

# A Family Guide to a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

The purpose of this brochure is to give you a clear understanding of what a Multi-Tiered System of Supports or “MTSS” is, how it can help your child and how you, as families, can actively support your child’s learning.

## What is MTSS?

An MTSS is first and foremost about helping students. More specifically, an MTSS is a way that districts and schools organize and provide education to ensure that students receive the instruction they need to be successful. By operating as an MTSS, schools acknowledge that students’ needs vary and so the best way to help them achieve is to provide instruction that is matched to those needs. Within an MTSS, educators carefully monitor student progress, work to ensure that all students receive effective instruction and provide more targeted or individualized support when needed.

## MTSS for All Students



Tier 1



Tier 2



Tier 3

## What is tiered instruction and how can it help my child?

Tiered instruction can be described simply as layers of support available to every student. For many students, the regular daily classroom instruction is sufficient for them to successfully meet grade level expectations. However, just like anyone learning a new skill or concept, some students may need more support to be successful. Because of this, schools plan for and are ready to provide additional supports, based on what students need, when they need it.



The term **Tier 1** refers to what is provided to all students, and is what every student in a classroom, grade level, or course is taught during the school day. For example, the instruction that is taught to all 4th graders, or the instruction that is taught to all students in Algebra 1, is considered “Tier 1”. Schools design and plan high-quality Tier 1, with the expectation that it will be what all students need in order to demonstrate mastery of grade-level expectations.

Even when provided effective Tier 1 instruction, some students will need additional support to master grade level standards. This additional support is known as “Tier 2” and “Tier 3” intervention. Ideally, when Tier 1 instruction meets the needs of most students, only some students will need Tier 2 intervention, and even fewer will need Tier 3 intervention in order to meet grade-level expectations. If your child is currently receiving tiered interventions, it simply means that additional help is needed for them to gain the knowledge or skills being taught.



**Tier 2** interventions are typically organized by a skill area and delivered to small groups of students with progress monitored over time. Tier 2 supports are always provided in addition to Tier 1, and for as long as necessary for students to get and remain on track toward mastery of grade-level expectations.



**Tier 3** interventions are the most intensive level of tiered supports and in most cases are provided when effective Tier 1 and Tier 2 aren’t enough for a student to master grade-level expectations. These supports are designed for individual students and are often based on results of additional assessments that identify specific skill strengths and weaknesses.

While the intent of tiered supports is to enable students to be successful, school teams may determine that a child needs the additional support of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) to meet grade-level expectations. Students eligible for ESE receive their specially designed instruction through, and as a part of, this same tiered instructional system. ESE services are not separate, nor are they “in addition to” tiered supports.

## How does the school decide what my child needs?

Schools engage in data-based problem solving to ensure that instruction and intervention support are matched to student need. This involves school or teacher teams using data to identify problem areas, determine why those problems exist, develop and implement an instruction or intervention plan, and then monitor student progress to see if students are improving or if additional adjustments are needed. Data used for problem solving come from a variety of sources (e.g., FAST, attendance, office discipline referrals, diagnostic assessments). Data-based problem solving is used to identify needed supports for large groups (Tier 1), small groups (Tier 2), and individual students (Tier 3).

## What is my role?

Families play a critical role in a child's education. When schools and families collaborate to support student learning, student outcomes are improved. Whether your child is meeting grade-level expectations, working on an accelerated curriculum, or receiving additional support, understanding MTSS in your child's school is beneficial.

### *What does MTSS look like for me and my child?*

Although MTSS will look different from school to school, there are common elements that you will likely see across all schools. They include:

- Regular communication about your child's progress in school
- Information about how you can help support your child's learning at home
- Notification if your child needs additional supports, including why those supports are needed and what supports are being provided
- If your child is receiving additional supports, frequent communication about how your child's performance is improving, and what steps will be taken next

### *What questions can I ask my child's school to learn more?*

Whether talking with your child's teacher, principal or other school support personnel, a great way to learn more about MTSS in your child's school is to ask questions. Here are some potential questions to get you started:

- Is my child meeting academic and behavioral expectations? How do we know?
- If additional instruction or intervention is needed, what supports will be given to my child?
- How often will I be updated on my child's progress?
- What can I do to support my child at home?

## Resources/Additional Information

Florida Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project (<https://floridarti.usf.edu>)

A Parent's Guide to RtI – National Center for Learning Disabilities (<https://www.advocacyinstitute.org/resources/ParentRTIGuide.pdf>)

RtI Action Network – Resources for Parents and Families (<http://www.rtinetwork.org/parents-a-families>)

Florida Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports Project (<https://flpbis.cbcs.usf.edu>)

