Michigan's Integrated Behavior & Learning Support Initiative

An Abstract Regarding

Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) and

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi)

"Multi- Tier System of Supports" (MTSS)

Multi–Tier System of Supports (MTSS) is being used more frequently throughout educational establishments to reflect attempts to meet the educational and behavioral needs of all students. MTSS has become a specific focus in many states and is being included in the improvement plans of districts and schools throughout the country. While many educators say, "We do MTSS," variable practice would suggest that a common understanding is elusive or at the very least not translating to consistent application and implementation. Thus, the first purpose of this abstract is to provide to existing and potential MiBLSi partners a clear and concise summary of the key elements of an effective MTSS framework.

Fidelity of implementation is critical to achieving desired results in any initiative, yet fidelity suffers in any effort where clear understanding is not provided and shared. In addition to the initial purpose of providing clarity of key elements, a second purpose of this abstract is to provide clarity of MiBLSi's charge in the MTSS scale-up initiative focused on developing sustainable practice.

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) is funded by the Michigan Department of Education. This project is designed to help schools develop school-wide support systems in reading and behavior. MiBLSi has been awarded a State Personnel Development Grant from U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. MiBLSi works closely with the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS.org) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN). MiBLSi has embraced the MTSS logic and framework and is using it to guide the work of supporting intermediate and local districts, as well as schools, in increasing the academic and behavioral success of their students. Given its mission and grant requirements, MiBLSi provides a specific focus on MTSS that attends to the sciences of effective instruction and sustainable implementation.

A Working Definition of MTSS

A Multi-Tier System of Supports framework must be designed so as to provide educational equity for all students. This framework must include high quality instructional and assessment elements implemented with fidelity and driven by data that accurately represent the effectiveness of instruction and the responsiveness of students. These critical elements as identified by Dr. George Sugai (2008) are listed below. For a school or district to make the claim that they are "doing MTSS," attention to and progress concerning each of these elements should be ongoing:

- **Universal Screening**
- **Data-Based Decision Making and Problem Solving**
- **Continuous Progress Monitoring**
- **Continuum of Evidence-Based Practices:**
    A core curriculum is provided for all students
    A modification of the core is arranged for students who are identified as needing targeted instruction
    A specialized and intensive curriculum is provided for students who are intensive in need
- **Focus on Fidelity of Implementation**

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Brief Description Of The Elements:

Universal Screening

- Universal screening is the systematic assessment of _all_ students on academic and/or social-emotional indicators for the purpose of identifying students who are at-risk, and may require support that varies in terms of level, intensity and duration.

Data-Based Decision Making and Problem Solving

- The hallmark of an effective MTSS framework is the use of a data-based decision making process
- Assessments and data used should be timely, matched to the learning targets, valid, and reliable
- The cycle of screening, validating, planning, implementing, progress monitoring and adjusting should be faithfully adhered to in each tier of instruction

Continuous Progress Monitoring

- In order to adjust instruction in a timely manner and not lose or waste instructional time, monitoring that matches instruction and increases in frequency with student need is essential in maximizing student progress.

Continuum of Evidence-Based Practices

- Use of a continuum of practices and programs with proven effectiveness to meet the learning goals for the population being served is critical to minimizing the number of students who are "curricular-impaired." The Components of this continuum include:
- High Quality Tier 1 (Core) Instruction
    - Clear learning expectations along with brief reviews of previous learning
    - Overt modeling
    - High student engagement and opportunities to respond
    - Frequent incremental and descriptive feedback
    - Follow-up instruction
    - Distributed practice
    - Differentiation
- Targeted and Intensive Instruction that increases in terms of intensity and duration as progress monitoring of student progress determines need:
    - Based on student data, instruction should increase in intensity and duration until student has reached mastery
    - Programs, procedures, and routines should be proven in terms of efficiency and effectiveness for the skills needed
    - Increased academic need of student should be matched by increased teacher skill
    - Frequent progress monitoring should direct ongoing instruction and feedback

Focus on Fidelity of Implementation

- Strong initial training and periodic fidelity checks of instructional implementation are critical because:
    - Drift happens
    - Inadequate training and modeling occurs
    - Even the best evidence-based programs and practices lose their impact when implementation falters

A MiBLSi– Supported MTSS Framework

The mission of a MiBLSi-supported MTSS framework is to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students by providing educators with access to evidence-based practices in a multi-tier, integrated behavior and academic model while establishing the conditions necessary for educators to implement these practices with fidelity. The goals of the funded initiative that drive the MiBLSi work are as follows:

Goal 1 – Participating Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) will increase their capacity to support MTSS over time.

Goal 2 – Participating Local Education Associations (LEAs) will increase their capacity to support MTSS over time.

Goal 3 – Participating Schools will demonstrate improved fidelity and student outcomes in behavior and literacy over time.

Goal 4 – MiBLSi will use evidence-based professional development practice and will use grant funds to support follow-up to initial professional development.

Goal 5 – Increase ISD/LEA/School participation in the initiative and support participants to move through the stages of implementation.

Goal 6 – Implement a pilot model to reduce overall levels of exclusionary discipline practices and disproportionality in race and discipline.

Goal 7 – Collaborate with Michigan Alliance for Families (PTI)

Goal 8 – Collaborate with Higher Education Learning Partnership (HELP) to advance implementation of MiBLSi supported MTSS through pre-service and in-service content and research.

MiBLSi's Mandated Components

Based on MiBLSi's funded mandates, there are required key components of this framework that are important for partners to understand. *The components that define this work are:*

- An Integrated Model of Behavior and Literacy
- Use of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model
- Adherence to and application of Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR) including early reading instruction
- Use of Capacity, Program Quality/ Fidelity, and Student Assessments
- Incorporation of Implementation Science through ISD/RESA and District Leadership and Implementation Teams

We prefer use of the following assessments and data systems to determine the effectiveness of this effort:

Capacity Assessments	Program Quality/ Fidelity Assessments	Student Assessments
• Regional Capacity Assessment (RCA) • District Capacity Assessment (DCA)	• Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) • School-wide Evaluation Tool for Reading– Self Assessment (Elementary and Secondary versions)	• School-Wide Information Systems (SWIS) • Curriculum-Based Measures (CBM) for Reading (e.g., Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Next) • Student Risk Screening Scale • Early Warning System

The 'Big Ideas'

Alignment

MiBSLi-Supported MTSS promotes and structures the work to develop continuity of the goals, priorities, resources, and use of personnel between the ISD, LEA, and the School using the State School Improvement ASSIST platform.

Sustainability

Through adherence to implementation science, attention is given to the stages of implementation and the implementation drivers. As a result, sustainable success is a much more likely occurrence than current practice, because energy and efforts compliment each other and are moving in the same direction.

Capacity Development

By considering the alignment of priorities and resources of the ISD, LEA, and the schools; required materials; training; and personnel are identified and developed before implementation begins.

Durability

Alignment between the entities and a development of redundancy in capacity help create durability to weather the factors that tend to render educational initiatives ineffective, inefficient, or short-lived.

The purpose of the MiBLSi work is to support the alignment, capacity development, sustainability, and durability of MTSS.

Value of MiBLSi

Through this focus, MiBLSi has gained visibility and notoriety within the state and nation as an exemplary initiative. The value that MiBLSi brings includes:

Experience: 14 years of successful building-based implementation of an integrated behavior and literacy initiative impacting over 600 schools

Effectiveness: Over 20 highly trained and experienced educators, researchers, and implementers statewide involved in content development, technical assistance, professional development, and evaluation of systems and outcomes

Exposure: Partnerships with key implementers and researchers around the country

Extended Learning Opportunities: A growing network of ISDs, LEAs, and Schools with opportunities to learn from each other

The "Non-negotiables" and Flexibility of Partnership with MiBLSi

In 2011, MiBLSi shifted its focus and emphasis from a building level implementation format to working with ISDs and LEAs. This was done in an effort to build the aforementioned alignment and capacity required to ensure sustainability, scalability, and durability. In that short time several ISDs and LEAs have made great progress. As with all new implementations, continuous improvement has taken place resulting in modifications and revisions based on our learning. It is through this process that some misconceptions and misunderstandings have surfaced. The most prevalent misconceptions involve what it means to partner with MiBLSi in this initiative.

The primary mandate to MiBLSi is to develop a focused, scale-up of an integrated ISD and LEA MTSS model. This model does not mean that every school within the LEA or every district within the ISD must implement an integrated MTSS. Rather, this means that the ISD/LEA shares responsibility in ensuring that a critical mass of schools within the district are implementing MTSS with fidelity.

MiBLSi has prioritized its work towards this focused, scale-up approach, but there are additional ways educational organizations currently participate and benefit from the services and supports provided by MiBLSi. These benefits range from simply accessing materials and information on the MiBLSi website to consultation, and participation in statewide training and events.

For "partners" (i.e. organizations who have accessed full support), questions have been posed regarding what organizational structures, measurement tools, and practices are required and which of these things might have flexibility to their make-up.

Non- Negotiables & Flexibility

Participating entities must:

- Adhere to Implementation Science as a guiding framework for the work
- Use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR) programs and materials
- Commit time and resources from both the ISD and the LEA to fulfill the functions of an executive team, an implementation team, and MTSS coordination at each level.
- Use data for decision-making, considering the preferred assessments and data systems first

Flexibility

- Participation is not a lock step process. Involvement is dependent on the partnering entity's stage of implementation and organizational readiness.
- The composition of the executive and implementation teams can be different based on several factors. Use of existing structures is encouraged to the point that partners are able to fulfill and sustain the functions required by the science of implementation.
- The implementation focus area is dependent on each entity's data, capacity to implement with fidelity, and the priorities determined in the entity's improvement plan.

Emerging Work

Finally, as this work has progressed and the value of the structures and practices has become evident to those involved, questions have surfaced regarding MiBLSi's support of other academic areas such as Mathematics and Early Childhood. The instructional research base and availability of validated assessments for math and early childhood are in their infancy compared to behavior and reading. MiBLSi is actively working with researchers and practitioners on both a state and national level to define effective practice. The good news is that implementation science translates across subject matter and settings. Attending to the drivers and the stages of implementation will help promote the success and sustainability of any initiative. ISDs, LEAs, and schools may pursue these areas but the support provided by MiBLSi is limited at this time to the implementation process and to the principles of effective instruction. Training tools and guidance around the assessments and subject-specific instruction are not at a point where reliable and valid information can be disseminated.

Further Reading

District Cohort First Annual Report:
http://miblsi.cenmi.org/LinkClick.aspxfileticket=kiVIKaVuCds%3d&tabid=640

MiBLSi Value Added:
http://miblsi.cenmi.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5wc7xwy1Fe8%3d&tabid=2303

MTSS Guiding Principles (condensed version):
http://miblsi.cenmi.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=-UMA1DpRiRU%3d&tabid=2314

MTSS Practice Profile:
http://miblsi.cenmi.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=wLvhDuo-8no%3d&tabid=2230

MTSS Overview Webinar on Learnport:
http://www.learnport.org

Concluding Remarks

It is hoped that this abstract has provided the desired clarity regarding both the key elements of an effective MTSS framework and the guidelines under which MiBLSi functions in this effort. More specific questions should be directed to your MiBLSi Technical Assistance Partner or any other MiBLSi project staff.