

Application for Participation in:



Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment

Submitting District:

Date:

RECOMMENDED CITATION: Kansas State Department of Education. (2020). Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment Application. Topeka, KS: Kansas MTSS and Alignment Project, Kansas Technical Assistance System Network

I. What is Kansas MTSS and Alignment?

In Kansas, every student is expected to be challenged to achieve high academic, social emotional and behavioral standards. To ensure that all students in Kansas meet this expectation, the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment (MTSS) has been developed, refined, and expanded over the last twenty plus years to meet the needs of our changing student population and the needs of our diverse communities. Simply put, the Kansas MTSS and Alignment is a set of evidence-based practices implemented across systems to meet the needs of all learners. Horner and colleagues (2005) stressed the importance of supporting children both academically and behaviorally to enable them to reach their full learning potential.

Kansas MTSS and Alignment builds a system of prevention, early intervention, and support to ensure that all students learn from instruction. It establishes a system that intentionally focuses on leadership, professional development, and an empowering culture. Kansas MTSS and Alignment incorporates a continuum of assessment, curriculum, and instruction. This systemic approach supports all learners through the selection and implementation of increasingly intense evidence-based interventions in response to academic, social emotional development and behavioral needs. The system establishes a Self-Correcting Feedback Loop that includes ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of instruction to ensure that each Kansas student achieves the high expectations set forth in the Kansas Standards.

The goal of Kansas MTSS and Alignment is to provide an integrated systemic approach to meeting the needs of all students. To achieve this, resources must be used effectively and efficiently to enable every student to be successful. Most importantly, Kansas MTSS and Alignment does not automatically require additional resources or add on to existing practices. Instead, it involves evaluating current practices, identifying practices that yield evidence of impact, addressing areas that are missing, and replacing ineffective or inefficient approaches with those that are supported by evidence. Kansas MTSS and Alignment becomes the guiding foundation for a continuous, school improvement process that focuses on the academic, social emotional and behavioral achievement of all students to prepare them to be successful high school graduates.

II. Overview of Application Process for Participation

The purpose of this application process is to identify school districts that will participate in Kansas MTSS and Alignment training. Kansas MTSS and Alignment trainers will provide training, technical assistance and professional development toward implementing a personalized and sustainable Kansas MTSS in your district through a collaborative, aligned, and integrated approach.

Partner school districts will be involved with Kansas MTSS and Alignment State Trainers in a three-phase cooperative process in order to ultimately ensure you have an effective, coherent system that uses feedback to continually meet the needs of all students and staff and improve academic, behavior, and social emotional growth and well-being for all students.

This application process is open and available for Kansas school districts to submit throughout the year. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment Team will review applications as received. If you have questions about the application or the status of your district's application, please email Krystal Porter at krystal@kansasmtss.org

The Kansas MTSS and Alignment project is intended to support school districts in developing sustainable, local capacity to implement a Kansas MTSS. Kansas MTSS and Alignment establishes systemic implementation of reading, mathematics, behavior and social-emotional learning, along with promoting an empowering culture required to meet the needs of all students. However, the district will decide which content area(s) to begin the process with, assessing periodically when the appropriate time is to add remaining content area(s), and which grade levels to include in the process. Consider including community-based preschool programs, school-based preschool programs, elementary schools, middle/junior high schools, and high schools as necessary and appropriate for your context to achieve systemic implementation. School districts and school buildings adopting the Kansas MTSS and Alignment process share ownership with Kansas MTSS and Alignment to ensure that implementation efforts are supported and sustained. Our experiences have taught us that single building implementation is not sustainable, except of course within districts that have only one building per level.

Once a school district has applied, Kansas MTSS and Alignment project staff will work collaboratively with representatives from the school district to determine the district's implementation readiness. Implementation readiness will be determined by the district's and participating building(s):

- a) ability to communicate and validate their need of, and readiness for Kansas MTSS
- b) current level of initiatives, priorities, structures, supports, and parent/community values and whether Kansas MTSS and fits within that structure
- c) current resource availability for training and staffing, appropriate technology supports, data systems, and administrative support
- d) expected outcomes if Kansas MTSS is implemented
- e) ability to refine and sustain Kansas MTSS
- f) capacity to implement Kansas MTSS

III. Application Timeline

Applications must be submitted via email or postal mail, using the contact information below and at the end of this application. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. Districts will be notified when their application is received.

Email applications and questions to: krystal@kansasmtss.org

Mail applications to:

Kansas MTSS and Alignment
Attn: Krystal Porter 11611 39th St.
Perry, KS 66073

IV. Benefits of Participation

Implementation of a Kansas MTSS takes sustained effort. What is the benefit to districts, staff, students, and families, from participating?

Working with the Kansas MTSS and Alignment project will help you achieve two key outcomes:

1. Ensure an effective, coherent system that uses feedback to continually meet the needs of all students and staff; and
2. Improve academic, behavior, and social emotional growth and well-being for all students.

You will do this by focusing on continuously improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of your system, using Kansas MTSS to guide you, as follows:

Improving effectiveness

A sustainable and effective system relies on solid relationships which foster the voice and agency of stakeholders to build toward collective efficacy. Opportunities for practice using Kansas MTSS include:

- Creating a common vision within the school district that aligns the beliefs and practices needed to support a systemic multi-tier system of supports to address the needs of all students.
- Developing commitment from all stakeholders for the implementation of Kansas MTSS, and creating efficiencies with regard to resource deployment (or allocation), priorities, and integration of services.
- Completing a continuum of implementation supports based on your needs.
- Enhancing continuity between buildings and grade levels across the district by reviewing and formalizing expectations, instruction, practices, processes, and language.
- Aligning professional development across the district to address data-based needs.
- Allowing for networking opportunities across the state.

Improving efficiency

A sustainable efficient system is able to continually evaluate the coherence and impact of its implementation efforts on desired outcomes, including equity. Opportunities for practice using Kansas MTSS include:

- Utilizing an impact cycle for evaluating and implementing evidence and research-based practices. This impact cycle process can also be utilized to support the implementation and scaling of new evidence-based and research-based practices as they are approved for use.
- Utilizing a data-based decision-making process to evaluate all decisions for effectiveness, equity, and impact.

- Aligning efforts/initiatives in ways that reduce redundancies, variance, and complexity producing coherence and impact around core values and goals. This can include:
 - Providing vision and targeted communications to help direct policy & practices
 - Aligning long-term allocation of resources
 - Legacy planning and developing capacity to support successful implementation
 - Supporting the development of competencies necessary for successful implementation
 - Improving systems for collecting local data that measures the impact of implementation
 - Building the school district’s capacity for leading, training, and coaching toward a sustainable Kansas MTSS

Continuous Improvement for Sustainability

An efficient, effective sustainable system continually evaluates the coherence of its processes and impact and equity of its outcomes to celebrate success and make necessary adjustments for improvements. Opportunities for practice using Kansas MTSS include:

- Developing infrastructures needed to support implementation efforts at appropriate levels of the system, such as school district leadership, school building leadership, and school collaborative teams.
- Establishing an ongoing, self-correcting communication feedback loop within the school district to support a systemic process of continuous improvement through data-based decision making.

V. Requirements for Participation

The following are requirements for a partnership between the local school district and the Kansas MTSS and Alignment project staff.

School District Commitment

Research through experience in corporations suggests that systemic change takes five or more years (<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept93/vol51/num01/Systemic-Change@-Rethinking-the-Purpose-of-School.aspx>). Therefore, the district and participating buildings will commit to participate in a phased approach to systems change. The school district will spend the necessary time developing the infrastructures to support the buildings and grade levels (potentially preschool-grade 12) in the district. This includes developing and maintaining professional learning communities (PLC), building leadership teams (BLT), and a district leadership team (DLT), and participating in all appropriate training sessions.

When appropriate, training content and goals will be co-constructed with districts across each phase. Depending upon readiness and capacity, some phases and/or content areas may overlap. An overview of the phases, typical topics, and potential artifacts / outcomes include:

Phase 1: Leadership Readiness and Systems Alignment

Creating a culture of shared leadership and systemic collaboration requires districts to engage in a collaborative inquiry process, and then integrate into its teams the key structures and practices most essential for creating and maintaining momentum to improve teaching and learning. Jay Westover, *Districts on the Move*, describes collaborative inquiry as, “educators working together by analyzing evidence of student learning to identify common challenges and test instructional approaches in an effort to develop collective expertise to improve student learning. This is not a once and done process. Instead, the collaborative inquiry process should occur throughout the school year in cycles that continually inform teaching and learning.” Kansas MTSS and Alignment, coupled with collaborative inquiry processes, can define student success indicators, high impact evidence-based instructional strategies, and timely, reliable and valid assessments that directly and swiftly informs pedagogy.

Without a solid foundation and systemic process, each level of the school district tends to naturally gravitate toward either controlling or delegating responsibility for allowing or leading their own improvement efforts, resulting in these common pitfalls:

- District leaders formulating improvement strategies that are imposed upon schools or, conversely, creating high expectations with little guidance for how to improve practices.
- Principals leading school staff in ways that range from prescribed conformity to benign neglect.
- Teachers embracing collaboration for collaboration’s sake to professional isolation.

To develop the shared leadership and systemic collaboration essential for realizing equitable improvement of student learning outcomes, the first step is to clearly define the structures, processes, and practices of teams most critical for co-leading districtwide improvement efforts. The District Leadership Team (DLT) will collaborate with Kansas MTSS and Alignment District Alignment Specialists to embed systemic components, creating a focused, coherent, and aligned system.

Kansas MTSS and Alignment District Alignment Specialists will also facilitate a process to review and analyze your data, determine content areas needing improvement, and select the order of those content area(s) to be addressed.

Districts will commit to providing the leadership necessary to set the stage for long-term systemic capacity-building efforts. (Estimated 4-8 months) Some examples of potential training topics, expectations and artifacts include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring feedback loops are developed and used in the service of enacting an effective, coherent system that continually meets the needs of all students and staff
- Selection of data-based goals for use with walkthrough tool
- Development and use of a communication plan

- Learning why and how to control the district’s narrative
- Completion of stakeholder mapping process
- Understanding how to utilize impact cycles
- Completion of initiative inventory
- Development and use of a process for proposing and selecting future initiatives
- Selection and use of decision-making method
- Verification/Development and use of district’s vision/mission/core beliefs

Phase 2: Evidence-Based Collaborative Inquiry

Building Leadership Teams (BLTs) and the District Leadership Team (DLT) will make Kansas MTSS the organizational structure to drive agendas, decision-making and communication feedback loops for a coherent, systemic approach, working with collaborative and specialty teams. The improvement of a school system is dependent on creating coherence among the evidence that informs progress and impact at the district, school, and classroom levels: the collective impact of collaborative expertise.

So, how do you develop this coherent system of continuous improvement through evidence-based collaborative inquiry? Jay Westover, “Districts on the Move”, states “By establishing recurring feedback loops that promote frequent and timely sharing of evidence and impact of improvement efforts occurring at the classroom, school, and district levels.” John Hattie says, “This begins with *knowing thy impact* from evidence of learning to guide the continuous improvement of practices”.

In this phase, educators will work collaboratively with each other and Kansas MTSS and Alignment State Trainers to analyze evidence, identify student needs, and select evidence-based instructional strategies in an effort to develop collective expertise and efficacy for improving student learning.

Kansas MTSS and Alignment’s commitment to districts is that we will help you utilize a data-based decision making process that allows for the focus to remain on the foundational components of relevance and co-constructing, when appropriate, your training goals for a customized process and sequence. (Estimated 8-18 months per content area)

Schools commit to maintaining an ongoing evidence-based collaborative inquiry process throughout each and every school year in order to inform teaching and learning. Some examples of potential training topics, expectations, and artifacts in this phase include, but are not limited to:

- The essentials of math core instruction
- Fluency building and number sense
- Explicit instruction
- The essentials of SEL core instruction
- Creating mastery experiences for students
- Teacher clarity and its impact on student achievement
- Feedback and its impact
- Differences between types of assessments

- Science of reading
- Adult social emotional competencies and relational practices
- Stakeholder feedback
- Family engagement practices
- High expectations and their effect on student achievement
- Opportunities for students to respond
- Culture/climate needs and curricula fit
- Selecting and evaluating curricula, assessments, and interventions
- Strength-based growth measures

As schools work through the collaborative inquiry phase, they will be able to connect the training topic, component, or artifact they are working on to the ultimate outcomes of: Ensuring an effective, coherent system that uses feedback to continually meet the needs of all students and staff; and Improving the academic, behavior, and social emotional growth and well-being of all students.

Phase 3: Continuous Improvement for Sustainability

Every school district's voyage will be unique because of the intricacies that come with systemic change. Regardless, because your district is undertaking a systemic continuous improvement process, your district can be successful in creating a clear and sustainable system with a converging focus on capacity building and coherence-creation resulting in improved student learning.

In this phase the district takes over from Kansas MTSS and Alignment State Trainers to have the DLT truly become the driver of the district's system. Kansas MTSS and Alignment State Trainers continue to be available for support. (Estimated 6-12 months) Some examples of potential training topics, expectations, and artifacts in this phase include, but are not limited to:

- Feedback continuum
- Fidelity
- Intentionally designed professional learning opportunities and communities
- Stakeholder feedback
- Curriculum adoption process
- Self-correcting feedback loop
- Peer coaching/collaboration
- Walk through data
- 3 to 5-year district timeline for continuous improvement
- Processes aligned to district goals and/or strategic plan

Districts will lead in clearly pointing out the processes and artifacts they've put in place to demonstrate the ultimate outcomes of: an effective, coherent system that uses feedback to continually meet the needs of all students and staff; and improved academic, behavior, and social emotional growth and well-being for all students

Potential Costs Associated with Implementation

Kansas MTSS and Alignment is a technical assistance and professional development project—therefore, project funds are used to support Kansas MTSS and Alignment created professional development and technical assistance activities and materials. This project is not intended to cover the costs associated with implementation. Consequently, applicants are strongly encouraged to leverage existing funding sources to offset implementation costs in order to develop, implement, and sustain local capacity for related coordination, coaching, training, technical assistance, and evaluation, as well as to aid in purchasing any appropriate academic, behavior, and/or social emotional resources.

As districts enter into this process in different spots along a readiness continuum, the following is a list of potential costs districts may incur while developing and implementing a Kansas MTSS. Many districts will already have some or all of these components in place prior to implementation and would therefore not consider them additional costs.

- Universal screening tools for chosen content area(s) (Potentially PreK-12)
- Evidence-based adoptions, addendums, and/or modifications to chosen content area(s) (Potentially PreK-12)
- Professional development (Potentially PreK-12)
- Potential substitute expense (Potentially PreK-12)

Districts participating in the Kansas MTSS and Alignment training will need to code their students (K-12) in need of special education support within the universal screening data base system. Districts are asked to submit this data to the Kansas MTSS and Alignment project in the fall and spring of each academic year. This data will not be identifiable by student, building, or district, but will be shared in an aggregate format with KSDE as part of a compliance measure for the federal government under Indicator 17 of the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report.

VI. Kansas MTSS and Alignment Application Questions

1. Does your district currently utilize a screening assessment for Reading? If so, what is the name of the assessment, how often is it given, and for which grades?
2. Does your district currently utilize a screening assessment for Math? If so, what is the name of the assessment, how often is it given, and for which grades?

3. Does your district currently utilize a screening assessment for Behavior? If so, what is the name of the assessment, how often is it given, and for which grades?
4. Does your district currently utilize a social emotional skills curriculum? If so, what is the name of the curriculum and which grades is it used?
5. What is your district's core curriculum for math at the Pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school levels?
6. What is your district's core curriculum for reading at the Pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school levels?
7. Does your district currently offer any interventions for math? If so, what are the interventions and to whom are they offered?
8. Does your district currently offer any interventions for reading? If so, what are the interventions and to whom are they offered?
9. Does your district currently offer any interventions for behavior? If so, what are the interventions and to whom are they offered?
10. Does your district currently collaborate with any community-based early childhood care or education centers? If so, which ones?

This document is a required component for the Kansas MTSS and Alignment application process, and must be completed, appropriately signed, and submitted in order to be considered.

Developing a systemic foundation of a Kansas MTSS should become a priority of the district. It is a process to operationalize and sustain school improvement efforts as they relate to creating a positive school climate and improving achievement for all students. Full commitment of the district and appropriate building level administrators is required.

(Print full name of school district above)

Agrees to the following commitments and participation requirements:

- The above-named school district will spend the time necessary developing the infrastructures necessary to support participating buildings and grade levels in all phases. This potentially includes pre-K through grade 12. This also includes participation at all required trainings and meetings.
- The above-named school district understands that the implementation of Kansas MTSS is a three-phase commitment in order to move toward continuous improvement for sustainability.
- The above-named school district agrees to align its beliefs and practices with the implementation of a Kansas MTSS across all appropriate levels, potentially pre-K through grade 12.
- The above-named school district agrees to designate a district-level administrator to provide oversight for the coordination and communication of the Kansas MTSS and Alignment effort in conjunction with Kansas MTSS and Alignment project staff.
- The above-named school district agrees to establish building leadership teams and collaborative teams at each participating building and a district leadership team.
- The above-named school district agrees to establish Databased Decision Making as a component for all DLT, BLT and PLC teams.
- The above-named school district agrees to collaborate across all departments in all participating buildings and at all appropriate grade levels to create efficient resources and align practices and priorities.
- The above-named school district agrees to allocate resources (time and fiscal) to support implementation efforts and long-term sustainability, which include:
 - Development of a training infrastructure that integrates and aligns district professional development activities.
 - Protecting district and building-level administration and staff from competing initiatives.
- The above-named school district agrees to support all participating buildings and appropriate grade levels using the following assessment measures and data collection systems:
 - Acceptable universal screening and progress monitoring tool for literacy and/or math and/or behavior for participating buildings/grade levels.
 - A data system for analyzing office discipline referral/Behavior Incident Referral data if behavior/SEL content area is chosen.

- The above-named school district agrees to complete a readiness assessment with Kansas MTSS and Alignment staff in order to develop a long-term district plan for Kansas MTSS implementation in schools, which includes professional development, professional learning communities, and other mechanisms of technical assistance that are evaluated and revised annually through the school improvement process.
- The above-named school district agrees to participate in continuous data-based decision making.
- The above-named school district agrees to develop and operationalize a self-correcting communication feedback loop.
- The above-named school district agrees to collaborate with Kansas MTSS and Alignment staff to develop capacity for training and coaching functions necessary for implementation and sustainability efforts.
- The above-named school district agrees to adhere to mutually developed project timelines.
- The above-named school district agrees to establish a multi-year data sharing agreement that will allow the reporting of data in the federal Systemic State Improvement Plan with no district identifiable information.
- The above-named school district agrees to review and revise district policies and procedures with Kansas MTSS and Alignment staff when appropriate and necessary.

This is a preliminary commitment given our school district’s current understanding. We recognize that we will have an opportunity to continue exploring the scope of this work during future meetings to determine the rightness of fit.

We also recognize that, as a school district, we reserve the right to opt out of this commitment should, upon further consideration, along with additional information from the implementation readiness meeting(s), we or Kansas MTSS and Alignment staff determine that we are unable to honor the commitments and requirements outlined in this document at any time.

Print Name

Signature

Email Address

Superintendent

Special Education Director

Mail application to: Kansas MTSS and Alignment
Attn: Krystal Porter
11611 39th St.
Perry, KS 66073

Or Email application to: krystal@kansasmtss.org