



System-Level Continuous Improvement: Tier 1 Problem Solving

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Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
- The IRIS Center Peabody College Vanderbilt University
- Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- RTI Action Network
- Oregon RTI
- Neuhaus Education Center
- Jason Harlacher, Jon Potter, and Adam Collins

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Group Agreements

We are **Responsible**

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

We are **Engaged**

- Share “air time”
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
 - Chat, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, unmute
 - Ask questions

Purpose

- Our purpose is to strengthen our system-level approach to supporting all students by implementing a structured, data-driven continuous improvement protocol within the MTSS framework.
- This process will enable leadership teams to identify and remove systemic barriers, align resources, prioritize strategic actions, and build a culture of continuous learning that leads to sustained student success.

Intended Outcomes

1. Build knowledge around the essential components of MTSS, including Tier 1 Standards of Practice
2. Use the problem-solving process to interpret universal literacy screening data and determine whether a systemic need exists
3. Examine schoolwide and/or districtwide trends to develop a plan for improvement

Setting Up Our Time for Success

- Engage and Reflect
 - Dropbox link with resources
 - Active participation (chats, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, etc.)
- Apply
 - Group activities
 - Action planning and next steps

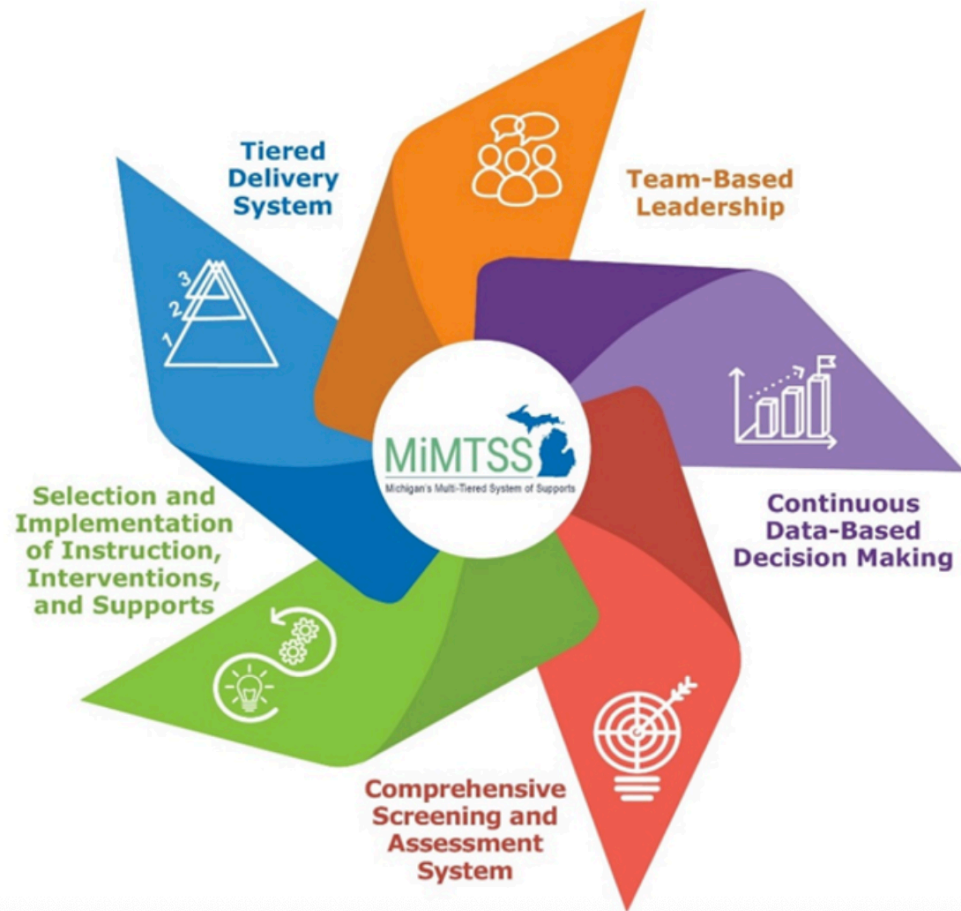


Agenda

- 1.0 MTSS Essential Components
- 2.0 MTSS and the Continuous Improvement Process
- 3.0 Tier 1 Problem-Solving Process: Beginning of the Year
- 4.0 Action Planning and Next Steps

1.0 MTSS Essential Components

MTSS Essential Components



“MTSS means a comprehensive framework that includes 3 distinct tiers of instructional support and is composed of a collection of evidence-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of a whole pupil at all achievement levels.”
(Public Act 146)

MDE MTSS Practice Profile (2020)

Public Act 146 MTSS Connections

- The law outlines critical features of an MTSS framework, including data-based decision making (DBDM)
- Requires a list of valid and reliable screening and progress monitoring reading assessments for selection and use by schools
- Language that outlines requirements of providing an MTSS framework to students showing characteristics of dyslexia
- Language that outlines requirements that all literacy consultants, coaches, and others providing reading intervention/instruction receive training on MTSS, dyslexia, structured literacy, etc.



Activity 1.1 Assessment Current State

ISD/District Leadership:

1. Locate the MDE MTSS Practice Profile
2. Review items 4.1-4.2
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

School/Building Leadership:

1. Locate the R-TFI that represents you
2. Review item 1.4
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

MTSS Framework: A System for All Learners

- Tier 1: Universal instruction and differentiation for all students
- Tier 2: Supplemental, targeted interventions intended for some learners who require more (support/extension) beyond Tier 1
- Tier 3: Intensified/individualized intervention instruction for students most at risk
- Big Idea: Tier 1 instruction is the primary prevention of reading failure

Adapted from MDE MTSS Practice Profile (2020)

Activity 1.2 Tiered Delivery Current State

ISD/District Leadership:

1. Locate the MDE MTSS Practice Profile
2. Review items 2.1-2.7
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

School/Building Leadership:

1. Locate the R-TFI that represents you
2. Review items 1.21, 2.1-2.5
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

MTSS Tier 1 Commitments

- A strong core (Tier 1) = fewer Tier 2/3 needs
- High-quality, evidence-based instruction (combination of whole group and small group)
- Includes adequate time to teach content, and sufficient opportunities to respond/practice/receive feedback
- Includes the ongoing use of data to inform instruction and to help identify learners who may need additional support

Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (2023)

High-Quality Tier 1 Instruction

- **High-leverage practices**
 - Effective at improving outcomes across grades and content levels
- **Evidence-based practices**
 - Effective at improving outcomes for specific content
- High-quality instructional materials
- Data-informed and aligned across tiers

Public Act 146 Tier 1 Connections

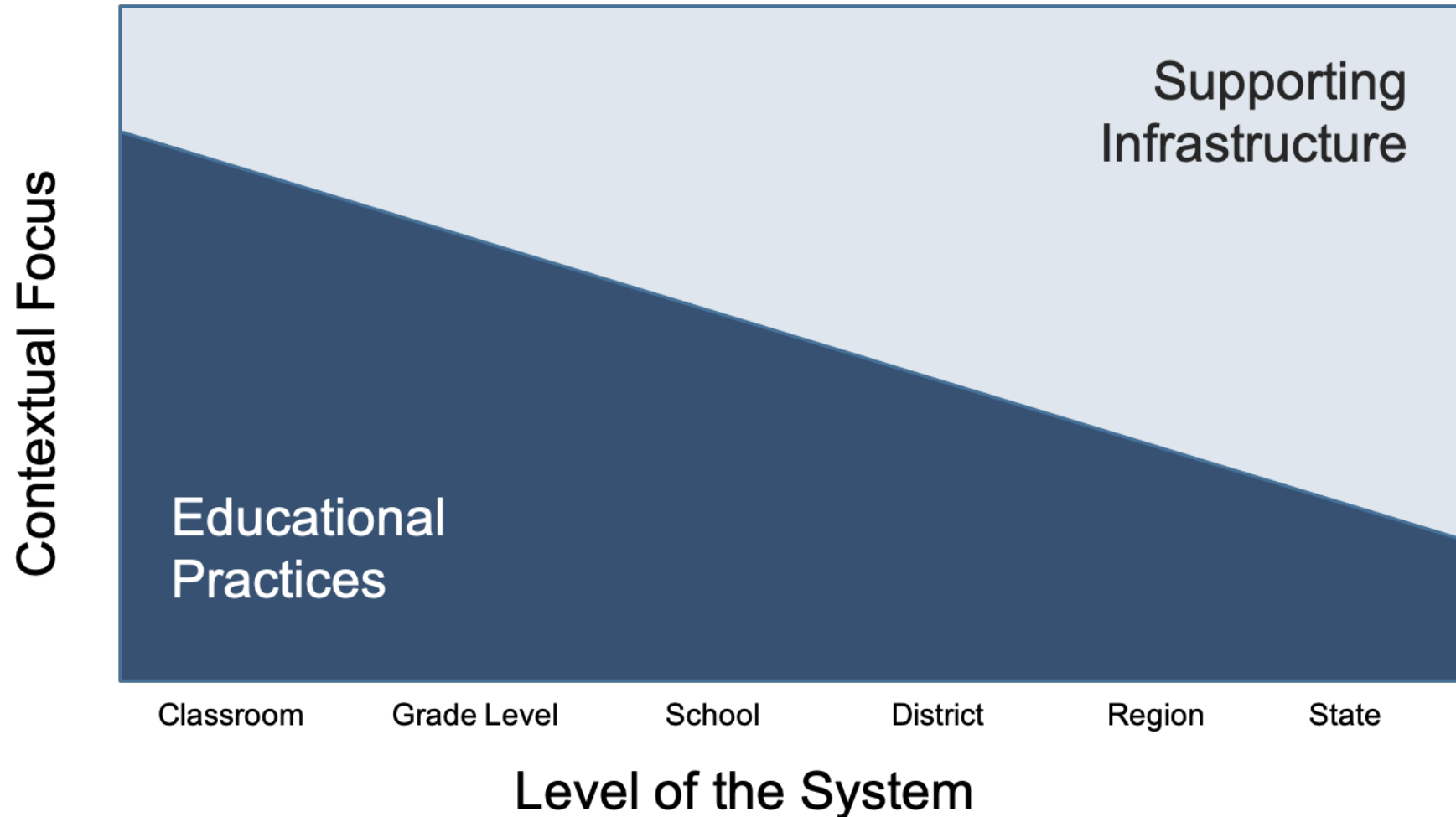
- The law outlines the features of Tier 1, class-wide reading instruction
- Requires a published list of evidence-based Tier 1, class-wide elementary reading curricula/materials that are aligned with science of reading methods that research has shown to improve literacy outcomes
- Language that outlines instructional methods to teach decoding and word recognition using a “code-emphasis instructional approach”

Tier 1 Teaming Structures

- District/ISD Teams
- School/Building Teams
- Grade-Level /Department Level Teams
- Classroom



Framework for Addressing Practices and Supports



(McIntosh & Goodman, 2016)



Activity 1.3 TBL Current State

ISD/District Leadership:

1. Locate the MDE MTSS Practice Profile
2. Review items 1.1-1.5
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

School/Building Leadership:

1. Locate the R-TFI that represents you
2. Review items 1.1-1.2
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

Team Based Leadership Expected Use

- Leads and coordinates MTSS implementation efforts
- Represents key stakeholders including an executive leader
- Allocates resources to MTSS professional learning and coaching
- Communicates regularly about MTSS implementation efforts
- Uses a process to address implementation challenges



Activity 1.4 TBL Reflection

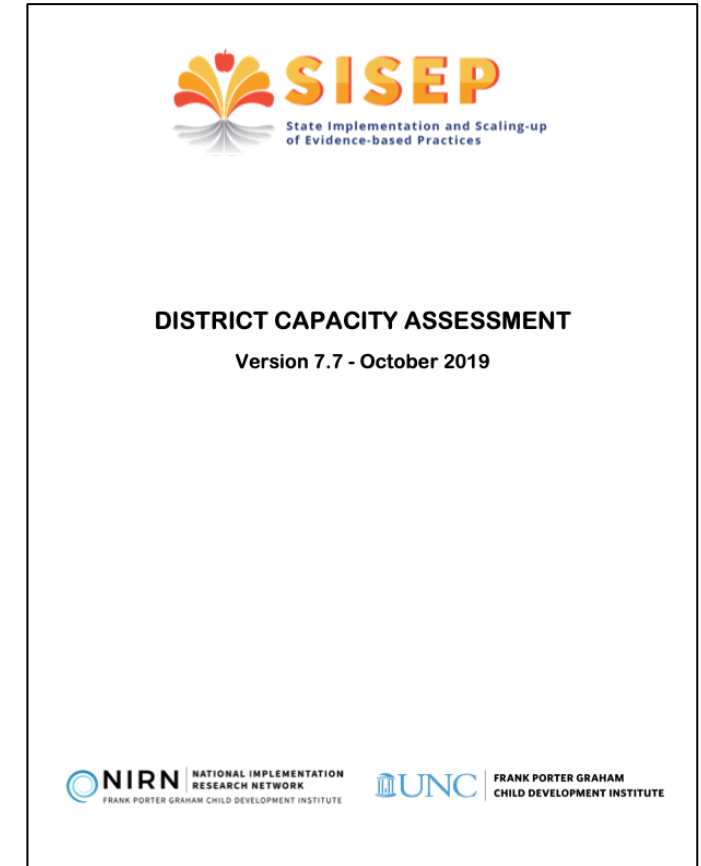
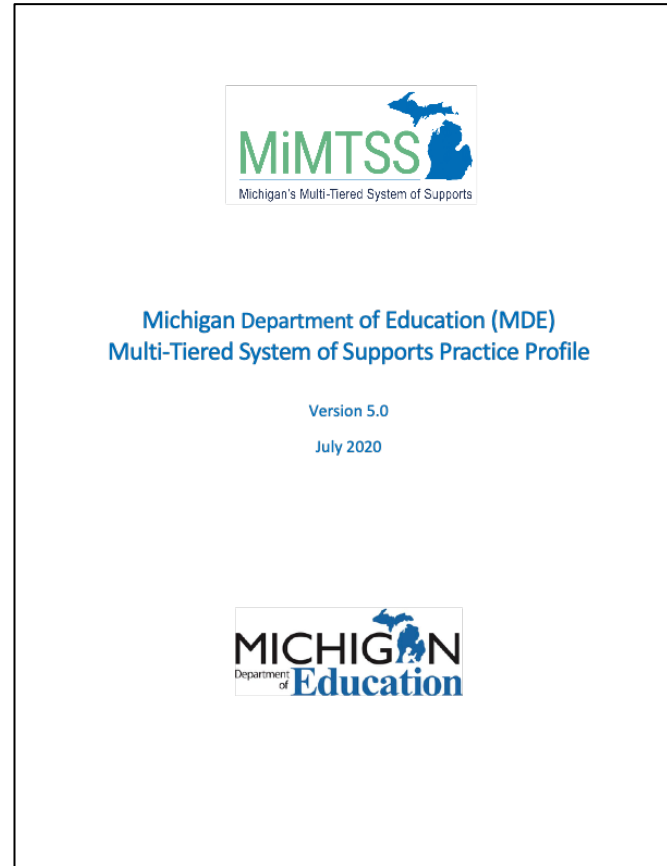
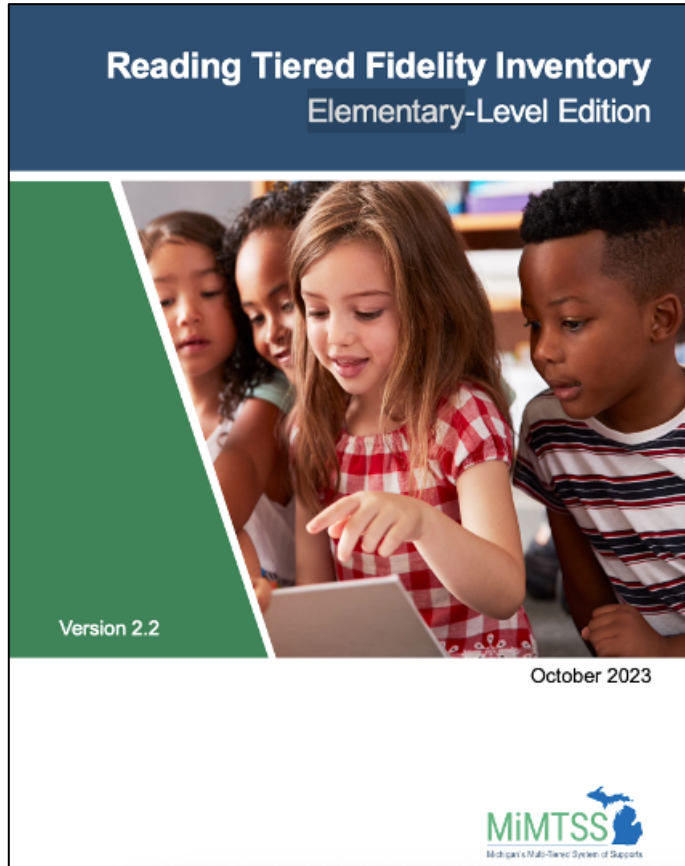
If you are from a building or district:

- Reflect on where your district and schools are with leveraging Team-Based Leadership to support MTSS efforts
 - What might be some next steps to strengthen what already exists?
 - Is there shared understanding about the unique bodies of work at the district and school levels to make MTSS happen?
 - Who might you communicate with?

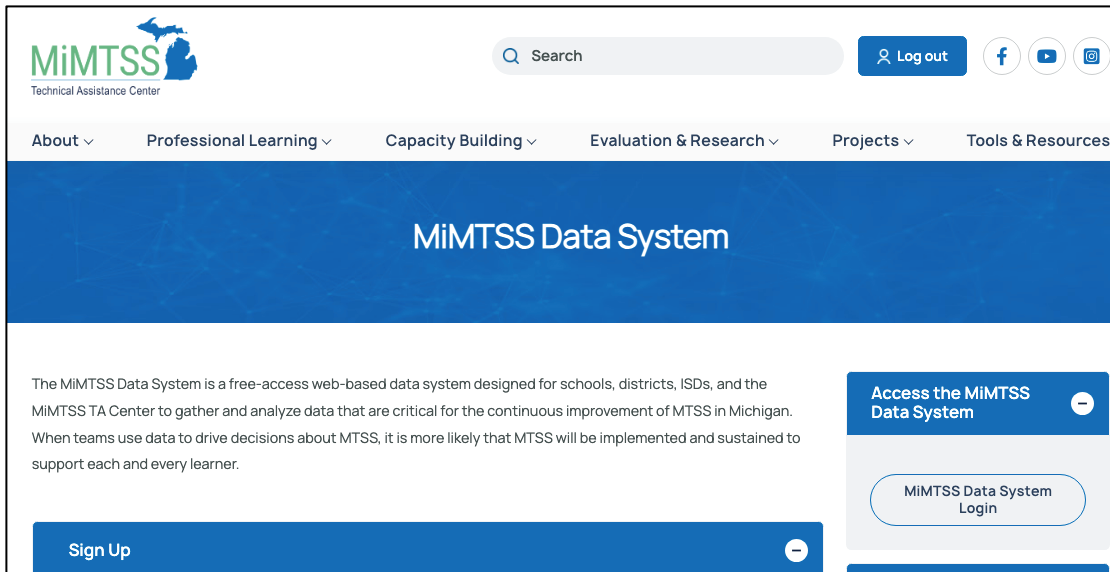
If you are from an ISD:

- How might you support districts and schools within your region in strengthening their Team-Based Leadership to implement MTSS?

MTSS Implementation Tools



MiMTSS Data System



A free-access web-based data system designed for LEAs, ISDs and MDE to gather and analyze data that are critical for the continuous improvement

Data Housed in the MiMTSS Data System

- Capacity Assessments
 - District Capacity Assessment, Regional Capacity Assessment, Installation Checklists
- Fidelity Assessments
 - SWPBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory, Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory, Installation Checklists, Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality
- Student Assessments
 - Aggregate: discipline referrals, early warning indicators, Acadience Reading K-6, 7-9, School Climate Survey
- Other
 - Personnel; Training Events, Participants, Evaluations; School/District/ISD facilities



Activity 1.5 MTSS Tools Chat

1. The tool(s) that describes the unique activities of a **district** team to support an MTSS framework is...
2. The tool(s) that describes the **school-level** activities to support a reading MTSS framework is...
3. Share an assessment that you have used before
4. Share an assessment that you are currently unfamiliar with
5. Share an assessment that is important to your MTSS decision-making that you do not see on the list

Connecting to Student Outcomes

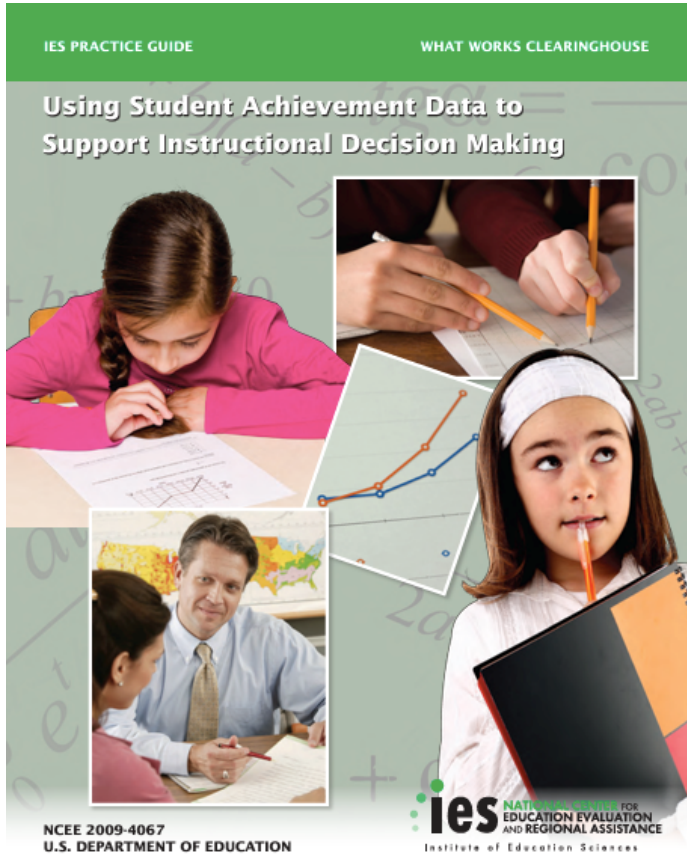
1. Measure MTSS implementation (R-TFI, DCA, etc.)
2. Use tool results to identify specific areas to strengthen MTSS practices
3. Use the problem-solving process to gauge the health of your system and determine priorities for action planning
4. Educators & staff improve their practices for implementing MTSS as expected
5. Educators & staff's improved MTSS practices help lead to improved student outcomes

2.0 MTSS and the Continuous Improvement Process

Why Engage in Continuous Improvement?

- A cornerstone of implementing a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework is engaging in continuous improvement through a data-based decision-making process
- District-level data review provides a platform to engage in this process multiple times per year with the goal of improving fidelity of implementation and student outcomes
- Aligns with the MTSS essential component of Continuous Data-Based Decision Making from MDE's MTSS Practice Profile

What Does the Research Say?



1. Make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement
2. Teach students to examine their own data and set learning goals
3. Establish a clear vision for school-wide data use
4. Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school
5. Develop and maintain a districtwide data system

IES Practice Guide: Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making, 2009



Activity 2.1 DBDM Current State

ISD/District Leadership:

1. Locate the MDE MTSS Practice Profile
2. Review items 5.1-5.3
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

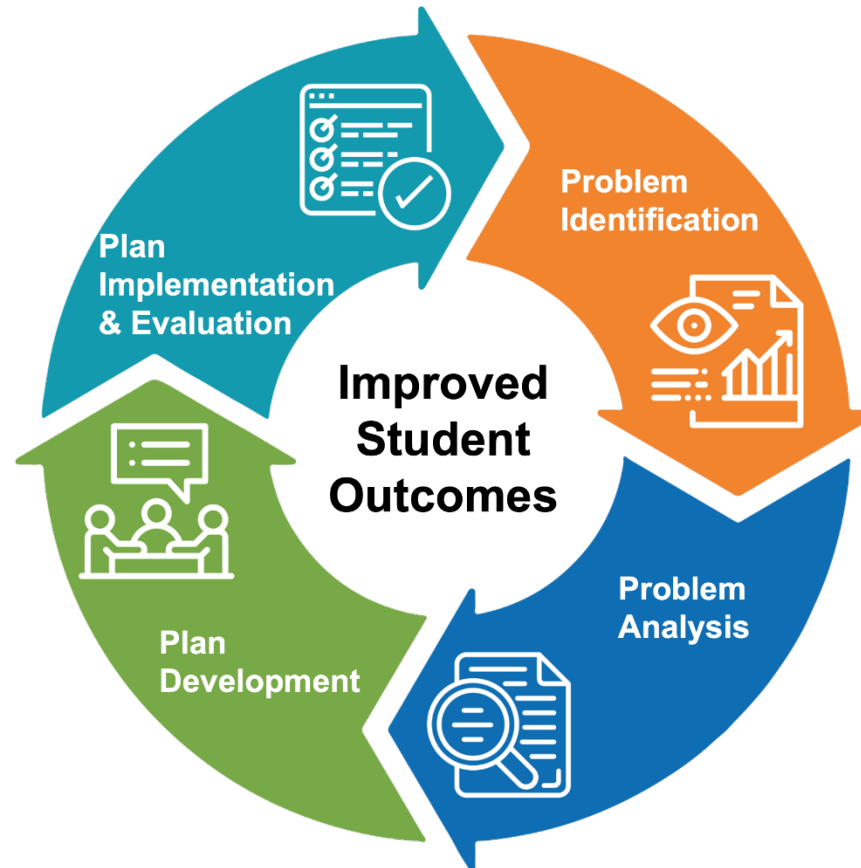
School/Building Leadership:

1. Locate the R-TFI that represents you
2. Review items 1.5-1.6, 1.20-1.21
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

Preparing for a Continuous Improvement Effort

1. Establish teaming structures
2. Assess readiness & make a commitment to MTSS
3. Self-assess/take an inventory of their current system
4. Build buy-in and understanding of MTSS
5. Establish assessments and screen all student
6. Respond to data by adjusting core instruction and interventions
7. Reflect on MTSS implementation and continuously improve

Continuous Improvement Problem-Solving Process



MDE MTSS Practice Profile (2023)

What is the Result of Data Review?

A **team**

- Uses **data** to develop or refine its **plan**
- Develops a **summary** of the plan to **communicate** to stakeholders
- Ensures the district/school **follows through** on the plan

In order to **improve outcomes** for students



Activity 2.2 Retrieval Practice

- Use your newly acquired or refined understanding of the four-step problem-solving process to respond to the following multiple-choice questions
- This activity is meant to help you check in with your thinking and apply what you know
- Pay attention to which questions come easily and which ones require a bit more thought



Question 1

How many steps are in the problem-solving process?

- A. Five
- B. Six
- C. Four
- D. Three
- E. I am not sure and could use a bit of review



Question 2

During which step of the problem-solving process do we answer why the problem is happening? What is our new objective?

- A. Problem Identification
- B. Problem Analysis
- C. Plan Development
- D. Plan Implementation and Evaluation
- E. I am not sure and could use a bit of review



Question 3

Fill in the blanks in the statement below:

We engage in continuous improvement to identify possible ____, monitor ____, and measure the ____ of ____.

- A. Risk, progress, effectiveness, instruction
- B. Progress, risk, instruction, effectiveness
- C. Evidence, progress, instruction, effectiveness
- D. Risk, all, outcomes, students
- E. I am not sure and could use a bit of review



Question 4

What is the purpose of the four-step problem solving process? Hint: What is at the center of the graphic?

- A. A strong implementation plan
- B. Specific goals
- C. Improve student outcomes
- D. Submit plan to MDE
- E. I am not sure and could use a bit of review

Focus on Impact and Implementation

Impact Data

Is Tier 1 instruction resulting in a positive impact on learner outcomes?

- Are at least 80% of students successful with core supports?

Implementation Data

Delivering instruction:

- As designed
- With consistency
- Using appropriate materials
- With instructional integrity

Keep in Mind

- Fidelity of implementation happens **before** improved student outcomes
- Implementation data helps to explain the impact data
- This process will support connecting the data to provide an understanding of the needs and the context
- General guidelines for problem-solving:
 - Fidelity above 80% = evaluate impact
 - Fidelity below 80% = develop a plan to improve fidelity

MTSS Center American Institutes for Research (2025)



Activity 2.3 Implementation Group Chat

- What data do you currently collect to determine levels of implementation at the...
 - District level?
 - School level?
 - Classroom level?
- How do you currently use the data?

Important Distinctions: School & District

Level of the Cascade	Focus for Initial Data Discovery	Focus for Root Cause Analysis	Guiding Question for Root Cause Analysis
School	School-wide Student Outcomes	Fidelity to the School-wide MTSS Plan	What are the contributing factors related to fidelity of MTSS implementation that are impacting our student outcomes ?
District	Fidelity and Student Outcomes Across Schools	District Infrastructure to Support MTSS	What are the contributing factors related to our district infrastructure that are impacting fidelity of MTSS implementation AND student outcomes across schools ?

3.0 Tier 1 Problem-Solving

System-Level Problem-Solving Process

- Step 1: Problem Identification
- Step 2: Problem Analysis
- Step 3: Plan Development & Implementation
- Step 4: Plan Evaluation

Universal System-Level Problem-Solving Process

Version 1.0
August 2025



Purpose of the Problem-Solving Process Resource

- Guides system-level teams through the four-step continuous improvement process as they study their data
- Provides a structured process for Tier 1 problem-solving
- Designed for teams to customize to fit the needs of the context of their district/building
- Narrows your district's focus

Risk Classification

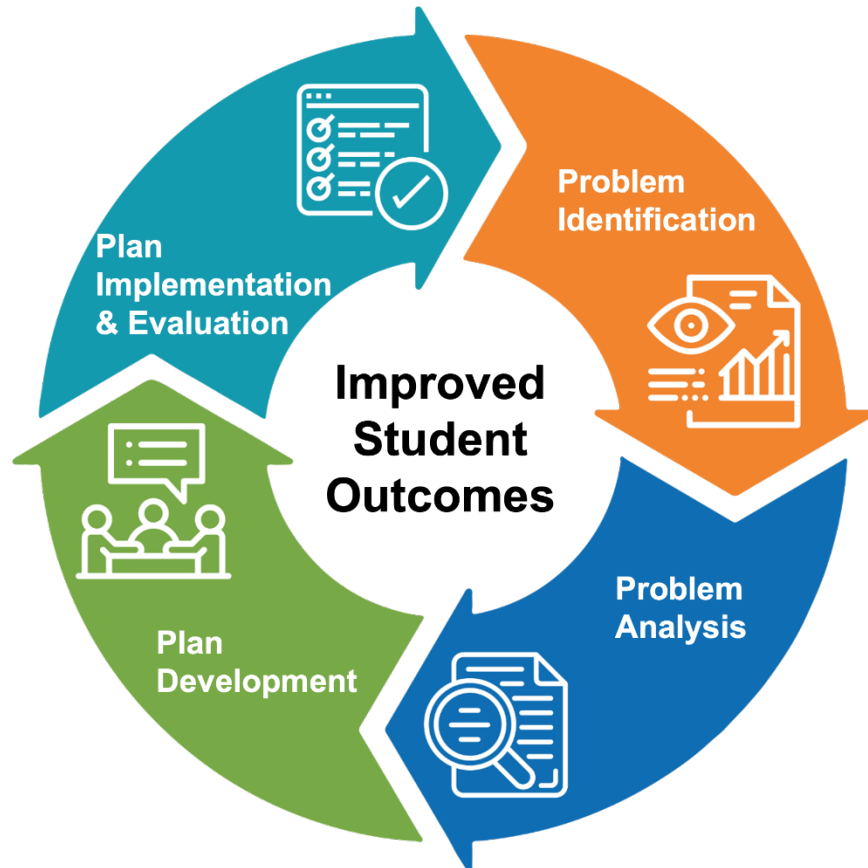
- **Low risk** – typically greater than an 80% chance of meeting expectations on a later assessment
- **Some risk** – typically a 50% chance of meeting expectations on a later assessment
- **High risk** – typically less than a 20% chance of meeting expectations on a later assessment



Activity 3.1 Preview and Prepare

- Locate the headings matching the 4 steps for Continuous Improvement
 - Problem Identification
 - Problem Analysis
 - Plan Development
 - Plan Implementation & Evaluation
 - As you browse, think about:
 - What stands out to you about the overall structure of the process?
 - Any surprises?
 - Confirmations?
-

Step 1: Problem Identification



Action Steps:

1. Review and analyze screening data
 - a) by building
 - b) by grade level
 - c) by student groups
2. Ensure fidelity of screening data
3. Determine effectiveness of the Tier 1 reading MTSS system

Review and Analyze Universal Screening Data

- By building
- By grade
- By student groups
- **Why:** Supports understanding of the full context
- **What:** Review and summarize current data
- **How:** Using both implementation and impact data

Ensure Fidelity of Screening Data

- Is the screener high quality, reliable, valid, and appropriate for your student population?
- Are there other district data sources available? Does the data confirm the screening results?
- Was the screener administered with fidelity? What data confirms this?
- Was the data entered accurately? What data confirms this?

Determine Effectiveness of the Tier 1 Reading Supports

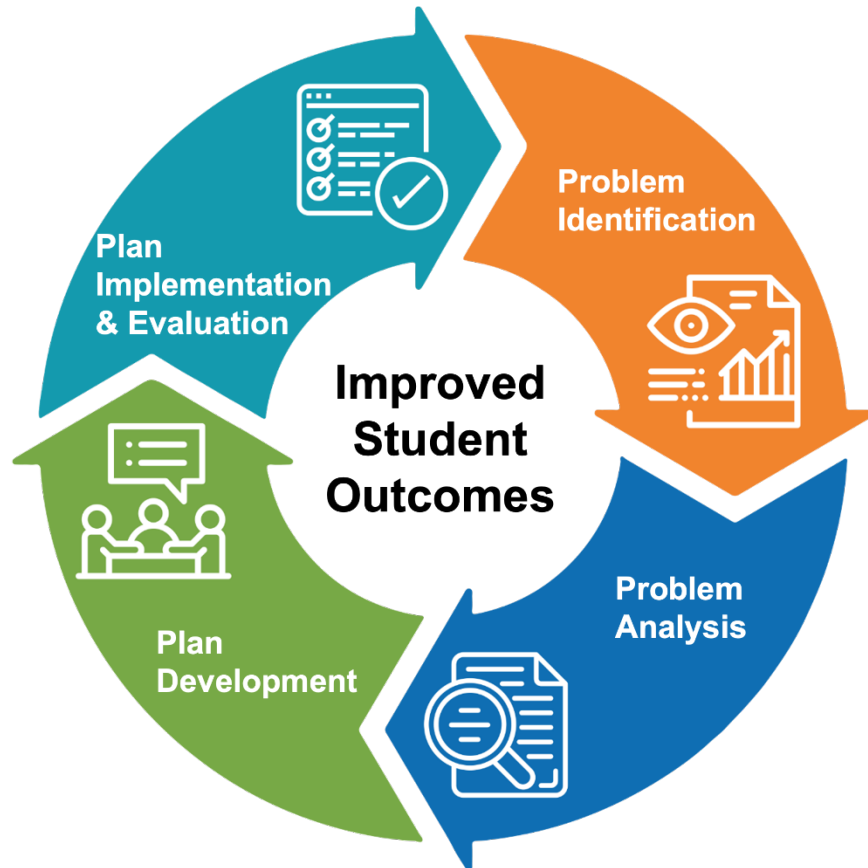
- Are at least 80% of students at each grade level successful with core supports alone?
- Are at least 80% of students in each subgroup successful with core supports alone?
- Are there patterns across schools, grades, or groups of students?



Activity 3.2 Problem Identification

1. Locate the problem-solving process document
2. Gather your universal screening data
3. Work through Step 1 of the problem-solving process

Step 2: Problem Analysis



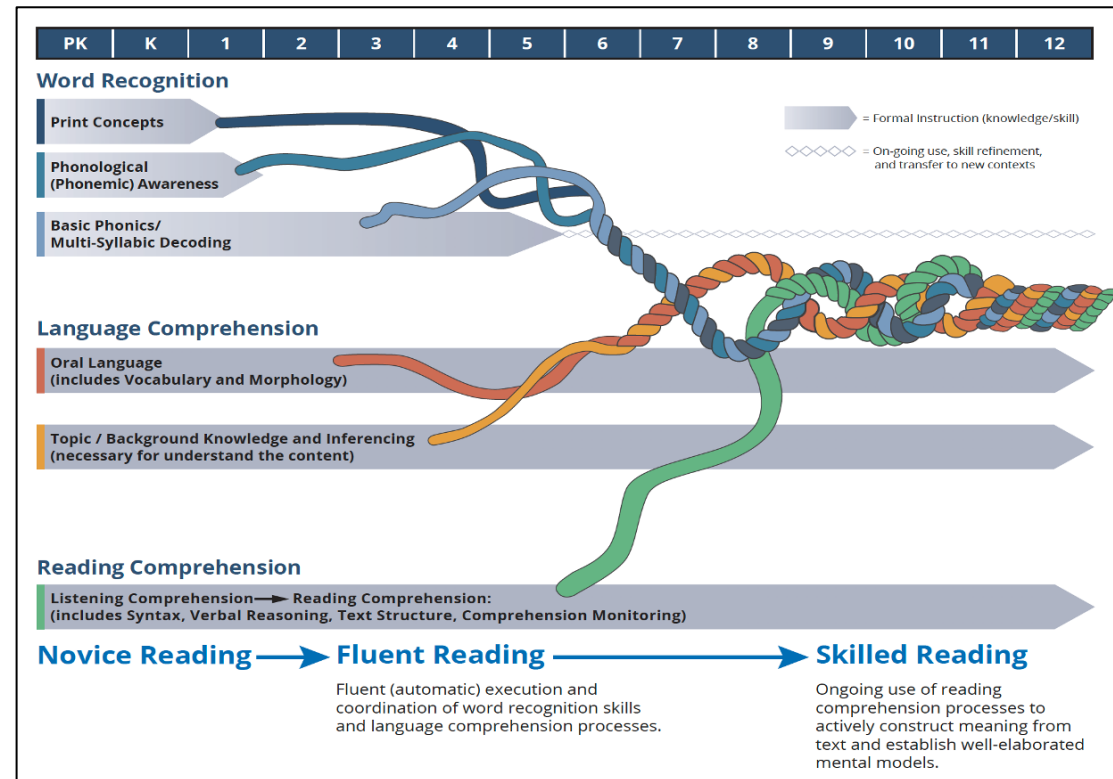
Action Steps:

1. Review & analyze
 - Subtest data
 - Implementation data
2. Examine disproportionality in student access to high-quality instruction & supports

Problem Analysis Overview

- **Why:** Supports a deeper understanding of the problem
- **What:** Analyze and interpret data
- **How:** Use your analysis of data to identify most important need and possible contributing factors

Reading Learning Progression



St. Martin et al. (2022)

Activity 3.3 Implementation Group Chat

- What data do you currently collect to determine levels of implementation at the...
 - District level?
 - School level?
 - Classroom level?
- How do you currently use the data?

Activity 3.4 Problem Analysis

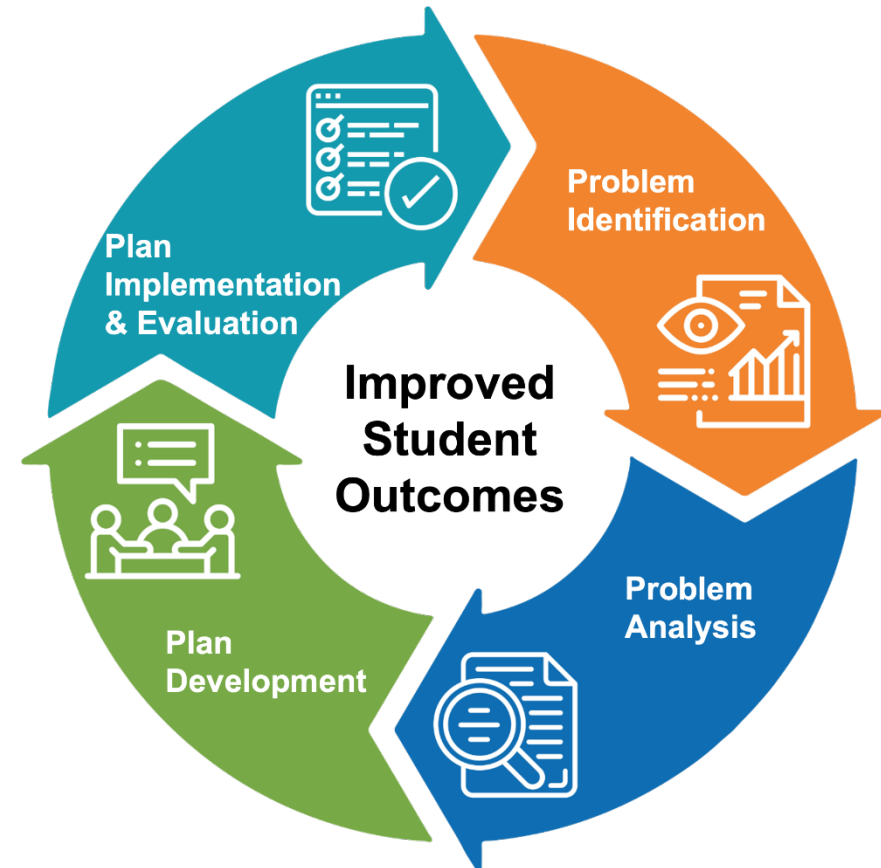
Using your universal screening data:

1. Work through Steps 1 & 2
2. Fill out the data tables with percentages for each area
3. Determine effectiveness of the Tier 1 reading supports
 - Are at least 80% of students at each grade level successful with core supports alone?
 - Are at least 80% of students in each subgroup successful with core supports alone?
 - Are there patterns across schools, grades, or groups of students?

Step 3: Plan Development

Action Steps:

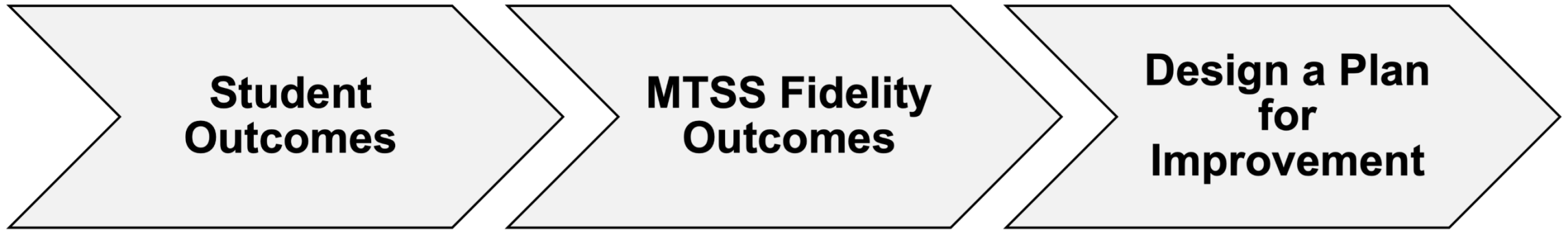
- Develop or update systems-level goals and strategies
- Develop or update systems-level implementation plans
- Develop or update tools for monitoring the progress of the implementation plan



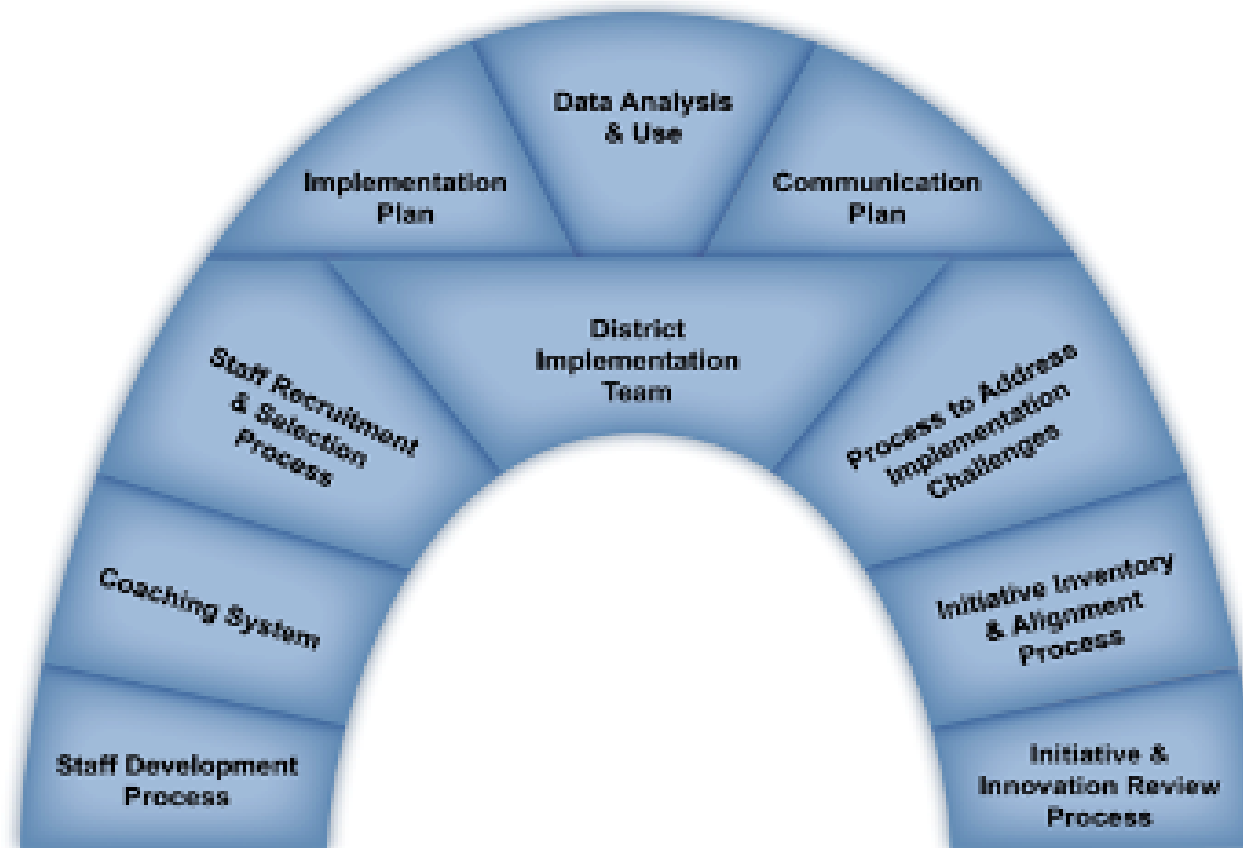
Plan Development Overview

- **Why:** Team and school staff know how to support improvement of implementation
- **What:** Update the Implementation Plan goals and activities
- **How:** Use problem-analysis section to keep the plan focused

Putting the Pieces Together



Contributing Factors to Focus On





Activity 3.5 IP Current State

ISD/District Leadership:

1. Locate the MDE MTSS Practice Profile
2. Review items 3.1-3.5, 5.4
3. Self-assess your current level of implementation

School/Building Leadership:

1. Locate the R-TFI that represents you
2. Review items 1.3, 1.9-1.16, 1.19
3. Self-assess your current level of implementation

Plan Development Activities

- Focus on the right questions:
 - What do we want for our staff, students, and families?
 - What is our current reality?
 - What do our students, educators, and families need to be successful?
 - How can we maximize our resources to support our staff, students, and families?
- These activities should be a break down of each step it will take to meet your target(s) and close the gap between where you are now and where you want to be related to outcomes for students

Use the Evidence

Evidence-Based

- Demonstrates effectiveness through rigorous studies (often quantitative)
- It is defined in PA 146/147 and consistent with federal guidance

Research-Based/Informed

- Grounded in existing theories, guided by the best available evidence, but may not have undergone rigorous testing to demonstrate effectiveness
- Not in PA146/147

Scenario: Sunshine Elementary

- Sunshine Elementary has determined that less than 80% of their students are considered low risk (their Tier 1 system needs to be adjusted)
- Through problem analysis, they've determined that basic foundational skills need to be targeted for improvement
- Data from the R-TFI shows that an evidence-based curriculum needs to be prioritized, staff need to be trained, and grade-levels need a common problem-solving process

Sunshine Elementary Action Plan Sample

Key Component	Implementation Shift	Goal Statement	Timeline & Responsibilities	Monitoring Plan & Status
Training and Professional Learning	All educators will receive sustained training and coaching on UFLI Foundations	By January 2026, 100% of instructional staff will be trained in UFLI to ensure fidelity of Tier 1 reading supports.	January 2026 Building admin will schedule PL opportunities with district coaches	Professional Learning Logs and Teacher Feedback Surveys 1/28/26- All instructional staff received initial training on UFLI. Ongoing job-embedded PL for implementation by coaches



Activity 3.6 Stop and Jot

- In your setting, are you strengthening MTSS practices or building the MTSS system itself as your improvement strategy?
- What take-aways about plan development do you have that can support the MTSS work being accomplished within your district/school?

Plan Development Process

- Review Building Leadership Team action plans (if applicable)
 - Option: Review the DCA, Practice Profile, or R-TFI and determine 1-3 concepts to prioritize
- Consider discussions your teams have engaged in while looking at school-level data
- Record goal(s) and identify specific steps the team will take to meet the goals established
- Record action steps

Develop SMARTER Goal(s)

- Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound, Equitable

Examples:

- By June 2026, the district will increase receive a total score of 60% or higher on the DCA
- By September 2027, the district will develop and use a communication plan, resulting in a score of 2 on the DCA
- 65% of K-5th grade students will annually meet or exceed their growth projection goal in reading as measured by the Fall Acadience Assessment

Communication

- Full Staff
- Families
- Grade-Level Teams
- Interventionists
- School Leadership Team
- District Implementation Team

Communicating with Stakeholders

- What key information needs to be communicated?
- To whom?
- Who will be responsible for the communication?
- When? How often?
- What is the level of urgency?
 - Nice to know
 - Need to know
 - Need to act



Activity 3.6 Communication Current State

ISD/District Leadership:

1. Locate the MDE MTSS Practice Profile
2. Review items 5.5-5.6
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

School/Building Leadership:

1. Locate the R-TFI that represents you
2. Review items 1.7-1.8
3. Self-assess and reflect on your current level of implementation

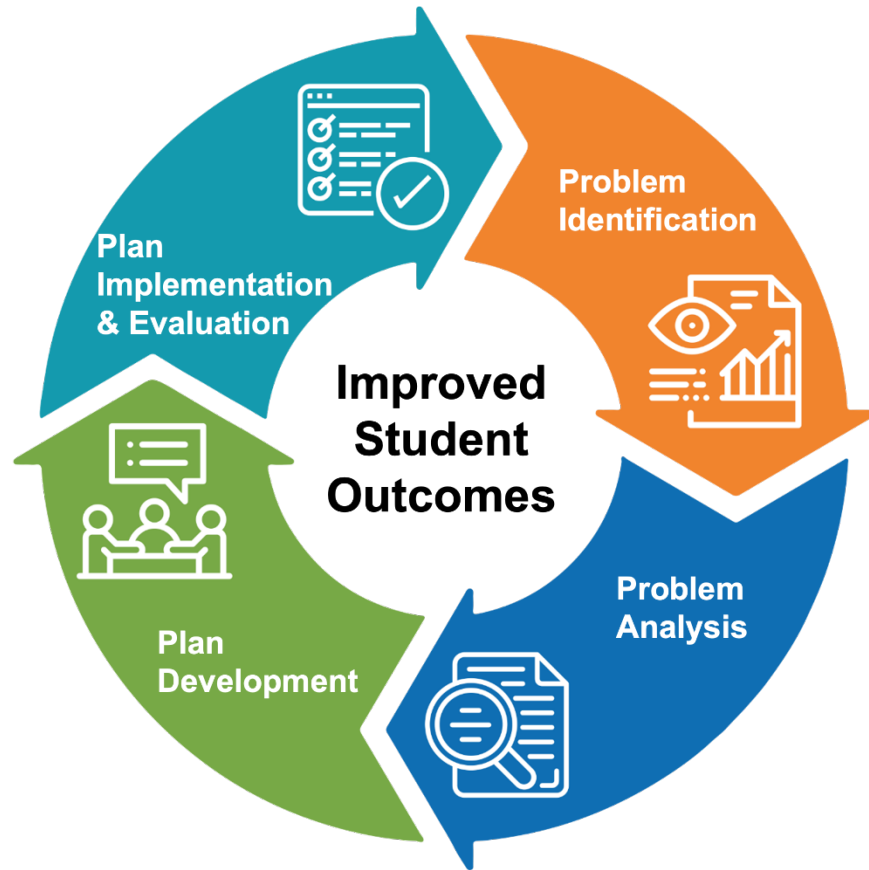


Activity 3.7 Plan Development

Using the information from Steps 1 and 2:

1. Work through Step 3
2. Fill out goal statements, timelines, and monitoring plans for each key component

Step 4: Plan Evaluation



Action Steps:

1. Review goals
2. Analyze data for effectiveness
3. Determine impact
4. Decide on next steps

Implement, Monitor, and Adjust

Capacity:

- Do we have the human, financial, time, and material resources necessary to sustain our MTSS efforts?
- What capacity barriers are limiting implementation, and how might they be addressed?

Fidelity:

- Are our MTSS practices being implemented as designed across classrooms, grades, and tiers?
- What data or observations confirm that adult practices align with our intended model?

MICIP (2025)

Implement, Monitor, and Adjust (cont.)

Scale & Reach:

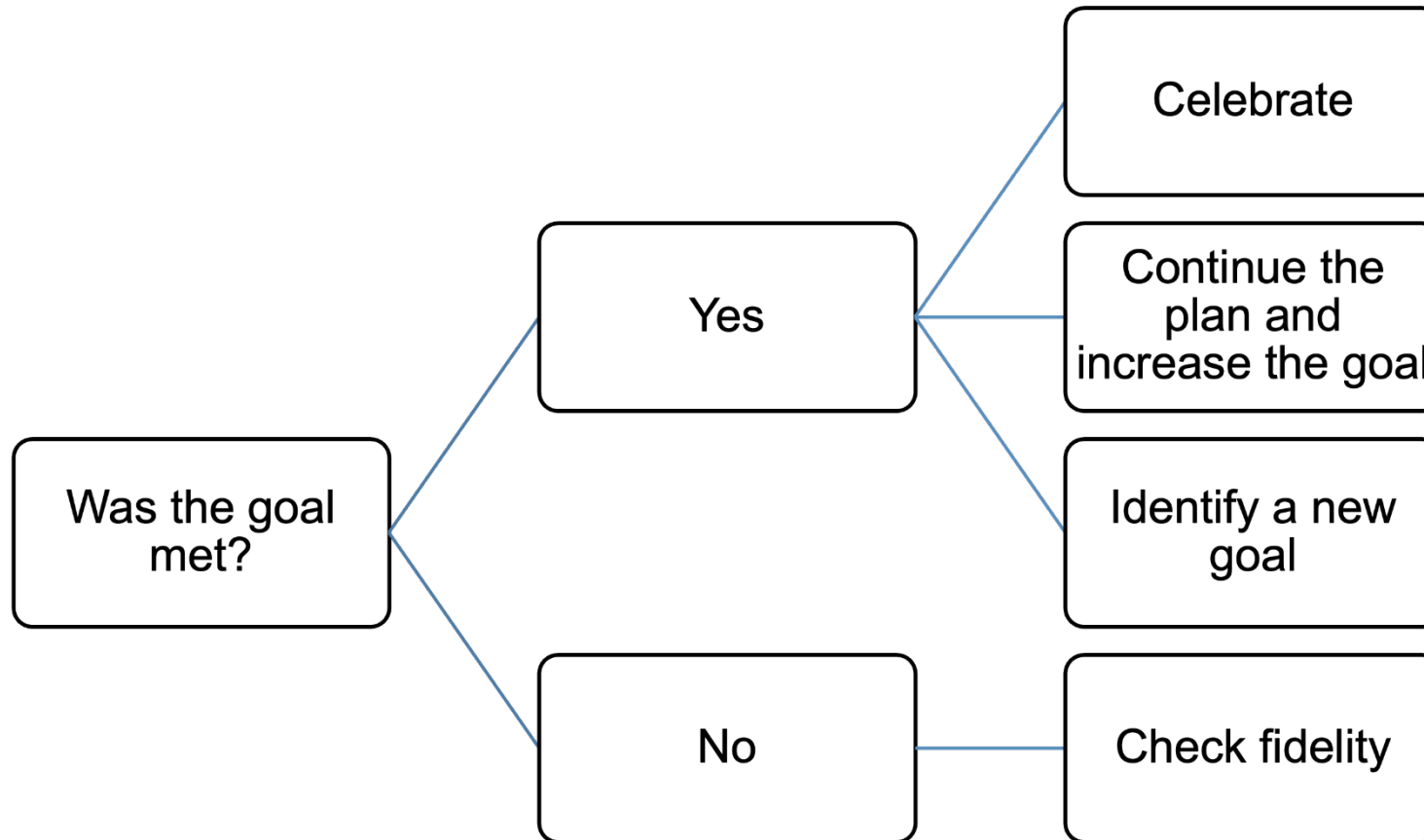
- To what extent are MTSS practices implemented across all schools, grade levels, and student populations?
- Are the supports reaching the students and classrooms we intended and how do we know?

Impact:

- What evidence shows that our MTSS practices are improving outcomes for students?
- Which student groups are benefitting most, and where are gaps persisting?

MICIP (2025)

Determine Impact on Student Outcomes



Activity 3.5 Choose Your Own Adventure

Option 1: Begin working through Step 3

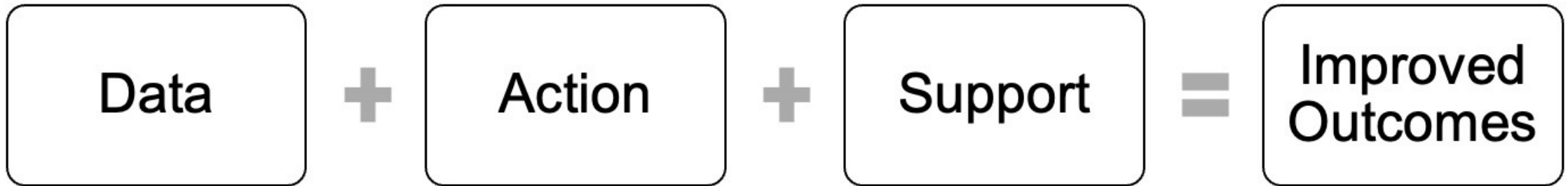
- Develop a SMARTER goal for student outcomes, and each prioritized contributing factor
- Identify specific actions you will take to meet the established goals
- Record detailed strategies for each action

Option 2: Locate your team's Implementation Plan

- Review action items and update the status for each item
- Identify any challenges preventing action items from being completed
- Record any next steps in the Implementation Plan, if needed

4.0 Action Planning and Next Steps

A Recipe for Success



- Continuous Improvement identifies opportunities for growth
- Implementation Plans outline steps to drive change
- Leadership provides the guidance and support to make it work

Activity 4.1 Reflect Back - Think Forward

1. Make a commitment for next steps/actions. Here are some ideas to get you started:
 - 1 minute action plan for your building/district
 - One thing you can share with a colleague/influencer
 - One affirmation that you are on the right track and the next step
2. Determine what updates need to be shared with staff and/or any implementation teams
3. How might your team leverage the continuous improvement process to strengthen implementation of the MTSS Framework?

Revisiting Intended Outcomes

1. Build knowledge around the essential components of MTSS, including Tier 1 Standards of Practice
2. Use the problem-solving process to interpret universal literacy screening data and determine whether a systemic need exists
3. Examine schoolwide and/or districtwide trends to develop a plan for improvement

Bringing it All Together

- Strong Tier 1 is critical
- We can't improve what we don't measure
- Data drives decisions
- Analyze with intention, act with impact
- A strong MTSS is critical to improvement



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