

Connecting the Dots:

California MTSS and Students with Disabilities

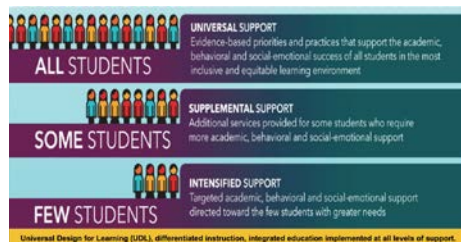
Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework designed to address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning in a fully integrated system of support. Teams use data to guide instruction and identify students who require additional support for increasingly intensive interventions based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



Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities in California have access to the same continuum of support offered to their peers. MTSS provides a coherent system of education in which all students, including students with disabilities, are considered general education students firstⁱ. This means that every student receives access to grade-level curricula and California state standards and most students are served exclusively in the general education classroom. Students with disabilities benefit from general education teachers and education specialists collaborating to provide optimal instructionⁱⁱ. This means that students with disabilities will have access to Universal Support, Supplemental Support and Intensified Support within the inclusive practice of the MTSS framework.



Inclusive practice refers to the instructional and behavioral strategies that improve outcomes for all students in the general education settingⁱⁱⁱ. All students receive support that is universally accessible to nearly everyone, with and without disabilities, using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This universal support includes academic content

instruction, school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and the core competencies of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Some students, with and without disabilities, might additionally need supplemental support. This might be a small group intervention in Language arts, a social skills group or targeted behavioral support. A few students, with or without disabilities, might need intensified support that might include one-on-one counseling, intensive math instruction or increasing behavioral interventions.



Connecting the Dots:

California MTSS and Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities that receive support from an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan should receive accommodations and modifications through universal, supplemental and intensive support as determined by their IEP/504 team. For example, a student might be receiving Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) in the area of Language Arts. This student should receive access to universal supports and accommodations in the general education setting. The general education teacher collaborates with the education specialist to determine the optimal instructional approach for supplemental supports in the general education setting to work on fluency goals. If additional, intensive support is appropriate, the team discusses strategies for intervention within the site's MTSS continuum of supports.

Another example might be a student receiving accommodations within the learning environment through a 504 plan. This student receives universal supports in the general education setting, as well as accommodations outlined within the 504 plan. The student might need supplemental behavioral supports through a program like Check In/Check Out. This is available to any student, with or without disabilities, through the school's PBIS framework. If intensive behavioral support becomes necessary, the student would receive those supports in addition to universal and supplemental intervention.

California's Statewide Task Force on Special Education notes "special education teachers hold a critical place in this system, selecting, designing and delivering appropriate early intervening services and, when it becomes apparent that extra, scaffolded and targeted supports are not producing the desired effect, providing the additional special education services that only a teachers trained specifically for this role can provide. Even then, most children would spend as much time as possible with their classmates in their general education classrooms"^{iv}

i California Statewide Task Force on Special Education. 2015. *One System: Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students*.

ii California Department of Education. 2014. *California English Language Arts/ English Language Development Framework*

iii Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2017. *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice*.

iv California Statewide Task Force on Special Education. 2015. *One System: Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students*. p.8.

