Allen County Schools

MTSS FRAMEWORK AND DISTRICT GUIDANCE

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Allen County School District Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Vision

Our vision is to graduate engaged, resilient citizens who pursue their passions, maximize their strengths, contribute to their community, and achieve meaningful purpose in life.

Mission

Our mission is to nurture, inspire, and empower the next generation to be successful contributors in an ever-changing world and to create a better future for all by providing joyful, authentic, meaningful learning experiences and instilling hope.

Core Values

The core values have been developed to anchor our staff around the core beliefs we (as district employees) must hold true to achieve our district's vision.

- We value the pursuit of **excellence**, always striving to exceed expectations through goal setting, productive struggle, reflecting, and improving.

- We value **dignity** and believe that it is our responsibility to honor the humanity in each unique individual, their strengths, their interests and to create a sense of self-worth for all.

- We value a **community** that embraces building relationships by collaborating in a healthy culture that demonstrates generosity, celebrates diversity, honors inclusivity, and creates a sense of belonging for each individual.

- We value **integrity** through acting responsibly, being transparent, and always choosing to do the right thing in an effort to build trust in ourselves and others.

- We value meaningful **risk-taking** that drives innovation and creativity to develop courageous individuals who take initiative and imagine new possibilities to positively impact their world.

Introduction to MTSS

All students are capable of learning at high levels. Far too many students are not experiencing the success they deserve and need. This is not because our students can't or don't want to learn. Many schools do not have the systems and processes in place to ensure high levels of learning for all students. Some students also face barriers to learning that may interfere with their ability to make optimal progress; however, there is strong evidence that teachers, schools, and classrooms can raise student achievement despite these barriers (Hattie, 2018; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon, 2014).

Through the focus on the whole child and efforts such as wrap-around services, the use of high-quality, evidence-based teaching practices, high-quality curriculum resources, trauma-informed practices, and strategies to actively engage all learners, schools have the ability to minimize or eliminate barriers and improve student learning outcomes. Our responsibility as a district is to ensure equitable access to grade-level content and well-designed systems of support that address students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional well-being.

The MTSS District Framework is designed to meet the needs of all students by ensuring schools utilize high-quality instruction, data-driven decision making, research, evidence-based practices, intervention supports, the fidelity of implementation, and progress monitoring to ensure sustained student growth. MTSS is not simply about interventions; instead, it is about creating a system within the Allen County School District that ensures everything we do fits together to ensure a high-quality, impactful, and sustainable education for each of our students.

What is MTSS?

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support is 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.

Six key tenets of the MTSS Framework (Harlacher, et al., 2014):

☐ All students are capable of grade-level learning with adequate support.

☐ MTSS is rooted in proactivity and prevention.
☐ The system utilizes evidence-based practices.
☐ Decisions and procedures are driven by the school and student data.
☐ The degree of support given to students is based on their needs.
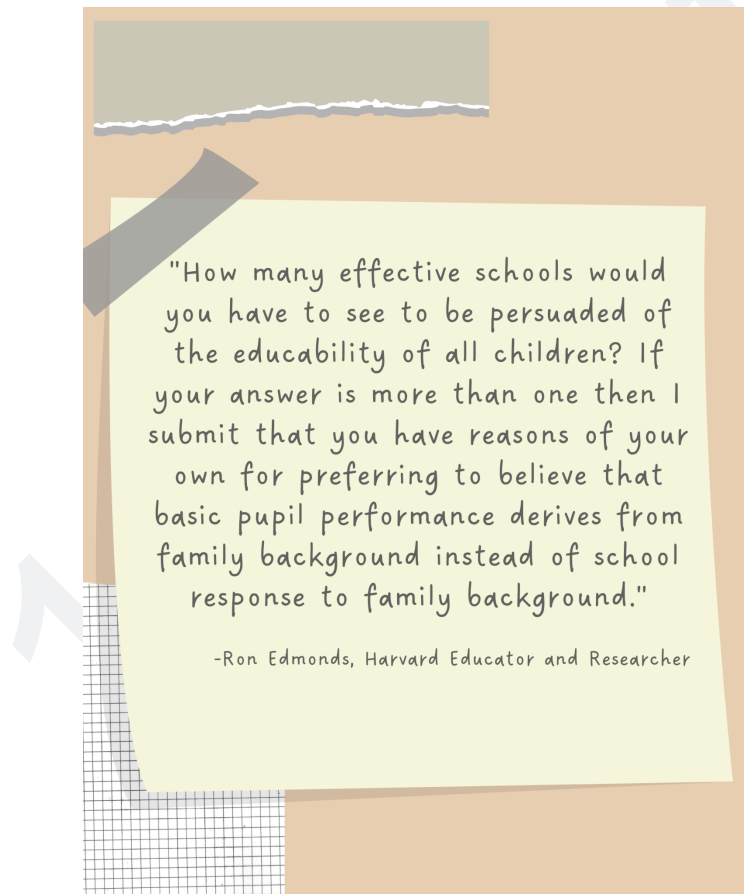☐ Implementation occurs school-wide and requires stakeholder collaboration.

Critical Components of KyMTSS
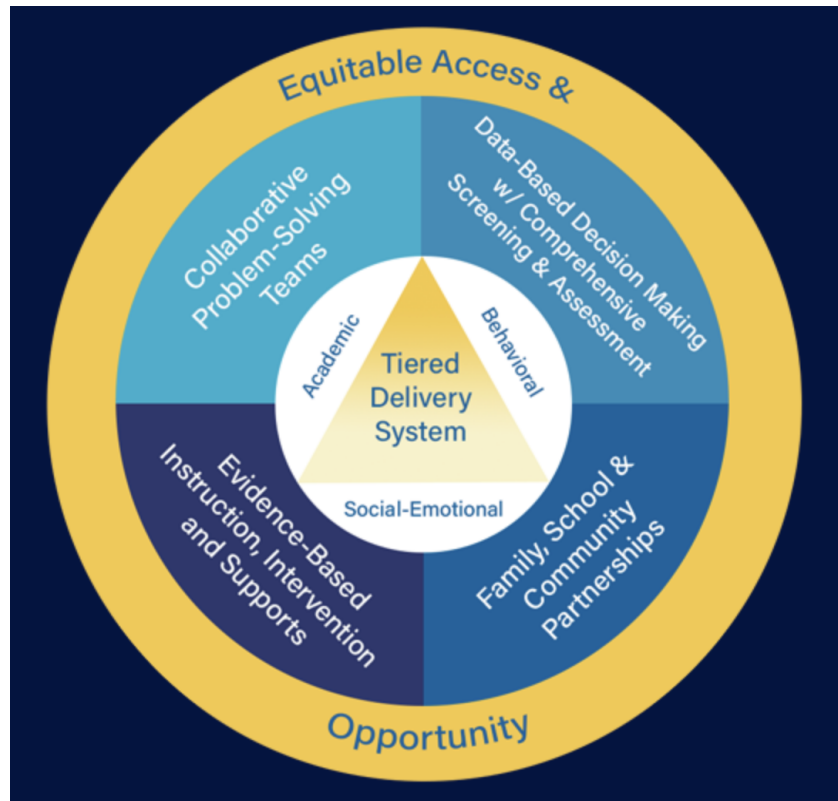
Equitable Access and Opportunity

Kentucky Department of Education explains the equitable access and opportunity component surrounding the MTSS framework and represents the intentional commitment to equity embedded within all parts of the MTSS Framework. For our purposes, we define equity. Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential (National Equity Project, 2022). Success and failure are not predictable based on social, economic, or cultural backgrounds. As a district and as individuals, the first challenge for us is to identify our own biases and beliefs about student learning. We encourage you to reflect on your own beliefs:

- Do you believe ALL students can learn at high levels?
- Do you believe students can't learn because of their home life, economic status, or skin color?
- Do you ever use the phrase, "Our kids can't because…."?
- Do you see yourself, the teacher, as the most critical piece of student success?
- Do you believe that you can make a difference in the lives of each student you serve?
- Do you believe that each student has unique gifts and talents that can be cultivated that lead to success?
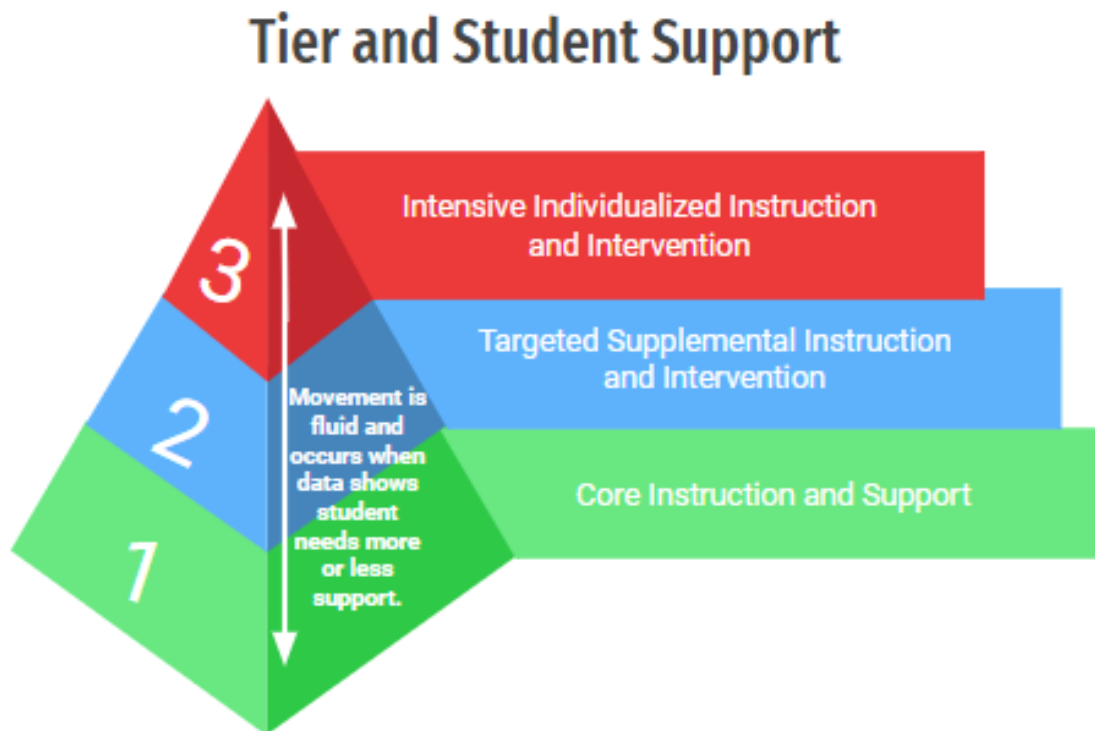
"How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of all children? If your answer is more than one then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background."

-Ron Edmonds, Harvard Educator and Researcher

Tiered Delivery System with a Continuum of Supports

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a preventative framework organized to provide a continuum of instruction, intervention and supports to meet the

academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students. Three tiers are used to describe the level and intensity of practices across the continuum. Movement between tiers is flexible and fluid, based on student assessment data. Students should not be placed in an "intervention class" for multiple weeks unless the data show they should continue to receive specific support. The familiar triangle that represents the continuum of supports designed to meet all students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs is shown below. The needs of the whole child is addressed at each level of the system - academic, behavioral, and social-emotional.

Pyramid of Interventions

Tier and Student Support

3 Intensive Individualized Instruction and Intervention

2 Targeted Supplemental Instruction and Intervention

Movement is fluid and occurs when data shows student needs more or less support.

1 Core Instruction and Support

Collaborative Problem-solving Teams
Collaborative problem-solving teams within the MTSS exist at multiple implementation levels (district, school, grade level, classroom) and across all three tiers. Teams are integrated and aligned for a common purpose to promote positive outcomes for all students.

In Allen County Schools, we will implement collaborative problem-solving teams at each level of the system:

District-Level Team. The district team will consist of the CAO, School Psychologists, District Coaches, a DOSE or Assistant DOSE, and the District Mental Health Counselor. The responsibilities of the district-level team include:
The development of and continuous updates of the District MTSS Framework and Guidance Document, communicating district-wide priorities, identifying professional development needs of staff, training new staff in the use of FastBridge screeners and progress monitoring tools, establishing district-wide benchmarks for each level of the system, providing continuous support and feedback to all schools, and reviewing district-wide data to determine patterns and trends.

School-Level CAP (Counselor, Assistant, Principal) Teams. Each building will develop CAP Teams that are made up of counselors, assistant principals, principals, school psychologists, instructional and district coaches, and interventionists. Each CAP team will be responsible for one grade-level of students and will meet at a minimum of every two weeks to review academic, attendance, and behavior data of their students. Each team meeting will end with a plan for addressing prioritized needs of individual students. Plans will include goals for the individual student growth area(s) such as academic, attendance, behavior, attendance, or social-emotional wellness, screeners, identify needed interventions, and a plan for progress monitoring and communication with all necessary individuals (classroom teachers, parents, students, etc.). Both Allen County-Scottsville High School and Allen County Intermediate implemented CAP teams in the 2021-2022 school year and saw tremendous success.

Grade-Level Teams. We will also continue to implement Professional Learning Communities that will serve as our grade-level teams across the district. In addition to reviewing their common formative data, grade-level PLCs will identify students needing additional support, implement necessary screeners for Tier II support, select interventions, and develop a plan for progress monitoring. School psychologists, instructional coaches, and district coaches will be available to support PLCs in this effort.

Data Decision Making with Comprehensive Screening and Assessment

Teams use a systematic process to analyze data across multiple domains to achieve improved and sustainable outcomes. Data-based decision making occurs at all levels of the system (district, school, PLC) and tiers to match instruction, intervention and support to the needs of all students. Progress monitoring data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions.

Allen County Schools will use screeners found in FastBridge to identify academic and social-emotional skills and support needed for each student.

Evidence-Based Instruction, Interventions, and Supports

Evidence-based instruction, intervention, and supports are those that have been shown in rigorous research studies to improve student outcomes. The selection process done by PLCs, with support from school leaders, considers local needs and the perspective of the whole child to ensure practices are aligned with goals, programs, and initiatives of the district and school. Teams should identify and communicate needed training, resources, and coaching to ensure evidence-based practices are implemented as intended in each classroom.

Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Family, school and community partnerships are about building active, reciprocal relationships in which schools, families, and community agencies engage in meaningful and culturally appropriate collaboration to improve student outcomes and provide the structure for families, schools, and community members to work together to support and improve the learning and well-being of all students.

Academics

Tier I: Why is Tier I Instruction so Important?

A tiered instructional process is the center of any effective multi-tiered system of support for students. MTSS is a process that involves a three-tiered approach to implementing high-quality, effective instruction, using research-based practices across content to support the academic needs of each student. Students at every

grade level must receive strong Tier I instruction utilizing evidence-based practices and a curriculum focused on essential skills and grade-level content. These are explicitly taught and modeled regularly. Positive reinforcements are used in conjunction with ongoing performance/assessment feedback. Data systems are in place to monitor performance and identify growth areas. Without strong Tier I instruction and access to grade-level content, student learning can be delayed, creating large gaps in academic knowledge. When Tier I is implemented effectively, the majority of learners should show high levels of proficiency on assessments. If assessment data shows gaps in learning or behavior, a plan must be put in place to provide additional support for students before and after a lesson. This support should occur in the regular classroom alongside their peers. Examples include scaffolding information and instruction, giving them extended time, and targeted tutoring.

If less than 80% of students are successful, that is an indication that it is a core issue, and we must change the core instruction to meet the needs of students. In this case, things to consider include: Understanding standards and what they mean for students to know and be able to do, ensuring alignment of tasks and activities to standards and rigor, using evidence-based practices and programs as a part of instruction, utilizing high-impact and research-based strategies, and providing targeted support to students in small groups or one-on-one through differentiation.

Behavior

> "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."
> Frederick Douglass

Behavior is simply communication. It is often communication that something is wrong and signals a lack of a student's skills to respond to a particular situation. Educators design instruction for academic interventions, yet, when it comes to behavior, we often create a list of rules and punishments without anchoring the systematic teaching and support needed for student behavioral success. This begins a long cycle for many students resulting in poor performance and a lack of self-efficacy in all areas. The MTSS framework challenges the belief that increased services are equivalent to more restrictive placements (Thurlow et al., 2020).

Restorative Practices and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) provide students with a proactive approach that involves teaching and reinforcing healthy and appropriate behaviors. Knowing these behaviors **must be taught** and do not come naturally for many students, schools implementing MTSS recognize, like academics, the need for <u>explicit</u> behavioral instruction that is paired with modeling, positive reinforcements, and ongoing feedback.

This school-wide data-driven prevention system calls on the expertise and wrap-around support from administrators, teachers, counselors, psychologists, and other specialists that will collaborate in CAP Teams to identify data needed to identify students in need of behavioral support and design a whole-child system to approach behavior issues through a Restorative Practices lens and personalized interventions.

<u>WHY Restorative Practices?</u>
The number of instructional days lost due to suspensions or expulsions increases each year in Allen County Schools. In most cases, students are moved out of the classroom most often for non-violent acts (ACS Trend Data, Infinite Campus). The culture and climate of a school and the connectedness of our students have a direct impact on their academic and behavioral success or lack of success. Realizing this, we must ask ourselves, are we building strong children or ensuring our community will have future adults in need of repair?

Our responsibility is to create a culture in which Restorative Practices can thrive, which means we are also challenged with analyzing data and redefining our classroom and schoolwide practices and policies. The first of which is classroom management, which is much more than just rules and consequences. Collectively, as a district, we define classroom management as it is defined by Cassetta and Sawyer (2013) as being "about relationships with students and teaching social skills along with academic skills."

According to research, there are two aspects of an effective classroom learning environment: *Relationships* and *high-quality instruction*. When students have strong, trusting relationships both with adults in the school and with their peers, and when

their lessons are interesting and relevant, it is much harder for them to misbehave (Smith, Fisher, Frye, 2018). Students will misbehave, it is human nature, it is how they learn the world and grow from experiences. It is how we respond to their behavior that matters most. Restorative Practices call for students to have a chance to learn from their mistakes and restore any damage that has been done to their relationships with others. The Restorative Approach identifies obligations and needs when relationships are harmed. Accountability through a Restorative Practice lens is defined as understanding the effects of the offense and repairing harm. Offenders are held responsible for their behavior, repairing any harm they have caused and working toward positive outcomes, not simply punished. Positive relationships are key for Restorative Practices to work. Most students won't misbehave toward adults who clearly care about them and their future. Restorative practices should be interwoven into every aspect and interaction in the school building.

Traditional approaches to discipline don't work. They leave adults exhausted and frustrated and they don't help to actually improve behavior, so schools find themselves in cycles of one misbehavior after another and a long list of repeat offenders. When kids don't have the reading or math skills they need, we engage them in explicit, systematic instruction to develop their skills. For some reason, we don't have the same approach to behavior. When kids don't have the behavioral, social, or emotional skills they need, we punish them and it stops there. We simply can't leave the acquisition of those skills to chance. Our current system doesn't teach - it and, at best, promotes compliance. We must change our thinking.

Many attempts at punishing behavior hold students publicly accountable and lead to anger, frustration, embarrassment, and a range of other negative emotions. When we use public behavior charts, sitting out at recess, ISS, and other negative consequences, those things are shown to *increase the misbehavior* rate and rarely or never lead to improved behavior. Punishments don't teach, they just create distance between the student and teacher. When we misuse our power as adults, we often find ourselves in situations where students are misusing their power with other students - such as bullying, fighting, etc. We need to continually evaluate our behaviors, as adults, and ask ourselves if we are creating a form of bullying in the name of discipline.

Many schools and districts have adopted zero-tolerance policies for more than just possession of a deadly weapon at school. One research study has described "the proliferation of zero-tolerance policies as the criminalization of typical adolescent behavior" (Jones, 2013). The negative effect of suspensions and expulsions are not limited to the student receiving the punishment. Perry and Morris (2014) found that "higher levels of exclusionary discipline over time generate collateral damage, negatively affecting the academic achievement of non-suspended students."

Improving our schools' culture and climate through a restorative approach will allow us to better serve the whole child, including their emotional and psychological health. Restorative Practices are a positive step forward in helping all students learn to resolve disagreements, take ownership of their behavior, and engage in school with empathy and forgiveness. To learn more about Restorative Practices from Dr. Dominique Smith, watch this webinar. We will also host a district-wide book study each year on Restorative Practices. You can sign up here.

Tier I: Why is Tier I Behavior Instruction so Important?
Much like academic Tier I, the same ideas and concepts are true for behavior. Tier I should include strong instruction around the behavioral expectations for students. For behavior, Tier I instruction may include daily social-emotional instruction or explicitly teaching behavior expectations and using restorative practices to address misbehaviors. For students needing extra support in Tier I, the intensity and duration of these supports will vary based on individual student needs. Depending on the progress monitoring data, students who are still not successful in Tier I, may need Tier II supports.

Tier II: Using data, we can identify students who are not being successful and need even more support or additional time. Students needing Tier II intervention will receive it in the classroom with the regular education teacher or special education teacher through small group or individual support. Tier II intervention support is **in addition to** what students are receiving in Tier I instruction and should fully align to the grade-level standards and skills students are working on mastering in Tier I. No more than 10-15% of students should need this type of support if our core Tier I

instruction is strong. Progress monitoring should be used with all Tier II interventions so teacher teams can see what interventions are working and which ones aren't working. Progress monitoring should occur throughout the intervention support being provided. Tier II support for behavior may be mandatory group sessions with school counselors or behavior plans for each student with goal setting and identified actions to learn the behavior.

Tier III: Using progress monitoring data, we may have students identified as needing foundational support through intensive intervention. Students receiving Tier III interventions need help beyond the skills currently being taught in the classroom and oftentimes lack foundation skills and knowledge to be successful in grade-level content. These students need intensive support and individualized instruction. No more than 3-5% of students should need this type of support. Students receiving Tier III intervention services should also be receiving Tier I and Tier II instruction. Tier III instruction often occurs outside of the regular classroom setting and should focus on specific skills that students are lacking. Tier III interventions should always be explicit and draw upon research around the practices and strategies that have the greatest impact. Screeners should be used to identify specific skills needed to be successful. Progress monitoring should take place throughout the duration of Tier III support and should be used to determine what supports are successful and what is still needed. Students receiving Tier III support should do so by those who are highly trained and skilled. Some examples of Tier III interventions may include individual sessions with counselors or the district mental health counselor. Outside referrals to a mental health professional may also be necessary.

Assessments and Interventions
Assessment data should be used to determine the need for additional support, time needed for intervention support, and the intervention services chosen. Screeners, such as those found in FastBridge, are a great way to identify student-specific needs. Data needs to be valid and reliable and should include more than teacher recommendation. FastBridge will be used district-wide and will serve as screeners for reading, mathematics, and SEL. In the FastBridge system, there are also tools for selecting interventions and progress monitoring.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is an essential component of any MTSS Framework. Progress monitoring simply allows us to quantify student progress or the impact of the intervention. Progress monitoring also allows school-level CAP Teams to adjust and make improvements to the interventions and supports being provided. Data from progress monitoring should be valid and reliable. In Allen County Schools, we will use FastBridge as our progress monitoring assessments.

Prior to interventions being provided, teams should design a plan for progress monitoring. For students receiving Tier II interventions by classroom teachers, teachers progress monitor twice per month. For students receiving Tier III support, progress monitoring will occur daily or weekly.

Sample Schedule for Progress Monitoring Academic Skills

Academics	Suggested Timeline	Instrument	Person Responsible
Tier I	Universal Screener: 3 times per year K-8 (Beginning, Middle, and End of the Year)	FastBridge Screeners FASTtrack Reading & Math: (k-1) earlyReading earlyMath (2-3) aMath aReading CBMreading (4-8) aMath aReading AUTOreading	Classroom Teacher
	Individual Screener: High school students referred for Tier	FastBridge Screeners FASTtrack Reading	Classroom Teacher,

	II and Tier III support	and Math: (9-12) aMath aReading AUTOreading	Counselor, or Interventionist
Tier II	Monitor Progress: Two times each month (or more often as concerns increase)	FastBridge Progress Monitoring Tools earlyReading AUTOreading CBMreading earlyMath CBMmath	Classroom Teacher
Tier III	Monitor Progress: Weekly	FastBridge Progress Monitoring Tools earlyReading AUTOreading CBMreading earlyMath CBMmath	Interventionists

Sample Schedule for Progress Monitoring Behavior Skills

Behavior	Suggested Timeline	Instrument	Person Responsible
Tier I	Universal Screener: 3 times per year K-12 (Beginning, Middle, and End of the Year)	FastBridge Screeners SAEBRS mySAEBRS	Classroom Teacher
	Individual Screener: As needed for students referred for Tier II and Tier III support	FastBridge Screeners SAEBRS mySAEBRS Early Warning Indicators	Classroom Teacher, Counselor, or Interventionist

Tier II	Monitor Progress: Weekly	FastBridge Screener or Behavior Charts of Frequency of Focused Behavior	Classroom Teacher
Tier III	Monitor Progress: Daily	Behavior Charts of Frequency of Focused Immediate Behavior	Interventionists

Data in MTSS, just like in the regular classroom, should drive the instructional decisions of teachers and school teams. When progress monitoring data shows the intervention in working, the intervention should continue until the goal is met. Depending on the progress monitoring plan, goals, and timelines, the data that show the intervention is not working is also extremely important. That is our sign that the intervention is not working and should be changed and a new intervention should be selected or the chosen intervention may need to be more frequent and intensive.

Social-Emotional Learning

It is important to take a systematic approach and embed SEL practices and policies into the regular school day and across all settings (Osher & Berg, 2017). Strategies such as daily check-ins, engagement, cooperative learning and SEL classroom discussions may be used to promote the development of students' social and emotional competencies.

Tier I: Support for all students build a sense of community, establish clear expectations, teach social and emotional competencies, and embed SEL in core instruction. SEL assessments are used to monitor progress, inform classroom instruction and identify skills to focus on for all students.

When behavior concerns or issues arise, teachers or other involved staff should first de-escalate the behavior in the moment, respond with Restorative Practices, and look at the cause of the behavior to prevent the issue from arising in the future.

Strategies may include allowing students to go to a "cool down" setting in the classroom or school, use de-stress strategies, or talk about their feelings and frustration with the teacher.

Tier II: Strategies may include restorative conversations, evidence-based strategies like Check In Check Out, etc. Other interventions may include short-term small group interventions for social skill development, anger management or coping with the impact of chronic stress or exposure to trauma.

Tier III: Interventions are student specific and may include wraparound supports and interventions identified from developing an individual support plan. The support plan focuses on identifying significant, student specific social, affective, cognitive, and or environmental factors associated with the occurrence and nonoccurrence of specific behaviors. This may also include support for students reintegrating back into school following placement at an alternative place or programs.

Creating a Common Language
It is important that everyone who works in Allen County Schools has a common language around the components of MTSS, screeners, progress monitoring and data. This framework and guidance document specifically addresses what you need to know to create a multi-tiered system of support. We encourage you to use this document as a reference when working in PLCs, teacher teams, school-level CAP Teams, and district-level teams to help create a common language across the district.

High-Quality Instruction
All students in every classroom in Allen County Schools should receive evidence-based, high-quality instruction and a curriculum that has been developed using research around what works best to increase student learning. The Kentucky Department of Education defines high-quality resources as those that are:

- Aligned with the *Kentucky Academic Standards*;
- Research-based and/or externally validated;
- Comprehensive, which includes engaging texts, authentic and meaningful tasks, and standards-aligned assessments;
- Culturally relevant and free from bias; and
- Accessible for all students

An essential component of high-quality instruction is for teachers to collaborate with their district and instructional coaches and colleagues in PLCs to review data and identify best practices that reflect current research. Support is provided by the district through our coaches who can support the development of high-quality instruction in every classroom in the district by working with teachers in small groups or one-on-one to dig into content standards, identify priorities, create units, lessons, and tasks that are aligned to the intent and rigor of standards, and to create assessments that provide accurate and real-time information on student learning.

Data Culture and Competency

A district-wide culture must exist that values and consistently engages in the use of data, not simply for accountability, but for making informed decisions. In PLCs and school-level CAP Teams, qualitative and quantitative data will be regularly collected and examined to determine the effectiveness of systems, practices, interventions, and to determine next steps for students' continuous progress.

Teachers must be trained in using data effectively. Our district has a number of people who can build capacity in teacher teams. School psychologists, Instructional coaches in each school, and district coaches are available to support teachers in high-impact evidenced-based interventions and effective use of data. Teachers will also be trained in the effective use of FastBridge screeners, intervention tools, and progress monitoring. A district team has been trained to provide any training needed.

Resources and Training

The Opportunity Myth

KYMTSS.org

[Principles of Designing Intervention in Mathematics](#)
[Intensifying Literacy Instruction: Essential Practices](#)
[Student Intervention Implementation Log](#)
[Intervention Plan for Small Groups and Individuals](#)
[Intensive Intervention in Reading Course Content](#)

Committee Members

Thanks to the following committee members for being trained in MTSS and giving feedback on input on the ACS District Framework and Guidance Document:

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Add additional sources here -