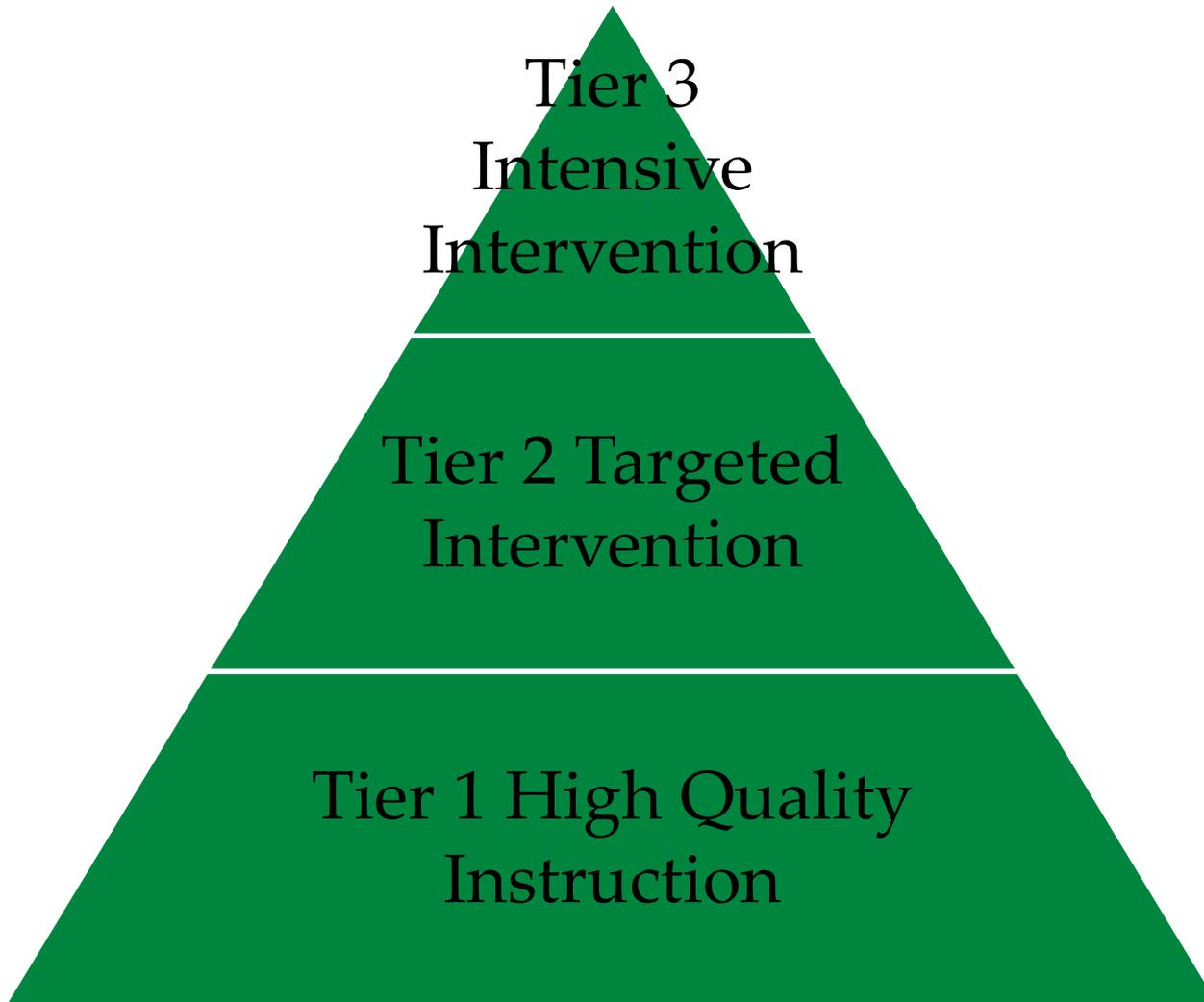


Enhancing the Effectiveness of Student Supports through School District Systems

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Context Inventory



Focus of the UVM Study

1. Develop a comprehensive profile of special education costs and describe the factors influencing costs.
2. Provide a systematic examination of Vermont's existing approach to funding special education, particularly how the existing funding mechanisms may facilitate or impede policy priorities for improving the effectiveness and efficiency with which students with disabilities are served.
3. Identify and prioritize design considerations for potential funding formula reforms.
4. Offer concrete examples for how a census-based funding model might be implemented in Vermont, including implications for overall state appropriations and funding for supervisor unions.

Some Findings of the UVM Study

1. "Vermont's special education population has the largest share of students with emotional disturbance of any state in the nation — and nearly three times the averages seen in neighboring states."
2. "Increased demand and limited capacity for community-based mental health and social services has shifted responsibility for providing these services to schools."
3. "There is a general understanding by educators in the field that service delivery challenges associated with providing comprehensive and early support systems as well as MTSS Tier 2 supports and interventions has resulted in more students being identified for special education, to secure both the instructional resources needed as well as funding from the state's special education reimbursement mechanism."

Some Thoughts from the DMG Report

- "Investing in the effectiveness of **core reading instruction** is critical for students in general education and students with disabilities"
- "Students with mild-to-moderate disabilities who struggle with **reading** may not be supported by teachers skilled in the **teaching of reading.**"
- "While some special education teachers across the SU/SDs had a strong background in the **teaching of reading**, others indicated that they did not have the training or background to be effective supporting students struggling in **reading.**"
- The 2015-2016 state-wide Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia (SBAC) results indicated that approximately 45% of 3rd – 5th graders did not score proficient in **English Language Arts.**

VT MTSS Components

- A Systemic and Comprehensive Approach
- Effective Collaboration
- High-quality Instruction and Intervention that is Responsive and Differentiated
- Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment System
- Expertise (Well-designed Professional Learning)

Vermont MTSS

- MTSS in some form (e.g. IST and EST) has been a Vermont best practice and policy since the late 1980s
- Vermont MTSS-RtII Field Guide (2014), new version in 2019
- Rule 2121.5 (2014) - "Each school shall ensure that a tiered system of academic and behavioral supports is in place to assist all students in working toward attainment of the standards. This system shall be aligned with the school's Personalized Learning Plan structures, and specific student support services shall be specified within a student's Personalized Learning Plan."
- 16 V.S.A. § 2902 (2015) - "Within each school district's comprehensive system of educational services, each public school shall develop and maintain a tiered system of academic and behavioral supports for the purpose of providing all students with the opportunity to succeed or to be challenged in the general education environment."

Summary of Context Inventory

- The UVM study indicates a shift to block grant funding would be more affordable and support best practice.
- This best practice recommendation is largely focused on improving Tier 1 instruction.
- High quality reading instruction is a key component of Tier 1 instruction.
- We have a long-standing policy framework in both statute, regulation, and board policy that supports and requires this work.
- In spite of this continuous policy framework, implementation of MTSS remains uneven

Towards a Systems Theory of Action

Strategy #1: Strengthen Existing Systems

School Districts, MTSS, and the EQS

- **2120.6. Curriculum Coordination.** As required in 16 V.S.A. §261a(a)(1), the board of each supervisory union shall ensure that each school implements the supervisory union's written and delivered curriculum.
- **2121.3. Needs Based Professional Learning.** Each supervisory union shall develop and implement a system of appropriate needs-based professional learning for all professional staff, including administrators and other staff involved in student instruction, as required in 16 V.S.A. §261a(a)(5).
- **2123.2. Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System.** Each supervisory union shall develop, and each school shall implement, a local comprehensive assessment system

Curriculum Coordination

- Recommended SU/SD board policy
- Well defined formal curriculum
- Coherent approach to literacy instruction; literacy plan?

Needs-Based Professional Learning

- Recommended SU/SD board policy
- Connect professional learning plan to continuous improvement plan
- Use data to evaluate and target professional development
- Focus professional development on improving Tier 1 instruction including literacy instruction

Local Assessment System

- Description of key assessments used across the entire system district
- Include state assessments (achievement) and benchmark assessments (growth)
- Consider "assessment efficiency" or use of data at formative, administrative, and policy levels. To what extent can data from an assessment:
 - Inform instruction (formative)
 - Evaluate practice (administrative)
 - Inform board decision making (policy)



Checking the Oil

A good literacy benchmark assessment system is like checking the oil on a car – it doesn't tell us everything, but it can tell us something very important.

Board Governance

- Adopt Policy Governance as model
- Boards engage stakeholders to determine desired Ends
- Codify Ends in policy
- Monitor incremental student performance against policy criteria
- Evaluate superintendent performance relative to student outcomes

"The research is clear: the effectiveness of a teacher has greater impact on student outcomes than any other school-based factor, including curriculum, purchased programs or teaching approach."

- DMG Report

One of the most important resources in the improvement of educational processes is time.

One of the root causes of "initiative fatigue" is the inability of a school district to respond as a system.

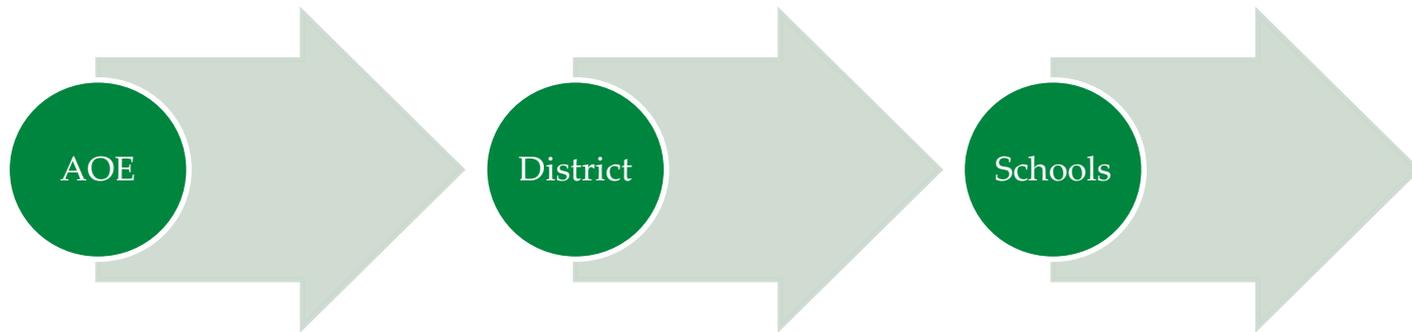
We can create more time for instruction by leveraging systems.

Strengthening Systems to Create More Time

- Curriculum Coordination and Professional Development – spend less time on curriculum development and more time on instructional improvement
- Assessment – Use a high quality benchmark assessment to replace less valid (useful) and efficient formative assessments
- Automate data collection and arrangement to increase time for data analysis

Strategy #2: Leverage Statewide Systems

System Roles and Responsibilities



AOE Purpose (Draft)

The Agency of Education implements state and federal laws, policies, and regulations to ensure all Vermont learners have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities. The Agency accomplishes this mission through the provision of leadership, support, and oversight of Vermont's public education system.

By leadership, we mean . . .

By support, we mean . . .

By oversight, we mean . . .

Shift to Systems Best Practices

In a system, traditional best practices are just good ideas unless they can satisfy two systems criteria:

High Leverage - for a relatively small amount of input there is significant positive impact on student learning

Transferable – quickly identify and scale good instructional practices across the entire system

- David Hargreaves

Statewide Systems

- Curriculum – to what extent could we shift curriculum development to a central/state model to focus more time on instructional improvement locally?
- Professional Development – to what extent could a needs-based PD assessment be done statewide and then major PD initiatives rolled out under state sponsorship?
- Data and Assessment – to what extent could we implement a statewide benchmark assessment to provide a consistent, valid, and reliable measurement of incremental student growth? Deploy a statewide data portal with common visualization tools?

Thank you!