

The Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Support Research Network (I-MTSS RN) defines I-MTSS as “a comprehensive and equitable prevention framework for improving the outcomes of all students, including students with or at risk for disabilities, through integrated academic and behavioral support” (I-MTSS RN, 2023). Research from the I-MTSS RN has enhanced our understanding of each key component of I-MTSS. This brief shares key questions asked within each component and briefly summarizes key findings.



What are the effects of integrated academic and behavioral support...

...for all students in Tier 1?

The UConn I-MTSS team studied the effects of integrated Tier 1 instruction in a randomized controlled trial. Preliminary findings suggest that when educators integrated key positive classroom behavior practices (i.e., prompts, specific praise, teacher-student game) within rigorous reading instruction,

- teachers **increased implementation fidelity** for *both* reading and behavior support practices, **increased** their **specific praise**, and rated students as having more behavioral strengths and less behavioral risk
- students were **more academically engaged** and **less off task**.

...for some students in Tier 2?

Behavior and Academic Supports: Integration and Cohesion (Project BASIC) examined the effects of integrated academic and behavior support in Tier 2 with a Sequential Multiple Assignment Randomized Trial (SMART) design. In Study 1, BASIC researchers examined the effects of integrating support for students’ engagement and self-regulation within reading intervention for students in grades 2 and 3. They found **some benefit** of integrated support on students’ **reading comprehension** (compared to reading intervention alone and business-as-usual control), but **did not observe benefit** of the interventions on other **reading skills or behavior**. In Study 2, they examined the effects of integrating engagement and self-regulation support within math intervention. Preliminary analyses suggest that **math outcomes** were **strongest** for students who received the integrated math and behavior support.

...for individual students in Tier 3?

The UConn I-MTSS team is also exploring the effects of integrated Tier 3 with an experimental single case design. Initial pilot work demonstrated the potential efficiencies of combining diagnostic academic and functional behavioral assessment into one **comprehensive assessment process** to inform an individualized and **integrated intensive intervention plan**. Ongoing research is examining whether implementation of an individualized integrated intensive (I³) plan is associated with improvements in students reading or behavioral outcomes.

How can we feasibly measure fidelity of the “I” in I-MTSS?

The Integrated MTSS Fidelity Rubric (IMFR) team developed and validated a tool for assessing the level of integration in tiered systems of support. The tool contains four domains of I-MTSS, further broken down into fourteen items. The items are the elements of I-MTSS implementation that receive a rating on the IMFR.

- Domain 1, Instruction and Intervention: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3
- Domain 2, Assessment: Universal Screening, Diagnostic Assessment, Progress Monitoring
- Domain 3, Data-based Decision Making (DBDM): Universal DBDM, Targeted DBDM, Intensive DBDM, Continuous Improvement
- Domain 4, Infrastructure: District Leadership, School Leadership, Schoolwide Culture, Professional Learning

Study findings indicate that the IMFR has strong content validity, structural validity, and inter-rater reliability. Schools also valued the IMFR, noting that the tool’s rating could help them identify I-MTSS strengths and areas for improvement. Taken together, these findings indicate that the **IMFR is a valid and reliable** measure of how

elementary schools integrate academic (i.e., reading and/or math) and social, emotional, and behavioral support in an I-MTSS framework.

What are common teaming structures in schools that implement I-MTSS?

The [IMFR](#) team also documented how teams functioned within an I-MTSS framework. The IMFR was administered to school MTSS leadership teams annually for 3 years. These teams, responsible for school implementation of tiered systems, were typically composed of a school administrator with decision-making authority (e.g., principal or assistant principal), at least one general education and special education teacher, academic and/or behavior coaches, and specialists like school psychologists and counselors. Other school teams that supported implementation included teams responsible for Universal data-based decision making (DBDM)—identifying students for Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention; Targeted DBDM—matching interventions to students’ specific learning/behavioral needs and monitoring students’ response to intervention; and Intensive DBDM—matching students to interventions and monitoring students’ response to intervention.

How can teams integrate and implement data-informed professional learning to support educators?

The [Ci3T ENHANCE](#) team identified data-informed professional learning as a critical need for supporting implementation of integrated tiered systems, such as the Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-tiered (Ci3T) model of prevention. From a national sample of educators, three priorities emerged: empowering district and school leaders, building school-site capacity, and supporting implementation of systematic screening to inform instruction. Findings also revealed in-demand professional learning topics, including managing acting out behavior and supports for students with internalizing behaviors. From these findings, the Ci3T ENHANCE team engaged in an iterative design process to create **on-demand professional learning resources** to support high-fidelity implementation of integrated tiered systems in a manner that protects teacher well-being (see ci3t.org/enhance).

How can we support sustained and scaled implementation?

Across projects, teams have developed resources to support implementation. In collaboration with technical assistance providers, these resources will enable educators to integrate practices, teams to assess their I-MTSS fidelity, and leaders to provide integrated professional development. Learn more about each set of resources:

- [I-MTSS Continuum of Research-Informed Practices \(*Intervention in School and Clinic* Special Series\)](#)
- [I-MTSS Fidelity Rubric \(IMFR\)](#)
- [Enhancing Ci3T Modules](#)

Stay tuned (i.e., check mtss.org) for additional research updates and other resources to support implementation of an I-MTSS framework.

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