

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Dallas Independent School District (ISD), the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework is used to identify students who are struggling in the areas of academics,<sup>1</sup> language,<sup>2</sup> and/or engagement.<sup>3</sup> Support for these students is provided in a tiered manner depending on the needs of each student.

- Tier 1 support is the foundation for all other supports and optimizes the likelihood that all students will achieve success in school.
- If students require additional support beyond Tier 1, they receive Tier 2 services, which include selected interventions and specialized instruction based on universal screening.<sup>4</sup>
- Students who respond favorably to Tier 2 services are returned to Tier 1. Students who do not respond favorably receive Tier 3 services (i.e., more intensive, frequent, and individualized interventions).
- Students who continue to struggle in Tier 3 are referred by the campus Student Support Team (SST) for specialized services outside MTSS.

Beginning in 2019-20, the Dallas ISD began using the *Measures of Academic Progress Growth (MAP)* reading and mathematics assessments as universal screeners to measure academic achievement and growth over time. Beginning in 2020-21, these nationally normed, standardized computer adaptive<sup>5</sup> achievement tests were administered at the beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year (BOY, MOY, and EOY, respectively) to students in grades one to 11.<sup>6</sup> The *MAP* assessments are used by MTSS to strengthen Tier 1 instruction and were partial determinants of which tier of support each student receives.<sup>7</sup> Specific interventions provided to each student are aligned with individual *MAP* data. Progress monitoring is also used to inform SST decisions about whether to move the student to a higher or lower tier.

<sup>1</sup> Academics include issues related to reading and mathematics.

<sup>2</sup> Language includes issues related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing across all content areas.

<sup>3</sup> Engagement includes issues related to academic disengagement, aggression, attendance, bullying, disruption to the classroom environment, and personally destructive behavior.

<sup>4</sup> Universal screening is the process of assessing all students to identify those who exhibit lower than expected academic outcomes.

<sup>5</sup> The difficulty of each question is determined by how students perform on previous questions. Answering correctly leads to more difficult questions, whereas answering incorrectly leads to easier questions.

During the 2021-22 school year, the administration of the Dallas ISD MTSS framework was supported by one program director, three coordinators and one data analyst.<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the MTSS framework with respect to funding, context, professional development (PD), perceptions of campus-based staff members, characteristics of students served by the program, and *MAP* outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

The 2021-22 budget for the MTSS program totaled \$577,626 in Title II funding, the same amount as in 2020-21 (Barton, 2021).

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

### What MTSS-related training was provided to Dallas ISD staff members in 2021-22?

Between September 13, 2021 and June 30, 2022, 1,222 Dallas ISD staff members attended one or more MTSS-related trainings.

The most frequently attended sessions were related to *MAP Growth* (25 sessions; 456 participants), and 610 participants completed at least one of the self-paced online sessions related to the MTSS framework or *MAP*.

### What were Dallas ISD campus-based staff member perceptions regarding the procedures, training, and support from the MTSS department in 2021-22?

The 2021-22 MTSS Feedback Survey (19 items) was administered from March 1 through March 25, 2022 to district staff members who had participated in at least one MTSS-related training during the 2021-22 school year ( $N = 1,027$ ; 39% response rate).

The purpose of the survey was to solicit respondents' feedback regarding their (a) MTSS knowledge, (b) implementation of MTSS, (c) usefulness of MTSS

<sup>6</sup> In 2019-20 *MAP* was not given at EOY because of the COVID-19 pandemic. *MAP* was not administered to grade one students until 2020-21.

<sup>7</sup> Other factors used to determine tier placement include existing assessments (i.e., Demonstrations of Learning, *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness*, *Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System*, Dallas ISD's *Assessments of Course Performance*, teacher created assignments, etc.) and teacher observations. Campus personnel, not central staff members, are responsible for tier assignment.

<sup>8</sup> A detailed description of the MTSS program staff members is available in the full report (Kim, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> A detailed methodology is available in the full report (Kim, 2022).

training, (d) perceptions about MTSS implementation on their campus, and (e) perceptions about the PowerSchool.

- Teachers accounted for 43 percent of respondents and the highest percentage of respondents (60%) reported participating in one or two MTSS training sessions in 2021-22.
- In addition to MTSS training, respondents most often indicated that they learned more about the MTSS framework from the Dallas ISD MTSS website and speaking with colleagues who received MTSS training.

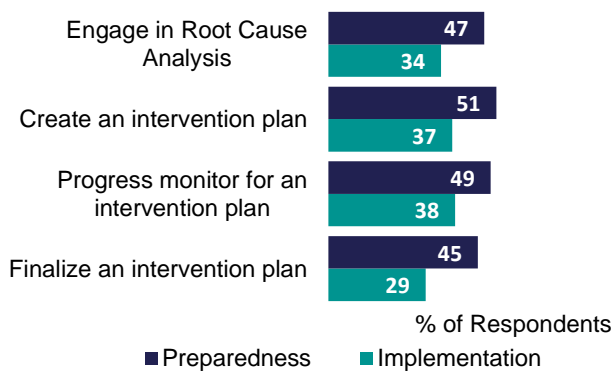
### MTSS Knowledge

- More than half of respondents reported having a moderate or great amount of knowledge about the purpose of MTSS and using *MAP* as a universal screener.
- However, less than half of respondents reported a moderate or great amount of knowledge of academic, engagement, and language interventions.

### Implementation of MTSS

- Sixty five percent of training participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they understood how to effectively implement the MTSS framework to support students who struggle academically, therefore, the workscope goal of 80 percent was not met.
- The highest percentage of respondents reported they used academic interventions often or very often (27%) compared to language (18%) and engagement (14%) interventions.
- While roughly half of respondents reported that support from the MTSS department prepared them well or very well, fewer (29% to 38%) reported implementing MTSS at least often (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Preparedness to Implement and Frequency of Implementation of Four MTSS Framework Elements**



Source: 2021-22 MTSS Feedback Survey.  
 Note: N = 366. Preparedness responses include ratings of Well and Very Well. Implementation responses include ratings of Often and Very Often. Excludes responses indicating that the questions are not applicable.

### Usefulness of MTSS Training

- Overall, feedback on the usefulness of MTSS-related training sessions were more positive for those who attended two or more sessions (49% to 60%) compared to those who attended only one session (28% to 32%).
- When asked what improvements could be made to support they received from the MTSS department (N = 97), the most common themes were the desire for (a) additional MTSS trainings throughout the year, (b) the need for user-friendliness of the system, and (c) on-site support and trainings.

### Perceptions about MTSS Implementation

- Forty-one percent of respondents indicated that they thought MTSS was implemented moderately or very effectively on their campuses in 2021-22.
- Of the 78 participants who suggested ways to improve the implementation of MTSS on their campus, almost a third of these respondents indicated a need for (a) more training on their campus and (b) more robust and explicit guidelines about implementing MTSS.

### Perceptions about the PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module

- Approximately half of survey respondents who reportedly used PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module reported that they were moderately or very satisfied with (a) its user-friendliness and (b) the amount of time required to use the module efficiently.
- When asked to describe how the PowerSchool module had been helpful (N = 65), the most common theme was PowerSchool’s usefulness in tracking, documenting, and monitoring student progress (28%).
- Respondents were also asked to describe how the PowerSchool module can be improved (N = 69). The most frequently articulated theme was that they needed more trainings, practical guidance, and support (35%), followed closely by the desire for the module to be more user-friendly.

### Which Dallas ISD students were served by the MTSS program in 2021-22?

#### Districtwide Use of *MAP* Assessments

- In 2021-22, between 59 percent (grade 11 at EOY) and 93 percent (grade 6 at BOY) of students were tested on the *MAP* assessment for reading.
- In 2021-22, between 53 percent (grade 11 at EOY) and 94 percent (grades 2 through 5 at BOY) of students were tested on the *MAP* assessment for mathematics.

## Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions

The number of Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic intervention plans<sup>10</sup> by subject can be found in Table 1.

- In 2021-22, 11,451 Tier 2 intervention plans were created in the PowerSchool, and of these, 5,328 plans (47%) were at least partially implemented and monitored<sup>11</sup> for 4,142 students.
- In 2021-22, 1,908 Tier 3 intervention plans were created in PowerSchool, and 771 Tier 3 intervention plans (40%) were at least partially implemented and monitored for 683 students.
- From 2020-21 to 2021-22, the number of students assigned Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention plans increased.
- Consistent with 2020-21, a greater proportion of plans focused on reading than mathematics at both tiers.

**Table 1: 2020-21 to 2021-22 Dallas ISD Tier 2 and Tier 3 Academic Intervention Plans by Subject**

Tier	Total N	Reading		Mathematics	
		n	%	n	%
<b>2021-22</b>					
Tier 2	4,142	2,996	62.1	1,826	37.9
Tier 3	683	694	94.7	39	5.3
<b>2020-21</b>					
Tier 2	3,633	2,918	72.6	1,099	27.4
Tier 3	91	77	82.8	16	17.2
<b>2020-21 to 2021-22 Change</b>					
Tier 2	509	78	-10.5	727	10.5
Tier 3	592	617	11.9	23	-11.9

Source: PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module database, 07/11/22.

Note: Data represent the number of plans. Because students could have multiple plans, students could be represented in multiple cells.

Tier 2 included more Hispanic ( $n = 3,017$ ) than African American ( $n = 937$ ) and White ( $n = 73$ ) students. Tier 3 included more African American students ( $n = 487$ ) than any other racial groups.

Compared to districtwide demographics (71% Hispanic and 21% African American), proportionally fewer Hispanics students (73% Tier 2 and 26% Tier 3) and proportionally more African American students (23% Tier 2 and 71% Tier 3) received a tier plan overall.

Most students with an intervention plan only had one plan (Tier 2: 66%; Tier 3: 89%). Over the past two years, the number of students with one plan decreased while students with two plans increased for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

<sup>10</sup> Tier was defined as the highest tier attained by a student during the entire year for a subject, regardless of how long or how many times the student remained at any one tier.

<sup>11</sup> An intervention plan was considered at least partially implemented and monitored if the student completed the assessment chosen by the teacher for the intervention at least once.

Finally, 13 percent of classroom teachers had progress monitored intervention plans in the MTSS Intervention Module. Thus, the workscope goal of 75 percent was not met.<sup>12</sup>

## What was the relationship between MAP assessment scores and MTSS implementation in 2021-22?<sup>13</sup>

*Because of smaller numbers of Tier 2 and Tier 3 students compared to Tier 1 students, results in this section should be viewed with caution.*

### RIT Scores

For English and mathematics, the mean RIT scores for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students were lower than Tier 1 students at each MAP administration window. However, Tier 2 and Tier 3 students experienced more gains from BOY to EOY.

- Tier 1 students: +4 to +7 points for English reading and +7 to +10 points for mathematics from BOY to EOY.
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 students: +8 to +15 points for English reading and +10 to +15 points for mathematics from BOY to EOY.

For Spanish reading, the mean RIT scores for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students were generally higher than Tier 1 students at each MAP administration window. Tier 2 and Tier 3 students experienced either the same or slightly lower gains than Tier 1 students.

- Tier 1 students: +5 to +15 points for Spanish reading from BOY to EOY.
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 students: +5 to +10 points for Spanish reading from BOY to EOY.

### CGP Scores

Overall, students with the greatest needs (i.e., Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in lowest performing achievement quintiles) tended to benefit from the additional tiered support from the MTSS program.

- For English reading, Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in the low or low average achievement quintiles 'exceeded'<sup>14</sup> MAP targets at a higher rate (44% and 41%, respectively) than Tier 1 students (35% and 31%, respectively) from BOY to EOY.
- For mathematics, Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in the low or low average achievement quintiles 'exceeded' MAP targets at a similar or slightly higher rate (37% and 44%, respectively) from BOY to EOY.

<sup>12</sup> The total number of classroom teachers includes teachers with a valid employee identification number in the 2021-22 district course files.

<sup>13</sup> Detailed methodology is available in the full report (Kim, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> "Exceeded" includes students who achieved high average or high growth on MAP Growth assessment.

respectively) than Tier 1 students (38% and 37%, respectively) from BOY to EOY.

## RIT Score Thresholds

The percentage of Tier 2 and Tier 3 students who met the threshold increased from 40 percent at BOY to 44 percent at EOY, whereas the percentage of Tier 1 students slightly decreased from BOY (62%) to EOY (60%). Over the past two years, the rate of students who met the threshold has decreased, especially at MOY.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Continue to support teachers in implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.** Less than half of plans created in the PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module were at least partially implemented and monitored by 13 percent of total classroom teachers. This is aligned with survey responses that indicated 29 to 38 percent of respondents reported implementing MTSS elements often or very often. Also, some survey respondents reported that they need additional MTSS trainings throughout the year with practical guidelines and user-friendly system. Therefore, MTSS program staff members should continue their efforts to support teachers in improving their knowledge and level of competence in implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

**Continue to improve consistency in MAP Growth implementation.** Although the Dallas ISD has committed to using *MAP Growth* as universal screeners for reading and mathematics, the percentage of students screened in the third year of implementation rarely exceeded 90 percent for any grade or either subject at MOY or EOY assessment windows. On average, the percentage of students tested also tended to decrease as grade level increased. While these percentages increased from 2020-21 especially for BOY and EOY administrations, stakeholders should continue to work to improve communication and training with respect to *MAP Growth* administration to continually improve the process.

**Continue monitoring MAP Growth progress among Tier 2 and Tier 3 students.** In 2021-22, Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in the two lowest performing achievement quintiles at BOY experienced either similar growth (<5% difference) or higher growth from BOY to EOY in English reading and mathematics than Tier 1 students in the same achievement quintiles. For English reading, Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in

the low, low average, and average achievement quintile 'exceeded' *MAP* targets from BOY to EOY at a higher rate compared to Tier 1 students. These results indicate that students with the greatest needs (i.e., Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in lowest performing achievement quintiles) benefited from the additional tiered support from the MTSS program, as measured by *MAP Growth* scores, compared to their Tier 1 peers. Stakeholders should continue to improve assessment processes and necessary assignment of Tier 2 and Tier 3 plans to ensure at-risk students receive the additional support they need.

**Improve frequency and content of MTSS training.** Survey respondents expressed the need for additional MTSS trainings throughout the year, on-site supports, and robust and explicit guidelines about implementing the MTSS system. Because participants who had completed two or more trainings rated the usefulness of MTSS training sessions higher (compared to those who attended only one session), it is likely that participants viewed the content as more useful as exposure to the content increased beyond a single training session. MTSS program staff members should continue to reach out stakeholders to determine the topics and resources that would be most beneficial and offer additional training opportunities, including on-site trainings.

**Improve ease and understanding of MTSS implementation.** Consistent with last year's survey responses, respondents expressed concerns about the user-friendliness of MTSS tools and lack of adequate practical guidance and supports. To improve the learning experience, stakeholders may benefit from (a) receiving more trainings throughout the year, (b) having additional opportunities to practice using the MTSS platform, (c) having access to additional resources at trainings (e.g., exemplar intervention plans), and (d) having access to more on-site support from MTSS experts or central staff members. This could provide teachers with clear guidance and feedback as interventions are implemented throughout the school year.

## REFERENCES

Kim, J. G. (2022). 2021-22 Evaluation of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

The complete list of references can be found in the full report (Kim, 2022).

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