

MTSS-B Tier 1 Implementation Checklist



Tier 1 practices and programs serve as the foundation of the MTSS-B tiered prevention framework, offering universal behavioral health and wellness supports for all students, across school settings, and reinforcing the concept of “mental health for all.” Tier 1 emphasizes proactive supports to boost prosocial skills and positive behaviors, laying primary prevention groundwork for an efficient advanced tier system. Engagement of youth and family voice is critical throughout Tier 1 implementation, ensuring that foundational practices are responsive to local culture, context, community values, and need. Below is a checklist of tasks to help guide your Tier 1 implementation, with additional guidance documents and tools for each task that you can access in the MTSS-B Toolkit.

Establish a Tier 1 team

A strong Tier 1 system is reliant on the establishment of school-based Tier 1 teams. It is important to keep your team small enough to engage in efficient action planning and decision-making, while including representation from relevant stakeholder groups. Tier 1 teams should have expertise in behavioral health and wellness as well as decision-making authority, and include representation from administration, teachers, behavioral health, students, and family. Coaching expertise and knowledge of school operations across grades and programs is also essential. Teams will need to define roles and procedures for reviewing MTSS-B related data to inform action planning and progress monitoring.



Forming School-based MTSS-B Teams

School Teams Inventory

Time Study Template

Tiered Team Meeting Template

Develop and teach positive schoolwide behavior expectations

Instead of teaching students what not to do at school, the tiered prevention framework should actively define and support the development of students’ prosocial skills and behaviors – those that schools, families and communities want to see. This serves to reduce challenging behaviors, support social skills building, and preventatively address student needs to reduce the need for advanced tier intervention. With the input of school, youth, and family stakeholders, the Tier 1 team will create a matrix of five or fewer positively stated behavior expectations, with examples across school settings. Expectations are then explicitly taught at schoolwide and classroom levels so they are clear and consistent for all.



Developing a Schoolwide Behavior Expectation & Acknowledgment System

Sample Schoolwide Behavior Expectations Matrix

Establish a behavior acknowledgment system

Reinforcement and shaping of prosocial behaviors are an important part of student readiness for learning. The Tier 1 team should design a system to acknowledge students when they engage in positive behaviors as outlined in the schoolwide behavior expectations. Examples of acknowledgment systems include a token economy, a group contingency system, and offering specific praise for positive behaviors – rewards that can be gradually faded out over time. The acknowledgment system should be clearly linked to behavior expectations, used across school settings by all staff, and be available to all students.



Developing a Schoolwide Behavior Expectation & Acknowledgment System

Sample Schoolwide Behavior Acknowledgment System



❑ Establish a schoolwide behavior response plan

A strong Tier 1 system requires clear, consistent, and restorative approaches to managing problematic behaviors when they arise. Restorative disciplinary practices emphasize a relational, trauma-informed approach to student behavior and favor restorative and inclusive rather than punitive and exclusionary practices. MTSS-B implementation may require an examination and revision of existing discipline policies and practices to provide clear guidance regarding use of restorative practices in response to problem behaviors. Guidance should include definitions of problem behaviors, procedures for classroom-managed vs. office-managed behaviors, and support for all staff in applying behavior response systems in a consistent manner.



Designing a Schoolwide Behavior Response Plan
Sample Minor vs. Major Behavior Response Plan
Sample Behavior Response Flowchart
Restorative Approaches to Addressing Student Behaviors

❑ Implement a social-emotional learning curriculum

Social-emotional learning (SEL) curricula offer lesson plans and materials for delivering social and emotional knowledge and skills in a school setting. An SEL curriculum is a comprehensive program that may span ages and grade levels to deliver SEL skills at a schoolwide level. Strong SEL curricula include implementation supports and provide tools to promote ongoing quality improvement and sustainability. The Tier 1 team, with input from additional staff as needed, should select a universal SEL curriculum that is aligned with schoolwide behavioral expectations and integrate it into the overall curriculum at schoolwide and classroom levels. Teachers will require ongoing professional development and coaching support in order to integrate a SEL curriculum into academic subject areas and school routines.



Selecting a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum

❑ Align health education and prevention programs with MTSS-B

The Tier 1 team should lead efforts to align and integrate existing health education and prevention programming with MTSS-B topics and priorities. All students should receive health education programming consistent with state and federal guidelines, and as appropriate to their developmental level, also be exposed to mental health literacy, as well as suicide, violence, and substance misuse prevention programming through the health education curriculum and/or separate initiatives.



Initiative Alignment Inventory
Selecting High Leverage Practices
Selecting Practices Tool
NIRN Hexagon Discussion Analysis Tool

❑ Collect and use data to track school- and student-level outcomes

The Tier 1 team will need a system for collecting and using data to inform decision-making and ongoing quality improvement. The Tier 1 team should review existing MTSS-B-related school and community data to support action planning, monitor Tier 1 implementation progress, identify schoolwide needs/gaps, and choose appropriate Tier 1 programs/supports. Office discipline referral data are sensitive to high fidelity Tier 1 implementation, and thus offer a high leverage indicator of student behavior and gained/lost instructional time.



Designing an MTSS-B Evaluation Plan
Office Discipline Referral Tracking Template
Instructional & Administrative Time Gained/Lost Calculator
Measuring School Climate (Coming soon)