Uinta County School District #1
Multi-Tier System of Supports Guidance Document

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) framework and its essential components in Uinta County School District #1 (UCSD #1). This MTSS guidance document is designed to:

1. Assist parents and school staff in understanding MTSS,
2. Overview the origins of MTSS in educational practice and research,
3. Clarify the usefulness and value of MTSS
4. Explain how MTSS can be implemented.

This information is not intended to be a substitute for training; it is intended to increase understanding of the various aspects of MTSS.

Why MTSS?

MTSS is built on the idea of intervening early to prevent failure and to maximize the effectiveness of grade level curriculum and instruction. It is not an initiative or program, but rather a framework for providing high quality curriculum and instruction to all students and intervention support for some students. UCSD #1 believes that implementing MTSS will contribute to more meaningful, earlier identification of learning and behavioral problems, improve instructional quality, provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, and assist with the earlier identification of students with disabilities. In summary, MTSS will benefit all UCSD #1 students in that it will provide a framework for more personalized instruction and need-based intervention.

What is MTSS?

The following definition of MTSS was developed based on what is currently known from research and evidence based practice:
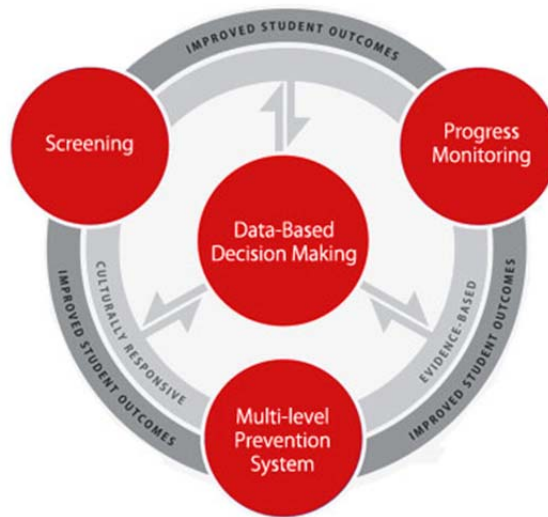
> Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) is a prevention framework that integrates assessment, data-based decision making, intervention, and frequent monitoring to meet individual student needs and maximize student academic achievement and pro-social behavior.

By utilizing an MTSS framework to address the needs of learners in our district, we will better realize our vision that all students will be prepared to meet the demands of 21st century citizenship, careers, and post-secondary education.   MTSS includes four essential components: screening, progress monitoring, multi-level prevention system, and data based decision-making. Listed in the table below is a brief description of each component.

MTSS Components	Description
Screening	All students participate in brief assessments used to identify students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes. Screening is conducted three times per year (e.g., fall, winter, spring)
Progress Monitoring	Students identified as at-risk are monitored frequently to assess rate of growth and effectiveness of interventions.
Multi-level Prevention System	Students are provided instruction and support at increasingly intense needs vary as do the level of support they require. A multi-level prevention system framework allows for different interventions as well as different intervention intensity.
Data-Based Decision Making	Teams, at all levels of instruction (e.g., district, school, grade), use a problem solving approach to use reliable and valid data for informed decision making.

When the four components of MTSS are working in concert students who are at risk are identified before significant academic or behavioral difficulties arise, receive evidenced-based interventions at the appropriate intensity, which leads to sustained academic and behavior improvement.

The graphic below was developed by the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) and represents the relationship among the essential components of MTSS (NCRTI, 2010).

The four essential components of MTSS will be reviewed in more depth in the following sections. The purpose of each section is to answer the fundamental questions of the *Why?* and *How?* for each component

Screening

Universal screening is a proactive process. It is done with *all* students in order to assess whether *all* students are progressing academically and behaviorally. Through the screening process, at-risk students are identified for additional assessment and support. Screening is conducted for kindergarten through fifth grade using valid, reliable, quick, and predictive instruments. UCSD #1 has adopted aimsweb 2.0, a comprehensive online assessment system (www.aimsweb.com). Aimsweb2.0 was chosen based on the strong empirical evidence supporting the various testing instruments included in the aimsweb suite. In addition, aimsweb has been shown to be predictive of performance on state tests.

In order to complete the screening process, an aimsweb manager has been identified at each elementary school building. Together with their principal a coordinated plan for screening students is developed. The screening assessment plan includes:

- identification of assessment team members
- training needed to ensure fidelity of test administration and scoring
- identification of testing locations that are free from distractions and provide sufficient privacy for the student being tested
- procedures for transitioning between testing areas and classrooms.
- plan for managing testing materials (e.g., making copies, distribution, collection upon completion)

- clearly defined testing schedule (e.g., which classes/grade levels will be tested when) A goal should be set by each assessment team to have student away from class for no more than fifteen minutes.
- periodic fidelity checks during test administration by aimsweb manager

The school aimsweb manager will coordinate training for the assessment team the week prior to the screening.   The goal of the training will be to ensure the assessment team is qualified to administer and score the tests accurately. Inter-rater reliability activities will be used to coach the accurate and consistent scoring of testing instruments.   Training materials will come from the aimsweb administration guidelines and adhere to their specifications for test administration. School aimsweb managers will receive training from the district MTSS coordinator.

The following are the general testing windows for the aimsweb assessments:

Date	Grade	Subject
September	K-5	Reading/Math
January	K-5	Reading/Math
May	K-1	Reading/Math

Determining Risk

In order to determine if a student is at risk for future learning difficulties in grades 1-5 screening data will be used from aimsweb and the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress data. When discrepancies exist between these two data sources Fountas & Pinnell BAS information will be used to confirm at risk status. Other data sources (e.g., classroom performance, performance on state assessments, diagnostic assessment data, short-term progress monitoring) could also be used as a third data point to verify screening data.

For students who are in kindergarten aimsweb and the Fountas & Pinnell BAS measures will be used to determine risk status. When available other data sources such as classroom observation, diagnostic assessment data, and short-term progress monitoring could be used to verify screening data.

Progress Monitoring

Once a student has been identified as at risk and in need of additional support through the screening process, progress monitoring is then used to "keep track" of the students learning in order to ensure they are making academic or behavioral gains as a result of instruction and additional intervention.

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Progress monitoring provides the teacher or interventionist with information that allows them to be able to be more responsive to student needs. For example, if a student consistently shows insufficient improvement on the progress monitoring assessments the teacher can then adapt or modify instruction in a way that better meets the needs of the student.

Progress monitoring assessments are done with measures similar to those used for benchmark testing. These measures are quick, statistically valid and reliable, and sensitive to improvement in student performance. The frequency of progress monitoring is dependent on the student's level of need. Students who are identified as being "at risk" based on established Tier II cut scores on the benchmark measure are typically progress monitored at least once a month while students with more significant needs are monitored more frequently (e.g., weekly, every other week). The length of time that progress monitoring will take place is dependent on the intervention that is being used with a student and their response to the intervention.

Typically, students will receive an intervention for a short period of time (e.g., 8-12 weeks) with the goal of returning them too less intensive instruction. If progress-monitoring schedules are set up for longer that might be an indication that there may be areas of need in the core curriculum or the student may need further evaluation. When progress monitoring data has been gathered, analysis of whether the student is responding to instruction happens in one of three ways: 1) visual analysis of comparison of aim line and trend line, 2) comparison of actual and predicted growth rate, and 3) comparing 3-4 consecutive score points relative to aim line.

Training for school aimsweb managers on how to establish progress-monitoring schedules and analyze progress-monitoring data will be provided by the MTSS coordinator. School aimsweb managers will be responsible for taking that information and training school personnel.

Multi-Level Prevention System

The MTSS framework includes three levels of prevention, which represent a continuum of supports.
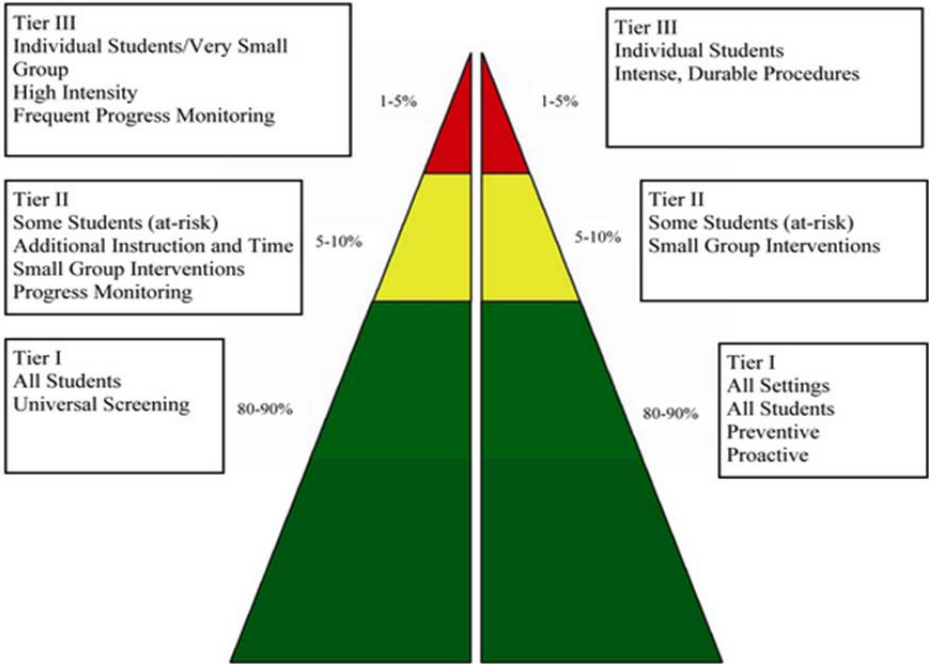
Level/Tier	Who?	Group Size	Key Components
Primary or Tier 1	All students participate in Tier I	Whole group or small group instruction	high quality core instruction and curriculum; differentiation for Tier II and Tier III students
Secondary or Tier 2	Students identified as at-risk through screening (e.g., 15% of students)	Small group instruction of 4-7 students	Targeted, evidence based intervention(s) delivered with moderate intensity (e.g., 30 min 3-4 times/wk)
Tertiary or Tier 3	Students who demonstrate nonresponse to Tier II (3-5%)	Individual or small group (2-3 students)	Individualized intervention(s) of increased intensity

The graphic below illustrates the multi-tier model for behavior and academics. When core instruction is effectively meeting the needs of most students, generally fewer than 15% of students would require Tier II and fewer than 5% will need Tier III. These percentages are expected across the broad

population as well as within subgroups of students, such as those who qualify for free and reduced lunch, special education students, and English Language Learners.

Academic Systems

Tier III
Individual Students/Very Small Group
High Intensity
Frequent Progress Monitoring

1-5%

Tier II
Some Students (at-risk)
Additional Instruction and Time
Small Group Interventions
Progress Monitoring

5-10%

Tier I
All Students
Universal Screening

80-90%

Behavioral Systems

Tier III
Individual Students
Intense, Durable Procedures

1-5%

Tier II
Some Students (at-risk)
Small Group Interventions

5-10%

Tier I
All Settings
All Students
Preventive
Proactive

80-90%

Tier I: Primary Prevention Level

The primary prevention level includes:

- all students
- data-based decision making
- research-based core curriculum and instruction designed to meet the needs of most students (~80% of students)
- instructional practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive
- universal screening to identify students who may need support in addition to primary prevention level instruction
- assessment practices that validate the effectiveness of primary level instruction
- differentiated learning activities (e.g. mixed instructional grouping, use of learning centers, peer tutoring)
- accommodations to ensure all students have access to the instructional program
- problem solving to identify interventions needed to address behavior problems that may be a barrier for the student learning.

All students in a school receive primary prevention level instruction. Universal screening measures are used to identify students who do not meet established cut scores.

Tier II: Secondary Prevention Level

Secondary prevention level includes:

- students identified as at-risk through screening measures (e.g., 15% or less of student population)
- data-based decision making
- small-group instruction that relies on evidence based interventions
- intervention specifies duration (e.g., 10 to 15 weeks of 20- to 40-minute sessions)
- intervention specifies frequency (e.g., 3 or 4 times per week) of instruction
- adult-led small-group instruction and/or the use of technology to differentiate instruction
- clearly articulated, validated intervention, which should be adhered to with fidelity
- progress monitoring (at least one time per month)

In order for a student to be considered at "some risk" or in need of secondary prevention level of supports at least two evaluation instruments (one of which is the universal screener) must show the student meets the established Tier II cut scores. If instruments are used that categorize proficiency based on a below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced criteria Tier 2 students would be identified as being in the basic range.

Movement from the secondary prevention level to the primary prevention level is done when progress-monitoring data suggests that the student is on track to meet the next Tier I benchmark.

Movement from the secondary to tertiary prevention level is done when progress-monitoring data suggests that secondary intervention efforts are not meeting the student's needs. It is

recommended that at least two evidence based Tier II interventions, implemented for a reasonable amount of time (e.g. eight to twelve weeks), should be attempted before consideration of a tertiary prevention level intervention.

The goal of the secondary prevention intervention is to help students develop skills that will enable them to be successful in primary prevention level instruction. Interventions chosen need to evidenced based and compatible with primary prevention level instruction in order to ensure students in the secondary prevention level can easily reintegrate into the primary prevention level. A continuum of integrated instruct between grades also needs to be utilized.

Tertiary Prevention Level (Tier 3)

Tertiary prevention level includes:

- students who fail to respond to secondary level prevention (~5% or less of student population)
- data-based decision making
- individualized instruction matched to student's area(s) of need
- greater intensity of secondary prevention intervention (e.g., longer sessions, smaller group size, more frequent sessions).
- progress monitoring (at least weekly)

In order for a student to be considered "risk" or in need of secondary prevention level of supports at least two evaluation instruments (one of which is the universal screener) must show the student meets the established Tier II cut scores.   If instruments are used that categorize proficiency based on a below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced criteria Tier 3 students would be identified as being in the below basic range.

If a student has achieved a level of proficiency to enable them to be successful in secondary prevention level instruction as evidenced by a percentile score of the 25th percentile or better they should be moved to the secondary prevention level instruction. Necessary curriculum overlap must exist between the secondary and tertiary levels to ensure success in the secondary prevention level. A continuum of support must also be utilized between grade levels.

If progress-monitoring data suggests that a student is not learning at a rate to "close the gap" further differentiation of instruction should utilized. Similar to the secondary prevention level at least two evidence based interventions, implemented for a reasonable amount of time (at least eight to twelve weeks), need to be tried before determining tertiary instruction has been ineffective at meeting student needs. If the student does not respond to tertiary interventions they should be referred to the building Student Study Team for additional problem solving and intervention suggestions.

What is an Intervention?

An intervention is the teaching of a new skill. Accommodations such as preferential seating or reduced are assignments are not considered interventions within an MTSS framework. When differentiating instruction the teacher/interventionists should review existing data about the

student and identify specific areas of deficit and then adjust instruction accordingly. Several resources exist for identifying evidence-based interventions. A sampling of websites that can be used for finding interventions are as follows:

- **What Works Clearinghouse** (*http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/*)
  Description: Practice guides on reading and mathematics interventions available under "Publications and Products" and reviews of the evidence base for published interventions.

- **IES Regional Educational Laboratory Program** (*http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/*)
  Description: provides information on researched and evidence based educational practices.

- **Best Evidence Encyclopedia** (*www.bestevidence.org*)
  Description: Provides summaries about the evidence supporting educational programs for children grades K – 12.

- **Intervention Central** (*http://www.interventioncentral.org*)
  Description: Provides evidenced based academic and behavioral interventions.

- **Florida Center for Reading Research** (*www.fcrr.org*)
  Description: Reading interventions available for Pre-K – Grade 12; Instructional materials for practitioners in grades K – 5 available; information on progress monitoring and assessments.

- **National Center on Intensive Intervention** (*http://www.intensiveintervention.org/*)
  Description: Includes progress monitoring and interventions tools chart for academics and behavior and ongoing training opportunities in Tier III implementation and progress monitoring.

After an intervention has been chosen the "intensity" should be considered as a variable that can be altered in an effort to meet the student's needs. Changing the intensity of an intervention can be accomplished in a number of ways. For example, lengthening instructional time, increasing the frequency of instructional sessions, reducing the size of the instructional group, or adjusting the level of instruction. Also, intensity can be increased by providing intervention support from a teacher with more experience and skill in teaching students with learning or behavioral difficulties (e.g. a reading specialist or a special educator).

Data-Based Decision Making

Data-informed decision-making is the essential element of an MTSS framework. It aligns the other three components --screening, progress monitoring, and multi-leveled instruction—under one comprehensive system. In order to be as responsive as possible to student needs, data-based decision-making must be a priority at the classroom, grade, and school level. In each of those settings, educators who know their students best will be able to ask the fundamental questions: What does the

student's data about tell me about his or her learning? What strengths does my student possess? What barriers may be impeding my student's performance? Finally, and most importantly: What evidenced based interventions will be most effective in helping them succeed?

When using data, more than one data source should always be used to validate or disprove a hypothesis about the level of student need, evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention, and match the curriculum to student's need. Instruments that have been shown to be reliable and valid should be used to inform these processes. Qualitative (e.g., observation) data can be used to inform the decision-making or problem solving process but should always be paired with scores from a psychometrically sound instrument to be considered an accurate representation of a student's abilities.

Screening and progress monitoring data can be aggregated and used to compare and contrast the adequacy of the core curriculum as well as determine the effectiveness of different instructional and behavioral strategies for various groups of students within a school. For example, if 60% of the students in a particular grade score below the cut point on a screening test at the beginning of the year, school personnel might consider the appropriateness of the core curriculum or whether differentiated learning activities need to be added in order to meet the needs of the students in that grade.

Disability Identification

Failure to respond to tertiary level intervention may suggest that the student may have a learning disability or other disability that requires further evaluation. Progress monitoring and other data collected over the course of the provided intervention will be reviewed during the evaluation process. Additional information will also be collected and considered as part of a comprehensive evaluation (e.g., tests of cognition, language, perception, and social skills). Effectively implemented MTSS frameworks also contribute to identifying students who, because of inappropriate or insufficient instruction, might only appear to have a disability.

Teams and Coaches Roles

MTSS requires collaborative teaming at all levels of instruction. In addition, a district level MTSS coach can assist in ensuring effective and sustainable implementation. The following describes the MTSS coach and district and school level teams' roles and responsibilities.

District Implementation Team
The role of the district implementation team is to facilitate the implementation of the district MTSS plan. Facilitating the implementation of MTSS is done primarily by analyzing implementation fidelity and student outcome data, reviewing building implementation efforts, and planning professional development activities. The District Implementation Team will review and update the

district MTSS plan. Reviewing the district MTSS plan will be done each Spring after the Fidelity of Implementation check. For more information on the District Implementation Team please see Appendix A District Implementation Team (DIT).

Building Implementation Team
The role of the building implementation team is critical for the implementation of a sustainable MTSS framework. The primary role of the BIT team is to take broad objectives outlined by the district and refine them into specific plans that meet the unique needs of the school. Due to the multidisciplinary make up of building implementation teams there exists a collective knowledge of student needs and interests, interpersonal dynamics of the school, staff needs, openness of the system to change, and resources that put the BIT team in the ideal position to develop unique building level plans. Once implementation plans are created the BIT ensures implementation with fidelity.   Below you will find direction on who should be part of the building implementation team, meeting schedules, communication between groups, and the responsibilities of building implementation team members. For more information on the Building Implementation Team please see Appendix B Building Implementation Team (BIT).

MTSS Coach
The role of the MTSS coach is multifaceted. The MTSS coach organizes personnel and resources for prompting and encouraging local school training and implementation efforts (Sugai & Horner, 2006), links leadership at every level (school, district, state) and guides the implementation process and provides direct support to leadership teams (Adelman & Taylor, 2007), and is a change agents at both the instructional level and the level of organizational and system change (Michael Fullan & Jim Knight, 2011). For more information on the role of the MTSS coach please see Appendix C MTSS Coach.

Summary
In summary, MTSS is a coordinated effort of a system to use data based decision making to identify students who are in need of additional support, provide appropriate interventions, and monitor student progress in order to prevent future academic or behavioral difficulties. MTSS is a preventive and proactive framework that actively engages in problem solving student need and responding in strategic ways. Teaming and coaching are essential elements to this process, as all stakeholders need to take an active role in building a sustainable MTSS model.

Resources
For more information about implementing components of MTSS, please see the following sources:

- **National Center on Response to Intervention (http://www.rti4success.org)**
    Description: Evidence based tools and assessments on tiered instruction, progress monitoring, and screening available under "Tools/Interventions" tab; considerations and ideas for teachers available for RTI stakeholders in Center's library.

Updated 1/30/15

- **Center on Instruction (www.centeroninstruction.org)**
  Description: Resources and research articles available on developing and implementing MTSS in schools

- **RTI Action Network (*http://www.rtinetwork.org/*)**
  Description: Website that includes RTI articles, webinars, learning communities, videos, newsletter, blog, and network for leaders.

- **National High School Center (http://www.betterhighschools.org/)**
  Description: Includes early warning system resources for use in MTSS implementation in secondary settings.

References

Adelman, H. S. & Taylor, L. (2007). Systemic Change and School Improvement. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 17,* 55-77.

National Center on Response to Intervention. (March 2010). Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2006) (invited paper). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review, 35,* 245-259.