Hot Topics in MTSS: Current Research to Address some of the Big Questions Impacting Implementation

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Presenters

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- Tessie Rose Bailey, American Institutes for Research
- Allison Gruner Gandhi, American Institutes for Research
- Dia Jackson, American Institutes for Research
- Discussant: Lynn Fuchs, Vanderbilt University
Implementing Tiered Frameworks

- Generating buy-in
- Meeting the needs of all students
- Understanding evidence
- Defining terms consistently
- Finding resources
- Changing complex systems
- Providing clear guidance
Session Overview

1. Lack of Consistent MTSS/RTI Language and Practice
2. Operationalizing Evidence-Based Practices within a Multi-Tiered System of Support
3. Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students
Questions to Consider

- What impact does our language have on effective and efficient implementation of integrated tiered systems of support?
- How do we ensure that the systems we develop are inclusive of the diverse needs of students?
Hot Topic: Lack of Consistent MTSS/RTI Language and Practice

Tessie Rose Bailey, Ph.D.
American Institutes for Research
Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RTI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.
Integrated Academic and Behavior Tiered Systems: MTSS, RTI...Oh MY!

(As of March 2017)
92% of SEAs and DC referenced an integrated academic and behavior system.

Visible shift from RTI to MTSS for 8 SEAs in last 3-4 years.

Use of terms appears to be associated with funded projects.

Integrated Academic and Behavior Tiered Systems: MTSS, RTI...Oh MY!
Creating Challenges: Inconsistencies in Definition and Implementation

- Number of essential components varies: e.g., 4 (NY), 5 (CO), 6 (AZ), 9 (ME), 11 (MI)
- Number of tiers ranged from 3 (most SEAs) - 4 (GA)
- Inconsistency found within SEAs and across PD/TA provided in the state (PTI, RESA, IHEs, and DOE used different terms)
- RTI 3 Ways:
  - RTI = MTSS
  - MTSS includes RTI as an academic framework
  - RTI viewed as SLD eligibility process
Inconsistencies with OSEP/OSERS?

“a multi-tiered instructional framework, often referred to as RTI, is a schoolwide approach that addresses the needs of all students…”

OSEP RTI Memo, Jan 21, 2011; OSEP Letter to Zirkel, August 22, 2016

“…a process based on a child’s response to scientific, research-based intervention (commonly referred to as “response to intervention” (RTI)) that meets the requirements in 34 CFR §300.307(a)(2)).”

OSEP Letter to Zirkel, September 10, 2013

“For those students who may need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment, schools may choose to implement a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), such as response to intervention (RTI) or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).”

OSERS Dear Colleague: Dyslexia Guidance, October 23, 2015
Why Does it Matter? Voices from the Field

- Top Facilitators of Successful Statewide MTSS Implementation
  - Cross-disciplinary Teaming
  - Access to Professional Development
  - Consistent Language and Practices
- Top Challenge and Need for Statewide MTSS Implementation
  - Consistent language and practices identified as most important “wish-list” item to support future implementation efforts at the SEA and local level

Charlton, Ross, & Sabey (2017)
We have changed the name of the "RTI" conference to the “RTI/MTSS” conference and now we are just the "MTSS" conference. Some LEAs think we are implementing a new thing.

D. N. – SEA Staff

If we say that RTI is NOT really MTSS or is just the special education/SLD piece of MTSS, then teachers and administrators feel like they are being asked to do something brand new - or they have to abandon the RTI work they did in order to do MTSS.

L. S. – State MTSS Consultant
Hot Topic: Operationalizing Evidence-Based Practices within a Multi-Tiered System of Support

Allison Gruner Gandhi, Ed.D.
American Institutes for Research
EBPs: What Are They?

- In simple terms, EBPs are practices that are supported by research

  - But what is considered a practice?
  
  - And how do I know if it is supported by research?
Challenge: Inconsistent Terminology

Authors and organizations refer to EBPs in a variety of ways:

- Evidence-based practice
- Research-based practice
- Scientifically-based practice
- Promising practice
- Best practice
Challenge: Inconsistent Criteria

Authors and organizations define criteria for EBPs in different ways:

- Quality of evidence (study design)
- Direction and magnitude of results
- Quantity of evidence
- Source of evidence
- Some combination of all these things
Every Student Succeeds Act

- Requires use of “evidence-based interventions” in low performing schools
- Four categories of evidence:
  - “strong evidence”: supported by at least one randomized study
  - “moderate evidence”: supported by at least one quasi-experimental study
  - “promising evidence”: at least one correlational study with pretests as covariates
  - programs with a rationale based on high-quality research or a positive evaluation that are likely to improve student or other relevant outcomes
- Must have a statistically significant positive effect on relevant outcomes
Limitations of Gold Standard Evidence...

- Generalizability to other populations
- Why isn’t this working?
- Time and fiscal resources that delay movement from the research lab into schools may mean few options in certain areas.
- Misalignment of “practice” with research design
- Generally effective isn’t universally effective… Some kids need more.
Are we taking EBPs a bit too seriously?

I can tell you’re struggling with fractions, Tony, but there aren’t any EBPs for kids in your grade. Maybe check back in a few years?
Is MTSS/RTI an EBP?

In MTSS/RTI, the “practice” in “evidence-based practice” is different in each tier!

Wouldn’t this mean that criteria for evidence should differ too?
## Characteristics of Intervention Levels/Tiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary (T1)</th>
<th>Secondary (T2)</th>
<th>Intensive (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction/Intervention Approach</strong></td>
<td>Comprehensive research-based curriculum</td>
<td>Standardized, targeted small-group instruction</td>
<td>Individualized, based on student data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Size</strong></td>
<td>Class-wide (with some small group instruction)</td>
<td>3–7 students</td>
<td>No more than 3 students (ideally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitor Progress</strong></td>
<td>1x per term</td>
<td>At least 1x per month</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population Served</strong></td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>At-risk students</td>
<td>Students with significant and persistent needs</td>
</tr>
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</table>
But What About Evidence of Effectiveness at Each Level?
## Role of Evidence

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<th>Intensive (T3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive research-based curriculum</td>
<td><strong>Comprehensive</strong> coverage of critical content</td>
<td><strong>Standardized</strong>, targeted small-group instruction</td>
<td><strong>Individualized</strong>, based on student data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional practices and strategies with evidence of efficacy</td>
<td>Intervention aligned to target skill(s)</td>
<td>Standardized program with demonstrated efficacy</td>
<td>Individualization of intervention, embedding instructional strategies and supports based on student data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequent, ongoing progress monitoring to determine impact</td>
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</tbody>
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Resources to Support Identification of EBPs at Tiers 1 & 2

- Best Evidence Encyclopedia: http://www.bestevidence.org
- Evidence for ESSA: https://www.evidenceforessa.org/
- IRIS Center: http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/ebp_summaries/
- Teaching Works: High Leverage Practices (Ball): http://www.teachingworks.org/work-of-teaching/high-leverage-practices
- CEEDAR Center: http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/
- Evidence-based Intervention Network: http://ebi.missouri.edu/
Resources to Support Identification of EBPs at Tier 2

http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/instructional-intervention-tools
Tier 3: Intensive Intervention

- Individualization of intervention, embedding instructional strategies and supports based on student data (e.g., precision or experimental teaching procedures)
- Targeted integration of academic and behavioral supports
- Frequent, ongoing progress monitoring to determine impact
- What’s the evidence: Is the student making progress?
Resources to Support Identification of EBPs at Tier 3

Academic Intervention

Behavioral Intervention Tools Chart

Academic Progress Monitoring

Academic & Behavior Intervention

Progress Monitoring
Additional Resources

National Center on Intensive Intention
http://www.intensiveintervention.org/

Center on Instruction:
Hot Topic: Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

Dia Jackson, Ed.D.

American Institutes for Research
Outcomes to Address and Prevent

- Increasingly diverse student population
- Inequitable academic opportunities
- Long-standing achievement gaps
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Economic level
  - Disability status
- High suspension and expulsion rates
- Overrepresentation of minorities in Special Education

(Ford, 2012)
A Dearth of Research

(Cartlege et. al., 2016)
Challenges in Urban Schools

**Structural**
- Leadership
- Infrastructure
- Resources
- High quality instruction

**Cultural**
- Perceptions of race and class as limiting predictors of academic achievement
- Viewing student difference as deficiency
- Lack of cultural responsive pedagogy

(Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus & Noguera, n.d.)
Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes of CRT</th>
<th>Emerging EBPs</th>
<th>Recommended approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional engagement</td>
<td>Collaborative teaching</td>
<td>Problem solving approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, language and racial identify</td>
<td>Responsive feedback</td>
<td>Child-centered instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural awareness</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Instructional scaffolding</td>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
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(Aceves & Orosco, 2014)
Tier 1 Core Instruction

Core curriculum & instruction for ALL students: school-wide reading, behavior, math and/or writing, includes sheltered instruction and culturally relevant teaching (80% of all students)

Core plus strategic evidence-based intervention (15% of all students)

Core plus intensive evidence-based intervention (5% of all students)

(Brown, & Sanford, 2011)
A limited number of tools have been researched specifically for use with ELLs. Validity may be a concern.

- Use tools with demonstrated reliability and validity to identify and monitor students’ needs for instructional support in both L1 and L2.

Assess students’ language skills (in L1 and L2 if needed)

Consider life and educational experiences

Consider cultural values and beliefs

(Brown & Sanford, 2011)
Tier 2 and Tier 3

- Use a problem-solving approach
- Observe the student in the classroom as well as in other settings.
- Intensive instruction has been proven beneficial for CLD students at risk.

(Cartledge et al., 2016; Council et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2014; Orosco & Klinger, 2010)
MTSS/RTI Considerations for CLD Students

- MTSS/RTI models for CLD students should include—
  - High quality instruction
  - Fidelity tools
  - Clear processes and procedures
  - Frequent data collection and analysis by a team
  - Data-based decision making

(Klinger & Edwards, 2006; Klinger, n.d.)
Reflections and Discussion

Lynn Fuchs, Ph.D.
Vanderbilt University
Discussion: Distinguishing Intensive Intervention from Tier 2

Lynn Fuchs
Vanderbilt University

Presented at CEC’s Annual Meeting
April 20, 2017
The Challenge

- Tessie, Allison, and Dia raise important issues for improving implementation of MTSS/RTI.

- These issues include consistent terminology, operationalizing evidence-based practices, and supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students.

- In my discussion, I focus briefly on a topic that represents a critical intersection among these 3 issues: How to conceptualize and design intensive intervention so it clearly differs in intensity from Tier 2 intervention.
Distinguishing Intensive Intervention from Tier 2: Background

- Special education, the most intensive level of intervention in a school building, is implemented for SWD by special educators or related personnel.

- At the same time, many school buildings provide Tier 2 intervention to students who are at-risk for disabilities within MTSS.

- Over time, consensus has emerged about the optimal structure and form of Tier 2 intervention:
  - A supplemental, evidence-based, well-articulated program (with a clear implementation manual that includes all materials), delivered in small groups by a trained interventionist.
The purpose of Tier 2 programs is to provide time-limited support of moderate intensity to create a stronger foundation of academic skill for at-risk learners.

The goal is to enable at-risk students to return to and succeed in the general education classroom.

Over the past 2 decades, the field has developed and validated many Tier 2 programs that strengthen end-of-intervention outcomes for the majority of at-risk students.
Need for Clarity about How to Intensify Tier 2

- But over these 20 years, evidence has also converged that not all students respond to such standard evidence-based Tier 2 programs.

- Research suggests 5–10% of the general population require the more intensive intervention afforded by special education.

- So it’s problematic for MTSS that schools often have difficulty identifying strategies for intensifying intervention (beyond available Tier 2 validated programs) for students who respond inadequately to Tier 2.

- This lack of clarity limits the capacity of schools to analyze intervention options, and it dilutes the effectiveness of the intensive intervention tier of MTSS.
To address this problem, we recently developed the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity.

This Taxonomy articulates 7 dimensions for evaluating and building intervention intensity.

The Taxonomy’s goal is to help (a) special educators increase the quality of intensive intervention and improve student outcomes and (b) schools offer intensive intervention programs that are clearly distinguishable from Tier 2 programs.

The Taxonomy includes 7 dimensions for intensifying intervention.
Seven Dimensions of Intervention Intensity to Help Teachers Strengthen and Individualize Beyond Tier 2 Interventions

- Individualization
- Strength
- Dosage
- Alignment
- Attention to Transfer
- Complexity
- Behavioral Support
Taxonomy’s Most Fundamental Dimension of Intensity: Individualization

The special educator uses the Taxonomy in 2 stages.

- **Set-Up Stage**: Applies the Taxonomy to select the (a) Intensive Intervention Platform and (b) the Progress–Monitoring System to be used for tracking the student’s responsiveness to this Platform.

- **Implementation Stage**: Reapplies the Taxonomy on a periodic basis – whenever the progress–monitoring data indicate the student’s response to the Intensive Intervention Platform is inadequate. On these occasions, she uses the Taxonomy to identify fruitful directions to individualize the Platform for meeting the student’s needs.

In this way, the most fundamental principle of intensive intervention is Individualization.
Lynn Fuchs, Douglas Fuchs, Amelia Malone
The Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity
Teaching Exceptional Children

Lynn.a.Davies@Vanderbilt.edu
Ask for TEC in press paper
Learn More

www.rti4success.org
References


References


