MTSS
Helping Your Child Grow, Learn and Succeed
Introduction

It is the job of Kansas educators to help every child in our state—your child—meet high standards for success. MTSS, the Multi-Tier System of Supports, is a framework to help schools and teachers give every Kansas child the right type of support to learn, grow and succeed.

How is this new and different? The MTSS framework helps schools create ways to:
• Identify each child's needs and provide support as early as possible.
• Use strategies proven to work with all students.
• Fit support to meet each student's needs.
• Regularly check children's progress to know what works.
• Change instruction as needed to match each child's learning.

Parents play an important part in their children's learning. Read this booklet to learn how MTSS helps your child and how you can help your child as well.

Definition of MTSS

Many children successfully learn at school. Some children need extra help in order to succeed. And a few children need intense support. MTSS is a framework for school districts to align resources to support the learning success of each child, regardless of the level of support needed. The MTSS framework can be used to design school wide support for children in the areas of reading, math and behavior.

Brief Overview of MTSS

MTSS has three tiers of instruction and support.

1. **Tier I** includes the instruction and support provided to all children.

2. **Tier II** (Supplemental) serves students needing more help. Extra instruction and support are provided to these children in small groups.

3. **Tier III** (Intensive) is for children who need intense support in order to succeed. Extra instruction and support for these children are provided in even smaller groups.
Every child’s progress is assessed three times per year and results are used to determine whether instruction and intervention need to be added. Based on the results of their assessment, children may have the level/intensity of instruction they are receiving adjusted. Instruction within each tier is based on assessment data and what is proven to be most effective and varies by children’s learning levels.

When schools implement MTSS it results in more ways for students to receive support. It should not be used to delay referral for a special education evaluation when needed. If you believe your child may need special education services work with your school and at any time you may request a special education evaluation.

**How MTSS Supports Your Child’s Literacy Development**

**Tier I**
The MTSS goal is for all students to receive high quality curriculum and instruction. Tier I includes the reading instruction that all students receive in order to meet this goal. Progress is checked regularly to make sure students have the reading skills needed to succeed at their current grade and level. Students scoring below that level may be given extra help through intervention.
Tier I instruction includes the core instruction provided for all students. There are five essential components of reading that are included during core reading instruction. They are:

1. **Phonemic awareness.** Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness includes blending sounds to make words, such as combining three separate sounds—/b/ /a/ and /t/—to make the word *bat*. It includes segmenting a word into separate sounds. For example, the word *bat* has three sounds: /b/ /a/ and /t/. Teaching phonemic awareness helps children learn to read and spell.

2. **Phonics.** Phonics teaches students about the relationship between sounds and printed letters and explains how to use that knowledge to read and spell. Readers regularly come across unfamiliar words. Advanced phonics or word study skills help them to understand what words mean. They are able to break words into smaller meaningful parts. For example, compound words can be broken into two smaller words as in *newspaper*—*news* and *paper*. Students can connect the letters and patterns of letters in print to their corresponding sounds in order to read words.

3. **Fluency.** Fluency is the ability to read words easily and automatically. To do this, readers must recognize many words “by sight.” Readers who read smoothly and accurately can focus on the meaning of what they read. Readers who struggle to decode, or identify, words are less likely to understand what they read.

4. **Vocabulary.** Vocabulary refers to the words we use for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Good readers recognize and know the meaning of many words. Learning new words is important for readers at all levels.
5. Comprehension. Comprehension is the ability to understand what is read. Children use many skills to understand the meaning of what they read. This is important for all types of reading, from stories and fiction to non-fiction and textbooks. Whether reading for fun or to learn something new, good readers think as they read. Sometimes readers must make self-corrections while reading in order to understand what they have read.

Good readers use all of these skills when they read. They know and can read many words automatically. They can figure out how to read new words. They read well enough to understand what they are reading. They are aware when their reading does not make sense and can go back and correct themselves.

Some children need more help than others to learn these reading skills. Teachers and parents can work together to provide that help. They can encourage and help children with reading at school and at home. Teachers are improving the ways they teach using new information from researchers. Parents also can learn new ways to help children build reading skills.

Tier II: Small groups of children in need of extra help

Tier II

Teachers make many decisions about what they teach by assessing each individual student. Each child learns differently and at different rates. Some children are identified as needing extra help. They receive Tier II instruction. They receive additional help, usually in small groups that focus on only one or two of the essential components of reading described earlier. They use teaching strategies that have been proven through research to be effective and progress is typically monitored every other week.
**Tier III**

Some students need more time, support, and smaller groups than Tier II. These students receive Tier III instruction. Tier III instruction is more explicit and skill focused. They are given intensive instruction using strategies that have been proven through research to be effective. Their progress is typically monitored weekly.

**How to Support Your Child’s Reading**

Parent involvement can have an important impact on children’s learning to read. The help you provide at home is very important. The hopes and expectations you hold for your child’s success are especially powerful. They tell your child that you believe in her and that you will support her learning success. What your child sees you do and hears you say, and the types of things you have in your home are all important in helping your child learn to read.
There are many important things parents can do to support their children's reading.

• **Set the stage for learning.**
  - Have many reading and writing tools available. These include different types of books, magazines, newspapers, maps, lists, notes, a message board, a calendar, mail, paper and pencils and pens. Using different materials for reading and writing shows your child that reading and writing are important.
  - Find a place in your home that is quiet and comfortable for reading and writing. A good spot is away from noise like the TV or radio, is well-lit, and has a place to sit. Your child can sit at the kitchen table and read to you while you are preparing dinner.
  - Let your child see you reading frequently. This shows that reading is important and a skill you value. An important part of your child's learning at home is tied to what you say and do. Actions speak louder than words! Your child may want to cuddle up next to you and read, too.

• **Support language development.**
  - Use regular home routines to name objects and actions. “Let’s go get today’s mail. Look—the grocery is having a special sale for the 4th of July. That’s a day when we celebrate our nation’s birth. Do you remember what we did last year? That’s right—we had a picnic with neighbors and saw a beautiful fireworks display.”
  - With young children, describe what they are doing. This helps them put words and sounds with things they are experiencing. “Look at you! You’re paddling your feet and using your arms like a real swimmer.”
  - Think out loud. Your child will hear new words being used in meaningful ways. Your young child benefits from hearing you describe what you are doing. “I’m making an omelet, so it’s okay that the egg yolk is broken. I’ll just whisk this to mix it well. Now I need to use the spatula to make sure it’s cooked evenly.”
Talk with your child. This helps expand your child’s language and knowledge. Ask about her day or have her describe a recent activity. Keep conversations going. This is one way for your child to hear and use many language skills.

Listen and respond to what your child says. This lets your child know what he says is important to you.

Tell stories. When children listen to stories, they improve their listening skills and their vocabulary grows. As children listen, they begin to understand that stories have a structure—they have a beginning, a middle and an end. If the stories are family stories, children also can learn much about the family’s history and culture.

• Reinforce the importance of school and learning.
  ✓ Talk with your child about school and what he is learning. Talking with your child about school and listening to him lets you know where he needs your help. It gives your child a chance to share and teach you what he is learning.
  ✓ Praise your child for working hard. Encourage her and let her know you expect her to do well and that you are going to help her succeed. You can use suggestions from this booklet to help your child learn to read.
  ✓ Talk about what your child is reading in all school subjects. Talk about science (biology, chemistry, physics), history (social studies, world history, U.S. history), English, math or elective subjects (photography, drama, debate). Ask your child to explain new information to you. Discuss together things your child might not fully understand. You don't have to have answers—just good questions. Look at the materials and together find clues to help clarify. Talk about other options and resources where you might look for information.
  ✓ Let your child know that schoolwork and reading is important. You make sure homework is completed, and you limit TV time. You notice what your child is doing and listen to what he is saying.

• Provide many and varied learning experiences.
  ✓ Use words that are “specific to the experience or setting” (Bell & Westberg, 2009, p. 52). Different experiences expose your child to specific words and their uses. This happens when you take
a trip, go to the zoo or visit local places of interest. At the baseball game, talk about RBIs, fly balls and double plays. At the zoo, talk about habitats and rain forests.

Use routine experiences to learn new things. Point out and investigate pomegranates, kumquats and kiwi fruit in the grocery store. Where do they come from? How do you eat them? Explain the markings on your measuring cup and talk about the difference in your measuring spoons as you combine ingredients when baking a cake. “Which is larger—one-third, one-fourth or one-half?” Almost any experience can be an opportunity to learn new things by talking about what you are seeing and doing.

- Encourage your child to read.

✓ Provide a variety of books to give your child various experiences with language and information. Reading is a very effective way to help build your child’s vocabulary and thinking skills. Books often use new words and structures that are different from language typically used in conversations. Your child’s teacher or school librarian can suggest books that your child might enjoy. And don’t forget to visit the public library for an endless source of books.

✓ Use proven strategies to help your child become a successful reader. Some of these strategies are described in the next section titled “Beyond the Basics.”
Reading progresses along stages of development. Although the stages of development may be labeled differently depending on the expert, the concepts are the same. Some experts name four stages of reader development: emergent readers, early readers, transitional readers, and self-extending readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 178). Each child's reading skills develop at a different rate. Regardless of their grade level, children typically pass through these stages sometime during preschool through third grade. Between grades 4 – 6, children are considered preadolescent readers. They use their developed reading skills at more advanced levels. Preadolescent readers use reading to learn in many different subject areas at school. The National Center for Family Literacy adds a fifth stage of development for these readers.

**Emergent Readers**

From preschool to about the beginning of first grade most children are considered emergent readers. Emergent readers

- Are building many new skills
- Rely mainly on pictures
- Are beginning to learn about print

Emergent readers may know and use the word *dog*, and then learn to recognize it in print. They may relate their own experiences to those described in a story. “My dog ran away and was lost one time. I felt sad, just like the boy in the story.”

You can help your child develop many emergent reading skills. Use the strategy for discussing storybooks called dialogic reading. Dialogic reading follows this process:

- Prompt your child with questions
- Evaluate and expand on the response
- Provide feedback and adapt to your child's interests and abilities
Dialogic reading works best when used after the first reading of a book with a child. Reading the same book more than once lets you

- Discuss ideas at new and deeper levels
- Point out print features of the book
- Revisit words and build vocabulary as well as other oral language skills
- Include different types of questions to expand conversation about the book

Your child can become more confident and skilled because the book is familiar and your child knows what to expect (Bell & Westberg, 2009, p. 52-53).

Dialogic reading includes two approaches called the PEER sequence and CROWD prompts (National Center for Family Literacy, 2003, p. 49-50).

**PEER Sequence**

**P** Parent initiates an exchange about the book. You might ask your child a question about the book using a wh- prompt (who, what, where, when, why), such as “What is Mrs. Bear doing?” The child may reply, “Standing on her toes.”

**E** Evaluate your child’s response. “Yes.”

**E** Expand on your child’s response. “She's standing on her toes and picking apples.”

**R** Repeat the initial question to check that your child understands the new learning. The next time through the book, repeat the question, “What is Mrs. Bear doing? Do you remember?” Your child may respond and include the new information, “She's standing on her toes and picking apples.” You then evaluate this response and expand by saying, “That's right, and she's putting them in her basket.”
**CROWD Prompts**

CROWD Prompts are types of questions to use with the PEER sequence. These questions are appropriate for older preschoolers. For two- and early three-year-olds, use only wh-prompts and open-ended questions.

- **C** Completion questions where the child fills in the missing word, such as “The sky is ___! The sky is ___!”
- **R** Recall questions to help check for understanding about the story, such as “Do you remember how this book ended?”
- **O** Open-ended questions increase the amount of talk about the book and help focus on details. For example, “What is happening on this page?”
- **W** “Wh” questions (who, what, where, when, why) help teach new vocabulary. “Who is that puppy chasing?”
- **D** Distancing prompts help your child relate the pictures and story to her own experiences. “Have you ever felt sad like the girl in this story?”

**Early Readers**

During kindergarten and first grade, emerging readers often become early readers.

Keep some of your child’s favorite books, those you have read aloud together, handy. Children like to hear these stories over and over. These are also the stories they will feel most comfortable with when they begin to read on their own. They will be able to read familiar stories smoothly and with expression. They are familiar with many of the words and recognize some words automatically. They will shift from reading the pictures to relying more on the print.

If your child makes a mistake when reading, don’t jump in and correct her. Help her learn to correct her own reading mistakes by practicing these simple steps (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, pp. 152-153).
Transitional Readers

Transitional readers are beginning to read unfamiliar texts on their own. As a transitional reader, your child now is reading more smoothly and with expression. She relies more on the words, but the books she reads should include pictures as well to help provide clues to the text. Include books that have new words along with your child’s growing number of familiar words. The books may be longer and more complex. She is using some of the reading strategies she has learned.

You can use the following two strategies to help your child 1) read smoothly and with expression, 2) build a larger bank of familiar words, and 3) practice decoding.

**Listen to Your Child Read**

Listening to your child read is an effective way to help him learn to read. Reading aloud can help him improve reading accuracy and comprehension. Make this as enjoyable a time as you can to help your child have a positive attitude about reading and school.

Choose a regular time and place for reading to help your child look forward to your time together. Listen to your child read at least three to four nights a week for at least 15 to 20 minutes. The more often you listen to your child read, the more likely his reading is to improve.
Here are some strategies to use to make your child’s reading time rewarding.

1. Have your child bring home his class reader, other class books, and library books for reading daily.
2. Communicate with the teacher, so you know what the daily reading assignment is.
3. Listen to your child read that day’s assigned reading.
4. Wait before helping him when he makes a mistake. Sometimes he will self-correct, or other words in the sentence can help him figure out an unknown word.
5. Praise him for correcting himself and using clues to figure out words on his own.
6. Provide help without telling him the word if he is unsuccessful at first.
7. Suggest that he try again. Ask him to think about clues to the word’s meaning. What makes sense with the other words in the sentence? You might ask him to look for a familiar part within the unfamiliar word (like sand in sandwich). You might have your child break the word into parts. Have him sound out each syllable separately. Then ask him to put the syllables together to say the new word.
8. Praise him as he successfully applies these skills.
9. Share information with your child's teacher and ask any questions you have about the read-aloud experience.

Paired Reading with Your Child

Paired reading is a strategy where both you and your child read aloud together at the same time. This can help your child learn to read. It can help her enjoy reading and become more confident about her reading. Paired reading helps improve vocabulary, accuracy, and comprehension.

In this strategy:
1. You and your child both read aloud together at the same time. Have your child try reading every word.
2. When she makes a mistake, say the correct word and give her time to repeat it without any discussion.
3. If your child feels able to read without you, she signals by rapping on the table with her hand.
4. When she makes another mistake or is unable to read a word, you say the word and she repeats it. At this time, you again begin reading together until she raps on the table again.
Self-extending Readers

During grades 1 to 3, many children become self-extending readers. Although children may be able to read, they can continue to improve.

Your child also can use reading to learn other things. Your child's reading might now include different types of books, such as poetry, non-fiction, and fables. Your child uses reading independently as a way to gather information and extend understanding. This includes books that are longer, such as chapter books, and books that are more complex. Your child is able to read smoothly and with expression.

To help support and strengthen your child's reading skills at this level,
- Talk about characteristics of different types of books. Biographies are real stories about a person's life, while autobiographies are written by the person himself. Poetry is often read differently than a story. You might read one poem several times, or a group of poems that are related in a particular way.
- Before reading a book, discuss the purpose and have your child describe what he/she already knows about the topic. Talk with your child about the characters or where the book takes place. Maybe it's about a familiar character or a famous event. Maybe it takes place in another country or describes a different and interesting culture. This prepares your child with a purpose for reading, and provides a context for unfamiliar words.
- Model reading being used in many different and meaningful ways.

Preadolescent Readers

Preadolescence refers to children in grades 4-6, ages 10-13. Children in these grades are still learning to read, but also are reading to learn across all school subjects. This requires good reading skills and children in these grades can still benefit from parents' help.
In grades 4 through 6, reading instruction continues to focus on word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Another important factor for children this age is motivation. While schools work with children in all of these areas, parents can provide important support. You can help your child improve her reading skills by using the following strategies.

“Good readers read more and become better readers. They are exposed to and learn more words” (Boardman, et al., 2008, p. 14). Preadolescent children have many diverse interests. These interests sometimes compete with the time they spend on reading. You can help your child set aside time to read, both for fun and for learning.

If your 10-13-year old child is a struggling reader, he needs to continue practicing word study skills. These skills help your child connect individual letters and letter combinations in words to their corresponding sounds.

Knowing words and their multiple meanings helps readers better understand what they are reading. The same strategies for supporting vocabulary development with younger children are effective for young adolescent children as well. These include “reading, high quality conversations and rich experiences” (Boardman, et al., 2008, p. 14).

An important way to improve fluency is to encourage your child to read more often. Help your child choose books where he can “comfortably identify most of the words” (Boardman, et al., 2008, p. 12). Children who read often tend to increase the number of words they recognize on sight and improve their reading fluency.

Another way to help your child read smoothly and accurately is to use guided oral reading. Have your child read a passage aloud to you. Make sure the passage is not overly difficult with too many unfamiliar words. Help your child use word study skills to decode unfamiliar words. Help your child practice the “check, search, and self-correct” strategy described earlier.
You may want to model for your child how to read the passage accurately. Then ask your child to read the passage a second time. This time his reading may be smoother and more accurate. You can repeat this activity with several passages. Talk together about the main idea(s) of what has been read before your child reads a new section.

Recognizing words and decoding new words helps your child read smoothly and more accurately. It also helps your child understand what she is reading. Children in grades 4-6 use reading to learn across many school subjects. They need strategies that help them understand what they read. These are strategies you can use to support your child's reading comprehension.

- Help your child think about what she already knows about a topic before reading new information. Before reading, look at titles, headings, pictures and captions. These hold clues to understanding the information.
- Think of questions that come to mind after you have looked at the clues. You can use the “wh- questions” described earlier: Who is this about? What is happening? Why? Where and when does this take place?
- Have your child summarize the main idea of what she has read.

Finally, things that are fun to do are more likely to be repeated. Help your child find things to read that are enjoyable and interesting. Ask your child's teacher for suggestions. Encourage your child to read things at a level where she can be successful.
## Ways to Support Your Child's Reading Development

1. **Set the stage at home for learning.**
   - Have available at home many things your child will enjoy reading.
   - Let your child know that reading and writing are important skills to have.
   - Provide a quiet, comfortable place for reading.
   - Help your child keep up with schoolwork and get help as needed.

2. **Talk with your child to support language development.**
   - Talk with your child about school and what he is learning.

3. **Provide various experiences where your child might learn new things.**

4. **Read together regularly and encourage your child to read on his own.**

5. **Show your child that you use reading for many important purposes.**

6. **Talk with your child about what he is reading in all school subjects.**

7. **Communicate with your child's teacher(s) to find out what you might do to support your child's learning.**

### Emergent Readers
**Ages 2 – 7**
Preschool to early grade 1

- Use dialogic reading when reading aloud with your child. This builds vocabulary, book knowledge, and comprehension. Use the PEER sequence and CROWD prompts to have a conversation with your child while reading together.

### Early Readers
**Ages 5 – 7**
Kindergarten to grade 1

- Help your child learn to correct her own reading mistakes by learning to monitor, search, and self-correct when reading.

### Transitional Readers
**Ages 5 – 7**
Kindergarten to grade 2

- Add different types of books to your child's collection at home. Use these reading strategies to help your child practice reading smoothly and accurately: Listening to Your Child Read and Paired Reading.

### Self-extending Readers
**Ages 6 – 9**
Grades 1 – 3

- Talk about characteristics of different types of books. Discuss the purpose for reading a selection and help your child think about what he already knows about the topic, characters and setting.

### Preadolescent Readers
**Ages 10 – 13**
Grades 4 – 6

- Continue to help your child recognize and know the meaning of new words. Continue to practice decoding strategies.
- Have your child reread passages to improve fluency.
- Help your child find things that are enjoyable to read.
- Help your child set aside time to read for pleasure.
Resources


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Summary

MTSS is a strong system of support to make sure that every child receives the help needed to be a successful learner. There are many things that you can do to help your child succeed.

• **Set the climate for learning at home.** Provide a regular time and place for your child to read. Have available things that your child is interested in or enjoys reading.
• **Talk with your child and engage your child in conversations.** These are wonderful opportunities for your child to hear new words and express ideas.
• **Provide experiences where your child can see and learn new things.**
• **Stay informed.** Learn what your child should be doing to be successful. Learn about strategies being used at school. Work together with the school and communicate regularly with your child’s teachers.
• **Support your child’s learning at home using similar strategies.** You can use the dialogic reading approach with an emergent reader. You can listen as your beginning reader reads aloud or you can practice paired reading. You can listen to a preadolescent reader reread a passage to read more smoothly and accurately.
• **Help your child apply learned knowledge and skills in real life situations.** If he is learning about the environment, have him help develop a recycling plan for your family.
• **Follow your child’s progress and seek additional help if you feel it is needed.**

For more information on MTSS:

- Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC)
  1-866-711-6711
  www.kpirc.org
- Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)
  1-800-203-9462
  www.ksde.org
- Kansas MTSS website
  www.kansasmtss.org
- Kansas MTSS website
  Special thanks to the Kansas MTSS Core Team for their assistance in the development of this resource.
- National Center for Family Literacy
  www.famlit.org

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