

Slate Valley
Multi-Tiered System of Supports - ELA / Literacy
Response to Instruction and Intervention
(MTSS-RtII)
Guide
2021 update

**Slate Valley Unified Union School District
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The original MTSS document was developed over a two year period by the ARSU MTSS-RtII Task Force and adopted by the ARSU Board on September 24, 2014, based upon intensive reading and research, participation in the VT MTSS BEST Institute, the incorporation of work completed by curriculum task forces and the assessment task force, as well as input and contributions by many teacher leaders and administrators throughout the district in collaboration with task force members. A revised MTSS-RtII Reading Guide was adopted on July 15, 2019. Based on the 2019 guidance from the state of Vermont, the document was revised again to reflect greater flexibility and the use of layers rather than tiers.

Revision Committee Members

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Slate Valley

It is helpful to think of a Multi-Tiered System of Support-Response to Intervention and Instruction (MTSS-RtII) as a comprehensive, systemic approach to teaching and learning designed to improve learning for **all** students through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment, instruction and intervention, provided by qualified professionals with appropriate expertise. Our District Mission, Vision and Shared Understandings speak to the very heart of a comprehensive systemic approach to teaching and learning.

Student Learning Achieved Through Engagement

District Mission: We are dedicated to the academic excellence of every student by empowering them with the means for the successful completion of district, state, and national educational standards and by challenging them to be productive members of society. We are committed to a comprehensive system of support to assure this outcome with the belief that failure is not an option.

District Vision: All students are engaged in rigorous, authentic, experiential, individualized learning that is supported or accelerated to ensure that they meet or exceed standards.

Our Students are curious and creative learners who succeed through personal initiative and sustained effort to reach high academic goals. They are critical thinkers and learners who seek knowledge and possess technological competence and collaborative skills. Our students embrace diversity and culture, act responsibly, and contribute to our community.

Our Educators believe in providing for the social, emotional, and academic needs of every child so that they feel connected, safe, and respected. They are committed to offering a challenging and engaging atmosphere in which all members of the school community can learn and grow.

Our Families and Community are integral to the success of our students and schools. Families are active, engaged, and welcomed partners in their child's education. Our community is passionate about equitable educational outcomes for all students.

Our Schools offer an enriched learning environment and a comprehensive system of supports to address the needs of the whole child.

Overview of VTmtss, from the [2019 VTmtss Field Guide](#)

Vermont educators are being called on to ensure that a multi-tiered system of supports is in place for all students. The implementation of VTmtss may vary according to the specific contexts, cultures and needs of schools and districts across the state. The VTmtss Framework is a systemic approach to decision-making for excellence and equity within a culture of continuous improvement that focuses on successful outcomes for all students.

This systemic approach:

- Supports the effective collaboration of all adults to meet the academic, behavioral, social and emotional needs of all students;
- Provides a layered system of high-quality, evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices that are matched to student strengths and needs;
- Relies on the effective and timely use of meaningful data;
- Helps districts and their schools organize resources to accelerate the learning of every student, and;
- Engages and develops the collective expertise of educators, students, family and community partnerships.

The VTmtss Framework:

- Unifies general and special education in intentional, ongoing collaboration;
- Provides a layered system of high-quality, evidence-based instruction, intervention and assessment practices matched to student strengths and needs;
- Relies on effective and timely use of meaningful data;
- Helps schools and districts organize resources to accelerate the learning of every student;
- Engages and develops the collective expertise of educators, students, families and community partnerships; and
- Employs a systemic approach to decision-making and continuous improvement that ensures positive outcomes

Shifting from Tiers to Layered Supports Model, from the [2019 VTmtss Field Guide](#)

Not surprisingly, because the idea of tiers was so powerfully linked to ambitious goals for all students and educators, it attracted a lot of attention. However, some unfortunate practices have emerged. In this edition, it is our intention to be very clear about several of these:

- Instructional supports, practices and interventions can be tiered – students can not! There are no “tier 2 students” (or tier 3 or tier 1). By assigning this type of label to students we make their current status permanent. That is the antithesis of the concepts underlying a multi-tiered system of supports.
- There is no specific number of tiers required in a multi-tiered system of supports.
- Layers of support are not necessarily sequential. Students may be accessing more than one type of intervention or additional support at a time.
- The types of support students receive do not supplant access to universal instruction. Supports provide additional instruction.
- Specific professionals are not automatically attached to any tier. Layered supports retain the important elements of tiers that require all district educators to respond as early as possible when students evidence difficulty in academic, behavioral or social-emotional areas.

Vermont's Guiding Principles for MTSS-RtII2, from the [2019 VTmtss Field Guide](#)

Principle 1: Success begins with committed educators who believe that all students learn and can achieve high standards as a result of effective teaching.

Principle 2: A well-developed, coherent and comprehensive system ensures equity by providing an appropriate context for learning with layered supports and personalized instruction for all students.

Principle 3: Effective and committed leadership at all levels of the system is crucial for guiding and sustaining educational excellence and equity.

Principle 4: A system supports all students by providing each student with the highest quality classroom instruction – instruction that is informed by research, supported by a standards-based curriculum and provided by highly qualified educators.

Principle 5: A coherent, articulated, balanced and comprehensive assessment system guides responsive teaching, informs educators and students about progress, and leads to effective decisions within a continuous plan for improvement for both students and systems.

Principle 6: Student proficiency increases when expert professionals analyze and use ongoing performance data to inform decisions and provide instruction that is responsive.

Principle 7: Instruction and intervention are culturally sensitive, based on solid research and allow teachers to use formative assessment and keen observation to engage in responsive teaching.

Principle 8: The foundation for effective problem-solving and instructional decision-making is a dynamic, positive and productive collaboration among students, families and professionals.

Principle 9: Ongoing professional learning for all members of the school community is needed to build capacity and sustain progress.

Principle 10: These principles are interrelated and most effective when integrated within a coherent plan for continuous improvement that recognizes how recursive assessment, reflection and adaptation improve instruction and increase student achievement.

Slate Valley Unified Union School District has adopted the following research-based practices for providing a comprehensive, systemic approach to teaching and learning designed to improve learning for all students through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment, instruction and intervention.

Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment Plan

Screening data of academic and/or behavioral achievement is typically collected two to three times per year on all students. Data collected for screening purposes needs to be analyzed to determine whether each student is (or is likely) to meet, exceed or not meet benchmarks. Screening data should identify students who are really at risk and need a closer look.

Progress Monitoring/Summative Assessment data are critical to decision making about the provision of instruction and intervention at all levels of a multi-tiered system. This data helps teachers provide responsive instruction and intervention and are used to decide whether or not planned instruction and interventions are working.

Diagnostic Measures are designed to probe student learning at a deeper diagnostic level. This data will help identify areas of weakness that require intervention and provide a more diagnostic approach to designing, implementing and evaluating instruction and intervention.

Student-Centered Learning

Individuals bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. Neuroscience reveals that these differences are as varied and unique as our DNA or fingerprints. Our district is committed to creating learning opportunities for students that increasingly place the student in the driver's seat of his or her education. To that end, we support the following practices: Personalized Learning, Flexible Pathways, Proficiency-Based Learning, and Differentiation.

Personalized Learning provides teachers and school systems an opportunity for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs. Students take an active role in designing their learning based on strengths, interests, and individual goals. This may include, particularly at the high school level, programs classified by the Agency of Education as Flexible Pathways.

Flexible Pathways legislation recognizes that not only should classroom instruction and school offerings be varied, but that some students may wish to learn outside the walls of our schools. This learning could take the form of internships, online or in person college courses, work-based learning, and more.




Proficiency-Based Learning is a student-centered, learning-centered approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the classroom. Instead of students competing with each other for class rank, they challenge themselves to perform better against a set standard. Instead of focussing on task completion and earning a grade, students focus on learning. Instead of arbitrary timelines, students are given multiple opportunities to show what they know. Instead of all types of tasks and all categories of learning being

averaged together, progress is clearly reported in smaller learning chunks. Students are given quality instruction, clear communication of the learning targets, and multiple, varied opportunities to practice in order to achieve proficiency.

Differentiation is a pedagogical practice wherein there is intentional variety in how ideas are presented, how students work with those ideas, and how students are assessed on their understanding of those ideas. Teachers can differentiate content, process, and product according to student readiness, interest, and learning profile while maintaining the integrity of the learning target.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs. Individuals bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. Neuroscience reveals that these differences are as varied and unique as our DNA or fingerprints. Three primary brain networks come into play:

<p>Recognition Networks The "what" of learning</p>  <p>What we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear, & read. Identifying letters, words, or an author's style are recognition tasks.</p>	<p>Strategic Networks The "how" of learning</p>  <p>Planning & performing tasks How we organize & express our ideas Writing an essay or solving a math problem are strategic tasks.</p>	<p>Affective Networks The "why" of learning</p>  <p>Why learners are engaged and stay motivated. How they are challenged, excited, or interested. These are affective dimensions.</p>
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APA Citation: CAST (2011). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0. Wakefield, MA. Author CAST

Layers of Instruction and Intervention

In the 2019 model from the VT Department of Education, the layers of instruction and intervention are much more fluid than tiers had been interpreted. However, each layer still must be delivered with fidelity, which can be defined as the adherence to specified guidelines and standards for a designated research based instructional practice, intervention and/ or program. It is adhering to the quantity, frequency and duration as stated in the conventions or protocol. It also encompasses quality of delivery. Fidelity should heighten the instructor's awareness of the diversity of student's needs and should then lead to appropriate differentiation. Differentiation should be student-centered and based on data. Differentiation can include providing students with multiple means for representing information (i.e. print, audio, and visual modes), multiple means of expression (i.e. written, oral, arts, multimedia), and/or multiple means of engagement (optimizing individual choice and autonomy, relevance, value and authenticity and minimizing threats and distractions).

Our graphic and explanation of the layers is as follows:

Universal Support Explained	Guided Support Explained	Structured Support Explained	Intensive Support Explained
Provided by the teacher in class (differentiated instruction and basic accommodations as it relates to proficiencies and indicators)	Provided by the teacher in class in consultation with educators out of the classroom (special educators, interventionists, coaches, guidance counselors, grade level team teachers, et cetera)	Provided by someone other than the classroom teacher in or out of class for a short term (specially trained IA, OT, SLP, coaches, guidance counselors, interventionists, et cetera)	Provided by specially trained educators in or out of the class, with greater frequency and duration (clinician, special educator, SLP, placement in a specialized program such as alt ed room, modifications to the curriculum)

Reading

Learning to read is a complex process. The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) summarized several decades of scientific research that clearly shows effective reading instruction addresses five critical areas:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

These five areas were incorporated into the No Child Left Behind Act and the Reading First initiative as essential components of effective reading instruction. These five critical areas are incorporated into the Common Core State Standards.

Scientific research reviewed by the National Reading Panel revealed that the methods of teaching the five essential components are critical and the most reliably effective approach is called systematic and explicit instruction. Systematic instruction reflects several important characteristics:

- Skills and concepts are taught in a planned, logically progressive sequence.
- Lessons focus on clearly defined objectives that are stated in terms of what students will do.
- Multiple practice activities are scheduled purposefully to help students master and retain new skills.
- Students work on carefully designed tasks that give them opportunities to apply what they have been taught.
- Assessments are designed and used in a timely fashion to monitor skill acquisition as well as students' ability to apply new skills, to retain them over time, and to use them independently.

Explicit instruction means the teacher states clearly what is being taught and models effectively how it is used by a skilled reader. Explicit instruction ensures students' attention is drawn to important features of an example or demonstration.

Slate Valley Unified Union School District is dedicated to developing curriculum and utilizing instructional practices that are based upon sound research, as well as using meaningful assessments to inform our instruction and assess our practice. Our goal is to provide all students with the necessary reading instruction and interventions to allow for mastery of the skills and meaningful application in real-world predictable and unpredictable situations

*intervention

**accommodations

Elementary Level ELA Support Description	Universal Support	Guided Support	Structured Support	Intensive Support
Pre-teaching		X	X	X
Double dose of Foundations (addition lesson or practice)	X	X	X	
Re-teach of Foundations with differentiation (possible alternative pacing)			X	X
Leveled Literacy Intervention			X	X
PASS Program - phonemic awareness	X	X	X	X
LIPS (Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program for Reading, Spelling, and Speech)			X	X
Edmark Reading			X	X
Read Naturally (fluency and comprehension)		X	X	
Reading Simplified	X	X	X	X
Orton Gillingham (Training required)	X	X	X	X
Words Their Way	X	X	X	
Raz Kids	X	X		
Read Between the Lines (inferencing)	X	X	X	
Fill in the blank notes	X	X		X
ESpark	X	X		
Anchor Charts and Personalized Visual Supports (Bookmarks with reading strategies, B and D inversions on desk)	X	X	X	X
Sentence Starters	X	X	X	X
Targeted Reading Strategy Instruction	X	X	X	X
Graphic Organizers	X	X	X	X

SOAR to Success (comprehension strategies)			X	X
Reading Milestones				X
Just Words		X	X	X
IXL			X	X
N2Y (Unique Learning)		X	X	X
Seeing Stars				X
Visualizing and Verbalizing			X	X
Report Form				
Framing Your Thoughts		X	X	X
Read 180			X	X
System 44				X
Explode the Code			X	X
Spelling City	X	X	X	X
Learning A - Z	X	X	X	X

Middle / Secondary Level ELA Support Description	Universal Support	Guided Support	Structured Support	Intensive Support
Fill-in-the-blank notes	X	X	X	X
Graphic Organizers	X	X	X	X
Read 180 or Annex setting for ELA			X	X
Additional writing conference time	X	X	X	X
Additional time with a text	X	X	X	X

Listening to a text / audio books	X	X	X	X
Several ways to demonstrate proficiency	X	X	X	X
Copy of notes or shared slides	X	X	X	X
Pre-teach vocabulary or vocabulary list	X	X	X	X
Explicit instruction in grammar and sentence formation	X	X	X	X
SOAR to Success (comprehension strategies)			X	X
Read Naturally		X	X	
Leveled Texts				X
Alternative text / condensed text				X
Reading Milestones				
Just Words				
IXL				
News to You				
Seeing Stars				
Visualizing and Verbalizing				
Report Form				
Framing Your Thoughts				
Read 180				
System 44				
Unique Learning				
Explode the Code				
Spelling City				

Learning A - Z