

# MTSS/RTI Hot Topic: Selecting an MTSS Assessment System

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All schools should evaluate the continued usability and sustainability of their current MTSS/RTI assessment system. This handout provides school teams with a systematic process for identifying, evaluating and selecting an effective data system. When using the process, schools will be able to answer...should I stay, or should I go? MTSS/RTI teams should use a systematic problem solving process and consensus building throughout the entire process. Suggested steps are listed below.

## **STEP I: Assess Your Needs and Current Context**

*Gather Data.* Consider surveying and interviewing current staff in your school/district. The purpose is to gain a greater awareness about how different users view the usability of the system. Consider using the following to guide your data collection.

- Describe your experience with the current data system.
- How would you rate your comfort level with the current data system?
- What do you see as the strengths of the current data system?
- What do you see as some of the challenges or concerns with the current data system?
- What additional features would you like the assessment system to have?

*Identify Potential Needs.* After reviewing the schoolwide data, come to consensus about what you would like your MTSS assessment system to do for your school and staff. For example, your team might determine that it is very important that the system allow you to easily compare the effectiveness of different interventions.

It is recommended that the final list of school needs be shared with your staff to ensure it has captured everything.

*Clarify School Context.* Before evaluating current or future tools, it is important to clarify the available resources and school context. Here is a brief list of some things to consider.

- Budget (initial and ongoing, professional development, printing)
- Professional Development Needs (accessibility, costs)
- Staffing (expertise, number, availability)
- Time (professional development needed, testing time)
- Domains of Interest (reading, math, behavior, ect)
- Resources (computers, space)

*Prioritize Needs and Resource Limitations.* It is important to remember that no assessment system will be perfect. Thus, it is very important to prioritize your needs from “very important” to “important, but we could probably do without.” It is important to also prioritize your resources limitations.

## STEP 2: Evaluate the Quality of the Assessments

Using the available tools charts (see Resources) and staff data, determine if the assessment tools meet the Center on Response to Intervention criteria for effective MTSS/RTI screening and progress monitoring. Consider evaluating reading, math, and behavior tools separately.

Consideration	Response	Comments
<b>Screening:</b> Evidence indicates that the screening tools are reliable, correlations between the instruments	Yes No DK	
<b>Screening:</b> valued outcomes are strong and predictions of risk status are accurate in all grade levels for which it is used	Yes No DK	
<b>Screening:</b> staff is able to articulate the supporting evidence and the purpose of the tool	Yes No DK	
<b>Screening:</b> Staff can be or were easily trained to 1) conduct screening with fidelity and 2) process is feasible given current school context (budget, staff)	Yes No DK	
<b>Screening:</b> Data can easily be used or is used by teachers with additional assessments to support instruction	Yes No DK	
<b>Progress Monitoring:</b> Selected progress-monitoring tools meet required criteria: (1) have sufficient number of alternate forms of equal and controlled difficulty to allow for progress monitoring at recommended intervals based on intervention level; (2) specify minimum acceptable growth; (3) provide benchmarks for minimum acceptable end-of-year performance; and (4) reliability and validity information for the performance-level score is available	Yes No DK	
<b>Progress Monitoring:</b> Staff is able to articulate the supporting evidence and the purpose of the tool	Yes No DK	
<b>Progress Monitoring:</b> Staff can be or were easily trained to 1) administer progress monitoring screening with fidelity and 2) progress monitoring process is feasible given current school context (budget, staff)	Yes No DK	
<b>Progress Monitoring:</b> Data can easily be used or is used by teachers with additional assessments to support instruction	Yes No DK	

List any other concerns about the assessment tools.

List any additional benefits of the assessment tools.

### STEP 3: Evaluate the Quality of the Data System

The following questions are in regard to the data system’s usability. Using staff data, determine if the data system meets the Center on Response to Intervention criteria for an effective MTSS/RTI data system. Consider evaluating reading, math, and behavior tools separately.

Consideration	Response	Comments
The data system allows users to document and access individual student-level data (including screening and progress-monitoring data)	Yes No DK	
The data system allows users to engage in evaluation of the system at the district, school, grade, intervention, and class levels.	Yes No DK	
The data system allows data to be entered in a timely manner	Yes No DK	
The data system provides reports to make timely and accurate decisions about movement among tiers.	Yes No DK	
The system allows users to access data and reports in a timely manner.	Yes No DK	
The data are represented graphically and are or could be easily understood by all users	Yes No DK	
The data system provides clear process for setting and evaluating goals.	Yes No DK	
The data system is cost effective and accessible to all users	Yes No DK	
The data system allows input data to be downloaded and stored on district/school data electronic storage.	Yes No DK	
Staff can be or were easily trained to 1) utilize the features of the system and 2) use the reports to support instructional decisions at all levels	Yes No DK	

List any additional concerns about the data system.

List any additional benefits of the data system to consider.

## STEP 4: Consider Other Factors

Consideration	Response	Comments
Does the assessment system support a prevention focus?	Yes No DK	
Does the leadership use the data to support decisions?	Yes No DK	
Is on-going professional development available and cost-effective to support sustained implementation of the system?	Yes No DK	
Is the assessment system appropriate for the current resources?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports allow for increased communication and collaboration with families?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports allow for increased communication and collaboration with among staff?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports support the evaluation of short- and long-term goals?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports support evaluation of the effectiveness of the RTI framework (i.e., core curriculum is effective, interventions are effective, screening process is effective)	Yes No DK	

## STEP 5. Determine Feasibility of Assessment System

As a team, summarize the pros and cons of the system and compare them to the needs of your school and your school's context. Consider the following:

- Does the assessment system currently meet our prioritized needs?
- Will the system continue to meet our needs in the future?
- Is the assessment system appropriate for our school context and resources?

If there are any concerns, consider reviewing the tools charts (see Resources below) and identifying another potential tool. Return to **STEP 2: Evaluate the Quality of Assessments** and review the tools and data system. Also consider having publishers provide access to sample accounts or providing a presentation about potential new features.

## STEP 6. Select Assessment System and Develop Implementation Plan

Regardless of the team's decision to stay with the current tool or move to a new tool, it is important to share the process and decision making with all staff. In addition to modeling the use of data for decision making, staff buy-in is essential for sustainability and implementation fidelity. On-going staff professional development is also critical. See the RTI Fidelity Rubric (See Resources below) for support in developing an implementation plan for your selected assessment system.

## STEP 7: On-going Evaluation of Assessment System

Consider repeating this process annually or bi-annually to ensure that your assessment system continues to meet your school's changing needs.

## Resources

*Screening Tools Chart.* This Center on Response to Intervention tools chart presents psychometric standards and usability information about academic screening tools from the fifth annual review of screening tools (<http://www.rti4success.org/resources/tools-charts/screening-tools-chart>).

*Academic Progress Monitoring General Outcome Measures (GOM).* The National Center on Intensive Interventions provides ratings in a tools chart regarding the psychometric standards, progress monitoring standards, and data-based individualization standards of academic monitoring tools. Additional information is provided in the chart. ([www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring](http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring)).

*Behavior Progress Monitoring Tools Chart.* The National Center on Intensive Interventions provides ratings in a tools chart regarding the psychometric standards, progress monitoring standards, and usability standards of behavior monitoring tools. Additional information is provided in the chart. ([www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools](http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools)).

*Essential Components of RTI Integrity Rubric and Worksheet.* The RTI Essential Components Integrity Rubric and the RTI Essential Components Integrity Worksheet are for use by individuals responsible for monitoring the school-level fidelity of RTI implementation. They may also be used by schools for self-appraisal evaluation; however, they were not designed for compliance monitoring and therefore should not be used for this purpose. The rubric and the worksheet are designed to be used together and are aligned with the essential components of RTI. (<http://www.rti4success.org/resource/essential-components-rti-integrity-rubric-and-worksheet>)