. Next, there are several forms of technical assistance including a technical assistance center, a data collection system, and a YouTube Channel which provides examples and summaries of best-practices. Finally, the MiMTSS website provides an eNewsletter, a resources page, and the Transformation Zone. The transformation Zone is a web page designed by several state organizations which serves as an outcome monitoring system that drives data-based decision making.

Link to MiMTSS Website: https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-81376_86454---,00.html

Link to Practice Profile:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MDE_MTSS_Practice_Profile_5.0July2020_ADA_700696_7.pdf

APPENDIX B.3 Montana MTSS

Montana MTSS

MTSS (Montana) Main Focus: Social Emotional & Academic

Tier I, II, III Supports Offered:

Tier I is designed to meet the needs of most students through the delivery of research-based academic, behavioral, and social-emotional instruction. Tier II involves the students that require more support to be successful with the core curriculum. For these students, supplemental Tier II instruction and interventions deliver evidence-based support targeted to specific skill deficits. Tier III involves the students that will require more intensive, individualized support in addition to the core curriculum. Tier III supports provide intensive individualized evidence-based interventions.

Who We Serve: (Regions, Districts, Schools, Teachers, Students, Students with Disabilities)

Montana OPI serves schools and districts in all 5 regions of Montana. Specifically, there are approximately 42 grant schools and 50 non grant schools.

Percentage of School Utilizing MTSS:

Of all schools within the state of Montana, it is estimated that 50% use an MTSS model.

Montana's MTSS Essential Features:

- Team-based Leadership
- Consensus and Commitment
- Evidence based Instruction, Intervention, and Supports
- Collaborative Teams
- Tiered Delivery System
- Comprehensive Screening and Assessment
- Data-based Decision Making

Online Platform:

Montana OPI utilizes Moodle and Google sites as their online platforms. Their State Personal Development Grant program (SPDG) will increase local educational agency (LEA) capacity to support and sustain the implementation of the Montana Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) through distance learning and web-based formats for professional development and coaching support focused on data-analytic problem solving at the systems level.

Implementation Tools:

The Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III Practice Profiles for each tier in the Multi-Tiered System of Support and are organized by systems, data, and practices. They address the essential

components of a comprehensive framework of MTSS designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child (cognitive, behavioral, physical, social and emotional). Montana OPI also used Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI), which gives teams a single, efficient, valid, reliable survey to guide implementation and sustained use of SWPBIS. Using the TFI, teams measure the extent to which school personnel apply the core features of SWPBIS at all three tiers – either individually or collectively. Schools may take the TFI as:

- An initial assessment to determine if they are using, or need, SWPBIS
- A guide for implementation of Tier I, Tier II, and/or Tier III practices
- An index of sustained SWPBIS implementation
- A metric for identifying schools for recognition within their state implementation efforts

The TFI is based on the features and items of existing SWPBIS fidelity surveys (e.g., SET, BoQ, TIC, SAS, BAT, MATT) and can be used to replace any or all of them.

<https://www.pbisapps.org/products/tfi>

Communication Initiative:

In terms of communication, Montana OPI utilizes email listservs to provide information to educators, families, and other stakeholders. Additionally, Montana OPI also utilizes the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The CSPD uses a process which includes preservice, inservice and technical assistance for parents, general education staff, administrators and other service providers with the end result being better programs and services for all children and youth.

APPENDIX B.4 New Jersey NJTSS

New Jersey NJTSS

MTSS (NJTSS) Main Focus: Academic

Tier I, II, III Supports Offered:

NJTSS provides a more intensive focus on Tier I. Their State Personal Development Grant program (SPDG) focuses on supporting early reading for kindergarten to second grade students. This focus on early reading stems from New Jersey being one of the country's greatest disproportionality states, for students referred to special education. And within that, early reading was identified as an area to target to reduce disproportionality. Reading support offered focuses on addressing where cohorts are in regard to being able to implement a tiered system, the data provided, the ability to collect the data needed for the project, and their assessment practices. NJTSS SPDG supports schools on their ability to assess for specific needs and in carrying out diagnostic tools in identifying specific student skills and conceptual needs. Furthermore, the SPDG program focuses on the Big Five Areas in their reading program, which is designed in alignment with the science of reading. It is ultimately the districts' decision on which types of interventions they use. The SPDG team simply provides guidance on what types of intervention would best address the vulnerabilities uncovered through the assessment process. The NJTSS SPDG is in the process of designing Tier II and Tier III intervention menu. The programs provided in this list are purchased by the district, but the SPDG assists with identifying districts that have the ability and resources to address the needs of their students who are receiving tier II and III interventions (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

Who We Serve: (Regions, Districts, Schools, Teachers, Students, Students with Disabilities)

They are currently working with 56 schools in 30 school districts, out of 630 districts. The difference between those receiving direct instruction and coaching and those not, is dependent on the SPDG's capacity. The 56 schools receive bi weekly coaching, process evaluations, data analysis support, and one-on-one district ELA coaching. The schools and districts not receiving intensive support are still required to provide a coordinated system of intervention. One way not participating districts satisfy this requirement, is to implement a tiered systems framework, and many adopt the New Jersey Tiered Systems of Supports model (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

Percentage of School Utilizing NJTSS:

Of all schools within the state of New Jersey, it is estimated that 60% use an MTSS model.

NJTSS Effectiveness:

It is estimated that overall, the framework was mostly effective. To elaborate, in terms of NJTSS, the most effective point is supporting schools on understanding the different types of assessment

in identifying specific student needs, skills, and conceptual gaps. Due to COVID-19 and theory of accelerated learning, it is imperative to be able to diagnose the exact needs for students in order to bridge the gaps created by the pandemic. Schools that are engaged in the SPDG program may be better equipped to shrink this gap, compared to schools outside of the project. In terms of addressing student learning gaps in general, the tiered systems offer schools a framework for identifying needs, and setting up the infrastructure necessary to have a comprehensive support system for students. This design can move beyond academics, and help provide support for students where they are at. By definition, this multi-tiered system of support promotes educational equity (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

NJTSS Essential Features:

- Effective district and school leadership
- Family and community engagement
- Positive school culture and climate
- High-quality learning environments, curricula and instructional practices
- Universal screening
- Data-based decision making
- Collaborative problem-solving teams
- Progress monitoring
- Staff Professional Development

(New Jersey Department of Education, 2020)

Online Platform:

NJTSS developed a custom platform for their SPDG project that assists schools in inputting screening and diagnostic data that ultimately assists in grouping student needs for common interventions. The platform was designed and implemented prior to COVID-19, based on the need for supporting districts and their data management. This online platform incorporates various assessments, but recommends DIBELS for early reading needs. The platform allows districts to input data gathered through the assessment process and will recommend intervention cycles based on grouped needs. It prescribes interventions and offers evidence-based practices. This custom platform is a one-stop-shop for data input, intervention, and progress monitoring (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

Implementation Tools:

NJTSS SPDG program provides a variety of implementation tools to support their participating districts. They also provide guidelines related to global implementation tools, which include best practices, key tools, and implementation resources. More information on key tools for implementation related to universal screening mapping and analysis for early reading, the New Jersey dyslexia handbook, and the universal and dyslexia screening flowchart can be found at <https://www.nj.gov/education/njtss/guidelines.pdf> (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021; New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Student Services, 2019).

NJTSS Communication Initiative:

In terms of communication, SPDG website offers a host of resources for districts and schools, they provide orientation presentations throughout the state, and continue to recruit new districts annually to participate in their program. In terms of district recruitment, the SPDG team sends out a broadcast memo to all districts to advertise the NJTSS opportunity. The team also targets more comprehensive schools as defined by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Usually, the team received a decent response rate from schools interested in participating in the project. This process is not conducted every year as this is not how the SPDG grant works. To elaborate, the SPDG is a five year grant and each time a district applies for the project, they are applying for a three year project participation (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

NJTSS Training Structures:

Provisional trainings are provided and cover topics including what is a tiered system, the NJTSS infrastructure, and supports to implement. Then districts complete the online training and implement how they see fit. In addition, there is also a website that offers various resources for districts and schools to access at their leisure. Prior to the pandemic, the SPDG team used to visit all the counties within the state and engage with all districts within the county. In this, they would present essential components of New Jersey Tiered Systems of Supports (NJTSS), and invite districts to apply for the SPDG project. Once joining, districts receive intensive training in data collection and interpretation, intervention implementation, and progress monitoring. Furthermore, the SPDG team is in the process of applying for another five year grant, and if awarded, they plan to improve their training, online platform, and modules related to supporting implementation of the tiered framework. Moreover, there will be both synchronous and asynchronous opportunities available to all districts coming soon (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

Future Partnerships:

As the SPDG team is entering their final year of the current grant, and are awaiting to see if they will be awarded another five year grant, future partnerships will be considered at a later time. If awarded, the SPDG team plans to expand their resources (i.e. staff members, time). But the current team is interested in the CDE's online academy, additional support to fill in the social emotional gaps in the NJTSS model, and different approaches to a SPDG program (L. Pereira, personal communication, May 14, 2021).

APPENDIX B.5 Utah MTSS

Utah MTSS

MTSS (UMTSS) Main Focus: Both social emotional and academic supports.

Tier I, II, III Supports Offered:

UMTSS is split into eight critical components. UMTSS offers support at Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III for each of the eight critical components. The components include: High Quality Instruction, Data-Based Decision Making, Team-Based Problem Solving, Equitable Education for Each Student, College and Career Readiness, Proactive School Climate and Structure, Parent and Community Involvement, and Supportive Leadership. More information about how each component is supported at each tier can be found at:

<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/03b9dbf0-c344-42d2-ac7e-1a5727eacf09>.

Who We Serve: (Regions, Districts, Schools, Teachers, Students, Students with Disabilities)

UMTSS serves 33 local education agencies across Utah.

Percentage of School Utilizing UMTSS:

100% of State Personnel Development Grant participants participate. However it is estimated that a significant portion of those participants are still working towards applying MTSS appropriately.

UMTSS Effectiveness:

Overall, when used with efficacy, it is estimated that UMTSS is very effective.

UMTSS Eight Critical Components:

1. High Quality Instruction
2. Data-Based Decision Making
3. Team-Based Problem Solving
4. Equitable Education for Each Student
5. College and Career Readiness
6. Proactive School Climate and Structure
7. Parent and Community Involvement
8. Supportive Leadership

Online Platform:

UMTSS utilizes Canvas.

Implementation Tools:

The UMTSS utilizes a variety of tools including the MTSS Team Practice Profile, High Quality Professional Development Checklists, Professional Development Planning Guides, The MTSS Common Language Survey, and a Fidelity and Outcome Summary.

UMTSS Communication:

UMTSS communicates via email, canvas, conferences, training, and in person where applicable.

UMTSS Training Structures:

UMTSS utilizes structures such as a training request portal, coaching, an annual conference, fall training, and newsletters.

Future Partnerships:

UMTSS is very open to partnering with other states in any ways possible.

APPENDIX B.6 Washington MTSS

Washington MTSS**MTSS Main Focus:**

Both social emotional and academic support.

Tier I, II, III Supports Offered:

Currently, Washington is in the process of taking applications from school districts interested in MTSS training support. The support will be provided to cohorts based on individualized needs to accomplish the desired increase in graduation rates. Currently, there has been a statewide focus on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). When exploring individual levels of support, Tier 1 will focus on the needs of approximately 80% of the student population with equitable access to universal instruction and supports that are culturally and linguistically responsive and are differentiated to meet unique needs of the district and schools. Tier 2 supports will be comprised of intervention programs that are evidence-based. In this tier, targeted interventions will be selected to remove the barriers that are preventing students from fully benefiting from the universal support being provided. Tier 3 supports will be directed towards students that demonstrate significant risk and are not responding to tier 1 and 2 supports. These interventions will be intensified across seven domains: Strength of Intervention Program, Dosage, Alignment, Attention to Transfer, Comprehensiveness, Behavioral Support, and Data-Based Individualization.

Who We Serve: (Regions, Districts, Schools, Teachers, Students, Students with Disabilities)

Washington will utilize a cascading system of support in which support will be provided at the district level and will filter through to school specific systems. Guidance will be provided for visibility, funding, and political support at the district level. It is then the responsibility of the district to provide access and training that will filter down to the school leadership team. It will then be the responsibility of the school leadership team to provide guidance and manage implementation by training school staff. School staff will then provide evidence-based practices to support students within their school. Based on data collected at the student level, outcomes of improvement will continue to guide the focus of implementation and need for re-evaluation.

Percentage of School Utilizing Washington's MTSS:

Prior to COVID-19, 20% of schools in the state were utilizing PBIS, currently they are in the planning and application process and are not active.

MTSS Effectiveness:

Systems have yet to be implemented as the state is currently in the district application process that will close as of July 2nd, 2021.

Washington Essential Features:

- Team-Driven Shared Leadership
- Data-Based Decision Making
- Continuum of Supports
- Family, Student, and Community Engagement
- Evidence-Based Practices

Online Platform:

Washington currently utilizes Canvas for training practices and will utilize regional educational service districts (ESDs) funds for training and coaching districts within a cohort structure. Each district chosen will have an individualized coaching service delivery plan in which training will be provided monthly through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods. Required check-ins between each synchronous event will be required to track fidelity of practices. An additional platform has been created to support the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) projects that will assist schools in providing screening and diagnostic data. This platform will aid in the grouping of students based on needs for common interventions. The platform was designed prior to COVID-19 based on needs related to data management. The platform incorporates various assessments but recommends DIBELS for early reading needs and allows districts to input data gathered through the assessment process. It will then recommend intervention cycles based on group needs. Interventions offered are evidence-based and will be a one-stop-shop for data input, intervention, and program monitoring.

Implementation Tools:

Implementation will be guided through a data tracking and assessment process that will provide specific support at the various levels as needed.

Washington Communication Initiative:

Communication for Washington MTSS practices is currently navigated through the state website (<https://www.k12.wa.us>). The state website offers multiple resources that outline the state's MTSS structure and highlights the essential components of the state's MTSS process. The website also provides schools and districts guidance on the application process and deadlines for becoming a member of its training cohorts. For training, the website provides access to a webinar that can be used for professional learning as well as archival documents from MTSS Fest. These assets include presentation materials, session recordings, and session Q&A sheets. For those looking for direct access to the states resources and datasheets, they can explore the Multi-Tier Systems of Support page (<https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/multi-tiered-system-supports-mtss>)

MTSS Training Structures:

Outside of open access to webinars and prior seminar documentation, districts selected for the grant training program will be provided access to individual trainers that will work directly with districts to support implementation of MTSS practices. Trainers will be hired at the state level and will provide individualized support at the district level. Trainers will work directly with districts on identification of needs. Individualized needs will be based on data collection at the school and district level. Members of district staff will be provided training opportunities that will help guide how support will cascade through the various other levels including staff training and implementation with students. Training will be done through synchronous and asynchronous lessons as well as through regularly scheduled check-ins.

Future Partnerships:

As Washington is currently in the initial stages of development, they are looking to partner with other states in any way possible. Ideal collaboration will be in the form of regularly scheduled

meetups in which states can discuss individual successes and how schools can be better supported through integration of MTSS

