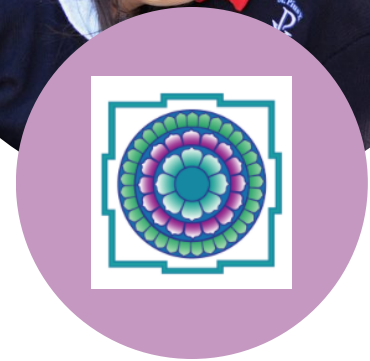


Widening the Circle

Celebrating Neurodiversity in Faith-based Schools

FOCUS STRATEGY: Basics of Tier One



MTSS is a three-tiered model of implementation that uses a differentiated approach to identify and serve the academic and behavioral needs of all students by focusing on high quality instruction and strong standards-based curriculum. The overall goal of RtI/MTSS is to improve student achievement using research-based curricular materials, delivered with evidence-based instructional approaches. This tier is dedicated to providing universal supports for **all** students to achieve success *both* in academic and behavioral realms. Consistent with the MTSS approach, the focus is on prevention. By adopting universal strategies to support all students, most problems can be prevented before they actually occur. It is suggested that having strong universal programming in place will address the needs of 75-80% of the students in any school building. Tier One is operationalized along these four areas:

Curriculum: Schools must ensure that the curriculum is focused and standards-based. It is critical to have a written curriculum that demonstrates an explicit link between the curriculum and standards. This ensures that the material that is taught to students is done so in a systematic fashion. This written curriculum identifies the most important learning for all students. Again, before any discussion of modification or accommodation, the school must be aware of what it is that they are modifying. Without an agreed upon curriculum, these kinds of modifications are synonymous to trying to hit a moving target.

RESOURCES

Boyle, M. (2017) *Ensuring a Place at the Table: Serving Students with Disabilities in Catholic Schools*. Arlington, VA: National Catholic Education Association

Boyle, M (2010) *Response to intervention: A blueprint for Catholic schools*. Arlington, VA: National Catholic Education Association.

Brooks, C. and McCoy-Cejka, C. (2019) *Setting the Table*. Arlington, VA: National Catholic Education Association



*Nothing great is ever achieved
without enduring much.*

-St. Catherine of Siena

Instructional Strategies: High-Quality curriculum should be delivered in highly effective ways. Educational research has yielded much knowledge about effective instructional practices. But, even though there is a great deal of information about effective teaching practices in the research, these strategies are not always used. A systematic approach to instructional strategies will help teachers build a common vocabulary for best practices and path for professional development, as well as lead to improved student achievement.

Assessment Literacy: School staff must develop strong competencies in assessment literacy in order to monitor learning in both academic and behavioral domains. In addition to national standardized tests, Catholic schools need to select and use data systems that provide ongoing tracking of student performance in both the academic and behavioral domains. This kind of data can take a variety of forms. From using various curriculum based measures (like AIMSWeb or DIBELS at the elementary level) to common formative assessments, schools need to develop a scheme to capture data in an on-going fashion. Staff must receive directed professional development in how to administer these instruments and use the results to monitor students' progress.

In addition to the collection of academic data, Catholic schools should also develop systems to track behavioral data. Schools must ensure that they are not only collecting, but also analyzing, data such as absences, tardies, office discipline referrals and minor infractions.

Positive Behavioral Management: Behavioral expectations must be defined. No assumptions about the behavioral expectations can be made. All members of the school community must know what is expected. Once defined, they must be explicitly taught and modeled by all. Positive behavior must be acknowledged and reinforced. As with all other areas, data must be used to monitor that progress of students in mastering the "behavioral curriculum." It is important to view issues of misbehavior as a "teachable moment".

