

Multi-Tiered System of Supports



Supporting Students
Through Academics, Social Emotional
Learning, and Behavioral Supports



www.cta.org/ipd



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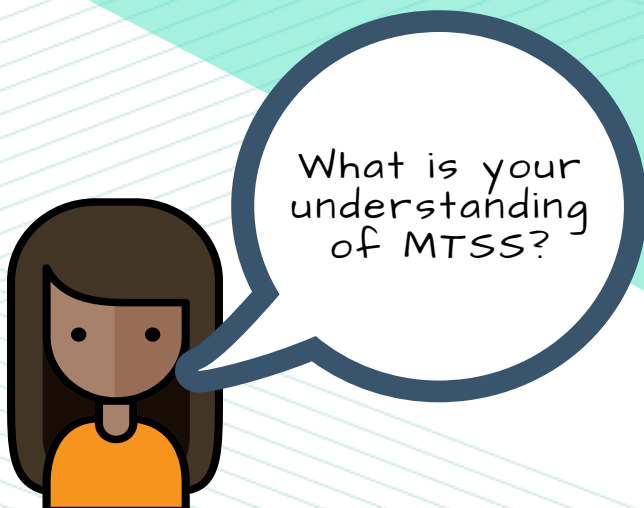
What is a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

MTSS

You may have heard the term, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) mentioned by your school district, other educators, or in other educational forums around the state. What is it? How close is your school district following this framework? Let's dive into the definitions and examples first.

According to the California Department of Education (CDE), "In California, MTSS is an integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on California Common Core Standards, core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavioral, and social success. California has a long history of providing numerous systems of support. These include the interventions within the RtI2 processes, supports for Special Education, Title I, Title III, and support services for English Learners, American-Indian students, and those in gifted and talented programs. MTSS offers the potential to create needed systematic change through intentional design and redesign of services and supports that quickly identify and match the needs of all students." Let's be clear though, MTSS IS NOT a state mandate. It is a recommended framework for schools to positively support the behavioral, academic, and social needs of all students.

In order to understand MTSS more, we need to dive into the definitions of frameworks and models and recognize the difference. According to the National Education Association, a "framework," provides an outline of principles, procedures, and practices. A "model," however, provides an explicit implementation sequence and specific procedures and practices focused on clearly-identified outcomes. MTSS is considered a framework. Why? Every district has a different population of students. Every school site is different, as is every single classroom. School districts must take the individuality and differences in school culture into consideration in order to create a successful tiered system of supports.



What is your understanding of MTSS?

According to the National Education Association, a "framework," provides an outline of principles, procedures, and practices.

A "model," provides an explicit implementation sequence and specific procedures and practices focused on clearly-identified outcomes.

In order to support California's focus on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), the work has begun over the past three years to support districts who are implementing MTSS through the Scaling Up Multi-Tiered System of Support (SUMS) initiative. SUMS' goal was to dole out approximately twenty-five million dollars in grants to school districts to build MTSS into all districts in California. Recently, the last of three cohorts was chosen. You can find out if your school district is in a SUMS grant cohort at: <http://www.ocde.us/MTSS/Pages/CA-MTSS-Interactive-Map.aspx>.



Why MTSS now?

In 2015, the State Task Force Report on Special Education was presented to the California State Board of Education. The report encompassed seven different areas of education that are impacted by Special Education; early education, teacher credentialing, evidence-based classroom practices, assessment, accountability, and Special Education funding. The report was created by a group of stakeholders who spent several years researching Special Education in California. The report was a culmination of their findings and decisions.

Some key highlights of the report include:

- A call for one integrated system of public education where there is a common “trunk” of credentialing for special and general educators.
- More early childhood intervention services to be available for all children, especially those in impoverished areas of the state.
- Statewide implementation and training for all educators in Universal Design for Learning and the development of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

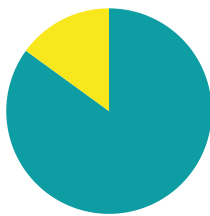
Many of the recommendations set forth by the task force entailed an extremely large amount of funding, most of which was not specifically set aside for changes this large in the current system. As a side note, aside from the big changes that implementing MTSS entails, the task force also recommended completely changing teacher credentialing so that Special Educators will not only work with their own caseloads of students, but with general education students also. In 2018, there has been push-back from the California Teachers Association on the Commission for Teacher Credentialing recommendations on this very issue.

It is evident through the events of the past few years that many of the recommendations from the task force are being implemented at the state level.

The Local Control Funding Formula, the Local Control Accountability Plan, and MTSS

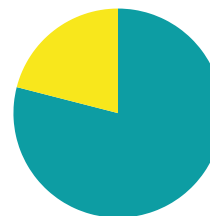
In creating a system of "All Means All", it is important to consider that students with IEPs are general education students first and while IDEA funding still remains separate, students in Special Education are fully included in LCFF. According to 2014-15 CALPADS data, a number of students with IEPs also qualify districts for additional funding (see the charts below for more details).

Students Living in Poverty



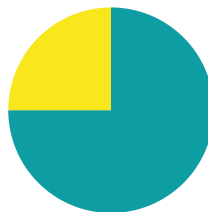
■ Without IEPs (85%) ■ With IEPs (15%)

Students Who Are ELLs



■ Without IEPs (79%) ■ With IEPs (21%)

Students in Foster Care



■ Without IEPs (75%) ■ With IEPs (25%)

The Orange County Department of Education has created a graphic that shows the alignment of the MTSS framework and the LCAP (next page). Ideally, LCAP should pay for MTSS in a local educational agency. Additionally, involvement in the SUMS initiative and other state MTSS programs might qualify as LCAP assistance in the California Accountability Model.

For more information on the types of assistance that are available to local educational agencies for LCAP support, look at the SBE November agenda (located in our Google Drive folder- see Appendix A).

What policies & support does CTA offer for MTSS?

CTA currently has policy on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (see Appendix A). The Center 4 Organizing & Bargaining (C4OB) and the Instruction & Professional Development (IPD) department has also published a 7 page joint advisory on the Multi-Tiered System of Support. The joint advisory includes MTSS-related bargaining advice on hours and committee work, transfers and reassignments, staff evaluation, class size/caseload, professional development, and workload. The advisory can be found by association presidents and bargaining chairs at ctasearch.org. Additionally, the IPD department hosted a webinar on MTSS in the Spring of 2018. The webinar featured a local president who spoke about the process of MTSS implementation and district collaboration. Members can find that recording at www.cta.org/ipd under the Trainings heading. IPD also has created a short animated video that reviews the basics of MTSS. Members, site reps, and leaders can find this video at <https://www.cta.org/professional%20development/ipd>.

What are the components and principles of MTSS?

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a comprehensive system or framework that is intended to proactively address the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of every student at a school site.

Every MTSS should have the following key components:

1. High-quality academic instruction that includes the use of Universal Design for Learning and differentiation strategies.
2. A system of positive behavioral supports is being put in place to address the behavioral needs of students. In addition, social-emotional curriculum is embedded within this and the academic instruction in the classroom. This means that counselors and mental health care providers are on site to work with students.
3. The school site "system" is flexible. This means that resources like the master schedule or the rooms on campus are adapted when necessary to meet student needs. All of these changes should be led by a site leadership team consisting of school staff and the use of data should determine making changes.
4. Data collection is integral to MTSS. Through the use of screenings, progress monitoring, formative assessment, and diagnostic assessments, site and grade level teams can make decisions about any additional strategic interventions students might need.

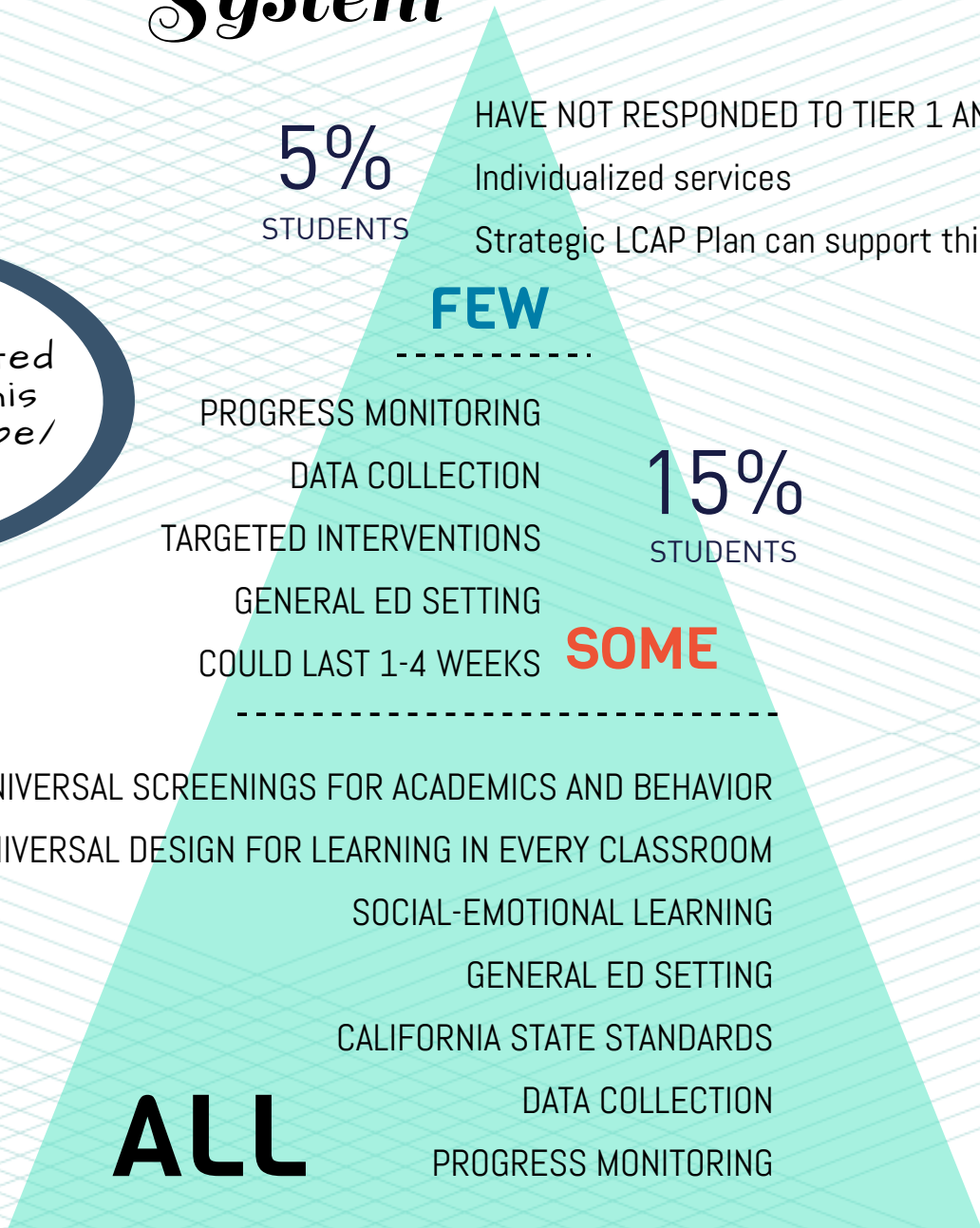
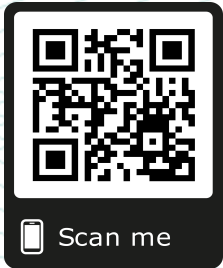
A variety of tiered supports are available to all students on a school campus.



Find our
recorded MTSS
webinar at
www.cta.org/ipd
under "Trainings"

a Multi-Tiered System

Watch our animated explanation of this at: https://youtu.be/xbFufC_n588



Through the use of data from screenings and formative assessment, team-based decisions are made about individual students to receive additional supports in either academics, behavior, or social-emotional learning. These supports continue to be provided in the general education classroom for a 2-6 week time period. If progress has not been made, the student will be referred to more intensive interventions outside of the regular classroom as seen in the third tier.

Unlike RTI which focuses on just serving a small group of students who are struggling academically, MTSS is considered a more wholistic approach for all students. Some additional key components of MTSS are:



Progress Monitoring

Screenings should be used to identify Tier 2 & 3 student needs

- Diagnostic - pre-learning
- Formative- during learning
- Summative- after learning

Differentiation

- CONTENT- change in material being learned
- PROCESS- change in the way students access material
- PRODUCT- way in which student show what they have learned
- FLEXIBLE GROUPING- way in which we group students to meet a need

Universal Design

- the "what" of learning
- the "how" of learning
- the "why" of learning

Data Collection

Used to promote continuous improvement at the district, site, and classroom levels. Data is collected from assessments and screenings and other sources of data.

Adapted from the California Department of Education MTSS Modules, 2016

PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT

COLLECT DATA



THIS TELLS US WHAT STUDENTS NEED



Progress Monitoring procedures



ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR

- Universal Design for Learning
- Differentiation

- Restorative Justice
- Trauma Informed Classrooms
- Positive Behavioral Interventions
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Mindfulness



Appendix A: Resources

For a comprehensive list
of resources, go to:
<http://bit.ly/MTSSbook>

Response to Instruction and Intervention/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

CTA believes Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²)/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a general education system-wide practice, using evidence-based methods and frequent data collection to respond to the academic and behavioral needs of students which enables them to meet high academic standards. CTA believes the effective implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention/MultiTiered Systems of Support includes the following essential elements:

1. General educators use research-based curriculum and interventions to intervene, and continuously monitor progress of students' academic growth and positive behavior. As appropriate, instruction and interventions are adjusted accordingly and may lead to referral to a Student Study Team. Progress is monitored as students respond or do not respond to interventions. As appropriate, interventions intensify-up to and including referral for assessment for Special Education services.
2. Students receive high-quality instruction in their general education classroom by appropriate qualified and trained personnel. Instruction is given in the core curriculum with the goal of achieving the state's grade level standards.
3. General educators use formative and summative assessments that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards.
4. Universal screening and progress monitoring are used to determine the effectiveness of student responses to intervention as well as to inform decisions on a continuum of services for students.
5. All school staff receives ongoing high-quality professional development in research-based, best instructional practices, interventions, assessments, behavior modification and data analysis. Site teams use a collaborative approach to monitor students and analyze data in order to develop and implement interventions.
6. The involvement and active participation of parents at all stage of the instructional and interventional process is essential to improving the educational outcomes of their students.
7. Full funding for professional development, resources and personnel is required to implement this system-wide, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for all students and should be included in district's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). (SEC: January 2009, June 2014)

Special Education Programs: Foundation for Excellence

CTA believes students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), may benefit from instruction provided in general education. There must be a greater emphasis on collaboration between general education teachers and special education staff in order to improve and expand services to students.

Decisions about the appropriate education for a student with a disability (SWD) must be individually determined and made with active involvement of varied professionals. There must be a full continuum of services and a full range of delivery models available. Each student must have available the most educationally appropriate curriculum, setting, and/or program to meet their needs.

CTA believes all educators retain the right to participate in development of IEP's for students whom they serve and be invited to participate in such IEP meetings.

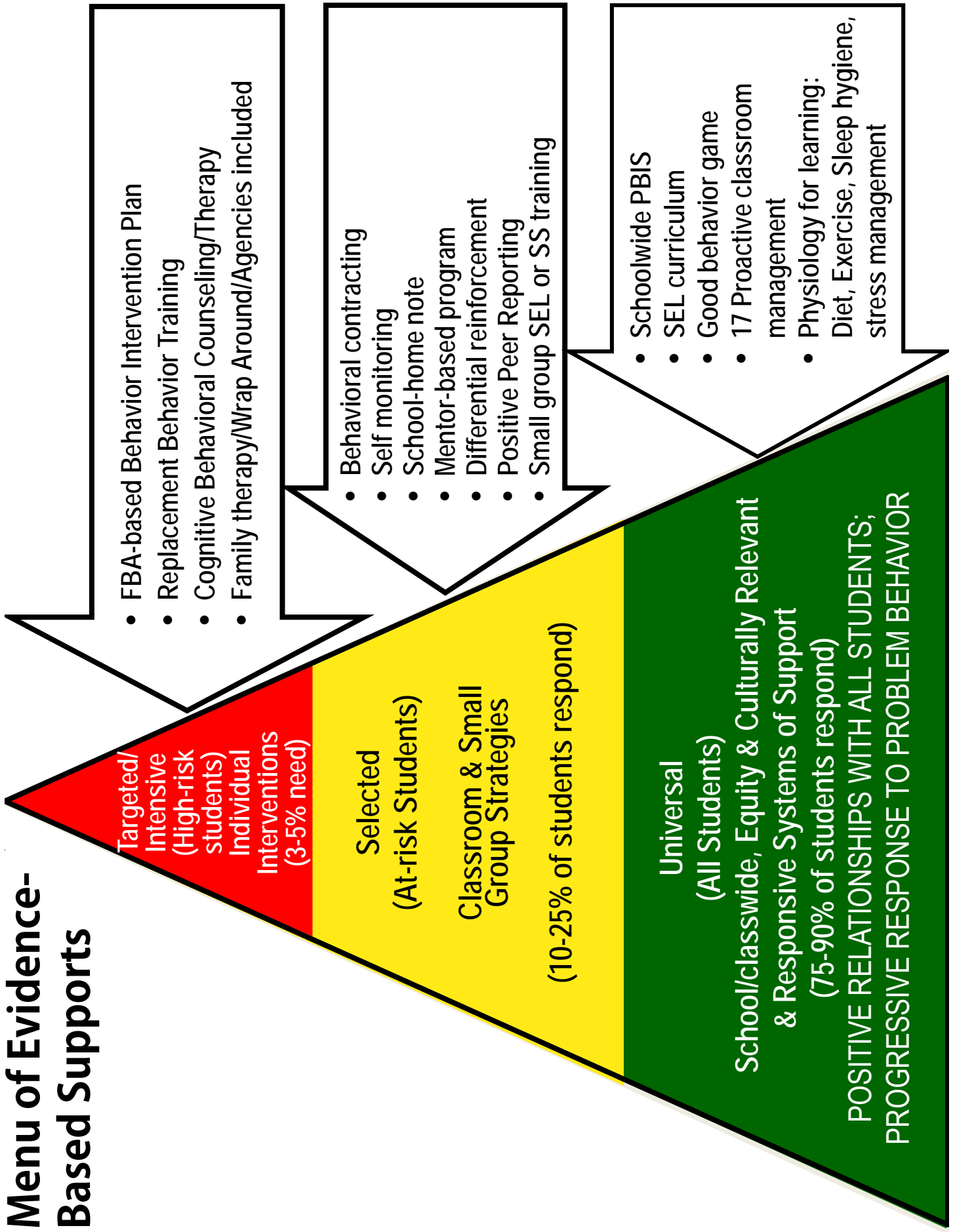
CTA believes the statute and regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be maintained. This includes protection of parent rights, professional rights, due process, IEP timelines, eligibility criteria and the evaluation process. Through their IEP, the SWDs will be placed in the most appropriate least restrictive environment because every SWD has the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or any other general education intervention or prevention programs shall not prevent nor delay access to special education services.

Proposed education reforms must provide adequate funding. Before statewide implementation these must be piloted and carefully evaluated. Staff development programs that address the needs for SWDs must be provided for all educational personnel. These programs must be designed and implemented by participating educational personnel. Programs must be scheduled on released time throughout the school year and provided with an appropriate budget.

Implementation of strategies such as collaboration, team teaching, student study team planning and any other support activities must be an integral part of the educational process, be fully funded and occur within the parameters of the work day. Any redefinition of roles and responsibilities, such as consultation, collaboration or alternative assessment procedures, must not result in an increase in the workload of personnel providing services to students with disabilities.

CTA stands ready and committed to be full participants in the dialogue and development that will produce positive changes for the benefit of our students through adequate funding and collaboration at the school site level to more appropriately address the needs of all students in California. (SEC: June 1990, May 1996, June 2005, June 2017)

Menu of Evidence-Based Supports





The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context

Based on the work of
Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007)

National Implementation Science Network (NIRN)

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHAPEL HILL

Citation and Copyright

Suggested citation:

Blase, K., Kiser, L. and Van Dyke, M. (2013). The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

This document is based on the work of Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN).

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About

The mission of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) is to contribute to the best practices and science of implementation, organization change, and system reinvention to improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services.

email: nirn@unc.edu

web: <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu>

Effective implementation capacity is essential to improving education. The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center supports education systems in creating implementation capacity for evidence-based practices benefitting individuals, especially those with disabilities.

email: sisep@unc.edu

web: <http://www.scalingup.org>



The Hexagon Tool helps states, communities, and agencies systematically evaluate new and existing interventions via six broad factors: needs, fit, resource availability, evidence, readiness for replication and capacity to implement.

Broad factors to consider when doing early stage exploration of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)/Evidence Informed Innovations (EII) include:

- **Needs** of individuals; how well the program or practice might meet identified needs.
- **Fit** with current initiatives, priorities, structures and supports, and parent/community values.
- **Resource Availability** for training, staffing, technology supports, data systems and administration.
- **Evidence** indicating the outcomes that might be expected if the program or practices are implemented well.
- **Readiness for Replication** of the program, including expert assistance available, number of replications accomplished, exemplars available for observation, and how well the program is operationalized
- **Capacity to Implement** as intended and to sustain and improve implementation over time.

A thorough exploration process focused on the proposed program or practice will help your Implementation Team(s) have a productive discussion related to the six areas listed above, and to arrive at a decision to move forward (or not) grounded in solid information from multiple sources. That information will assist you in communicating with stakeholders and in developing an Implementation Plan.

There are a number of discussion prompts listed under each area of the hexagon. These prompts are not exhaustive, and you may decide that additional prompts need to be added. The prompts direct you to relevant dimensions that your team may want to discuss before rating the factor.

For example, under the area labeled **Fit**, you are reminded to consider:

- How the proposed intervention or framework ‘fits’ with other existing initiatives and whether implementation and outcomes are likely to be enhanced or diminished as a result of interactions with other relevant interventions
- How does it fit with the priorities of your state, community, or agency?
- How does it fit with current state, community, or regional organizational structures?
- How does it fit with community values, including the values of diverse cultural groups?

Recommendations for Using the Hexagon Tool

The following are SISEP recommendations for using the tool:

1. Assign team members to gather information related to the six factors and to present the information to the decision-making group or relevant Implementation Team. Following report-outs related to each area and/or review of written documents, team members can individually rate each area on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 indicates a low level of acceptability or feasibility, 3 a moderate level and 5 indicates a high level for the factor. Midpoints can be used and scored as 2 or 4.
2. You can average scores for each area across individuals and arrive at an overall average score, with a higher score indicating more favorable conditions for implementation and impact. However, cut-off scores should not be used to make the decision.
3. The scoring process is primarily designed to generate discussion and to help arrive at consensus for each factor as well as overall consensus related to moving forward or not. The numbers do not make the decision, the team does. Team discussions and consensus decision-making are required because different factors may be more or less important for a given program or practice and the context in which it is to be implemented. There also will be trade-offs among the factors. For example, a program or practice may have a high level of evidence with rigorous research and strong effect size (Evidence), but may not yet have been implemented widely outside of the research trials¹. This should lead to a team discussion of how ready you are to be the “first” to implement in typical educational settings in your area. Or the team may discover that excellent help is available from a developer, purveyor, or expert Training or Technical Assistance, but that ongoing costs (Resource Availability) may be a concern.
4. We recommend that after reviewing information related to each factor, individually scoring each factor, summarizing ratings, and discussing the strengths and challenges related to each factor of the proposed intervention, that the team members decide on a process for arriving at consensus (for instance, private voting or round-robin opinions followed by public voting

¹ Usable Interventions - To be usable, it's necessary to have sufficient detail about an intervention. With detail, you can train educators to implement it with fidelity, replicate it across multiple settings and measure the use of the intervention. So, an intervention needs to be teachable, learnable, doable, and be readily assessed in practice.

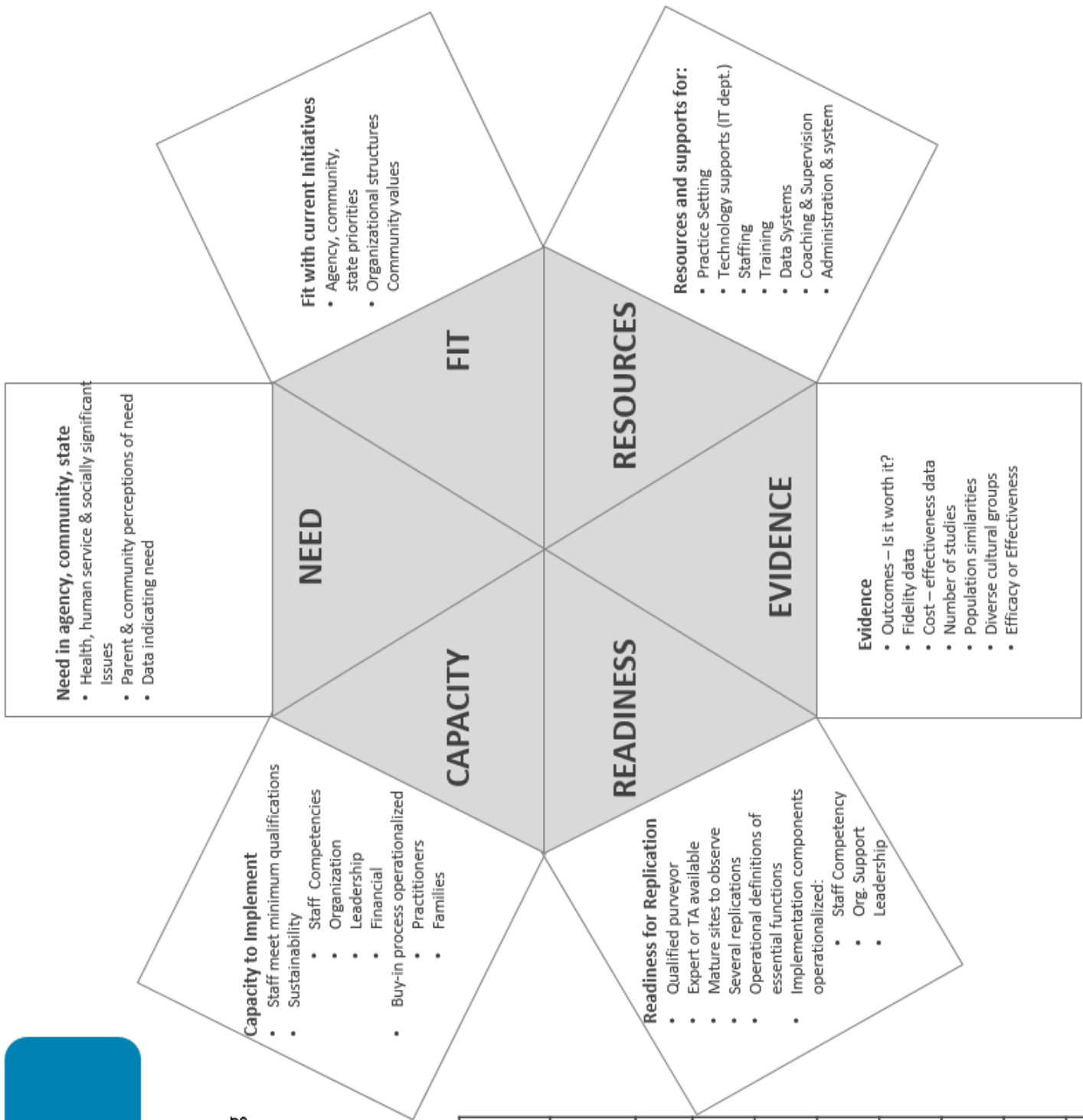
The Hexagon Tool

Exploring Context

The Hexagon Tool can be used as a planning tool to evaluate evidence-based programs and practices during the Exploration Stage of Implementation.

See the Active Implementation Hub Resource Library

<http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu>



EBP:	5 Point Rating Scale: High = 5; Medium = 3; Low = 1. Midpoints can be used and scored as a 2 or 4.		
	High	Med	Low
Need			
Fit			
Resource Availability			
Evidence			
Readiness for Replication			
Capacity to Implement			
Total Score			



A Local President's Testimony about the Hexagon Tool

When I attended the CTA Presidents Conference last July, I specifically chose to attend the presentation by Karen Taylor and Lisa Adams, called "Closing the Discipline Gap," because one of the major concerns for our secondary teachers is the lack of support they feel with discipline and follow up with students. I know that the tendency for districts is to send a couple of people from each site to a training on PBIS or Restorative Justice, expect those few to train the staff, then will themselves a "PBIS district."

This pattern of districts randomly approaching the implementation of new programs, which actually require a huge cultural shift at school sites, is why these programs fail. People will say, "Well, PBIS doesn't work!" But the reality was that the implementation was what didn't work! This was a frustration I have had in our District, because it creates cynicism for anything new that is suggested. It feels like, once again, some administrator is building his resume on the backs of teachers. He can write, "I initiated PBIS in our district," when, in reality, he just checked off the box and is now moving on to his next district, leaving the rest of us behind feeling cheated once again.

Because of this happening in my own district, the goal I have is to write some contract language on how to actually implement EVERY new program. So, when I went to Karen and Lisa's presentation, I was thrilled to see the Hexagon Tool, published by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) which Karen and Lisa presented. This tool is used as a planning tool at the very beginning of exploring new programs, to evaluate whether implementing a program would be needful and viable.

In a nutshell, the tool examines the **need** for a program, the **fit** for the district, the **resources** and supports required, the **evidence** of the effectiveness of the program, the **readiness** for replication within the district and **capacity** (sustainability and buy-in). I was already so excited that I had attended their session for the terrific discussion on closing the school to prison pipeline and the need to shift our thinking from punitive to redemptive discipline, but this tool was what I really latched onto!

I immediately scheduled an appointment with the Associate Superintendents of Ed Services and the Associate Superintendent of Student Services, and shared this tool. If we are going to avoid the constant swinging of pendulums in education, this tool is a way to stop it! It is a colossal waste of monetary and human resources to continually try the next new thing, when one well-planned, intentional and focused implementation of a strong program is what is required! I highly recommend ANY training by these two experts in professional development, but you truly MUST see how this Hexagon Tool could transform how business is done in your district! It has given me a foundation for writing contract language as we move forward.

All systems working together in a cohesive framework through different levels of support



Social Emotional Competencies ¹ and How They Relate to Other School Wide Initiatives				
Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision-Making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identifying emotions ❖ Accurate self-perception ❖ Recognizing strengths ❖ Self-confidence ❖ Self-efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Impulse control ❖ Stress management ❖ Self-discipline ❖ Self-motivation ❖ Goal setting ❖ Organizational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Perspective-taking ❖ Empathy ❖ Appreciating diversity ❖ Respect for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Communication ❖ Social engagement ❖ Relationship building ❖ Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identifying problems ❖ Analyzing situations ❖ Solving problems ❖ Evaluating ❖ Reflecting ❖ Ethical responsibility
<p>Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Restorative Justice</p> <p>Trauma Informed Practices</p> <p>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</p>	<p>Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Restorative Justice</p> <p>Trauma Informed Practices</p> <p>Project-Based Learning</p>	<p>Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Restorative Justice</p> <p>Trauma Informed Practices</p> <p>Project-Based Learning</p> <p>Social Justice Curriculum</p> <p>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</p>	<p>Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Restorative Justice</p> <p>Trauma Informed Practices</p> <p>Project-Based Learning</p> <p>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</p>	<p>Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Restorative Justice</p> <p>Trauma Informed Practices</p> <p>Project-Based Learning</p> <p>Social Justice Curriculum</p> <p>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</p>

¹ <http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/> CASEL, 2017



Appendix B: Articles & Research

For a comprehensive list of
articles and research, go to:
<http://bit.ly/MTSSbook>



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION RESEARCH BRIEF

IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Lindsey O'Brennan & Catherine Bradshaw, Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence

What is School Climate?

The National School Climate Council (2007) defines school climate as “norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe” (p.4). School climate is a product of the interpersonal relationships among students, families, teachers, support staff, and administrators. Positive school climate is fostered through a shared vision of respect and engagement across the educational system. Emphasis is also placed on the collective sense of safety and care for the school’s physical environment. A related concept is school culture, which refers to the “unwritten rules and expectations” among the school staff (Gruenert, 2008).

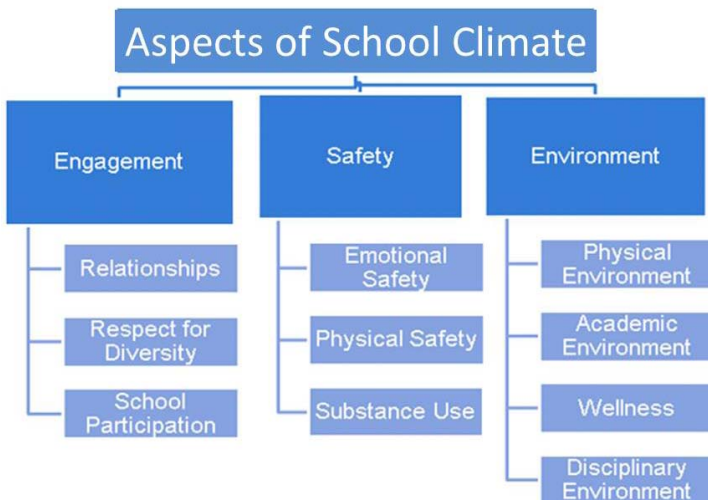
Although there is no universally agreed upon set of core domains or features, the National School Climate Center identifies five elements of school climate: (1) *safety* (e.g., rules and norms, physical security, social-emotional security); (2) *teaching and learning* (e.g., support for learning, social and civic learning); (3) *interpersonal relationships* (e.g., respect for diversity, social support from adults, social support from peers); (4) *institutional environment* (e.g., school connectedness, engagement, physical surroundings); and (5) *staff relationships* (e.g., leadership, professional relationships). Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education’s Safe

and Supportive Schools model of school climate (see Figure) includes three inter-related domains or features of *student engagement* (e.g., relationships, respect for diversity, and school participation), *safety* (e.g., social-emotional safety, physical safety, substance use), and the *school environment* (e.g., physical environment, academic environment, wellness, and disciplinary environment) (also see Bradshaw et al., in press).

Why is School Climate Important?

A positive school climate is recognized as an important target for school reform and improving behavioral, academic, and mental health outcomes for students (Thapa et al., 2012). Specifically, schools with positive climates tend to have less student discipline problems (Thapa et al., 2013) and aggressive and violent behavior (Gregory et al., 2010), and fewer high school suspensions (Lee et al., 2011). Research has also shown associations between school climate and lower levels of alcohol and drug use (LaRusso et al., 2008), bullying (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2009), and harassment (Attar-Schwartz, 2009). In addition to reducing students’ exposure to risk factors, school climate can promote positive youth development. For example, a favorable school climate has been linked with higher student academic motivation and engagement (Eccles et al., 1993), as well as elevated psychological well-being (Ruus et al., 2007; Shochet et al., 2006). Not surprisingly, schools promoting engaging learning environments tend to have fewer student absences (Gottfredson et al., 2005) and improvements in academic achievement across grade levels (Brand et al., 2003; Stewart, 2008).

A positive school climate also has benefits for teachers and education support professionals (Bradshaw, Waasdorp et al., 2010). Research shows that when educators feel supported by their administration, they report higher levels of commitment and more collegiality (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Likewise, schools where educators openly communicate with one another, feel supported by their peers and administration, and establish strong student-educator relationships tend to have better student academic and behavioral outcomes (Brown & Medway, 2007). School climate efforts also have the



U.S. Department of Education’s Safe and Supportive Schools Model

potential of increasing job satisfaction and teacher retention, which is a major concern given the high rate of turnover in the field of education (Boe et al., 2008; Kaiser, 2011).

How is School Climate Measured?

Given the importance of positive school climate for students and educators, it is essential for schools to monitor school climate on a regular basis. Several tools have been developed to assess student, parent, and educator perspectives on school climate. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments has created an online compendium of research-based school climate measures, including surveys to be completed by students, parents, and educators. One such measure included in the collection is the *California Healthy Kids Survey*, which assesses school connectedness, opportunities for meaningful participation, and perceptions of safety across elementary, middle, and high school. The *Comprehensive School Climate Inventory* also measures multiple elements, including an orderly school environment, parent/community involvement, collaboration within the school, and instructional practices. Other assessments, such as the *Communities That Care Youth Survey*, gather data on school, community, family, and peer risk and protective factors related to perceptions of school climate. There have been relatively few observational tools developed to measure school climate, although measures of school engagement and student-educator interactions may tap into aspects of school climate (Pianta et al., 2008).

When assessing school climate, educators should consider the following key factors:

- ✓ **Chose a reliable and valid assessment.** School climate has multiple features (e.g., safety, interpersonal relationships, physical environment); thus, survey instruments should reflect the multi-dimensional nature of the school's culture. Schools should aim for a survey that addresses the emotional, physical, and behavioral aspects of school climate.
- ✓ **Assess annually.** School climate should be assessed on an annual basis; thus, surveys should be easy to administer.
- ✓ **Survey across perspectives.** In order to get a comprehensive view of the school, multiple perspectives need to be assessed. Students, families, teachers, administrators, and education support professionals should be involved in the school climate assessment.
- ✓ **Communicate findings.** An often overlooked, but critical step in the assessment process is sharing the results with the school community. School-wide

presentations, community discussions, PTA meeting presentations, and classroom discussions will help gain buy-in for school climate initiatives and future planning.

- ✓ **Take action.** A core reason for collecting data on school climate is to use it to guide decision-making related to the selection of evidence-based approaches for improving school climate and, more broadly, for informing school improvement efforts which match the school's unique needs.
- ✓ **Repeat.** Re-assess the school climate annually, celebrate improvements, and plan for the next phase of school climate enhancements.

How Can Schools Improve Climate?

Once a school has measured the school climate and identified areas for improvement (e.g., increased supervision in hallways, professional development on cultural diversity), educators need to consider ways to change the school norms, values, and expectations. Integrated and multi-tiered models are often the most effective approaches (Greenberg et al., 2001; O'Connell et al., 2009). Although there is no one-size-fits-all program, there are common features of evidence-based practices related to school climate enhancement.

- ✓ **Multi-tiered framework.** Although the use of a single, targeted program may change specific problem behaviors in the school (e.g., bullying), there is growing interest in the use of multi-component approaches which provide a continuum of programs and support services in order to both target behavior problems and address the broader social ecology of the school.
- ✓ **Communication across partners.** Research indicates that prevention programs are not only more effective, but are more likely to be sustained over time if the entire school community (students, staff, administrators) contributes to developing the program (Greenberg et al., 2003; Rigby, 2007).
- ✓ **Assess school climate from multiple perspectives.** Parents, students, and staff often differ in their perceptions of the school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Waasdorp et al., 2011). While some may debate which perspective is more accurate, it is important to understand multiple viewpoints on school climate, including areas of convergence and divergence.
- ✓ **Data-based decision making.** In order to effectively address the emotional and behavioral needs of a school, several different types of data need to be utilized. These data include, but are not limited to: student, parent and staff surveys, discipline data (e.g., office discipline referrals, suspensions), school-wide observational data, as well as school demographics

(e.g., enrollment, student mobility). This information can inform decisions about implementation of universal, selective, and targeted prevention programs.

Evidence-based Approaches to School Climate Improvement

✓ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

(PBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2006) is a three-tiered prevention strategy that focuses on the prevention of student behavior problems and promotes a positive, collaborative school environment. School staff work together to create a school-wide program that clearly articulates positive behavioral expectations, recognizes when students and educators meet those expectations, and encourages data-based decision-making by staff and administrators. Schools implementing PBIS have documented significant decreases in discipline problems (e.g., bullying, aggressive behaviors, suspensions, office discipline referrals), enhanced school climate, reduced need for counseling and special education services, and improved academic outcomes and prosocial behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2010; 2012; Horner et al., 2009).

✓ **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program** (Olweus et al., 2007) is a school-wide evidence-based program designed to reduce and prevent bullying and improve school climate. The tiered program is implemented across all school contexts and includes school-wide components, classroom activities (e.g., class rules against bullying, class meetings), and targeted interventions for individuals identified as bullies or victims. It also includes activities aimed at increasing community involvement by parents, mental health workers, and others. Previous studies of the Olweus program have demonstrated significant reductions in students' reports of bullying and general antisocial behaviors (e.g., fighting, vandalism, theft, and truancy), as well as improvements in schools' social climate (Limber et al., 2004; Olweus, 2005).

✓ **Social and Emotional Learning** (SEL; CASEL, 2013) is a framework for developing social and emotional competencies in children based on the understanding that learning is maximized in the context of supportive relationships and engaging educational settings. SEL programs are implemented school-wide (i.e., preschool through high school) and can improve the sense of the school as a caring, supportive environment. For example, the Caring School Community Program and Responsive Classroom are both SEL programs that have been shown to improve student and staff perceptions of the school climate and increase positive behavior and academic performance (CASEL, 2013).

Resources

National School Climate Center: schoolclimate.org

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments: safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments' School Climate Survey Compendium: safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement

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BACKGROUND:

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS ACROSS ALL GRADES

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, establish and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. SEL is critical to developing competencies besides academic content knowledge that are necessary to succeed in college and in careers. Effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school. SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful.

Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker. Workforce demands aside, many call for the 21st century classroom to be student-centered and to support individual learning needs. Moreover, students' ability to learn well depends not just on instruction, but also on factors such as the school climate, a sense of belonging with peers, positive relationships with educators, and the feedback they receive.

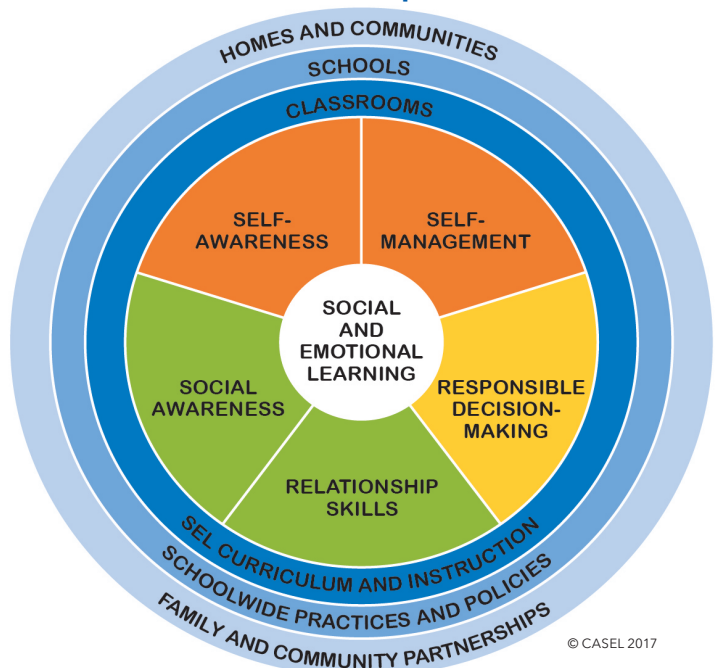
Neuroscience research demonstrates that emotion and cognition are inextricably linked; emotions are critical for all people to understand, organize and make connections between even "pure" academic concepts.

Many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence,

bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills. This is best done through effective classroom instruction, student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad parent and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

As Maurice Elias, the head of Rutgers University's Social Emotional Learning Lab, has stated, schools have a "moral and ethical imperative" to take responsibility for students' well-being, not just their academic knowledge.

Core SEL Competencies



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Outcomes Associated with the Five Competencies

The short-term goals of SEL programs are to:

- ▶ promote students' self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship and responsible decision-making skills
- ▶ improve student attitudes and beliefs about self, others, school, and community.

These, in turn, provide a foundation for better adjustment and academic performance as reflected in more positive social behaviors and peer relationships, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, improved grades and test scores.



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There is a growing awareness in the U.S. among educators and policymakers about the importance of social and emotional development for successful student performance, especially in preschool and elementary school. The five sets of SEL competencies are important from very early in life, but are especially relevant as children begin to spend time with adults outside the home and to socialize with peers.

Social and emotional skills play a role in determining how well-equipped children will be to meet the demands of the classroom and if they are able to engage fully in learning and benefit from instruction.

Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS)

“For SEL skills applied for students at the Tier 1 level, the access to these skills is embedded within the

authentic curricula. Some students may need more specific skill training and practice utilizing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (such as small group or individual situations, settings or programs).”

Mosley, IDEA Resource CADRE, 2016

Powerful Evidence Supporting the Impact of Enhancing Students' SEL

Research shows that SEL can have a positive impact on school climate and promote a host of academic, social, and emotional benefits for students. Durlak, Weissberg et al.'s recent meta-analysis of 213 rigorous studies of SEL in schools indicates that students receiving quality SEL instruction demonstrated:

- ▶ **better academic performance:** achievement scores an average of 11 percentile points higher than students who did not receive SEL instruction;
- ▶ **improved attitudes and behaviors:** greater motivation to learn, deeper commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork, and better classroom behavior;
- ▶ **fewer negative behaviors:** decreased disruptive class behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals; and
- ▶ **reduced emotional distress:** fewer reports of student depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.

Resources

www.CASEL.org The Missing Piece

A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools

www.ASCD.org/ASCD/pdf/siteascd/policy/sel_policybrief_final_11-16-15.pdf

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: A Multi-tiered Framework that Works for Every Student

The most effective tool teachers have to handle problem behavior is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs help teachers recognize the significance of classroom management and preventive school discipline to maximize student success. PBIS strategies are critical to providing all young people with the best learning environment.

— NEA President Lily Eskelsen García

PBIS is a prevention framework that works for all students

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a general term that refers to positive behavioral interventions and systems used to achieve important behavior changes. PBIS was developed as an alternative to aversive interventions used with students with significant disabilities who engaged in extreme forms of self injury and aggression.¹ PBIS is not a new theory of behavior, but a behaviorally based systems approach to enhancing the schools' ability to design effective environments that are conducive to quality teaching and learning.

The National Education Association (NEA) views PBIS as a general education initiative, though its impetus is derived from the special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). PBIS improves the social culture and the behavioral climate of classrooms and schools which ultimately lead to enhanced academic performance. "Viewed as outcomes, achievement and behavior are related; viewed as causes of each other, achievement and behavior are unrelated. In

this context, teaching behavior as relentlessly as we teach reading or other academic content is the ultimate act of prevention, promise, and power underlying [Positive Behavioral Supports] PBS and other preventive interventions in America's schools."²

Legislation calls for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Supports has held a unique place in special education law since Congress amended the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997. Referred to as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in IDEA, PBIS is the only approach to addressing behavior that is specifically mentioned in the law. This emphasis on using functional assessment and positive approaches to encourage good behavior remains in the current version of the law as amended in 2004.

PBIS implementation

Successful PBIS programs are dependent upon the entire school community. The principles and tenets of PBIS are the same as those represented in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Response to Intervention (RTI) as they include universal screening, continuous progress monitoring, data-based decision making, implementation fidelity, and evidence-based interventions. PBIS is not a manualized, scripted strategy or curriculum. It requires adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.

Every school has a unique climate, so a one size fits all approach is not as effective as interventions based on the needs of the learning community. School-wide PBIS includes proactive strategies for designing, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors. A continuum of PBIS for all students within a school is implemented in all areas of the environment (classrooms, hallways, restrooms, and busses).

In 1972, the court in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (348 F.Supp. 866 (D.D.C. 1972)) found that students with disabilities were being excluded from educational opportunities for issues related to behavior. Congress intended to address this exclusion in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as the Supreme Court in *Honig v. Doe* (484 U.S. 305 (1988)) clarified, saying:

Congress very much meant to strip schools of the *unilateral* authority they had traditionally employed to exclude disabled students, particularly emotionally disturbed students, from school (p. 323).

PBIS is a multi-tiered system designed to be inclusive of all environments and link research-validated practices. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve results for desired behaviors. The primary prevention is school-wide for all students, staff, and settings. The secondary prevention is for a specialized group of students who exhibit at-risk behaviors and the tertiary prevention would be for those students who need specialized, individualized supports for at-risk behaviors.

Implementing evidence-based intervention practices are the key to a successful PBIS program. Components include but are not limited to:

School-Wide

- Leadership team
- Behavior purpose statement
- Set of positive expectations and behaviors
- Procedures for teaching school and classroom expected behaviors
- Continuum of procedures for encouraging/discouraging desired behavior

Individual Student

- Behavioral competence at school and district levels
- Function-based behavior support planning
- Team- and data-based decision making
- Targeted social skills and self management
- Individualized instructional and curricular accommodations

Classroom

- School-wide
- Maximum structure and predictability in routines

- Positively stated expectations taught, posted, reviewed, and supervised
- Maximum engagement through high rates of opportunities to respond
- Continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behaviors and responding to inappropriate behavior

Congress recognized the need for schools to use evidence-based approaches to proactively address the behavioral needs of students with disabilities. Thus, in amending the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act both in 1997 and in 2004, Congress explicitly recognized the potential of PBIS to prevent exclusion and improve educational results in 20 U.S.C. § 1401(c)(5)(F):

(5) Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by—

(F) providing incentives for whole-school approaches, scientifically based early reading programs, *positive behavioral interventions and supports*, and early intervening services to reduce the need to label children as disabled in order to address the learning and behavioral needs of children.

Nonclassroom

- Active supervision by all staff
- Positive expectations and routines taught and encouraged
- Precorrections and reminders
- Positive reinforcement

IDEA's Requirements to Use Functional Behavioral Assessments and Consider PBIS

IDEA requires:

- The IEP team to consider the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for any student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or the learning of others (20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(B)(i)).
- A functional behavioral assessment when a child who does not have a behavior intervention plan is removed from his or her current placement for more than 10 school days (e.g. suspension) for behavior that turns out to be a manifestation of the child's disability (20 U.S.C. §1415(k)(1)(F)(i)).
- A functional behavioral assessment, when appropriate, to address any behavior that results in a long-term removal (20 U.S.C. §1415(k)(1)(D)).

PBIS works for all of us

NEA recognizes that professional development is critical to proper implementation of PBIS and the improved behavioral outcomes that PBIS can foster. For an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to “consider” the use of PBIS, IDEA requires the team to have knowledge of PBIS, discussion of its use, and the capacity to implement PBIS to improve outcomes and address behavior. If the program is to be successfully implemented school wide, PBIS needs the attention of time, training, and buy-in from the entire school community.

NEA views PBIS as a multi-tiered system of support that works for all students and believes adding language in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to “consider” the use of PBIS would be beneficial. Employing PBIS ensures a consistent and proactive approach for

all students. Results from the past few years indicate that this type of multi-tiered intervention (can reduce problematic student behavior, reduce referral rates to special education, and enhance students' social behavior.³ PBIS supports the success of all students and establishes an environment in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports: frameworks versus models

Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) or School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) are the generic terms for a set of planned, integrated, school-wide approaches that help schools to address (a) positive school climate and safety, (b) classroom discipline and behavior management, and (c) student self-management and a continuum of interventions for students exhibiting social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges. A recent meta-analysis of over 200 studies of school-based programs (Durlak, et al., 2011) revealed that classroom time spent on social, emotional, and behavioral learning and self-management helped to significantly increase students' academic performance, interpersonal success, emotional self-control and well-being, and behavioral skills and development.

There are a number of national frameworks or models to guide the implementation of SWPBS. For example, some schools use approaches reflecting the PBIS framework from the National PBIS Technical Assistance Center located jointly at the Universities of Oregon and Connecticut and funded by the U.S. Department of Education since 1996 (www.pbis.org).

Project ACHIEVE is a comprehensive school improvement model and program consisting of seven interdependent components, one of which is its Positive Behavioral Support System (PBSS) component (Knoff, 2012; www.projectachieve.info). Partially supported by Department of Education grants since 1990 and implemented in over 1,500 schools or districts nationwide, Project ACHIEVE was recognized in 2000 by the U.S.

Department of Health & Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as an evidence-based model prevention program. Project ACHIEVE's whole-school model has integrated PBSS into a multi-tiered continuum of academic and behavioral instruction and intervention approaches, and Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) since its early beginnings.

While there are other SWPBS models available, it is important to distinguish between a "framework," which provides an outline of principles, procedures, and practices, and a "model," which provides an explicit implementation sequence and specific procedures and practices focused on clearly-identified outcomes.

The goals of a School-wide Positive Behavioral Support System

The ultimate goal of a SWPBS is to maximize students' social, emotional, and behavioral self-management skills as demonstrated by high and consistent levels of effective:

- Interpersonal, social problem solving, conflict prevention and resolution, and emotional coping skills that occur...
- in the classroom and common areas of the school that result in...
- academic engagement and achievement, and that...
- prevent or discourage specific acts of teasing, taunting, bullying, harassment, hazing, and verbal/physical aggression.

To accomplish these goals, students need to learn, master, and apply—at appropriate developmental levels—the following competencies:

- Social Competencies
 - Listening, engagement, and response skills
 - Communication and collaboration skills

- Social problem-solving and group process skills
- Conflict prevention and resolution skills
- Emotional Competencies
 - Emotional self-awareness, control, and coping skills
 - Awareness and understanding of others' emotions and emotional behavior
 - Positive self-concept, self-esteem, and self-statement skills
- Cognitive-Behavioral Competencies
 - Self-Scripting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-correction, and self-reinforcement skills
 - Social, interactional, and interpersonal skills
 - Classroom and building routine skills
 - Instructional and academic supporting skills

Instructional Staff need to demonstrate:

- Effective, differentiated instruction and sound classroom management approaches
- Knowledge and skill relative to determining why students are academically and/or behaviorally underachieving, unresponsive, or unsuccessful in the classroom
- Collaborative interactions with related services personnel (e.g., school counselors or psychologists) or other assessment/intervention consultants
- Commitment to implementing, with support, more strategic or intensive academic, behavioral instruction, or intervention to address specific student needs

Schools need to:

- Develop and implement a preschool through high school "Health, Mental Health, and Wellness"

program guided by a scaffolded scope and sequence of courses, curricula, modules, or experiences

- Systematically teach students social, emotional, and behavioral skills consistent with their developmental levels
- Identify classroom and common school area behavioral expectations and standards for all students, and develop and implement a school-wide behavioral accountability system involving incentives and differentiated responses to progressive levels of inappropriate student behavior
- Have related service and other staff available to provide consultation to classroom teachers, to complete functional assessments of behaviorally challenging students, and to help implement strategic or intensive instructional and intervention services, supports, strategies, and programs to underachieving, unresponsive, or unsuccessful students
- Reach out to parents and engage community resources in areas and activities that support students' academic and social, emotional, and behavioral learning, mastery, and proficiency
- Evaluate the outcomes of SWPBS activities, especially in the following areas: positive school and classroom climate; high levels of student engagement and achievement; high levels of prosocial student interactions; low levels of school and classroom discipline problems requiring office discipline referrals or school suspensions or expulsions; low levels of student drop-out rates (at the secondary level) or placements in alternative schools or settings; high rates of student high school graduations and post-secondary school successes

The National Education Association believes that effective disciplinary procedures enhance high expectations for quality instruction and learning. A safe and nurturing

environment in which students are treated with dignity is the right of every student.

The Association promotes study, development, and funding for a variety of effective discipline procedures. The Association also believes that governing boards, in conjunction with local affiliates, parents/guardians,

students, education employees, community members, and other stakeholders, should develop proactive policies, procedures, standards, and professional development opportunities that provide the necessary administrative support to education employees for the maintenance of a positive, safe school environment.⁴

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¹Durrand & Carr, 1985

²Algozzine, Wang, & Violette (2011) George Sugai, OSEP Center on PBIS Center for Behavioral Education & Research, University of Connecticut, November 8, 2011

³www.pbis.org

⁴NEA Handbook

RESOURCES

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NEA IDEA Special Education Resource Cadre
Washington, DC 20036
www.nea.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>