



What is MTSS and Why Schools Need It

Public schools have long recognized the need for additional student supports, including mental health care and social-emotional support, but have lacked resources to meet this need in any systemic way. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, California's public school systems have increased urgency to address the many challenges students face, which have been exacerbated during the ongoing health crisis.

California has made significant new state investments in mental health and wellbeing, leading to increased funding for youth services. In addition, the significant new state and federal COVID-19 relief funds have been directed to schools to address students' social-emotional and mental health needs as well as provide academic support.

The [California Multi-Tiered System of Support \(CA MTSS\)](#), provides a framework for school districts and school sites to deploy these resources in a systemic way to provide all students with supports that promote overall well being. The CA MTSS framework aligns academic, behavioral, social and emotional learning, and mental health supports to quickly identify and match to the needs of all students and close equity gaps.

"MTSS predates the pandemic, but the framework feels like it was made for this moment. It can be thought of as a schoolwide commitment to a set of proven strategies that address academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs." - Al Mijares, Orange County Superintendent of Schools

The CA MTSS Framework braids numerous state, regional, county, district, school, family and community resources to provide districts and schools a systemic approach for addressing each and every student's academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning through a continuum of support that is universally designed and differentiated to meet the needs of the whole child.

The evidence-based domains and features of the California MTSS framework provide opportunities for schools and districts to strengthen school, family, and community partnerships while developing the whole child in the most inclusive, equitable learning environment.

The CA MTSS Framework promotes the maxim "All Means All" to ensure that local educational agencies and schools successfully implement efforts to meet the needs of each and every student. It promotes efforts to ensure all students participate in the general education curriculum, instruction, and activities of their grade-level peers.

California MTSS FRAMEWORK

The California MTSS Framework includes 5 Domains and 11 Features. The needs of the Whole Child are successfully met when ALL Domains and Features are effectively implemented with fidelity.



Whole Child Domain



Essential Domains and Features to Support the Whole Child



Adapted with permission from: SWIFT Education Center. (2016). Domains and Features Placemat. Lawrence, KS. swiftschools.org

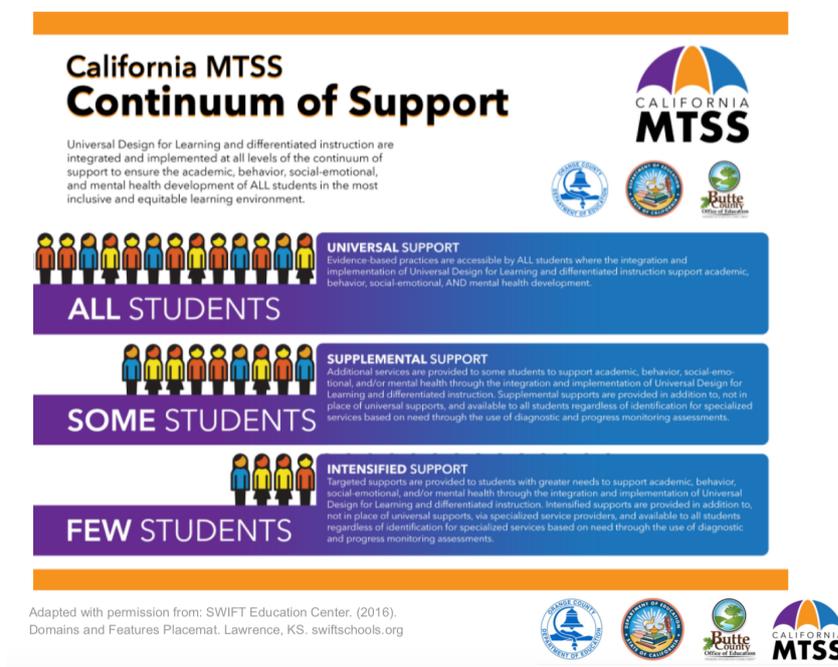


The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), aligned to California's Eight State Priorities, provide the infrastructure for building a statewide system of support. California's Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework is a driver for implementation.

Designed to Meet Needs of Every Student

The CA MTSS Framework provides the structure needed to achieve an inclusive, equitable, and positive learning environment for each and every child. It applies a holistic and customized approach to each student's unique needs by including opportunities for universal, supplemental, and intensified supports to cover the wide spectrum of student needs.

Built into the CA MTSS Framework is a continuum that emphasizes universal support must be provided for all students, recognizing that some students may need supplemental support at times, and a few students may require more intensified support sometimes to be successful. The framework allows for variability and customization so that the breadth of needs is met for every student.



The pillars of CA MTSS include collaboration, use of data, differentiated instruction, and proactive targeted interventions that are all intended to boost student success and proactively address any existing gaps in their current needs. Schools can use these benchmarks to increase student attendance, lower dropout and disciplinary rates, improve school climate and environments, and boost academic performance.

"Rural schools wrote the book on serving the whole child and the whole community. It is a part of our fabric. The CA MTSS Framework provides rural schools and districts with an approach to implement equitable practices unique to rural areas. CA MTSS implementation reveals the quick-to-adapt nature of rural and small systems and gives us the path to share our strengths with the rest of the field."

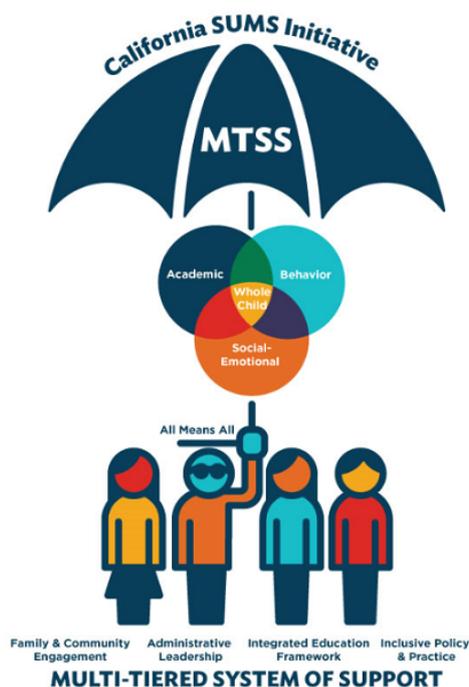
- Mary Sakuma, Butte County Superintendent of Schools

Implementation

Implementation of CA MTSS utilizes a strength-based approach by assessing what is already in place at the school and district, and utilizes continuous improvement, problem-solving, evidence-based practices, strong leadership teams, and continuous use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions and resources.

The Orange County Department of Education and the Butte County Office of Education have partnered to develop and disseminate resources and technical assistance to support implementation of MTSS in diverse schools and district contexts across the state, including rural areas of California.

In partnership with the California Department of Education, the two county offices of education offer grant opportunities for school sites, districts, and county offices of education in order to build capacity for coaching and implementation of MTSS. This state-funded effort is called the [California Scale-Up MTSS Statewide \(SUMS\) Initiative](#).



Studying the Impact of MTSS

Analysis of student outcome data shows that implementation of MTSS makes a positive impact. Five years into California's MTSS implementation by a cohort of districts that received grants through the SUMS Initiative, the number of students referred for special education has decreased, rates of suspension and expulsion have decreased, bullying and harassment have decreased, and discipline referrals are decreasing. Meanwhile, students reporting increased positive school engagement, and districts are showing gains in student achievement on the California School Dashboard in english language arts and math.

In partnership with Orange County Department of Education and Butte County Office of Education, UCLA's Center for the Transformation of Schools (CTS) is studying the impact of a [pilot program aimed at addressing school suspension disparities apparent by race](#) and helping schools to change the way they approach discipline. The UCLA Research Consortium is also working with the CTS staff and the CA MTSS leadership in Orange and Butte County Offices of Education to explore new research that can inform efforts to address discipline disparities apparent by race and income and to improve learning conditions for historically marginalized groups.

For more information, visit <https://ocde.us/MTSS>