

The Case for MTSS-B



The need is clear

Of the 13% - 20% of U.S. children who meet criteria for a mental health disorder, less than half receive services to address these concerns – leaving them at higher risk of negative outcomes including substance use, risky sexual behavior, violence, intensifying mental health difficulties, and a two-fold risk of school dropout.

The system is overburdened

Half of NH counties fall within mental health professional workforce shortage areas and the distribution of qualified mental health staff is scarce in NH compared to neighboring states.^{1,2} Youth are particularly vulnerable to declines in availability of services – fewer than half of youth receive the mental health services they need. Schools, while a natural hub for service delivery, can be too under-resourced to meet the need without effective, systems-level supports in place.

Students need to be ready to learn

Mental health challenges undermine social-emotional competencies – such as executive functioning and emotion regulation – that are foundational to student engagement. Interpersonal skills are crucial to the development of positive relationships with teachers and peers and the underlying emotional states needed to support attention and commitment to achievement.

Schools are a natural access point

Schools offer a critical access point to address unmet social-emotional and mental health needs. Of the fraction of youth who receive mental health services, 70% - 80% receive them in school. Youth are six times more likely to complete evidence-based treatments offered in schools than in other community mental health settings.

Focus on social-emotional learning is key

Integrating SEL curricula into schools promotes healthy development and academic achievement. SEL programming improves test scores while decreasing emotional distress, disruptive behavior, and substance use. Students who participate in SEL programs fare better than their peers – up to 18 years later – in their social-emotional and mental health.

Instructional time increases through reduced problem behaviors

High-quality implementation of schoolwide behavior expectations and response plans within a framework of supportive services is associated with reduced problem behaviors and office discipline referrals (ODRs). Over time, reducing ODRs through high-fidelity MTSS-B can recapture educational time that would otherwise be lost to preventable student behaviors.

School climate improves

High-fidelity MTSS-B creates positive learning environments that improve and sustain school climate, which is positively related to student achievement and school completion, improved social and behavior outcomes for students, and increased school safety. Healthy school climates are also associated with lower teacher stress and increased job satisfaction.

School-family partnerships strengthen

MTSS-B helps schools and communities better engage with families. When families contribute to decisions about student interventions, schools are more successful in delivering student supports. Involving families in decision-making allows them to support their student's learning and behavior at home, contributing to improved student outcomes.

Student engagement and achievement improves

MTSS-B's focus on schoolwide positive behavior, teacher-student relationships, and classroom management maximizes learning time and academic achievement. MTSS-B can address underlying student needs, improve attitudes about school and academics, reduce barriers to attendance, and improve chances of school completion.

¹ <https://www.governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/2019-03.pdf>

² <https://data.hrsa.gov/maps/map-tool/>

See the [MTSS-B Supporting Literature](http://nhmtssb.org/) guidance in the MTSS-B Toolkit at <http://nhmtssb.org/> for additional references.