

Special Education and MTSS

Special education and the educational framework of MTSS aimed at systematically supporting struggling students have a very long, complex relationship. RTI (or Response to Intervention) is a component of MTSS. The idea of RTI first appeared in federal law in 2004, when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized. The RTI process was introduced as an alternative means of identifying students with specific learning disabilities. The intent of the law is to ensure students found eligible as a student with a specific learning disability are not the result of deficient teaching and would benefit from more intensive supports. Over the years, the educational framework has expanded beyond the field of special education. It is now employed as a method of improving instruction and academic achievement for all students.

In the Thompson School District, the Exceptional Student Services Department (ESS) works with district and building level Student Support Teams (SST) to support students suspected of having a specific learning disability. If a school team suspects a student of having an SLD that is impacting a student's ability to access the educational environment without special education supports and services, the team needs to respond accordingly.

- Not all students need to go through the SST process. If a student is suspected of having an educational disability that is not a specific learning disability, (i.e. Other Health Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Serious Emotional Disability), the ESS team must move forward with the initial evaluation process.
- If the team suspects a student of having a specific learning disability, the SST will use the systematic process for screening, intervening and ongoing progress monitoring as needed. This is what was intended under IDEA to determine a child's response to research-based, scientific intervention.

At any point in the SST process, the IDEA entitles parents to request a formal evaluation to determine eligibility for special education. The SST process cannot be used to deny or delay a formal evaluation for special education. Additionally, SST cannot replace the need for a comprehensive evaluation.

https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/ta_sld_evaluation_eligibility