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MTSS Component Focus of the Month

Component Number One: A Systemic and Comprehensive Approach

A multi-tiered system of supports is a comprehensive and systematic framework for evaluating and maximizing the opportunities for all students to learn and succeed within any content area. It highlights the significance of effective, culturally responsive and differentiated first teaching, as well as, effective early intervening supports for both academics and behavior for all students ([Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports Response to Intervention and Instruction \(MTSS-RtII\) Field Guide, 2014](#)). Furthermore, [Title 16 of the Vermont Statutes, § 2902](#) of the Educational Support System and Educational Support Team, requires each public school to develop and maintain an educational support system for children who require additional assistance in order to succeed in the general education environment (Vermont Education Lawbook, 2016).

Welcome to the first, in a series of five documents that provide useful information for effectively implementing a multi-tiered system of supports in Vermont schools. The *Vermont (MTSS-RtII) Field Guide* contains five components that will be addressed. We begin the sequence with the central component, A Systemic and Comprehensive Approach.

Importance of Component

A **Systemic and Comprehensive Approach** to teaching and learning is incorporated in all the components of a multi-tiered system of supports, which include: Effective Collaboration, High-quality Instruction and Intervention, Comprehensive Assessment, and Professional Learning.

The following characteristics of effective schools are evident and important in negotiating change and improvement:

1. Strong and distributed leadership at all levels of the system with a clear focus and shared vision;
2. Consideration of roles and responsibilities through self-assessment;
3. Sustained focus over time, building on existing strengths and examining areas for growth;
4. Attention to practical matters that create greater learning opportunities – particularly school climate and scheduling;
5. Careful assessment and allocation of resources – people, time and materials; and
6. Articulation and alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment (*Vermont (MTSS –RtII) Field Guide, 2014*).

Furthermore, essential elements of a systemic and comprehensive approach include a framework that:

1. Develop coherent and consistent curriculum and behavior practices that guide instruction and intervention to improve outcomes for all students;
2. Reduce and eliminate disjointed programs across general, remedial and special education;
3. Focus on prevention and reduce unnecessary student failure;
4. Provide more effective instruction for all students and reduce the number of students in special education; and
5. Pool resources and share expertise to meet shared goals for instruction and assessment
(*Vermont (MTSS-RtII) Field Guide, 2014*).

Benefits of this Component

All students benefit from a multi-tiered system of supports with evidence-based practices that maximize student achievement through academic and behavior supports. A Systemic and Comprehensive Approach includes Universal, Targeted, and Intensive levels of support. Universal (Tier 1) denotes those supports provided to every student. Targeted (Tier 2) denotes additional supports provided to remediate or accelerate success for some students. Intensive (Tier 3) denotes individually-responsive supports intended to further remediate or accelerate success for the remaining few students. Intensive (Tier 3) do not necessarily equate to special education services. Furthermore, Tier 2 and 3 supports are provided *in conjunction* with, not in place of, Tier 1 instruction.

Steps to Getting Started

Listed below are five suggested steps to get started implementing a multi-tiered system of supports

- [Visioning](#) (SWiFT, 2016)
- Lay the foundation for a multi-tiered system of supports
 - [Together: A SWiFT Film on Integrated Educational Framework](#)
 - [ALL Means ALL](#)
 - [Whatever It Takes: A SWiFT Film on Inclusive Academic Instruction](#)
- Establish the Leadership Team
 - [Visit the SWiFT Guide](#)
- [Increase family and community awareness](#) and engagement
- [Evaluate the implementation of the framework](#) to identify areas of success and areas that require refinement

Vignettes and Resources

1. [SWiFT Introduction to Inclusive Academic Instruction](#)
2. The Vermont Agency of Education [website's MTSS page](#)
3. The [PBIS MTSS page](#)
4. [The Iris Center](#)