

MTSS Component Summary: Data-Based Decision Making

Data-based decision making occurs at all levels of multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) implementation, from individual students to the district level. Teams use screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, classroom assessment, and fidelity data to make decisions about instruction, movement within the multi-level prevention system, intensification of instruction and supports, and identification of students with disabilities (in accordance with state and local policies).

Teams also use implementation data to evaluate the extent to which supports have been implemented with fidelity and resulted in the expected success. Within data-based decision making, teams use specific data at certain points within the process. Specifically, screening data are used to identify students at risk, and diagnostic data are used to identify specific student needs. Progress monitoring data are used to monitor student growth and effectiveness of instruction. Classroom assessments are used to understand student need and for formative assessment decisions, and fidelity data are used to assess the extent to which practices and processes are implemented as intended.

Data-based decision making is important to the MTSS process because

- ensures decisions are made with reliable and valid information,
- provides a process for making decisions about supports and resources,
- clarifies what type of data are used and how they are used,
- ensures that students have equitable access to interventions and supports, and
- facilitates team buy-in of implementation practices.

Steps to implement:

1. Establish MTSS teams to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of implementation across the MTSS framework in a school or district.
2. [Establish a process for teams](#) that includes clear agendas, roles, and procedures to help teams remain focused as they analyze data and make relevant decisions.
3. Train staff through ongoing and regular professional development to effectively analyze screening, progress monitoring, and implementation data and to use that data to make decisions about instruction and implementation.
4. Monitor [team fidelity](#) by conducting consistent meetings using the agreed-upon teaming process.

5. Analyze data using established data rules that assist teams in determining needs and problem hypotheses, identifying solutions or interventions, setting measurable goals, and monitoring the impact of implementation.
6. Evaluate and improve the system by developing a plan that articulates short- and long-term goals for MTSS implementation. The plan helps teams monitor impact and identify potential barriers to equitable implementation.

Tips for implementing data-based decision making:

- Establish [data-decision making teams](#) that represent key stakeholders, including leadership and practitioners.
- Use valid and reliable tools to collect data with [fidelity](#).
- Follow a validated, standardized process for problem solving.
- Have clear, written decision rules and guidelines.