

# Connecting the Dots:

## California MTSS and Inclusive Academic Instruction

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework designed to address academic, behavioral, and social and emotional learning in a fully integrated system of support. Teams use data to guide instruction and identify students who require additional support for increasingly intensive interventions based on need. Student supports are universally designed, differentiated, and integrated. MTSS offers the potential to create needed systemic change through intentional design and redesign of services and supports to quickly identify and match to the needs of all students.

In California MTSS, counties, regions and state educational agencies are the source of technical support, local educational agencies are the place of intervention and schools are the place of transformation. MTSS is a framework that supports equity-based inclusion within a multi-tiered framework.



### What is Inclusive Academic Instruction?

The MTSS Domain includes three important features: inclusive academic, inclusive behavior, and inclusive social and emotional instruction. All three are of equal importance and must be in place in order to meet the needs of the whole child. When considering the needs of the whole child, educators utilize a multi-tiered system of support to provide increasing levels of support and interventions for students who need it. Advanced tier interventions are available for all students, regardless of eligibility for other supports and services (IEP, EL Plan, GATE Plan, etc).

All students have access to a universal core curricula for all content areas that are research-based and aligned to content standards and frameworks. Educators differentiate instruction and intentionally design lesson plans using the principles of Universal Design for Learning based on academic need. In addition, flexible grouping of students is used to maximize student engagement and participation in the learning. Collaboration between grade level and/or content area educators and special educators occurs to monitor students' academic progress via a comprehensive assessment system. Universal screeners are conducted three times a year on all students. This data is used to identify students who need more or less intensive supports and guide instructional decisions. Progress monitoring data is gathered to ensure that students are acquiring the academic content. The data also provides information on the effectiveness of instructional practices, resources, curriculum, and the capacity of the individuals and the school system providing the instruction. Supplemental and intensified interventions for all academic areas are matched by type and intensity to student need. The interventions are research-based, delivered by skilled, trained interventionists, have clearly defined decision rules for access and exit, have procedures to monitor fidelity of implementation and overall effectiveness of the intervention.



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### How do MTSS and Inclusive Academic Instruction align?

All students, regardless of age, race, zip code, language, physical challenge, intellectual ability, capacity, or competency are provided with the most inclusive learning environment. Inclusive academic instruction moves away from previous instructional practices where students were segregated and placed in categorical classrooms. Equitable learning environments ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in the general education curriculum, instruction, and activities of their grade level peers. Therefore, promoting the maxim “All Means All,” which ensures LEAs and schools successfully implement efforts to meet the needs of each and every student.

In order for inclusive academic instruction to occur, schools and LEAs effectively utilize teams that include diverse perspectives; including but not limited to administrators, teachers, education specialists, counselors, psychologists, instructional coaches, gifted and talented (GATE), and English Language Learner (EL) specialists. Teams collaborate as they analyze results from a comprehensive assessment system that includes student outcome, implementation, and capacity data for continuous improvement. Formal and informal procedures are in place to monitor the use and effectiveness of instructional practices and supports. Metrics include, but are not limited to the following: formative and summative student data, walk-through observations, educator evaluations, lesson plans, master schedules, self-assessment reflections (e.g., Fidelity Integrity Assessment-FIA), and formal assessments (e.g., Fidelity of Implementation Tool-FIT). Universal screeners, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools provide the necessary information on student performance to inform decisions regarding the appropriate continuum of support, instructional practices, and selection of curricula.

There are a number of common structures and practices that support inclusive academic instruction, including but not limited to: Universal Design for Learning, co-teaching, culturally responsive teaching, etc. When implemented well, they ensure that all students are receiving high quality instruction. Students receive the supports they need when they need them; from the staff members who are best able to support them. Specialized strategies are not provided to ALL students (ie. a student without an IEP may be able to benefit from strategies used for students with IEP’s, such as reading strategies, sensory supports, behavioral supports).

### Want to learn more about Inclusive Academic Instruction to support your MTSS work?

Check out these resources to support your MTSS work:

- [Center on Response to Intervention Screening Tools Chart](#)
- Connecting the Dots: MTSS and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)
- Connecting the Dots: MTSS and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
- [Co-teaching](#) - The Co-teaching Connection, Marilyn Friend
- [Equity As a Basis for Inclusive Educational Systems Change](#), Sailor, 2017
- Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Blending RTI and PBIS, McIntosh, K. and Goodman, S., 2016
- [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#)
- [SWIFT Education Center](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning](#)
- [What It Takes to Make Co-teaching Work](#)

