

School-wide Behavioral Support within the Kansas MTSS Framework

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The Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) is an overarching framework for school improvement that assists schools in redesigning resources with a focus on system level change across the classroom, school, and district to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. To achieve this, resources must be used in effective and efficient ways to enable every student to be successful. Through MTSS buildings evaluate current practices to identify those that yield evidence of effectiveness, address areas that are missing, and replace ineffective or inefficient approaches with those that are supported by research and address an area of need as indicated by the building data.

An effective behavior support system is a proactive and preventative school-wide behavioral support system, not just a behavioral “program” or set of reactive strategies. Some characteristics of effective school-wide behavior support systems include:

- Administrative support, leadership, and active participation
- Focus on building core instruction and supports at the building and classroom level
- Clearly defining and teaching expected behaviors to all students in a systematic manner
- Collection and analysis of screening data regarding behavior of all students and building level systems
- Use of data to improve core behavioral instruction and supports
- Use of data to identify students for additional support through interventions
- Using data to monitor the progress of students receiving intervention

Behavioral programs and strategies are different from a school-wide behavioral system. Behavior programs are designed for narrower purposes, such as teaching behavioral skills to a subset of students (e.g., Skillstreaming, ASSET, Boys Town) or building social-emotional competencies (e.g., Lions Quest, Positive Action, Second Step). Many programs include some combination of enhancing social-emotional competencies and behavioral skills instruction, and are typically taught by the counselor, behavioral specialist, or other support personnel in a “pull-out” manner. Evidence-based behavior programs focusing on improving behavioral skill deficits through instruction and practice could potentially be used within supplemental (Tier 2) or intensive interventions (Tier 3) in a multi-tier system of supports to meet student needs.

Strategies are a set of procedures or steps that an individual is taught and then uses more and more independently in order to solve a problem or develop a new skill. Give Me Five (Wong & Wong, 2009) is an example of a classroom management strategy to remind students of appropriate behaviors when the teacher needs the attention of all students.

Behavioral programs and strategies are a necessary component within school-wide behavioral support system but are insufficient alone since they are not designed to provide core behavioral instruction to all students. Schools that have previously structured and implemented a MTSS addressing academics may expand their system to address behavior. The *Kansas MTSS: Structuring Behavior Supplement* guides schools through creating a school-wide behavior support system including practices and recommendations largely based upon the research validation of School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS), also referred to as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Schools that currently have in place or wish to use a research-based school-wide behavior support system other than the *Kansas MTSS Behavior Supplement* (e.g., PBIS/SW-PBS, Safe & Civil Schools, Project Achieve) can do so compatibly within the MTSS framework. Regardless of the approach a school takes, it is critical that a research-based school-wide behavioral support system, such as Kansas MTSS Behavior Supplement, PBIS, Safe & Civil Schools, or Project Achieve, be selected to provide the systemic and systematic framework needed.

Both MTSS and PBIS seek to create a framework to systematically address behavioral issues of students through a focus on establishing behavioral expectations, defining those expectations operationally, explicitly teaching those expectations to students (and staff), recognizing and encouraging the use of those behaviors in the school setting, and using regular data review both to refine the building system and to assess the effectiveness of supports provided to individual students. A significant difference between MTSS and PBIS is the use of coaches. The PBIS model relies on both internal (building or district based) and external (typically regional consultants) coaches to help build capacity and ensure fidelity of implementation (Sugai et al., 2010).

The Safe & Civil Schools System, like MTSS and PBIS, focuses on systemic change to positively impact building culture and individual student behavior. The Safe & Civil Schools system addresses all of the areas common to MTSS and PBIS (above), but takes a multi-pronged approach to achieving that end. Buildings who participate in the Safe & Civil Schools system focus on the building system and classroom systems simultaneously. While building-wide systems are employed, all teachers are trained in specific classroom management techniques (e.g., CHAMPS, Discipline in the Secondary Classroom) to ensure consistency across the building. A multi-tiered approach is then utilized to work with students who require additional support with targeted, customized interventions (Sprick, Booher, & Garrison, 2009). Training for each of the three levels is distributed across time so that participants can experiment with implementation and share what is working and what is not in subsequent training sessions.

MTSS and Project Achieve both use a model that includes multiple tiers with a focus on prevention and provision of strategic or intensive intervention based on student need. Both systems provide a framework for academics and behavior, and include an emphasis on linking data to instructional decision-making, building positive behavior supports, and the use of problem-solving procedures. Project Achieve includes the Stop & Think Social Skills program (Knoff, 2001), while MTSS leads schools to review and select research-based protocol programs based on needs indicated by student data.

Buildings wishing to be trained in PBIS, Safe & Civil Schools, or Project ACHIEVE will need to work directly with consultants from those organizations. No matter which school-wide behavior support system is chosen, the MTSS framework will guide buildings in aligning and integrating all school efforts for academic and behavioral student support.

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