

Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports & Alignment



Early Childhood Reading: Structuring

Structuring Guide for Early Childhood Reading 2018-2019 Academic Year

Introduction to Document

The *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports Structuring Guides* have been created to assist teams in documenting the structures necessary to begin the implementation of a Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). This document may contain tools that are to be used in conjunction with content area-specific documents for reading, mathematics, behavior, and social-emotional content areas. All Kansas MTSS documents are aligned with the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Innovation Configuration Matrix (ICM)*, which describes the critical components of a MTSS and what each looks like when fully implemented, and the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Research Base*, which provides a basic overview of the research support for a MTSS.

www.ksdetasn.org/mtss

Acknowledgements

A significant commitment of time and energy from numerous Kansas educators, their districts, organizations, and partners made this document possible. Their efforts to learn and help others understand what it takes to make a MTSS a reality within schools is reflected in this document. This grassroots effort on the part of Kansas educators indicates a commitment to meeting the needs of every student and sharing wisdom from the field and research. As the list of individuals and districts who have contributed to this effort over the past years has become too long to detail, a collective expression of gratitude is offered here to everyone who has contributed to the concepts, ideas, and knowledge that are reflected in all Kansas MTSS documents.

The contents of this resource were developed under an agreement from the Federal Department of Education to the Kansas State Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Kansas State Department of Education or the Federal Government should not be assumed. Kansas MTSS is funded through Part B funds administered by the Kansas State Department of Education's Early Childhood, Special Education, and Title Services. Keystone Learning Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in this program and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Keystone Learning Services Executive Director, 500 E. Sunflower Blvd, Ozawie, KS 66070, 785-876- 2214. Authorization to reproduce in whole or in part is granted. Permission to reprint this publication is not necessary.

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Introduction

In Kansas, there is a belief that all children can learn. Fundamentally, every student should be challenged to achieve high standards, both academically and behaviorally. An aligned, systemic framework for ensuring all students have this experience is referred to as Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment (MTSS). Simply put, Kansas MTSS is a set of evidence-based practices implemented across an aligned system to meet the needs of all learners. Horner et al. (2005) stressed the importance of supporting children both academically and behaviorally to enable them to reach their fullest learning potential. Kansas MTSS builds an aligned system of prevention, early intervention, and support to ensure all children learn. Additionally, Kansas MTSS establishes a system that intentionally focuses on leadership, professional development, and an empowering culture, in addition to a focus on student learning.

Kansas MTSS incorporates a continuum of assessment, curriculum, and instruction. This systemic approach supports both struggling and advanced learners through the selection and implementation of increasingly intense evidence-based interventions in response to both academic and behavioral needs. A brief to help start this conversation is located at <https://ksdetasn.org/resources/1266>. Whether your program is implementing a single content or planning to combine academic and social/behavior contents, it is essential that you begin with the *System's Guide* and then specific content guides. The Kansas MTSS system of alignment establishes a Self-Correcting Feedback Loop that includes ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of instruction to ensure that each Kansas student achieves high standards.

Across the nation, schools use a variety of curricula, interventions, and methods to monitor student learning, both academically and socially. The goal of Kansas MTSS is to provide a systemic approach to meeting the needs of all students. To achieve this, resources must be used in a manner that is both effective and efficient. While Kansas MTSS does not necessarily require additional resources or supplements for existing practices, it does involve evaluating your current practices to identify those that yield evidence of effectiveness, addressing areas that are missing, and replacing ineffective or inefficient approaches with those that are supported by research evidence. Kansas MTSS is an approach to school improvement and accreditation activities that address the academic and behavioral achievement of all students.

Literacy and Preschool MTSS

Literacy development starts early in life and is highly correlated with school achievement (NELP, 2008). In fact, the literacy experiences that occur between a child's birth and eighth birthday are particularly important to later reading development (IRA & NAEYC, 1998), which makes the application of Kansas MTSS for literacy in preschool especially important. The primary prevention of reading difficulties is to ensure that young children develop strong language skills and engage in meaningful experiences filled with print, literacy play, storybook reading, and writing (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) (2008) conducted a synthesis of the scientific research regarding the early literacy skills of young children from birth through age five. Based on the NELP Report, four areas emerged as important for young children's early literacy development: oral language (which includes vocabulary knowledge), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge (National Institute for Literacy, 2009). Kansas MTSS was designed to utilize these

key areas to support all learners.

Scholars have highlighted the need for more intentional and explicit literacy instruction in preschool classrooms. Teaching all students to read requires a system for the early identification of students who are “at-risk,” as well as a system for providing those students with the interventions they need to become proficient readers. Good classroom curriculum and instruction generally meet the needs of most students, but an efficient system for providing high-quality interventions is required to ensure the needs of all students are met.

At times, the application of Kansas MTSS in preschool will be slightly different than what may be put in place for school-aged children; however, the basic processes and practices are similar. For appropriate application to occur, leadership teams must understand the similarities and differences between programming for very young children and those approaches used in more formal schooling. It is important that programs use evidence-based instructional practices that have been shown to be effective with young children, including developmentally appropriate teaching strategies.

Creating the Structure for a Preschool MTSS

The guidance for creating the necessary structure for a preschool MTSS currently focuses on the following:

- Implementation of an evidence-based core curriculum that supports the acquisition of early literacy skills and serves as the foundation for meeting the needs of ALL children.
- Instructional strategies and interventions that support the acquisition of early literacy skills through differentiated instruction (e.g., small flexible groups, embedded learning opportunities).
- Determination of preschool, end-of-the-year learning targets based on information gathered from curriculum-based assessments, early literacy general screening tools, and/or other means (e.g., Kansas Early Learning Document: Early Learning Standards-KSEL) as identified by your leadership team.
- Universal screening and progress-monitoring activities that assess the areas of early literacy that are predictive/precursor skills to the essential skills identified as necessary for reading proficiency in later grades, specifically oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness.
- Identification of preschool children for whom the core curriculum and instruction do not appear to be sufficient and who may be in need of more intensive instruction.
- Provision of tiered support (Tier 2/3) through instruction targeted on specific skills, with opportunities for practice and corrective feedback through game-like activities carried out in additional small groups and/or embedded and explicitly taught.

Tier 1 / Curriculum and Instruction for Early Literacy

From birth, young children begin developing knowledge and skills that build a foundation for later reading ability. These skills do not develop in isolation, but are intertwined with other developmental domains (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). As young children explore their world, specific interests spark in-depth investigations, and playtime provides meaningful opportunities to practice and become proficient. Preschool teachers must intentionally create environments and

utilize instructional strategies to build children's language and conceptual knowledge, while also promoting the development of specific code-focused skills.

How preschool educators teach is as important as what they teach young children. Early literacy experts advocate for a balanced approach to preschool instruction (National Institute for Literacy, 2009). Strong early literacy programs provide a combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, differentiation, grouping strategies (large, small, and individual), and flexible schedules that allow for sustained and in-depth learning through play and responsive/nurturing teaching techniques (Neuman, 2010).

The NELP synthesis identifies oral language (speaking and listening), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge as essential preschool early literacy curricular areas (National Institute for Literacy, 2009).

Oral Language

Children learn to understand and use language through conversations within meaningful contexts and daily activities (Hart & Risley, 1995). Preschool teachers must incorporate opportunities and design activities that encourage children to talk and interact (Wasik, Bond & Hindman, 2006). Conversations are more than listening to others model language; they are opportunities for children to express their thoughts, get needs met, resolve conflicts, and learn from adults and one another.

A language-rich classroom provides multiple daily opportunities for children to be engaged in conversations with their peers, individually with adults, and in group settings. It also involves a rich and engaging environment that sparks young children's interests and fuels their conversations. Educators create opportunities for children to engage in conversations by designing spaces, activities, and routines, as opportunities for rich conversational talk. They also take time to listen and respond to the things children are saying and ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas and thoughts.

Young children's vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading, listening comprehension, and decoding. Beginning readers use their word knowledge to decode by matching a phonological representation to a known word (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). For comprehension tasks, vocabulary can be thought of as "little pieces of knowledge" providing the background information necessary to comprehend both oral and written language (Neuman, 2011). Intentional vocabulary instruction is an important, but often neglected instructional area in preschool. A child's vocabulary size at age 3 is one of the strongest predictors of their 3rd grade reading achievement (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). In addition, vocabulary skills are a significant predictor of reading comprehension after the third grade (Biemiller, 2005).

Unfortunately, the vocabulary skills of many preschool children considered "at risk" are already drastically behind their peers by the time they are three (Hart & Risley, 1995). For this reason, it is important for the preschool early literacy curriculum to include explicit vocabulary instruction that focuses on both contextual and definitional information, along with multiple word exposures across settings (Coyne, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2004).

Learning new vocabulary begins with word curiosity or “word consciousness” (Graves, 2000). Once a word is noticed, students use the context to create an initial meaning (Carey & Bartlett, 1978). As children link this new word to additional contexts, their understanding increases, and they further refine their definition (Christ & Wang, 2010).

Storybook reading provides an excellent opportunity for exposure to both language and new vocabulary (Neuman & Dwyer, 2008). An interactive storybook reading approach pulls children into talking about books through the use of open-ended questioning. Interactive reading can be done in whole group settings, but is most effective for promoting oral language development when it occurs in small group and one-on-one book reading contexts.

Dialogic reading is a specific type of interactive storybook reading with a strong research base in preschool. The acronym PEER has been developed to describe this process: Prompt with a question about the story, Evaluate the response given to the question, Expand on the response (through paraphrasing and/or adding information), and Repeat the initial question to check understanding of the new information. In addition to the PEER process, adults are encouraged to ask a range of question prompts to keep the dialogue going and provide scaffolding support using the acronym CROWD to represent the variety of questions that should be used: Completion questions, Recall questions, Open-ended questions, “Wh” questions (who, what, where, when, why), and Distancing questions. The Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge: CONNECT has created a free online training module specifically focused on Dialogic Reading Practices at <http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/learners/module-6> .

Phonological Awareness

Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds is fundamental to learning to read. Phonological awareness is a term that describes an individual's ability to detect and manipulate the sound structure of words independent of their meaning (Lonigan, 2006) and is an important and reliable predictor of later reading ability (NELP, 2008).

Strong early literacy preschool curricula provide opportunities for children to practice recognizing the sound structure of words in increasingly complex ways using whole words, syllables, onset/rimes, and phonemes (Vukelich & Christie, 2004). While these skills can be easily embedded into meaningful and playful preschool activities (e.g. singing songs, playing games, and storybook reading), it is important for preschool programs to have a systematic approach to teaching phonological awareness skills.

The development of phonological awareness is the foundation for later phonics instruction, which is necessary for students to become capable readers. An important goal of early literacy instruction and intervention in preschool is to maximize the number of children who enter kindergarten with sufficient phonological skills to benefit from more formal phonics instruction.

Phonological awareness embraces more than rhyming in preschool. The development of phonological awareness proceeds along a continuum, from awareness of larger to smaller units of sound (words to syllables to individual phonemes (sounds)). However, this is not a stage model

in which a child masters one level before learning the next. Instead, the levels overlap, and children show beginning levels of skill on more complex tasks, while still mastering less complex tasks (Philips, Clancy-Menchetti & Lonigan, 2008). Phonological awareness also involves a range of manipulation and detection skills specific to the sound structure of words. The chart below describes the approximate developmental acquisition of basic phonological awareness skills.

	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years
Rhyming (Match and produce word endings (rhymes))	Participate in rhyming activities	Match rhyming words	Produce words that rhyme
Alliteration (Match and produce words with same initial sounds)	None	Recognize words with a common initial sound	Produce words with a common initial sound
Blending (Combine syllables and sounds to make words)	none	Combine a sequence of isolated syllables to produce words	Combine a sequence of isolated sounds to produce words
Segmenting (pull words apart into syllables and sounds)	None	Identify syllables in words	Identify initial sounds in words

(Paulson & Moats, 2010)

Preschool educators must understand the complexities of different types of phonological awareness tasks. Differing units of sound can make a task more or less challenging. Tasks that involve larger units of sound are generally easier for a child than smaller ones (e.g., clapping out syllables is easier than clapping out the sounds of a word). Tasks can also be more or less difficult depending on what the child is asked to do. Identity tasks (e.g., rhyme oddity, first-sound matching), synthesis tasks (e.g., syllable or phoneme blending), or analysis tasks (e.g., word or syllable segmenting or deleting, phoneme-counting tasks) can change the complexity. Blending tasks are normally easier than analysis tasks, and tasks that involve generating a response are more difficult than recognition tasks (Philips, Clancy-Menchetti & Lonigan, 2008).

Preschool schedules provide multiple daily opportunities to teach phonological awareness skills. Singing songs, reciting poems, reading storybooks, writing, playing transition games, and engaging in play all provide a context that can be used to think about and manipulate sounds and words. The challenge is to ensure teachers have a curriculum that outlines a scope and sequence for instruction and they also understand the developmental continuum so they can provide appropriate scaffolding to support each learner.

Alphabet Knowledge

Young children must also be intentionally taught about letters and letter sounds. They need hands-on exploration of letters and the opportunity to use letters and sounds in meaningful contexts (e.g., environmental print, name labels, writing notes) and in their play. Just surrounding children with letters, alphabet books, and letter activities isn't enough; to take advantage of a literacy-rich environment, children need instruction about letters and their sounds.

Learning the alphabet is the third essential emergent literacy skill identified by NELP (2008). There is evidence to suggest that teaching young children letter names supports their ability to use sound cues contained in the letter names (e.g., /b/ in B, /f/ in F) to learn letter sounds (Phillips & Piasta, 2013); however, it is the letter–sound connection that is most important. Research also suggests that there may be an advantage to teaching both upper and lower-case letters together rather than teaching first upper- and then lower-case letters (Phillips & Piasta, 2013). Children tend to learn letters that have the most meaning to them first, so beginning with the letters in children's names may have a slight advantage to teaching letters/sounds in their alphabetic sequence (Justice, Pence, Bowles, & Wiggins, 2006).

A child's ability to identify the letters of the alphabet when entering kindergarten is a factor that has been correlated with beginning reading success (NELP, 2008). However, learning to identify the letters in a rote and isolated manner, such as “the letter of the week,” is neither effective nor appropriate (Venn & Jahn, 2003). When preschool programs go through the alphabet one letter each week, they are not able to get through the alphabet more than one time each school year. This method does not allow opportunities for children to compare and contrast several letters at a time. Instead, alphabet knowledge should be taught in meaningful contexts that enable children to discriminate between individual letters. For young children, this includes familiar words, such as their own name, the names of their classmates, and words they frequently see in the environment.

Code-Focused Instruction

Code-focused instruction is the systematic, sequential, explicit, and intentional instruction of phonological awareness skills and alphabet knowledge. While these skills can be taught independently, there is a greater impact when they are taught in conjunction (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). For this reason, as you look at intervention materials, Kansas MTSS recommends grouping phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge into a single intervention focus.

Print Awareness

Print awareness was a fourth curricular area identified by NELP (2008), because it provides the meaningful context for children's literacy learning. Children with print awareness understand that written language is related to oral language and that written language carries meaning. Teachers promote print awareness through talk about print in books, making sure young children understand the organization of print in books, drawing attention to letters and sounds in print, encouraging children to write and play with letters and print, and supporting children's understanding of the relationship between oral and written language.

Print awareness is a necessary foundational skill that serves as a prerequisite for learning to read. Without print awareness, children struggle to understand the context for other literacy skills. Research has linked the use of consistent print referencing during shared reading to the development of early literacy for young children who are typically developing and those who are at risk (Justice & Sofka, 2010).

For further information on the NELP report and the essential areas of preschool literacy, the brief *What Works: A Teacher's Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction*, <http://familieslearning.org/public/uploads/editor/files/what-works.pdf> provides additional information.

Standards and Curriculum

The *Kansas Early Learning Standards* (KELS), found at <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Early-Childhood-Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Early-Childhood> provide a starting point for teachers and curriculum committees. The KELS document provides information and guidance to early childhood providers on the developmental sequence of learning for children from birth through kindergarten. Aligned with the Kansas K-12 standards, the KELS are structured around domains for learning that include a whole child perspective.

The KELS were not designed to serve as an assessment or a curriculum. Rather, the *Kansas Early Learning Standards* were designed to guide educators in selecting curricula and assessments focused on the skills and knowledge young children should have as a result of participating in high-quality early childhood programs. An understanding of early literacy development, the four essential areas of early literacy instruction and evidence-based instructional strategies are fundamental considerations when selecting preschool early literacy curriculum materials.

The Kansas MTSS system of alignment advocates for the selection of a comprehensive, evidence-based preschool curriculum that address all domains of learning outlined in the *Kansas Early Learning Standards*. While your MTSS efforts are focused on academics and/or social behavior, when it comes to intervention, it is important that programs use curricula that address the needs of the whole child. Programs are encouraged to use resources such as the Head Start Preschool Consumer Reports (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/curriculum-consumer-report.pdf>) and/or the What Works Clearing House (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW/Results?filters=,Pre-K,Literacy>) to examine the evidence-base of different preschool curricula.

Additionally, programs should examine their selected curriculum to determine whether the four essential areas of early literacy instruction are adequately addressed. Some comprehensive curricula provide strong support for early literacy, while others may not include all four essential areas with equal weight. If this is the case, supplemental early literacy materials may also be needed to strengthen your overall program and ensure student outcomes are maximized.

Professional Development, Curriculum Fidelity, and Communication

Once a program has determined what their comprehensive and/or early literacy curriculum will be during their MTSS efforts, their leadership team will want to record this information on its Tier 1 Protocol with enough specificity to ensure all teachers can implement the curriculum with fidelity. Typically, curricula contain more components/content/days than can be implemented within a classroom day or year. Leadership teams will want to decide what parts of their curriculum are essential elements and what are left up to teacher discretion. It is important when comparing data across classrooms that there be some consistency regarding what and how the preschool curriculum is taught. It is also important to keep in mind what the curriculum itself considers critical elements. For research-based curricula that have demonstrated positive outcomes, decisions to eliminate or reduce the time spent on an essential element may impact the results.

Leadership teams will also want to make decisions about expectations regarding the daily schedule. A preschool program's daily schedule is a critical component of curriculum and instruction. Depending on your program's philosophy and/or requirements, you may want to determine how much time children should be expected to have for self-directed learning, how much time should be teacher directed, the maximum duration of a teacher-directed activity, etc. This step will ensure that leadership teams have outlined an achievable and developmentally appropriate use of their preschool curricula and also help provide consistency in implementation across classrooms. Teams should create a sample schedule with expected time allotments for the day. Decisions about what parts of the curriculum must be implemented, in what types of settings (whole group, small group, play), and for how long (how long a typical whole group should last, how much time should be spent outside or in play) should then be documented and communicated to teachers.

Whether implementing a new curriculum or refining the use of a current curriculum, professional development is a task leadership teams should take time to consider and plan. Creating a plan for professional development is a critical step toward ensuring fidelity and sustainability. Teams should consider the following:

- What training will staff members need to implement the curriculum expectations?
- Who needs to know the expectations?
- When and how will the curriculum expectations be communicated to staff?
- What type of follow-up will be needed?
- Who will communicate the expectations to new staff?
- How and when will new staff receive training on the curriculum?

Leadership teams will want to plan for both their communication and professional development needs each time they meet. Communication is an important aspect of achieving staff buy-in and sustained change. Therefore, while developing your communication and professional development plan, teams should make sure there is bidirectional communication. A one-way communication plan may get the message out, but it does not allow messages to come back easily. Reciprocal communication is critical if the leadership team is to create a plan that will be supported by staff.

Once these decisions have been made and documented, leadership teams will also want to consider how they will monitor the fidelity of the implementation of their plan. Monitoring fidelity of curriculum implementation is not meant to be punitive; rather, it is intended to provide information for leadership teams to use when making data-based decisions regarding their MTSS. Curriculum fidelity data can provide insight into needed professional development, assist teams in making determinations about curriculum, and/or help leadership teams decide whether the expectations they outlined are appropriate and possible. Using the expectations that were outlined for teachers regarding the Tier 1 Protocol, a checklist can be created outlining curriculum expectations. This checklist could be used by an administrator during walkthroughs, as a reflective self-assessment, or as a peer mentoring tool. The leadership team should determine how a fidelity tool will be used and how fidelity will be monitored based on the needs of their institution's system.

Assessment

Comprehensive Assessment Plan and Data-Based Decision Making

Preschool programs use a variety of assessment tools for a variety of purposes. Developmental screening tools (e.g., DIAL, ASQ) are used to determine which students may have developmental delays and may need further assessment. Diagnostic assessments (e.g., Braken, Brigance, PLS, Peabody Motor Scales) often compare children to a standardized sample, and are most generally used to determine whether a child may qualify for special education or other services.

Curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Carolina, Teaching Strategies Gold) are used multiple times per year to measure a child's progress over time and help teachers in planning core curriculum. Program assessments (e.g., COSF, Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot) are used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of programs. In the Kansas MTSS process, the first step to creating a comprehensive assessment plan is to consider the assessment tools you are already using, the purposes for which you are using those tools, and whether there are tools or practices that are duplicative in purpose or no longer necessary. This information should be documented on your *Comprehensive Assessment Plan* along with other decisions your leadership team makes about the assessments that will be used in your program.

Universal Screening

A primary step in Kansas MTSS is to determine what your program will use as a Universal Screening tool. Unlike Developmental Screening tools, a Universal Screening tool is used to compare students to a normative sample or standard for the purposes of identifying which students may be at risk for later learning difficulties based on indicators that are predictive of later achievement. A Developmental Screening tool identifies children who may have a developmental delay, while a Universal Screening tool identifies students who may be at-risk and ranks them based on that risk into levels/tiers. This distinct difference makes the data from Universal Screening tools particularly helpful for examining the effectiveness of your curriculum and supports a process for tiered intervention.

Universal screening tools appropriate for early literacy, assess the predictive elements of early literacy: oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. They are valid and reliable for this purpose, they can be used with confidence to make instructional decisions, and can be given at least three times per school year. To assist teams in selecting a universal

screening tool appropriate for early literacy, the document *Preschool Universal Screening Tools* can be found in the appendix. Leadership teams will need to ensure that they have the tool or tools to assess all three predictive elements of early literacy (i.e. oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness). Keep in mind, some tools do not assess all three elements, therefore programs may consider using more than one universal screening tool, when one tool does not contain all three elements.

Creating a comprehensive assessment system is one of the major structuring tasks that must be completed by your leadership team. Kansas MTSS recommends screening preschool students at least three times per year using a universal screening tool. This information should be reviewed alongside elementary universal screening data to support discussions related to the adequacy of your preschool curriculum, the match between your preschool and kindergarten scope and sequence, and the information necessary to meet the needs of individual students. However, when comparing preschool and elementary data, leadership teams should keep in mind the makeup of their preschool population. In most school systems, all kindergarten students do not attend a public preschool program. Additionally, the students who do attend preschool in a public school often meet at-risk criteria or are receiving preschool special education services.

Your leadership team will use the universal screening data to examine the adequacy of your curriculum and your system's need for professional development. The classroom staff will use the universal screening data to plan for differentiated instruction within the core curriculum, and to identify students in need of additional support for literacy to determine the focus of that intervention. Each universal screening tool sets the criteria for determining which students are at or above the benchmark and which students are in need of Tier 2/3 support. Programs should follow the decision rules for the tool they select when using this information to group students into levels of tiered support.

Progress Monitoring

Monitoring progress regularly and using the data to make instructional decisions results in students making more academic progress than when teachers do not use progress monitoring. Teachers' accuracy in judging student progress increases when progress monitoring strategies are used consistently (Stecker & Fuchs, 2000). For preschool students at Tier 1, progress monitoring is often done through the use of curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Teaching Strategies Gold), administered three to four times per year. These assessments are tied to content area instruction and help teachers determine whether students have learned the concepts and skills taught so instruction may be adjusted to re-teach concepts or provide additional practice on skills not yet mastered. For students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction, progress-monitoring data are used to chart the growth of individual students on targeted skills. Progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental or intensive instruction answers two questions:

1. Is the instructional intervention working?
2. Does the effectiveness of the intervention warrant continued, increased, or decreased support?

Unlike in a K-12 MTSS, preschool universal screening tools can generally not also be used as

progress monitoring tools, because they cannot be given with enough frequency to monitor intervention effectiveness or to make changes to a student's intervention focus. Instead, preschool programs are encouraged to use mastery monitoring strategies as a means to assess and monitor the progress of students receiving tiered intervention. Mastery monitoring strategies are teacher designed, and involve directly collecting data on students' mastery of specific skills. Typically, changes to the level of tiered instruction a preschool student receives will only happen after each universal screening benchmark period; however, teachers can use the data they collect through mastery monitoring and their knowledge of the student to make changes when the intervention efforts do not seem to be effective or indicate that a change is needed.

Collecting and graphing progress-monitoring data over a series of weeks provides a visual pattern of skill acquisition for students receiving additional support. Kansas MTSS recommends mastery monitoring data collection in preschool occur at least one time every two weeks for students receiving Tier 2 support and one time every week for students receiving Tier 3 support.

Diagnostic Assessments

It is not generally necessary for leadership teams to identify a formal diagnostic process to determine instructional focus in preschool. The skills being assessed at the preschool level do not warrant deeper evaluation. In a K-12 MTSS assessment system, diagnostic assessments are used to help narrow down the focus for intervention. Preschool early literacy intervention will focus on: 1) oral language/vocabulary, 2) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, or 3) a comprehensive approach that targets all areas. Some protocol interventions may have informal assessments that can be used to place students into the appropriate level of the program.

Professional Development, Assessment Fidelity, and Communication

Once assessments and assessment processes have been selected, your leadership team should plan for professional development and ongoing support to all staff expected to use these tools and processes. Decisions should be made regarding who will administer the universal screening tool and who will score/enter data into your database. If all teachers are involved in the administration of an assessment, they will need to be trained and supported to ensure fidelity of assessment administration. Sometimes programs choose to create an assessment team to collect universal screening data, in which case only those team members need training. Regardless of whether every staff member administers the assessment or only a team, all staff members need to understand the purpose, rationale, uses of the assessment, and how to interpret the instructional implications of data. Initial and ongoing training should be differentiated according to the expected use, alignment of practices, and each staff member's prior knowledge.

It is also important to monitor the fidelity of assessment administration, especially when it is new for staff. Fidelity monitoring ensures that all data are valid and reliable. There are three main areas to be considered:

- Are assessments administered and scored by staff who have been trained to do so?
- Are assessments administered according to the assessment calendar?
- Are assessment results correctly interpreted and used to guide intervention?

Effective techniques to minimize scoring errors while ensuring fidelity include, making sure examiners have:

- Excellent training
- Opportunities to practice
- Periodic training review
- Experienced examiners who mentor/check first-time examiners' scoring
- Opportunities for shadow scoring (two examiners score the same student, thereby allowing them to compare scores)

Within the framework of professional development, having new examiners work with experienced examiners and providing opportunities for shadow scoring offers the best opportunities for ongoing professional development. Such opportunities should be included within the larger professional development plan being implemented and monitored by the leadership team.

In planning for professional development, it is helpful for leadership teams to consider these questions specific to each assessment method:

- Which staff members are expected to administer the assessment?
- Which staff will not be administering the assessment, but will be involved in interpreting instructional implications of the results?
- Which staff members, if any, have experience with or have previously received professional development on the assessment?
- Which staff members need to attend initial professional development on the administration of the assessment?
- Which staff members need to attend initial professional development on the interpretation of the assessment?
- When (date) will the staff first be expected to administer the assessment?
- When (date) will the initial professional development be provided?
- Who will provide the professional development?
- Who will monitor the correct administration (fidelity) of assessment?
- What method will be used to monitor the correct administration (fidelity) of the assessment?
- How frequently will the administration (fidelity) of the assessment be monitored?
- When and how will ongoing professional development for staff be provided?
- When and how will professional development for staff needing additional support in effective assessment administration of the assessment be provided?
- Who will provide professional development for new staff and how will it be provided?

These questions are designed to help leadership teams as they begin the development of an overall professional development plan. Once specific decisions are made, the leadership team should record the results on the professional development plan and begin designing how these decisions will be communicated with staff. Once again, it is important to remember that communication is a key aspect of achieving buy-in and sustainability. Therefore, procedures are designed and executed to ensure regular and consistent communication about what is happening with regard to your MTSS efforts—not only among the leadership team, but also with all stakeholders. It does not have to be a large formal plan; it only needs to be as large and formal as necessary for the leadership team to ensure that bi-directional communication occurs as planned.

Leadership teams should consider communication with various stakeholders regarding how, when, and what assessments are given. Staff members will need to know about decisions regarding changes in assessment practices. Parents are also interested in the assessments in which their children will be participating, and leadership teams will need to discuss how results of assessments will be shared with parents. The leadership team should make decisions regarding what information is appropriate to share with which stakeholders and when that information should be shared.

- Who needs the information about assessments?
- What information do they need?
- When will communication occur?
- Who will provide the information?
- How will the communication be provided?
- What feedback or input will be requested?
- How will the feedback/input be used?

Once the leadership team develops a communication plan regarding assessment, the plan should be implemented and then regularly reviewed at leadership team meetings. Any communications that have occurred or feedback that has been received can be shared with team members, and any needed revisions can be planned and implemented. In this way, consistent communication between the leadership team and stakeholders is ensured.

Tier 2/3

Grouping for Preschool Early Literacy Intervention

Preschool populations by their very nature include children with a wide variety of skill levels. Therefore, preschool daily schedules are designed to provide multiple opportunities for differentiated instruction along the developmental continuum. All children, including those needing Tier 1, 2, or 3 support, should participate in the core early literacy curriculum with differentiation provided. Differentiation of core curriculum is considered Tier 1 for all students.

When considering how to provide intervention for students needing Tier 2/3 support, Kansas MTSS recommends preschool programs not follow a “walk to intervention model” typically used

in K-12 programs. Instead of grouping students across classrooms or bringing in someone the child does not know to provide intervention, Tier 2/3 intervention should ideally be provided in a child's classroom by familiar adults. It is especially important for young children to develop positive and secure relationships with a small number of adults. In addition, familiar adults who already work with students are more likely and able to provide distributed practice on target skills during the day. Research suggests that preschool teacher-child relationships play a significant role in influencing young children's social and emotional development (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). Therefore, children identified through universal screening as requiring more support should receive that support through additional small groups and/or Embedded Learning Opportunities within the daily routine and play.

Using the decision rules determined by your universal screening tool, children needing additional instruction in key early literacy skills will be identified to participate in intervention focused on a) oral/language/vocabulary, b) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, or c) a comprehensive intervention targeting all 3 areas (i.e. oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness).

Tier 2

Kansas MTSS recommends classroom teams consider at least one of two approaches when designing schedules of early literacy intervention for individual students. Classrooms may use a combination of both approaches to meet the individual needs of their students.

The first option involves the design of an additional small group (e.g. 3 to 4 students, 2 to 3 times per week for 10 to 15 minutes). Students needing Tier 2 support would be assigned to an intervention group based on the need identified by the universal screening tool. Small groups could be provided in a variety of ways in a preschool classroom. Interventionists might pull students for a short time during self-directed learning activities or during other flexible times of the day (arrival/opening activities, transitions, snack time, etc.). Times for intervention can also be built into the daily schedule. Adults might work with all the students in small groups of varying sizes and purposes. Interventions should be selected from the district's Tier 2 Protocol.

For some students/classrooms, it may make more sense to use the evidence-based strategy of Embedded Learning Opportunities to provide students needing Tier 2 intervention with distributed practice across the daily schedule on selected intervention targets. Therefore, another option would be to design an intentional schedule that provides students with frequent (i.e. at least 8) daily documented Embedded Learning Opportunities on targeted skills. The key to this option is the documentation of who, what skills, how, and when the embedded learning opportunities will occur each day and a method to ensure each student has the specified opportunities to practice each day. For this approach, teams will narrow down the learning target to a small set of skills that can be embedded based on developmental progressions. The use of a matrix, with the daily schedule listed vertically and the activities listed horizontally, will allow teams to create a process for when/who/how embedding will occur. The specific learning targets should be listed on each student's matrix, and the opportunities provided should be documented.

To increase opportunities for practice, it is also recommended that whichever option above is used, one or two learning centers be intentionally designed based on early literacy targets (e.g., a language/vocabulary focused center and a phonological awareness focused center). Classroom staff should encourage students needing Tier 2 support for early literacy to participate in these targeted centers multiple times per week. These learning opportunities should be designed to complement and extend what was learned in the core curriculum.

Tier 3

Students who are identified as needing Tier 3 early literacy intervention require more intensive opportunities to learn early literacy skills and the skills being taught should be more focused and narrower in scope. Recommendations for Tier 3 look similar to those for Tier 2, but the intensity of the intervention is increased through smaller group sizes and added frequency.

One option at Tier 3 also involves small group instruction; however, the group size should be smaller and the frequency extended (e.g. 1 to 2 students, 4 to 5 times per week for 10 to 15 minutes) to provide students more intensive support. Students needing Tier 3 support would be assigned to an intervention group based on the need identified by the universal screening tool. Interventions should be selected from the district's Tier 3 Protocol.

The use of Embedded Learning Opportunities may be an especially useful strategy for some students needing Tier 3 early literacy intervention. Therefore, another option within Tier 3 is to design a schedule that provides a student with more frequent (i.e. 12 times per day) documented Embedded Learning Opportunities with targeted skills. This option also requires documentation of how, with whom, and when the Embedded Learning Opportunities will occur each day and a method to ensure students receive the planned Embedded Learning Opportunities daily.

To increase opportunities for practice, it is also recommended that instructors encourage students in Tier 3 to participate in learning centers proactively designed based on early literacy targets multiple times per week.

Tier 2/3 Protocols

Another task for leadership teams is the development of a Tier 2 and Tier 3 Protocol. A protocol outlines a procedure or system of rules that govern the selection of intervention methods and materials based on the intervention area identified by the universal screening tool. Just as leadership teams determine the core curriculum, it is imperative that they consider what the staff will use to provide early literacy intervention. A protocol makes it easier for the staff to implement interventions because they do not need to design individualized interventions for each student. It also helps leadership teams as they examine their data. If teachers are selecting from

the same few interventions and students are not making the progress expected, leadership teams have documentation that different intervention materials and approaches are needed.

Leadership teams should identify the current materials and critically evaluate them to ensure essential skills are represented and materials will support the targeted areas. Leadership teams must also consider the evidence base of different interventions and instructional approaches. Prior to selecting, purchasing, or using any instructional materials, it is critical to carefully review the research base and match it to your student population. A variety of evidence-based interventions can be found to match learner needs. To assist teams in selecting early literacy interventions appropriate for early childhood programs, the document *Preschool Early Literacy Intervention Ideas* can be found in the appendix.

In Kansas MTSS, the curriculum protocol incorporates a portion of the protocol methodology and the problem-solving model. This is referred to as the hybrid approach. In this approach, a set group of interventions is defined to be used throughout the system. The interventions are chosen from a list of evidence-based approaches designed for specific areas of concern. Collaborative teams determine which intervention is to be used first based on the universal screening data. Once the intervention begins, progress monitoring data are used to determine if the intervention needs to be adjusted, intensified, or customized based on pre-established decision rules (McCook, 2006). Once the curriculum protocol is developed, leadership teams need to determine a management system for organizing and using the materials selected to ensure all staff members providing supplemental and intensive intervention know where materials are located and how they are organized.

The goal of interventions should always be to accelerate learning. If student performance indicates that this is not happening, the intervention needs to be adjusted. Intensity of instruction may be needed in order for the interventions to be effective. “If instructional groups are too large, instruction is not properly paced or focused, or too many intervention sessions are cancelled, then impacts on student performance will be reduced” (Torgesen, 2006, p. 4).

According to Torgesen (2006, p. 4), one of the biggest risks of intervention groups is that we begin to expect a lower standard of performance for students who require them. He states that, in order for intervention groups to work properly, intervention systems require school-level monitoring and regular adjustments. This is accomplished in Kansas MTSS by collaborative teams meeting on a regular basis to analyze students’ progress, make adjustments to instruction and use of the Self-Correcting Feedback Loop for communication.

At least eight key aspects are involved in developing and maintaining an effective intervention system

1. Strong motivation on the part of teachers and school leaders to be relentless in their efforts to leave no child behind.
2. A psychometrically reliable system for identifying students who need interventions in order to make normal progress in learning to read.
3. A similarly reliable system for monitoring the effectiveness of interventions.

4. Regular team meetings and leadership to enforce and enable the use of data to adjust interventions as needed.
5. Regular adjustments to interventions based on student progress. The most frequent adjustments should involve group size and time (intensity), but may also involve a change of teacher or program.
6. Enough personnel to provide the interventions with sufficient intensity (small group size and daily, uninterrupted intervention sessions).
7. Programs and materials to guide the interventions that are consistent with evidence-based research.
8. Training, support, and monitoring to ensure intervention programs are implemented with high fidelity and quality (Torgesen, 2006).

Professional Development, Tier 2/3 Fidelity, and Communication

Once intervention materials have been selected, it will be necessary to provide professional development that is comprehensive, sustained, and intensive enough to support all staff members who are expected to use the curricula/strategy to provide instruction. Simply having curriculum materials available does not ensure appropriate use. Staff members must have a working knowledge of the curriculum/strategy content and materials, as well as an understanding of the planning and pacing process for lesson development. Leadership teams must set clear expectations that curricular materials/strategies will be implemented and used with fidelity and provide professional development to support such outcomes.

The professional development plan for intervention curriculum/strategy implementation should be dynamic in nature and result in the intervention curriculum/strategy being implemented with fidelity. It should be a plan that is based on individual staff learning needs and results in the knowledge and skills necessary for staff to utilize the intervention curriculum/strategy. The plan should ensure that staff members are accessing and utilizing curricular materials in the expected manner, by planning for and conducting intermediate and follow-up activities. To accomplish this, leadership teams should establish methods for monitoring the use of the curriculum by individual teachers and utilized to differentiate among ongoing professional development and support for each staff member.

Activities for monitoring the fidelity of intervention curriculum/strategies are not intended to be punitive, but rather, should be understood as a piece of the overall professional development plan, resulting in further staff support as needed. Many purchased curricula and programs come with fidelity-monitoring tools, such as observation or walk-through forms. Leadership teams are responsible for establishing a plan to monitor and support the correct and effective use of curriculum materials/strategies.

In planning professional development, it is helpful for leadership teams to consider the following questions specific to each curriculum/strategy selected:

- Which staff members are expected to implement the curriculum/strategy?
- Which staff members, if any, have experience with or have previously received professional development on the curriculum/strategy?

- Which staff will not be implementing the curriculum/strategy but will be expected to align instruction with it?
- Which staff members need to attend the initial professional development on the curriculum/strategy?
- When (date) will staff be first expected to use the curriculum/strategy?
- When (date) will initial professional development be provided?
- Who will provide the professional development?
- Who and how will it be ensured that staff members have all materials necessary to implement the curriculum/strategy?
- Who will monitor the use/implementation (fidelity) of the curriculum/strategy?
- What method will be used to monitor the use/implementation (fidelity) of the curriculum/strategy?
- How frequently will the use/implementation (fidelity) of the curriculum/strategy be monitored?
- When and how will ongoing professional development for staff using the curriculum/strategy be provided?
- When and how will professional development for staff needing additional support to use the curriculum/strategy effectively be provided?
- Who and how will professional development for new staff be provided?

As at each of the previous steps, once decisions have been made and documented for Tier 2/3 intervention, leadership teams should create a plan for communication/dissemination. Collaborative and district-level teams will need to know the plan so it can be carried out with fidelity. Leadership teams should consider the following issues:

Does the communication plan need to be modified?

- Are there steps that need to be carried out in order to communicate decisions about intervention?
- Did the discussion of a communication plan for intervention lead to a need to develop an action plan or to add any items to the Stop-Doing List?

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Appendix

Preschool Universal Screening Tools			
Reference	Description	Target Group	Cost/Retrieval Information
<p>myIGDIs (McConnell, Wackerle-Hollman, Bradfield-Roloff, Rodriguez, Hojnoski, Floyd, Duran, & Missall, 2006, 2013)</p>	<p>The myIGDIs early literacy+ includes measures for vocabulary, comprehension, phonological awareness, and alphabet knowledge. An alternate Spanish version is available for literacy.</p> <p>The myIGDIs early numeracy includes measures for numbers and operations.</p>	<p>4 and 5 year olds</p>	<p>Early Literacy+ Kit is \$315 per classroom set. Includes 1-year access to online data system and training modules. Annual renewal fee for online data system</p> <p>Early Numeracy Kit is \$285 per classroom set. Includes 1-year access to online data system and training modules. Annual renewal fee for online data system.</p> <p>When purchased together, the early literacy and early numeracy kits are \$495 per classroom set.</p> <p>http://www.myigdis.com</p>
<p>Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI) (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2016)</p>	<p>The PELI measures early literacy through a storybook format and includes measures for alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, oral language/comprehension, and phonological awareness</p>	<p>3 to 5 year olds</p>	<p>Available to anyone willing to participate as a research partner. Research partners must purchase classroom kits. The 3-4 year old bundle is \$99 and the 4-5 year old bundle is \$99.</p> <p>https://dibels.org/peli.html</p>
<p>FastBridge (FastBridge Learning, 2017)</p>	<p>earlyReading composite measures alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness.</p> <p>Developmental Milestones measures oral language.</p> <p>earlyMath composite includes measures for numbers and</p>	<p>4 and 5 year olds</p>	<p>Available from FastBridge Learning. Those interested should contact FastBridge for pricing and availability</p> <p>http://www.fastbridge.org/assessments/</p>

	operations.		
mCLASS:CIRCLE (Landry and the University of Texas Health Science Center)	mCLASS:CIRCLE is a computer-based assessment that can be administered in English and Spanish. It measures vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and numeracy. It also includes measures for 11 Head Start Domains	Preschoolers	Available from Amplify. Those interested should contact Amplify for pricing and availability https://www.amplify.com/
PALS-PreK (Invernizzi, Sullivan, Meier and Swank, 2005)	PALS-PreK measures phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge. It does not include an oral language measure.	4 to 5 year olds	Pricing is on a per-student basis with online scoring available at an additional cost. Pricing information can be obtained by contacting the PALS Marketplace https://www.palsmarketplace.com/

Kansas MTSS Preschool Literacy Intervention Ideas

Tier 1 Instructional Practices /Curricula

- Choosing a Comprehensive or Literacy Curriculum –
 - Head Start Preschool Curriculum Consumer Reports
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/curricula>
 - Literacy and Language Preschool Curriculum Consumer Report
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/curriculum-report-ll.pdf>
- Literacy-Rich Classroom Environment
 - Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool-Kit
<http://www.brookespublishing.com/resource-center/screening-and-assessment/ellco/>
 - Early Language and Literacy Reflection Tool
<http://www.sstr5.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ZMBJhNLnH5Y%3D&tabid=665>
- Read It Again Pre-K <http://ccec.ehe.osu.edu/practice/ccec-curricula/read-it-again-pre-k/materials/> (vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, oral language)
- Daily Shared Book Reading (dialogic/interactive) – (vocabulary and oral language)
 - Connect Module 6 Dialogic Reading community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/learners/module-6
- PAVED for Success (Oral Language/Vocabulary) <http://products.brookespublishing.com/PAVED-for-Success-P250.aspx>
- Phonemic Awareness in Young Children (Phonological Awareness)
<http://products.brookespublishing.com/Phonemic-Awareness-in-Young-Children-P317.aspx>
- PALS Activities – Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Activities -
<https://pals.virginia.edu/tools-activities.html>
- Learning Language and Loving it (language strategies to use for embedded learning)
<http://www.hanen.org/Guidebooks--DVDs/Educators/Learning-Language-and-Loving-It.aspx>
- Planned Language Approach (language and literacy strategies) -
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/planned-language-approach/big-5.html>
- Language Scaffolding (Florida’s VPK Teacher Tool Kit- strategies)
http://www.flvpkonline.org/teachertoolkit/langVoc/section_2/2a.htm
- Think, Show, Tell, Talk Vocabulary Strategy (Free from Florida VPK Teacher Tool Kit strategy) -
http://www.flvpkonline.org/teachertoolkit/langVoc/section_5/5a.htm
- Book Embedded Vocabulary Instruction (Free from Florida VPK Teacher Tool Kit strategy)
http://www.flvpkonline.org/teachertoolkit/langVoc/section_3/3a.htm

Tier 2/3 Intervention

□ Oral Language

- Story Friends - <http://products.brookespublishing.com/Story-Friends-Classroom-Kit-P963.aspx>
- Read It Again Pre-K <http://ccec.ehe.osu.edu/practice/ccec-curricula/read-it-again-pre-k/materials/> (vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, oral language)
-
- Small group, child-directed conversation following PAVEd guidelines
- Small group, interactive storybook reading sessions following PAVEd guidelines
- Small group, vocabulary instruction following PAVEd guidelines

□ Phonological Awareness/Alphabet Knowledge

- PAtH to Literacy - <http://products.brookespublishing.com/PAtH-to-Literacy-P965.aspx>
- PALS Activities – Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Activities - <https://pals.virginia.edu/tools-activities.html>
- Rode to the Code <http://products.brookespublishing.com/Road-to-the-Code-P322.aspx>
- Phonemic Awareness in Young Children <http://products.brookespublishing.com/Phonemic-Awareness-in-Young-Children-P317.aspx>
- Building Early Literacy and Language Skills <http://www.voyagersopris.com/curriculum/subject/literacy/building-early-literacy-and-language-skills/overview>
- Read It Again Pre-K <http://ccec.ehe.osu.edu/practice/ccec-curricula/read-it-again-pre-k/materials/> (vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, oral language)
- Reading Ready <http://www.brookespublishing.com/resource-center/screening-and-assessment/millie/>