Danville Area School District MTSS Manual

Updated August 2026

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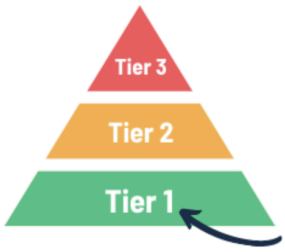
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Overview of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework that aims to provide high-quality, targeted support to all students, addressing their academic, behavioral, and social-emotional/mental health needs through a tiered approach. The goal is to promote success for **every student** by providing appropriate interventions at various levels based on individual needs. The system involves a continuum of support, with interventions becoming more intensive as needed. MTSS integrates both academic and behavioral components and typically includes three primary tiers:

Overview of the Three Tiers of MTSS:

1. **Tier 1: Universal or Core Support (Primary Prevention)**
    - **What it involves:** This is the foundation of MTSS and includes high-quality, evidence-based instruction and practices provided to all students. In Tier 1, all students receive grade-level appropriate instruction and general support in the general education setting.
    - **Goals:** To meet the needs of most students and prevent learning or behavioral challenges from emerging.
    - **Key Components:**
        - High-quality curriculum and instructional practices that are research-based.
        - Social-emotional learning (SEL) / mental health programs integrated into the school culture.
        - Classroom management strategies that foster positive behavior and relationships.
        - Universal screening to assess all students' progress.
        - Differentiation to address diverse learning styles and abilities.
    - **Target Group:** All students in the school. Tier 1 support should be able to support approximately 80% of the overall student population.



2. **Tier 2: Targeted Support (Secondary Prevention)**
    - **What it involves:** Tier 2 provides additional support for students who need more help than what is offered in Tier 1. These students are identified through data (such as assessments, grades, or behavior observations) as being at risk for academic, behavioral, or social emotional / mental health needs.
    - **Goals:** To provide targeted interventions aimed at preventing students from falling further behind or developing more significant challenges.
    - **Key Components:**
        - Small group interventions that address specific academic or behavioral needs (e.g., reading interventions, behavior check-ins).
        - More frequent progress monitoring to track student performance and response to interventions.
        - Additional social-emotional learning programs or counseling support for students who need it.
        - Collaboration between teachers, interventionists, and support staff to adjust interventions as needed.
    - **Target Group:** Students who are identified as at-risk based on screening or data analysis. This is approximately 5-15% of the student population.



3. **Tier 3: Intensive Support (Tertiary Prevention)**
    - **What it involves:** Tier 3 provides the most intensive, individualized support for students who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. These students may have significant academic, behavioral, or emotional challenges that require specialized intervention and support.
    - **Goals:** To address complex needs with individualized, highly targeted strategies and intensive support.
    - **Key Components:**
        - One-on-one or smaller group interventions, often with specialists (e.g., reading specialists, behavioral therapists, counselors).
        - Tailored academic and behavioral plans developed through a collaborative team process

        - Increased frequency of progress monitoring and adjustment of interventions.
    - **Target Group:** A small percentage of students with significant and persistent needs. This level of support is needed for approximately 5% of the student population.



Key Principles of MTSS:

1. **Data-Driven Decision Making:**
    - Data plays a critical role in MTSS. Teachers and staff collect and analyze data on student performance, behavior, and social-emotional well-being to make informed decisions about which interventions or supports are necessary.
    - Universal screening tools and ongoing progress monitoring ensure that students are supported at the right level.
2. **Early Intervention:**
    - MTSS emphasizes early identification and intervention, aiming to provide support as soon as a student shows signs of struggling. Early intervention prevents small issues from becoming larger, more complex problems.
3. **Collaborative Approach:**
    - MTSS encourages collaboration among teachers, administrators, and specialists. Teams of educators work together to review data, plan interventions, and monitor student progress.
4. **Systemic Support:**
    - The MTSS framework is not limited to individual student support, but also involves creating a school-wide culture of support. This includes professional development for staff, effective use of resources, and building a positive, inclusive school climate.
5. **Continuous Progress Monitoring and Adjustment:**
    - Teachers and interventionists regularly assess student progress to ensure interventions are working. If students do not show improvement, interventions may be adjusted or intensified.

Benefits of MTSS

- **Early Identification of Needs:** MTSS helps schools quickly identify students who need additional support, reducing the likelihood of academic failure.
- **Comprehensive Support:** The framework provides a holistic approach to student well-being, addressing academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.
- **Proactive Intervention:** The tiered system ensures that interventions are delivered in a timely and structured way, before students fall too far behind.
- **Better Outcomes:** When implemented effectively, MTSS can lead to improved academic achievement, better behavior, and emotional well-being.

MTSS provides a structured, proactive approach to supporting all students. By using data to guide decision-making and offering a continuum of interventions, MTSS helps ensure that every student receives the level of support they need to succeed academically, behaviorally, and socially. The tiered system ensures that support is tailored to the severity of the student's needs, promoting equitable access to education for all learners.

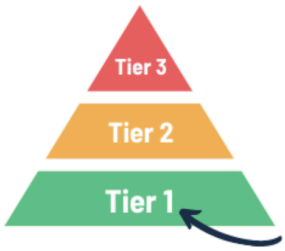
MTSS is the Law

The goal of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is to help increase the impact of educational investments by ensuring that interventions being implemented have proven to be effective in leading to desired outcomes, namely improving student achievement. ESSA defines a Multi-Tiered System of Supports as “A comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students’ needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision making.”(Sec 8101(33)

Academic Tiered Systems

Tier 1: Core Instruction

High quality core instruction is essential to ensure that 80% of students' needs are met at the Tier 1 level.



Components of Effective Tier 1 Academic System:

- **Standards-Based Curriculum**: a curriculum based upon state standards.
- **Systematic Explicit Instruction:** Skills are taught from less to more complex using direct, clear, and concise instructional language.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Students have different levels of background knowledge and school readiness; differentiated instruction engages each student in active learning according to his/her needs. The content of instruction, delivery of instruction, and targeted level of instruction can be differentiated
- **Flexible Grouping:** A combination of whole group, small group, and individual instruction allows teachers to create fluid groups that meet the needs of all students.
- **Active Student Engagement:** Ensuring all students are actively involved during instruction and are not passive recipients

Tier 2: Targeted Academic Interventions



At Tier 2, students identified as being at-risk academically through universal screeners are provided scientific, research-based interventions in addition to the core curriculum. Approximately 5-15% of students will need supplemental instruction at a Tier 2 level of support to become proficient. Tier 2 interventions are implemented in the regular

classroom individually or with groups of students demonstrating common skill deficits.

Targeted group interventions typically involve an additional 60 minutes of instruction (outside of core instruction) provided each week (e.g., two to three 20-minute intervention periods). Targeted group interventions must be more explicit: more intensive than core instruction; carefully scaffolded; ideally occur individually or in groups of approximately 3 to 5 students; and a student's progress must be monitored.

It's important to remember that the interventions suggested in the manual are just that: **suggestions**. Every student is unique, and what works well for one might not be the best approach for another.

Therefore, it's crucial to **tailor interventions to individual students' needs**. This means being flexible and ready to adapt strategies based on a student's specific learning style.

Tier 3: Intensive Academic Interventions



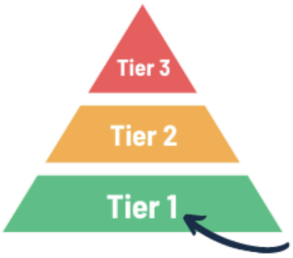
Students who have not demonstrated progress with targeted interventions at a Tier 2 level of support require more time and more intensive interventions. Tier 3 interventions are distinguished from Tier 2 interventions because they are even more individualized based on data collected in individual problem solving, occur with smaller student-teacher ratios, possibly occur for a longer duration of time, and possibly occur with another teacher (reading specialist, special ed teacher, speech teacher, etc). About 1-5% of students will require this level of intensive support.

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Behavioral Tiered Systems

Tier 1: Universal Behavioral Programs



Tier 1 represents school-wide behavioral initiatives such as PBIS. This is the primary level of prevention, and it involves setting school-wide expectations and interventions for student behavior. Additionally, each classroom teacher must have a clear set of classroom level expectations and interventions for student behavior. Typically 80% of students will be successful with Tier 1 interventions solidly in place.

Tier 2: Strategic Behavioral Interventions



Tier 2 represents interventions for about 15% of students, those who need a bit more assistance beyond the school-wide and classroom level behavioral interventions. Tier 2 interventions are designed for students who have received multiple / repeated referrals for behavioral issues. Interventions happen within the regular education classroom using research-based behavior plans as recommended by the MTSS Team, that are implemented consistently and where student progress is documented.

It's important to remember that the interventions suggested in the manual are just that: **suggestions**. Every student is unique, and what works well for one might not be the best approach for another.

Therefore, it's crucial to **tailor interventions to individual students' needs**. This means being flexible and ready to adapt strategies based on a student's specific

behavioral and/or emotional needs.

Tier 3: Intensive Behavioral Interventions



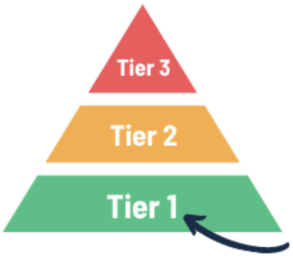
Tier 3 reflects the most intensive interventions for students with the highest level of need. Generally, Tier 3 interventions are used with about 5% of the school population. The students at Tier 3 require focused interventions to learn expected school behaviors. This most likely happens outside of the regular education classroom with an interventionist, school counselor, paraprofessional, or special education teacher. Research-based behavior plans that are consistently implemented with proper documentation of student progress will be identified by the MTSS Team.

It's important to remember that the interventions suggested in the manual are just that: suggestions. Every student is unique, and what works well for one might not be the best approach for another.

Therefore, it's crucial to tailor interventions to individual students' needs. This means being flexible and ready to adapt strategies based on a student's specific behavioral and/or emotional needs.

Social-Emotional / Mental Health Tiered Systems

Tier 1: Universal Social Emotional / Mental Health Programs



Tier 1 represents guidance activities that are available for all students. At the elementary level students participate in guidance classes utilizing research-based curriculum. At the middle school level students participate in a class designed for incoming sixth graders. At the high school students participate in lessons and support during their flex time. Typically 80% of students will be successful with Tier 1 interventions solidly in place.

Tier 2: Strategic Social Emotional / Mental Health Interventions



Tier 2 represents interventions for about 15% of students, those who need a bit more assistance beyond the school-wide established programs and lessons. Interventions can happen within the regular education classroom following recommendations from the MTSS team. They could also involve a group session with a guidance counselor or mental health specialist.

Tier 3: Intensive Social Emotional / Mental Health Interventions



Tier 3 reflects the most intensive interventions for students with the highest level of need. Generally, Tier 3 interventions are used with about 5% of the school population. The students at Tier 3 require focused interventions for their social emotional / mental health needs. This most likely happens outside of the regular education classroom with a guidance counselor, interventionist, or mental health specialist.

MTSS and its Relationship with Special Education

MTSS is not the same as special education but can be a precursor to it. If a student does not respond to interventions at Tier 3, the school may conduct a more thorough evaluation to determine if the student qualifies for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). MTSS helps ensure that students receive the appropriate interventions and supports before special education services are considered, reducing unnecessary referrals and ensuring that all students get the right level of support.

MTSS in the DASD

DASD Mission Statement

In partnership with families and the community, DASD empowers students in a safe environment through relevant and engaging educational experiences that support academics, creativity, and character development.

In alignment with the DASD mission statement, MTSS assists the district in its commitment to identifying students' needs and providing targeted support to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in a safe and engaging environment.

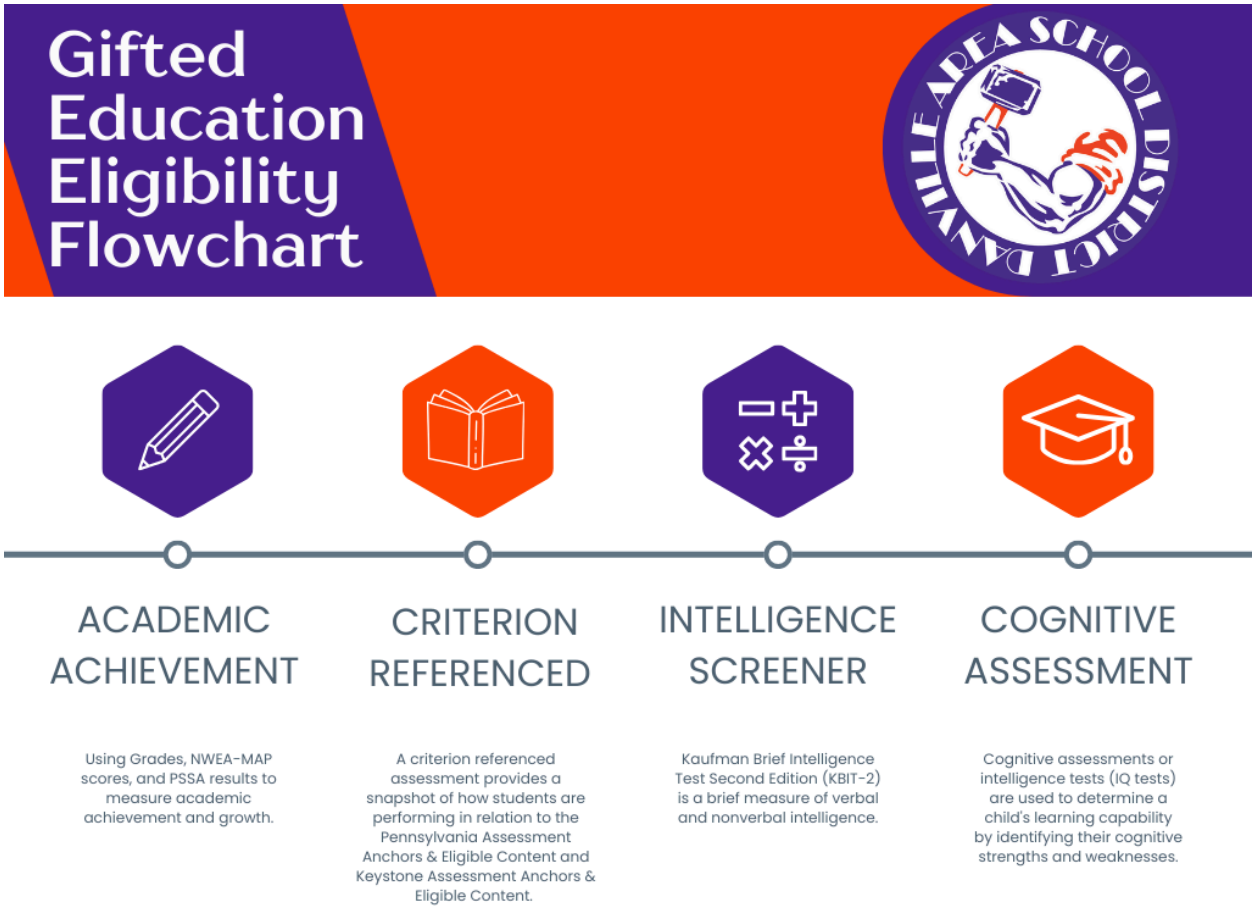
- **Safe Environment:** MTSS promotes positive behavior and creates a safe learning environment for all students, ensuring that everyone feels supported and can focus on learning.
- **Relevant and Engaging Education:** MTSS uses data to identify students who need additional support and provides targeted interventions to meet their individual needs, making learning more relevant and engaging for all.
- **Academics, Creativity, and Character Development:** MTSS supports academic achievement, social-emotional learning, and character development for all students, helping them reach their full potential.

Diagnostic Data Assessments in the DASD

Diagnostic assessments provide valuable information about students' strengths and needs in specific areas. This information will be used to tailor instruction, monitor student progress, identify learning gaps, evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and to make informed data-driven decisions. These are valuable tools that can overall improve student learning outcomes, and ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Academics	
DPS	• NWEA MAP Fluency • NWEA MAP ELA Growth Assessments • i-Ready Math Assessments
LV	• NWEA MAP ELA Growth Assessments • NWEA MAP Fluency Assessment - 3rd Grade and Tier 3 • NWEA MAP Math Growth Assessments • Student Progress Indicators (Firefly) - Math and ELA (Criterion-Referenced) • PSSA: ELA, Math & Science
DMS	• NWEA MAP ELA Growth Assessments • NWEA MAP Math Growth Assessments • Student Progress Indicators (Firefly) - Math and ELA (Criterion-Referenced) • PSSA: ELA, Math & Science • Keystone Exam: Algebra I
DHS	• Student Progress Indicators (Firefly) - Algebra and ELA • CDT: Biology • Winter and Spring Keystone Exams ○ Algebra, Biology, ELA
Behavior	
DPS & LV	• Behavior and Emotional Screening Tools • Sapphire Referrals
DMS & DHS	• SAP Referrals • Sapphire Referrals

MTSS: Gifted Education



Academic Achievement for Gifted Eligibility		
Kindergarten - 2nd Grade	NWEA MAP Fluency and Growth	95th percentile or higher
	i-Ready - Math	90th percentile or higher
3rd - 8th Grade	NWEA MAP Growth - ELA and Math	95th percentile or higher in either ELA or Math
	PSSA - ELA and Math	Advanced Scores in either ELA or Math

Classroom Diagnostic Tool for Gifted Eligibility		
3rd - 8th Grade	Student Progress Indicators (Firefly) - Math and ELA (Fall 3rd-8th Grade)	Scaled Scores in Advanced Range in either ELA or Math
End of 2nd Grade Academic Achievement scores will be used as an initial indicator for the Intelligence Screener		

Intelligence Screener for Gifted Eligibility		
Kindergarten - 8th Grade	KBIT-2	95th percentile or higher

Cognitive Assessment for Gifted Eligibility		
Kindergarten - 8th Grade	Gifted Evaluation	95th percentile or higher

Determination of gifted ability will not be based on IQ score alone. The determination shall include an assessment by a certified school psychologist. (22 Pa. Code §16.21(d))

MTSS: Speech / Language Services

Referrals

- Referral comes in from regular ed teacher via Sapphire
- SLP conducts an initial screen which assesses each phoneme in the initial/medial/final positions of words.
- SLP identifies which phonemes are in error and conducts a stimulability assessment for each sound, as well as an intelligibility screen.
- Based on the outcome of the overall screen, the MTSS team (Admin, SLP and teacher) will determine whether to proceed with interventions, evaluation, or if the student is not eligible for services.

Interventions

- Time
    - 15-20 minutes per week
- Types
    - Tier 2 - Teachers will be provided strategies to use in the classroom from the SLP
    - Tier 3 - The 5 Minute Kids program will be utilized with the exception of post vocalic R, which requires more structured teaching of articulatory placement
        - Communication to parents about student participation will come from the SLP
- Progress Monitoring
    - Re-assess skills every 6-8 weeks to determine need for ongoing services

MTSS: Mental Health

General Referral

- Initial referral for mental health services may be completed by any district staff member through MTSS General Referral Form
- MTSS Team will communicate receipt of referral to referring staff member and make determination for mental health services
- A positive referral will prompt referring staff members to complete “Referral Form for Mental Health Services.” Upon completion, this form will be distributed to corresponding Mental Health Specialist
- Upon receipt of Referral Form for Mental Health Services, Mental Health Specialist will conduct a thorough clinical assessment with student to determine clinical needs and potential formal mental health diagnosis
- Mental Health Specialist will determine type and frequency of therapeutic interventions based on formal evaluation

Emergency Referral

- A mental health emergency is any situation where a student is at risk of harming themselves or others, or if their emotions and behavior are out of control. Examples of mental health emergencies include expressing suicidal thoughts, threatening to harm themselves or others, self-injurious behaviors, severe agitation or aggression, rapid mood swings, or inability to perform daily tasks
- If you have a serious concern about a student, please contact a mental health specialist or an administrator immediately.
- Always remain with the student until identified support is available.
- After the student is getting support from the mental health specialist or administrator please complete the MTSS General Referral Form.

MTSS: DASD Retention Consideration

Board Policy 215 addresses student retention and should be reviewed prior to any retention discussion. This policy does put the final retention decision into the hands of the building principal.

Choosing to retain a student is an extremely serious decision as it affects a year of a child's life. It is a significant intervention. Being that it is **an intervention it must be determined through the MTSS process** and by seriously thinking through the considerations listed below.

Retention Considerations:

1. **Has this child been retained in the past?** If the child has been retained they should not be retained for an additional year. That would be evidence that retention was not the correct intervention.

2. **Is this child in kindergarten or first grade?** Research would support retention at this primary level, but does not support retention in higher grades. There would need to be significant evidence for retention above the first grade level.

3. **What is the child's attendance record?** If the child has a chronic attendance problem then it is unlikely that retention will be the appropriate intervention as that attendance problem will more than likely continue into the next school year. In this case measures to improve attendance should be taken as opposed to retaining the child. If the child had a unique circumstance that hurt their attendance then retention may be an appropriate intervention.

4. **What is the child's age and birthday?** If a child is old for their grade it is important to consider the social and physical size implications that retention could cause for a student.

5. **Does the child have behaviors that are impeding their learning?** If the child had behaviors that impeded their learning, but now a plan is in place that is working, another year may provide them with an opportunity to learn the skills missed. If the child has behaviors that impede their learning that are still unaddressed then the intervention focus should be around behavior support not retention.

6. **What are the student's scores on standardized diagnostic tests?** Scores on diagnostic tests should be considerably lower than that of their peers, yet also show some level of growth to demonstrate that another year in a grade is the appropriate intervention.

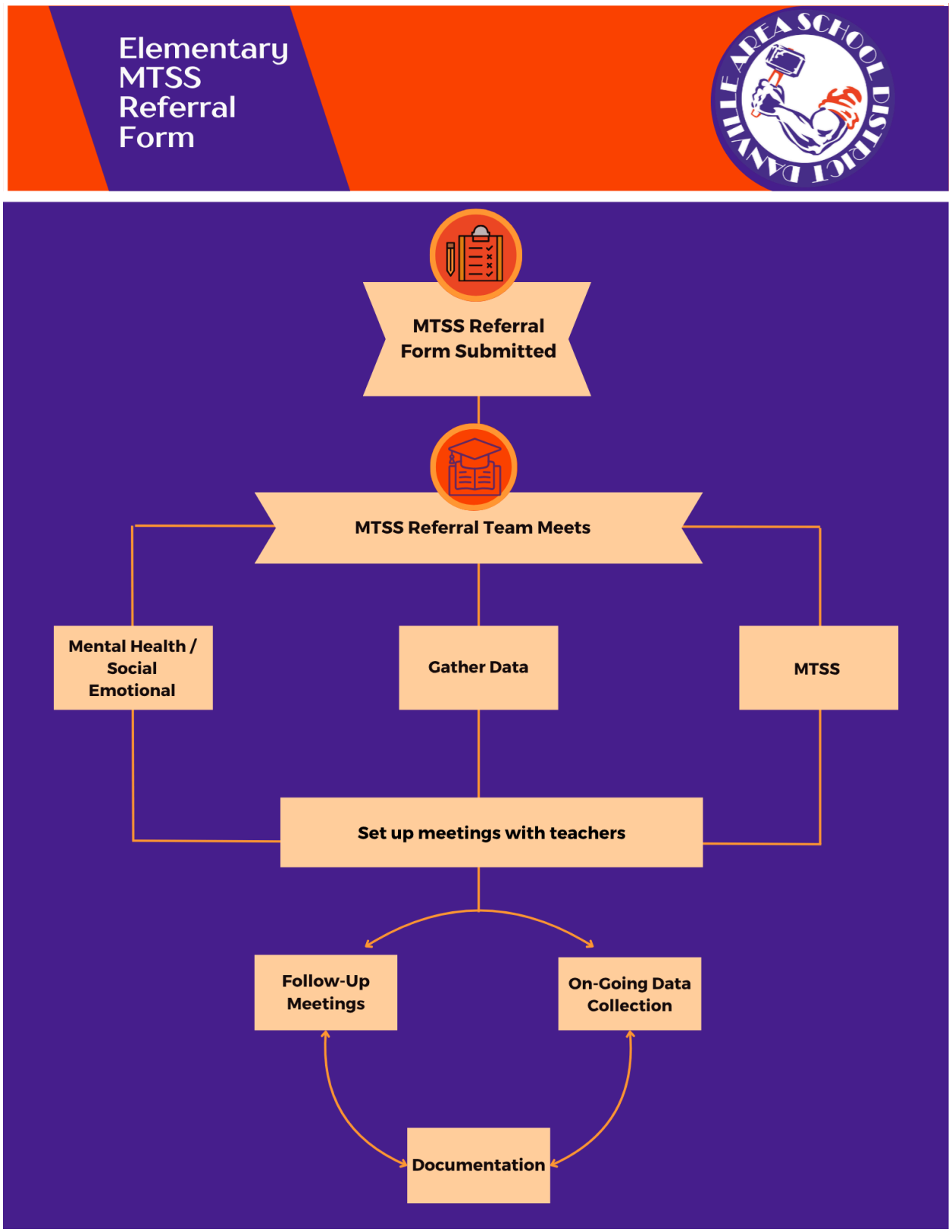
7. **What are the student's scores on curriculum-based assessments?** Scores on curriculum-based assessments should be considerably lower than that of their peers, yet

also show some level of growth to demonstrate that another year in a grade is the appropriate intervention.

8. **What is the teacher observing?** It is appropriate to get anecdotal information about academic performance, behavior needs, interactions with peers, etc. from the teacher as a data point for consideration.

Again, retention is only considered through the MTSS process and by the MTSS team considering the 8 questions listed above. Communication with families about retention does NOT occur until the MTSS team is prepared to make that recommendation to the building principal.

Elementary MTSS Processes



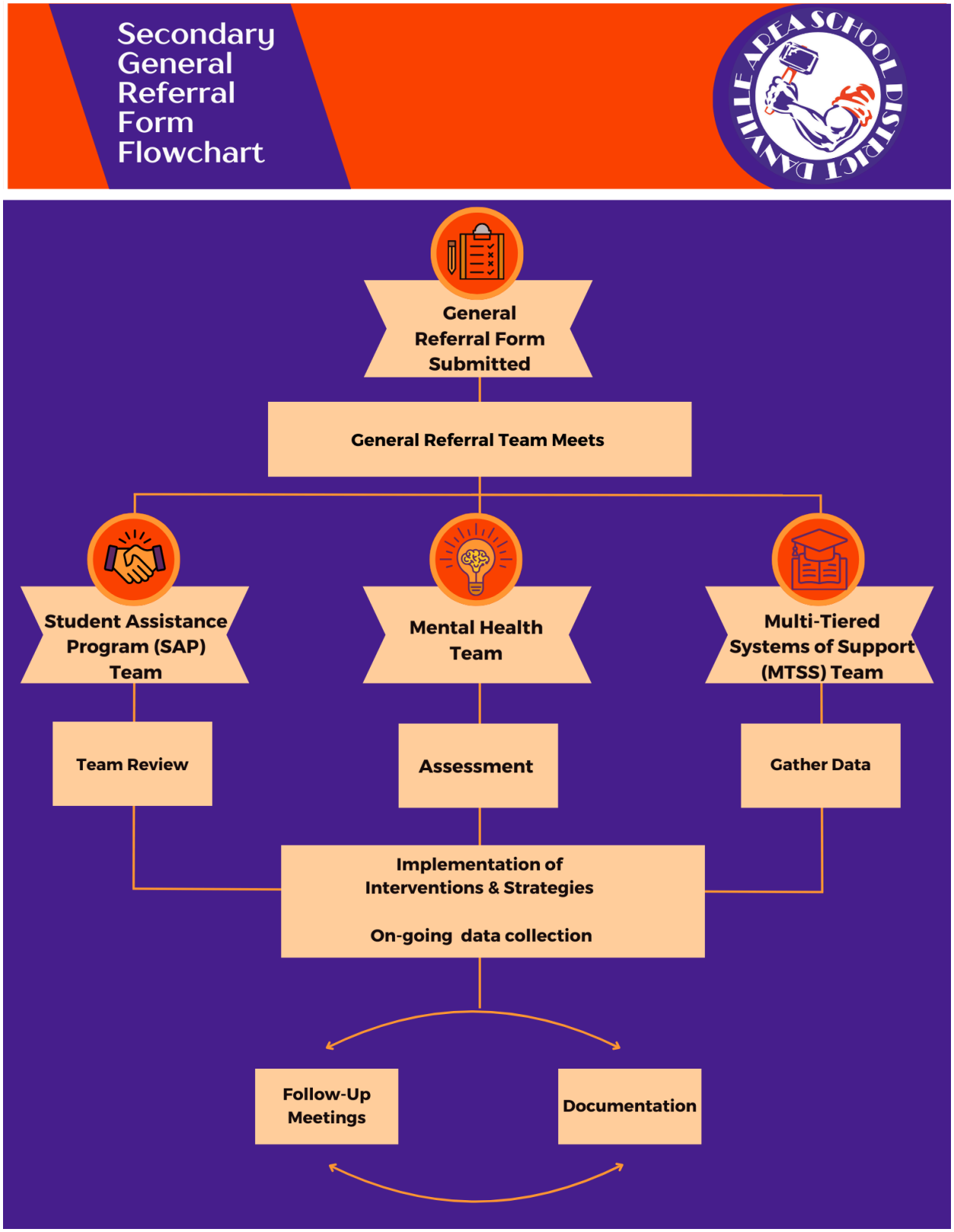
Danville Primary School

Meeting Structure	Referral Review: Bi-Weekly MTSS Team Meetings: Monthly	
Stakeholders (may vary based on referral)	Principal of ISE Assistant Principal of ISE Building Principal Regular Education Special Education LEAD	Director of Mental Health Mental Health Specialist School Psychologist Nurse School Counselor
When to Refer	When to refer? ● Initial Referral is made after a consistent research-based intervention is provided to a student with 4-6 weeks of data to show lack of growth with the intervention. ● Identified students will be addressed with Case Managers will be contacted to discuss concerns and determine if a team meeting is needed, and/or a revision is necessary. ● Students receiving support / intervention from a Reading Specialist will be referred by the Reading Specialist if not making progress in reading.	
Referral Form and Data	Form: DPS General Referral Form 2026-2027 Data Sheets - exact data to be provided to the team ● ELA - phonemic awareness, module assessments ● Math - Diagnostics, unit review ● Writing samples ● Fluency Checks ● Observation notes with checklist ● Strategies tried in the classroom including frequency & duration ● Additional data may be provided based on referral	
Referral Review	Referral Meeting Next Steps could include: ● Scheduling an MTSS Meeting ○ General education teachers will be included to the greatest extent possible pending coverage availability ● Provide Interventions with tracking forms for monitoring ● Mental Health Evaluation ● Referral returned for lack of data / evidence ● Screening for speech services ● Referral for enrichment services ● Screening for gifted (refer to gifted procedures) The referring teacher will receive an email about the results of the review process	
MTSS Meeting and Check-In	Possible Outcomes ● Evaluate interventions to determine if additional information is needed ● Intervention provided and progress monitoring will be collected ● Follow up meeting based on initial meeting ● Recommend a Permission to Evaluate be issued	
Documentation	All Documentation will be maintained in the students' Sapphire Suite.	

Liberty Valley Intermediate School

Meeting Structure	Referral Review: Bi-Weekly MTSS Team Meetings: Monthly	
Stakeholders (may vary based on referral)	Principal of ISE Assistant Principal of ISE Building Principal Regular Education Special Education LEAD	Director of Mental Health Mental Health Specialist School Psychologist Nurse School Counselor
When to Refer	• Initial Referral is made after a consistent research based intervention is provided to a student with 4-6 weeks of data to show lack of growth with the intervention, academically, behaviorally, and/or socially. • Identified students should not be referred. • Students receiving support / intervention from a Reading Specialist will be referred by the Reading Specialist if not making progress in reading.	
Referral Form(s) and Data	Form(s): Liberty Valley General Referral Form 2026-2027 Data will be collected through the General Form and will include: • Diagnostic Assessments • ELA - Modular assessments / Spelling • Math - Quizzes & Unit Assessments • Writing samples - TDAs • Fluency Checks • Observation notes with checklist • Strategies tried in the classroom including frequency & duration • Additional data may be provided based on referral	
Referral Review	The MTSS Team will conduct a Referral Review based on the Elementary General Form. After the Referral Review Meeting Next Steps could include: • Scheduling an MTSS Meeting ○ General education teachers will be included to the greatest extent possible pending coverage availability • Provide Interventions with tracking forms for monitoring • Mental Health Evaluation • Referral returned for lack of data / evidence • Screening for speech services • Screening for gifted services	
MTSS Meeting and Follow-up	Possible Outcomes • Evaluate interventions to determine if additional information is needed • Intervention provided and progress monitoring will be collected • Follow-up meeting based on initial meeting • Recommend a Permission to Evaluate be issued	
Documentation	All Documentation will be maintained in the students' Sapphire Suite.	

Secondary MTSS Processes



Danville Middle School

Meeting Structure	General Referral Form Review: Bi-Weekly SAP / Mental Health / MTSS Team Meetings: Bi-Weekly	
Stakeholders (may vary based on referral)	Principal of ISE Assistant Principal of ISE Building Principal(s) Special Education LEAD School Counselor(s)	Director of Mental Health Mental Health Specialist School Psychologist General Education Teacher Nurse
Referral	Process: ● Staff member will submit general form based on concerns observed with the General Education Curriculum and/or environment ● Team will decide if the referral is for the SAP Team, the MTSS Team, or the Mental Health Team ○ SAP Team will meet and conduct a review ○ Mental Health Team will complete an assessment ○ MTSS Team will gather additional academic data	
	Forms: Danville Middle School General Referral Form 2026-2027** DMS SAP Referral Form	
	MTSS Data Form - exact data to be provided to the team ● Diagnostic Assessments ● Grades ○ Work completion vs assessments vs homework ● Writing samples including TDAs ● Classroom Observation with notes and checklist ● Strategies implemented in the classroom ○ Frequency, duration ○ Small group frequency and skills being worked on	
MTSS Meeting and Follow-up	Possible Outcomes ● Evaluate interventions and determine if additional information is needed ● Intervention provided and progress monitoring will be collected ● Follow up meeting based on initial meeting ● Recommend a Permission to Evaluate be issued	
	All Documentation will be maintained in the students' Sapphire Suite.	

**General Form Submission - If you have a serious concern about a student, please contact a school counselor or an administrator immediately (in addition to submitting this form).

Danville Area High School

Meeting Structure	General Referral Form Review: Bi-Weekly SAP / Mental Health / MTSS Team Meetings: Bi-Weekly	
Stakeholders (may vary based on referral)	Principal of ISE Assistant Principal of ISE Building Principal(s) Special Education LEAD School Counselor(s)	Director of Mental Health Mental Health Specialist School Psychologist General Education Teacher Nurse
Referral	Process: ● Staff member will submit general form based on concerns observed with the General Education Curriculum and/or environment ● Team will decide if the referral is for the SAP Team, the MTSS Team, or the Mental Health Team ○ SAP Team will meet and conduct a review ○ Mental Health will complete an assessment ○ MTSS Team will gather additional academic data	
	Forms: Danville Area High School General Referral Form 2026-2027** HS SAP Referral Form	
	MTSS Data Form - exact data to be provided to the team ● Grades ○ Work completion vs assessments vs homework ● Writing samples including TDAs ● Classroom Observation with notes and checklist ● Strategies tried in the classroom ○ Frequency, duration ○ Small group frequency and skills being worked on	
MTSS Meeting and Check-In	Possible Outcomes ● Evaluate interventions and determine if additional information is needed ● Intervention provided and progress monitoring will be collected ● Follow up meeting based on initial meeting ● Recommend a Permission to Evaluate be issued	
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