
It's not about establishing a MTSS framework; it's about transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching

In the 2015 *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), a multi-tiered support system (MTSS) is defined as "a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students' needs, with regular observation to facilitate data based instructional decision making." The term MTSS had been coined earlier as part of efforts to place Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) into a continuum of interventions.

Currently, many SEAs, LEAs, and schools are using the term MTSS. And the definition and its operationalization are being adapted and expanded.

As too often happens, the difficulties involved in implementing major system changes have arisen for those who have adopted/adapted MTSS. Moreover, We note that others refer to MTSS, but they use the acronym mainly as a "buzzword." (Often, when an acronym replaces the words describing a school improvement practice, the essence of the approach is lost.)

What's Being Lost

A multi-tiered support system (MTSS) emphasizes the importance of a continuum of interventions in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Such a continuum is *one facet* of unifying and developing an equitable system of student/learning supports. However, more is involved in rethinking the role of schools in reducing the opportunity and achievement gaps. Ultimately, the need is for schools to make *fundamental* improvements in the way learning, behavior, and emotional problems are ameliorated.

In 2022, the Center sent out a document entitled: *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*. <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>

In that guide, we discussed the need for system changes to end the fragmentation, overspecialization, and marginalization of student/learning supports and outlined first steps to take in pursuing the changes. As the guide emphasizes, significantly reducing the achievement gap requires a laser-like focus on closing the opportunity gap by transforming the role schools play in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students. In essence, the need is for fundamental changes in the way student and learning supports are conceived and structured.

To clarify ways to move forward, we developed a companion document. It provides a detailed discussion of the first steps, suggests a monthly schedule, and provides links to resource aids for pursuing them. (We also offer a few cautions to help avoid potential pitfalls.)

See *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process*
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemchangesteps.pdf>

We look forward to sharing your comments.