



The Ewing Public Schools
Response to Intervention (RTI) and
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Plan

2024 – 2028

The Ewing Public Schools (ETPS)

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Introduction to Response to Intervention (RTI) and a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an instructional framework designed to identify and support students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. At its core, RTI is a data-driven, problem-solving process that provides targeted interventions matched to student needs and monitors progress over time. MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) is a broader framework that encompasses both academic and non-academic supports, such as behavior, social-emotional learning, and attendance or absenteeism. In short, RTI is an academic support framework and MTSS is the comprehensive umbrella that includes RTI plus behavioral, social, and emotional supports.

RTI begins with high-quality, research-based instruction in the general education setting provided by the general education teacher. The curriculum is aligned to grade-level standards and performance indicators. In an RTI process, a student who is struggling receives additional instructional support by matching instruction to his/her/their individual needs through a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). Each tier provides instruction with increased intensity such as small groups or instructional time focused on the development of a specific skill or standard. The focus is on targeted interventions directed to the need of the individual student rather than broad based instruction.

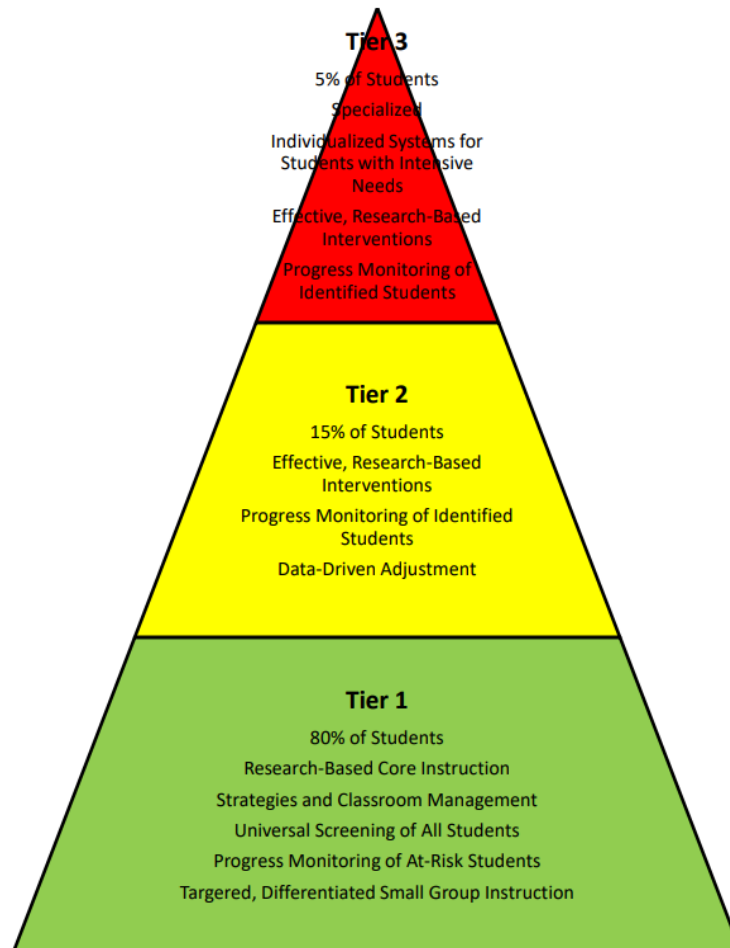


Figure 1 – Three-Tiered Support System

Student intervention outcomes drive instructional decision-making at every tier of the model. Systematic, data-based decision-making or problem-solving is used to decide not only what interventions to try, but whether the implemented strategies are working for the student. RTI systems combine universal screening, progress monitoring, and high-quality instruction for all students, with interventions targeted for students who struggle. A student who is showing growth and progress through the application of interventions may have those interventions adjusted or adapted; data are consistently collected and flexibility in grouping is essential.

Informed by federal legislation including the No Child Behind Act (NCLB) 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004, the New Jersey Department of Education provided guidance for districts to adopt a New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS), “a framework compiled of core components for multi-tiered academic and behavioral supports designed to promote student achievement and success and response to intervention (RTI)” ([NJTSS Implementation Guidelines, 2019](#)). A graphic representation of the nine essential components of NJTSS are highlighted in Figure 2.

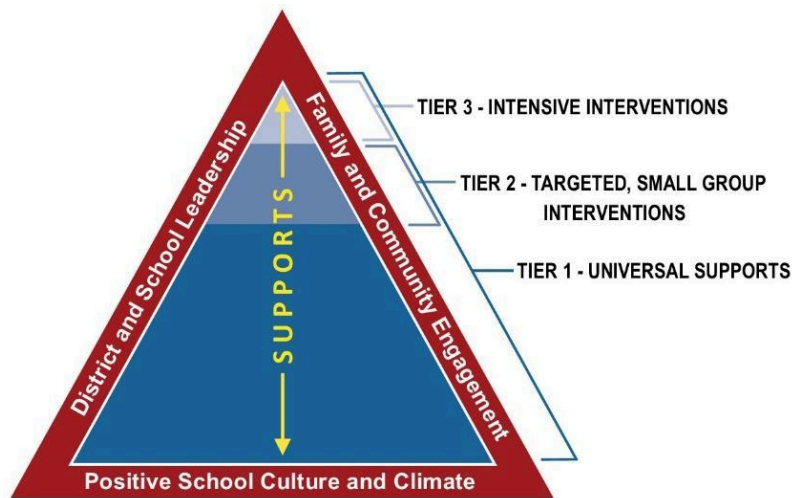


Figure 2 – New Jersey Tiered System of Supports

Academic Support within The Ewing Public Schools

The three-tiered system of supports outlined within the NJTSS served as guidance for the development of The Ewing Public Schools multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). This tiered prevention system addresses a continuum of student needs through three tiers of prevention and support:

- Tier 1: Core universal instruction for all students within the general education classroom
- Tier 2: Core instruction plus additional targeted intervention within a small group setting
- Tier 3: Core instruction plus customized intervention delivered using small group or one-on-one targeted instruction

Tier 1 Academic Support

Tier 1 instruction within The Ewing Public Schools includes a literacy block of 120-minutes at the elementary level and nearly 130-minutes at the middle and high school levels. Within this instructional block, time is provided for direct instruction aligned with best practices in literacy instruction, application of key concepts, independent practice, and small group differentiated learning. For mathematics,

elementary school students engage in a 60-minute math period and a 30-minute WIN (What I Need) period where differentiated, small group math instruction occurs. Middle school and high school students engage in a math block of nearly 130-minutes as well.

To support each student's social-emotional wellbeing, elementary students participate in a 30-minute Morning Meeting, which allows for students and teachers to work together to develop a safe classroom community of respect and rapport. Elementary and middle school students are supported through a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program, and Ewing High School's Student Government programs promote a healthy and positive school culture.

Within every K-5 general education classroom, students take grade level benchmark assessments at least three times each school year (fall, winter, spring) in the areas of reading and mathematics. After each assessment window, classroom teachers analyze data to evaluate each student's areas of strength and areas in need of growth or development. Additional universal screening assessments are then administered to students performing at the bottom 25% of each grade level to gather additional information, including the following:

- Reading accuracy (letter knowledge, phonics, and phonemic awareness);
- Reading fluency and word recognition;
- Reading comprehension;
- Mathematical accuracy (counting, number identification, writing numbers, and knowledge of math facts);
- Fact fluency; and
- Problem solving (application of accuracy and fluency, story problem, using number lines, fractions, and remainders).

Using these multiple data points, students in need of additional support in reading and/or mathematics are identified and are scheduled to work with the district's Early Intervention Specialist (EIS) teachers for Tier 2 support.

Tier 2 Academic Support

Students working below grade level and demonstrating a need of foundational skill development using the district's benchmark and universal screener assessments will meet with an Early Intervention Specialist for targeted, small group instruction 3-5 times per week, 30-minutes per session; this targeted intervention will be in addition to Tier 1 instruction. EIS teachers will use research-based best practices and evidence-based interventions to support each student and help him/her/them develop in the identified area in need of growth and development.

Each student's rate of improvement will be determined through ongoing progress monitoring. In the [New Jersey Tiered System of Supports \(NJTSS\) Implementation Guidelines](#), the NJDOE describes this process. "Progress monitoring is used for students receiving Tier 2 or 3 support to determine students' response to intervention. Each student's progress is determined by administering multiple forms of the same assessment at intervals frequent enough to make decisions about the impact of intervention, e.g., weekly" (27). For additional information regarding progress monitoring, [see the Progress Monitoring section of this document](#).

EIS teachers will identify a specific foundational skill or area in need of development, provide targeted, small group instruction to develop that skill, and progress monitor the student's ability to apply that skill to reading or mathematical thinking to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. A student who

demonstrates growth or mastery of that targeted skill may have his/her/their intervention or tier adjusted, and a student who continues to struggle with the same skill over time may receive more intense intervention supports.

Tier 3 Academic Support

Tier 3 intervention is designed for those students who demonstrate insufficient progress in Tier 2; it is reserved for approximately 3-5% of students who will receive more intensive instruction in addition to their core instruction. This tier provides greater individualized instruction in a small group or one-on-one setting, and differs from Tier 2 in terms of frequency of service, duration, group size, frequency of progress monitoring, and/or focus.

Within The Ewing Public Schools, a student receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions will also be referred to the I&RS Team for the development of an Intervention Plan.

Elements	Tier 1 Core Curriculum and Instruction	Tier 2 Supplemental Instruction	Tier 3 Intensive Instruction
Who	All students (100%)	Students needing supplemental supports, e.g., targeted small group instruction, in addition to core instruction (10-15%)	Students needing intensive supports, e.g., one-on-one targeted instruction, in addition to core instruction (3-5%)
Frequency of Delivery	Instruction is daily, with differentiated small group instruction 2-3 times per week	In addition to core instruction, a Tier 2 small group intervention will occur for 30-minutes, 3-5 times per week	In addition to core instruction, a Tier 3 individualized intervention will occur for 30-minutes, 3-5 times per week
Assessments Used	Benchmarks and universal screenings: iReady, district-created benchmarks, Foundations	Benchmarks, universal screenings, and progress monitoring biweekly: iReady, Foundations, SPIRE, CBM	Benchmarks, universal screenings, and progress monitoring weekly: iReady, Foundations, SPIRE, CBM
Implementation	Ongoing	EIS support, with cycles of 6-8 weeks, including at least 6 data points	EIS support, with cycles of 6-8 weeks, including an additional 6+ data points

Progress Monitoring and Academic Interventions

Progress monitoring is the practice of assessing student performance on a repeated basis to determine how well a student is responding to instruction. Data obtained from progress monitoring helps staff determine the extent to which students are benefiting from classroom instruction and informs decisions about appropriate levels of intervention. The data can be plotted on graphs and used to decide if students are progressing. Progress monitoring is the shared responsibility of the classroom teacher and the EIS teacher who is providing the Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention.

There are different uses of data from progress monitoring within the different tiers of intervention.

Data from Tier 1 inform decision-making about classroom instruction in the following ways:

- Once a student has been initially identified as at-risk by benchmarking and screening procedures, progress monitoring can be used to determine the student’s progress in the core curriculum and confirm or refute initial screening results.

- Analysis of the average performance of all students combined and his/her/their rate of growth can assist teachers and administrators in determining the need for curricular and instructional accommodations or modifications within the core curriculum.
- Tier I academic interventions may include the following:
 - High-quality, evidence-based instruction aligned to grade-level standards.
 - Clear modeling of expectations and application of learning strategies (think-alouds).
 - Use of visual aids, anchor charts, graphic organizers, and manipulatives (counters, base-ten blocks, fraction strips, number lines) to support understanding.
 - Pre-teaching and reinforcing key vocabulary.
 - Frequent checks for understanding and questioning strategies, including the use of highlighters or diagrams to assist with story problems in math.
 - Whole-group read-alouds with discussion and comprehension checks.
 - Differentiated text levels within classroom libraries and for independent, content-based learning.
 - Opportunities for partner reading, choral reading, or echo reading, as well as opportunities for math discourse (turn-and-talk, group problem solving).
 - Access to audiobooks or text-to-speech tools for grade-level materials.
 - Integration of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in daily lessons.

The primary purpose of progress monitoring in Tier 2 and beyond involves determining whether the intervention is successful in helping the student catch up to grade level expectations. Data from progress monitoring in Tier 2 and 3 inform decision-making regarding individual student's responsiveness or lack of responsiveness in the following ways:

- Learning rate, or student growth in achievement or behavior competencies over time, compared to prior levels of performance and peer growth rates; and
- Level of performance, or the student's relative standing on some dimension of achievement/performance, compared to expected performance (NASDSE, May 2006).
- Tier 2 and tier 3 academic interventions may include the following:
 - Small group (Tier 2) or individual (Tier 3) guided reading or focused math instruction at a students' instructional level (3–5 times per week).
 - Targeted intervention in specific skill areas (e.g., decoding, fluency, comprehension, problem-solving).
 - Increased opportunities for repeated reading, reading fluency, and math fact fluency practice.
 - Step-by-step problem-solving organizers or frameworks with heavy scaffolding and modeling.
 - Highlighting, annotation, or color-coding materials to assist with learning and comprehension.
 - Use of multisensory techniques for learning (e.g., tapping, tracing, sand writing, utilizing manipulatives).
 - Pre-teaching and re-teaching key content-specific concepts and vocabulary.
 - More explicit phonics instruction with additional practice opportunities, including possible Orton-Gillingham-based strategies for Tier 3 reading support.
 - Use of sentence frames, graphic organizers, or structured response supports for comprehension questions.
 - Strategic pairing with partners (peer-assisted learning).

- Break down multi-step problems or probes into smaller, manageable chunks.
- Modified assignments (fewer problems, target skill focus).
- Progress monitoring weekly or biweekly to assess growth and adjust instruction.

Data from progress monitoring should be used to inform student movement through tiers. For example, progress monitoring data obtained during the course of Tier 2 intervention should be analyzed for level of performance and growth status. If student data reflect performance at or above benchmark, the student may return to Tier 1. If the student is performing below benchmark, but is making sufficient growth progress, the decision to continue Tier 2 intervention may be made. If the student is performing below benchmark and demonstrates little growth, a change in the Tier 2 intervention or movement to a Tier 3 intervention may be considered.

When monitoring the progress of multilingual students (MLs), “the expected rate of progress takes into account...linguistic...considerations such as the student’s [native and second] language proficiency, stage of second language acquisition, [and] type of language instruction. The student’s progress [is compared with] levels demonstrated by peers from comparable cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds who have received the intervention” (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008).

Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS)

I&RS is a school-based program designed to provide coordinated services and interventions for general education students who are experiencing learning, behavior, attendance or health difficulties that may be interfering with their success at school. Each school is required to establish an I&RS team, usually composed of teachers, administrators, counselors, specialists, and other staff, that develops and monitors intervention plans to support identified students.

The purpose of the I&RS team is as follows:

- Identify and address student difficulties early, before they become more serious;
- Develop and implement coordinated action plans tailored to meet individual student needs;
- Provide support and guidance to staff and parents/guardians in addressing student challenges;
- Mobilize school and community resources to assist students with academic, behavioral, or health-related concerns;
- Document strategies and outcomes to track student progress and adjust supports as needed; and
- Ensure equity of access to interventions so that all students can succeed in the general education environment.

Each of The Ewing Public Schools has an I&RS team that works collaboratively with students and families to identify areas in need of support, brainstorm and finalize supports and interventions, adopt an Intervention Plan, track progress after the adoption of interventions, and evaluate growth over time. Teachers or parents can request to convene the I&RS team to discuss supports for a student, and data are collected from different individuals who know the child including parents/guardians, teachers, a school counselor, nurse, and administrator. When appropriate, students are invited to attend the I&RS meeting to provide input as well. Request for Assistance forms can be found on the [Intervention & Referral Services page](#) of The Ewing Public Schools’ website.

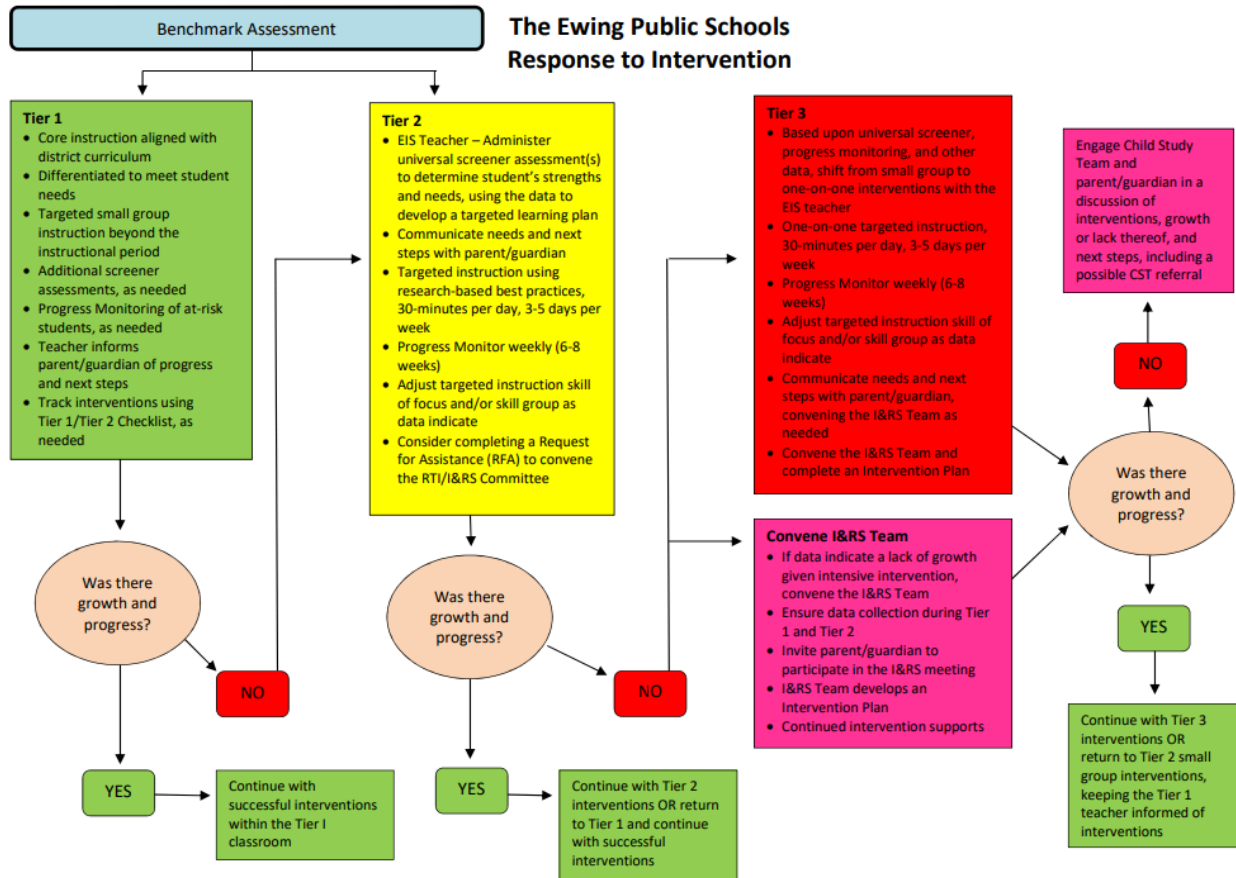


Figure 3: MTSS and I&RS Program within The Ewing Public Schools

Behavior Interventions and Support

In the event that a student’s behaviors interrupt his/her/their learning or the learning of others, the I&RS team may convene to develop an Intervention Plan focused on behavior management and student self-regulation. Parents and families are essential partners in this process. A parent/guardian knows his/her child best—what motivates them, what triggers frustration, and what strategies have worked at home. Their insight helps the school team create a plan that is consistent and supportive across environments. When families and schools work together, students are more likely to feel understood, supported, and successful.

Tier 1 behavior support interventions may include the following:

- Clear school-wide behavior expectations (e.g., 4Rs, ROAR, SOAR).
- Positive reinforcement system (e.g., PBIS).
- The adoption of a school-wide approach to social-emotional learning and support (e.g., Zones of Regulation, classroom Zen Zones or quiet corners).
- Morning meetings or community circles to build relationships.
- Brain breaks and movement opportunities built into the school day.

- Whole class lessons facilitated by the classroom teacher or school counselor (e.g., feelings and empathy, upstanders vs. bystanders, breathing and self-regulation, positive communication strategies).

Tier 2 behavior support interventions may include the following:

- Small group social skills instruction (e.g., lunch bunch with the school counselor or CST case manager).
- Daily behavior check-in/check-out with a school counselor, mentor teacher, or staff member.
- Individualized behavior plan or contract with rewards.
- Scheduled movement or sensory breaks.
- Home-school communication tools (e.g., daily or weekly behavior reports).
- Peer buddy system for social or behavioral support.
- Behavioral screening conducted by the district's Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), with [parent permission](#).

Tier 3 behavior support interventions may include the following:

- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) to understand the root cause of behavior.
- Individualized Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) with targeted strategies.
- One-on-one counseling or behavior coaching.
- Collaboration with outside mental health providers or community resources, with [parent permission](#).
- Increased adult support during high-risk times.
- Highly personalized reinforcement systems aligned to the student's interests.

Attendance Interventions and Support

Regular school attendance is one of the most important factors in a child's success because every school day builds on the day before. When students miss school, they miss key instruction, practice, and classroom discussions. Research indicates that students who miss more than 10% of the school year, approximately 18 days for the full academic year, are significantly more likely to fall behind in reading. A study from the *Annie E. Casey Foundation*, "[Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades](#)", found that students who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read on grade level by the end of third grade. Additional research indicates that students who are not reading proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

New Jersey Department of Education attendance regulations [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6](#) require district Boards of Education to "develop, adopt, and implement policies and procedures regarding the attendance of students, including the adoption of a definition of 'unexcused absence' that counts towards truancy." The Ewing Public Schools encourages regular school attendance and outlines district expectations in [Policy 5200](#). Understanding that chronic absenteeism adversely affects student learning and performance, a school's I&RS team may be called upon to develop an Intervention Plan to support any student whose attendance consistently exceeds 10%.

Tier 1 interventions to improve and support student attendance may include the following:

- Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations, including information for families about the importance of attendance through orientation, back to school events, and parent-teacher conferences.
- Daily greetings and maintaining a positive classroom climate to make school welcoming.
- Routines, rituals, and celebrations related to attendance and engagement.
- Personalized positive communication for families when a student is absent.
- Recognition of good and improved attendance.
- Connection to a caring adult in the school.

Tier 2 interventions to improve and support student attendance may include:

- The development of a schoolwide Attendance and Absenteeism Plan, including the use of information gathered from a parent/guardian/family survey.
- Development of an attendance action plan through the school's I&RS team.
- Short-term incentives for improved attendance (e.g., PBIS recognition).
- Data analysis to identify and address common community and school barriers that adversely impact daily attendance.
- Check-in/check-out with a school counselor, CST member, or staff member to provide a positive staff connection to start and end the school day.
- Small group interventions and supports.
- Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension.

Tier 3 interventions to improve and support student attendance may include:

- I&RS referral for personalized problem-solving and Intervention Plan development.
- Individual counseling for anxiety, school refusal, or social-emotional challenges with the school counselor or CST member.
- Collaboration with outside agencies for health or mental health support, with [parent permission](#).
- Wraparound services for chronic absenteeism (e.g., transportation assistance, family support programs, community partnerships).
- Referral to the district's attendance officer, as a last resort.

Information and Resources

Attendance Works: Advancing Student Success by Reducing Chronic Absence

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/>

CASEL District Resource Center for SEL Supports

<https://drc.casel.org/>

Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports

<https://mtss4success.org/essential-components>

Center on PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports

<https://www.pbis.org/>

Ewing Township Board of Education District Policy 2417 - Student Intervention and Referral Services
<https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=2417&id=463e7cd6c2714c62bde9f3d39dd18a71>

Ewing Township Board of Education District Policy 5200 - Attendance
<https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=5200&id=463e7cd6c2714c62bde9f3d39dd18a71>

Intervention Central: Your Source for RTI Resources
<https://www.interventioncentral.org/>

New Jersey Department of Education: Intervention & Referral Services
<https://www.nj.gov/education/njtss/resources/irs/>

New Jersey Department of Education: Student Attendance
<https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/sandp/attendance/>

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports and Implementation Guidelines
<https://www.nj.gov/education/njtss/>

PBIS World
<https://www.pbisworld.com/>

“Present, Engaged, and Accounted for: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades” by the Annie E. Casey Foundation
<https://www.aecf.org/resources/present-engaged-and-accounted-for>

U.S. Department of Education: Chronic Absenteeism
<https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/chronic-absenteeism>

What is MTSS? Multi-Tiered System of Supports
<https://www.branchingminds.com/mtss-guide>