

# Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Myth Busters

## Myth 1: MTSS is new and in addition to response to intervention (RTI).

### —Myth 1 Busted—

- The term “MTSS” is increasingly used nationwide to describe the framework that encompasses supports for the whole child, including academics, behavior, and mental health.
- Though the terminology may be new to some people, the framework itself and the concepts have a long history of implementation and a strong evidence base.
- RTI and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) are examples of tiered systems under the MTSS umbrella. Thinking of these frameworks within the broader view of MTSS can allow for better integration of interventions and supports.
- Effective implementation of MTSS helps districts and schools streamline their efforts to more efficiently meet the needs of all students.

## Myth 2: An MTSS framework should be used only when skill deficits are apparent.

### —Myth 2 Busted—

- MTSS is a proactive approach for schoolwide implementation of evidence-based instruction and intervention.
- A primary component of MTSS is using assessment data to drive differentiated instruction and decision making for all students.
- MTSS involves universal intervention for all, targeted intervention for some, and intensive intervention for a small number of students.
- Students with disabilities should have access to all tiers in MTSS.

## Myth 3: MTSS is not my job.

### —Myth 3 Busted—

- MTSS is a schoolwide framework where everyone has a role to play—teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, counselors, specialists, caregivers, etc.
- MTSS is provided through the collaborative efforts of general and special education.
- Student support teams should represent a cross-section of knowledge and expertise. Such teams might include general education teachers, special education teachers, interventionists, specialists (reading, math, behavior, etc.), administrators, school counselors, social workers, and evaluation personnel (diagnosticians, licensed specialists in school psychology, etc.).

## Myth 4: Behavior and mental health are not as important as academics in MTSS.

### —Myth 4 Busted—

- Senate Bill 11 and House Bill 18, passed in 2019, require schools to address the mental health and wellness of students. To meet this challenge, MTSS provides an intentional and systematic approach for meeting students' academic, behavioral, and mental health needs.
- Some people worry that a focus on behavior and mental health detracts from the academic mission of schools. The research demonstrates the opposite:
  - Problem behaviors have many adverse effects on the school environment, including lower student achievement, reduced teacher effectiveness, and impeded school improvement initiatives.
  - Conversely, multiple randomized control trials have shown several positive outcomes associated with schoolwide behavior and mental health supports—all of which correlate with improved student achievement.
- MTSS is a comprehensive framework that, when implemented effectively, can provide students with the academic, behavioral, social, and mental health supports needed to progress toward instruction and intervention goals.
- Many teachers and educators report feeling ill-equipped in this area. Ongoing training and professional development are vital to sustained implementation.

### References

- Durlak, J. A., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., Weissberg, R. P., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405–432. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development, 88*(4), 1156–1171. doi:10.1111/cdev.12864

This document was created in collaboration with the TIER Network.  
For more information, visit <https://tier.tea.texas.gov>

