

Selecting an MTSS Data System

Step 2: Evaluating Tools

This handout is designed to be used when selecting and evaluating a data system for conducting screening and progress monitoring within a tiered system of support.

Activity 1: Purpose for Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring

Consider your purpose for screening and progress monitoring and come to consensus about why these data are needed. The list below outlines common reasons cited by teams although the list is not exhaustive.

What is our purpose for implementing universal screening and progress monitoring?

- To evaluate core curriculum, core instruction, and intervention effectiveness.
- To evaluate program effectiveness for target groups (special education, Title 1, racial/ethnic groups).
- To identify students who need additional assessment and intervention.
- To identify number/percentage of students at risk.
- To assist in decisions about resource allocation.
- To maximize performance on end-of-year tests.
- To contribute to school improvement efforts.
- To assist in reporting district, school, or student performance to parents.
- To identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes.
- To reduce inappropriate referrals to special education or overidentification of students as students with disabilities.
- To identify when any instructional change is needed.
- To monitor students' progress toward individual education program (IEP) goals.
- To share individual student progress with educators, families, and students.
- Other: _____

Selecting a Universal Screener

Districts and schools should evaluate the usability and sustainability of their current or future MTSS assessment system. This section provides district and school teams with a systematic process for identifying, evaluating and selecting an effective data system. MTSS teams should use a systematic problem-solving process and consensus building throughout the entire process. Suggested steps are listed below.

1. Assess Your Needs and Current Context

For teams who are able to clearly define their needs and priorities, consider moving ahead to number 2. For teams new to MTSS or who have not defined their needs and priorities, consider completing the *Assessing Your Needs and Current Context* before moving to Step 2. The following summarizes the activities found in the resource.

Gather Data. Consider surveying and interviewing current staff in your school/district. The purpose is to gain a greater awareness about how different users view the usability of the current assessment system for screening and progress monitoring.

Identify Potential Needs. After reviewing the schoolwide data, come to consensus about what you would like your MTSS assessment system to do for your staff and community. For example, your team might determine that it is very important that the system allow you to easily compare the effectiveness of different interventions or communicate effectively with parents. It is recommended that the final list of needs be shared with your staff to ensure it has captured everything.

Clarify School and District Context. Before evaluating current or future tools, it is important to clarify the available resources and school context. Here is a brief list of some things to consider.

- Budget (initial and ongoing, professional development, printing)
- Professional Development Needs (accessibility, costs)
- Staffing (expertise, number, availability)
- Time (professional development needed, testing time)
- Domains of Interest (reading, math, behavior)
- Resources (computers, space)

Prioritize Needs and Resource Limitations. It is important to remember that no assessment system will be perfect. Thus, it is very important to prioritize your needs from “very important” to “important, but we could probably do without.” It is important to also prioritize your resource limitations.

2. Identify and Evaluate the Potential Assessment Tools

Using the available tools charts available on the National Center for Intensive Intervention (www.intensiveintervention.org) and data from Step 1, identify 1-3 potential tools that appear to match your priorities and needs. Once selected, use the rubric below to systematically assess the extent to which each meets the criteria for effective MTSS screening and, if considering a comprehensive system, progress monitoring tools. Evaluate reading, math, and behavior tools separately if you are looking for tools to assess multiple domains.

Considerations for Screening Tools	Response	Comments
Screening: Can be administered fall, winter, and spring to all students	Yes No DK	
Screening: Evidence indicates that the screening tools are reliable	Yes No DK	
Screening: Possess strong correlations between the instruments and valued outcomes (validity)	Yes No DK	
Screening: Predictions of risk status are accurate in all grade levels for which it will be used	Yes No DK	
Screening: Staff will be able to articulate the supporting evidence and the purpose of the tool	Yes No DK	
Screening: Cost effective and accessible training is available to ensure staff administer with fidelity	Yes No DK	
Screening: Data can easily be used or is used by teachers with additional assessments to support instruction	Yes No DK	
Screening: Cost and tool format is reasonable given current school context (e.g., budget, staff)	Yes No DK	
Considerations for Progress Monitoring Tools	Response	Comments
PM: Has sufficient number of alternate forms of equal and controlled difficulty to allow for frequent PM	Yes No DK	
PM: Specifies minimum acceptable growth	Yes No DK	
PM: Provides benchmarks for minimum acceptable end-of-year performance	Yes No DK	
PM: Reliability and validity information for the performance-level score is acceptable	Yes No DK	
PM: Staff will be able to articulate the supporting evidence and the purpose of the tool	Yes No DK	
PM: Cost effective and accessible training is available to ensure staff administer with fidelity	Yes No DK	
PM: Cost and tool format is reasonable given current school context (e.g., budget, staff)	Yes No DK	
PM: Data can easily be used by teachers for instructional decision making	Yes No DK	

Consider any other concerns about the assessment tools.

Consider any additional benefits of the assessment tools.

3. Evaluate the Data System and Other Factors

Use the rubric below to assess the quality of the tool’s data system and consider other important factors. If you do not have access to the data system consider having the publisher provide a live demonstration of the system or provide access to a sample account.

Considerations for the Data System	Response	Comments
The data system allows users to document and access individual student-level data	Yes No DK	
The data system allows users to engage in evaluation of the system at the district, school, grade, intervention, and class levels.	Yes No DK	
The data system allows data to entered in a timely manner	Yes No DK	
The data system provides reports to make timely and accurate decisions about movement among tiers.	Yes No DK	
The system allows users to access data and reports in a timely manner.	Yes No DK	
The data are represented graphically and are or could be easily understood by all users	Yes No DK	
The data system provides clear process for setting and evaluating goals.	Yes No DK	
The data system is cost effective and accessible to all users	Yes No DK	
The data system allows input data to be downloaded and stored on district/school data electronic storage.	Yes No DK	
Staff can be or were easily trained to 1) utilize the features of the system and 2) use the reports to support instructional decisions at all levels	Yes No DK	
Other Considerations	Response	Comments
Does the assessment system support a prevention focus?	Yes No DK	
Does system allow the leadership use of the data to support decision making?	Yes No DK	
Is on-going professional development available and to support sustained implementation of the system?	Yes No DK	
Is the assessment system appropriate for the current resources?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports allow for increased communication and collaboration with families?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports allow for increased communication and collaboration with among staff?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports support the evaluation of short- and long-term goals?	Yes No DK	
Do the reports support evaluation of the effectiveness of the MTSS framework	Yes No DK	

Consider any additional concerns about the data system or other factors.

Consider any additional benefits of the data system or other factors.

4. Select an Assessment System

As a team, summarize the pros and cons of the reviewed systems and compare them to the needs and context of your school or district. Consider the following in your final selection:

- Which system meets our prioritized needs?
- Which system will likely meet our needs in the future?
- Which system is appropriate for our school context and resources?
- Which system will work best with our implementation timeline?
- Which system will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in our data collection and analysis?
- Which system will most likely support teachers in making decisions about instruction?
- Which system will most likely support administrators in making decisions about instruction?
- Which system will help us communicate with families and community members?

As a team, come to consensus about which tool appears to be the best fit for the school or district. Remember no tool or system will be perfect. Before making the final selection, it is highly recommended that the team share with its stakeholders its selection process and its rationale for selecting the proposed assessment system. This provides an opportunity for gathering any additional feedback, identifying potential concerns that will need to be addressed, and increasing buy in for the assessment system. In addition to modeling the use of data for decision making, staff buy-in is essential for sustainability and implementation fidelity. If there are any major concerns about selecting one of the reviewed tools, consider reviewing additional tools from the tools charts (see Resources below) then return to **STEP 2: Evaluate the Quality of Assessments**.

5. Communicate Decision and Develop Implementation Plan

Regardless of the team's decision to stay with the current system or move to a new system, it is important to share the process and decision making with all staff. On-going staff professional development is also critical. See the MTSS Fidelity Rubric and other resources for support in developing an implementation plan for your selected assessment system. Consider requesting access to sample accounts for teachers and administrators to pilot with several students prior to full implementation.

Resources for Selecting Screening Tools

Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart. The National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) provides ratings in a tools chart regarding the psychometric standards, progress monitoring standards, and data-based individualization standards of academic monitoring tools. (<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring>).

Academic Screening Tools Chart. The NCII provides ratings in a tools chart regarding the classification accuracy, technical standards, and usability features of academic screening tools. (<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/chart/academic-screening>)

Behavior Progress Monitoring Tools Chart. The NCII provides ratings in a tools chart regarding the psychometric standards, progress monitoring standards, and usability standards of behavior monitoring tools. Additional information is provided in the chart. (<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools>).

Behavior Screening Tools Chart. The NCII provides ratings in a tools chart regarding the performance level standards, growth standards, and usability features of behavior screening tools. (<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/chart/academic-screening>)

Essential Components of MTSS/RTI Fidelity Rubric and Worksheet. The MTSS Essential Components Integrity Rubric and the MTSS Essential Components Integrity Worksheet are for use by individuals responsible for monitoring the school-level fidelity of MTSS implementation. They may also be used by schools for self-appraisal evaluation; however, they were not designed for compliance monitoring and therefore should not be used for this purpose. The rubric and the worksheet are designed to be used together and are aligned with the essential components of MTSS/RTI. (<http://www.rti4success.org/resource/essential-components-rti-integrity-rubric-and-worksheet>)

Academic Screening Tools Chart (Older Version). This Center on Response to Intervention tools chart presents the original version of the academic screening tools chart and includes information regarding the psychometric standards and usability information of academic screening tools. This chart will be posted until **June 2019**. (<http://www.rti4success.org/resources/tools-charts/screening-tools-chart>).