

## Integrated Model of Academic and Behavior Supports

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is committed to ensuring that all children receive an appropriate public education, regardless of race, culture and background, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, or educational need. NASP maintains that all students learn best in inclusive environments that implement high-quality, evidence-based instruction. Inclusive programs are those in which students with and without disabilities receive appropriate instruction and related services in age-appropriate general-education settings. Furthermore, an optimal service delivery system is one that is aligned with a multitiered system of support (MTSS) in which evidence-based instruction is delivered along a continuum, based on student need, includes both academics and behavior, and uses data to guide instructional decision-making. The following are some features of such a system.

- All children can learn. Schools have a responsibility to teach them both academic and behavior skills. Behavior skills include the appropriate interpersonal, emotional, and social skills needed by students in all school settings.
- School personnel and parents partner on every aspect of a child's education.
- General education includes all children. Instructional options are based on individual student needs and include collaboration by general education, special education, and specialized instructional support personnel.
- Schools implement a process for early identification of struggling students so that swift remediation through evidence-based interventions can occur.

### USE OF A MULTITIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Assessment and intervention activities must always link directly to the needs of students. NASP supports an integrated MTSS as an effective approach for meeting the learning needs of all students. An MTSS incorporates multiple tiers of instruction for academic and behavior skill development. Providing a multitiered continuum of prevention and intervention services that are evidence-based, data-driven, and culturally responsive is consistent with NASP's *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (NASP, 2010).

### General Features of an MTSS

Multitiered systems are evidence-based. Intervention strategies are selected according to their proven effectiveness and student need, they are correctly and fully implemented, and student progress is monitored through objective and valid measures (National Center on Intensive Intervention, 2015). There is a focus on prevention strategies that lead to positive academic and behavior outcomes that are delivered to all students. An MTSS includes a systematic problem-solving and data-based approach to decision making. Finally, tiered supports are culturally responsive and provide a continuum of both

academic and behavior supports that incorporate awareness of student diversity in race, culture and background, language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and educational need.

**Specific Practices in an MTSS**

Specific critical features of a multitiered system of support include the following (Kovaleski,

- Comprehensive Tier 1 core instructional programs that include:
  - Clearly stated learning expectations and goals;
  - Explicit instruction;
  - Strategies to enhance student engagement;
  - Scaffolding and support for learners to move from acquisition through fluency, building to mastery, and generalization; and
  - High doses of corrective feedback.
- Early identification of student needs through implementation of universal screening measures completed with the entire school population.
- Identification of appropriate interventions of increasing intensity.
- Evidence-based, reliable, valid, and sensitive assessments used to monitor how students are responding to instruction and to make changes, as necessary, based on data.

MTSS can be used to improve outcomes for individuals and groups of vulnerable students who might otherwise experience exclusionary discipline through suspension and expulsion, grade-level retention, slower learning trajectories, dropout, lower postsecondary enrollment, and lower rates of employment (Cortiella, 2014). Examples of tiered supports are shown below.

1	<p><b>Universal Support. In Tier 1</b>, all students are taught using high-quality instruction, and support is provided for all students in the general education setting. Universal (i.e., school-wide) screenings for all children are conducted regularly to identify the needs of each and every student.</p>	
	<p><b>Universal Academic Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schools select evidence-based core curricula and use them with differentiated instruction in response to student needs.</li> <li>● Teachers are trained and prepared to use adopted materials and methods effectively.</li> <li>● There are regular observations of teaching to confirm that materials and methods are used as intended.</li> <li>● Regular (i.e., triannual) screening of all students is conducted.</li> <li>● School teams analyze screening data to inform core instruction.</li> <li>● School teams use screening data to identify students needing additional instruction.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Universal Behavior Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All expected student behaviors are taught, prompted, and reinforced when observed.</li> <li>● Skills related to self-management, responsible decision making, empathy, positive interpersonal relationships, and goal setting are taught.</li> <li>● School teams conduct primary prevention screenings that gather information about all students.</li> <li>● School teams gather and analyze data from existing school-wide information (e.g., office disciplinary referrals) to identify which students and/or settings need additional resources.</li> </ul>

2	<p><b>Targeted Support. At Tier 2</b>, based on data from school-wide screening conducted at Tier 1, school teams identify students whose academic and/or behavior performance and rate of progress are below what is expected for their grade and educational setting. Instructional materials and appropriate progress measures are selected based on individual students' learning needs. Tier 2 instruction is provided in addition to the Tier 1 core instruction, and students complete weekly progress measures.</p>		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="253 348 797 926"> <p><b>Supplemental Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted supplemental instruction is provided to students in small groups.</li> <li>• Tier 2 instruction is aligned with student need according to assessment data.</li> <li>• Instruction provides high doses of opportunities to respond.</li> <li>• Instruction includes immediate corrective feedback.</li> <li>• Instruction incorporates procedures for maximizing student motivation.</li> <li>• School personnel conduct observations to ensure that supplemental instruction is implemented as intended.</li> <li>• School personnel monitor student progress on a weekly basis using psychometrically valid progress measures.</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="797 348 1354 926"> <p><b>Environmental Adjustments and Social Behavior Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School personnel use additional assessments such as student/parent/teacher rating scales, observations, and/or interviews to identify appropriate interventions.</li> <li>• Small group and individualized behavior supports are provided to improve students' behavior and social skills.</li> <li>• As needed, teacher practices are modified to meet students' needs.</li> <li>• Progress is regularly monitored with student-specific measures such as direct behavior ratings and daily report cards.</li> <li>• Students, parents, and teachers stay informed about student progress through regular communication.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Supplemental Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted supplemental instruction is provided to students in small groups.</li> <li>• Tier 2 instruction is aligned with student need according to assessment data.</li> <li>• Instruction provides high doses of opportunities to respond.</li> <li>• Instruction includes immediate corrective feedback.</li> <li>• Instruction incorporates procedures for maximizing student motivation.</li> <li>• School personnel conduct observations to ensure that supplemental instruction is implemented as intended.</li> <li>• School personnel monitor student progress on a weekly basis using psychometrically valid progress measures.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environmental Adjustments and Social Behavior Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School personnel use additional assessments such as student/parent/teacher rating scales, observations, and/or interviews to identify appropriate interventions.</li> <li>• Small group and individualized behavior supports are provided to improve students' behavior and social skills.</li> <li>• As needed, teacher practices are modified to meet students' needs.</li> <li>• Progress is regularly monitored with student-specific measures such as direct behavior ratings and daily report cards.</li> <li>• Students, parents, and teachers stay informed about student progress through regular communication.</li> </ul>
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3	<p><b>Intensive Support.</b> At Tier 3, students who continue to struggle despite high-quality Tier 1 and 2 instruction, or whose needs are more intense than can be addressed by typical Tier 2 interventions, require the most intensive, and sometimes individualized, instruction. A problem-solving team typically determines the need for intensive supports based on a variety of assessments that include data collected during prior interventions and instruction. More frequent progress monitoring (e.g., hourly, daily, or weekly) is used to document progress toward grade level standards. A student's inadequate response to interventions at all three tiers may be used as part of the documentation for special education eligibility in relation to a specific learning disability (e.g., a specific learning disability for limited progress in academics).</p>		
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Having sufficient reliable data from validated progress measures is essential for the accurate interpretation of student progress (National Council for Measurement in Education, 2014). Progress data review must begin with consideration of whether there are sufficient data points for interpretation and include an assessment of whether the intervention strategies were implemented as planned.

## **ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST**

School psychologists can be instrumental agents in the application of a multitiered system of academic and behavioral supports because of their broad training in evidence-based practice, consultation, assessment, and data-driven instructional decision making for students from diverse backgrounds (NASP, 2010).

### **Tier 1**

- Participate in the design and implementation of core academic and behavior curricula.
- Lead teams in designing and implementing school-wide universal screening systems and using these data to guide core instruction and to help identify students at-risk.
- Collaborate with family members and other professionals who support students with academic and behavioral challenges.
- Advocate for the mental health needs of all students by leading efforts to incorporate regular instruction and progress monitoring (routine checks of student proficiency during the instructional year to verify growth) of student wellness at the universal level (NASP, 2015a).

### **Tier 2**

- Assist teachers and school teams in selecting evidence-based interventions and progress monitoring tools match to student need.
- Support regular progress monitoring and data reviews, including reviews of treatment integrity.
- Consult with teachers and other school staff to boost understanding and interpretation of progress data to determine if students are making adequate progress and whether intervention changes are needed.
- Lead small-group interventions to support students' social skills and mental health (NASP, 2015b).

### **Tier 3**

- Participate in functional behavior and academic assessments to customize individual plans for students' interfering behaviors and development of appropriate behaviors and academic skills.
- Assist school teams in selecting evidence-based interventions that align to the intensive needs of specific students.
- Examine the systems that influence the development of individual students to support better alignment with student development and needs.
- Provide individualized counseling and therapy for students with intensive mental health needs (NASP, 2015b).
- Collaborate with parents and school teams as part of the frequent review and interpretation of Tier 3 data to determine whether a student should be referred for a comprehensive evaluation.

Throughout all tiers, school psychologists can evaluate implemented programs and supports to assist in determining the effects of multitiered approaches on school-wide academic and behavioral outcomes. Important data to consider are the percentages of students meeting learning goals, rates of special education referral and placement, and disproportionate placements of students from diverse backgrounds in programs that remove them from the general education classroom.

## SUMMARY

NASP believes that children learn best in inclusive environments that provide evidence-based instruction to all students. Recent research suggests that an effective education for students can be accomplished with a multitiered system that incorporates evidence-based core academic and behavior curricula as well as supplemental targeted and intensive interventions. School psychologists play important roles in implementing this model by leading school teams and facilitating the design and delivery of multitiered, problem-solving systems of support for all students. School psychologists effectively use their training in data-based decision making to identify potentially vulnerable groups of children, consult with school teams to improve student outcomes, and reduce risk for academic, behavioral, and social–emotional concerns over time (Greenberg et al., 2003). School psychologists can serve as facilitators of school teams, including problem-solving teams, and assist in the evaluation of student responses to intervention through program evaluation efforts.

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Acknowledgment of position statement writing group members: Rachel Brown (Chair), Rebekah Bickford, Matthew Burns, Joe Kovaleski, Diane Morrison, Chris Riley-Tillman, David Tilly, and Amanda VanDerHeyden.

Please cite this document as:

National Association of School Psychologists. (2016). *Integrated Model of Academic and Behavioral Supports* [Position statement]. Bethesda, MD: Author.