Delaware Multi-Tiered System of Support

Classroom Quick Reference Guide

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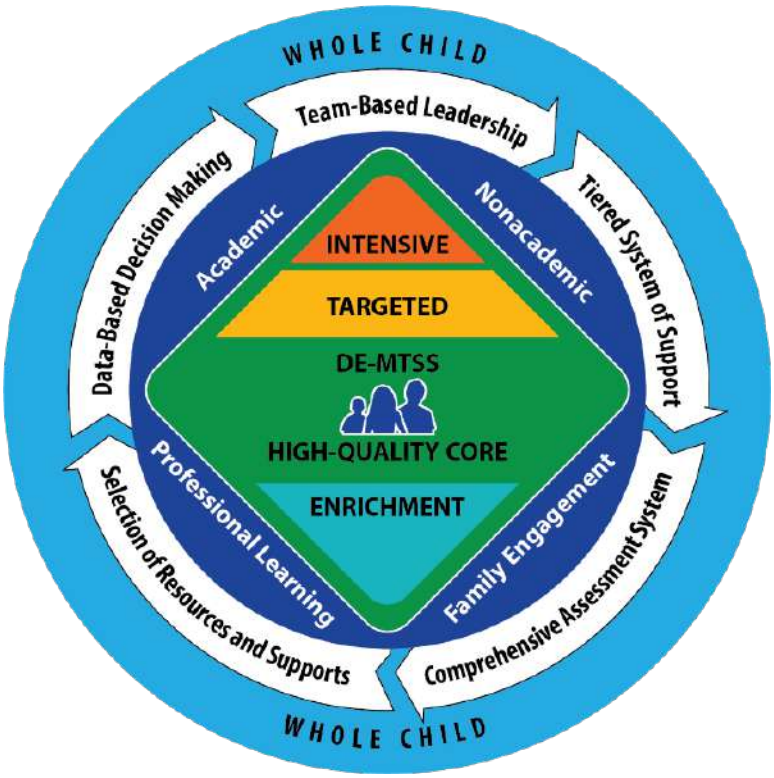
Introduction

This quick reference guide provides an overview of the Delaware Multi-Tiered System of Support (DE-MTSS; Figure 1) and describes key practices for educators implementing DE-MTSS. The audience for this guide includes general and special educators, interventionists, specialists, and other school personnel who work directly with students and are responsible for implementing DE-MTSS.

Figure 1. DE-MTSS Graphic



DE-MTSS Vision

DE-MTSS provides a whole-child framework for all students to reach their full potential in a positive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. Through high-quality instruction and intervention – and a culture of collaboration, communication, and flexibility – parents, educators, and leaders work together to develop a responsive system of support that addresses the academic and nonacademic needs of all learners and boosts student performance.

What Is DE-MTSS?

The DE-MTSS framework (Figure 1) is designed to meet the needs of the whole child through an integrated, multilevel prevention system that optimizes team-based leadership and data-driven decision making to meet the academic and nonacademic[1] needs of all students. Educators provide high-quality, core academic instruction and nonacademic practices as universal supports to all children. School teams use a universal screening process to identify students who need additional help, and they deliver evidence-based interventions and supports that match student needs and are informed by ongoing progress monitoring and additional formative assessments.

Key Ideas

DE-MTSS is a framework for aligning, organizing, and sustaining the delivery of evidence-based instruction and interventions. It is not a program or curriculum.

DE-MTSS integrates academic (e.g., reading and mathematics) and nonacademic (e.g., behavior, social and emotional) systems, data, and practices to support the whole child.

The DE-MTSS framework aligns, organizes, and sustains the delivery of evidence-based instruction and interventions. To support improved whole child outcomes, DE-MTSS integrates academic (e.g., reading and mathematics) and nonacademic (e.g., behavior, social and emotional) systems, data, and practices. This integration is important because of the connections among academic performance, behavior, and social and emotional functioning. Furthermore, integrating academic and nonacademic systems increases efficiency, which helps districts, charters, and schools use resources more effectively to support all students and build educator capacity (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

[1] *Nonacademic* refers to practices and instruction that contribute to valued outcomes not directly related to academic performance, such as positive behavior, social and emotional competence, mental health, and physical health.

DE-MTSS Essential Components

DE-MTSS includes the five essential components described in Table 1. Each essential component is connected to and builds on the others. These essential components are presented in more detail in the DE-MTSS Implementation Guide.

Table 1. DE-MTSS Essential Components

Essential Component	Definition
Data-Based Decision Making	A process that uses all data relevant to the whole child to make informed decisions about academic and nonacademic instruction and supports.
Team-Based Leadership	Districts, charters, and schools use multiple teams and teaming structures to share decision making, distribute responsibility, and organize a coordinated MTSS.
Tiered System of Support	The DE-MTSS framework includes a multilevel system of response that integrates academic and nonacademic supports to decrease school failure, maximize achievement, and meet the needs of the whole child.
Comprehensive Assessment System	A comprehensive assessment system uses a balance of formative and summative assessments, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring measures, each being valid and reliable for its intended purpose and administered at specific intervals or as needed.
Evaluation and Selection of Academic and Nonacademic Resources, Supports, and Interventions	Within a tiered system, district, charter, and school leaders work collaboratively to provide the necessary resources and support for the evaluation, selection, and implementation of high-quality academic and nonacademic instructional resources and evidence-based interventions.

DE-MTSS Educator Implementation Actions

This section presents an overview of effective practices that educators can use when implementing DE-MTSS. These actions should not be considered a comprehensive list of all actions that educators must take when initiating DE-MTSS. Rather, the actions listed here are intended to highlight effective practices that can be used across a variety of settings to promote positive outcomes for students.

DE-MTSS Educator Implementation Actions

- Universally design instruction and remove barriers to learning.
- Use the gradual release of responsibility model.
- Demonstrate cultural and linguistic responsiveness.
- Collaborate with families to support all students.
- Use data to understand student strengths and needs.
- Differentiate instruction and supports.
- Implement effective classroom management practices.
- Use fidelity of implementation data to improve instruction.
- Select and implement targeted interventions and supports.
- Deliver intensive intervention and supports.

Universally design instruction and remove barriers to learning. (back to top)

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) creates an equity-oriented environment where differences in experience, knowledge, and ability, along with individual student strengths and needs, are considered, acknowledged, and anticipated. UDL is an essential strategy for meeting the diverse needs of students within Tier 1 core instruction.
- Identify and remove barriers to learning that may unintentionally materialize within the curriculum.
- Design instruction to maintain consistent focus on the Delaware State Standards–aligned lesson or unit goal, while proactively offering flexibility in the goals, methods, materials, and assessments used to optimize accessibility and opportunity for all.

- Deliver effective scaffolds, supports, and high-leverage and evidence-based practices, and provide options for how students engage, perceive content, and communicate their learning (Meyer et al., 2014).
- Resources:
  - Delaware ACCESS UDL Initiative
  - CAST

Use the gradual release of responsibility model. (back to top)

- The gradual release of responsibility model is an effective method of teaching that can be delivered across grades and academic and nonacademic content areas within Tier 1 core instruction. The goal is to provide appropriate scaffolding and support to move students toward independence. The four components of the model—focused lessons, guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent work—and associated teacher actions are shown in Table 2.
- Throughout the components, educators provide frequent opportunities to respond, offer immediate specific feedback, and maintain a brisk pace throughout instruction to enhance student engagement and focus on learning (Kearns, 2018).

Table 2. Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

Component	Teacher Actions
Focus Lessons	▪ State the learning objective and desired outcome of the lesson. ▪ Model the skill using clear explanations and planned examples to clarify students' understanding. ▪ Demonstrate the thinking required to solve a problem or complete a task by "thinking aloud."
Guided Instruction	▪ Scaffold students' understanding using questions, prompts, and cues. ▪ Gradually release control as students gain mastery.
Collaborative Learning	▪ Structure small-group activities for students to apply what they have learned. ▪ Provide opportunities for students to use academic language with peers.
Independent Learning	▪ Provide opportunities for students to practice independently and gain fluency with a skill.

Source: Fisher and Frey (2013)

Demonstrate cultural and linguistic responsiveness. (back to top)

- The use of culturally and linguistically responsive practices by teachers and other school staff involves purposeful consideration of the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors that may have an impact on students' success in the classroom.
- Attention to these factors, along with the inclusion of cultural elements in the delivery of instruction, will help make the strongest possible connection between the culture and expectations of the school and the culture(s) that students bring to school.
- Ensure that instruction builds on existing student knowledge and experience and is language appropriate.
- Use awareness of students' cultural and linguistic strengths to inform decisions about instruction, interventions, and supports.
- Validate and affirm all student and family cultures and focus on the strengths of each individual.
- Resources:
  - Florida's Culturally Responsive PBIS

Collaborate with families to support all students. (back to top)

- Culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement is an important feature in the successful implementation of DE-MTSS. Research demonstrates that when families are engaged in their child's education, students have more positive outcomes (e.g., Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
- Build relationships with families early in the school year.
- Focus on student and family strengths when communicating with families.
- Develop a system for ongoing, two-way communication with all families (e.g., newsletter, plan for sharing progress updates) and ensure that communication is in the home language of the family.
- Share and interpret academic and nonacademic data with families, including screening and progress monitoring data.

- Provide multiple formats for meetings (e.g., phone, video conference), and offer a range of meeting times.
- Encourage family members to share their concerns and perspectives on student needs.
- Resources:
  - PBIS and Family Engagement Overview
  - Florida PBIS Family and Community Engagement
  - Parent Notification Checklists and Sample Letters

Use data to understand student strengths and needs. (back to top)

- Analyze a wide range of assessment data to gain a full understanding of students' current performance, strengths, and needs and to inform instructional decisions.
- Use diagnostic assessment to identify a student's specific strengths and areas of need. Existing data, such as screening and progress monitoring data, may provide information about the types of errors that a student is making or potential causes of behavior problems.
- Analyze academic and nonacademic data at the same time to understand the connection between academic and behavior challenges. For example, diagnostic data may reveal that an underlying academic deficit is causing a problem behavior to occur.
- Examine formative assessment data, including progress monitoring data, to determine whether changes in instructional practices, interventions, and supports are needed.
- Resources:
  - Example Diagnostic Tools
  - PBIS Technical Guide on Classroom Data: Using Data to Support Implementation of Positive Classroom Behavior Support Practices and Systems
  - Data Rich, Information Poor? Making Sense of Progress Monitoring Data to Guide Intervention Decisions

Differentiate instruction and supports. (back to top)

- Differentiation can involve mixed instructional groupings, team teaching, peer tutoring, learning centers, and scaffolding to ensure that all students have access to the instructional program and nonacademic supports. Differentiated instruction is not the same as providing more intensive interventions to students at risk for academic and nonacademic difficulties (National Center on Responsive to Intervention, 2010).
- Use assessment data and knowledge of student readiness, learning preferences, language, and culture to offer students in the same class different scaffolds and supports to address their needs.
- Use flexible grouping to differentiate instruction and supports based on student needs and the learning objectives. Homogenous grouping allows for focused instruction for students with similar needs. Heterogenous, or mixed ability, grouping can be used to provide increased modeling and scaffolding for students and as a strategy for improving interpersonal skills and motivation.
- Provide differentiated instruction and supports across the tiers.
- Resources:
  - High Leverage Practice #17: Use Flexible Grouping
  - Differentiated Instruction Professional Development Module

Implement effective classroom management practices. (back to top)

- An essential part of providing Tier 1 nonacademic supports is implementing effective classroom management strategies. Consistently implemented and effective classroom management strategies create a predictable environment that is beneficial for both students and teachers and increase student engagement and instructional time. These are strategies that, like academic evidence-based practices (EBPs), have a research base showing positive impact and response from students. Table 3 includes examples of effective classroom management strategies.

Table 3. Features of Effective Classroom Management

Critical Feature	Examples
Maximize classroom structure.	• Develop predictable routines. • Design environment to elicit appropriate behavior and minimize crowding and distraction (e.g., seating arrangement for easy movement and traffic flow).
Post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce a small number of positively stated expectations.	• Define what the rules look like across all the routines and settings in school. • Teach the expectations directly in the expected context.
Actively engage students in observable ways.	• Provide students with high rates of opportunities to respond. • Consider various observable ways to engage students. • Incorporate a range of EBPs that promote active engagement.
Establish a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior.	• Acknowledge and immediately reinforce when students exhibit expected behaviors; provide consistent and specific praise. • Maintain language and goals of schoolwide expectations within the classroom so that students can generalize these behaviors across settings.
Establish a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior.	• Use brief and specific error corrections to respond to problem behavior. • Incorporate differential reinforcements when necessary (e.g., ignore inappropriate behaviors, timeout from reinforcement).

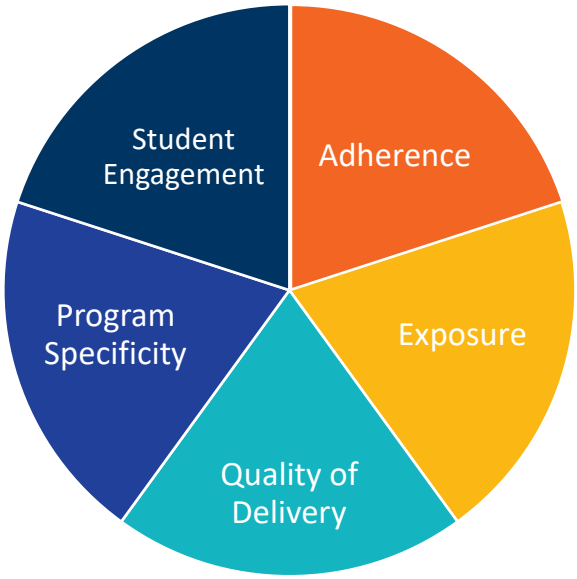
Note. Adapted from *Evidence-Based Classroom Management: Moving From Research to Practice* (Simonsen, 2010).

- Resources:
  - Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Management Strategies for Teachers
  - Evidence-Based Classroom Management: Moving From Research to Practice

Use fidelity of implementation data to improve instruction and supports. (back to top)

- It is important to consistently implement instruction, supports, and interventions as intended. If we do not implement critical components of instruction, supports, or interventions with consistency then we cannot link student outcomes to the instruction we provide.
- Fidelity data assist educators with problem solving by allowing them to rule out ineffective implementation as the cause for poor outcomes. Fidelity data may be collected using a variety of tools, such as checklists, teacher logs, and observation tools. Figure 2 presents the five components of fidelity.
- Complete brief self-assessment checklists and implementation logs to measure fidelity of implementation of classroom practices and the delivery of interventions and supports.
- Use the data from fidelity measures to identify areas to improve the consistency of instruction and supports.

Figure 2. Five Components of Fidelity



- **Student engagement.** How engaged and involved are the students in this intervention or activity?
- **Adherence.** How well do we stick to the plan, curriculum, or assessment?

- **Exposure/duration.** How often does a student receive an intervention? How long does an intervention last?
- **Program specificity.** How well is the intervention defined and different from other interventions?
- **Quality of delivery.** How well is the intervention, assessment, or instruction delivered? Do you use good teaching practices?[2]
- Resources:
  - Classroom Management: Self-Assessment Revised
  - Student Intervention Implementation Log

Select and implement targeted interventions and supports. (back to top)

- Tier 2 interventions and supports are for students who are identified via universal screening processes as requiring additional supports beyond those provided to all students. The universal screening process requires a second stage of screening to confirm the need for Tier 2 intervention. Tier 2 interventions and supports typically involve small-group instruction to address specific areas of need.
- Select evidence-based interventions and supports for Tier 2 that have been evaluated using a rigorous research design and show evidence of positive effects for students who received the intervention. When an evidence-based intervention program is not available for a particular grade or content area, select practices or programs supported by the best available evidence. This may mean selecting promising programs that are consistent with research-based practices but have not yet been rigorously evaluated.
- Consider the seven dimensions of the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity (Fuchs et al., 2017) when selecting an evidence-based intervention. The first six dimensions are applicable to selecting an intervention for Tier 2, and the last dimension (i.e., individualization) is critical to Tier 3 but is not necessary for Tier 2 intervention. These dimensions help educators evaluate and select evidence-based interventions. Table 4 includes guiding questions for each dimension of the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity.
- Collect and analyze progress monitoring data to determine whether changes in instructional practices, interventions, and supports are needed.

[2] See Dane and Schneider (1998); Gresham et al. (1993); and O'Donnell (2008) for more information.

Table 4. Considerations for Selecting an Evidence-Based Intervention

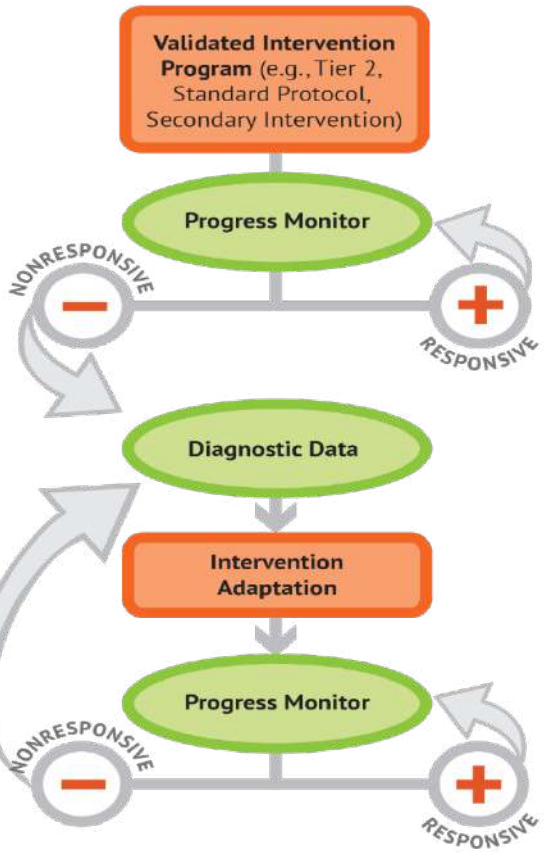
Dimension	Key Considerations
Strength	Does evidence suggest the intervention is expected to lead to improved outcomes?
Dosage	Will the group size, duration, structure, and frequency provide sufficient opportunities to respond?
Alignment	Does the intervention match the student's identified needs?
Attention to Transfer	Does the intervention assist the student in generalizing the learned skills to general education or other tasks?
Comprehensiveness	Does the intervention include elements of explicit instruction?
Academic/Behavior Support	Does the student have opportunities to develop the behavior skills necessary to be successful? Can the intervention be easily integrated into academic instruction (academic support)?
Individualization	Can the intervention be individualized with a data-based process to meet student needs?

Note. Adapted from *What Is the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity?* (National Center on Intensive Intervention [NCII], n.d.).

Deliver intensive intervention and supports. (back to top)

- Implement intensive intervention for a small number of students with the most intensive academic and nonacademic needs. Tier 3 may include increased intensity through smaller group sizes, more instructional time, and increased use of explicit instruction. Students with disabilities receive support across the tiers, including Tier 3.
- Use the data-based individualization (DBI) process to deliver intensive intervention. The DBI process has five steps, beginning with providing a validated intervention program delivered with fidelity (often known as a Tier 2 intervention). Figure 3 presents the DBI Framework from NCII.
- Use a continuum of strategies for intensifying a student's intervention, based on the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity (i.e., strength, dosage, alignment, attention to transfer, comprehensiveness, and behavioral or academic support).

Figure 3. DBI Framework



- Resources:
  - What Is Intensive Intervention?
  - Introduction to Intensive Intervention Module
  - Intensive Intervention Course Content

Conclusion

DE-MTSS provides a whole-child framework so that all students reach their full potential in a positive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. Implementing DE-MTSS is an ongoing process that requires sustained effort from personnel at all levels of the system. The Delaware Department of Education is committed to supporting Delaware educators in implementing DE-MTSS to improve academic and nonacademic outcomes for all students. The information in this guide will help educators build essential knowledge and create a common language to support MTSS implementation across Delaware.

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