What is MTSS?

MTSS is a multi-tiered framework which promotes school improvement through engaging, research-based academic and behavioral practices. MTSS employs a systems approach using data-driven problem solving to maximize growth for all. It is "an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data" (NRCLD, 2006).

The MTSS framework is built upon the philosophy that instruction and interventions may be intensified to better meet the needs of individual students. The tiers do not represent placements or procedural steps, but rather varying levels of instructional intensity. All students receive the core instruction (Tier I). In addition to the core, some students may require more strategic (Tier II) or intensive/targeted (Tier III) levels of support in order to be successful.

It is important to remember that MTSS is a problem-solving process for addressing the academic and/or behavioral needs of students, not a procedure for getting students evaluated for special programs or services. However, should the need arise, MTSS is part of the evaluation process for special education eligibility decisions. The goal of this focused attempt is to provide meaningful and specific interventions that clearly address a student's individual needs. Our mission is to ensure that every student is provided appropriate instruction using proven research-based strategies.

What is PBIS?

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety and support improved academic outcomes. More than 22,000 U.S. schools are implementing PBIS and saving countless instructional hours otherwise lost to discipline. The premise of PBIS is that continual teaching, combined with acknowledgement or feedback of positive student behavior will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety and learning. PBIS schools apply a multi-tiered approach to prevention, using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis to develop school-wide, targeted and individualized interventions and supports to improve school climate for all students. (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports)

Accommodations, Modification and Interventions

Accommodation:

An accommodation can be made for any student, not just students with a 504 plan or an IEP. An accommodation does not alter what the student is expected to learn. An accommodation makes learning accessible to the student and allows the student to demonstrate what they know.

Accommodations are alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow children with a disability to complete the same assignments as other children. Accommodations do not alter the content of

assignments, give students an unfair advantage or in the case of assessments, change what a test measures.

Accommodations are basically physical or environmental changes, generally referred to as good teaching strategies.

- Extended time, frequent breaks, varying of activities
- Change in classroom, preferential seating, physical arrangement of the room, reducing/minimizing distractions, cooling off period
- Emphasizes varied teaching approaches (visual, auditory, multi-sensory), individual or small group, demonstrating/modeling, visual cues, use of manipulatives, pre-teaching, graphic organizers
- Highlighting material, note taking assistance, notes provided by teacher, calculator, computer, word processor, Braille, and/or large print
- Directions given in small, sequential steps, copying from book
- Positive reinforcement, concrete reinforcement, checking for understanding, study guides, before/after school tutoring • Reading test verbatim, shortening length of test, test format changed (multiple choice vs. fill in the blank)
- Allow for verbal responses

Modification:

Modifications are generally made for students with significant cognitive or physical disabilities. A modification does alter content knowledge expectations as well as assessment administration practices.

A modification is a change in the course of study, standards, test preparation, location, timing, scheduling, expectations, student response and/or other attribute which provide access for a student with a disability to participate in a course, standard or test. It does fundamentally alter or lower the standard or expectation of the course, standard or test.

Modifications are used in the classroom to meet the needs of every child's strength. Modifications involve lowering the level of materials presented.

- Presentation of curriculum is modified using a specialized curriculum which is written at a lower level of understanding.
- Materials are adapted; texts are simplified by modifying the content areas—simplifying vocabulary, concepts and principles.
- Grading is subject to different standards than general education, such as based on IEP goals.
- Assignments are changed using lower level reading levels, worksheets and simplified vocabulary.
- Testing Adaptations are used, such as lowering the reading level of the test.

Intervention:

An intervention is a specific skill-building strategy implemented and monitored to improve a targeted skill (i.e. what is actually known) and achieve adequate progress in a specific area (academic or behavioral). This often involves a changing instruction or providing additional instruction to a student in the area of learning or behavior difficulty.

Academic or behavior interventions are strategies or techniques applied to instruction in order to teach a new skill, build a fluency skill, or encourage the application of existing skills to a new situation. Interventions require a targeted assessment, planning, and date collection. Interventions should be evidence based and monitored regularly to determine growth and to inform instruction.

Interventions differ from accommodations and modifications in that they teach new skills to help students overcome specific deficits or maladaptive response patterns.

Interventions require a targeted assessment, planning, and data collection (ideally including baseline data) to be effective. Consideration is given to the nature of the problem (i.e. skill deficit versus performance deficit).

Interventions focus on the needs of the "individual" student.

Ted Gennerman, Ph.D.

What is progress monitoring?

In the context of an RTI prevention model, progress monitoring is used to assess student progress or performance in those areas in which they were identified by universal screening as being at-risk for failure (e.g., reading, mathematics, social behavior). It is the method by which teachers or other school personnel determine if students are benefiting appropriately from the typical (e.g., grade level, locally determined, etc.) instructional program, identify students who are not making adequate progress, and help guide the construction of effective intervention programs for students who are not profiting from typical instruction (Fuchs & Stecker, 2003). Although progress monitoring is typically implemented to follow the performance of individual students who are at risk for learning difficulties, it can also follow an entire classroom of students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).