

Applying the
MTSS Intervention
Process Flowchart
To Your Multi-Tiered System
of Supports



BRANCHING
MINDS

Recently, Branching Minds shared the resource “MTSS Intervention Process Flowchart” with our readers. After an overwhelmingly positive response to the chart, and thousands of views, comments, and downloads, we created this guide to serve as a companion document to support your use of the flowchart.

At Branching Minds, we deeply understand educators’ enormous responsibility to our students, families, and communities when making educational decisions. We are here to support you in building and sustaining your MTSS processes. In this guide, we will cover:

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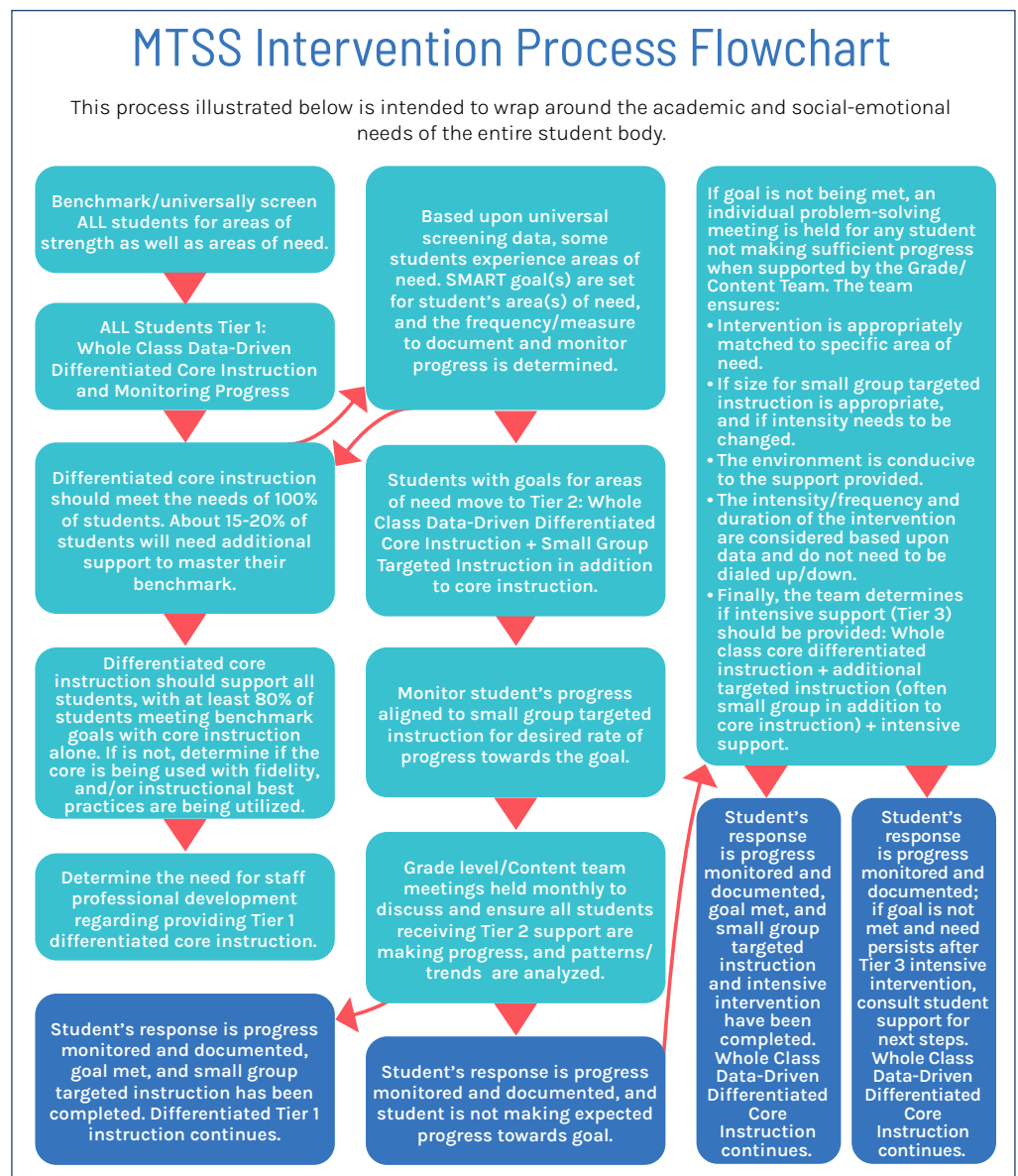
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What Is the MTSS Intervention Process Flowchart?

In short, [MTSS \(Multi-Tiered System of Supports\)](#) is a system that creates conditions for timely, comprehensive problem-solving to provide early and targeted support to students in academic and non-academic areas at increasing intensity or tiers of instruction.

MTSS supports the idea that the earlier we can identify a [strength](#) or a problem, analyze it so we can best understand our learners' needs, implement a plan providing each student the level of support they need using research-backed interventions matched to their specific challenges, and frequently monitor for fidelity and effectiveness, the higher the likelihood we can help our students achieve success more quickly.

[The MTSS Intervention Process Flowchart](#) was created as a visual for MTSS processes and serves as a series of reminders that support problem-solvers when making critical decisions about students and instruction.



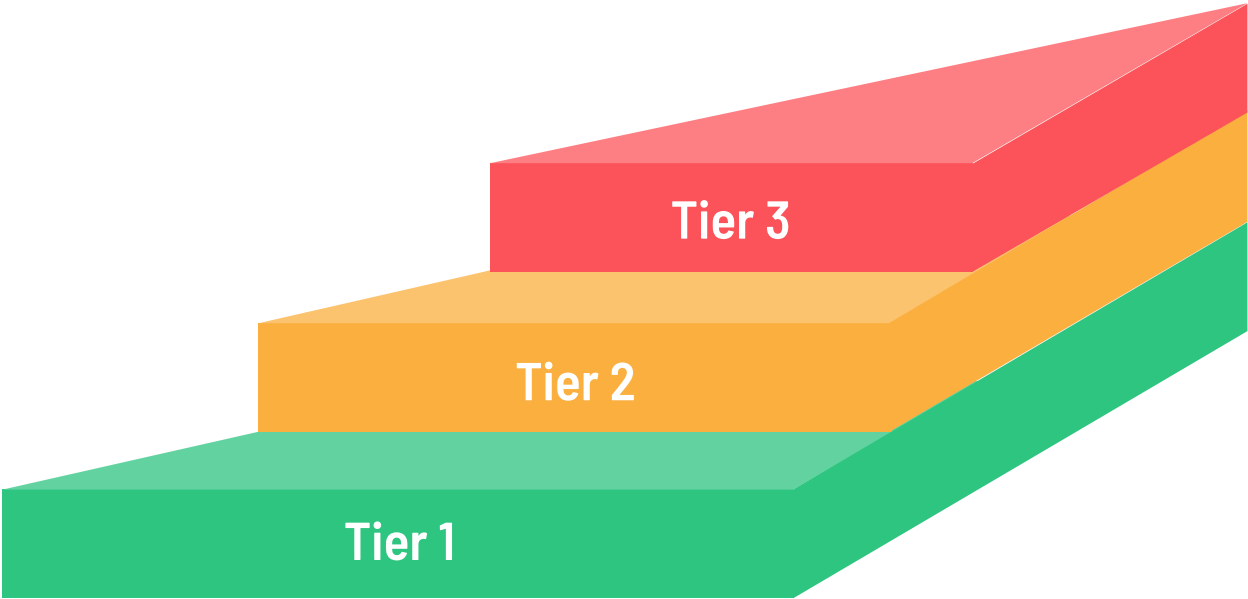
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Why Is the MTSS Intervention Process Flowchart Valuable?

The MTSS Intervention Flowchart was designed to help you make decisions during data review. When faced with many data sources and outcomes, it can be challenging to know what to do next. The flowchart is valuable because it guides us to look through multiple lenses when problem-solving.

First, we address how to dig deeper to provide support. Whether addressing [Tier 1 data-driven core instruction](#) for all learners, [Tier 2](#) needs for targeted learners, or is very individualized, targeted support at [Tier 3](#), the flowchart guides problem-solvers to move the plan forward considering the very specialized components at each tier.

Simultaneously, the flowchart refers problem-solvers to continuously evaluate and ensure the implementation of a strong core instruction under every layer of support. The visual of the MTSS Triangle turned on its side best represents that interventions occur in a layered approach, increasing intensity and duration of support as needed.



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MTSS Intervention Process Flowchart: Essential Terminology

Ensuring your staff has a deep understanding of the key terms below will help to mobilize all and allow everyone to be aligned in understanding.



Universal Screener or Benchmark Assessment: Screeners or benchmarks that provide valuable information about each student's areas of strength and need, and can offer a snapshot of progress over time. Screeners are given at regular intervals during the school year. The data from universally screening students helps educators keep abreast of any changes in student learning.



Data-Driven Differentiated Core Instruction: The tailored use of instructional strategies for ALL students based on varying readiness levels, interests, strengths, and learning preferences to provide equitable access to core instruction and curriculum.



Progress Monitoring: Progress monitoring is used frequently to assess a student's progress to determine the effectiveness of intervention support provided to a student.



Fidelity: Fidelity is measured at every tier of instruction, and refers to the degree to which assessments and instruction/supports are implemented as intended by the research. Inspecting fidelity or implementation integrity helps identify the critical missing steps to inform what schools should do next. Fidelity inspections consist of monitoring practices such as consistent administration of assessments and instruction/supports, the cadence or how often assessments and instruction/supports are delivered as prescribed, and ensuring that protocols are followed. Data collected on student needs and the fidelity of how evidence-based practices are implemented during data-based differentiated core can be used to identify professional learning for improved Tier 1 instruction.



Targeted Tier 2 Intervention: Targeted group intervention supports involve additional instruction outside of core instruction provided at the dosage, time, and cadence, that the research suggests. Targeted group interventions are standardized using a validated intervention program. Targeted Tier 2 Interventions should be evidence-based, meaning that research suggests a positive outcome for students when delivered with fidelity.



Intensive Tier 3 Intervention: Students who have not demonstrated expected progress with targeted group interventions at a Tier 2 level of support require more time in more intensive interventions. Tier 3 interventions are based on data collected in individual problem solving and often occur with smaller student-teacher ratios.



Data-Based Decision Making: Data-based decision-making includes inspecting relevant data to student performance and problem-solving through team meetings to make decisions about instruction, intervention, implementation, and disability identification (in accordance with state law). Relevant data may be universal screener data, historic academic and behavioral performance data, observational data, and peer performance data to draw comparisons and conclusions on the root cause of students' barriers to learning to their fullest potential.

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You Asked, We Are Answering! Best Practices for Using the MTSS Intervention Flowchart

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Why do we start with Universal/Benchmark Screening?

Employing a universal screener or benchmark is a critical component of MTSS as it helps you monitor your system’s health, your student’s areas of strength, and your student’s needs. We use [universal screeners and benchmark data](#) in two ways; first, it determines if core instruction sufficiently supports our students. Data-driven, differentiated core instruction should be designed for 100% of our learner’s needs. Screener data that portray more than 80% of the students meeting grade-level expectations denotes a “healthy” Tier 1, in other words, optimal core instruction. Roughly 15% to 20% of our learners may need additional support after data-driven differentiated core instruction in a “healthy” implementation.

Second, universal screeners and benchmarks provide insight into students’ areas of strength, as well as which students may need additional targeted or intensive support. The flowchart provides a visual reminder or cue to review your screener data for both areas of concern. The two-way arrows on the chart specify that the MTSS team should consider serving more students at Tier 1 based on screener data while assessing students who need targeted interventions based on their screener data. It also serves as a reminder that once students are identified as needing Tier 2 targeted support, they must continue to

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What is Differentiated Core Instruction?

Within an MTSS, our goal is to ensure that 100% of our students are provided with Tier 1 quality core instruction, understanding that about 15-20% of our students will need additional support to master their benchmark. Core instruction consists of all curricular materials and strategies used routinely with all students in general education. Core instruction should be designed and differentiated to support your students’ needs based on screener data; this means core instructional practices, strategies, and curriculum may vary from school to school, district to district. Therefore, it’s crucial to identify this trend, saving time and resources.



Progress monitoring is mentioned often in the chart. How should progress be monitored, and at what frequency?

Progress monitoring is the process of tracking student growth towards their skill-based goal using a specific assessment tool. These are typically short, skill-based valid, and reliable assessments that are administered. These assessments help us quantify how a student responds to instruction and intervention.

Learn more about Progress Monitoring [here](#).



What is the difference between small group targeted support in Tier 2 and intensive support in Tier 3?

At Tier 2, students identified by universal screener as needing additional supports academically or behaviorally receive scientific, research-based targeted small-group instruction in addition to the core. Tier 2 Targeted Interventions are standardized and can be implemented with groups of students demonstrating common skill needs or social/emotional/behavioral risk characteristics. This targeted instruction usually occurs in addition to core instructional time. Targeted group instruction must be more explicit: more intensive than core instruction, and ideally occur in small groups.

Students who have not demonstrated progress with targeted group instruction at Tier 2 should be provided intensive interventions in line with the flowchart. Tier 3 interventions are distinguished from Tier 2 instruction because they are individualized based on data collected in individual problem solving and occur with smaller student-teacher ratios and more frequently than targeted supports. A problem-solving team should individually review the student's response to targeted instruction and intervention to determine if increased frequency and duration would support the student best, knowing that intensive intervention takes time and consistency. Tier 1, data-based core instruction should continue when students receive Target Tier 2 instruction and Intensive Tier 3 instruction.



Is this process considered to be a pathway to special education?

MTSS and Special Education are not synonymous and have, unfortunately, been loosely conflated over time. Because of this misconception, we must monitor that our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is not a pathway to special education; rather a proactive and responsive system to students' needs.

Our MTSS processes should ensure that ALL students receive what they need when they need it. The MTSS team continuously evaluates the growth of students receiving Tier 3 interventions by reviewing progress monitoring data and the intervention plan. If a student's goals are not met and need persists after Tier 3 intensive intervention, the Student Problem Solving Team should be consulted for next steps, and Differentiated Tier 1 instruction continues.

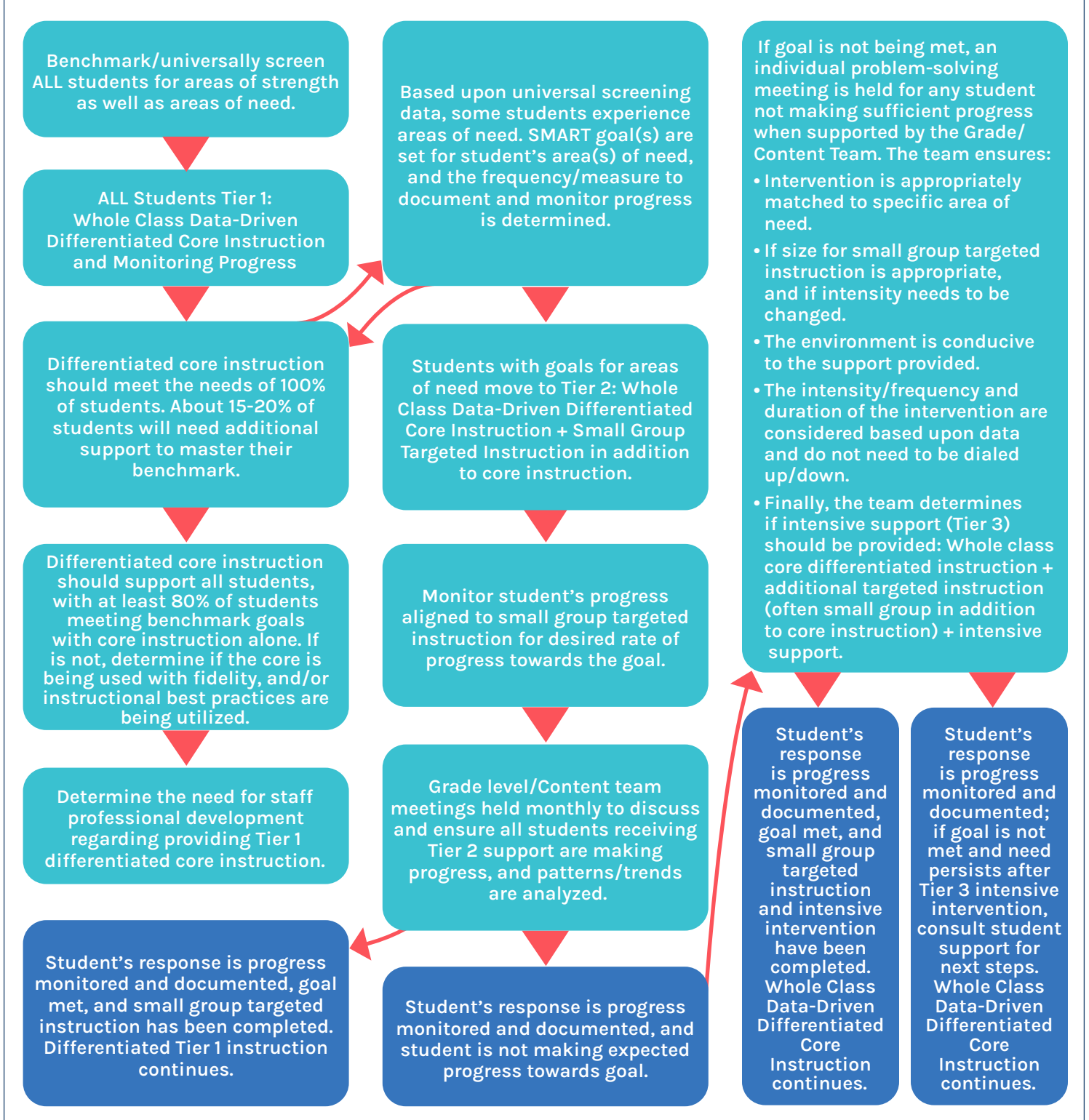
It's important to note that no matter what level of problem-solving occurs, students continue to have [equitable access](#) to Tier 1 Differentiated Core within their general education classrooms.

Last notes...

MTSS emphasizes the existence of a network of [infrastructure support](#) and decision-making that is essential for student, school, and district success. The MTSS Intervention Flowchart helps teams navigate the complexities of problem-solving at all levels of instruction and intervention, bringing quality data-based decision-making to life through a streamlined MTSS process.

MTSS Intervention Process Flowchart

This process illustrated below is intended to wrap around the academic and social-emotional needs of the entire student body.



About the Author of the Guide

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Brittany Shurley is a Branching Minds Educational Consultant. Brittany has served students, educators, and leaders in various roles throughout her career including as a classroom teacher, learning disabilities specialist, school-based leader, and district level administrator. Brittany has extensive experience in facilitating the implementation of an MTSS at the district and school levels. She is passionate about ensuring teachers have the tools to promote safe, healthy, and engaging learning environments where students are experiencing success.

About the Author of the MTSS Flowchart

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Deanne Rotfeld Levy is a consultant for Branching Minds regarding MTSS best practices. Deanne is also a University Supervisor at the National College of Education at National Louis University. Deanne previously served as Vice President of Customer Success for Discovery Education and was a Chicago Public Schools special education teacher and case manager. Deanne holds a Master of Arts in Teaching Special Education from National Louis University.

About the Branching Minds solution:

Branching Minds is an MTSS/RTI system-level education platform that brings together innovative, easy to use technology with the latest insights from the learning sciences to help drive student and school success, while making teachers and administrators work easier and more effective. Branching Minds connects data, systems, interventions, and stakeholders so that educators, administrators, and families can work better together to support students' holistic needs.

Branching Minds provides so much more than just a solution to our problem. Branching Minds has illuminated a path forward for developing the foundational systems and processes we need to truly personalize supports for our students. In addition, Branching Minds multiplies our capacity to identify and respond to student needs.

— Sarah Guerrero, Principal,
Northbrook Middle School, Spring Branch ISD, TX



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