



# Kansas MTSS Annual Evaluation Report—2012

## Executive Summary

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## Introduction

This is an executive summary of the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Annual Evaluation Report 2012. It provides a summary of evaluation activities, data, and observations for the first year implementation of the evaluation system, covering the time period of January 2012-December 2012. It contains a description of the current status of MTSS implementation.

The report is organized around the five evaluation questions:

1. **Scope:** How many schools and districts are participating in MTSS?
2. **Implementation:** Annually, how many schools and districts 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 and districts 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 and districts?
5. **Sustainability:** How successful are schools and districts in sustaining MTSS?

## Evaluation Methods

Multiple data collection strategies were used in the evaluation. A statewide online survey involved all public schools in Kansas. Other activities targeted a subset of schools implementing MTSS. The evaluation methods included:

1. Statewide online survey of all public schools in Kansas
2. Core Team interviews and focus groups with Recognized MTSS Facilitators
3. Case study visits of three selected schools and one district with five school visits
4. Data analysis of student performance on state assessments and Core Team data on MTSS training participation
5. Analysis of Building Level Status Form and Office Discipline Referral (ODR) data
6. Document and website review

## Evaluation Question 1: Scope of MTSS

### How many schools and districts are participating in MTSS?

#### Current Status Question 1

MTSS training participation data show that as of 2012, 620 unique schools (about 44%) of the approximately 1,400 Kansas schools, representing 155 districts (54%), have participated in some level of formal MTSS training (Project Work, Structuring, and/or Implementation). A total of 681 schools have completed Structuring training in reading, math and/or behavior and 372 (55%) of these have gone on to participate in Implementation training. These trends indicate that most schools begin with Structuring and move to Implementation as predicted/anticipated.

The number of schools participating in formal MTSS training has increased over time, peaking in the 2010/11 school year. The 2009/10 school year saw the highest Structuring training participation, with 211 schools. The following school year saw the highest Implementation training participation with 161 schools.

The majority of schools participating in MTSS are doing so in reading, with 260 having participated in Implementation training in reading. The next most common area of Implementation training is behavior (79 schools), and math with 33 schools.

In 2009/10 the Core Team began working with districts to train and support them in implementing MTSS systemically as a district-wide approach. Fourteen districts have participated in district-level MTSS training, to date.

## Evaluation Question 2: Implementation

**Annually, how many schools and districts 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

To answer this question we examined data from the *MTSS School Survey of Effective Instructional Practices*, which yielded a response rate of 48.7% of 1,346 public schools in Kansas. Survey respondents came from 233 of the 289 districts in Kansas, representing approximately 80.6% of all public school districts. Survey data indicate that MTSS is being implemented to some degree in 88.2% of responding schools. The survey responses of 215 (32.8%) of the schools indicated that they are in the "initial implementation" stage, with 40 schools (6.1%) scoring in the "full implementation" stage (see Table 1).

Based on a cross-tabulation of training participation data and survey data, 108 or 65% of the schools that participated in Implementation training also scored at the “initial” or “full implementation” stages on the survey. This suggests that training may be an important factor influencing fidelity of school practices and that schools are advancing in their stage of implementation over time.

**Table 1. Classification of Responding Schools by Stage of Implementation**

<b>Stage of Implementation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No stage	77	11.7
Exploration	266	40.5
Installation	58	8.8
Initial Implementation	215	32.8
Full Implementation	40	6.1
Total Implementers	579	88.2
Total	656	99.9

Survey data are supported by site visits to selected schools, interviews with the MTSS Core Team, and focus groups with Recognized MTSS Facilitators. Similar barriers and challenges to implementation were reported across sources of data. The most frequently noted challenges or barriers to implementation across data sources were (1) time and (2) money/resources.

The most frequently noted supports for implementation were (1) administrative leadership and support, (2) stakeholder buy-in/collaborative culture, (3) MTSS professional development, and (4) research-based MTSS materials and tools.

Data from multiple sources indicate that MTSS implementation practices appear to be consistent with the Kansas MTSS Framework, covering all key features of MTSS. Areas for attention/improvement relate to monitoring for fidelity of implementation, strengthening the core instructional program, and planning for sustainability.

### **Evaluation Question 3: Student Outcomes**

#### **How are students in schools and districts that are fully implementing MTSS performing?**

Data sources for this question included Building Level Status Form (BLSF) data collected from schools at the full implementation stage of MTSS and school level state assessment results.

### Building Level Status Form (BLSF) Analysis

BLSF data are universal screener data that schools report as the percentage of students at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 levels in each MTSS focus area. Reading and math data were collected from full implementation schools with grades K-5, and behavior data were collected from full implementation schools with grades 6-8. Because the 2011/12 school year was the first year of collection of the BLSF data, it is considered a baseline year. Data were collected from 33 of 40 schools that were identified by their survey responses as fully implementing MTSS. Table 2 shows the range of the average change (percentage points) for students scoring at benchmark on the universal screening instrument, Fall 2011 to Spring 2012 in reading, math and behavior. The greatest improvements were demonstrated in the lower grades in reading and math, with an average 20.33 point increase in reading (Kindergarten) and an average 20.33 point increase in math (quantity discrimination) (Kindergarten).

Building based office discipline referral data (ODR) showed an opposite trend over the course of the school year. Referrals for each of the grades collected (6-8) showed an increase in the number of referrals in Spring 2012 compared to Fall 2011. These data should not be inferred as representative of all schools implementing MTSS in behavior, as only three schools reported data.

**Table 2. Mean Percentage Point Change Ranges by MTSS Focus Area 2011/12**

MTSS Focus Area	Number of Schools Responding	Mean Range Change in Percentage Points Fall to Spring
Reading K-5	20	3.23 to 20.33 points
Math Missing Numbers/Quantity Discrimination K-1	3	8.33 to 20.33 points
Math Computation 2-5	3	13.67 to 16 points
Math Concepts/Applications 2-5	6	-1.5 to 22 points
Behavior 6-8	3	-5.47 to -12.10 points

### State Assessment Analyses

From 2010/11 to 2011/12, state assessment results for elementary schools implementing MTSS showed a slight average decrease in the percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards in both reading and math, as did the results for the state overall. Schools categorized as fully implementing MTSS, those in installation, and those that never participated in any training all also showed slight decreases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on the state

reading assessment. In math, there were also slight decreases for schools at all stages of implementation as well as for the state overall.

### **Current Status Question 3**

Analysis of state assessment data showed some inconsistent patterns between Building Level Status (universal screening) data and state assessment data. Building Level Status data tend to show an increase in the percentage of students meeting benchmark from Fall to Spring in reading and math. State assessment data showed slight decreases in the percentages of students achieving proficiency from 2010/11 to 2011/12. Behavior data for the three schools fully implementing MTSS showed an increase in office discipline referrals over the course of the 2011/12 school year.

With regard to the BLSF data, it is important to note that because so few schools have reached the full implementation stage in math and behavior it is not appropriate to make any inferences from these baseline data. As more schools reach full implementation over time, additional data will be analyzed.

### **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 and districts?**

To answer this question we examined five areas of the statewide system and infrastructure: information dissemination, resources, effectiveness of materials/implementation with fidelity, alignment of training programs and materials, and KSDE investments.

#### **Information Dissemination**

- 79.0% of survey respondents reported accessing documents or materials on the KansasMTSS.org website.
- Symposium attendance has grown from approximately 800 in 2009 to 1164 participants in 2012.
- 64.5% of survey respondents reported they or someone from their school has attended an MTSS Symposium.
- 77% of survey respondents indicated that the KSDE/MTSS Core Team effectively disseminates information about MTSS to “some” or to a “great extent.”
- 90.1% of survey respondents reported they “agree” or “strongly agree” that MTSS materials were being used for local professional development.
- Recognized MTSS Facilitators noted that two of the main supports they provide to MTSS implementation were (1) the information and materials that are available through both face-to-face training and on the MTSS website;

and (2) the opportunity to bring up-to-date information and materials used in training back to the school in which they were working using a “trainer of trainers” model.

### **Sufficient Resources**

- Nearly 70% of survey respondents indicated they “agree/strongly agree” that Recognized MTSS Facilitator(s) are providing ongoing support/coaching for implementation of the core curriculum and interventions in the schools.
- 86% reported that they had sufficient resources to provide ongoing professional development to “some” or “to a great extent.”
- 61.7% of respondents indicated that there are enough Recognized MTSS Facilitators to support MTSS implementation on a statewide basis.

### **Effectiveness of Materials—Implementation with Fidelity**

- 85.1% of survey respondents reported that the quality of MTSS training materials were “somewhat” or a “major support” to implementation.
- 85% noted the quality of MTSS tools.
- 77.6% noted the value of the Structuring process.
- 69.5% noted the quality of the Recognized MTSS Facilitators as “somewhat” or a “major support” to implementation.
- The Core Team updates materials and training on an ongoing basis based on current research.
- MTSS training materials for Recognized MTSS Facilitators are described as highly scripted, user friendly, and of overall high quality.
- Consistency in delivery and fidelity in the use of materials is required and monitored.

### **Alignment of Training Programs and Materials**

WestEd conducted a systematic review of MTSS training documents to examine the alignment of materials with the Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council (NSDC)) Standards for Professional Learning<sup>1</sup>. These nationally accepted standards of best practice advocate for professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for *all* students. Three sets of documents were reviewed: General Documents, Structuring Documents, and Implementation Documents. The majority of these documents are available on the KSDE MTSS website at <http://www.kansasmtss.org>. WestEd found that MTSS training programs and materials are well aligned with evidence-based, nationally accepted standards for professional development principles and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.learningforward.org/standards/standards.cfm>

- MTSS training occurs at multiple levels (state, district, and school) and includes networks of problem-solving teams from TA providers and online support networks.
- MTSS professional development includes an overview of implementation, including the stages of implementation, tools and guidance for implementing the model and documenting change. Leadership teams also receive guidance about important communication topics to consider and documents emphasize the importance of monitoring fidelity of implementation.
- Recognized MTSS Facilitators use a variety of training methods and materials to support schools.

### **KSDE Investments to Improve Statewide Implementation and Sustainability**

KSDE has invested heavily in a tiered system of support for schools choosing to implement MTSS. These investments include the state level Core Team, the independent, for profit Educational Service Centers which cover the state geographically, and the Recognized MTSS Facilitators who provide direct training and ongoing support at the local district and school level.

- 78% of 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.

### **Investments in the Statewide System**

- The MTSS website where the extensive MTSS materials are posted, updated, and are downloadable by anyone
- Dissemination of MTSS materials conducted through multiple modalities and venues including the annual MTSS Symposium, presentations at other statewide conferences, newsletters for Facilitators, announcements broadcast through KSDE to various constituency groups, and the website
- The Core Team, a state level body that works through a trainer-of-trainers model to implement MTSS in the schools. The Core Team’s nine members, are for the most part, employed by one of the Educational Service Centers, to (1) develop the MTSS Framework and support materials in reading, math, and behavior, (2) train and monitor Recognized MTSS Facilitators who train and support schools, and (3) train and support districts implementing MTSS. The Core Team is the link between the KSDE and the field with regard to MTSS.
- Recognized MTSS Facilitators, a network of MTSS trainers and facilitators at the local level. Employed by the Educational Service Centers, their services are available on a fee-for-service basis to local districts and schools. As such,



it is described as a “self-sustaining system” that is not dependent on state funds.

### **Challenges**

- Capacity for long-term follow-up with schools/districts after they have completed their formal MTSS training
- Reliance on the Educational Service Centers as the infrastructure through which MTSS is scaled up across the state
- Staying “on message” with regard to MTSS is a challenge across a number of independent Educational Service Centers. According to some interviewees, some of the services/models that Service Centers offer may not be consistent with the principles and practices of MTSS.
- Reliance on a fee-for-service model may, over time, impact school or district participation in MTSS due to local budget constraints
- Variability in the quality of Recognized MTSS Facilitators
- The degree to which Recognized MTSS Facilitators are engaged in training or providing services to school and districts in a number of different content areas in addition to MTSS

### **Current Status Question 4**

The evidence presented suggests that the KSDE and Core Team are effectively supporting implementation of MTSS with fidelity. KSDE has invested heavily in MTSS implementation through funding of the MTSS Core Team, the development of a network of Recognized MTSS Facilitators, the annual MTSS Symposium, the development of the website, use of external experts and consultants, and in promoting the MTSS Framework consistently across audiences at the state and local level. The availability of high quality Recognized MTSS Facilitators seems to be key to sustaining an infrastructure that will result in full statewide implementation over time.

### **Evaluation Question 5: Sustainability**

#### **How successful are schools and districts in sustaining MTSS?**

It is too early to assess the extent to which schools and districts are sustaining MTSS. Rather we present some data on early indicators of potential sustainability.

#### **Scope of Sustainability**

About half of the schools that scored at the full implementation stage on the school survey are participating in and benefiting from MTSS training participation and are moving from the exploration into implementation stages. Of the 40 schools in the

full implementation stage based on the school survey, 23 or 57.5% completed formal training to the Implementation level. Interestingly, nine or 22.5% of the full implementation schools participated only in Structuring training while eight of them participated in no formal MTSS training at all. (See Table 3.) Data show that most full implementation schools first began the MTSS Structuring process at least three years prior to the survey. On the other hand, some schools scored at the “fully implementing” stage on the survey with little or no documented formal MTSS training. Whether MTSS implementation is sustained in participating schools over time will be determined in subsequent years of the evaluation study.

**Table 3. Number of Schools at Full Implementation in 2011/12 by Training Participation**

Highest Level of Training	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
No Training	8	20.0%
Structuring	9	22.5%
Implementation	23	57.5%
Total	40	100.0%

### Sustainability Challenges

Data from the school survey, interviews, and focus groups show that a number of challenges were raised by participants with regard to MTSS sustainability over time. These included:

- Lack of fiscal resources (90% of survey respondents)
- Time to implement the model with fidelity during the school day (90.5% of survey respondents)
- Adequate staffing
- Leadership turnover
- Staff turnover
- The degree of investment and length of time of the change process
- Limitations on the capacity for ongoing, long-term coaching from MTSS Facilitators
- Sustaining motivation and commitment to fidelity to the MTSS Framework
- Capacity for ongoing staff development
- Staying “on message” and consistent communication from the state level down to the district and building level

## **Institutionalization of MTSS**

By “institutionalized,” we mean that the key features of the MTSS Framework are firmly established, widely accepted practices within the school.

### **Indications of Institutionalization**

- 94.3% of survey respondents indicated that the MTSS Framework, principles, and practices are widely accepted/institutionalized in their schools.
- 97.2% of responding schools reported that staff support the ongoing implementation of MTSS.
- Survey responses showed that certain key MTSS practices are firmly established in schools, such as universal screening, protected core instructional time, protected intervention time, and the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Building Leadership Teams to support MTSS.
- Case study data indicate that MTSS is institutionalized in the schools fully implementing MTSS. Teachers and staff in these schools see it simply as the “way we do things.” Over time, MTSS practices have become somewhat routine, with regularly scheduled team, assessment, and progress monitoring times built into the school day.

## **Integration with other Improvement Efforts**

Data from multiple sources indicate that MTSS is perceived as being well-integrated with other school improvement efforts at the district, school, and state levels.

### **Indicators of Integration-School and District Level**

- 94.6% of survey respondents reported that MTSS is integrated with other school improvement efforts.
- 90.2% indicated that the necessary ongoing professional development is provided.
- 97.1% reported that the leadership and support needed over time are available.
- 88.6% of survey respondents agreed to “some” or “to a great extent” MTSS is clearly aligned with other state and local school improvement initiatives.
- 91.2% reported that schools have aligned resources within federal, state, or local education programs to support the implementation of MTSS.
- Case study sites referred to MTSS as the “process by which we do everything” by school leadership and most teachers.
- In case study sites, MTSS provides the framework for decision-making and for integrating other initiatives into the school.

### **Indicators of Integration-State Level**

- Increased integration of MTSS into the Kansas Technical Assistance and Support Network (TASN)
- Administrative support received from the Kansas State Board of Education, Diane DeBacker, Commissioner of Education, Brad Neuenswander, Deputy Director of Learning Services, and Dale Dennis, Deputy Director of Fiscal and Administrative Services, Kansas State Department of Education
- Strong leadership and direction from Colleen Riley, KSDE Director of Early Childhood, Special Education, and Title Services
- The Core Team engages in strategic and long term planning.
- State leaders are reported to be consistently “on message” in their interaction with schools, districts, and the community.
- Core Team members reported that KSDE is taking an intentional approach to breaking down silos/barriers within the state agency.

### **Core Team and Facilitator Suggestions for Promoting Sustainability**

- Continued refinement of MTSS principles and practices with already implementing schools
- Specialization for Recognized MTSS Facilitators in core MTSS content areas
- Investment in the existing TASN as the “TA arm” of KSDE to scale up MTSS and ensure that TASN projects are aligned and consistent with the MTSS Framework
- Maintain the Core Team in a strong leadership role for MTSS.
- Maintain the Core Team’s separateness/independence from KSDE.
- Continue being “on message” with regard to MTSS across the Department.
- Ensure that all divisions/staff at KSDE have knowledge of and understand the MTSS Framework.
- Continue to provide new and ongoing training opportunities by the Core Team to support schools implementing MTSS including Leadership Essentials II and the MTSS Refresher Workshop.

### **Current Status Question 5**

In this 2012 report on the MTSS Evaluation, it is too early to determine how successful schools/districts are in sustaining MTSS over time. Nevertheless, the results of the first year evaluation data collection activities give an indication of the likelihood of MTSS sustainability and the factors that may serve to threaten sustainability if they are not addressed in time. The integration of MTSS into a school’s approach to school improvement, assistance with making the connections between MTSS and other state level initiatives, leadership at the district and

building level, and opportunities for ongoing support and training appear to be important factors in ensuring sustainability of MTSS in the coming years.

## Summary

Given that this is a formative evaluation report, we have not made formal findings nor have we drawn any conclusions at this point in the evaluation process. However, based on first year evaluation activities, data analysis, and the school/district case studies, we have developed several “working hypotheses” that we will continue to test as the evaluation moves forward. These hypotheses are:

- School and district level leadership for MTSS is necessary for successful implementation.
- Having a building-based MTSS facilitator or coordinator helps support successful implementation with fidelity.
- Schools that are successfully implementing have a common language around assessment, instruction, outcomes, and behavior.
- 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.

The next cycle of the external evaluation of MTSS includes a re-fielding of the Effective Instructional Practices Survey, collection of additional building level universal screening data, and case studies of additional schools. These data collection activities will contribute new perspectives, insights, and understandings regarding the statewide implementation of the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and provide evidence on the working hypotheses.

The current status of MTSS for each of the five evaluation questions is summarized in the table below.

**Table 4. Current Status of MTSS**

<p><b>1. Scope:</b> How many schools and districts are participating in MTSS?</p>
<p>MTSS has a broad and growing scope of adoption across the state given that participation in the initiative is not a state mandate. Analysis shows that about 44% of all schools in Kansas, representing 55% of all districts, have participated in formal MTSS training to some extent. A total of 681 schools have completed Structuring training in reading, math, and/or behavior and 372 (55%) of these have gone on to participate in Implementation training. To date, 14 districts have taken a system-wide approach to MTSS implementation.</p>
<p><b>2. Implementation:</b> Annually, how many schools and districts 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>
<p>MTSS survey data indicate that MTSS is being implemented to some degree in 88.2% of the 656 responding schools representing 81% of all public school districts. The survey responses of 32.8% of schools indicated that they are in the “initial implementation” stage, with 40 schools (6.1%) scoring in the “full implementation” stage.</p> <p>MTSS implementation appears to be consistent with the Kansas MTSS Framework, covering all key features of MTSS. Areas for attention/improvement relate to monitoring for fidelity of implementation, strengthening the core instructional program, and planning for sustainability.</p>
<p><b>3. Student Outcomes:</b> How are students in schools and districts that are fully implementing MTSS performing?</p>
<p>Baseline data from the Building Level Status Forms on universal screening results suggest that, for the most part, schools are seeing an increase in the percentage of students scoring at benchmark in reading and math over the course of the school year.</p> <p>State assessment data show a very slight decrease in the percentage of students achieving proficiency from 2011 to 2012 in schools implementing MTSS; the same trend as in the state overall.</p>
<p><b>4. Statewide System and Infrastructure:</b> How effective are KSDE and MTSS Core Team activities in supporting statewide implementation of MTSS with fidelity by schools and districts?</p>
<p>The KSDE and Core Team are effectively supporting implementation of MTSS with fidelity. KSDE has invested heavily in MTSS implementation through funding of the MTSS Core Team, the development of a network of Recognized MTSS Facilitators, the annual MTSS Symposium, the development of the website, use of external experts and consultants, and in promoting the MTSS Framework consistently across audiences at the state and local level.</p> <p>Survey and case study data support the effectiveness of the KSDE and Core Team in supporting MTSS.</p>
<p><b>5. Sustainability:</b> How successful are schools and districts in sustaining MTSS?</p>
<p>It is too early to determine how successful schools/districts are in sustaining MTSS. The integration of MTSS into a school’s approach to school improvement, assistance with aligning MTSS with other state level initiatives, leadership at the district/building levels, and opportunities for ongoing support and training appear to be important factors in ensuring sustainability of MTSS in the coming years.</p>