

Achieving Results for Students with Disabilities

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Nebraska Multi-tiered System of Supports (NeMTSS)



Today's discussion

- Key components of MTSS
- Some potential hypotheses for the current results for students with disabilities
- Importance of our beliefs about students and learning
 - MTSS and a growth mindset
- Some lessons learned from implementation science
 - What it takes to implement MTSS
- Training and technical assistance for MTSS



What is MTSS?

What is MTSS?

- A school improvement process focused on using data (instructional and student data) to guide decision making at all levels within districts and schools
 - Includes systems-level decisions related to things like resource allocation, scheduling, instructional programs/practices used, infrastructure for professional development and support for teachers in utilizing effective instructional programs/practices, and
 - Student-level decisions related to determining need for intervention support beyond core classroom instruction, determining effectiveness of intervention supports and adjusting support for students (e.g., increasing intensity, fading support, etc.) to meet their needs



MTSS

MTSS is not a special education initiative
MTSS is not a general education initiative

MTSS is an **EVERY** education initiative

-Judy Elliot



Components of MTSS

Instruction and intervention

- Evidence-based programs and instructional delivery practices
- Increasing intensity/precision of instruction as students needs increase

Assessment system

- Using screening data to determine which students need support and progress monitoring data to determine if the support is working
- Using multiple data sources to make decisions about student progress and next steps for instruction

Fidelity and support system

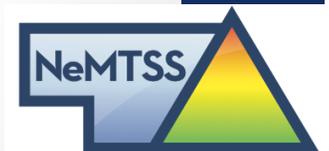
- Instructional data are used to inform professional development and support needs for instructional staff

Continuous improvement process

- Using data at a systems level to evaluate the implementation of MTSS and make necessary changes

Teaming

- All aspects of implementation of MTSS are the responsibility of leadership/ implementation teams



Some potential hypotheses for the current results

Lack of intensity of instructional supports necessary for student success

- **Lower expectations** based on mindset and beliefs about students and learning
- Lack of use of evidence-based, empirically supported programs/practices that have a high-likelihood of working for struggling students
- **Not achieving deep implementation** of effective programs/practices
- Special education system infrastructure may not be designed for student success (e.g., how services are provided, para assistance, etc.)



Importance of our beliefs about students and learning



Observations from schools that suggest lower expectations...

- When evidence-based programs/practices are adopted, acceptance of low fidelity
 - “I don’t do the program that way. My kids aren’t able to do that, so I made changes to it.” (even though the students are not making progress)
 - Administrator says, “Mr. Smith knows what his students need, so that’s why he’s not implementing it that way” (even though the students are not making progress)
- Most often the changes are not based on sound research and lead to a decrease in intensity of instruction instead of an increase



Observations from schools that suggest lower expectations...(cont.)

When students aren't making progress,

- the focus is not on what the adults are doing and alterable variables like examining: fidelity to delivery of effective instructional practices, dosage of the intervention (actual duration of time engaged and actively participating in meaningful activities that are likely to lead to an increase in knowledge, skill, etc.), group size, precision of instructor, special education system infrastructure
- Instead, the lack of progress is attributed to the student or unalterable variables related to the student: family, IQ, special education label, academic history, etc.
- So, the focus and sense of urgency is often on
 - getting a different program
 - getting the student into a more restrictive special education program
 - getting accommodations for testing



Observations from schools that suggest lower expectations... (cont.)

Acceptance of low performance because of beliefs about IQ and special education:

- “If that student’s IQ is here [horizontal hand gesture] and they are performing here [horizontal hand gesture in line with other hand] so we are just excited about that”
- When discussing a student’s progress that is not at the desired level based on the student’s goal, adult says,
 - “She has a full scale IQ score of 63”
 - “that’s a SPED student.”
 - “that’s a SPED student. We’re pleased he’s making any growth”
 - “His brother and sister were just like that – it’s in the gene pool”



Why is this and what
can we do about it?



“A few modern philosophers...assert that an individuals’ intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity which cannot be increased.

We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism... With practice, training, and above all, method, we manage to increase our attention, our memory, our judgment...

and literally become more intelligent than we were before.”

Alfred Binet, 1911 – often referred to as the father of the IQ test



Mindset

Assumptions of a Fixed Mindset

- Intelligence is a **“thing”**
- Talent and intelligence are **innate and fixed**, people are born with a certain amount, and that cannot be changed
- Intelligence is measureable
- **Innate ability** determines learning and achievement
- Categorize people (e.g., very smart, kind of smart, kind of dumb)

Assumptions of a Growth Mindset

- Innate ability **explains only part** of learning and achievement
- **Intelligence is not fixed**
- Intelligence grows and is influenced by **expectations, confidence, and effective effort, and practice**

Dweck, 2006



Student mindset

Fixed Mindset

- Have a strong desire to look smart and fear of not looking smart
- Avoid challenges
- Give up easily and early
- See effort as unnecessary
- Ignore or feel attacked by useful negative feedback
- Feel threatened by the success of others
- If success means you're smart, then failure mean your dumb

Growth Mindset

- Embrace challenges
- Persist in the face of obstacles
- See effort as a pathway to mastery and success
- Learn from feedback/criticism
- Find inspiration in the success of others
- Reach higher levels of achievement

Dweck, 2006



Research on mindset

- Teacher mindset is correlated with student achievement (Rheinberg et al., 2000)
- Mindset can predict future achievement (e.g., Henderson & Dweck, 1990)
- Messages from adults about ability and effort can have a strong influence on student attitudes and achievement (Mueller & Dweck, 1998)
- Students can learn to adopt a growth mindset through explicit teaching (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003; Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007)
- Students with a growth mindset react differently to critical feedback and difficult tasks (Mangels et. al., 2006; Dweck, 2006)



Adult mindset

- Fixed mindset
 - Perceive students that struggle as not sufficiently bright, talented, or smart in a subject
- Growth mindset
 - Perceive struggling students as a challenge. These are students in need of effective instruction, extra feedback and guidance on how to improve

In a study by Rheinberg et al. (2000):

- Low achievers in fixed mindset teachers' classes left as low achievers at the end of the year
- Low achievers in growth mindset teachers' classes moved up and became moderate and in some cases high achievers



Each individual's "true potential is unknown (and unknowable); it's impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil and training."

-Dweck, 2006



Fostering a growth mindset

In the adults

- Step 1: Learn to hear the fixed mindset voice
- Step 2: Recognize that there's a choice (of how you interpret challenges, setbacks, criticisms)
- Step 3: Talk back to it with a growth mindset voice
- Step 4: Take the growth mindset action (take on the challenge, learn from setbacks and try again, hear the criticism and act on it)

In the students

- Providing feedback based on effort, hard work, not getting it “yet,” it's ok to make mistakes, in fact, we can learn a lot from our mistakes (effort-based praise); specific feedback including looking at and correcting mistakes with students
- Explicitly teaching a growth mindset
- Modeling a growth mindset for students

Dweck, 2006



MTSS and a growth mindset

- Key assumption of MTSS: All students can learn
- Deep implementation of MTSS can foster a growth mindset in the adults and students by
 - Identifying students needing extra support early
 - A focus on goals/high expectations
 - Use of program/practices with empirical support
 - A focus on learning (not teaching) – reaching mastery and continuing to try until mastery is achieved
 - Supporting teachers to become effective at providing strong instruction for students
 - With students for whom we haven't found the right instructional match (not making progress we need to see), use problem solving to focus on ALTERABLE variables to adjust instruction for students
- Intentionally focusing on fostering a growth mindset in students and adults
- **Always asking – does this have a high likelihood of working for students – using proven practices (so their effort is meaningful)**



With a growth mindset, we observe...

- Sense of urgency to get results for the students who struggle the most
 - Want suggestions for making changes instructionally or systemically to get results for students
- Interventionists say they want to work with the students who are struggling the most because they want to help them catch up
- Hear interventionists talking with students about mastery and working hard
- See academic settings during intervention/when students are receiving special education supports with high levels of student engagement in meaningful activities



Observations from schools that suggest high expectations...

- When a student is not making progress
 - Team focus is on variables school can control to intensify instruction (e.g., more time, more precise delivery, different interventionists, change in delivery to make it more explicit, added motivational strategy, increase pre-teaching, increase review, reduce group size)
 - There is no mention of special education label, IQ, family issues, etc.
 - “What we’ve been doing isn’t working for this student, how can we adjust the instruction?”

Some potential hypotheses for the current results

Lack of intensity of instructional supports necessary for student success

- Low expectations based on mindset and beliefs about students and learning
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Lack of deep implementation of programs/practices

Some potential barriers to deep implementation include...

- Lack of clear description of programs and practices – evidence-based programs/practices
- Lack of upfront planning for implementation
- Lack of clarity of expectations
- Lack of core beliefs
- Lack of knowledge and skills: underestimation of the amount of support (PD and coaching) needed to develop knowledge and skills
- Haven't established clear indicators of what deep implementation looks like
- Going through the motions, but not truly using data for continuous improvement of the process

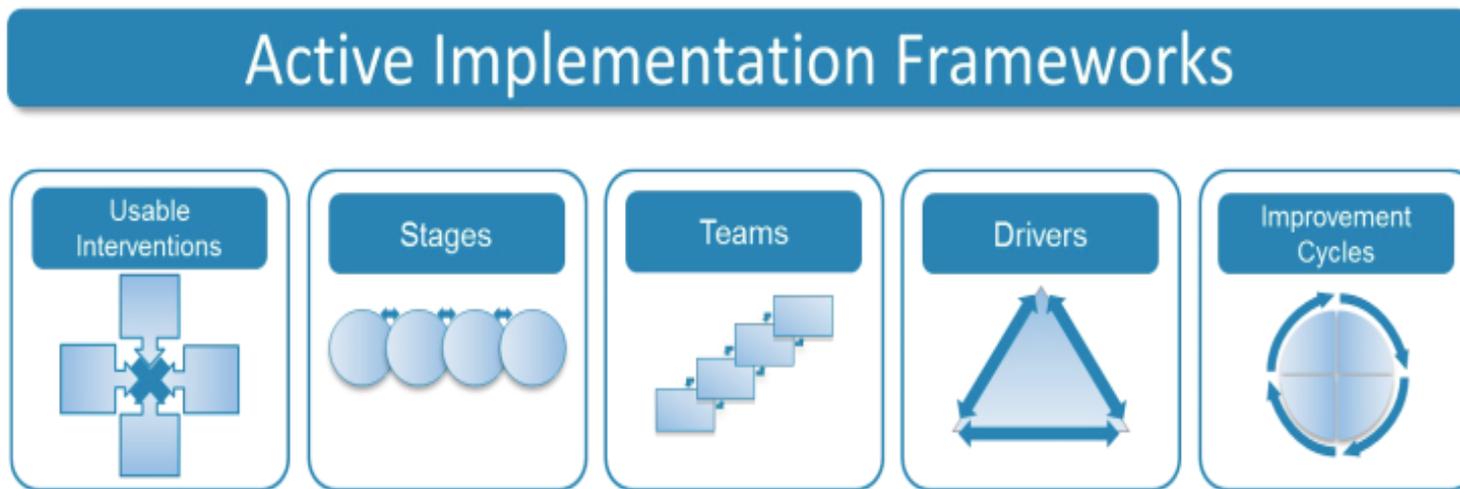


How can Implementation Science Research help?

- Deep Implementation of research based programs and practices must occur in order for students to receive the supports they need
- This information should be used when any new program or practice is considered for implementation in the future as getting them fully implemented should always be the goal

Findings from NIRN Research

Five Active Implementation Frameworks found to be essential in implementation of initiatives across a range of fields:



Fixen, D.L.; Blase, K. A.; Naoom, S. F.; and, Duda, M. A. (2013). NIRN

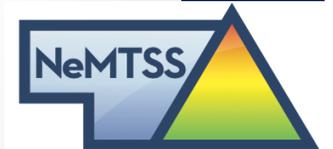


Building and implementing a MTSS

- Establishing a team
- Analyzing current practices and determining a focus area
- Selecting evidence-based programs/practices to implement
- Building an infrastructure for implementation (that includes much more intensive training and support than has typically been provided)
- Establishing indicators of deep implementation of the programs/practices
- Monitoring implementation and problem solving



Exploration



Building and implementing a MTSS

- Establishing a team
 - Implementation team that includes decision makers – responsible for all aspects of implementation
 - Team is only as strong as the weakest implementer (a growth mindset related to the adults and students)
 - Willingness to make decisions about allocation of resources, provision of PD and support based on need and likelihood of success for students
 - Team must be focused on “Making it Happen” – not letting it happen or helping it happen (Fixen, D.L.; Blase, K. A.; Naoom, S. F.; and, Duda, M. A., 2013)



Building and implementing a MTSS (cont.)

- Examining current instruction (across all systems: core, intervention, special education)
 - Student data
 - Current instruction – expectations around use of materials, delivery practices, etc.
 - Gathering of instructional data (e.g., student engagement and active participation in learning)
- Examine current decision making processes at a systems level (e.g., resource allocation (funding, people resources), provision of professional development and support)
 - How are decisions made? Are decisions made based on need, likelihood of the decision leading to success for students, ability to provide support to achieve deep implementation?



Example of questions to ask when examining a system: Special Education System

What is the goal of Special Education in your district?

- Expectations for students? Teachers?

Quality of programs/practices

- What programs/practices are used - at what grade levels
 - What is the level of implementation of the programs/practices? Consistently good delivery and implementation?
 - Evidence-based programs/practices?

Instructional delivery

- What does the current instruction look like – engagement? Student responding?
- What is the intensity of instruction – how do you intensify?

Training and support for delivery

- Observations – who conducts observations using what tool, when, and how are data used to determine PD and coaching needs?
- Training and support for interventionists in programs/practices/strategies

Logistics

- Structure of schedule, allocated time, actual time
- Are students participating in core instruction/not missing core instruction for supports?
- Pull out or in classroom services, inclusion model?

Data

- Special Education rate
- Students exiting
- NeSA, screening, progress monitoring data

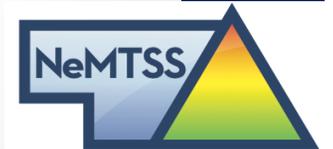


Building and implementing a MTSS process (cont.)

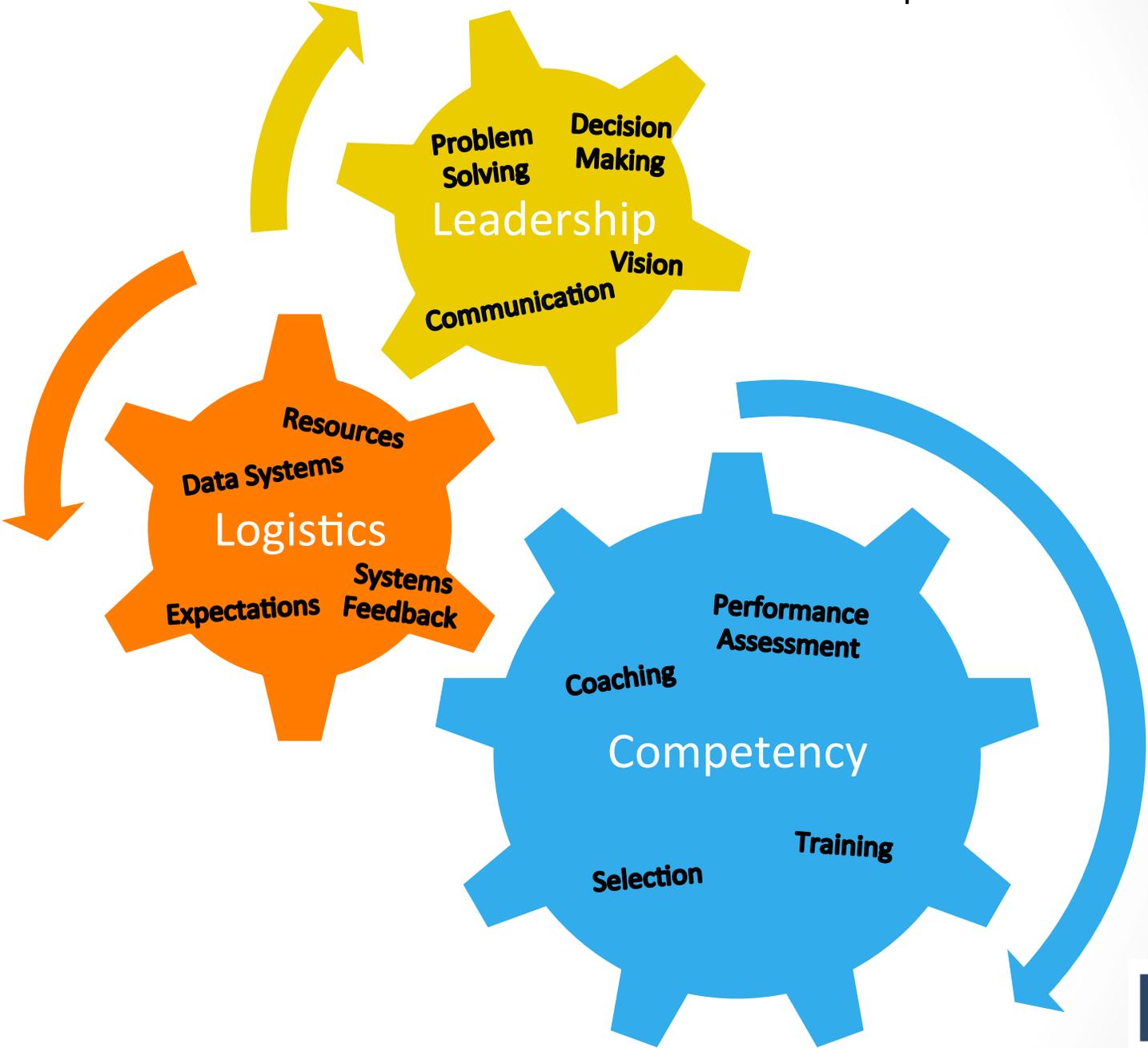
- Determine focus area(s)
 - Use combination of student data sources to help guide determination of focus area: Core, Intervention and Special education
- Determining what program(s)/practices(s) you will implement
 - What is your identified need, what need are you trying to address?
 - Select something that has a high likelihood of addressing the need/working for students
- Clearly define the program/practice/strategy
 - anyone asked what it is would have similar responses
 - anyone to whom it's described would be able to walk in a classroom and know if it is present or absent or to what level it's being implemented



Installation



Implementation Drivers



Adapted from Fixsen & Blasé, 2008

Building and implementing a MTSS process (cont.)

Plan for deep implementation

- What are your expectations for implementation?
 - Who is expected to implement it and to what level of implementation?
- What are your indicators that it is deeply implemented?
- Initial and ongoing training and support should be planned before any expectation of implementation
- Plan for and provide initial training
 - First – for those who will be managing/monitoring implementation and those who will be supporting implementation
 - Then – for those who will be implementing
 - Should include opportunities for practice



Building and implementing a MTSS process (cont.)

Plan for deep implementation

- Observation/performance assessment –
 - How will you determine if the program/practice/strategy is being implemented by the implementers
 - How will you use that information to plan further support for those who need it until they reach the expected level of implementation
- Plan to provide support for staff based on need as determined by a combination of instructional data and student data
- What types of support will be provided?
 - Booster training sessions based on need identified through performance assessments/observations
 - Coaching support – feedback, modeling, side-by-side, planning, use of videotapes, etc.



Initial implementation



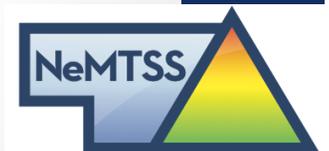
Building and implementing a MTSS process (cont.)

Begin implementation of the model/program/practice

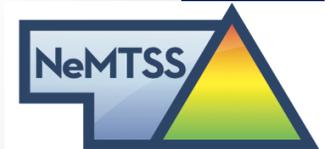
Follow the implementation plan for providing ongoing professional development and support for implementers

Monitoring implementation and problem solving

- Team needs to monitor progress on indicators of deep implementation and ensure whether or not they meeting the expectations on the indicators
- Team needs to problem solve around any indicators that are not met to plan to get those indicators met



Full implementation



Building and implementing a MTSS process (cont.)

- The full model is implemented (including evidence based instructional programs & practices, applying systematic decision rules to universal screening and progress monitoring data to guide supports for students) as determined by performance on indicators of deep implementation
- Achieving growth/improved results for students
- Implementation team continues to focus on problem solving and planning to sustain MTSS



Training and technical assistance for MTSS

- Regional information sessions in the fall of 2015
 - Assistance with planning for implementation
- Professional development workshops
- Technical Assistance



References

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