BRANCHING MINDS

School Leaders' Guide to **Your Best MTSS Professional Learning**

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As a novice educator, I was eager for every ounce of knowledge, embracing each professional development opportunity with enthusiasm. I soon realized, though, that not all of my colleagues shared this zeal. In fact, some actively avoided PD sessions, and I was even advised to simply "smile and nod" through them.

Despite the **staggering $18 billion** spent annually on professional development across US districts, **56% of teachers** express dissatisfaction with the quality of their learning experiences, particularly in the realm of new initiatives. Understandably, educators are discerning when it comes to professional development; they want tangible impacts on their work and student outcomes, as do school leaders.

Because a Multi-Tiered System of Supports is an organizing framework for the overall work of education, it is especially important that professional learning around MTSS is truly impactful. I remain steadfast in my belief in the transformative power of effective learning experiences. **Educators rightly demand and deserve high-quality professional development,** during the initial implementation of MTSS and as part of the ongoing improvement process.

Larissa Napolitan
Former Teacher and Instructional Coach
Digital Content Creator, Branching Minds

A Missing Ingredient - Adult Learning Theory

Malcolm Knowles developed Adult Learning Theory, or "andragogy," as he explored the idea that adult learners need and want applicable knowledge. (Ponder, 2023) Andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults, and without an understanding of these adult learning principles, professional development can fall flat. According to Instructional Design.org, adults need the following:

- **To know *why* they are learning something:** Adults have limited time and resources for learning new things, if there isn't value in what they are learning, they are less likely to buy in.

  » EXAMPLE: Adults may not adopt IT security practices unless they understand the direct impact that a data security breach can have on themselves, the district, and students.

- **Experiential learning:** Adults want job-embedded experiences directly applied to their work. Educators are learning as they go.

  » EXAMPLE: Taking time during a problem-solving meeting to review or model an applicable concept is often more effective than a stand-alone training.

- **A problem-solving approach:** Learning for adults should solve a problem, not just provide knowledge.

  » EXAMPLE: Behavioral de-escalation training that includes relatable case studies and practical application of skills will be more effective than a session that covers only background and theory about dysregulated emotions.

- **Topics of immediate value:** Learning should be directly relevant and applicable tomorrow.

  » EXAMPLE: A professional development session about formative assessments could provide teachers with ideas and resources to try immediately.

➡ **Learn more from this article: Utilizing Adult Learning Theory in MTSS Professional Development**

Let's explore how to plan and implement high-quality professional learning with adult learning theory in mind.

Step 1: Make a Reasonable Plan

MTSS learning and implementation is a multi-year process. As a leader, be realistic about the pace at which your team is able to internalize and apply new concepts. A clear scope and sequence for MTSS professional development ensures that every stakeholder is provided with the knowledge and skills they need for an MTSS implementation at a reasonable pace. Too much, too fast can be detrimental to your adoption efforts.

When creating a scope and sequence, it's essential to consider whether the needs are technical or adaptive. According to Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky in The Practice of Adaptive Leadership (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009):

- **Technical challenges** can be diagnosed and solved, generally within a short time frame, by applying established know-how and procedures. Technical issues can be solved with tools and strategies that make the work feasible.

- **Adaptive challenges** are the gaps between the values people stand for and the reality they face (their current lack of capacity to realize those values in their environment). These challenges usually ask people to disrupt comfortable routines and consider new educational practices.

Technical and adaptive change need to go together. When implementing MTSS, there are technical aspects to the practice - for example, learning to use a software platform like Branching Minds. Your team will need to learn about logging in, creating plans, and uploading documents. The adaptive challenges, on the other hand, are related to changing thinking around student intervention, understanding the why behind interventions, analyzing the data, and even shifting the way that meetings are structured. Both technical and adaptive change are essential to a high-functioning MTSS practice and should be supported by your professional learning plan.

From the Desk of Our Professional Services Team:

When discussing adaptive versus technical challenges, it's important to note that while a technical challenge can often be addressed with a tool or strategy, an adaptive challenge requires collective problem-solving by the individuals directly impacted—it's not something an outside entity or tool alone can solve; it necessitates a shift in mindset and approach.

Example Stakeholder Planning Template

Stakeholder	Professional Learning Concepts	Objective	How	When
Central Office Support Staff -Superintendent -Assistant Superintendent -Directors/Coordinators (Curriculum & Instruction, English Language, Technology)	• Generating SMART district goals • Gain understanding/ arrive at the common language around MTSS	Reflect on district technical and adaptive strengths and weaknesses related to MTSS. Consider time and resources needed to effect change. Designate one individual to spearhead change (if this was not already done).	Live half to full-day training	After district leadership has determined more support is needed to support MTSS in their district

MTSS Director	• Goal setting
	• Change Management
	• Communication Strategies
	• MTSS Foundations
	  - Screening
	  - Progress Monitoring
	  - Interventions
	  - Meeting Structures
	• Data-analysis skills to assess student, grade, and school-level progress
		Ensure that prerequisite vision, MTSS knowledge and leadership skills are present to spearhead the initiative.	MTSS Coaching	After district leadership has determined more support is needed to support MTSS in their district

Principals and Assistant Principals	• Goal setting
	• Change Management
	• Communication Strategies
	• MTSS Foundations
	  - Screening
	  - Progress Monitoring
	  - Interventions
	  - Meeting Structures
	• Data-analysis skills to assess student, grade, and school-level progress
		Reflect on school and staff specific technical and adaptive needs related to MTSS current practices.
		
		Ensure that prerequisite MTSS knowledge and language are established.
			Half-day session for all district school leaders	After district leadership has generated a strategic MTSS plan

School Level MTSS Teams
- Academic Interventionists
- General Education Teachers
- Mental health/English Language/Gifted Specialists
	• Establishing Group Norms
	• MTSS Foundations
	  - Screening
	  - Progress Monitoring
	  - Interventions
	  - Meeting Structures
	• Any technical training in software that is necessary to implement MTSS practicably.
	• Data-analysis skills to assess student, grade, and school-level progress
		Ensure that a representative sample of staff has clear vocabulary and pedagogical knowledge around MTSS.
		
		Generate team goals that will align with, uphold and reinforce district implementation goals.
		
		Develop school-specific protocols related to technical and procedural implementation.
			Full-day session with no more than 4-7 staff per school	After clarity around objectives is communicated by principals to school staff. This includes specific expectations for implementation, timelines, and resources the district will allocate to ensure success

Classroom Teachers	Any technical training in software that is necessary to implement MTSS practicably.	Understand the necessary MTSS principles to ensure best practice at Tier 1/Tier 2. Develop the technical understanding needed to implement effective MTSS documentation.	2 hours of (a)synchronous learning + ongoing weekly coaching while doing the work	After the MTSS team feels some comfort in adaptive/technical changes and has the confidence to champion the initiative school-wide
Support Staff - Paraprofessionals, Tutors	Technical training in providing interventions with fidelity or collecting and/or recording assessment data.	Help support staff understand their role in supporting MTSS implementation. Provide staff adequate training to be able to effectively support MTSS implementation.	½ day 2x per year	During or after classroom teacher training
Parent(s)/ Guardian(s), and Community Members	• Understanding key MTSS terminology • How to support at home if a student receives supplemental support • What to expect if asked to come to a meeting • What data is collected at school and how to interpret	To help parent(s)/guardian(s) understand the level of support their student and all students receive in school.	In-person events Newsletters	Should occur regularly throughout the school year in small increments

➡ Downloadable: [Stakeholder Professional Learning Planning Template (Appendix A)](#)

From the Desk of Our Professional Services Team:

Flexibility is crucial to ensure campuses remain well-staffed during professional development, especially when facing staff and substitute shortages. To accommodate this, sessions can be offered more than once, with half of the schools or staff attending in the morning and the other half in the afternoon for example. This approach ensures that campuses maintain essential personnel such as counselors or behavior specialists on site.

Step 2: Getting Ready for Learning

As you are establishing a scope and sequence, conduct a needs survey with your staff. This survey provides insights into the specific areas where educators seek support, ensuring that the PD plan is tailored to address their needs and create buy-in, voice, and choice, ultimately fostering professional growth and enhancing student outcomes.

➡ Downloadable: MTSS Learning Preference Survey
- Check out the PDF version (Appendix B)
- Download editable Google Doc version
- Download editable Google Form version

➡ Downloadable: MTSS Skills and Outcomes: Reflection Questions for PD Planning (Appendix C)

EXPERT TIP:

A culture of learning stems from the leader's own approach to professional growth. Remember that as leaders, you are a learner along with your staff, maybe a few steps ahead. To create a sense of collective participation, use language like "we" over "I" to acknowledge that learning is a shared journey. "School district leaders are not just a contextual factor, but rather an integral part of the process." (Whitworth and Chiu 2015)

Michele James,
Branching Minds Consultant

Prioritize Learning

It is easy to get weighed down by urgent tasks and put off long-term professional learning goals. Evaluating the use of your professional development time is one of the first steps to getting the most from that time.

■ How much of your designated Professional Learning time is spent on logistical tasks?

■ What kind of feedback do you receive from teachers? Do you gather feedback at the end of a learning session?

■ Does your learning session focus match the goals of your school?

An Eisenhower Chart can help your MTSS team determine priorities by highlighting what is both urgent and important.

➡ Downloadable: Professional Learning Priority Matrix (Appendix D)

Address Physical Needs

Have you been an unfortunate participant in professional learning where the atmosphere was so unwelcoming or uncomfortable that you were unable to focus? Little things leaders do to make learners comfortable go a long way in promoting positive experiences during PD sessions and making the learning accessible to all participants.

A few things to consider:

- Check the temperature in the room. Is it too hot or cold? If you can't control the temperature, send a note to participants to dress for the temperature or bring layers.

- Communicate the agenda beforehand to help participants know what to expect from the day.

- Provide breaks. Sitting for long periods is difficult for many people and is not conducive to learning; provide **breaks at least every 30-45 minutes.**

- Set norms for using the restroom or eating during the session.

- Even better, provide snacks, drinks, and treats to show respect and appreciation.

- Have a comfortable workspace for teachers, tables with chairs is far more comfortable than desks or lunch table seating.

- Are your presentation materials accessible to everyone? Are you providing physical copies for those that need it? Using a microphone so that all can hear?

EXPERT TIPS:

One practice to help eliminate administrative tasks from your meetings is to **set up a weekly newsletter** with reminders, schedules, and other logistical details. This document could be referred to at meetings to remind people to refer to it for their questions regarding events and logistical tasks. After an adjustment period, you will have more time for learning.

As a facilitator, check in with attendees at the beginning of a session and **find out what their questions, challenges, and needs are.** Use that information to adjust the environment and to provide contextualize the learning when appropriate. Consider having each participant jot down or share one thing they hope to learn, or one challenge they face related to the topic. This helps make the material relevant and applicable for participants.

Step 3: Provide Differentiation and Choice

 "Adults like control, which is why self-directed learning remains a hallmark of adult education." (Young and Osborne 2023) Provide options for educators to choose HOW they learn when possible. The nature of the content may influence the best format—for instance, whether this content is better suited for small group discussions or individual study, or whether it's more effectively delivered in-person or online. While it might seem convenient to assume that everyone's preferences are similar, it's crucial to understand the specific needs of your learners.

Factors such as the complexity of the content or your staff's comfort with technology can also impact the choice of format. And, differentiation occurs not only in the format but in the depth of the content—whether it involves introducing new ideas or practicing the application of existing knowledge. As a leader, it's essential to consider both the preferences and requirements of your learners, as well as the objectives of the learning experience.

◰ EXPERT TIP:

Novice and veteran educators come at learning in different ways. Veteran educators often apply more quickly because they have context for the basics, while novice educators may have enthusiasm but are easily overwhelmed. Consider how you can provide space for both types of learners, whether by grouping or by how they encounter and apply content.

Asynchronous Courses

Asynchronous learning is particularly beneficial for technical challenges and background knowledge. Educators value the ability to complete courses on their own terms and in their preferred environment. "The most common benefits noted by the teachers were the ability to work at their own pace, having access to PD materials at any time, and receiving the opportunity to reflect and discuss with other teachers." (Parsons et al. 2019).

Consider these options as a way to enhance the asynchronous learning experience:

1. Plan for time during a professional development day to complete the courses.

2. Have someone on sight to act as technical support for those issues that might arise.

3. Encourage departments or professional learning communities to complete parts of courses together, such as watching videos and then discussing.
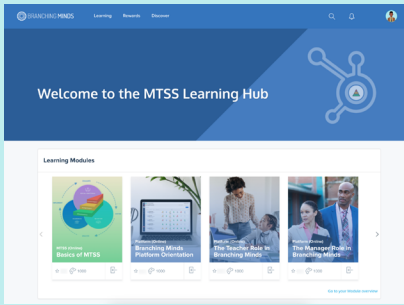
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The Branching Minds Online MTSS Learning Hub

From the Desk of Our Professional Services Team:

The Branching Minds team developed the MTSS Learning Hub to provide every teacher with access to high-quality professional development content. Our asynchronous learning approach emphasizes short bursts, micro-content, and case studies, allowing educators to engage independently or collaboratively. While much of our e-learning focuses on technical skills, it's crucial to remember that it cannot replace human facilitation. Utilize e-learning to maximize the efficiency of facilitated sessions, prioritizing the exploration of adaptive challenges and collaborative solution identification during valuable face-to-face time. **Learn more here!**

Other Modes of Learning

Professional Learning Choice Board	A choice board provides flexibility within the day, too. One option is to create 6-8 choices for staff learning, such as watching videos or reading articles around areas of focus for the school year. Then, establish a method of accountability through reflection and application questions. You could also bring the staff back together to discuss their learning.	➡ Downloadable: **Professional Learning Choice Board (Appendix E)**
Micro-Learning	"Microlearning is a type of short, focused learning that can usually be completed in just a few minutes. "(Naji 2022) Examples of this include Duolingo daily lessons or Merriam Websters' word of the day. Send out a daily or weekly learning tip or skill for teachers to learn a little bit about. You could try something like: • Instructional Strategy of the Week • MTSS Term of the Day • Tech Tip Tuesday	➡ **Downloadable: Tier 1 Behavior Micro-Learning Tips** • **Check out the PDF version (Appendix F)** • **Google Slides version**
EdCamps	Edcamps are informal participant-led discussions based on topics chosen by the participants. They are based around discussion and demonstration, with a participant taking the lead, but acting more as a facilitator than direct instructor.	**Watch this video to learn more about how Edcamps.** **EdCamp101**
Case Studies	Case studies allow educators to apply theory to their practice directly. Educators gain different perspectives and explore complex issues when paired with collaboration and discussion.	**Check out these examples:** **MTSS Case Studies** *From Colorado Department of Education*

Step 4: Applying the Learning

According to the **Learning Policy Insitute**, effective professional development includes collaboration, coaching, and expert support. (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Garner 2017) In other words, learning should not only be contained in those designated PD days but embedded throughout the day-to-day work. Thankfully, this is the approach **most educators prefer**! **The great benefit of MTSS is that no educator is doing the work alone, meaning the learning is by nature collaborative.**

Mentorship and Coaching Are For Everyone

Adults need different levels of support to implement new skills effectively. Just as a coach is there to motivate, direct, and encourage based on an athlete's skill, school leaders can do the same. Some staff members might need someone to listen as they process and figure things out independently, some need modeling and practice, some want advice or input, and some might just need someone to cheer them on. When taking a coaching approach, building relationships and trust is essential.

➡ Resource: **The MTSS Coaching Toolkit**

EXPERT TIP:

During a professional learning session, incorporate checks for understanding using polls, websites, or quick surveys. These can be done anonymously and help facilitators respond to misconceptions or questions during a session without embarrassing colleagues.

Stephanie Bryan,
Branching Minds Consultant

Professional Learning Communities

"High-quality PD creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts." (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Garner 2017)

One of the most powerful tools within a school is the collective work of a group of educators.

John Hattie's research indicates that teachers' collective efficacy can profoundly impact student learning. Most schools naturally have PLC's, whether by grade level or department, and this can be a great way to group educators for professional learning, share ideas, and collaborate for problem-solving.

Richard DuFour, a leader within the movement for Professional Learning Communities, established four critical questions for PLC's.

Here are a few things to consider when implementing PLCS.

- Establish norms for meeting times.

- Practice Active Listening

- Create a focus on student growth

- Integrate and protect time to meet during the school day

- Visit and observe when possible

- Utilize protocols to make the most of the time available

Four Critical Questions for PLC's:

1. **What do we want all students to know and be able to do?**

2. **How will we know if each student has learned it?**

3. **How will we respond when some students do not learn it?**

4. **How we will extend the learning to students who have demonstrated proficiency?**

(DuFour 2004)

➡ **Downloadable: Small Group Protocol (Appendix G)**

Talk About Your Learning

According to John Hattie, **visible learning** happens when teachers reflect on how their teaching practices impact student outcomes. Discussion questions that make learning visible open the door for deeper conversations and collaboration. Leave space in meetings or check-ins to discuss not just "how we are teaching" but rather on "how well students are learning."

Collective efficacy is also built through **public learning** practices — low-stakes opportunities to reflect on personal growth as teachers as well as to share stories of challenges in student learning and moments of uncertainty or doubt.

Here are a few prompts to help start the conversation:

Prompts for Public Learning:

"I would like your support in understanding how to help my students get better at..."

"This feels important because..."

"When I look at my data, I am noticing... but I am hoping to see..."

"A challenge I am facing is..."

"A question I have is..."

(Sugarman 2021)

Follow Up With Reflection and Feedback

Learning that is never talked about again might be one of the main reasons that educators are skeptical of professional development. Combat this by planning for follow-up as you plan for the professional development itself:

- Request feedback after every type of learning session.

- Make time for educator reflection and providing necessary feedback. Feedback is not only about the application of learning but also about the learning process and opportunities for teacher reflection.

- Implement reflection as an ongoing practice, not just after learning but as teachers put their learning into practice within the classroom. Reflection is a powerful tool for the momentum of change.

- Create a follow-up plan that can be embedded in structures that already exist, such as monthly faculty meetings and PLC's, with regular reminders, next steps, and accountability.

"For new practices to be sustained and changes to endure, teachers need regular feedback about the effects of their efforts on students. Success is reinforcing. People tend to repeat actions that bring success and decrease or halt actions that don't." (Guskey 2021)

➡ **Downloadable: Educator Reflection Questions (Appendix H)**

Conclusion

Later in my career, as an instructional coach, I was the one leading professional development and supporting teachers with applying new knowledge and strategies. Now the challenge lay in providing support that aligned with their skill level and preferences. My greatest concern was that these busy teachers might leave without gaining something useful and applicable. I wanted to change the reputation of professional learning!

Amidst the myriad challenges that educational leaders face, it's easy to overlook the profound impact that effective adult learning has on student outcomes. The investment in the growth of educators, specifically in the implementation of MTSS, pays continual dividends in the classroom and beyond. At Branching Minds, we want to create a path for every learner - including the adult learners who are leading the way!

About the Author

Larissa Napolitan is the Digital Content Creator for Branching Minds and the host of Branching Minds' podcast "Schoolin' Around." As a former middle school English teacher and instructional coach, she has over 13 years of experience building systems for improvement, training and coaching teachers in new technology and instructional methods, and leading efforts to build curriculum and literacy initiatives. She holds Masters's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and Education Administration from Emporia State University. Her passion lies in leveraging her expertise and academic background to effect positive change in education while also utilizing her writing and voice to reach a wider audience and advocate for teachers and students.

Additional Professional Learning Resources from Branching Minds:

➡ **Blog: 4 Considerations to Support Educators in MTSS Professional Development**

➡ **Blog: Utilizing Adult Learning Theory in MTSS Professional Development**

➡ **On-Demand Webinar: Organizing for Change to Institute MTSS**

➡ **Guide: The Admin Guide to Supporting Teachers with MTSS Implementation**

➡ **Blog: How to Plan MTSS Professional Learning Throughout the Year**

➡ **Blog: Top 3 School Leadership Development Secrets Unlocked**

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Appendices:

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Stakeholder Professional Learning Planning Template

Stakeholder	Professional Learning Concepts	Objective*	How	When

* Consider the district goal and what the stakeholder needs to learn to contribute to accomplishing that goal.

MTSS Learning Preference Survey

Name:
Grade Level Department:

Do you prefer to learn with a group or on your own?

☐ On my own
☐ With a group
☐ A mix of both

What type of professional development do you benefit from the most? (You can choose multiple)

☐ Staff Led
☐ Guest Speakers
☐ Instructional Fairs
☐ Book studies
☐ Short Presentations w/ work time

☐ Webinars
☐ Self-paced courses
☐ In Person
☐ Online

What are your areas of strength? (You can choose multiple)

☐ MTSS Basics
☐ PBIS/Classroom Management Basics
☐ Differentiated Instruction
☐ Academic Intervention Strategies
☐ Behavior Intervention Strategies

☐ Intensive Intervention
☐ Progress Monitoring
☐ Data Analysis and Decision Making
☐ Social Emotional Learning
☐ Technology Tools

In what areas do you need more training and/or coaching? (You can choose multiple)

☐ MTSS Basics
☐ PBIS/Classroom Management Basics
☐ Differentiated Instruction
☐ Academic Intervention Strategies
☐ Behavior Intervention Strategies

☐ Intensive Intervention
☐ Progress Monitoring
☐ Data Analysis and Decision Making
☐ Social Emotional Learning
☐ Technology Tools

What else would you like us to know about professional development and coaching on our campus?

_____

_____

_____

MTSS Skills and Outcomes: Reflection Questions for PD Planning

These data-based questions can help guide the selection of topics for professional learning.

1 Is the core curriculum supporting a minimum of 80% of all students (i.e., are 80% of students on grade level)?

    a. Look at data from curriculum-embedded assessments and data from nationally normed assessments.

2 Does the **core curriculum support students** across demographics, schools, grades, and classrooms?

    a. Examine Curriculum-embedded assessment and nationally normed assessment data broken down by various categories.

3 Are students progressing, and do we see healthy **tier movement**?

    a. Is your school or district moving towards a minimum of 15% of students in need of Tier 2 support and 5% in need of Tier 3 support?

    b. Are students moving out of tiers, as evidenced by **universal screeners or progress monitoring tools**?

4 Are students **progressing equitably**?

    a. Are there trends along racial, ethnic, or gender lines regarding who is moving tiers, in what direction, and who isn't?

    b. Review the data above and filter it through race, gender, ethnicity, etc.

5 Are evidence-based interventions delivered with fidelity?

    a. Use **progress monitoring data** for the research-based interventions in use

6 Are efficiencies being found by creating small groups for like needs?

    a. Examine information identifying which interventions have been selected for students.

    b. Are students receiving interventions that match their needs as identified by screeners, curriculum-based assessments, qualitative teacher observation, and any other relevant data?

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Impact Effort Map: Template

Do Later:	Do Now:

Delegate:	Schedule:

MTSS Professional Learning Choice Board

1. Choose 3 Options from these learning opportunities.

2. After completing, fill out a reflection form and submit it to receive credit for your work.

Watch this webinar about Checking in on MTSS Interventions. **Task:** Talk with your team about setting procedures and timelines for intervention plans. Share what you learned from this webinar.	Read through this guide about Core Instruction. **Task:** Find 2-3 aspects that could apply to your own work.	Listen to these 2 podcast episodes. MTSS and Positive Behavior Support Student Wellness **Task:** Reflect on how you might want to support students in wellness this year.	Watch this MTSS summit session with a colleague. Differentiation? I bet you are already doing it! **Task:** Discuss how it can apply to our work.
Learn about some new interventions to include in our toolbox! Finding and Using Evidence-Based MTSS Interventions: A How-To Guide **Task:** Pick 1-2 interventions to print off and try.	Check out the following resources about family engagement. **Task:** Create a plan for how you are going to engage parents this year.	Watch this webinar about Tier 2 behavior interventions. **Task:** Reflect on how this might impact your classroom	Read through these 2 blog posts. Engagement Practices Supporting Intervention Plans **Task:** List 3-4 takeaways for your practice.

Choice for Learning	Reflection *(Use this space to share 2-3 applications from your learning that you found useful from the session you chose.)*

Tier 1 Behavior Micro-Learning Tips

Send one of these per day or per week, continue to add ideas to the list throughout the year. Download Slides for easy sharing.

1 **Set clear expectations:** Clearly communicate your expectations for behavior in the classroom. Make sure students understand the rules and consequences of misbehavior.

    a. Example: Make visual reminders for your classroom and review and practice these expectations. If you expect students to raise their hand during a discussion, practice what that looks like several times.

2 **Establish routines:** Create structured routines for daily activities such as entering the classroom, starting a lesson, transitioning between activities, and packing up. Consistent routines help minimize disruptions and keep students focused.

    a. Transition times can often be the hardest for some students; practice your cues and their actions several times. This might take a while before students know what to do.

    b. Establish clear routines for the beginning and end of class; the time of day can eliminate frustration and confusion. For example, if students are to do bellwork or activity upon entering, have it displayed in the same place every day.

3 **Use positive reinforcement:** Clearly communicate your expectations for behavior in the classroom. Make sure students understand the rules and consequences of misbehavior.

    a. For example, writing notes to a student and making a positive phone call can go a long way to reinforce positive behavior. There should be 3 positive interactions for every negative one.

4 **Consistency is key:** Be consistent in your enforcement of rules and consequences. Students need to know that the same expectations apply to everyone and that consequences are fair and predictable.

    a. For example, every student should receive the same response to similar behavior. If one student gets 3 warnings, then ensure that every student gets the same kind of warnings.

5 **Address misbehavior privately:** When a student misbehaves, address the issue privately rather than calling them out in front of the whole class. This approach preserves the student's dignity and allows for a more constructive conversation.

    a. For example, if a student is talking to their neighbor, instead of addressing it in front of everyone, perhaps going to stand by them or talk with them after class about their behavior may prevent the situation from being a bigger problem.

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6

Use non-verbal cues: Develop a set of non-verbal cues to redirect behavior or communicate with students without disrupting the flow of the lesson. This can include eye contact, hand signals, or a simple gesture.

a. For example: If a student often has to get up to use the restroom or even just needs to move, have an agreed-upon signal for that student or even for the whole class. This will save time and disruption.

7

Teach self-regulation skills: Help students develop self-regulation skills by teaching techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness exercises, or self-reflection. These strategies empower students to manage their own behavior.

a. This could look like starting the hour with a few minutes of deep breaths or even a silent activity before starting class or the day. This can allow for the chaos of transition to dissipate before beginning a lesson.

8

Implement a behavior monitoring system: Use a system to monitor and document student behavior, either for a positive behavior skill that you are teaching, or for a negative behavior that you are working to eliminate.

a. This could be done with a chart or an app. Share progress reports with students and involve parents if necessary.

9

Offer choices: Provide students with choices within limits to give them a sense of autonomy and ownership over their actions.

a. For example, offer a choice of tasks or activities to complete within a given timeframe. If a student finishes an assignment early, offer a list of options for how they might spend their free time that is listed out on the board. Consider surveying the class for their suggestions for what those options might be for each class.

10

Foster a positive classroom culture: Create a positive classroom culture by promoting kindness, respect, and empathy. Model these behaviors yourself and encourage students to treat each other with kindness and consideration.

a. For example, establishing a "no unkind words about anyone" rule. This even applies to the teacher. Allow students to hold you accountable as well. This collective work might demonstrate that kindness is a skill you have to continue to work on.

Small Group Peer MTSS Learning Protocol

Protocols are official procedures or set structures for a set time. Using a protocol for small group discussions and learning help ensure ample time for every participant to be heard and contribute to the group. Here is an example of a way to use a protocol for small-group MTSS learning.

Purpose:	*To come together to examine successes and challenges within the MTSS implementation with a small 3-5 member group, to provide insight and feedback from a group of peers.*
Time:	*2-3 hours, depending on the number of participants.*
Materials:	*Notepads, pen, and pencils (Optional: Chart paper for whole group reflection)*
Instructions:	*Use a timer to keep on track and to make sure each member has time to share.*

Preparation (15 min)	Each group member will take notes of an example of a situation where they felt successful and challenged in their MTSS practice. They should either prepare a short description or have notes to help them concisely describe their challenge/success for the group.
Sharing (3 min)	One person will go first voluntarily, sharing about their situation; other participants will take notes silently, not interrupting.
Clarifying Questions (2 min)	Others will ask clarifying questions to understand the situation. The volunteer will answer only in facts.
Analysis and Discussion (10 min)	The presenter will listen and take notes while others discuss the situation and provide insights. Participants will discuss what the presenter did or didn't do and other factors.
Reflection (5 min)	The presenter will reflect out loud on what the participants shared and reflect on their actions. Others can take notes but not interrupt the presenter. The group should acknowledge the work of the presenter.
Additional Rounds	Each participant should have an opportunity to share; each round should be about 20 minutes.
Debrief and Whole Group Reflection (15 min)	The groups should share common themes or ideas with the whole group when coming back together.

*Inspired by and based on **National School Reform Faculty** protocols

The Educators End of Year Reflective Journal

This space is for you to take a moment to reflect and celebrate your year, and to begin to process possible goals for the future.

The best is to do this soon after the school year ends, and then put it away until a few weeks before school starts again in the fall.

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1. What do I want to celebrate about this year?

2. What challenges did I overcome?

3. What did I do well this year? (Big and small things)

4. What was something new that I tried this year?

5. What was something I learned?

6. In what way did I grow professionally this year?

7. What was something that was frustrating this year?

8. What would I change about this past year?

9. Who supported me in my year? Colleagues, mentors?

10. Which students did I connect with the most?

11. What was my favorite part of each day?

12. What decisions that I made were good ones, that I wouldn't change?

13. What turned out better than I thought it would?

14. What brought me the most joy in this year and why?

Get Results-Oriented MTSS Coaching and Professional Development for Your Staff

Branching Minds provides engaging professional development that *deepens* educator practice and *strengthens* each infrastructure component needed to sustain a multi-tiered intervention system. Our partnership includes a **suite of professional learning and system-level support services** that help our partners achieve high-fidelity MTSS by honing the knowledge and skills needed for their specific roles and responsibilities.

Request your consultation today!

Readiness

Sustainability
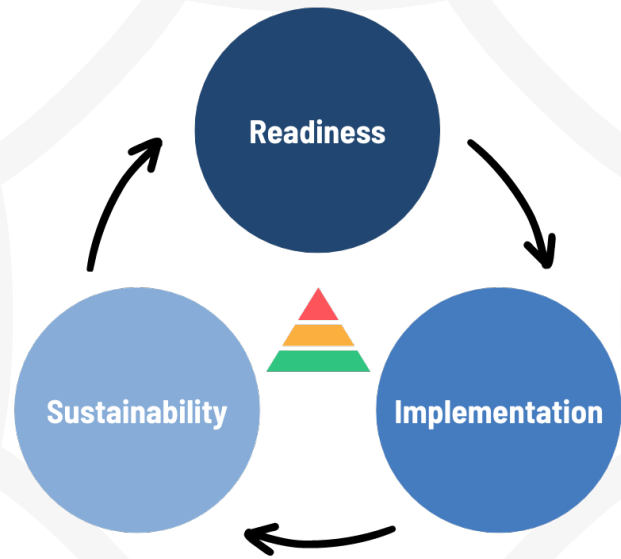
Implementation

Learn More About Our Professional Learning Services ⇨

> " We really started because we knew that we had just this missing piece in MTSS installation and implementation. We have all this data, but not really a great way to kind of compile it, and everybody has access. We found ourselves making tons of spreadsheets and things that were not super efficient. And so we looked into Branching Minds. And it seems like a great fit for what we needed. The PD was really exciting from my standpoint so that I had a partner in leading some of this work. "
>
> — Emily Myers, Director of MTSS, Orange County Schools (NC)