

Championing Mental & Behavioral Health through Equity-Centered MTSS



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Learning Objectives

Discuss the call to provide culturally affirming mental and behavioral health services, and the practical realities that influence our effectiveness.

Explore ways to organize MBH efforts along a continuum of services within an MTSS framework so that children receive the support they need and want to come to school.

Identify strategies for using MTSS to promote equity and reduce disproportionality in your schools.



Limitations and Considerations

I am a practitioner, not a researcher. I always strive to be evidence-based in my work.

The information and ideas I am presenting today come from my own experiences and knowledge of best practices rather than through my affiliation with NASP as the Immediate Past President.

I have no commercial ties to topics being discussed today.

There are no guarantees that suggested strategies will be effective in every case.

Some of my experiences with MBH & MTSS

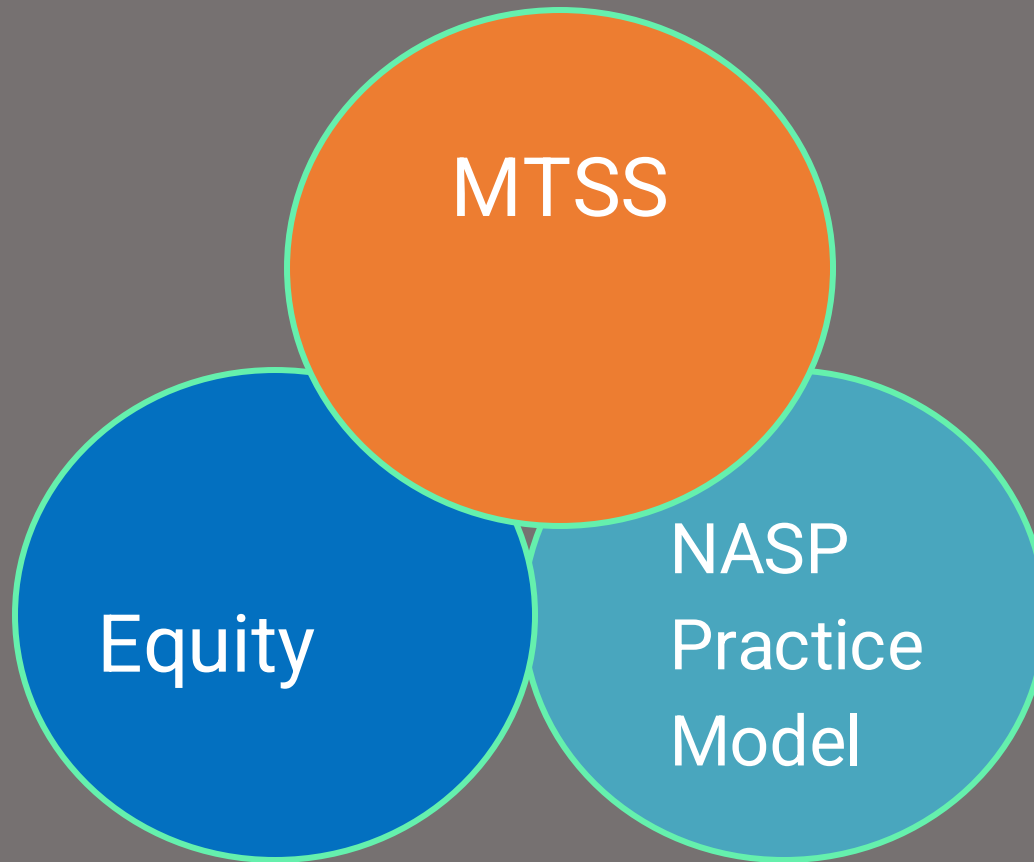
MBH (1990)

RTI (2001)

PBIS (2005)



Advocacy at school/district levels



Meeting the Moment: Youth Mental Health

IN 2023

4 in 10 high school students experienced **persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.**

2 in 10 students **seriously considered attempting suicide** and almost **1 in 10** students **attempted suicide.**

39% of LGBTQ+ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year – including 46% of transgender and nonbinary young people. LGBTQ+ youth of color reported higher rates than White peers.

CDC, 2023;
Trevor Project,
2024

Championing MBH & Equitable Practices

Improvement

**Any school,
any setting**

**Equity-Based
MTSS**

Demographics – Why Does This Matter?

School Psychologists

- 12% Racially/ethnically minoritized
- 18% Multilingual

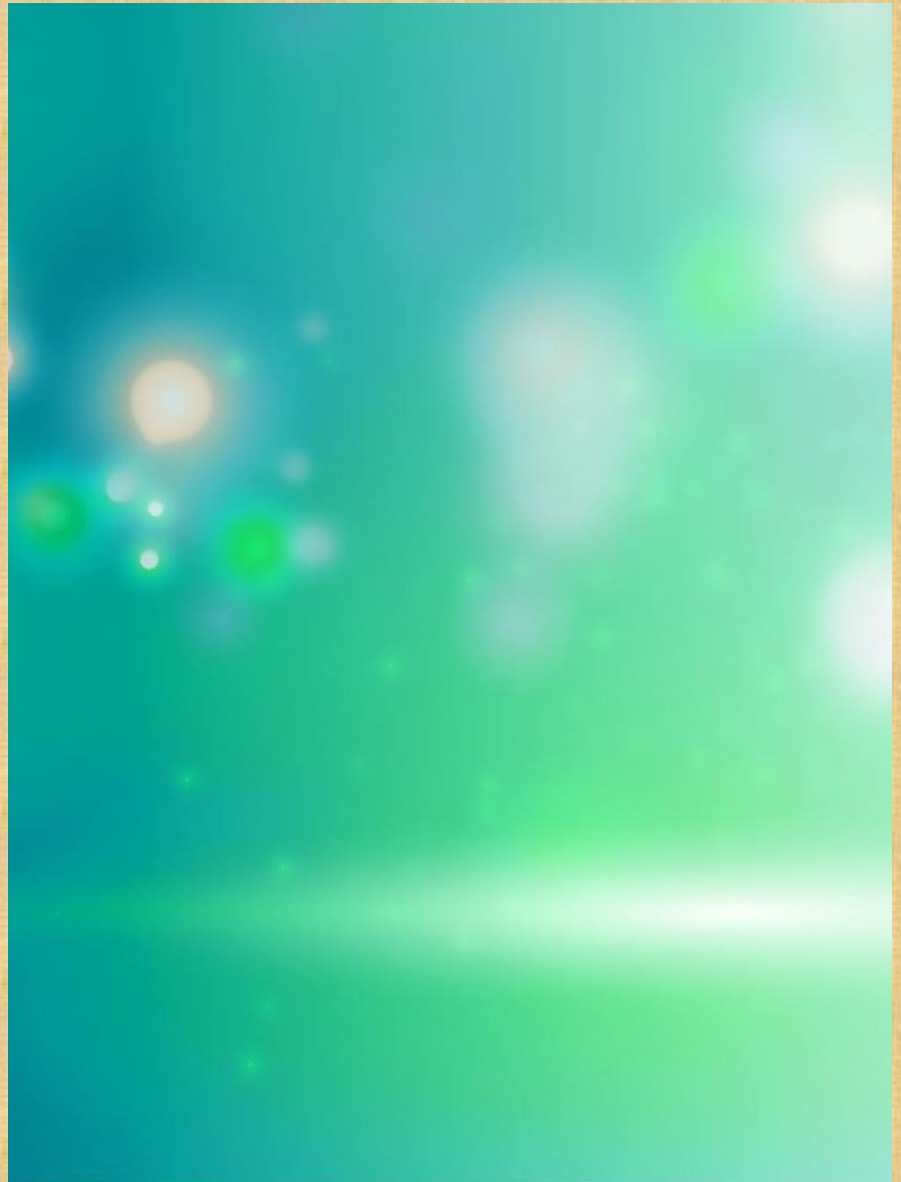
Grad Students in SP

- 31% Racially/ethnically minoritized
- 28% Multilingual

U.S. Children

- 53% Racially/ethnically minoritized
- 26% Multilingual

Culturally
Affirming
Mental and
Behavioral
Health
Services



2020 Practice Model: MBH

Promoting school psychologists as mental and behavioral health providers has been rolled into our Practice Model Strategic Goal.

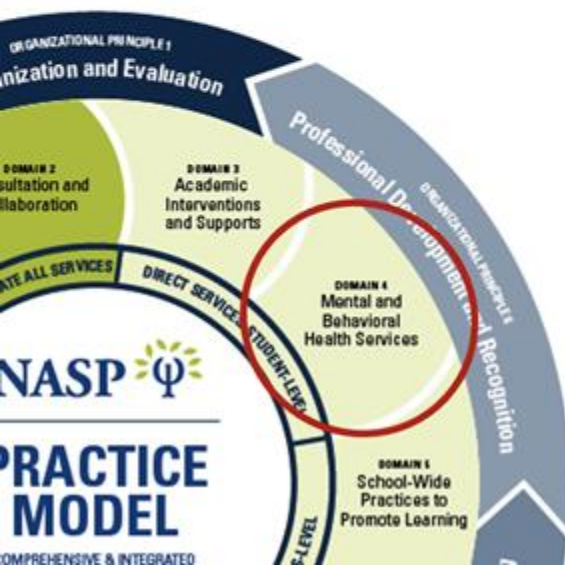
Direct Services—Student Level

Domain 4: Mental & Behavioral Health Services & Interventions

- School psychologists design, implement, evaluate services to promote resilience and positive behavior, support socialization and adaptive skills, and enhance mental and behavioral health.
- Understanding of behavioral and emotional impacts on learning and of evidence-based strategies to promote social-emotional functioning.

“MBH services and interventions”

What does this consist of exactly?



Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

SP's recognize risk and protective factors & use data and assessment to facilitate the design & delivery of interventions to help students develop effective social-emotional skills...

Self-regulation

Self-monitoring

Self-advocacy

Planning/organization

Empathy

Positive coping strategies

Interpersonal skills

Healthy decision making

Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

SP's integrate behavioral supports & MH services with academic and learning goals for children. Using data, they identify children who may require individualized support & provide a continuum of dev. appropriate and culturally responsive MBH services...

Individual/group counseling

Behavioral coaching

✨ Classroom/schoolwide SEL programs ✨

Positive behavioral supports

Parent education & supports

...including adaptive skills, life skills,
personal safety awareness

Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

SP's understand the impact of **trauma** on social, emotional, and behavioral functioning...and work to implement practices that reduce the impact of trauma on learning and behavior.

Trauma-informed schools

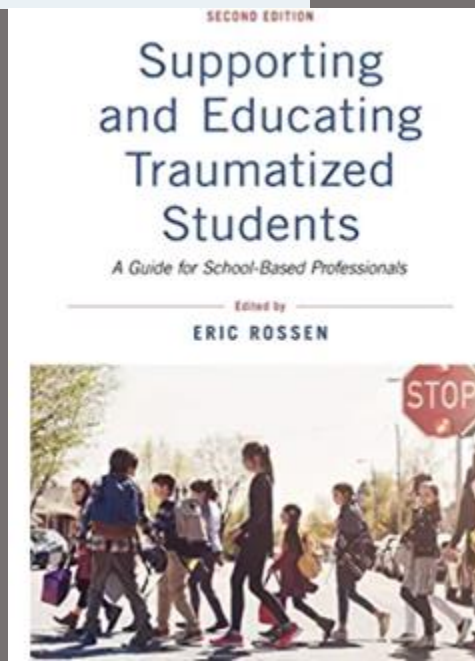
Staff education

Parent education

Student education

SEL

principal/asst principals!!!



Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

Often
Sometimes
Seldom
Never

SP's use culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate assessment techniques to identify emotional and behavioral disabilities.

They use assessment data to select and implement evidence-based mental and behavioral health interventions.

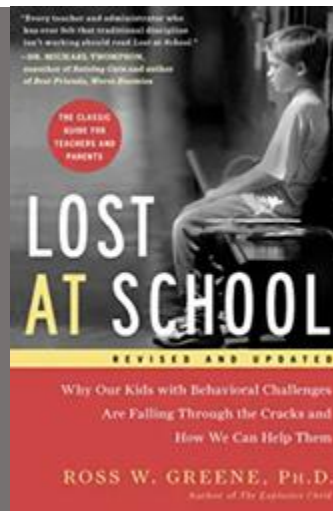


Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

SP's demonstrate skills related to behavior analysis & use systematic decision-making to consider the antecedents, consequences, functions, & potential causes of behavioral difficulties that may impede learning or socialization.

They recognize that behavioral difficulties may stem from specific skill and/or performance deficits that can be remedied through instruction and/or reinforcement strategies.

FBA...BSP/BIP



Collaborative Problem-Solving/Proactive Solutions...Lagging Skills & Unsolved Problems (Ross Greene)

Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

SP's develop and implement positive behavioral supports at the individual, group, classroom, school, and district levels that demonstrate the use of appropriate ecological & behavioral approaches* to promote effective student discipline practices and classroom management strategies.

***such as...**

Positive reinforcement

Social skills training

Restorative justice

Positive psychology

Examples of MBH Services from PM Text:

SP's promote effective **home-school** collaboration and, when necessary, collaborate with other **community providers** to coordinate MBH supports and wraparound services.





When school psychologists create connections among schools, families, and community providers, they validate family engagement as one of the most powerful predictors of children's development, educational attainment, and success in school.

Weiss, Lopez, & Caspe (2018). *Joining together to create a bold vision for next generation family engagement: Engaging Families to Transform Education*. Global Family Research Project. New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Culturally Responsive/Affirming Services

Making school systems more responsive to the cultures and communities they serve.

Goal: Enhance Educational Equity

Developing the "ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures." -- National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems.

Key Elements of Culturally Responsive and Affirming Practice

Highlights from the work of Dr. Janine Jones

✦ **Cultural self-awareness**

✦ **Awareness and sensitivity to the worldviews of others**

Explore your own culture, beliefs, and values.

Believe that you can serve individuals of a different race or ethnicity.

Complete intentional multicultural interviews.

Learn more about the cultures of students through students and families.

Work from a strengths perspective.

Assume there is heterogeneity within an ethnic group but the foundation of cultural values is likely to be homogenous.

Keep the family active in the intervention planning and progress monitoring.

Engage in dialogue with colleagues and continue to increase cultural literacy.

Develop a list of professionals for consultation on multicultural issues.



Practical
Realities that
Influence Our
Effectiveness

Help Wanted

**Does your district have a
problem with school
psychologist shortages?**

1:500??

What is your school psych to student ratio?





Do you feel your role is dictated by district traditions?

A Continuum of Mental and Behavioral Health Services



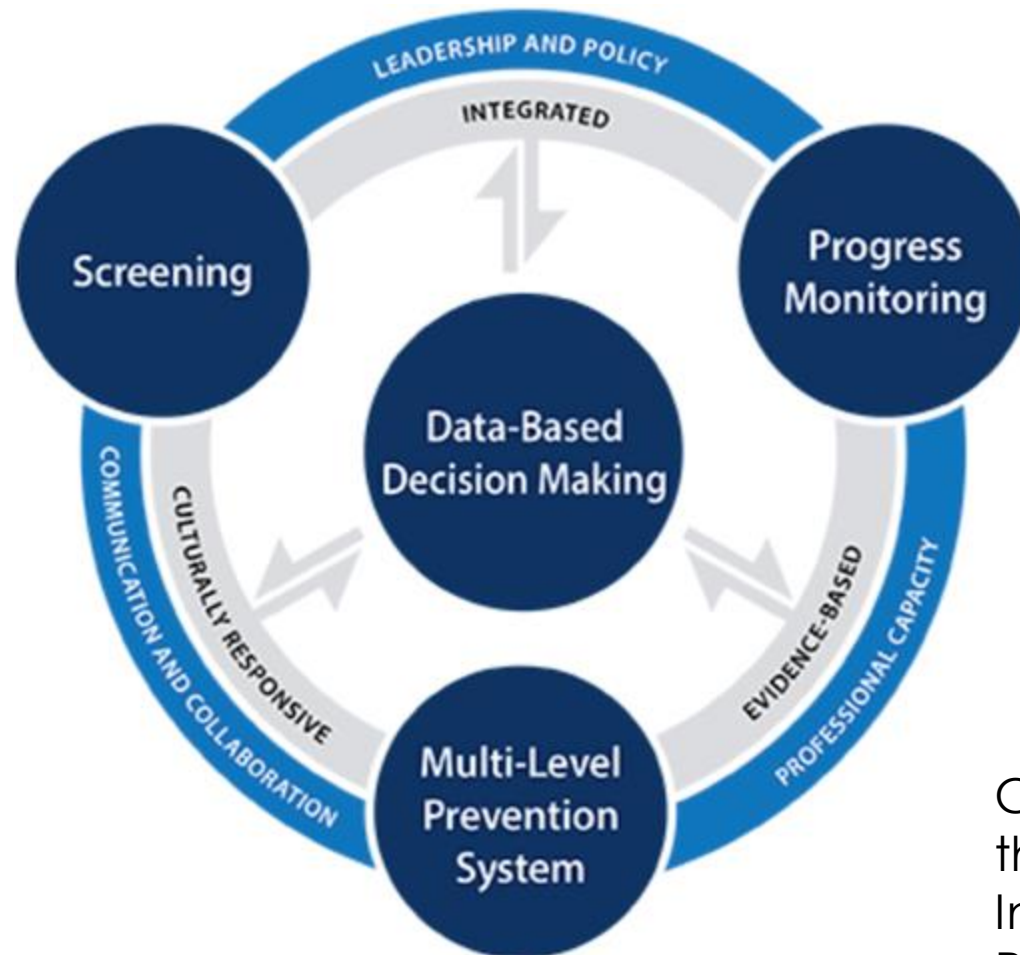
MTSS

Problems with an Exclusively One: One Approach

If Sabrina works part-time in her school of 800, and 40% of them need MH support...



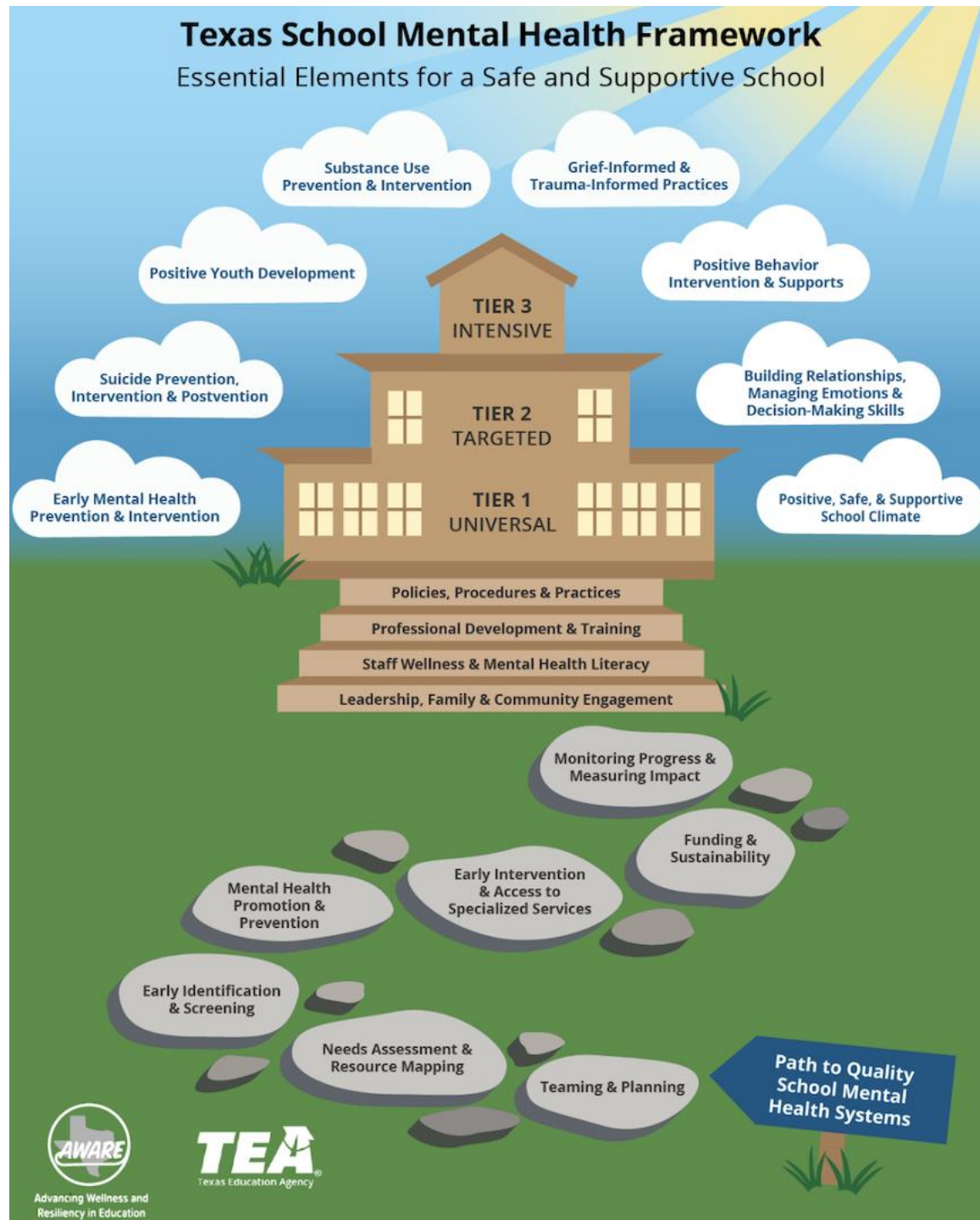
Essential Elements of MTSS



Center on MTSS at
the American
Institutes for
Research, 2020

Texas MTSS for MH!

<https://schoolmentalhealthtx.org/about-school-mental-health/>



Definition of Comprehensive School MH

Comprehensive school mental health systems provide a continuum of services and supports intended to:

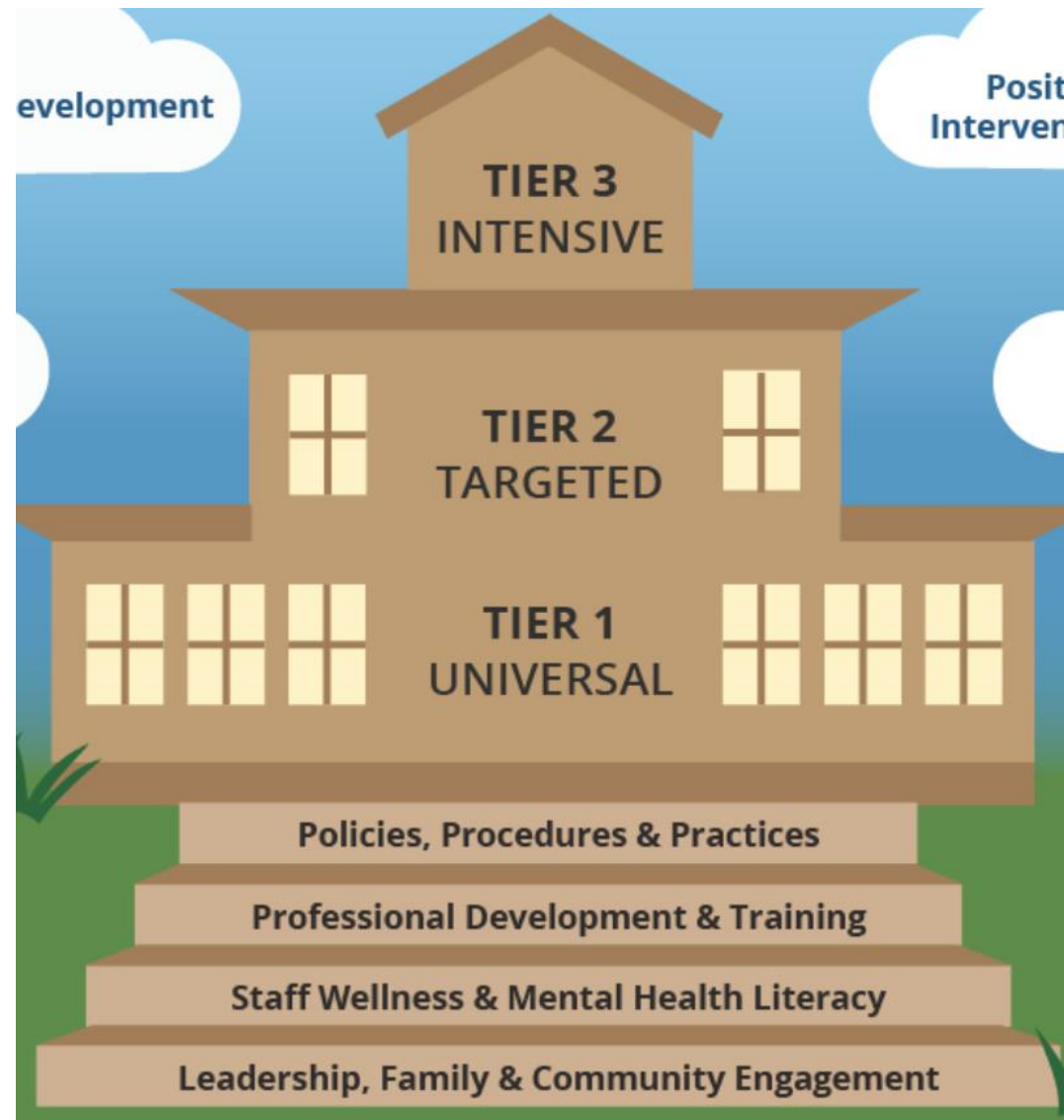
- Promote a positive school climate*
- Teach and support skills for social, emotional, and behavioral health*
- Prevent mental health and substance use problems*
- Intervene early to reduce the severity of mental health concerns; and*
- Provide access to school-based and community-based interventions and supports to students and families.*

Comprehensive school mental health systems support the safety, academic success, and well-being of students. The comprehensive school mental health system is built on a strong foundation that brings together a diverse group of stakeholders to plan, implement, and improve the system; conducts regular needs assessments to understand the strengths, gaps, and needs within the local context; selects and implements culturally-responsive services and supports that are backed by evidence of their effectiveness, and engages in on-going performance monitoring and quality improvement.

The Schoolhouse

The schoolhouse in the center of the picture represents MTSS, which outlines the structure of the school mental health system. Drawing from a public health approach, the MTSS identifies that our services and supports are planned for 3 tiers: one tier to provide universal supports to all students (Tier 1), one tier to intervene early and address emerging mental health concerns (Tier 2), and one tier to provide intensive or specialized services to support students with a mental health disorder (Tier 3).

The MTSS is strengthened by the factors represented on the steps to the school.



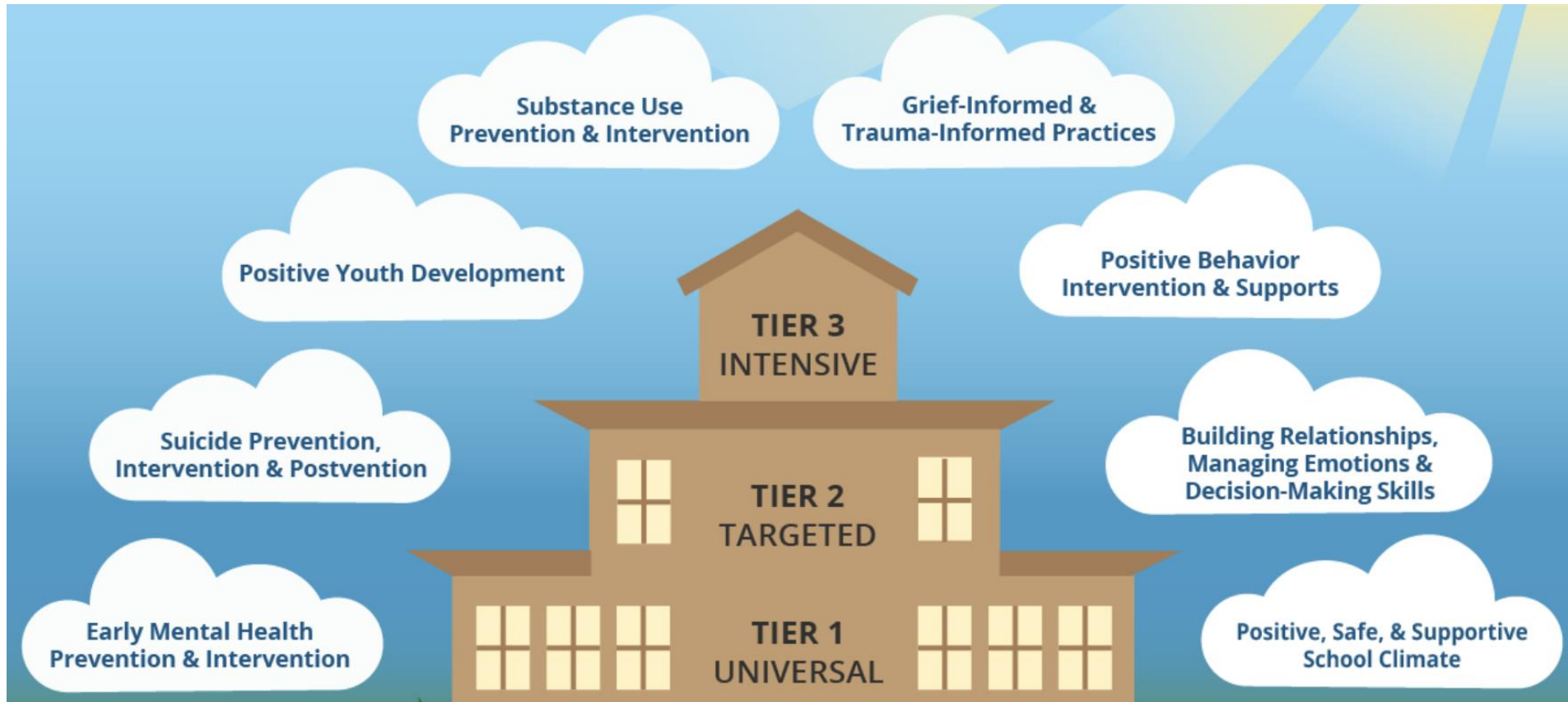
THE PATHWAY

On the stone pathway, we find the domains of quality for our school mental health system. Within each domain, districts and schools can explore best practices for effective school mental health systems, benchmark their local practices to national quality standards, and plan for and prioritize improvements.



THE CLOUDS

The components of a comprehensive school mental health system are presented in the clouds above the schoolhouse. The components, identified in [TEC §38.351](#), represent the areas in which Local Education Agencies must develop practices, procedures, and/or professional development opportunities. Specific requirements are outlined in the [School Mental Health Toolkit](#). Resources, best practices, and training for these components are available on the [TEA Best Practice List](#).



Texas School Mental Health

Key Concepts within a MTSS

The following are key concepts for understanding a MTSS for school mental health:

- The supports and services within a MTSS are flexible, providing easy access to needed services at times and places that are convenient to families.
- **MTSS tiers are layered**, rather than distinct or separate. Students who are accessing higher levels of care continue to access any beneficial services and supports within lower tiers. Families and students can access services throughout the tiers, as needed, and do not need to try lower levels of care before progressing to a more intensive level of services.
- **The MTSS is most effective when schools invest in Tier 1 universal supports.** When we build a strong foundation of mental health promotion and prevention, we reduce the need for targeted and intensive services.
- Provide more intensive and targeted services and supports at the individual, group, or family level to address mental health concerns.
- Teams implementing the MTSS for mental health use **dynamic, problem-solving approach** to identify problems, analyze the problem, create an action plan, implement the plan, measure outcomes and adapt.

Examples of Supports for Social-Emotional/MH/Behavior

TARGETED

Social Skills Groups

Other counseling groups

Check In Check Out

Mentoring programs

Family Supports

Weekly check-ins with counselors

Peer Counselors

Absentee Supports

INTENSIVE

Short-term intensive counseling

Students on IEP caseload/MH services

Crisis Support for students and families

FBA/BIP

Wraparound services w/community agencies

UNIVERSAL

PBIS Values/Expectations

Monthly MH/SEL Themes

Restorative Practices

Positive Reinforcement - "tickets", "awards", emails/phone calls home

SEL - behavior is taught & modeled, multiple settings

Trauma-informed teaching, PD to support teacher understanding, knowledge, growth. MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID.

Presentations and activities/clubs that promote belonging, acceptance, self-regulation, empathy...

Texas Examples of Supports for MH/Behavior

UNIVERSAL

TARGETED

INTENSIVE

- Universal screening
- Social and emotional skills lessons
- Character education
- Setting behavioral expectations
- Positive reinforcement systems
- Restorative practices

- Teaching mental health literacy
- Building school community
- Bullying and violence prevention programs
- Suicide prevention programs
- Substance use prevention programs

- Care management
- Check In / check out
- Check and connect
- Social skills group
- Coping skills group

- Why Try
- Mentoring
- Service learning programs
- Non-verbal cues
- Bounce Back (K-5)

- CBITS (4-12)
- Keeping Your Cool
- Coping Cat

- Increased intensity of Tier 1

- Evidence-based individual counseling
- Evidence-based family counseling
- Telemental health services
- Functional behavior assessment
- Behavior intervention plan

- Safety planning intervention
- Crisis intervention protocols
- Care and referral coordination
- Wraparound planning
- Transition support following hospital care

The Collaborative Task Force on Public School MH Services Year 3 Report (TEA, 2023)

Key Findings:

- All students and staff need support. Rates of anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, suicidal behavior, and substance use disorders among students in Texas have risen. A significant majority of Texas school districts report increased student stress, anxiety, disengagement, behavior problems, and sadness/depression.
- School counselors need support to perform the mental and behavioral health counseling services as outlined in SB 179 (87 R).
- The availability of student mental health and behavioral health data varies across school districts and campuses. In this report, the Task Force responded to this gap by surveying districts about their capacity to collect student mental and behavioral health data.

The Collaborative Task Force on Public School MH Services Year 3 Report (TEA, 2023)

Key Recommendations:

The Task Force highlighted three primary gaps in the ability of school districts to address the emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of students in Texas:

- appropriate school staffing;
- sufficient resources, including funding and effective training and coaching to implement evidence-based practices across the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and
- the collection of data that supports accountability and on-going quality improvement.

Six pages of specific recommendations to address these gaps, one of which is:

The Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency, and school districts should prioritize and dedicate resources needed to implement **robust multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)** that provide for a coordinated array of promotion and prevention strategies, early intervention services, and linkages and referrals to community-based service providers for families seeking mental health services for their children.

Project A.W.A.R.E (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) Texas

an initiative in collaboration with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) intended to strengthen community and school-based supports for the mental health, wellness, and resiliency of students.

MISSION *and* VISION

At Project AWARE, our **mission** is to develop and sustain an integrated, multi-tiered system of supports that promotes mental health, wellness, and advances the resilience of students in the family, education, and community settings.

Our **vision** is to establish a comprehensive school mental health system that utilizes both school and community-based supports, ensuring that all students have access to a positive, safe, and supportive school environments that foster resiliency and academic success.

our GOALS

Increase and improve access to culturally and developmentally appropriate school- and community-based mental health services.

Increase awareness and identification of mental health issues among all adults working with young people and promote positive mental health for students, families, school staff, and the community.

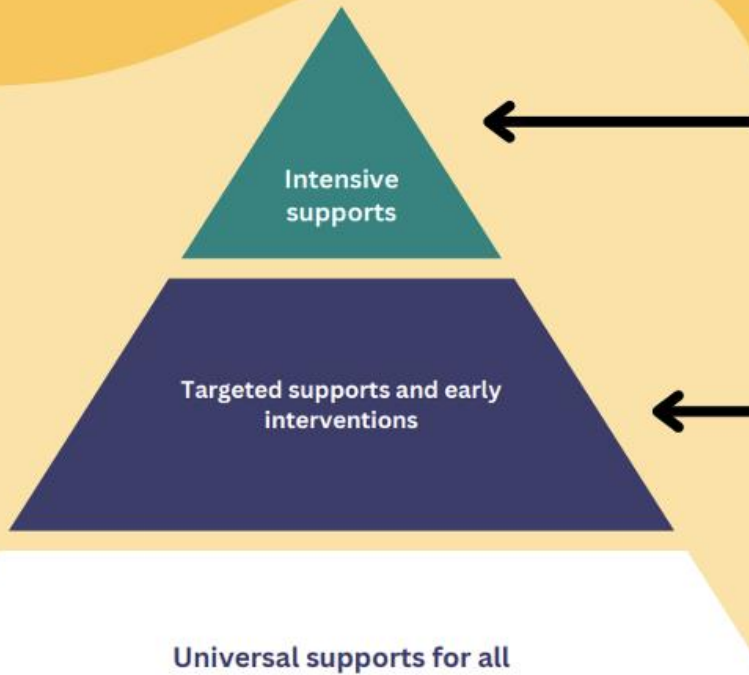
Help students develop skills that will promote resilience, self-regulation and pro-social behaviors; avert development of mental and behavioral health disorders; and prevent youth violence.

Develop infrastructure and capacity to sustain access to mental health promotion and evidence-based practices for school and community-based services.



A.W.A.R.E Texas uses a comprehensive multi-tiered system of mental health and wellness supports (MTSS) as a framework for cross-system collaboration to ensure Texas youth have access to the wide range of interventions associated with complete mental health and wellness.

Best Practice Examples:



- Individual mental health counseling by a mental health specialist
- Case management & coordination with providers and family
- Safety planning

- Connections to support services at school & in community
- Small group skill-building
- Referrals & follow up plans

- Grief and Trauma informed campus/district/staff
- Mental health literacy, promotion, and prevention
- Positive, safe, and supportive school climate

School Psychologists' Role in MTSS

what is possible vs what is allowed

local or state constraints

caseload, shortages, model for services

consultant role

provider role

School Psychologists' Role in MTSS

Practice Model Domains

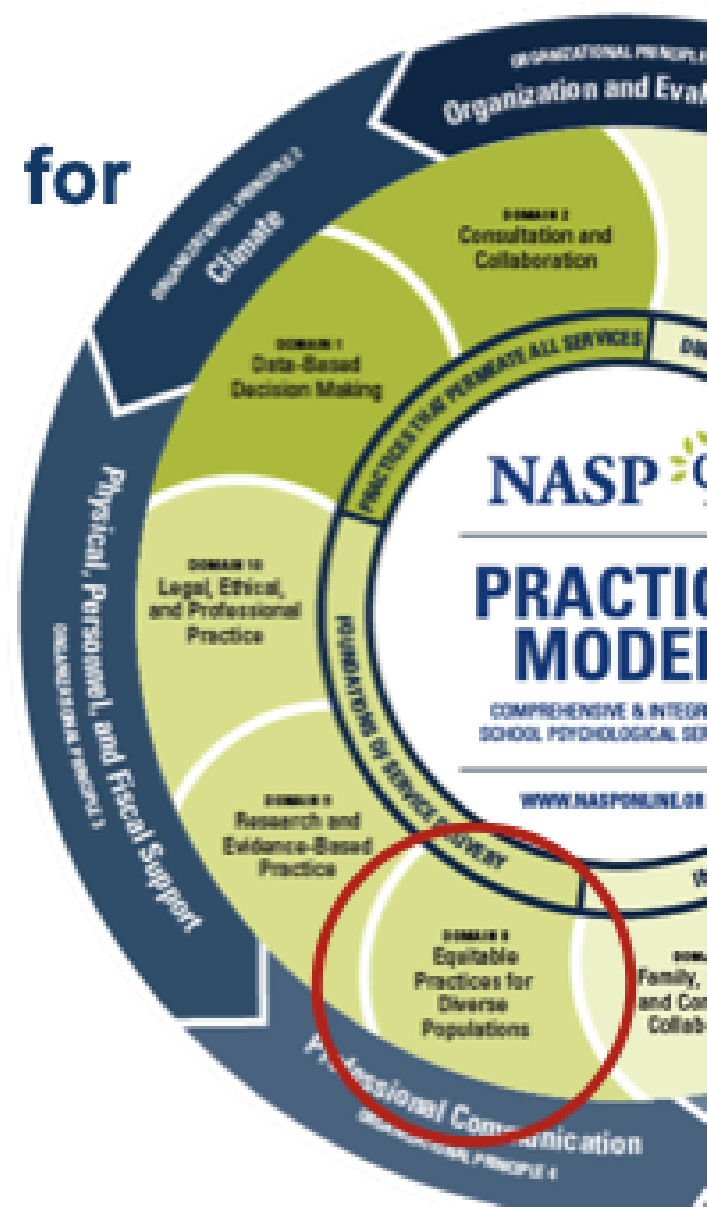
- Data-Based Decision Making
- Consultation and Collaboration
- Mental and Behavioral Health Services & Interventions
- School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning
- Services to Promote Safe and Supportive Schools
- ...and more....

Foundations in Equitable Practices

Foundations of School Psychological Service Delivery

Domain 8: Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations

- School psychologists implement evidence-based strategies to enhance services in both general and special education and to address potential influences related to diversity.
- Advocacy for social justice and equity that eliminates systemic barriers for minoritized populations and ensures that each student receives what they need to benefit from opportunities.



Domain 8: Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations

School psychologists use inclusive language and provide culturally responsive and equitable practices in all domains of service delivery for diverse individuals, families, schools, and communities.

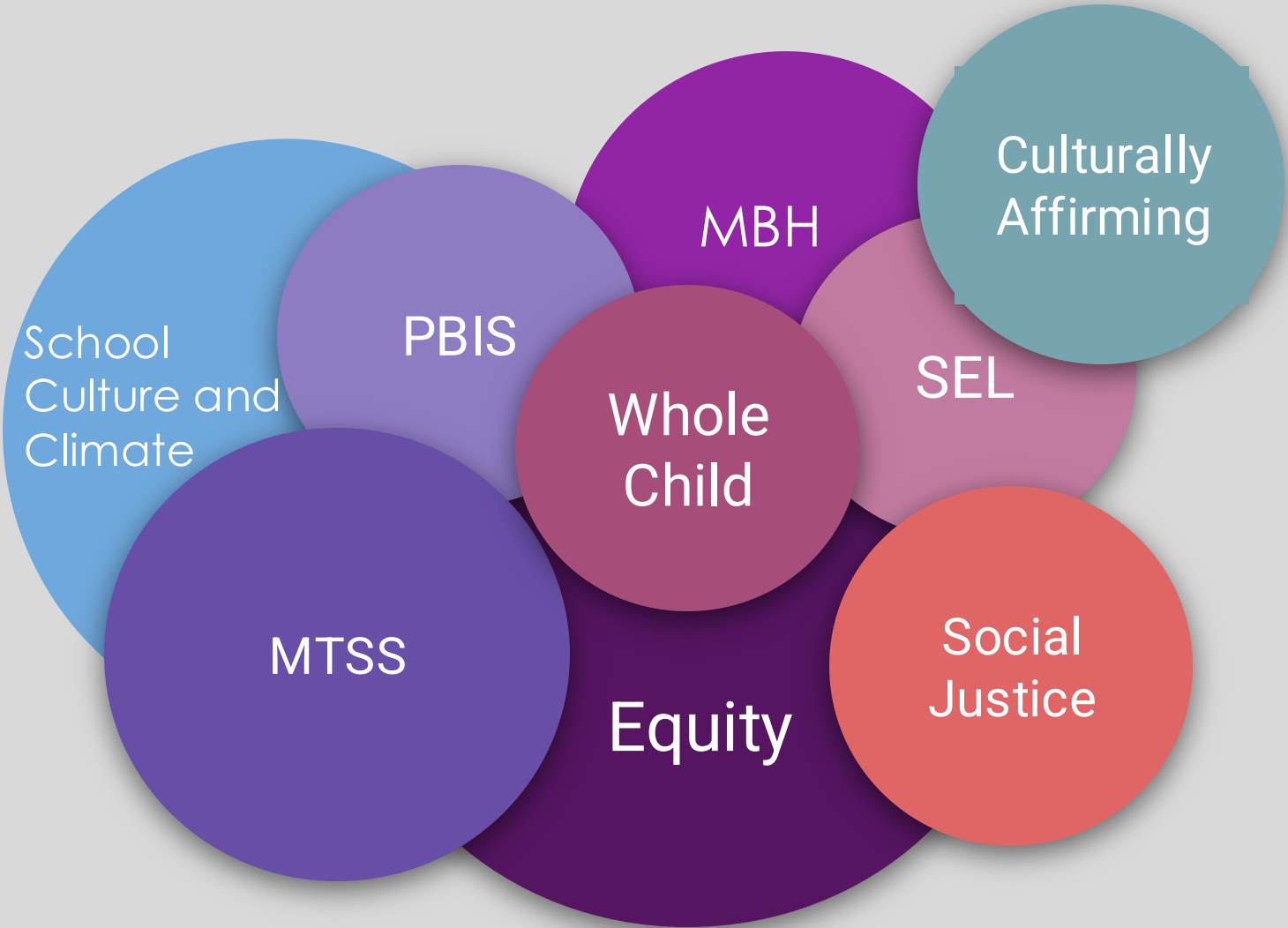
Domain 8: Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations

School psychologists acknowledge the subtle racial, class, gender, cultural, and other biases and personal beliefs they may bring to their work and the impact these may have on their professional decisions, interactions, and activities. School psychologists also remain aware of the negative impact that biases—such as racism, sexism, and others—have on students, families, schools, and communities; thus, they collaborate with education professionals to promote respect for diversity for an inclusive and supportive school setting.

Domain 8: Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations

School psychologists promote equity and social justice in educational programs and services by ensuring that all children and youth learn in safe, supportive, and inclusive environments. School psychologists actively engage in efforts to address factors that limit equity and access to educational opportunity.

Interconnecting Concepts & Practices



“...Without explicit centering of equity and grounding in critical consciousness, MTSS initiatives may not advance equity as intended.”

Sullivan, A. L., Nguyen, T., & Shaver, E. (2022). Foundations of equity-centered MTSS. Equity by Design. Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP EAC).

Equity by Design: Foundations of Equity-Centered MTSS

(Sullivan, et al., 2022)

- Limitations of MTSS when socio-political contexts are ignored
 - Deficit-based assumptions
 - Race-neutral approaches
- Centering the most minoritized and marginalized
- “To center equity in practice, there are three critical stances that effective educators must take:
 - critical consciousness,
 - critical pedagogy, and
 - critical reflection” (Skelton, 2015, in Sullivan et al., 2022).

Some Definitions

Socially Just MTSS

Socially just MTSS processes and services are designed to meet the needs of all students, **including needs which arise out of experiences of oppression and marginalization**. Socially just MTSS meaningfully include students with disabilities, and enable all students to **achieve outcomes that are personally and socially important**.

McKenney & McPherson, 2022

Equity-Based MTSS

Equity-based MTSS creates a school environment where all students, staff, and families are **invited, welcomed, understood, and feel a sense of belonging**. It involves implementing policies, practices, and protocols that **increase opportunity, access, voice, and representation** and engagement of all partners, and creating systems of learning to which all students have access.

SWIFT Education Center, 2020

Turn and Talk: Initial Reflections re: Equity

What biases might we and fellow educators in our schools have?

- Has there been any exploration of implicit bias?
- What kinds of student behavior are valued and expected?

Which people or groups hold power in our schools?

How do we center our students' perspectives & lived experiences?

Do our schools encourage kids to critically examine society?

How reflective is our staff? How reflective are we?

Do we genuinely connect with students and their diverse backgrounds?

Do we critically examine school data on climate, feelings of belongingness, and disproportionality?

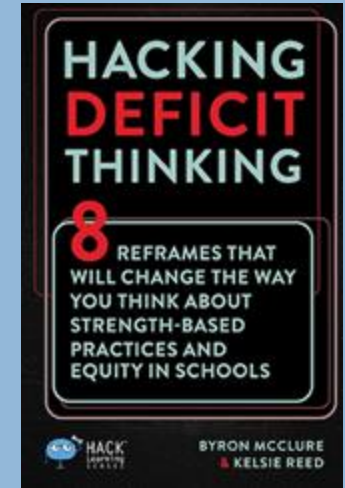
Embracing a Strengths-Based Approach vs a Deficit Model of Psychology

Martin Seligman

- pioneer of Positive Psychology
- categorization of virtues and character strengths
- focus on strengths is key to a good life

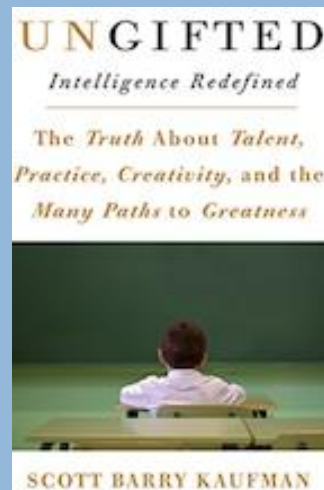
Byron McClure & Kelsie Reed

- Dedicated to improving equity in schools
- Reframe: go from what's wrong to what's strong!



Victor Rios

- Sociologist at UCSB
- From gang member to professor
- Teacher's belief in him
- From At Risk to At Promise



Scott Barry Kaufman

- Cognitive Scientist & Humanistic Psychologist
- From special ed student to prolific researcher and professor
- IQ testing; calling for a new theory of intelligence that incorporates passion and engagement

Back to Texas...

8 Components of a Comprehensive School Mental Health System

- Building Skills Related to Managing Emotions, Establishing and Maintaining Positive Relationships, and Responsible Decision-Making
- Early Mental Health Prevention and Intervention
- Grief-Informed and Trauma-Informed Practices
- Positive Youth Development
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- Safe, Supportive and Positive School Climates
- Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention
- Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/mental-health/mental-health-and-behavioral-health>

Where does PBIS fit in?

PBIS as part of MTSS

Figure 3: This figure shows how PBIS focuses on the behavioral components of MTSS

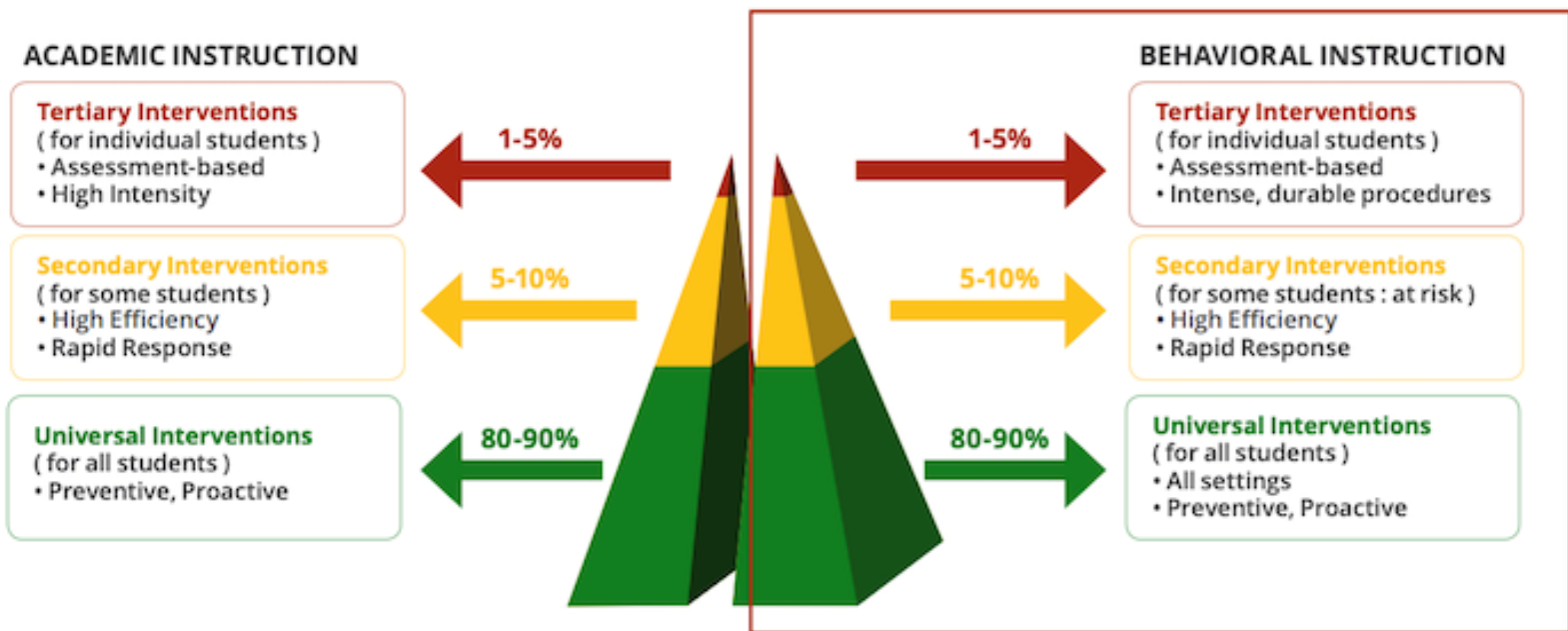
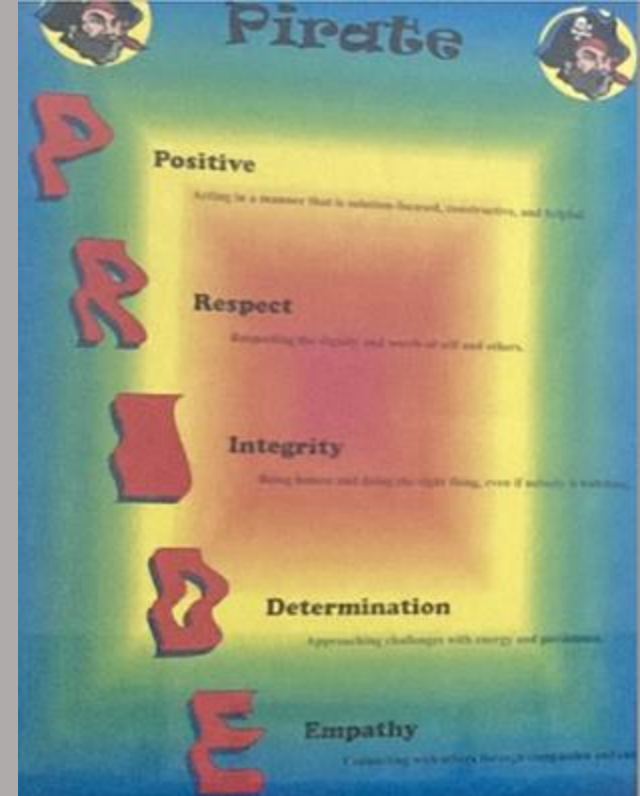


Image adapted from: pbis.org/school/mtss

One PBIS Example



At Louisville Middle School, we envision a learning community where these fundamental values form the foundation of the House of PRIDE:

Positivity propels us to transform challenges into opportunities.

Respect compels us to honor the dignity and worth of self and others.

Integrity inspires us to do the right thing, especially when no one else is watching.

Determination dares us to approach life with energy and persistence.

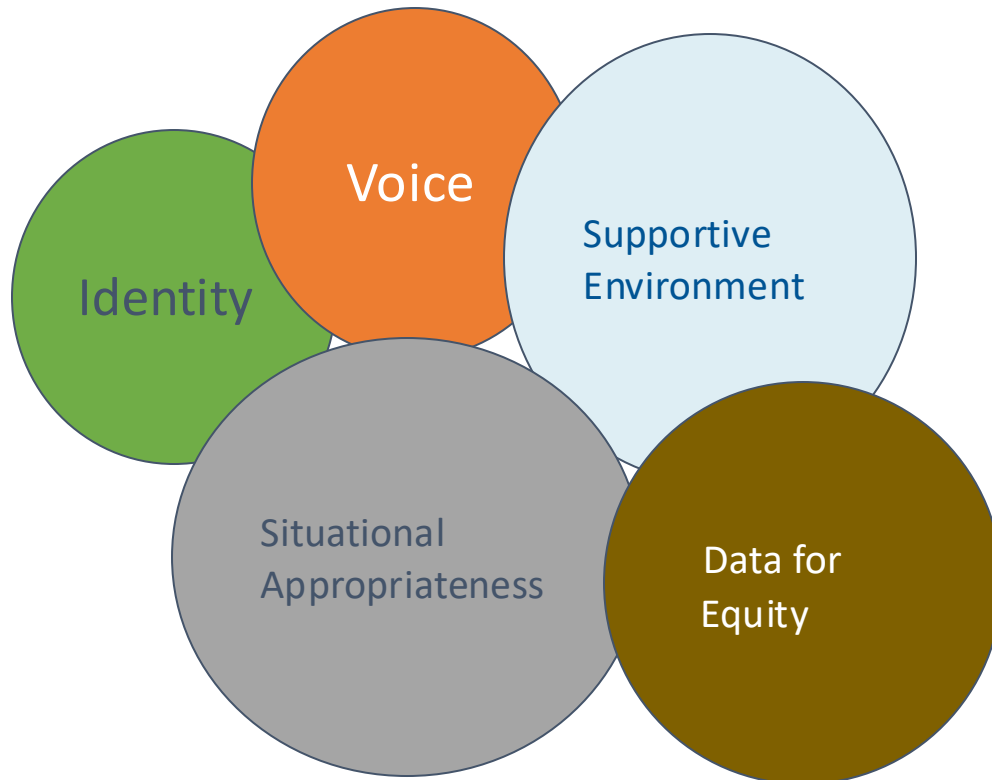
Empathy calls us to connect with others through compassion and caring.

Cultural Responsiveness in MTSS/PBIS/SEL

What happens when a school's PBIS or SEL program is not culturally responsive or affirming?
When equity is not centered?

PBIS with Cultural Responsiveness at its Core

The primary goal of cultural responsiveness within a PBIS framework is to use PBIS principles to change school cultures and systems to enhance educational equity.



PBIS is not fully implemented until it is culturally responsive.

Source: pbis.org

Essential Foundations of Effective PBIS/SEL

- *Culturally Affirming and Responsive*
- *Focuses on Strengths and Assets*

What are your *dreams*?

What are your *goals*?

What are your *skills*?

What are your *passions*?

US Culture Wars and Current Challenges to SEL



Positive Impacts of SEL

Is this Evidence-Based Practice?

- Academics
- Behavior and mental health
- Cost savings
- Long-term lifetime outcomes
- Teacher morale
- Promotes equity & SJ
- Enhances trauma-informed care

Science Links SEL to Student Gains: Landmark study documented multiple benefits of SEL

2011 meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs including over 270,000 students in K-12 revealed:

Student Gains:

- ✓ Social-emotional skills
- ✓ Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- ✓ Positive classroom behavior
- ✓ 11 percentile-point gain on standardized achievement tests

Reduced Risks for Failure:

- Conduct problems
- Emotional distress

Source: Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K. (2011) *The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions.* *Child Development: 82 (1), 405-432.*

Cost Benefits from SEL - Prevention is Key!

✨ 11 to 1 ✨

Belfield, C., Bowden, B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning*. New York: Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education.



Teachers Benefit from SEL

Jennings, P.A. & Greenberg, M.T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. American Educational Research Association.



Teachers who possess strong social and emotional competencies are **more likely to stay in the classroom longer** because they're able to partner more effectively with students and address challenging behaviors — one of the main causes of burnout.

Transformative, Equitable SEL: Promoting Justice-Oriented Civic Engagement

CASEL promotes Transformative SEL, which focuses on skills for individual success, interpersonal relations, and community-building, as well as skills needed to ensure democratic, fair, and inclusive communities.

Source: Jagers, Skoog-Hoffman, Barthelus, & Schlund, 2021.

Focal constructs:

- *Identity*
- *Agency*
- *Belonging*
- *Collaborative problem-solving*
- *Curiosity*

These concepts can be incorporated into current SEL efforts at the school or district level.

Sample SEL & MBH Programs

Second Step

MindUp

CBITS

Sources of Strength

I Can Problem Solve

Why Try

Character Strong

Passageworks

Check In Check Out

Random Acts of Kindness

Zones of Regulation

Responsive Classroom

Social Decision

Making/Problem-Solving

Dialectical Behavioral
Therapy in the Schools

THE GUILFORD PRACTICAL INTERVENTION IN THE SCHOOLS SERIES

DBT SKILLS IN SCHOOLS

Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving
for Adolescents (DBT STEPS-A)



James J. Mazza, Elizabeth T. Dexter-Mazza,
Alec L. Miller, Jill H. Rathus, and Heather E. Murphy

Foreword by Marsha M. Linehan

Multiple Dimensions of Equity

Policy development

Teaching practices

Student and family engagement and access

Data-based decision-making

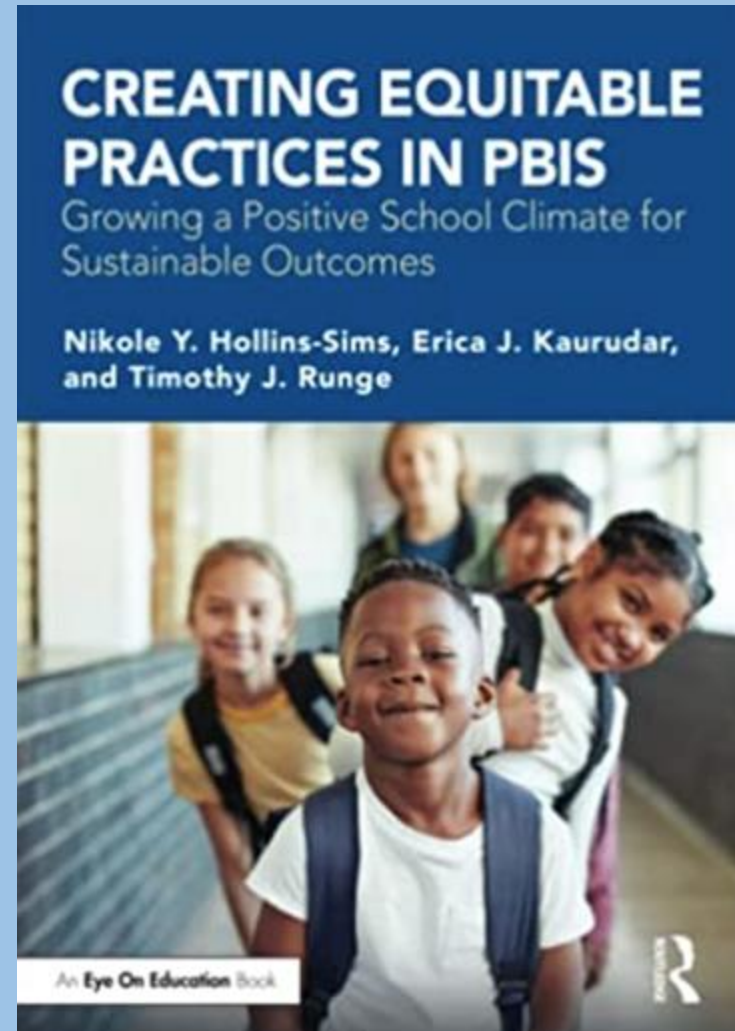
Assessment practices

Inclusive, safe, culturally affirming learning environments

Disproportionality in disability identification, gifted identification, and discipline

Nikole Hollins-Sims

- Drawn from real life in schools
- Comprehensive guidance
- Clearly written for educators
- Practical tools for each step
- Vignettes
- Applicable to different types of marginalization
- Speaks to learning journey





Guiding Questions for Educators: Promote Equity Using SEL in your School

When social and emotional learning (SEL) is implemented with a culturally responsive lens, educators can use SEL to cultivate equitable learning opportunities, responsive relationships, and inclusive practices. An equity lens helps educators affirm the identities, strengths, and cultures of all students; elevate their voice and agency; create a sense of belonging; cultivate curiosity and collaborative problem-solving; and more fully nurture the strengths and social and emotional development of all students.

Educators can use the following questions when exploring the CASEL core competencies through an equity lens:

SELF-AWARENESS

- In what ways does your identity (race/ethnicity, social class status, gender, language, learning abilities, strengths, interests, etc.) inform who you are as an educator?
- Can you recall times or events in which your identity was made obvious or important to you? What did you come to understand from the experience?
- What are the relevant similarities and differences in your lived experiences and those of your students? What are the historical and institutional factors that help explain this?
- What practices of inquiry and reflection have you created to remain aware and informed of your personal biases, perceptions, and mindset?
- What are some instances in which you recognize your personal perspective is limited, and you should seek the perspectives of others?



IDENTITY

- What are some ways your sense of wellbeing impacts the educational experience you provide to students?
- How do you mitigate the biases and perceptions that you hold that may negatively impact students?

Weeks, M., Kulkarni, T., Harris, B., Proctor, S., & Sullivan, A. L. (2020, February). *MTSS is not enough: Preventing disproportionality through nondiscriminatory tiered services*. Symposium at the annual convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Baltimore, MD.

MTSS is Not Enough: Preventing Disproportionality through Nondiscriminatory Tiered Services

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to Discover®

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When students feel like they belong, and they receive the affiliation and support they need, they want to come to school, and...

- ...discipline and suspensions go down
- ...academic achievement goes up
- ...student-teacher relationships flourish
- ...professional development and student support meetings are more positive
- ...parents feel welcome and show support for the school
- ...there is higher educator morale and less burnout
- ...school is fun!**



Strategies for Using MTSS to Promote Equity and Reduce Disproportionality in Your Schools



What is the current state of affairs in your school(s)?

School Help Teams

Shared Leadership

Policies

Data Collection &
Analysis

MBH Tiered Services
PBIS/SEL

Cultural Responsiveness
Evidence Based
Professional Capacity



Status Check

Teams and Leadership

Purpose and status of current teams

Leadership team membership & representation

Professional development for team members

Start MBH efforts with PBIS

Status Check

Data Collection & Analysis

Formal & informal needs assessment

Discipline data

Attendance

Climate surveys (students, staff, & parents)

Disaggregate the data to examine group differences

Disproportionality: Belongingness/Safety/Discipline/Attendance

Consider running focus groups to gain more clarity

Status Check

MBH Tiered Services

What MBH services and personnel are currently in place and available?

Are services primarily at Tier 1, 2, or 3?

Create a list and a visual for the school.

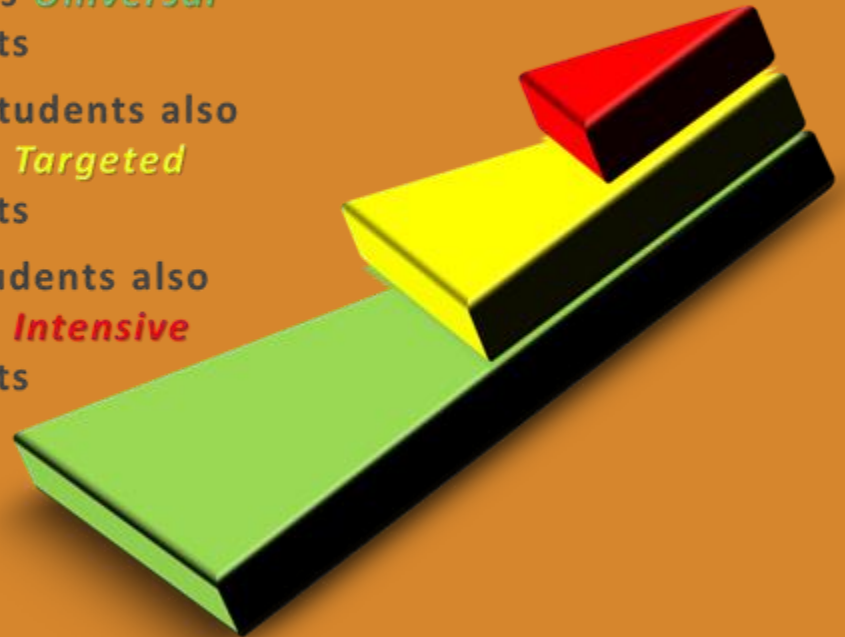
Community resources audit

Status Check

MBH Tiered Services

Layered Continuum of Supports

- Every student receives *Universal* supports
- Some students also receive *Targeted* supports
- Few students also receive *Intensive* supports



Making a Plan

Select Targets for Intervention

Leadership Teams
Family & Student Voice
Data Collection & Analysis
Climate Surveys
Mental Health Screening
PBIS
SEL
Attendance
Discipline/Restorative Prac.
Tier 2 & 3 MBH Interventions

Set Goals

School Improvement Goals
SP Personnel Eval Goals
Smart Goals
Pace Yourself
Short Term & Long Term
1-year, 3-year, 5-year

Select Strategies

Equity-Centered
Evidence-Based
Culturally Affirming
Strengths-Based
Professional
Development

Stages of MTSS Implementation

Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3

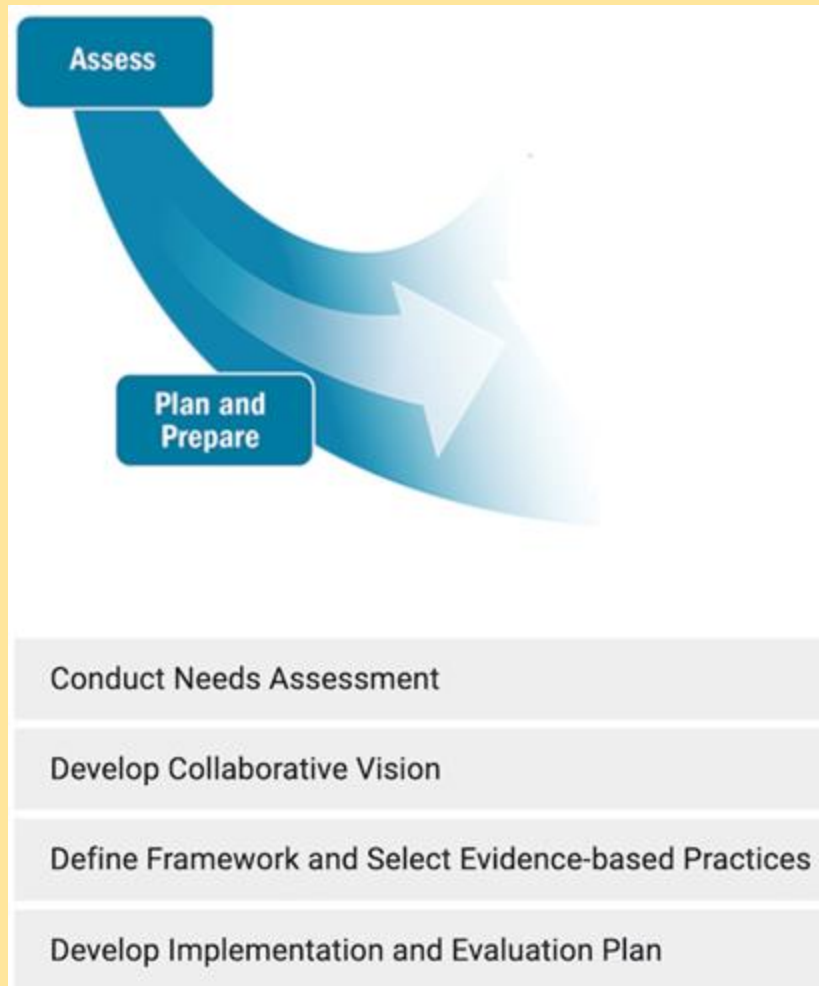


Center on MTSS at the American Institutes for Research, 2020

<https://mtss4success.org/implementation>

Stages of MTSS Implementation

Phase 1



Center on MTSS at the American Institutes for Research, 2020

Stages of MTSS Implementation

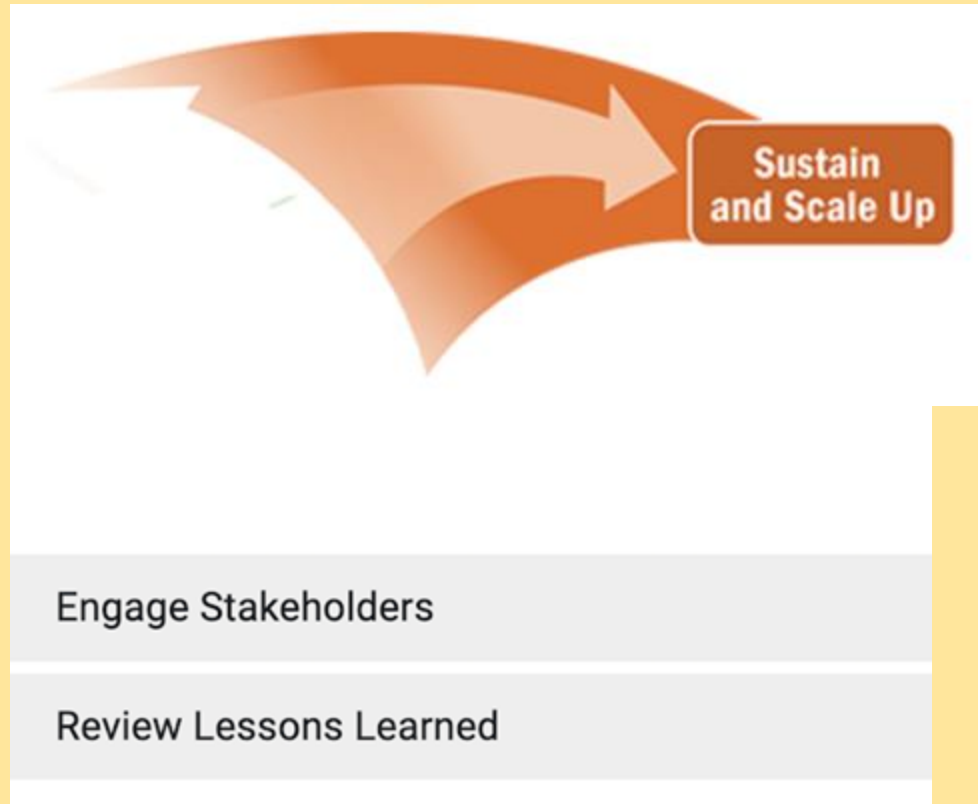
Phase 2



Center on MTSS at the
American Institutes for
Research, 2020

Stages of MTSS Implementation

Phase 3



Center on MTSS at the
American Institutes for
Research, 2020

Table Talk

Stages of MTSS Implementation

What phases are your schools in for implementing any MTSS?

What phases are your schools in for MTSS for MBH? (MBH/PBIS/SEL in your schools)

Degree to which your schools' MTSS is equity-centered?
(1-5)

Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3



Center on MTSS at the American Institutes for Research, 2020

Do We Have Options?



One size
does NOT
fit all.



The person who moves a mountain
begins by carrying away small stones.

-Confucius



Where to Start

- How can you get involved?
- Needs assessment
 - Partnership with administration is key
 - Climate surveys - either system-wide or make your own (google forms)
- What are the desired outcomes?
- How will you measure growth?
 - Measures of school quality (climate, safety)-->essential for accountability for the public
 - Include key interested parties in planning, including students & parents



assessment
appreciated
valued friends
learning effective
trust belonging survey
safety climate strengths
respect support

Build on what is working

What strengths & existing programs can you build on and/or tweak?



Don't make this an "extra"

- Formalize and link to yearly school improvement plans.
- You can also link it to your yearly personnel evaluation in terms of setting goals



Create and commit to a good vibe

- Provide a LOT of positive reinforcement to staff. Make it rewarding and inspiring.
- Enlist staff by building on their strengths and common ambitions for the school.



Attend to the Community Foundations First

Start with **PBIS**, if not in place already. Why?

- Common values (poll students, families, staff)
- Common language
- Expectations apply to adults and kids both
- Clarity of expectations
- Recognition that anyone can earn - “average Joe”
- Builds relationships and positivity
- Helps teacher morale

But Is it culturally responsive? Could that be improved? Is more input from students or families needed?

5 Equitable Action Activities for Educators Using Social and Emotional Learning

Self-Reflection for Staff

1 SELF-AWARENESS

Equitable Action to Reduce Unconscious Bias:

Increase awareness of diverse social identities.

Recognize possible biases and explore constructive ways to overcome those biases.

Example Activity:

Have staff **read** to them to consider negative stereotypes. For example, assume students are more likely to through ways to unconscious bias.

2 SOCIAL AWARENESS

Equitable Action to Reduce Unconscious Bias:

Research different cultures and learn why diversity exists.

Example Activity:

Share **Dr. Melissa Talk** with your staff learning experience. American youth and educators can reduce disproportionate

3

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Equitable Action to Reduce Unconscious Bias:

Understand and learn about equitable behaviors as a first step to managing one's behavior.

Learn strategies for coping with stress caused by discrimination or prejudice.

Example Activity:

Involve your staff in the process of creating school norms and rules around disciplinary action. Address unconscious bias and build in checks and balances to ensure all students are treated fairly.

4

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Equitable Action to Reduce Unconscious Bias:

Build relationships with diverse individuals and groups.

Example Activity:

Encourage staff to build relationships with diverse individuals in low-stakes settings, such as volunteering activities or multi-cultural networking events.

5

DECISION-MAKING

Equitable Action to Reduce Unconscious Bias:

Strive to build inclusivity and define mutually beneficial solutions.

Consider how decisions affect others.

Example Activity:

Encourage educators to **reflect** on how a suspension or expulsion might affect a student's future. Set a school or district goal to decrease disciplinary referrals by a certain percent.

Time for Questions and Sharing

- Any experiences you'd like to share about your efforts?
- Any tips you can share about overcoming barriers?
- Any successes or meaningful experiences?
- Want to share some ideas you're brewing for next steps?



We all question the worth of our contributions. The juxtaposition of our self-doubt and the grandiosity of our mission can oftentimes make us feel like frauds. But don't wait for confidence to deliver. Just by wanting to give something of importance, you are someone of importance.

- Amy Fast, Ed.D.



Resources

Casel.org

https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2021/08/2021.8.4_Promoting-equity-using-SEL-in-your-school.pdf

CDC - Promoting MH & Well-Being in Schools: How to Get Started

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/mental-health-action-guide/pdf/CDC-MH-Action-Guide_How-to-Get-Started.pdf

Center for MTSS website:

<https://mtss4success.org/implementation>

Guiding Questions for Educators: Promote Equity Using SEL in Your School:

https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2021/08/2021.8.4_Promoting-equity-using-SEL-in-your-school.pdf

PBIS.org

Self-Reflection for Staff, Exploration of Bias:

<https://apertureed.com/promoting-equity-pbis-sel/>

Texas School Mental and Behavioral Health Website

<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/mental-health/mental-health-and-behavioral-health>

Texas School Mental Health Framework:

<https://schoolmentalhealthtx.org/about-school-mental-health/>

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NASP Demographics Report 2024

Skelton, S. M. (Guest). (2015, December). What does it mean to center equity in educator effectiveness? [Audio podcast episode]. *Centering Equity in Educator Effectiveness Equity Spotlight*. Great Lakes Equity Center.

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