

Kansas MTSS Annual Evaluation Report—2013

Executive Summary

Submitted to:

Colleen Riley,
Kansas State Department of Education
120 SE 10th Ave
Topeka, KS 66612-1182

Submitted by:

WestEd
Learning Innovations Program
300 Unicorn Park Drive, 5th Floor
Woburn, MA 01801
Tel : 781-481-1100 Fax : 781-481-1120

Contacts:

Kristin Reedy, Ed.D. and Natalie Lacireno-Paquet, Ph.D.
Project Co-Directors, WestEd
Tel: 781-481-1100 Fax: 781-481-1120
Email: KReedy@WestEd.org or NPaquet@wested.org

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Introduction

This is an executive summary of the Kansas MTSS 2013 Annual Evaluation Report. The report provides a summary of evaluation activities, data, and observations for the second year of the full implementation of the evaluation system (Year 3 of the contract).¹ It covers the time period of January—December 2013. It provides a description of the current status of MTSS implementation in Kansas.

The report is organized according to the five evaluation questions:

1. **Scope:** How many schools, districts, and early childhood settings are participating in MTSS?
2. **Implementation:** Annually, how many schools, districts, and early childhood settings are (a) exploring the use of MTSS to meet students' academic and behavioral needs, (b) adopting and installing components of MTSS (e.g., assessments, curriculum, instruction, etc.), or (c) successfully implementing MTSS with fidelity?
3. **Student Outcomes:** How are students in schools, districts, and early childhood settings that are fully implementing MTSS performing?
4. **Statewide System and Infrastructure:** How effective are KSDE and MTSS Core Team activities in supporting statewide implementation of MTSS with fidelity by schools, districts, and early childhood settings?
5. **Sustainability:** How successful are schools, districts, and early childhood settings in sustaining MTSS?

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation activities in 2013 replicated some methods from 2012 in order to collect trend data over time and build upon the evaluation efforts in 2012. Key evaluation methods and data sources in 2013 included:

- A survey of school principals regarding MTSS Practices, entitled the *Kansas School Survey of Effective Instructional Practices*;
- Collection of grade and school level student assessment data through the Building Level Status Forms and state assessment data;
- Group interviews with Recognized MTSS Facilitators; and

¹ Note that Year 1 of the four-year contract involved an Evaluability Assessment that contributed to the development of the final Evaluation Plan. Year 2 of the contract (2012) was the first year of Evaluation Plan implementation.

- Case studies of three schools implementing MTSS with a high level of self-reported fidelity, which included extensive observations, interviews, and focus groups with school staff.

Evaluation Data Collection Timeline

Data Collection Activity	Fall 2011 (Pilot)	Winter/ Spring 2012	Fall 2012	Winter/ Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Winter/ Spring 2014
Core Team Data on MTSS Participation	X		X		X	
Student Performance on State Assessments	X	X		X		X
Document Review		X		X		X
Statewide Online Survey	X	X		X		X
Case Study Visits	X		X		X	X
Building Level Status Forms & ODR Data	X	X		X		X
Interviews and Focus Groups	X		X		X	

Evaluation Question 1: Scope of MTSS

How many schools, districts, and early childhood settings are participating in MTSS?

Current Status Question 1

Participation in formal MTSS training opportunities has grown steadily overtime, peaking in the 2010/11 school year, with the number of new participants diminishing significantly in the past two years.

At this point schools representing more than half of all districts in Kansas have participated in some form of MTSS training; indeed fully 44% of all public schools in Kansas have participated in formal Structuring and/or Implementation training in reading, math, and/or behavior, representing 63% of all districts. Reading is the area of MTSS in which the most schools have been trained.

Evaluation Question 2: Implementation

Annually, how many schools, districts, and early childhood settings are (a) exploring the use of MTSS to meet students' academic and behavioral needs, (b) adopting and installing components of MTSS (e.g., assessments, curriculum, instruction), or (c) successfully implementing MTSS with fidelity?

Current Status Question 2

MTSS training participation data show that as of 2013/14, 44% of Kansas' 1472 schools have participated in some level of formal MTSS training (Project Work, Structuring, and/or Implementation). These trends indicate that schools are coming in at Structuring and moving into Implementation as predicted/anticipated. Based on a cross-tabulation with the survey respondents, 181 (63%) of the schools who responded to the survey and have participated in Implementation level training scored at the "initial" or "fully implementing" stages on the survey. This suggests that training is having an impact on school practices and that schools are advancing in their stage of implementation over time.

MTSS survey data indicate that MTSS is being implemented to some degree in 90.7% of responding schools. This is an increase from 88.2% in 2012. Survey responses of 67.9% of the schools indicated that they are in the "initial implementation" stage, with 49 schools (8.3%) in the "fully implementing" stage. Compared to 2012, responding schools demonstrated an increase in the percentage scored at both the "initial" and "fully implementing" stages.

Survey data are supported by site visits to selected schools and focus groups with Recognized MTSS Facilitators. There are barriers and challenges to implementation that were similar across sources of data. The multiple sources of data collected by the WestEd team also helped to identify factors that facilitate/support implementation. MTSS implementation appears to be consistent with the Kansas MTSS Framework, covering all key features of MTSS. Areas for schools and district to pay attention to or focus improvement efforts relate to monitoring for fidelity of implementation, training and supervision of staff, strengthening the core instructional program, and addressing the needs of all students, including those (the "benchmark kids") who are scoring at or above benchmark on the universal screener.

Classification of Responding Schools by Stage of Implementation

Stage of Implementation	2012		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No stage	77	11.7	55	9.3
Exploration	266	40.5	70	11.8
Installation	58	8.8	16	2.7
Initial Implementation	215	32.8	402	67.9
Full Implementation	40	6.1	49	8.3
Total Implementers	579	88.2	537	90.7
Total	656	99.9%	592	100.0%

Evaluation Question 3: Student Outcomes

How are students in schools, districts, and early childhood settings that are fully implementing MTSS performing?

Data sources for this question included school level state assessment results and Building Level Status Form (BLSF) data collected from schools fully implementing MTSS.

Summary for Question 3

The state assessment data are inconclusive as to any patterns or trends in the achievement levels of schools implementing MTSS. Survey data and site visits to case study district and schools suggest that principals and teachers perceive improved achievement for students through the implementation of MTSS practices. The survey suggests that principals see more students meeting and exceeding standards on assessments. Site visit data suggest that progress monitoring data show students acquiring more skills. Student level data with information about participation in interventions would provide a much more robust data source to assess the impact of MTSS on student achievement.

Evaluation Question 4: Statewide System and Infrastructure

How effective are KSDE and MTSS Core Team activities in supporting statewide implementation of MTSS with fidelity by schools, districts, and early childhood settings?

Summary for Question 4

Evidence from the school survey, case study site visits, focus groups with MTSS Facilitators, the 2012 review of documents, and the MTSS website show that KSDE and the Core Team are effectively supporting implementation of MTSS with fidelity. School survey respondents reported that, to “some” or “to a great extent,” KSDE has established the necessary infrastructure to sustain and extend MTSS implementation over time (79.3%), that there are sufficient resources (78.2%), and that MTSS is clearly aligned with other state and local

improvement initiatives (83.4%). A lower percentage (64.5%) agreed that there are sufficient MTSS Facilitators to support MTSS statewide.

At the same time, as more schools have sustained implementation, through the evaluation, it has become clear that district leadership and investment is needed to fully support MTSS implementation. This suggests a need for state level MTSS efforts to focus on the district role in MTSS implementation.

Evaluation Question 5: Sustainability

How successful are schools, districts, and early childhood settings in sustaining MTSS?

Current Status Question 5

Through the evaluation activities, especially the survey and case studies, we are learning about sustainability—what it takes and what the challenges are. Staff buy-in and support, the integration and institutionalization of MTSS practices so that it becomes routine, the “way of doing things” and the umbrella for all school improvement efforts appear to be key. Training of staff, changes to schedules, the purchase of resource materials, are all necessary but not sufficient. Also key are district and school leadership support for MTSS through words and action.

Evidence Related to Emerging Hypotheses

Working Hypotheses

The analysis of data collected through the evaluation activities in 2012 suggested a number of working hypotheses that WestEd would “test” through the completion of the 2013 cycle of the evaluation system. These hypotheses were:

1. School and district level leadership for MTSS is necessary for successful implementation.
2. Having a building-based MTSS facilitator or coordinator helps support successful implementation with fidelity.
3. Schools that are successfully implementing have a common language around assessment, instruction, outcomes, and behavior.
4. Schools that have the ongoing support of a high quality Recognized MTSS Facilitator are more likely to implement MTSS with fidelity and sustain implementation over time.

Summary of Hypotheses Analysis

There is considerable qualitative evidence to support the validity of the four hypotheses, drawn from the school survey analysis, focus groups with Recognized MTSS Facilitators, and case study site visits. Leadership is clearly perceived to be an essential factor in MTSS implementation; a school collaborative culture including a common language and vision and whole staff “buy-in” are perceived to be critical implementation factors, and ongoing support from a high quality MTSS Facilitator is appreciated and wished for over the long term by participating case study schools. When survey data are disaggregated by stage of implementation, the consistent pattern of responses shows that “fully implementing” schools are more likely to report high levels of leadership, a collaborative culture including shared vision, common language, and full staff support, the availability of ongoing support and coaching, and professional development. The designation of a building-based MTSS Facilitator/Coordinator is reported by 42.8% of the “fully implementing” schools with 57.1% reporting that no such position exists. Our interpretation is that a formal position does not necessarily guarantee implementation with fidelity, nor does it appear to be essential for full implementation at the building level. (See charts showing patterns in survey responses by stage of implementation, below/attached.)

Summary

Comprehensive data and emerging findings from this evaluation are beginning to provide clear direction for what it takes for a school to reach full implementation of MTSS.

Successful implementation needs, but is not limited to:

- Leadership—at the building and, increasingly, at the district level.
- High quality core curriculum, assessment systems, and instruction—assessing and grouping students are not enough for full implementation. A coherent system that starts with a strong curricular and instructional foundation, informed by assessments is needed.
- Empowering culture—where all staff speak a common language about MTSS, have a shared vision of MTSS, and a majority of staff support MTSS. There must be widespread acceptance of the MTSS principles and practices and protected time for collaboration around instruction and assessment.
- Professional development—ongoing professional development to support sustainability and to ensure that new staff are also brought into MTSS is essential. Ongoing coaching and facilitation are also helpful.
- Support for implementation—including integration and alignment of MTSS practices with school needs and other initiatives.

Even with all of these factors in place, implementation is not necessarily a smooth and linear process. Even with support and buy-in MTSS can be considered complex and time-consuming to implement. But schools are demonstrating that with strong leadership and broad-based staff support for MTSS, these challenges can be addressed. (See chart on current status for each evaluation question, attached.)

Considerations and Recommendations for Year 4

This section contains recommendations for the KSDE and MTSS Core Team related to supporting high quality MTSS implementation with fidelity in schools across Kansas. We also provide a summary of evaluation activities planned for 2014.

Recommendations

1. Focus school or district improvement efforts on monitoring for fidelity of MTSS implementation, training and supervision of staff, strengthening the core instructional program.
2. School and district improvement efforts, and the Core Team could explore ways to ensure that MTSS is addressing the needs of all students, including research based methods to support those learners (the “benchmark kids”) who are scoring at or above benchmark on the universal screener.
3. Dissemination of updates about MTSS and a set of profiles of different types of schools effectively implementing MTSS would help to further support scaling-up, implementation with fidelity, and sustainability.
4. Consider what is needed to ensure robust and accurate data are collected to establish and monitor the impact of participation in MTSS at the student level. For example, the state could consider establishing a statewide data system on student participation in interventions and student progress/outcomes in MTSS and require participating MTSS schools to submit BLSF data on an annual basis.
5. Investment in district-level/district-wide training and support and capacity development will assist in further scaling up of MTSS across Kansas.
6. Further investment in the development of the cadre of Recognized MTSS Facilitators could be reduced if balanced against increased district-level/ district-wide training and ongoing support to schools *within* the district.

Next Steps

The evaluation is designed to be cyclical and thus most of the evaluation activities will be repeated in 2014, the projects final/summative year. The focus of site visits, activities for 2014 include:

- The *Survey of Effective Instructional Practices* will be fielded a third time in February 2014,

- Building Level Status Form data will be collected from fully implementing schools at the end of the 2013/14 school year,
- Follow-up case study visits will be conducted in selected schools in the Wichita Public Schools district, as our single district-wide example of MTSS implementation,

Concluding Comments

Based on the 2013 (Year 3) evaluation activities, the WestEd evaluation team provides the following summary of the “state-of-the-state” of Kansas’ implementation of MTSS.

The scope and reach of MTSS is growing across the state with continued strong participation in the annual MTSS Symposium and participation in formal MTSS training opportunities. Schools that participate in formal training are successfully moving into increasingly advanced stages of implementation.

Schools that are scoring at the “fully implementing” stage on the survey report high levels of leadership, a collaborative school culture, and the ongoing supports that are considered to be necessary to sustain implementation. The National Center for State Implementation and Scaling-Up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP)(2013) emphasizes the importance of what are referred to as “implementation drivers” in the sustainability of interventions and school improvement efforts. These include competency drivers, organization drivers, and leadership drivers. Kansas’s implementation of MTSS includes these critical features demonstrated through the state’s infrastructure, dissemination, and training that has been established to support MTSS.

In terms of the degree to which MTSS has been “scaled-up” across the state as a whole, Fixsen et al. (2013) estimate that the threshold for scaling an evidence-based program is the point at which at least 60% of the “service units” (in this case schools) in a system are using the program (in this case MTSS) with fidelity and positive outcomes. They hypothesize that “at the 60% point the system itself would need to have changed to accommodate, support, and sustain the outcomes of the evidence-based program and demonstrate the promised benefits to society” (p. 214). Given the Fixsen et al. standard, MTSS has met the scaling-up threshold for schools that have responded to the school survey of evidence-based practices, where 90% of responding schools are implementing MTSS to some degree. Participation data for formal MTSS training also show that more than half of Kansas school districts and 44% of all public schools have participated in some level of formal MTSS training. Going forward, a challenge will be to sustain the MTSS momentum so that increasingly more schools and districts choose to participate in training and implementation related to the Kansas MTSS Framework.

The development of the capacity to collect and report representative and accurate student outcome data will be necessary to fully assess the impact that MTSS is having on student results. However, qualitative data as reported by participating schools support the perception that MTSS is having a positive impact on student outcomes at the local level.

References

Fixsen, D., Blase, K., Metz A. & VanDyke, M. (2013). Statewide implementation of evidence-based programs. *Exceptional Children*, 79 (2), 213-230.

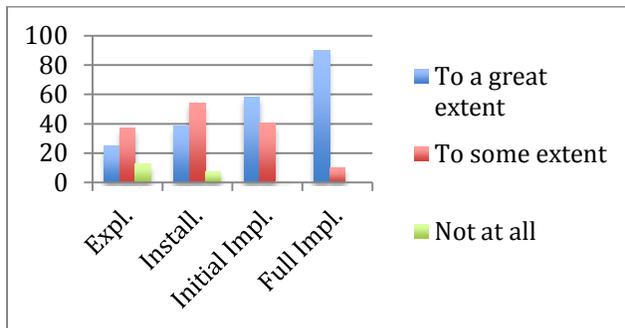
Kansas MTSS Annual Evaluation Report 2013—Current Status

Evaluation Question	Current Status
<p>Scope: How many schools, districts, and early childhood settings are participating in MTSS?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participation in MTSS formal training opportunities continues to grow with a total of 714 schools completing Structuring training and about 60% of those (425) have moved onto to Implementation level training. 2. Participation peaked in 2010/11 with a total of 293 schools but has declined in the past three years going from a total of 206 schools 2011/12, to 93 and 29 in 2012/13 and 2013/14 respectively. 3. Reading continues to be the predominate area of MTSS implementation with 510 schools having participated in Structuring training and 58% (294) completing Implementation level training, as well. 4. 183 districts have had schools that are represented in formal MTSS training participation since 2008/09. This represents 63% of the total number of school districts in Kansas (289). 5. 44% (644) of Kansas’ 1,472 schools have participated in some level of formal MTSS training. 6. As of 2013/14, about 32% of all Kansas students attended a school that completed some level of formal MTSS training.
<p>Implementation: Annually, how many schools, districts, and early childhood settings are (a) exploring the use of MTSS to meet students’ academic and behavioral needs, (b) adopting and installing components of MTSS (e.g., assessments, curriculum, instruction, etc.), or (c) successfully implementing MTSS with fidelity?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on school survey responses, 49 schools (8.3%) scored in the “full implementation” stage on the survey; 67.9% scored in the “initial implementation” stage. 2. More schools are moving from “exploration” into the “initial implementation” stage. The percentage of schools scoring in “initial implementation” increased significantly from 32.8% in 2012 to 67.9% in 2013. 3. Data from both the survey and formal training participation show that schools are moving successfully from “exploration” to “full implementation” and that their participation in formal MTSS training contributes to that transition. 4. 90% of schools that (1) responded to the survey and (2) have participated in formal Implementation training scored at either the “initial” or “full implementation” stages on the survey. Training is having an impact on school practices and schools are moving into increasingly sophisticated stages of implementation over time. 5. Multiple sources of data indicate that MTSS implementation appears to be consistent with the Kansas MTSS Framework, covering all key features of MTSS.
<p>Student Outcomes: How are students in schools, districts, and early childhood settings that are fully implementing MTSS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey respondents are reporting observed impact/outcomes of MTSS on students: an increase in students scoring at benchmark on the school’s universal screening assessment; an increase in the percentage of students scoring at proficient or above on the state assessment; and a decrease in the number of Office Discipline Referrals. 2. The state assessment data are inconclusive as to any patterns or trends in the achievement levels of schools implementing MTSS. This is in contrast to perceptions

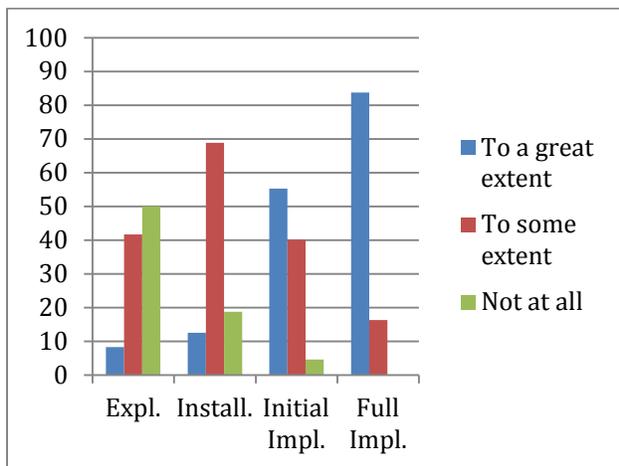
performing?	and reports of school staff that MTSS is making a difference in student outcomes. A more sensitive measure of student growth is needed to accurately assess the degree to which MTSS is having an impact on student outcomes in Kansas.
Statewide System and Infrastructure: How effective are KSDE and MTSS Core Team activities in supporting statewide implementation of MTSS with fidelity by schools, districts, and early childhood settings?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The website and annual MTSS Symposium are effective ways to disseminate information about MTSS. Symposium participation has remained at capacity at over 1000/year for the past four years. 2. Survey respondents agreed (78%) that KSDE/MTSS Core Team effectively disseminators information about MTSS. 3. Review of data and documents, including interviews with Recognized MTSS Facilitators and case study site visits, suggests that there are currently sufficient statewide resources for MTSS implementation. 4. Evidence from the school survey, case study site visits, focus groups with MTSS Facilitators, the 2012 review of documents, and the MTSS website show that KSDE and the Core Team are effectively supporting implementation of MTSS with fidelity. 5. District leadership and investment is needed to fully support MTSS implementation. 6. Only 61.5% of survey respondents report that there are sufficient MTSS Facilitators to support MTSS statewide.
Sustainability: How successful are schools, districts, and early childhood settings in sustaining MTSS?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participation in formal MTSS training opportunities appears to facilitate schools' movement into more sophisticated stages of implementation over time. 2. Survey respondents report that time, lack of fiscal resources, and competing school improvement initiatives were the greatest challenges to sustainability of MTSS over time. 3. Survey respondents also reported that MTSS is integrated with other school improvement efforts (96%), that they have the leadership to sustain MTSS (97%) and that school staff support MTSS (97%). 4. An analysis of survey responses by stage of implementation shows that schools scoring in the "full implementation" stage: 5. Reported higher levels of integration of MTSS in school improvement initiatives; 6. Appear to be more likely to report having the leadership and support that they need for sustainability; 7. Reported higher levels of collaborative culture evidenced by a shared vision, common language, and staff support of MTSS; 8. Are more likely to report that they have the support/coaching from a Recognized MTSS Facilitator and that they have the resources to provide ongoing professional development to support MTSS.

Patterns by Stage of Implementation—Evidence from Emerging Hypotheses

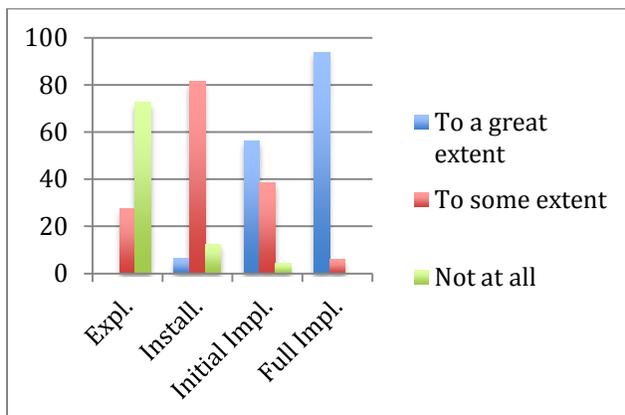
Leadership Over Time/Sustainability



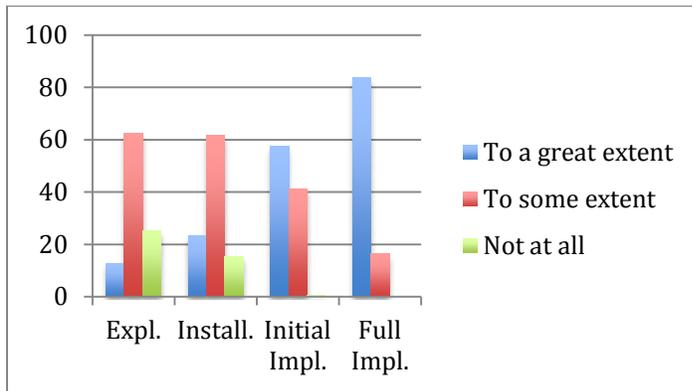
Shared Vision



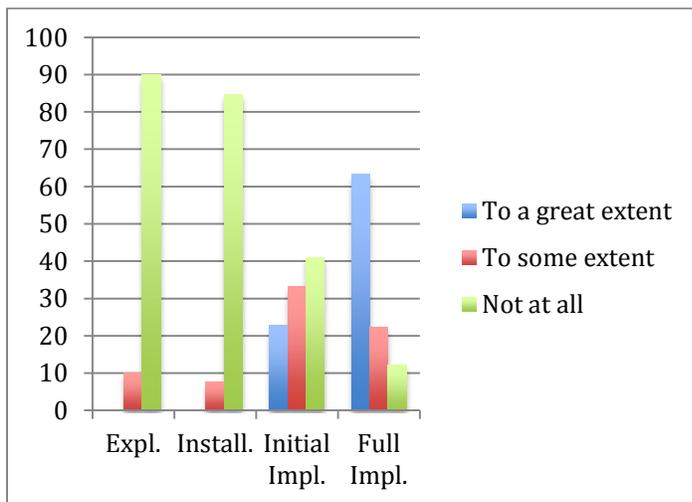
Common Language



Majority of Staff Support MTSS



Ongoing Support/Coaching



Resources to Provide Ongoing PD to Support MTSS

