

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,¹ language,² and/or engagement.³ 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.⁴
- 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 adaptive⁵ achievement tests were administered at the beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year (BOY, MOY, and EOY, respectively) to students in grades one to nine.⁶ The MAP assessments are used by MTSS to strengthen Tier 1 instruction and were partial determinants of which tier of support each student receives.⁷ Specific interventions provided to each student are aligned with individual MAP data. Progress monitoring is also used to inform SST decisions about whether to provide more or less intensive tier interventions.

The purpose of this evaluation is to examine the nature of the MTSS framework in 2022-23, including implementation, professional development (PD) sessions, perceptions of campus-based staff members, characteristics of students served by the program, and student assessment outcomes in relation to MTSS implementation. The evaluation also examines relevant Title II workscope goals.⁸

The 2022-23 budget for the MTSS program totaled \$577,626 in Title II funding, the same amount as in 2021-22 (Kim, 2022).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

How was MTSS implemented in 2022-23?

During the 2022-23 school year, the administration of the Dallas ISD MTSS framework was supported by one program director, two coordinators, and one data analyst.⁹ Under the leadership of the program director, the coordinators and data analyst supported campus staff members through year-round virtual and in-person PD activities, management of PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module, development of intervention resources, and providing guidance and resources.

The MTSS department also worked with Racial Equity Office to serve students with reading difficulties using 32 reading interventionists.¹⁰

The MTSS program staff members and four lead reading interventionists were invited to complete a survey that included open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of the implementation of MTSS in 2022-23.

- The respondents described the MTSS department as highly collaborative, always seeking to enhance capacity around MTSS and its essential components while remaining flexible and adaptable to meet the district's needs.

¹ Academics include issues related to reading and mathematics.

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

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

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

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ A detailed methodology is available in the full report (Kim, 2023).

⁹ A detailed description of the MTSS program staff members is available in the full report (Kim, 2023).

¹⁰ More details regarding the impact of MTSS reading interventions can be found in Kim (2023).

- Few challenges discussed by respondents were related to the user-friendliness of the PowerSchool platform and the need for additional support and accountability from school leadership. Suggestions to enhance student success included investing in a versatile platform, fostering a data-driven culture among teachers, and ensuring accountability at each campus.

Year-Round Virtual and In-Person PD Activities

Between July 19, 2022 and June 1, 2023, 2,661 Dallas ISD staff members attended one or more MTSS-related trainings.

The most frequently attended sessions were related to *MAP Growth* and *MAP Reading Fluency* and 467 participants completed at least one of the self-paced online sessions related to the MTSS framework or *MAP*.

What were Dallas ISD staff member perceptions regarding the procedures, training, and support from the MTSS Department in 2022-23?

From February 27 through March 24, 2023, the 2022-23 MTSS Feedback Survey (20 items) was sent out to 2,100 district staff members who had participated in at least one MTSS-related training during the 2022-23 school year. A total of 551 (26%) provided at least partial responses. In addition, the MTSS staff members sent out an anonymous survey link to potential respondents to increase the number of respondents, resulting in 33 individuals at least partially completing the survey ($N = 584$).

- Teachers accounted for 72 percent of respondents, and the highest percentage of respondents (56%) reported participating in one or two MTSS training sessions in 2022-23.
- 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

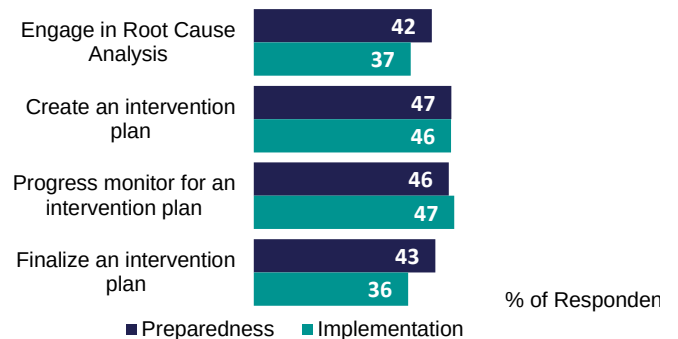
- More than half of respondents reported having a moderate or great amount of knowledge about the purpose of MTSS (56%) and using *MAP* as a universal screener (55%).
- However, less than half of respondents reported a moderate or great amount of knowledge of academic, engagement, and language interventions (43%).

Implementation of MTSS

- Sixty seven percent of training participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they are proficient with implementing 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 (37%) followed by engagement (26%) and language (23%).
- While 42 to 47 percent of respondents reported that support from the MTSS department prepared them (well or very well) to implement various elements of MTSS, comparatively fewer respondents reported that they implemented these elements often or very often except for progress monitor for an intervention plan (Figure 1).

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



Source: 2022-23 MTSS Feedback Survey.

Note: 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. Excludes responses indicating that the questions are not applicable; therefore, N s vary by survey item. N s per survey item are provided in the full report (Kim, 2023).

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 (67% to 68%) compared to those who attended only one session (36% to 43%).
- When asked what improvements could be made to support they received from the MTSS department ($N = 134$), the most common themes were the desire for (a) proper MTSS trainings, (b) the need for direct support, and (c) more ongoing and frequent trainings.

Perceptions about MTSS Implementation

- Forty five percent of respondents indicated that they thought MTSS was implemented moderately or very effectively on their campuses in 2022-23.
- Of the 134 participants who suggested ways to improve the implementation of MTSS on their campus, more than a third of these respondents indicated a need for more in-person trainings on their campus and support for teachers, administrators, and counselors on how to use the MTSS tool effectively and consistently.

Perceptions about the PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module

- Less than half of survey respondents who reportedly used PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module reported that they were moderately or very satisfied with (a) its user-friendliness (45%) and (b) the amount of time required to use the module efficiently (42%).
- When asked to describe how the PowerSchool module had been helpful ($N = 102$), the most common theme was that the module was a valuable resource for knowledge enhancement, structure, and support in meeting students' diverse needs (21%).
- Respondents were also asked to describe how the PowerSchool module can be improved ($N = 78$). The most frequently articulated theme was that they needed more comprehensive training along with clear instructions and ongoing support to enhance usability and effectiveness of the PowerSchool module (34%).

Which Dallas ISD students were served by the MTSS program in 2022-23?

Districtwide Use of MAP Assessments

- In 2022-23, between 62 percent (grade 9 at EOY) and 92 percent (grade 8 at BOY) of students were tested on the MAP assessment for reading.
- In 2022-23, between 60 percent (grade 9 at EOY) and 95 percent (grades 4 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 plans¹¹ by subject can be found in Table 1.

- In 2022-23, 19,064 Tier 2 intervention plans were created in the PowerSchool, and of these, 8,064 plans (42%) were at least partially implemented and monitored¹² for 5,722 students.
- In 2022-23, 2,325 Tier 3 intervention plans were created in PowerSchool, and 1,245 Tier 3 intervention plans (54%) were at least partially implemented and monitored for 1,049 students.
- From 2021-22 to 2022-23, the number of students assigned with Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention plans increased.
- Consistent with 2021-22, a greater proportion of plans focused on reading than mathematics at both tiers.

Table 1: 2021-22 to 2022-23 Dallas ISD Tier 2 and Tier 3 Academic Intervention Plans by Subject

	Total	Reading		Mathematics	
Tier	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
2022-23					
Tier 2	7,481	4,769	63.7	2,712	36.3
Tier 3	1,049	901	93.0	68	7.0
2021-22					
Tier 2	4,142	2,996	62.1	1,826	37.9
Tier 3	683	694	94.7	39	5.3
2021-22 to 2022-23 Change					
Tier 2	3,339	1,773	1.6	886	-1.6
Tier 3	366	207	-1.7	29	1.7

Source: PowerSchool MTSS Intervention Module database, 08/16/23.
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 ($n = 4,026$) than African American ($n = 1,364$) and White ($n = 150$) students. Tier 3 included more African American students ($n = 736$) than any other racial groups.

Compared to districtwide demographics (71% Hispanic and 20% African American), proportionally fewer Hispanics students (70% Tier 2 and 26% Tier 3) and proportionally more African American students (24% Tier 2 and 70% Tier 3) received a tier plan overall.

Most students with an intervention plan only had one plan (Tier 2: 62%; Tier 3: 89%). Over the past two years, there has been a decline in the rate of students who had only one plan, whereas the rate of students who had multiple plans had increased for Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Finally, 32 percent of classroom teachers had progress monitored intervention plans in the MTSS Intervention Module. Thus, the workscope goal of 45 percent was not met.¹³

What was the relationship between MAP Growth assessment scores and MTSS implementation in 2022-23?¹⁴

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.

¹¹ 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.
¹² 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.

¹³ The total number of classroom teachers includes teachers with a valid employee identification number in the 2022-23 district course files.
¹⁴ Detailed methodology is available in the full report (Kim, 2023).

- Tier 1 students: +4 to +6 points for English reading and +8 to +10 points for mathematics from BOY to EOY.
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 students: +5 to +10 points for English reading and +8 to +11 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 lower gains than Tier 1 students except for students in the low achievement quintile.

- Tier 1 students: +6 to +15 points for Spanish reading from BOY to EOY.
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 students: +7 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'¹⁵ MAP targets at a higher rate (48% and 35%, respectively) than Tier 1 students (33% 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 (44% and 46%, respectively) than Tier 1 students (40% and 41%, respectively) from BOY to EOY.

RIT Score Thresholds

The percentage of Tier 2 and Tier 3 students who met the threshold increased from 43 percent at BOY to 48 percent at EOY, whereas the percentage of Tier 1 students remained nearly unchanged from BOY to EOY. Over the past two years, the rate of students who met the threshold has increased across all assessment windows.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to provide robust support to teachers in implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. Despite increased creation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 plans in the PowerSchool Module, reported implementation and monitoring rates were still low. Feedback underscored the need for ongoing practical MTSS training with a user-friendly approach. Thus, MTSS program staff members should provide training with particular focus on implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and monitoring.

Continue monitoring MAP Growth progress among Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in the lowest performing achievement quintiles showed comparable or even greater growth in English reading and mathematics from BOY to EOY compared to Tier 1 students in the same quintiles. Stakeholders should refine the assignment of Tier 2 and Tier 3 plans to ensure that an increasing number of students facing academic challenges receive the essential additional support and benefit from the interventions.

Enhance the frequency of comprehensive on-campus training. Providing regular training sessions addressing different aspects of MTSS will improve confidence and implementation. Additionally, stakeholders could benefit from more opportunities for hands-on experience with the MTSS platform, access to additional resources during training, and increased availability of on-site support from MTSS staff members. Offering comprehensive trainings that guide users through the PowerSchool module's functionalities will improve ease and understanding of MTSS implementation.

REFERENCES

Kim, J. G. (2023). 2022-23 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, 2023).

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¹⁵ "Exceeded" includes students who achieved high average or high growth on MAP Growth assessment.