

MTSS

EXPLAINED:

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
IMPLEMENTING A MULTI-TIERED
SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

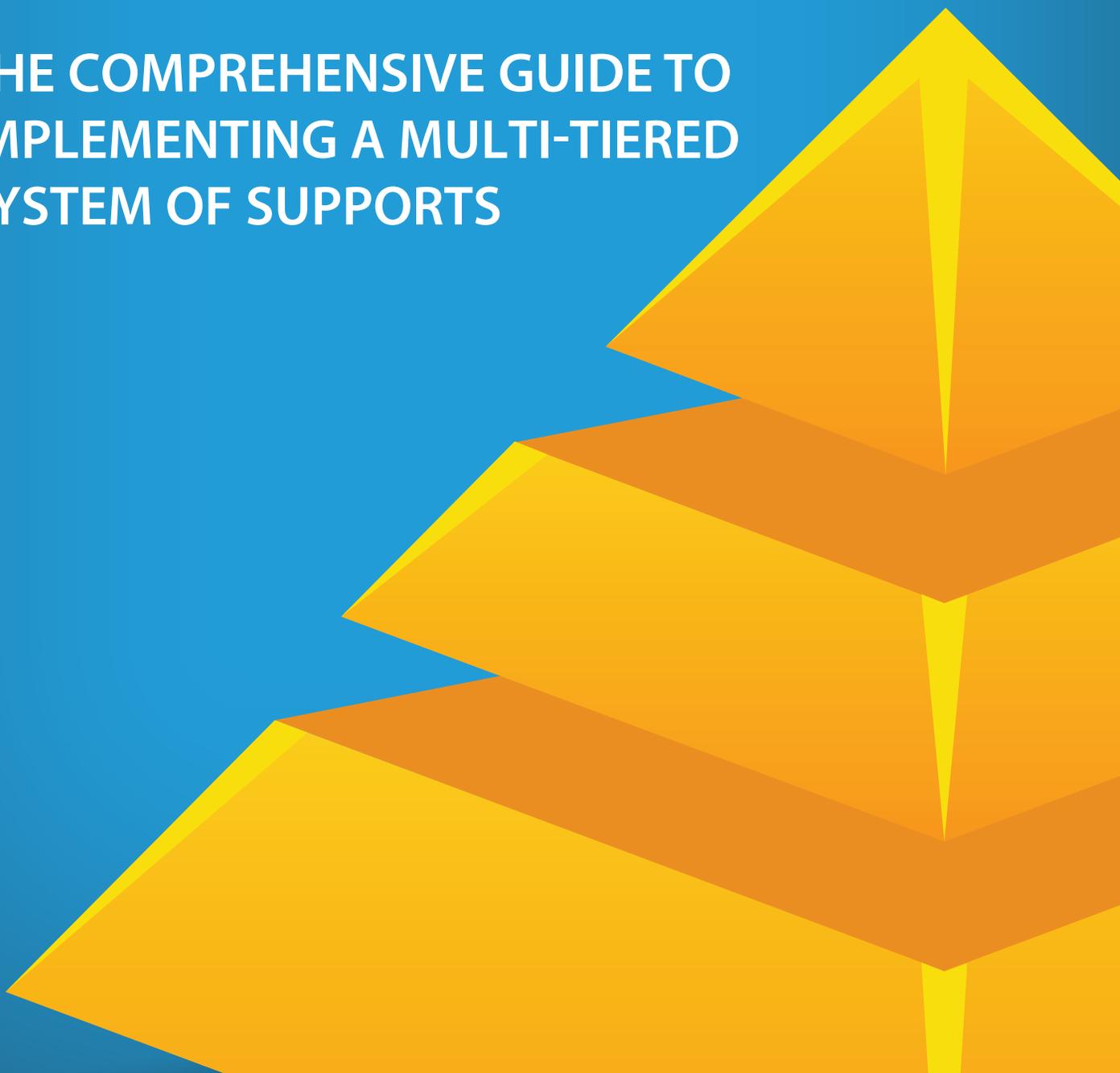


Table of Contents

A MTSS Overview.....	3
What is MTSS?	4
The Three Tiers of Intervention	11
The Purpose of the Tiers	12
Key Components of MTSS	13
Accurate Assessment Tools	14
Evidence-Based Interventions	15
Progress Monitoring	16
The Problem-Solving Process	17
Work Smarter, Not Harder.....	18
Parental Involvement	19
Resources	21

A MTSS Overview

There are many trends in education that have come and gone over the years. The reason most trends don't last long is because they take a single trait factor approach to student intervention. As a result, educators find themselves lamenting the following situations over and over again:

"Johnny doesn't seem interested in learning how to read."

"Tamara never completes her assignments on time."

"José has not shown up for my class in over a week."

What single approach could be used to salvage these students? Answer – there is none. There are many reasons and circumstances that have led to these statements. It is far too complex of a problem to be solved by a single approach. Whatever intervention that is decided upon to turn these students around must take a multi-tiered approach in order to have any lasting impact.

What is MTSS?

MTSS stands for “Multi-Tiered System of Supports”. Some states will have small derivatives of this, but the core concepts are the same. [Florida’s MTSS project](#) defines MTSS as:

“An evidence-based model of schooling that uses data-based problem solving to integrate academic and behavioral instruction and intervention. The integrated instruction and intervention is delivered to students in varying intensities (multiple tiers) based on student need.”

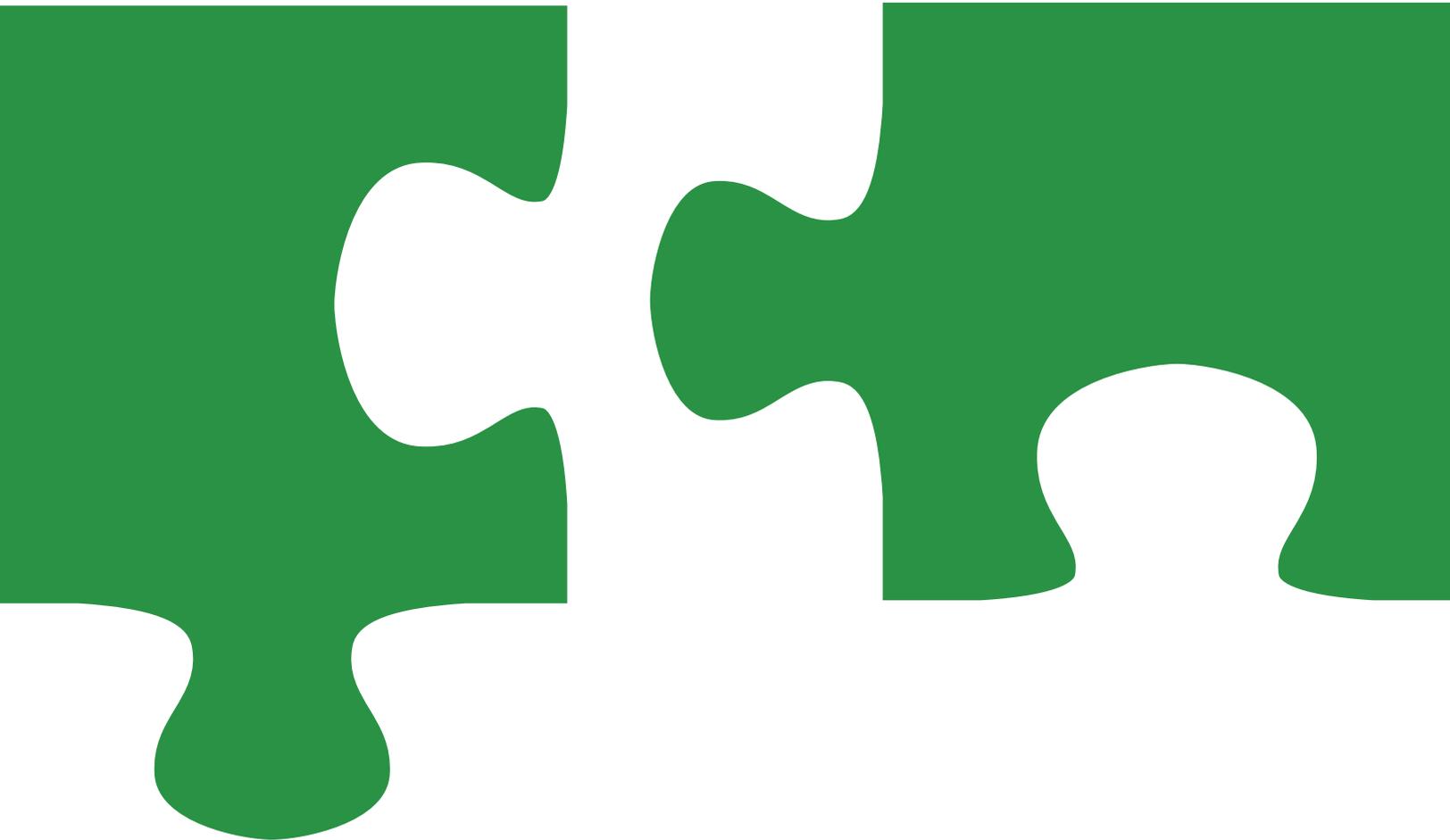


Like [Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports \(PBIS\)](#), MTSS is NOT a pre-packaged curriculum. It is NOT just for special education. Rather, MTSS is a set of ideas focused on how to help all children be successful in school. There is no one “right” way to implement MTSS. Instead, MTSS is a way of thinking about and evaluating the services that schools offers their students to advance towards and achieve their academic and career goals.

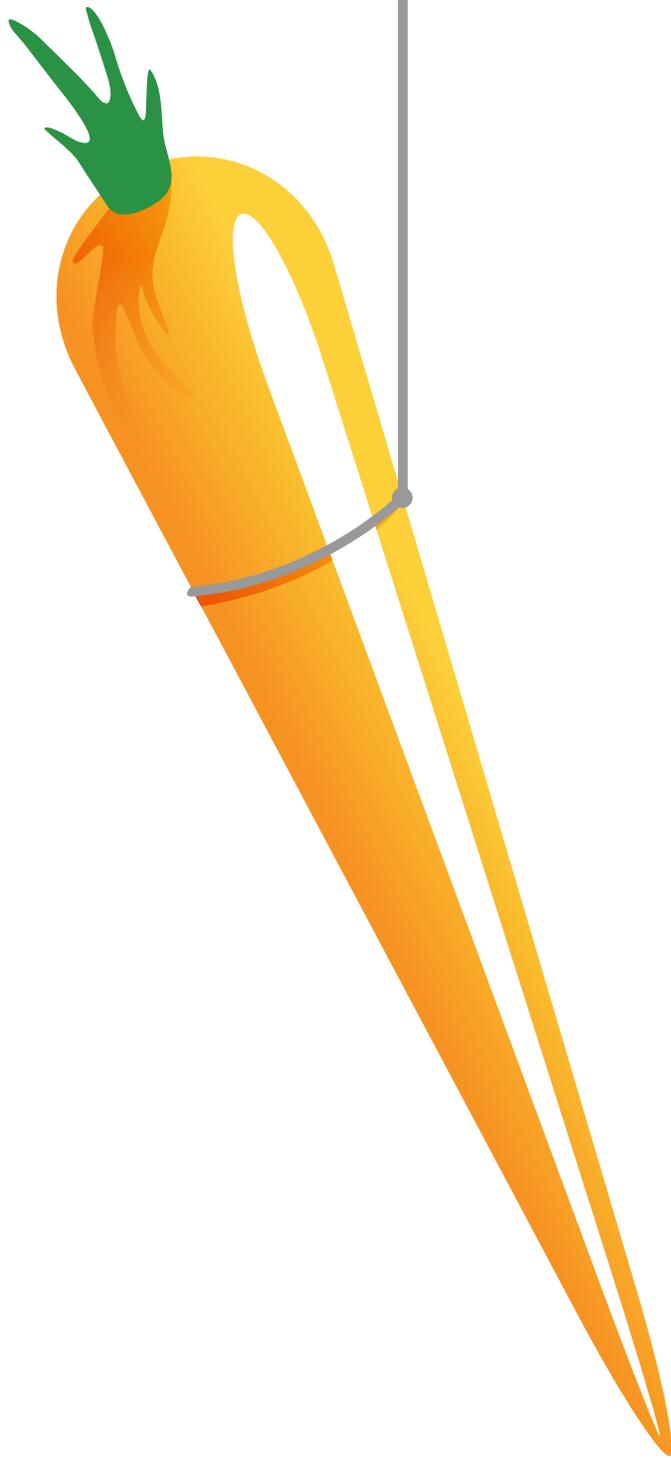


MTSS is not a program, strategy or trend. It is a way of thinking and problem solving to identify what kind of instruction each student responds to best. MTSS is a thought process that is constantly trying to answer the questions, *"How well are the students responding to this instruction?"* and *"How can we make it better for them?"*. It does this by identifying and adding interventions to help students meet expectations.





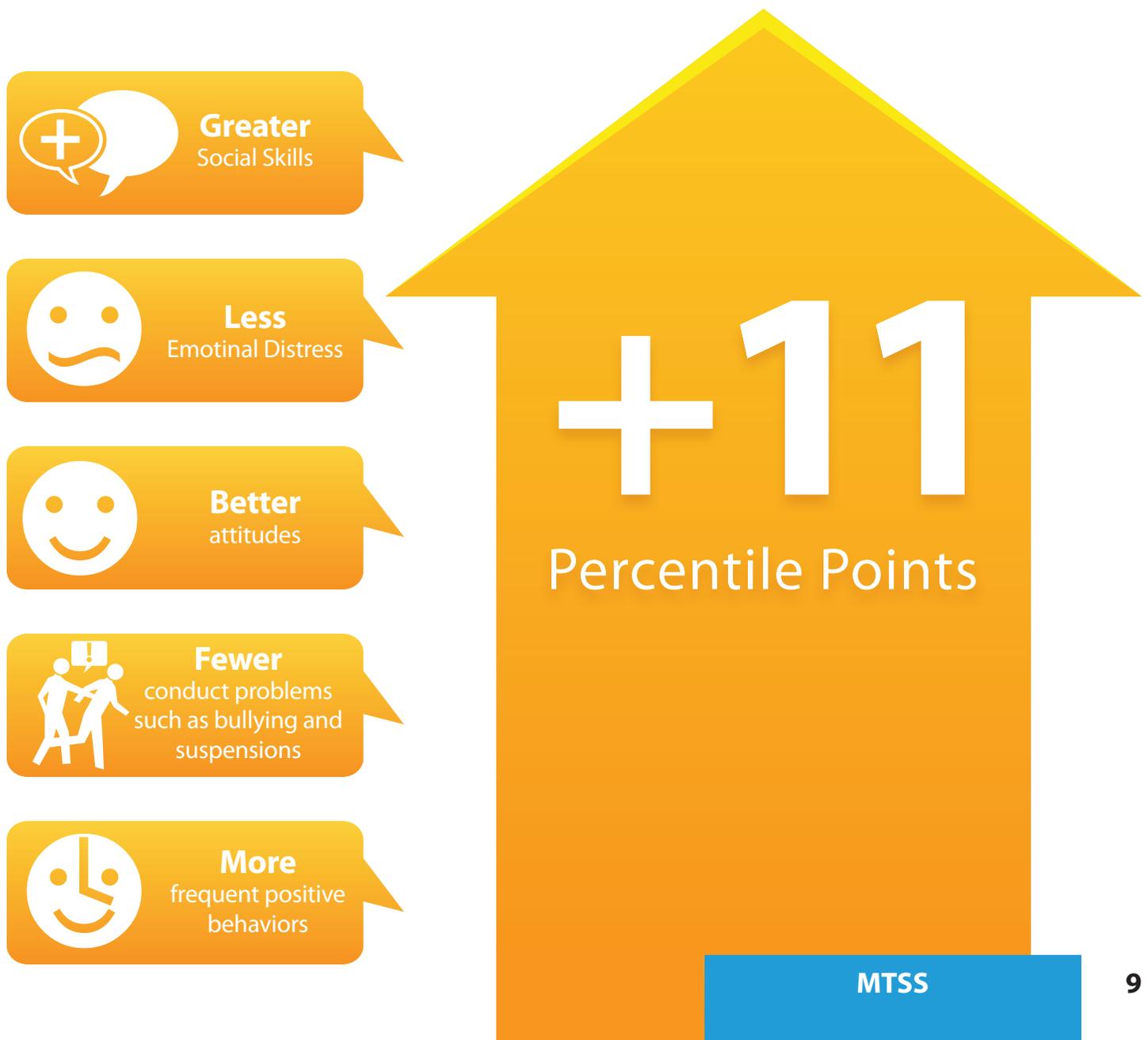
A solid MTSS framework will answer both questions. MTSS is all about finding out what motivates students to learn and delivering interventions to help them learn. It's about helping them make the connection between the classroom and the real world, helping them identify their post-secondary goals, delivering interventions and supports that help students achieve those goals by equipping them with the skills (both academic and behavioral) that they need to succeed.

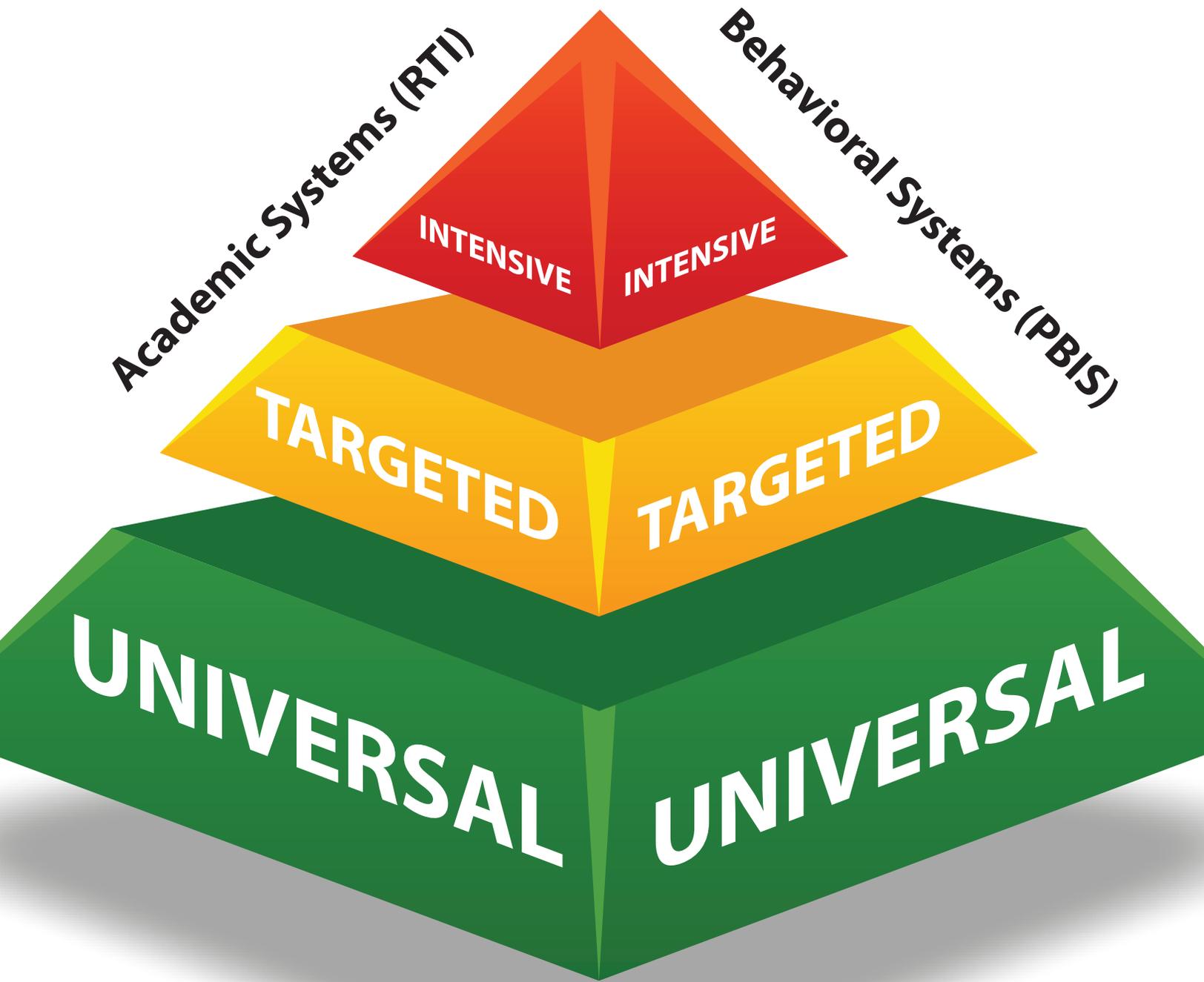


It's critical that we accurately identify what students need to be successful with the MTSS methodology. One of the most important (and often overlooked) aspects of MTSS is giving students a reason to learn. Without a reason to learn, students will lack motivation and it won't matter HOW the instruction is delivered. Much focus is placed on the "how" of MTSS, but it's even more important to ask "why".

Many students in the past have been inappropriately labeled as special education because of poor academic performance, but their lack of success really had nothing to do with academic ability. Without a solid connection between the classroom and the community, these students simply failed to see how what they were learning in school would ever help them accomplish their post-secondary goals. They disconnected due to a lack of interest.

A [recent study](#) found that students who took part in a social/emotional learning framework (like [PBIS](#)) that included academic and career goal setting skills raised their grades and standardized test scores by 11 percentile points. The study also found that these social/emotional learning skills led to greater social skills, less emotional distress, better attitudes, fewer conduct problems, and more frequent positive behaviors.





MTSS is an overarching thought process regarding student success that combines both academic and behavioral aspects. The academic side is often defined as “Response to Intervention” (RTI), while the behavioral side can be defined as “Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports” (PBIS).

The Three Tiers of Intervention

There are three levels of intervention or support identified as part of the MTSS system. They are NOT categorizations of students, but rather are basic guidelines to define the amount of support that any given student may need:

Tier 1: Universal - this level applies to ALL students and includes the high quality teaching and behavior support for all students in the school

Tier 2: Targeted - this level applies to SOME students and includes additional interventions for students who need more help on specific skills

Tier 3: Intensive - this level applies to FEW students and includes interventions designed to address the unique needs of an individual student



The Purpose of the Tiers

The purpose of the different tiers is to:

- help schools provide effective teaching and effective classroom environments so that all students are able to meet grade level standards
- provide help to students who are having difficulty in addition to what everyone gets, rather than replacing it with something different
- allow schools to provide help to students that matches each student's needs

Goal:
providing *whatever*
the student needs
to succeed

Key Components of MTSS

Every MTSS framework needs to contain certain key components in order to be successful. These components include:

One

Being prevention oriented: knowing who needs support as early as possible each year and putting the appropriate supports in place using accurate assessment tools

Two

Implementing evidence-based interventions for all students and tailoring interventions based on student's needs

Three

Using progress monitoring data to know when to make a change in instruction

These key components will help ensure that the goal of MTSS for schools - to use their resources in ways that enable **every** child to be successful - is reached.

Accurate Assessment Tools

In order to provide effective intervention, you need to know where it's needed. Accurate assessment tools allow you to allocate your resources accurately so you know you're always in the right place doing the right thing at the right time. Good assessment tools (like the ones found in [Conover Online](#)) allow you to reach more students with the specific supports and interventions that they need to be successful, so this first step is EXTREMELY important.



Evidence-Based Interventions

You will be hard pressed to find interventions that are more evidence-based than the [Conover Company](#) assessment tools provided in [Conover Online](#). With 120 doctoral-level research papers and books and over 8.5 million administrations, Conover Online sets the bar for valid intervention tools. And with the breakthrough technology of Conover Online, these interventions are available at only \$5 each - making them the most effective and most affordable intervention tools available.



Progress Monitoring

Accurate data comes from accurate assessment tools, which first identify the areas of greatest need. Follow up with evidence-based interventions that will give your students the skills they need to be successful. After these interventions, post-assessments are important so that student progress can be measured.

Progress monitoring can be difficult if not done correctly, but [Conover Online](#) makes this process easy and fool-proof. Using a cloud-based data-tracking system, Conover Online records everything users do and pulls all the data (including built-in pre- and post-assessment results) into one central location. With Conover Online, progress monitoring has never been so simple.



Conover Online™

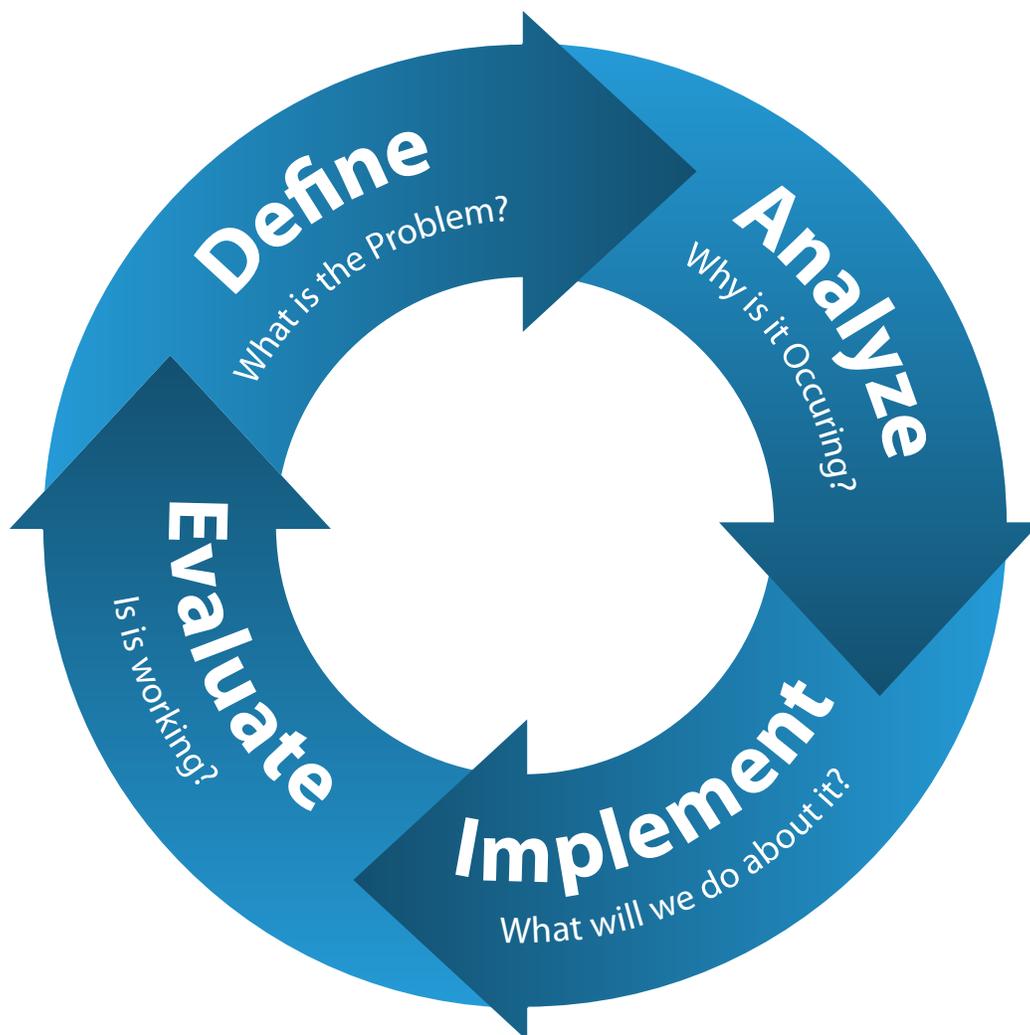


The Problem-Solving Process

In order to successfully achieve the goal of MTSS, to enable schools to use their resources in ways that enable **every** child to be successful, MTSS uses a four-step problem solving process. This problem-solving process is important for making the instructional adjustments needed for continual improvement.

During this problem solving process, four critical questions must be asked:

- 1) What is the problem? (*Define*)
- 2) Why is it occurring? (*Analyze*)
- 3) What will we do about it? (*Implement*)
- 4) Is it working? (*Evaluate*)



Work Smarter, Not Harder

Every job is made easier if you have the right tools. Abraham Lincoln once said “If I have six hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend the first four sharpening the ax”. Leveraging technology allows you to “sharpen your ax” when it comes to implementing a solid MTSS framework.



Technology has truly enabled us to “redeem our time.” Having the right tools for the job allows us to get the job done more quickly, more efficiently, and, in the long run, more cost-effectively. For example, as writing and word processing have evolved from pen and paper to typewriter to personal computer, the potential number of words per minute production has increased. Technology has made our lives easier by allowing us to do more with less – less time, less energy, less money – and grants to us more of these precious resources to actually apply effective interventions.

The same is true with MTSS. By utilizing technology, you can work smarter, not harder. Technology allows you to focus on the data (sharpening your ax) before you apply the intervention.

Parental Involvement

Every parent/teacher meeting regarding a student's intervention plan should be guided by the four questions from the "Problem Solving Process" on page 17. Since all children take part in Tier One interventions, all parents should be aware of the MTSS framework. Parents can also see the changes occurring in their children, both academically and behaviorally, on a daily basis.



Parents are a critical piece to the MTSS puzzle as they are the child's most knowledgeable "expert". Parents are allies who have important insights.

Here are several questions you should ask if you are a parent engaging in a MTSS meeting for your son or daughter:

- Is my child successful?
- If not, why and what can we do differently?
- If needed, how is additional help going to be provided?
- Who is going to provide the additional help?
- How often will they need to provide it?
- How long will they need to provide it?
- What can I do to help with interventions for my child?
- How will I know if interventions are working?

Resources

While you are trying to make a decision about what is best for your school, your students, and your staff, don't forget that there are people and resources to help you every step of the way.

A couple states have put together informational MTSS websites:

- [Kansas](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Michigan](#)
- [Massachusetts](#)

The Conover Company is prepared to provide you with all of the assessment assistance you need. Contact them to find out more about their cloud-based system. You might want to also check out their [education blog](#), as it is filled with great information on all kinds of social/emotional learning topics.

No matter where you are in the MTSS process, we applaud you for researching Multi-Tiered System of Supports and looking to improve the effectiveness of your interventions. The MTSS methodology will help you transform your school into a place where **EVERY** student is successful.

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