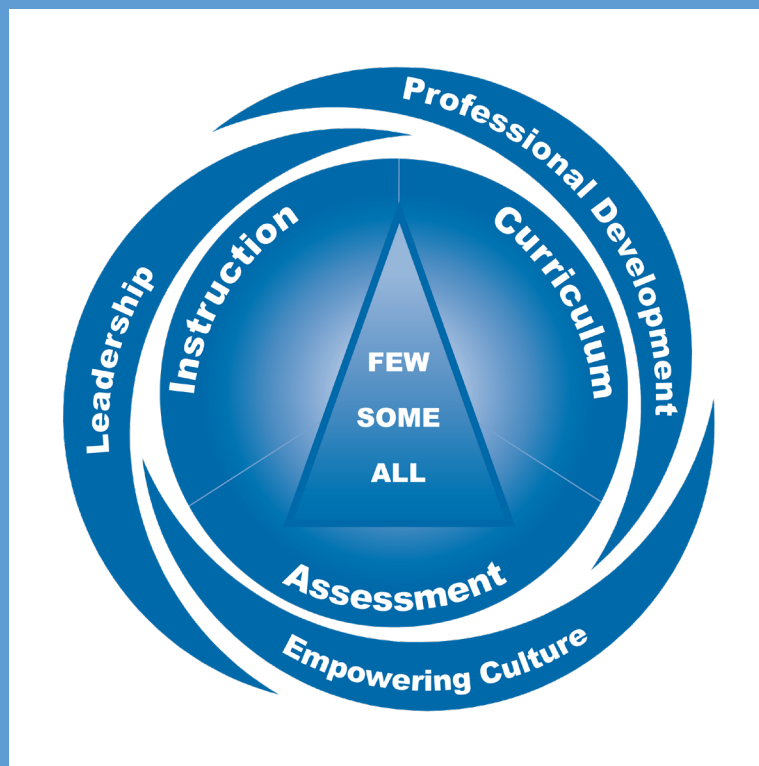


KANSAS MULTI-TIER SYSTEMS OF SUPPORTS (MTSS) & ALIGNMENT



READING GUIDE

PRE-K THROUGH 12TH GRADE



Introduction to Document

The *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment Guides* have been created to assist teams in documenting the structures necessary to begin the implementation of a Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). This document might contain tools to be used in conjunction with content-area-specific documents for reading, mathematics, behavior, and social-emotional content areas. All Kansas MTSS documents are aligned with the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Innovation Configuration Matrix (ICM)*, which describes the critical components of an MTSS and what each looks like when fully implemented, and the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Research Base*, which provides a basic overview of the research support for a MTSS.

www.ksdetasn.org/mtss

Acknowledgements

A significant commitment of time and energy from numerous Kansas educators and their districts, organizations, and partners made this document possible. Their efforts to learn and help others understand what it takes to make an MTSS a reality within schools is reflected in this document. This grassroots effort on the part of Kansas educators indicates a commitment to meeting the needs of every student and sharing wisdom from the field and the research. As the list of individuals and districts that have contributed to this effort over the past years has become too long to detail, a collective expression of gratitude is offered here to everyone who has contributed to the concepts, ideas, and knowledge that are reflected in all Kansas MTSS documents.

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Table of Contents

Introduction to Document	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
Introduction	6
Science of Reading	6
Tier 1 within an MTSS Model: All Means All	9
Core Curriculum.....	10
Selecting and/or Evaluating Core Curriculum.....	12
Ensuring Fidelity of Curricula.....	12
Planning Professional Development for Core Curriculum.....	13
Tier 1 Core Reading Instruction	13
Grades K-3.....	13
Grades 4-12.....	14
Planning for Core Reading Instruction.....	16
Implementing an MTSS at Tier 1	17
Universal Screeners	17
Universal Screening for Grades K-8.....	17
Universal Screening for Grades 9-12.....	17
Step 1: Review and Validate Universal Screening Data	18
Step 2: Analyze Data	19
Building-Level Considerations.....	19
Building and Collaborative Considerations.....	20
Grade Level and Classroom Considerations.....	21
Additional Academic Reports Available in Winter and Spring.....	22
Classwide Intervention Needs (Grades K-5)	22
Determining Classwide Instructional Focus.....	22
Scheduling for Instruction	23
K-12 Models of Instruction.....	23
Elementary Example.....	25
Planning for Interventions for Some and Few	27
Establishing Effective Interventions for Reading.....	28
Adolescent Supplemental Support.....	28
Effective Intervention Curricula for Reading.....	29
Professional Development for Intervention Curricula.....	31

Ensuring Fidelity of Intervention Curricula	31
Planning Professional Development	31
<i>K-6 Intervention Instruction</i>	<i>31</i>
Adolescent Intervention.....	32
Skills, Strategies, and Activities.....	32
Professional Development for Instructional Practices and Ensuring Fidelity	33
Planning Professional Development	34
Review Policies and Practices for Instruction	34
<i>Step 3: Use Data to Group Students.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Small-Group/Walk-to-Intervention Groups.....</i>	<i>35</i>
General Grouping Guidelines.....	36
<i>Step 4: Determine Relative Focus of Instruction</i>	<i>37</i>
Determining Instructional Focus for Small Groups.....	37
Notes for Building Leadership Teams	40
<i>Step 5: Progress Monitoring.....</i>	<i>40</i>
Matching Progress Monitoring to Instructional Need	42
Setting Ambitious Progress Monitoring Goals	42
Using Progress Monitoring to Guide Intervention Instruction	43
Consecutive Data Points Above the Aimline.....	44
Consecutive Data Points Below the Aimline	44
How to Adjust an Intervention	44
Not Making Progress – Customize the Intervention.....	45
How to Customize an Intervention	46
<i>Step 6: Document Interventions</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Ongoing Problem-Solving and Refining Your System</i>	<i>48</i>
Continuous Improvement of Your Kansas MTSS.....	48
Integrated MTSS Implementation Scale	48
Core Beliefs/Mission Statement Review	48
Family Engagement Survey Results (FES)	49
Final System Progress Determination	49
Prioritizing and Allocating Resources	49
Planning Improvement Actions	50
Providing Communication of System Progress and Improvement	51

Reflecting Effort in the School Improvement Plan and KESA	51
References.....	53
Appendix	61
Appendix: Reading Diagnostic Assessments	62
Tiered System of Support Comparison of Models	63
Small Group Intervention Log.....	75
Introduction to Document.....	79
Acknowledgements	79
Introduction.....	80
Literacy and Preschool MTSS.....	82
Creating the Structure for a Preschool MTSS.....	82
Standards and Curriculum	83
Assessments	84
Universal Screening.....	84
Progress Monitoring	85
Diagnostic Assessments	86
Preschool Integrated Implementation Protocol.....	86
Tier 1 – Curriculum and Instruction in Early Literacy.....	88
Foci of Early Literacy Instruction	89
Oral Language.....	89
Phonological Awareness	90
Alphabet Knowledge.....	93
Code-Focused Instruction	93
Print Awareness.....	94
Recommendations for Providing Preschool Literacy Interventions.....	95
Tier 2	96
Tier 3	96
References.....	98

Introduction

In Kansas, there is a belief that all children can learn. Fundamentally, every student should be challenged to achieve high standards, both academically and behaviorally. A systemic framework for ensuring that all students have this experience is referred to as Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). Simply put, Kansas MTSS is a set of evidence-based practices implemented across a system to meet the needs of all learners. Horner et al. (2005) stressed the importance of supporting children both academically and behaviorally in order to enable them to reach their fullest learning potential. Kansas MTSS builds a system of prevention, early intervention, and support to ensure that all children learn. In addition to student learning, Kansas MTSS intentionally focuses on leadership, professional development, and an empowering culture.

Kansas MTSS and Alignment incorporates a continuum of assessment, curriculum, and instruction. This systemic approach supports both struggling and advanced learners through the selection and implementation of increasingly intense evidence-based interventions in response to both academic and behavioral needs. Whether your program implements a single content or plans to integrate academic and behavior contents, it is essential that you begin with the System's Guide and then the content guides. The Kansas MTSS Framework establishes a Self-Correcting Feedback Loop that includes ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of instruction to ensure that each Kansas student achieves high standards.

Across the nation, schools use a variety of curricula, interventions, and methods to monitor student learning, both academically and socially. The goal of Kansas MTSS is to provide an integrated systemic approach to meet the needs of all students. To achieve this, resources must be used in an effective and efficient way. While Kansas MTSS and Alignment does not necessarily require additional resources or additions to the existing practices, it does involve evaluating current practices to identify those that yield evidence of effectiveness, addressing areas that are missing, and replacing ineffective or inefficient approaches with those that are supported by research and/or evidence. Kansas MTSS and Alignment is a guiding framework for school improvement and accreditation activities to address the academic and behavioral achievement of all students.

A multi-tiered reading model has been designed to implement these research findings and meet the instructional needs of all readers. The MTSS is a prevention model aimed at providing early supports to students before they fall behind or become disengaged from school because of advanced learning needs. A multi-tier reading model uses scientific, evidence-based reading practices and the five essential areas of reading.

Science of Reading

More than 30 years of research exists indicating how children learn to read, why some children fail at reading, and what components and practices are necessary to provide effective instruction in reading. Within the last two decades, neuroscientists have provided a much clearer picture of how reading develops within the brain. Multiple researchers have attempted to provide representations of this process. This section is designed to provide a brief overview of some of this work. Considerable research supports

the importance of using systematic and explicit instruction when teaching the five essential areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

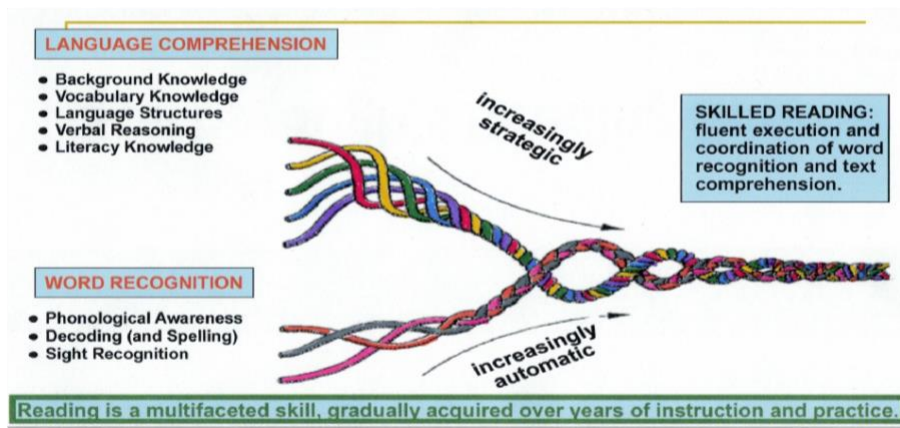
The relationships between these five areas of reading are represented in the Gough & Tunmer's Simple View of Reading formula:

Decoding (word recognition) x Language Comprehension = Reading Comprehension or a Proficient Reader.

In an attempt to explain the relationships between these skills, Hollis Scarborough developed what is now known as Scarborough's "Rope" Model (depicted below). This model expands on the Simple View and demonstrates how these components interact with one another.

Fluent reading depends on both the automaticity of word recognition and the use of language comprehension sub skills. These sub skills are like strands in a rope that become increasingly integrated and automatic as reading develops.

Scarborough's Rope



(Scarborough, 2001)

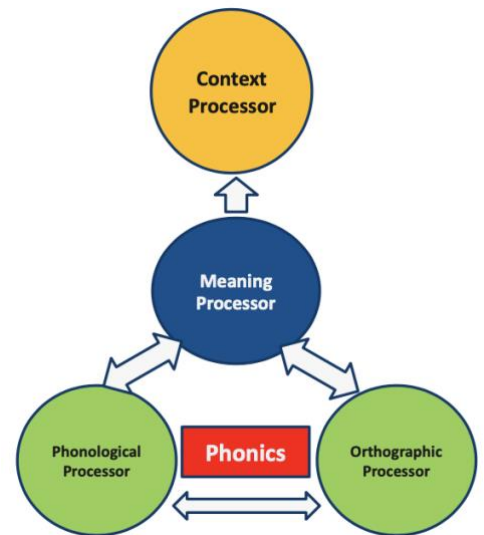
According to this formula, skilled reading is the product of word recognition (phoneme awareness, phonics, and fluency) and language comprehension (fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Therefore, a proficient reader must have both good word recognition skills and language comprehension.

While Scarborough's model was designed to explain the full reading experience, the 4-Part Processing Model for word recognition proposed by Seidenberg and McClellan (1989) supports the research of cognitive psychologists regarding the reading processing systems. The 4-Part Processor is a graphic representation of the four parts of the brain involved in reading. The phonological processor symbol on the graphic represents the back part of the frontal lobe of the brain that is responsible for speech-sound awareness. The orthographic processor symbol on the graphic represents the lower back occipital part of the brain that is responsible for letter and letter-pattern recognition. The angular gyrus is where the

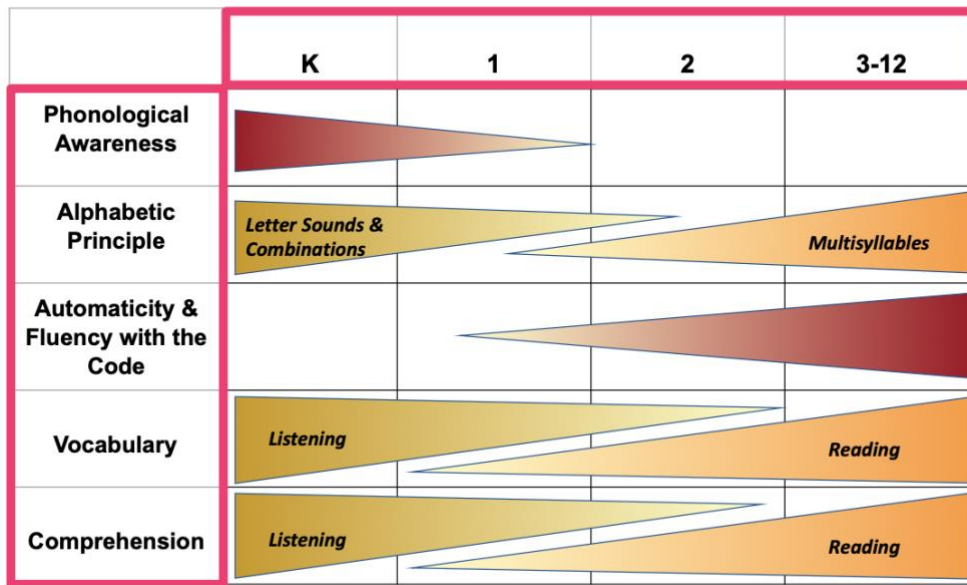
phonological and orthographic processing systems communicate to support word recognition. The meaning and context processor symbols represent the temporal areas in which meaning and comprehension take place.

The four-part processor concept helps explain the various ways in which reading problems might develop and why reading instruction should target several kinds of skills in tandem. The goal of instruction is to activate all of the processing systems and enable them to work together. LETRS Module 1 (2019) states, "[The concept] shows why recognition and fast processing of sounds, letter patterns, and morphemes—as well as word meanings, language comprehension, and background knowledge—are all important components of skilled reading" (Moats & Tolman). According to Snowling (as cited in Perfetti, 2005, p.3), "word recognition is the foundation of reading; all other processes are dependent on it."

These theoretical models beg the question of how a teacher determines what needs to be taught to students and when. According to the Connecticut Longitudinal Study (Foorman, Francis, Beeler, Winikates, and Fletcher, 1997; Shankweiler et al., 1999; Shaywitz, 2003), the relationship between decoding and comprehension changes as students learn to read. In this study, decoding in first grade accounted for about 80% of passage comprehension compared to 50% in the fourth grade and 40% by eighth grade. Even though eighth grade comprehension is still dependent on decoding by almost half, the study shows that teaching reading is not a balance of skills, but rather the ability to provide the right doses at the right time (Moats & Tolman, 2009). The idea of dosage of these big ideas of reading is depicted in the following graphic:



The Right Doses at the Right Time



Although all components may show up during a comprehensive lesson at all levels, different skills and activities are emphasized at different stages of reading development.

Tier 1 within an MTSS Model: All Means All

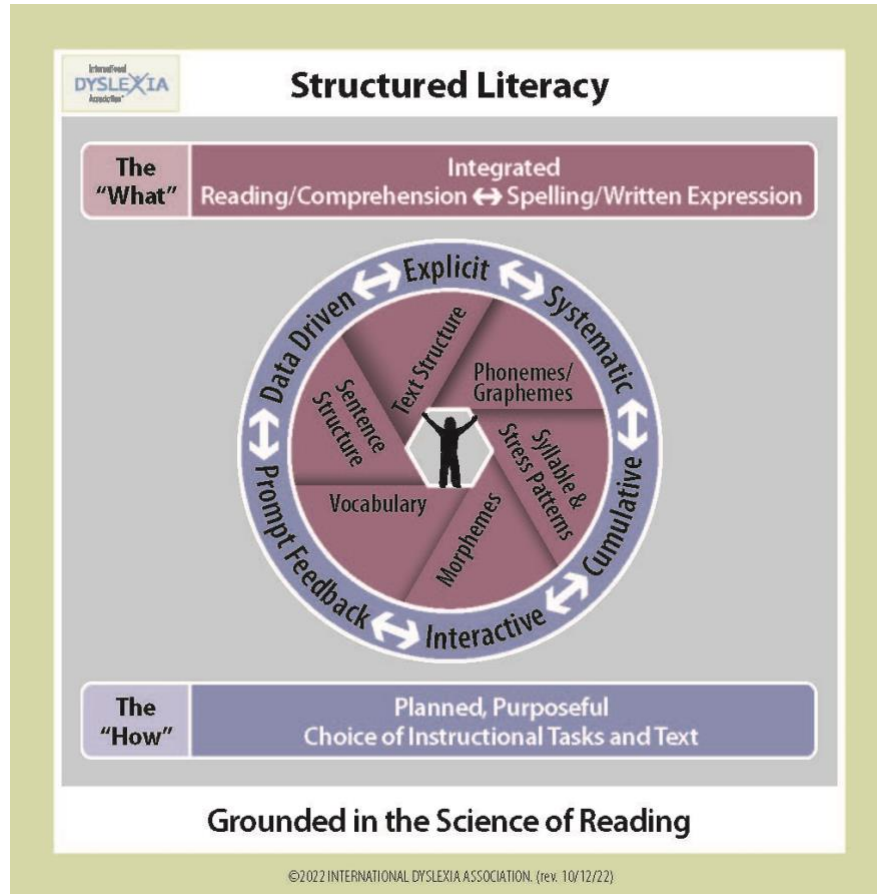
A multi-tier reading model emphasizes early identification, supplemental instruction, ongoing assessment, and the use of assessment data to identify students who need intervention. Assessment selection is a critical step in the MTSS process. The efficiency of the MTSS process varies depending on the assessments selected to drive the process. Teaching all students to read requires a system for the early identification of at-risk students and a system for providing those students with the interventions they need to become proficient readers by third grade. Good classroom instruction should meet the needs of most students, but an efficient system for providing high-quality interventions is required to meet the needs of all students.

While it is understandable that teams often want to begin creating an MTSS at the Tier 2 and 3 levels, the most impactful intervention for students begins at Tier 1. An evidence-based core curriculum, using best practices and delivered with fidelity to all students for a sufficient amount of time, has the greatest impact on student achievement. “Most school districts in the country do not have the resources to intervene their way out of ineffective universal instruction” (Gibbons, Brown, and Niebling, 2019). Tier 1 instruction is provided to all students. When Tier 1 instruction comes from a highly knowledgeable teacher and is evidence-based, about 80% of students should demonstrate successful reading achievement (Buckingham, 2020).

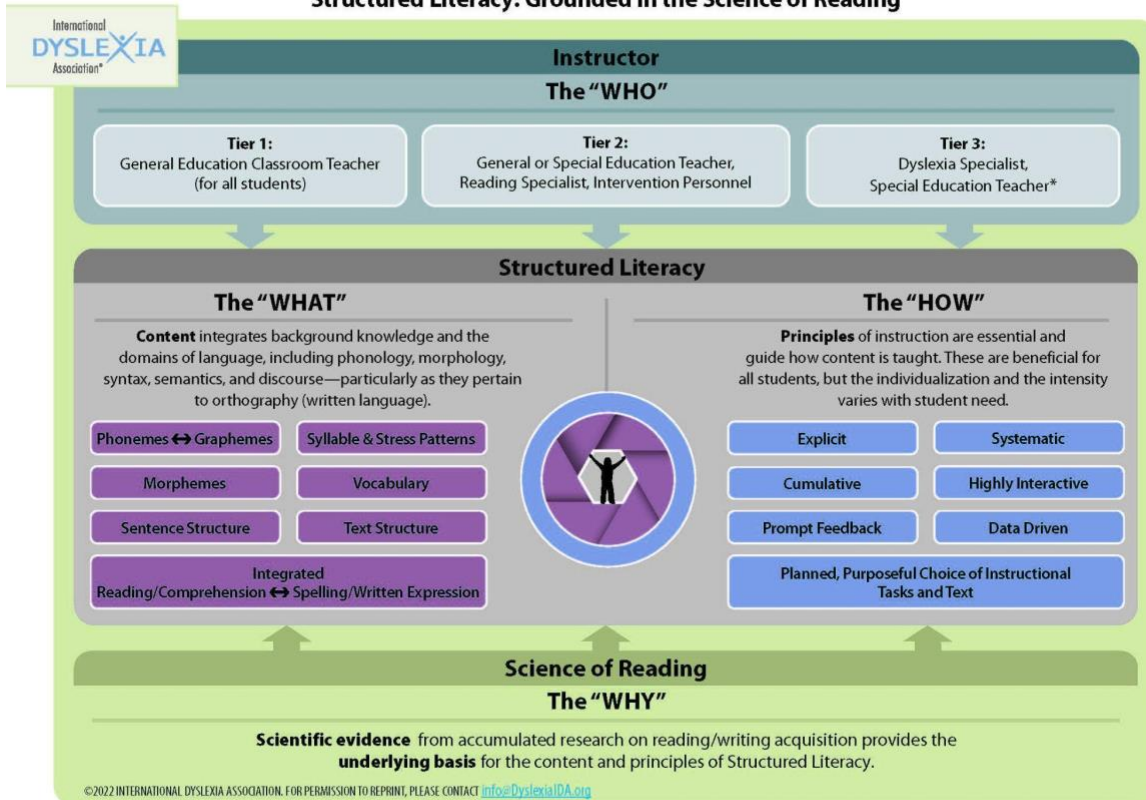
Core Curriculum

A strong core reading program must meet district curriculum mandates, align with the Kansas State Standards, be based on the five essential components of reading instruction, and include the right doses at the right time. Dr. Jack Fletcher recommends that schools adopt programs that are explicit and comprehensive and provide ample opportunities for practice (Fletcher, 2018). At all levels, staff members need to consider what core skills and knowledge will be required of all students and what core curriculum materials will be used to provide that instruction. Regardless of whether the core skills and knowledge are taught through a comprehensive core curriculum, such as what is typically seen at the elementary level or through content-area classes as students transition to the secondary level, the purpose is still the same. Each school must establish and provide curriculum materials that will be used to teach core skills, strategies, and knowledge.

In Kansas, core curriculum must also meet the standards of structured literacy. The following diagrams (International Dyslexia Association, 2023) give a concise explanation of the components and more information can be found on the KSDE Dyslexia [website](#).



Structured Literacy: Grounded in the Science of Reading



Structured Literacy: An Introductory Guide is available from www.DyslexiaLibrary.org. This brief can be downloaded after logging into the IDA digital library.

*For individuals with dyslexia and other reading difficulties, Structured Literacy must be delivered with more individualization and intensity and by a highly qualified instructor. See Accreditation ^{Plus} <https://himyul.com/2p8v3hct> and <https://himyul.com/5bvt18hz>.

(rev. 9/30/22)

Materials comprising the core curriculum must support good-quality classroom instruction to ensure that all students meet or exceed state and local standards, benchmarks, and indicators in all areas. The materials should also be evaluated to determine the adequacy of support these materials provide for the acquisition of core skills, strategies, and knowledge. A first step in determining the core curriculum's effectiveness is to identify what is being taught at each grade level in each course and the curricular materials currently being used. Core curriculum should be evaluated and selected to ensure that the curriculum at each grade level systematically and explicitly focuses on the acquisition of literacy skills.

After careful analysis, the leadership team should determine if the core curriculum is adequate or if it needs to be strengthened. One way to determine if the core curriculum is adequate is by analyzing universal screening data, three times each school year. Analysis of the universal screening data at the systems level provides information that can be used to examine the effectiveness of the instructional supports to help determine when changes should be made. When used at the systems level, the universal screening data should be used formatively to identify the need for support at the school level. Instructional supports may include aspects of the system such as the curricula and programs used in the school, such as the core reading program, any supplemental materials or interventions, and the fidelity of implementation of curricular/instructional programs. Keep in mind that major curricular decisions should not be based on a single data point, but trend data over time.

Selecting and/or Evaluating Core Curriculum

If the district seeks to evaluate existing or potential new resources, there are a variety of tools to help with that process. *The Reading League* provides a rubric for evaluating a new program at [this site](#). KSDE has added curriculum/instructional resources to the Dyslexia page that are also helpful in evaluating a new program. That can be found at [this site](#). In reviewing materials, educators will be positioned to make the necessary decisions as to whether there are existing gaps in the materials that should be filled. Educators will also be able to make decisions about discontinuing or replacing curricula in a coordinated and consistent manner due to the lack of effectiveness or a research base.

Ensuring Fidelity of Curricula

The professional development plan for curriculum implementation is dynamic in nature and results in the curriculum being implemented with fidelity. It is a plan that proactively identifies content and tasks based on individual staff learning needs. The focus on these needs will result in the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively utilize the curriculum.

Leadership teams are responsible for establishing a plan to monitor and support the correct and effective use of curriculum materials. Tools and tasks for monitoring an individuals' fidelity of curriculum implementation are not intended to be punitive, but rather should be understood as a piece of the overall professional development plan. Fidelity checks ensure that staff members are accessing and utilizing curricular materials in the expected manner by planning for and conducting intermittent and follow-up

actions/tasks. To accomplish this, leadership teams should establish methods for monitoring the use of the curriculum by individual teachers. Differentiated, ongoing professional development and support for each individual should be part of the plan.

Planning Professional Development for Core Curriculum

The building leadership team identifies the professional development needs related to curriculum implementation by identifying and considering the targeted staff and the qualities of each specified curriculum.

It is important that all staff members with instructional responsibility have a solid understanding of the core curriculum and receive professional development that enables them to implement it with fidelity. In this instance, this includes the staff members responsible for instruction at all three MTSS levels. This is necessary to ensure that the curriculum that is implemented at the supplemental or intensive level is aligned with the core curriculum.

Tier 1 Core Reading Instruction

Grades K-3

Merely having a strong core curriculum, while important, is not enough: how it is implemented is equally (if not more) impactful than the curricula itself! Especially in the primary grades, teachers must be prepared to provide strong foundational instruction in critical reading skills. Teachers must be able to provide skill-based, systematic, and explicit instruction to the entire class while simultaneously working with small groups of students who have different instructional needs. Students with diverse needs are best supported when instruction is at the right level and focused on the areas of most critical need. According to Torgesen et al. (2007), without strong core classroom instruction, including differentiation by classroom teachers, school resources can be overwhelmed by the demands placed on individual staff members providing intervention. The Kansas Department of Education has provided specific recommendations regarding the use of structured literacy instruction rather than a balanced literacy approach. Details on those recommendations and requirements can be found [here](#). The IES has also provided a practice guide outlining those instructional practices that can most strongly impact K-3 student achievement. That guide can be found [here](#).

How many minutes of Tier 1 reading instruction should our primary students receive? Core instruction provided to all students in the building should be consistent with evidence-based practices and the district's allocation of instructional minutes. "Evidence substantiates the use of the (reading) block as a best practice in literacy instruction and meets the ESSA requirements for evidence that demonstrates a strong rationale. For this reason, we continue to recommend the use of an uninterrupted, 90-minute block as the Tier 1 foundation for a strong literacy program" (Underwood, 2018).

As building leadership teams develop the Tier 1 curriculum protocol, educators should give careful thought to how that 90-minute block should be used. Resources from the University of Texas linked [here](#) provide a

framework for time allotments that reflect the Science of Reading. This daily block includes active engagement with multiple opportunities to practice skills in both whole-group and small-group settings.

Instruction in small groups should be teacher-led and involve flexible, differentiated, homogeneous groups. All students should be actively engaged during the small-group time, either with an adult or practicing skills in differentiated, independent student centers that are based on student data. A sample week of small-group planning and instruction from the University of Texas can be accessed [here](#).

Grades 4-12

When children become adolescents, learning shifts to being more content-driven, focusing on the ability to build content knowledge and develop critical thinking skills. Content-area classes are considered to be the core reading class at the secondary level. Essentially, core (Tier 1) reading instruction is designed to support the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension in all students and to encourage struggling readers to apply the strategies emphasized during intervention instruction.

A common question for grades 4-6 is whether these grades should follow the early literacy model or the adolescent recommendations. At grades 4-12, in buildings that have departmentalized intermediate grades (4-6), the model of instruction will be more like those for middle and high school buildings in which all students are included in content-area classes. If these grades, however, are still self-contained, most schools choose to adapt more fully to the early literacy model of instruction.

At the secondary level, the core reading curriculum is implemented as part of content-area classes. Core reading instruction at the secondary level involves both disciplinary literacy and cross-curricular instructional practices. A strong core curriculum for adolescent readers must meet district curriculum mandates and align with the Kansas Common Core Standards. Disciplinary literacy involves access to the content of each course. “The idea is not that content-area teachers should become reading and writing teachers, but rather that they should emphasize the reading and writing practices that are specific to their subjects, so students are encouraged to read and write like historians, scientists, mathematicians, and other subject-area experts” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). In other words, content teachers must “share the secrets of literacy that work in their content areas” (Lent, 2016).

The ability to read grade-level material has implications in every content classroom. Ensuring that all students have access to their content text is a driving factor when considering Tier 1 instruction for adolescents. Leadership teams need to examine the efficacy of core instruction in order to ensure that the needs of students are being met. In order to assist students in becoming critical thinkers, the use of embedded strategy instruction across content areas is encouraged. When buildings consistently use strategies embedded in content areas, students can “focus on comprehension and content knowledge,” and learning across all content areas is enhanced (Johnson, 2009). Teachers must create multiple opportunities for students to practice using the strategies as applied to content-specific materials and situations as well as provide adequate feedback on their use. Without explicit strategy instruction, researchers note that many students are not able to perform at grade level and demonstrate gaps in their ability to read and write at the secondary level (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Deshler, Palincsar, Biancarosa, & Nair, 2007).

An early step when developing the Tier 1 reading protocol at these grades involves the selection of an evidence-based building-wide reading strategy to support reading in all content classes. *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* (Kamil et al., 2008) and the National Reading Panel's (2000) report are major sources for identifying strategies that can have an immediate impact on student reading achievement, including adolescent reading in grades 4-12. The IES Practice Guide can be found [here](#).

Because reading skills are more embedded in content subject matter for older students, a cross-curricular approach is also essential in order to meet students' needs (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Kamil et al. (2008) recommended improving adolescent literacy in core content areas by providing explicit vocabulary instruction, direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction, opportunities for an extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation, and increased student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.

Selecting a common comprehension or vocabulary strategy to be used throughout the building in all content areas is important with older students for transition of the skill. Selection of a building-wide strategy should be made with all disciplines in mind and through the use of both screening and informal assessments by all content teachers. Upon asking all teachers to observe the reading habits and behaviors of all students, the building leadership team not only gains valuable insights to support selection of the building-wide strategy, but also achieves strong buy-in from all staff members. Strategies must be taught in all classes so that the use of those strategies within content reading assignments can be modeled and cues provided for their application. Students should be provided with enough guided practice in order to apply a strategy before teachers introduce a new strategy or procedure.

When reading strategies are isolated and only practiced during intervention, the older struggling reader compartmentalizes that skill as something only to be used at intervention time. However, if the strategy is used across the content-area classes, students get multiple opportunities each day to practice and internalize that strategy (Denton et al., 2007). "To leverage time for increased interaction with texts across subject areas, teachers will need to reconceptualize their understanding of what it means to teach in a subject area. In other words, teachers need to realize they are not just teaching content knowledge but also ways of reading and writing specific to a subject area" (Carnegie, 2006). This instruction benefits *all* students.

All teachers should be provided with strategies as part of their core curriculum to assist students with the acquisition of information by reading content-area materials in all subject areas. Since these strategies are considered the core curriculum across content-area classes, it is critical that these strategies be taught with fidelity. Professional development activities will be necessary to help teachers move from using initial strategies to applying multiple strategies and procedures. These include but are not limited to strategies for vocabulary acquisition such as morphological analysis or building background knowledge through wide reading opportunities.

A building-wide strategy often selected by middle and high teachers focuses on vocabulary. Teachers must consider the high-leverage effects of teaching not only content-specific vocabulary, but also academic

vocabulary in the content areas. Knowledge development of general academic words should occur while developing knowledge of the overall discipline. Studying disciplinary texts with appropriate scaffolding will help students understand discipline-specific words (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). Professional development activities will be necessary to help teachers move from using initial strategies to applying multiple strategies and procedures.

Planning for Core Reading Instruction

The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) made it clear that the best approach to reading instruction is one that incorporates explicit instruction in five essential areas of reading: phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, methods to improve fluency, enhanced vocabulary, and comprehension. The research included for vocabulary evidence provided by the National Reading Panel consisted mostly of studies of students in third grade and older, while the research on comprehension involved mostly students in fourth grade and above.

The following is a summary of the panel's findings (University of Oregon, 2009):

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Children who learned to read through specific instruction in phonemic awareness improved their reading skills more than those who learned without attention to phonemic awareness.
- **Phonics:** Students showed marked benefits from explicit phonics instruction from kindergarten through sixth grade. The panel also found that systematic, synthetic phonics instruction (teaching students explicitly to convert letters into sounds and then blend the sounds to form recognized words) had a positive and significant effect on disabled students' reading skills. Systematic, synthetic phonics instruction was also significantly more effective in improving low socioeconomic status, alphabetic knowledge, and word reading skills (NICHD, 2006).
- **Fluency:** Reading fluency improved students' abilities to recognize new words; read with greater speed, accuracy, and expression; and better understand what they read.
- **Vocabulary:** Vocabulary instruction and repeated contact with vocabulary words are important.
- **Comprehension:** In general, the panel found that teaching a combination of reading comprehension techniques/strategies is the most effective.

Implementing an MTSS at Tier 1

Universal Screeners

It is important that universal screening tools assess the critical skills that fall within the five essential areas of reading and are highly predictive of future performance. The best measures are those that can be administered quickly yet reliably while still providing data that can be used with confidence to make instructional decisions.

The simple skills of reading measured by curriculum-based measurements (CBM) predict eventual reading comprehension so well that testing only takes 7-15 minutes per child. What is tested is simpler than what is taught: Both foundational skills and comprehension will need to be taught, even though comprehension may not be tested thoroughly (Moats and Hancock, 2004, p. 12).

Universal Screening for Grades K-8

All students in grades K-8 (Early Reading K-3 and Adolescent Reading 4-8) should be screened three times per year on critical literacy skills. The skills measured will depend upon grade level and the time of year. The publisher of each potential universal screening instrument should be able to provide a manual or technical guide that will enable teams to determine whether or not the critical skills are covered (See Appendix: Critical Skills for Universal Screening). KSDE also has a resource outlining the requirements for [dyslexia screening](#) that should also be consulted.

Most universal screening tools have pre-established cut points or benchmarks that can be used, whereas others are based on normative information and utilize percentile ranks as a means of identifying students who may need additional support. Screening tools that have preset benchmarks identify students at risk of falling into the strategic (students needing additional intervention) or intensive category (students needing substantial intervention) (Farrell, Hancock, & Smartt, 2006).

Universal Screening for Grades 9-12

In grades 9-12, screening is a multi-step process focused on reading comprehension. The first step in this screening process involves assessing students' grade-level comprehension skills at least once a year in the fall or when they identify students in need of reading intervention or advanced learning needs that may need extension or acceleration opportunities. This can be done by administering group assessments or computer-adaptive group assessments.

For districts that do not yet have a secondary-level screener as part of their selected universal screener, the following table provides a few examples of assessments that can be used as the initial step for universal screening for grades 9-12.

Universal Screening for Grades 9-12			
Grade Level	Measure	Skill Assessed	Examples of Group Assessments
9-12	Comprehension Measure	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) ● STAR Reading ● FastBridge ● AIMSweb+ (measures only to 8th grade)

Since screening is a multi-step process for students in grades 9-12, the leadership team will need to determine which grade-level comprehension assessment will be administered to all students in these grades at least once a year. To maximize efficiency, these comprehension assessments are typically administered to groups. Next, leadership teams will then need to determine which assessment to administer to the students in grades 9-12 who did not pass the grade-level comprehension assessment and need intervention to determine the appropriate intervention.

Regardless of the initial screening tool chosen, it is important to note that “there is not one single screening tool that works well for every grade level in secondary settings.... It is commonly recommended that secondary settings use a combination of attendance data, performance data on standardized tests, course grades, credit attainment, and discipline data as part of the screening process. Students who fall off track in multiple areas should be targeted for additional support” (Gibbons, 2019).

Step 1: Review and Validate Universal Screening Data

Critical Components:

Who: Building leadership teams and collaborative/grade-level teams

What: Universal screening data

When: After every universal screening

Where: Building leadership and collaborative team meetings

Why: To ensure that the data collected are valid and reliable in order to make the most accurate instructional decisions.

Validation of screening data at the building, grade, class, and individual student levels is a critical first step for the collaborative teams and the building leadership team. In addition to supporting collaborative teams in considering the validity of scores for individual students, the building leadership team needs to review systemic issues that might affect the validity of screening data. The building leadership team should consider whether fidelity of administration was present in the universal screening assessment. Discuss and review any information collected regarding the following issues:

- Were the directions for the administration of the screening assessment followed exactly?
- Were the time limits for each test followed exactly?
- Was shadow scoring used to check scoring fidelity (academics only)?
- Were assessments given within the window for administration as outlined on your assessment calendar?
- Were all staff members who administered the assessment adequately trained?
- Did the collaborative teams verify individual student data?

It is important that the members of the building leadership team review the procedures established for collecting data during the universal screening process. Building leadership team members should ask, “How do we know?” regarding each of the issues listed above to verify that adequate information about assessment fidelity has been collected.

The Kansas MTSS encourages districts to select assessments with strong predictive validity, reliability, efficiency, and established cut scores. Predictive validity indicates that the measure is a strong predictor of future performance and can accurately classify students as at risk or not at risk. If a test is reliable, two testers who assess the same students will get very similar—if not identical—scores. Efficiency refers to how quickly the screener can be administered, scored, and analyzed. The cut score is a necessary component of universal screening to identify which students may be at risk. Even when a strong assessment is selected, if it is not administered with fidelity, the above key features are compromised (Gersten & Newman-Gonchar, 2011, pp. 29, 30). Ensuring the validity of data is a process that applies not only to universal screening data. All data collected throughout the implementation process, including systems-level, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring data, must be reviewed to ensure that teams have confidence in the results.

Step 2: Analyze Data

Critical Components:

Who: Building leadership and collaborative teams

What: Universal screening data reports (percent at each tier, growth across benchmarks, etc.)

When: After every universal screening

Where: Building leadership and collaborative team meetings

Why: To determine overall progress

Building-Level Considerations

After every universal screening, the building leadership team will review building-level data to determine if the core curriculum has sufficiently met the needs of most students (80% or more students at or above benchmark). If not, the team will provide general information regarding how many students might need additional Tier 2 or Tier 3 support from the system. Each data system can provide reports that will visually represent the percentages of students within each tier of risk.

In some buildings, the building leadership team must consider the question, “What is our core curriculum?” and ensure that staff members are, in fact, using that core curriculum. The core curriculum should be established using recommendations from the previous Curriculum section. A review could be required of the materials the teachers are expected to use at each grade level and what is negotiable and non-negotiable as part of the core curriculum.

The building leadership team should also review any information that has been collected about the fidelity of the implementation of the core curriculum. A lack of fidelity in teaching the core is often identified as a problem, and it is a first consideration when trying to increase the number of students who are at benchmark. In addition to the issue of curriculum fidelity, the building leadership team may want to review core instructional practices, especially those evidence-based instructional practices embedded in the district’s selected core curriculum.

The building leadership team will also need to consider whether there are any needs regarding professional development within the building. It is important that there be clear two-way communication about grade-level results and any issues related to the core between the building leadership team and the collaborative teams as well as between the building leadership team and the district leadership team.

Any issues with the core curriculum need to be addressed prior to focusing on adding interventions. However, building leadership teams must be cautious about making changes to the core curriculum based on limited data. The leadership team will need multiple data points and time to examine patterns across grade levels before making significant adjustments to core curriculum and instruction. To assist the building leadership team in analyzing data at the building level, a building-level status discussion worksheet has been developed for each universal screening period with questions specific to that time of year. The worksheet is designed to lead the building team through a discussion around the universal screening data and get a picture of how the system is functioning at the building level.

Building and Collaborative Considerations

The building leadership and collaborative teams should review grade-level reports and consider the number of students within the Benchmark (Tier 1), Supplemental (Tier 2), and Intensive (Tier 3) ranges. The goal for buildings is to have 80 percent of students within the on-track range or above. If the building has fewer than 80% of students within the on-track range, then several issues should be considered:

- Are core instruction and the core curriculum (including social and behavioral expectations) being implemented with fidelity? How do we know?
- Is core instruction explicit, systematic, and scaffolded?
- Are concepts being taught to mastery?
- Are there sufficient examples, explanations, and opportunities for practice to support new learning?

- In terms of differentiating the core, what thoughts arise with regard to the strengths and needs of this current grade?
- Are professional development or supports needed for the teachers regarding the core curriculum or instruction?

When a high percentage of students in a particular grade level fail to reach the on-track range, there is an indication of possible problems with core instruction and curriculum. The leadership team must consider the data for all grades in the school and look for patterns across the grade levels that might indicate systemic issues. Often, issues with core curriculum and instruction need to be a primary concern. Even outstanding supplemental and intensive interventions cannot serve to support students who are failing because of issues within the core.

Grade Level and Classroom Considerations

Grade-level/collaborative teams also need to review grade-level reports and set goals for growth. When reviewing grade-level data from the initial universal screening of the academic year, teams should focus on questions similar to the following:

- What is the current grade-level status?
- What should the goal for this academic year be?
- What are the strengths/needs of the current group of learners?
- What are the implications of the grade-level results for differentiation of core instruction and curriculum?
- Are there instructional or curriculum concerns that the building leadership team needs to address?
- Are there areas in which professional development is needed for staff to implement the core more effectively across the grade level?
- What do the individual skills assessed help determine regarding the skills taught in the core? Are there any skills that need to be taught more explicitly and systematically?
- What additional supports or resources are necessary to achieve learner goals at a particular grade level?

Most building leadership team members will be participating in classroom-level data analysis as a member of a collaborative/grade-level team. The building leadership team should:

- Support the work of the collaborative teams.
- Review data to determine if any classrooms appear to be problematic.
- Consider the current distribution of building personnel and/or resources and determine whether they need to be distributed differently.
- Consider issues reported to the leadership team by the collaborative teams.

Classroom-level data is important, not as a tool to compare teachers, but as a way to determine where to best use resources. If one class has significantly higher needs, for example, it would make sense to place additional assistance in that classroom during core instruction.

Additional Academic Reports Available in Winter and Spring

As subsequent universal screening data is collected, both building and collaborative teams analyze the effectiveness of their interventions. It is important to determine whether individual students are making sufficient progress. Some assessment systems provide a snapshot view of the effectiveness of core, supplemental, and intensive interventions for individual students. A focused conversation can provide a format for data discussions.

Classwide Intervention Needs (Grades K-5)

The first decision the collaborative team must make is whether there is a need for a classwide intervention for any of the classrooms at that grade level. To make this determination, team members should follow the steps below for each of their own classrooms (steps also noted on the classwide flowchart):

- a. Adjust your system's student scores report so scores are ranked from high to low.
- b. Find the median (middle) score. Note: Some systems report the median score on the screening report at the bottom.
- c. Compare the median score to the benchmark for that time of year. If the median score is below the benchmark, there is a need for a classwide intervention. Even if the median score is above the benchmark, teachers might want to look at the next few scores below the median. If those students show the need for tiered support, the teacher might consider implementing a classwide intervention.

When more than half the students are below the benchmark, a traditional Walk-to-Intervention small-group model is not robust enough to move the needle for such a high number of students. Most schools do not have the resources to provide adequate group size when more than half of the students are demonstrating Tier 2 or Tier 3 needs. In their 2022 meta-analysis, Neitzel and others found that whole-class approaches “obtained outcomes for struggling readers as large as those found for all forms of tutoring, on average, and benefitted many more students” (Neitzel, 2022).

- A classwide intervention allows for a rapid response that should lower the number of students demonstrating need in a shorter amount of time. Conversations around the core should also take place if this is a widespread issue across grades within a building.

Determining Classwide Instructional Focus

Once the need for a classwide intervention is detected, each classroom will need to determine the focus of instruction for an individual classroom. Different classrooms at the same grade level might need a different classwide intervention. A flowchart in the Appendix illustrates the process for determining the classwide focus.

For grades K and 1, the focus could be phonological, early phonics, or both. Classroom teachers should review the detailed reports for subtests that make up the composite score. Which subskills show at least a third to half of the students at risk? Those sub scores indicate areas that need focus in a classwide intervention.

For grades 2-6, classroom teachers should first look at the number of students who demonstrated inaccurate answers. If a third to half of the students are demonstrating less than 95% accuracy, it is recommended that teachers begin with a phonics intervention. Rather than giving all students an informal diagnostic assessment on specific phonics skills, teachers could consider the last phonics skill that should have been mastered in the previous grade as a starting point.

To assist teachers in determining specific skills to begin classwide interventions, the Kansas MTSS team has developed materials that provide skill descriptions and free curricula matching those skills to allow teachers to place students in a classwide intervention as quickly as possible. The goal is to reduce the percentage of students at risk in a short amount of time, so the typical small-group instructional format can be utilized with greater efficiency.

The link to these materials is provided [here](#). In addition, a webinar providing more detailed information can be accessed [here](#).

Scheduling for Instruction

K-12 Models of Instruction

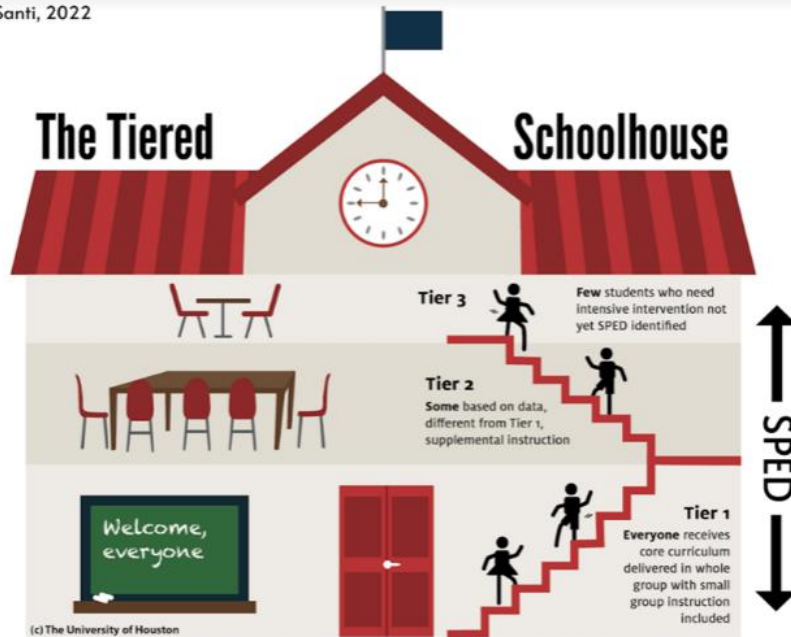
The building leadership team will select a model for providing the necessary tiered instruction to meet students' needs. There are a variety of possible models of instruction. The culture and logistics specific to a building will influence the implementation of any of the described models or the team's creation of a model that is unique to the building. When choosing an intervention delivery model, it is essential to consider recommendations for supplemental and intensive instruction as well as advantages and disadvantages of each model of support. A table outlining various models of instruction and when they might be used is available in the Appendix.

When creating the schedule to put into practice the selected model of instruction, teachers should ensure that classrooms are receiving adequate time for core instruction and that sufficient time is being built in for supplemental and intense intervention for reading. The building leadership teams may need to review the considerations regarding providing services to students who need interventions for both reading and math, given the challenges of scheduling intervention time and the staff members who can provide those interventions. Because intervention instruction must be aligned with core instruction, leadership teams should consider including collaborative planning time within the schedule.

For grades K-6, it is generally necessary to schedule intervention blocks for the entire school

schedule prior to scheduling the 90-minute reading blocks. Staggering of intervention blocks allows the school to use all staff members more efficiently over the course of the day.

adapted from Fletcher and Santi, 2022



Tier 1	Tier 2 or Tier 3	30 minutes 3-4 times per week
<p>Tier 1 ALL Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-3 90 mins. • 4-12 45-60 mins • evidence-based curriculum practices 	<p>Tier 2 "SOME risk"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide skill based intervention instruction • homogenous small groups • progress monitor every 2 weeks 	<p>Tier 3 "HIGH risk"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide comprehensive or skilled based intervention based on student need • homogenous smaller groups • progress monitor weekly • consider adding 15-20 mins. if NOT responding

Time dedicated to Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction should be built into the master schedule in order to manage instructional time and ensure that students have access to the full core curriculum. It is suggested that an additional 30 minutes of targeted tiered instruction be provided beyond the core three to four days per week (Gersten et al., 2008; McCook, 2006) and should be conducted in small homogeneous groups of three to five students. Elementary students with Tier 3 needs have more explicit and systematic instruction and fewer students in the group. The recommended time for Tier 3 intensive intervention is also 30 minutes (Vaughn, Denton, Fletcher, 2010). The ideal group size for intensive instruction should be no greater than three students. Fluidity of grouping is also an important component to consider and ensure that students can move to less-intensive supports as quickly as possible to reduce the loss of other instructional time.

For middle and high school students, homogeneous instruction can be provided to groups as large as 10 to 16 students for 30 to 50 minutes per day or one class period on three to four days per week (McCook, 2006). When using specific programs, it is necessary to follow program guidelines if group sizes are specified. In grades 4-12, Intensive (Tier 3) instruction should be skill based and

focused on direct instruction. Intensive support is provided to small, homogeneous groups of one to four students for 50 to 60 minutes per day (Denton, Bryan, Wexler, Reed, & Vaughn, 2007).

Schedules must be created for the purpose of optimizing the value of academics. The team can navigate the school day more easily if the schedule is created in a spreadsheet format and the boxes are color-coded to reflect the different blocks of time.

The leadership team should review the current assessment data on students in the building to obtain a rough estimate of the number of students who will need some type of intervention and whether a classwide model needs to be implemented first. The team should then review the models in the Tiered System of Support Comparison of Models tool (Appendix) and discuss the pros and cons of each model. A model of support should be selected that appears to be appropriate for the number of students in the school who might need intervention and that aligns with the building's core beliefs.

Elementary Example

A model of instruction that is growing in popularity is the Walk-to-Intervention model, in which a school provides common intervention times either for the same grade levels or across grade levels. During this common intervention time, students go to different classrooms for intervention. Interventions in this model can be provided by various staff members such as classroom teachers, specialists, and instructional aides. An advantage of this model is that tailored instruction can also be provided for advanced learners.

The following example demonstrates how a building can create a schedule to make the Walk-to-Intervention model work. Simply put, this approach preserves a block of time at each grade level (K-6) for core instruction (typically 90-minutes, dependent on core curriculum recommendations) and tiered intervention (30-minute reading). No special classes are scheduled during this time, and all teachers and instructional aides are part of the supplemental intervention. Of course, students who would be best served by a particular specialist should be assigned to that specialist during instructional grouping. In some schools, an enrichment teacher or librarian also works with classes during this intervention time to ensure that students with advanced learning needs receive enrichment and extension opportunities. In the schedule depicted below, the class has a consistent time each day, thereby allowing for structure and predictability. Many schools find that this type of schedule results in improved student behavior as well as enhanced academic achievement. This type of scheduling requires planning and flexibility so that students can move in and out of instructional groups when needed, as dictated by the data.

Time	Kdg.	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade
8:00-8:30	Intervention			Reading		Reading	
8:30-9:00	Reading	Intervention			Reading		
9:00-9:30		Reading	Intervention				
9:30-10:00			Reading	Intervention			Reading
10:00-10:30					Intervention		
10:30-11:00						Intervention	
11:00-11:30							Intervention
11:30-12:00							
12:00-12:30							
12:30-1:00							
1:00-1:30							
1:30-2:00							
2:00-2:30							
2:30-3:00							
3:00-3:30							

Note: In reality, the schedule should include a short break between each intervention group to give interventionists time to change groups, materials, and/or locations.



One way to work collaboratively to develop a schedule is illustrated here.

In summary, the leadership team must:

- Identify the amounts of time needed for core and tiered instruction.
- Identify staff members who can provide needed instruction throughout the day.
- Develop a detailed schedule for core, strategic, and intense instruction.

Planning for Interventions for Some and Few

Establishing Effective Interventions for Reading

According to Torgesen (2006), “we will never teach all our students to read if we do not teach our students who have the greatest difficulties to read. Getting to 100% requires going through the bottom 20%.” When a classwide intervention is not warranted, the most efficient way to provide interventions for struggling learners is through small groups in addition to core instruction. This allows the instruction to be targeted to the students’ specific needs, while providing more opportunities to respond and receive feedback.

Intervention curricula at Tier 2 and Tier 3 should be different from the core curriculum, although it must be closely aligned. It must provide targeted and/or comprehensive intervention support. Targeted skill-based lessons are more systematic, explicit, and focused on a small number of specific skills at a time. Louisa Moats, a primary author of LETRS, suggested that the choice of reading interventions depends on a student’s instructional need and what is likely to work best and is not based on chronological age or grade level (Moats, 2019). Research has demonstrated that older students who struggle with reading at the word level benefit from instruction in word study (Scammacca et al., 2007). “A student who has difficulty decoding words should receive instruction in word study whether he is in first grade, fourth grade, or 12th grade. The instructional materials used may vary depending on age and grade level, but the learning objectives remain the same” (Boardman et al., 2008, p. 5).

Although interventions may be guided by different programs than the classroom core program, the instructional routines used to teach the skills and knowledge should be consistent with the instruction provided in the classroom. Instruction, not only in the classroom, but also in the intervention and other support programs (i.e., Title and special education), should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. Having too many programs with too many different instructional routines leads to confusion for struggling readers. Regular collaborative team meetings in which classroom teachers and intervention specialists discuss student needs and progress are key to a successful school-level intervention system.

For supplemental and intensive support to be provided in grades K-3, curriculum materials must be selected that focus on skill-based instruction, which refers to the five essential areas of reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). For intensive supports, curricular materials may differ from those used for supplemental instruction, as students are typically missing many skills or concepts, thus requiring a more comprehensive intervention. Once these curricular materials are provided with fidelity, the problem-solving aspect of the MTSS hybrid model can be used to further intensify and customize supports for students at the intensive level.

Adolescent Supplemental Support

Instruction for supplemental support for adolescents is typically provided through targeted

strategy-based instruction, while intensive support for adolescents is skill-based instruction. These targeted strategies will be described in greater depth in the Instruction Section.

Just as staff members reviewed and evaluated the core curriculum, it is imperative to review the current supplemental and intensive materials to determine what will work best to meet students' academic needs. Curricula for supplemental and intensive instruction should utilize scientifically based reading research (SBRR) interventions that are aligned to the core curricula.

One of the leadership team's challenges is to identify resources that may already be available in the system to provide effective interventions for students. It is critical that the leadership team ensure that intervention programs are implemented regularly with fidelity. Teams should identify the current materials and critically evaluate them to ensure that all essential skills are represented and the materials will support both targeted skill- or strategy-based instruction (supplemental) as well as comprehensive instruction (intensive). In doing this, staff members will be positioned to make the necessary decisions regarding whether gaps exist in the materials that should be filled. Staff members will also be able to make decisions about discontinuing or replacing curricula in a coordinated and consistent manner in response to a lack of effectiveness or research support.

A variety of evidence-based interventions and instructional materials can be found to match learners' needs within each of the groups. It is important to remember that programs do not teach. Success does not depend on which program you buy, but on how trained your teachers are to deliver excellent instruction. For students needing remediation, highly explicit and systematic instruction paired with immediate corrective feedback are essential. When students receive intervention on computer-assisted programs, they may not receive the level or the precision of reteaching needed to overcome misconceptions, etc. According to Stein, Solomon et al. (2022) "Scripted in-person programs are likely to have a stronger effect and may outperform the examined ILs." Prior to selecting, purchasing, or using any instructional materials, teams should carefully review the research base and match it to the student population (Hall, 2011).

After making final curricular selections, building teams should develop a curriculum protocol so that staff members will know what curriculum to use for core instruction and intervention. The interventions are chosen from a list of scientific research bases designed for specific areas of concern. The collaborative teams determine which intervention is to be used first based on the universal screening CBM data. Once the intervention begins, progress monitoring data is used to determine if the intervention needs to be adjusted, intensified, or customized based on pre-established decision rules (McCook, 2006). Once the curriculum protocol is developed, building teams determine a management system for organizing and using the materials selected to ensure that all staff members providing supplemental and intensive intervention know where the materials are located and how they are organized, thereby allowing for efficient planning for instruction.

Effective Intervention Curricula for Reading

Important characteristics for an effective intervention system have been identified, including the following interventions (Torgesen, 2006, p. 7):

- Must be based on the student's need, determined by assessment data.
- Should be offered as soon as it is clear that the student is lagging behind in the development of skills or knowledge critical to reading growth.
- Must significantly increase the intensity of instruction and practice, which is accomplished primarily by increasing instructional time, reducing the size of the instructional group, or doing both.
- Must provide the opportunity for explicit (direct) and systematic instruction and practice along with cumulative review to ensure mastery.
- Must provide skillful instruction including good error correction procedures, along with many opportunities for immediate positive feedback and reward.
- Must be guided by and responsive to data on student progress.
- Must be motivating, engaging, and supportive; a positive atmosphere is essential.

Professional Development for Intervention Curricula

Once the curriculum materials have been selected, it is necessary to provide professional development that is comprehensive, sustained, and intensive enough to support all staff members who are expected to use the curricula to provide instruction. Simply having curriculum materials available at each level (i.e., core, supplemental, intense) does not ensure appropriate use. Staff members must have a working knowledge of the curriculum content and materials as well as an understanding of the planning and pacing process for lesson development. Furthermore, leadership teams must set clear expectations that curricular materials will be implemented and used with fidelity and provide professional development to support such outcomes.

Professional development activities must be differentiated in order to support the individual needs of staff members as they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills enabling them to implement the specified curriculum with fidelity. Initial and ongoing training should be differentiated based on the expectation of use, alignment of materials, and prior knowledge of the content area; such training should also build on prior professional development activities.

Ensuring Fidelity of Intervention Curricula

Similar to curricula for core, this process should proactively identify content and tasks based on individual staff learning needs to result in the knowledge and skills necessary to utilize the curriculum. Appropriate access and utilization of intervention materials should be monitored with intermittent and follow-up actions/tasks. Remember to differentiate professional development to support each staff member.

Again, similar to core curriculum, tools and tasks for monitoring an individuals' fidelity of curriculum implementation are not intended to be punitive, but rather should be understood as a piece of the overall professional development plan. Many purchased curricula and programs come with fidelity-monitoring tools such as observation or walk-through forms. Leadership teams are responsible for establishing a plan to monitor and support the correct and effective use of curriculum materials.

Planning Professional Development

The building leadership team identifies the professional development needs related to curriculum implementation by determining and considering the targeted staff members and the qualities of each specified curriculum.

K-6 Intervention Instruction

During an intervention, students are grouped by instructional need, not necessarily by

chronological age or grade. The instruction in intervention should align with the practices that occur in the core program, although it may be necessary to intensify the instruction depending on the needs of the students. The fluidity of grouping at this level becomes critical to ensure that students can return to less-intensive instruction as quickly as possible to reduce the loss of more instructional time.

Instruction during intervention should:

- Occur in small group sizes, which allows for more opportunities for student response and corrective feedback (see Appendix).
- Be aligned with the instructional practices in the core program.
- Be more systematic, explicit, and focused on a small number of specific skills at a time.
- Be delivered at a quick, engaging pace.
- Be provided with extensive, explicit modeling, and scaffolding.
- Use graphic organizers to reduce cognitive load, if needed.
- Use multi-modality instruction (hear it, say it, see it, read it, write it).

In addition, there are differences in the intensity between strategic and intensive instruction. Intensive intervention must include the following aspects:

- More time is needed for intervention.
- More intensive and explicit instruction.
- More customization of instruction.
- Smaller group size.
- Increased opportunities to respond.
- Immediate corrective feedback.
- More frequent progress monitoring.

Adolescent Intervention

For adolescent literacy, strategic (Tier 2) intervention is designed to provide support to students who need targeted, focused instruction in reading. It is intended to focus primarily on instruction in comprehension and vocabulary strategies, with instruction in phonics such as word reading and/or reading fluency provided when needed. Research supports the use of authentic text from core content classes while providing instructional strategies to support the development of background knowledge and vocabulary within the students' content-area classes.

Skills, Strategies, and Activities

As leadership teams begin planning for effective literacy instruction for all students, teachers must understand how skills, strategies, and activities are different.

- **Skills** relate to the idea of proficiency. The student can orchestrate all of the aspects of the task well and, in most cases, automatically (e.g., reading, knitting, cooking).

- **Strategies** are a set of procedures or steps which an individual learns and then uses more and more independently in order to solve a problem (e.g., chunking). Strategies are more like systematic aids for learning. While strategies have some basic steps or procedures, they are adjusted to meet the demands of each new, but related, task.
- **Activities** are structures that reinforce instruction and promote the development of strategies and skillfulness in reading (e.g., phoneme/grapheme mapping and word sorts). Activities are good for reinforcing/solidifying things, but not for teaching something new.

Professional Development for Instructional Practices and Ensuring Fidelity

It is imperative that the leadership team plan for the significantly challenging task of providing support to staff. Professional development must be carefully planned and implemented to enable staff members to change their instructional practices and fully support MTSS.

The first step is selecting instructional strategies/practices, which should be recorded on the Tier 1 Protocol. The second step is planning ongoing support of staff members to implement the necessary practices. To achieve fidelity of implementation, staff members need initial training as well as ongoing coaching and support to use these practices effectively and efficiently.

The building should also have a process in place to formally monitor the implementation of the instructional practices. In this manner, response and support via coaching can be provided in a timely and encouraging manner. The Kansas MTSS classwide intervention model includes a fidelity check that supports consistency of instruction. This is not an evaluation tool, but rather a way to reduce the variance in treatment.

The following steps can be used to decide how to support staff members in the use of evidence-based instructional practices:

- Develop a plan to provide professional development to appropriate instructional staff members (including EL, Migrant, Title, SPED, paraprofessionals).
- Determine the key elements of instruction that need to be monitored for fidelity.
- Determine a method (e.g., walk-through, peer coaching) to monitor key elements for fidelity.
- Develop and implement a plan to provide training and coaching to instructional staff members who need additional assistance in providing instruction, as identified through monitoring. Monitor the plan for fidelity of implementation.

Professional development activities must be differentiated in order to support the individual needs of staff members as they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, enabling them to implement the specified instructional strategies and practices with fidelity. Initial and ongoing training should be differentiated based on the expectation of use, alignment of practices, and prior knowledge and should also be built on prior professional development activities. The

leadership team should review the Tier 1 Protocol for a reminder of which instructional practices were identified to be supported.

Planning Professional Development

The building leadership team will identify the professional development needs related to the implementation of instructional strategies and practices by identifying and considering the targeted staff members and the qualities of each specified practice.

In planning professional development, it is helpful for the leadership team to consider the following questions specific to each instructional strategy or practice:

- Which staff members, if any, have experience with or have previously received professional development on the strategy/practice?
- Which staff members need to attend initial professional development on the strategy/practice?
- Who will provide the professional development and when (date) will the initial professional development be provided?
- Who will monitor the use/implementation (fidelity) of the strategy/practice and how often?
- Which method will be used to monitor the use/implementation (fidelity) of the strategy/practice (walk through, peer observations, etc.)?
- How will this practice be sustained for new staff members and others who need additional support?

These questions are designed to help leadership teams as they begin the development of an overall professional development plan. Once specific decisions are made, the building leadership team should record the results on the building's results-based staff development plan and/or on a professional development plan. The leadership team should also consider whether the discussion of professional development and fidelity of instruction has led to a need to develop an action plan. Lastly, the team should consider the idea: are there practices that the team should let go of?

Review Policies and Practices for Instruction

Once the instructional practices plan has been completed, the leadership team should review district and building policies and practices regarding instruction to identify whether there are any policies and practices that need to be changed to align with the Tier 1 Protocol. The leadership team should also consider whether the discussion of policies and practices regarding instruction has led to a need to develop an action plan.

Step 3: Use Data to Group Students

Critical Components:

Who: Collaborative teams

When: After every universal screening

Where: Collaborative team meetings

Small-Group/Walk-to-Intervention Groups

Once a small-group approach is established as the best choice, collaborative teams are ready to begin the grouping process. Grouping students according to the recommendation for tiered support (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3) is not sufficient, because these recommendations only indicate the intensity of support the students need for success. Collaborative teams must also determine the relative focus of instruction.

When grouping students for reading, it is essential to consider the predictive indicators associated with the grade level and the time of year the assessment is given. Consider how resources are currently allocated to support instructional groups and whether any changes in resource allocation are warranted.

The building leadership team reviews the decision rules currently in place to ensure that they have been implemented as planned and consider whether any of the decision rules need revision. The decision rules that each team created (e.g., cut-scores and guidelines for movement among and between groups) can be found in the comprehensive assessment plan.

Other building leadership team responsibilities for this step are as follows:

- Conduct fidelity checks to ensure that the collaborative teams have met and conducted the sorting and diagnostic processes correctly.
- Conduct checks to ensure that students are grouped correctly based on both the instructional intensity recommendation and the instructional focus for skill development.
- Review the data to determine whether any classroom needs to implement a classwide intervention and whether that intervention has been planned.
- Consider any needs for professional development.

General Grouping Guidelines

- Locate class or grade list reports.
- Review the students’ scores compared to the benchmark.
- Identify students who need strategic or intensive instructional interventions.
- Can this be validated? What other measures can we consider (state assessments, attendance, reading/writing/spelling screeners, etc.)?
- Follow the recommendations of your assessment system or the KS MTSS and Alignment recommendations for the grade level and the time of year.

Students are initially grouped using the Universal Screening Assessment data. When available, a four-group instructional grouping worksheet, such as the generic one illustrated below, is used to provide an efficient way to organize data into four groups to determine the instructional focus for each student.

More detailed grouping information for all grade levels and grouping worksheets are located in the appendix of the implementation manual. **Note that the grouping worksheets have been revised slightly and reflect a broader intervention rather than laser focus on a single skill.**

Determining Relative Focus of Instruction Using Oral Reading Fluency Data	
<p>Group 1: Accurate and Fluent</p> <p><i>May need enrichment in addition to core instruction</i></p>	<p>Group 2: Accurate but Slow</p> <p><i>May need fluency and vocabulary/comprehension instruction</i></p>
<p>Group 3: Inaccurate and Slow</p> <p><i>Focus on Accuracy with Phonological Awareness/ Phonics/Sight Word Recognition</i></p>	<p>Group 4: Accurate and Fluent but Low Comprehension</p> <p><i>May need support in vocabulary/comprehension</i></p>

Step 4: Determine Relative Focus of Instruction

Once the initial grouping is complete, teams will have the task of making sure the intervention groups are homogenous in need, appropriate in size, effectively staffed, and equipped with curriculum that matches the instructional focus for that group. It is critical to have a good match between the knowledge of the instructor and the intervention the instructor will teach. Therefore, it is important to know the strengths and professional development needs of the instructional providers (e.g., teachers, building aides, and para-educators). Building leadership teams should consider how certified and noncertified staff can best be utilized to teach intervention groups. Instructional effectiveness depends on the use of strong evidence-based instruction and staff training to provide the intervention.

In addition, the building leadership team will need to select appropriate interventions from those documented in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 protocol to identify the protocol interventions to be used with each group.

Determining Instructional Focus for Small Groups

When it has been determined that a class does not need a classwide intervention, planning for small-group instructional focus begins. Once the initial instructional sorting has been completed, the diagnostic process starts. More specific information can be found by following the links to grade-level specific grouping tools:

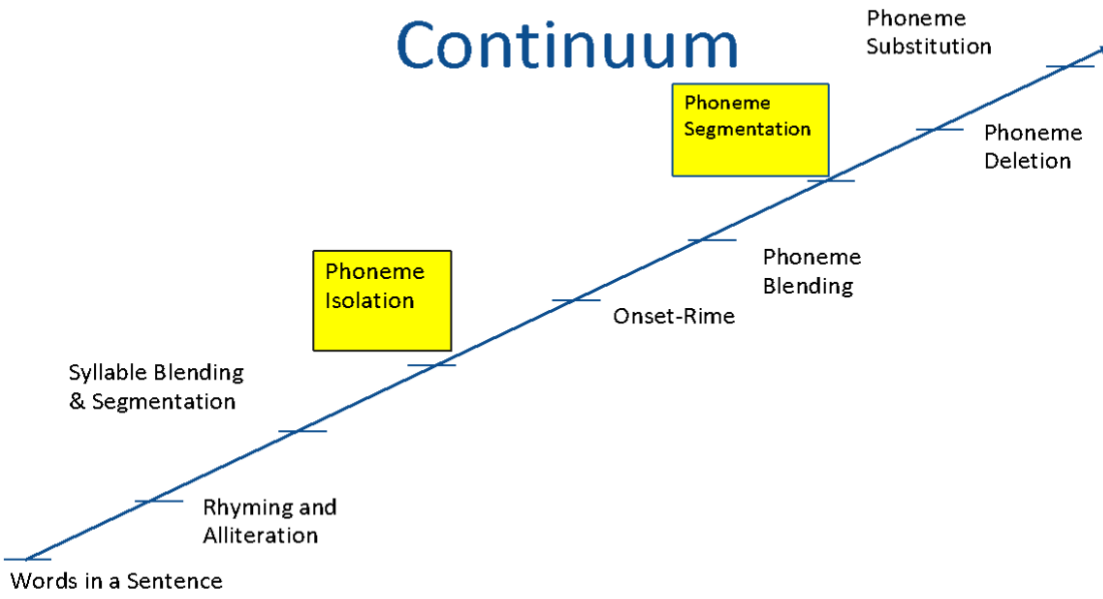
- For grades K-1, follow [this link](#) for steps to problem-solve and group students.
- For grades 2 and above, [follow this link](#) to problem-solve and group students.
- The grouping worksheet is located [here](#).
- The grouping summary is located [here](#).
- The adolescent grouping webinar is located [here](#).

The building leadership team will need to take into consideration grade-level recommendations between older elementary and adolescent readers and determine which methods make sense for their building configurations. In her book, *Educators as Physicians (2010)*, Dr. Jan Hasbrouck states, “The CBM research on oral reading fluency has indicated that these assessments lose some of their predictive power once students reach the Grade 6 reading level.”

Students in Group 3 on the Oral Reading Fluency Grouping Worksheet (grades 2 and above) need additional assessment to determine their instructional focus. This group should be given a phonics assessment (e.g., QPS or PSI) and possibly a phonological screener (e.g., PAST or PASI) to determine their instructional needs. These assessments are based on skill continuums. It is important to note that not all children follow the continuums illustrated below; these are just general progressions.

Students should be placed in an intervention group that addresses the lowest skill or skills not yet mastered but expected to be mastered for the students’ grade level. For purposes of the Kansas MTSS, a student must score at least 90% on a phonics diagnostic task to be considered as having mastered that skill. For Phonological Awareness diagnostic tasks, the Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends 80% or more for a student to demonstrate mastery.

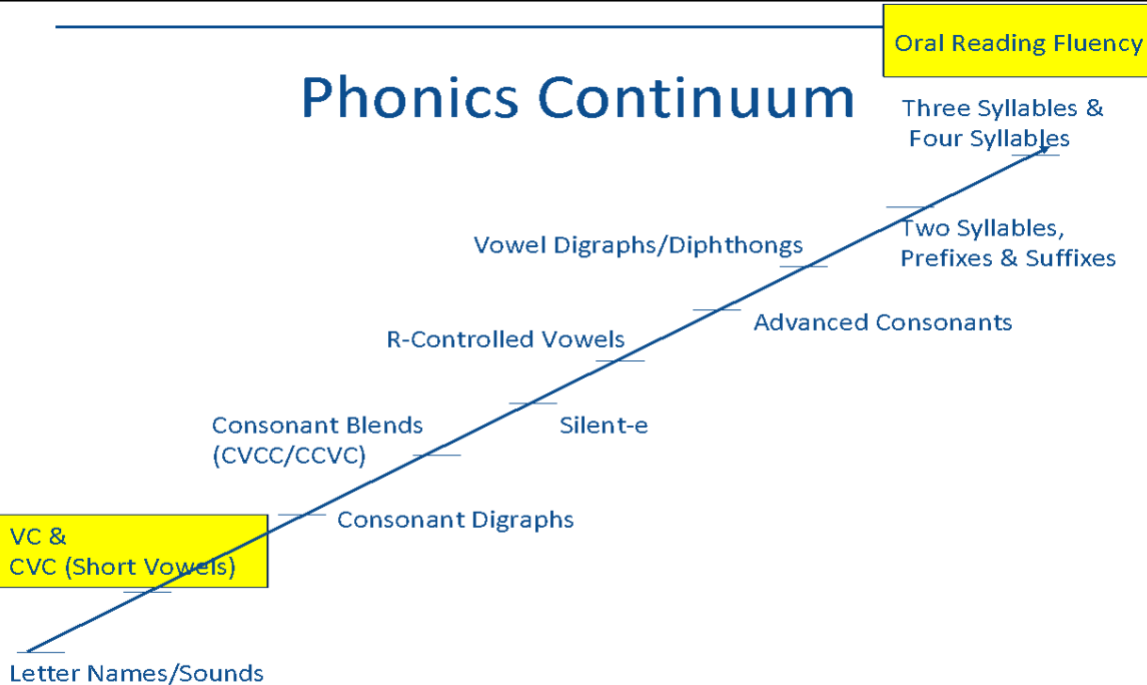
Phonological Awareness Continuum



www.ksdetasn.org/mtss

*Yellow highlighted boxes indicate skills assessed with typical universal screening measures.

Phonics Continuum



www.ksdetasn.org/mtss

It is important to make a good match between the knowledge of the instructor and the intervention the instructor will teach. Therefore, it is important to know the strengths and professional development needs of the instructional providers (e.g., teachers, para-educators). For instance, some teachers are confident in teaching advanced phonics skills, while others are more skilled at teaching reading comprehension. Building leadership teams must consider how certified and noncertified staff members can best be used to teach intervention groups. The building leadership team should plan to provide any needed professional development to ensure that instructional staff members have the necessary skills to provide reading instruction. Instructional effectiveness depends on the use of strong evidence-based instruction and staff training to provide the intervention.

In addition, the building leadership team will need to choose appropriate Tier 2 and 3 interventions from those documented in the implementation protocol (from Structuring) to identify the protocol interventions to be used with each group and document the interventions selected for each group.

It is critical that there be an explicit connection between the students' needs, the level of strategic or intensive instruction, and the focus of instruction. The most successful groupings and progress occur when specific student skill deficits are pinpointed and aligned with the appropriate intervention. Building leadership teams will need to transfer appropriate Tier 2/3 interventions from those documented on the implementation protocol (from structuring) to the oral reading fluency grouping summary for use by the collaborative teams. The building leadership team should communicate clearly to teachers and interventionists that protocol interventions selected for each group come from the Tier 2 and Tier 3 protocol. When conducting universal screening, it is essential to revisit and refine the alignment of student needs with the levels of intervention intensity and the instructional focus of the groupings.

Remember that programs do not teach. Success does not depend on a program but on how well trained the interventionists are in those materials as well as in strong instructional practices.

For further professional development in the five areas of reading, the LETRS modules are designed to provide deep foundational knowledge that will enable interventionists to be optimally effective when delivering instruction. The latest information on LETRS training can be accessed through the KSDTASN website.

Finally, if your screening system does not provide grouping details, it is important to document the final instructional groupings in order to organize the students in the variety of groups that will be needed. The document should include details such as the names of the students in the group, the focus of instruction, the name of the interventionist, the progress monitoring tool and frequency, and other important information. This approach ensures clear communication, organization, and understanding of the instructional groupings so the groups can be implemented in an efficient manner. A sample of the instructional assignment worksheet for reading is in the Appendix; it can be revised or created to suit the school's needs.

Notes for Building Leadership Teams

The responsibilities of the building leadership team for this step are as follows:

- Conduct fidelity checks to ensure that the collaborative teams have met and performed the diagnostic process correctly and that they are following the guidelines for assigning curriculum and instruction to match the students' needs.
- Conduct checks to ensure that students are placed into groups correctly according to their level of intensity and based on the data from the diagnostic process.
- Consider any needs for professional development.
- Consider how resources are currently allocated to support instructional groups and whether any changes in resource allocation are warranted.
- Ensure that the Tier 2 and Tier 3 protocol is being used and determine if modifications to the protocol are needed.
- Consider any needs for professional development.

To ensure that an effective, coherent system is created, teams must use the self-correcting feedback loop to continually meet the needs of all students. This provides leaders with enhanced visibility into school performance and improved decision-making. Teachers have a clear understanding of what works best in raising student achievement, and students can demonstrate achievement.

Step 5: Progress Monitoring

Critical Components:

Who: Building leadership and collaborative teams

What: Intervention logs, individual progress monitoring charts, research-based practices resource, list of steps for intensifying an intervention, list of steps for customizing an intervention.

When: As determined by the frequency of collaborative team meetings

Where: Collaborative team meetings

Why: Ensure that appropriate instructional adjustments are made in a timely manner dependent on student response to intervention.

“Often principals try to alleviate the stress level of teachers by postponing progress monitoring. However, by postponing progress monitoring you will lose the data that motivate teachers to keep going because progress monitoring documents the improvements that students are making” (Hall, 2011). Ongoing progress monitoring is essential for students receiving interventions to ensure all students are achieving adequate progress. Data from progress monitoring tracks how students are responding to an intervention; without this data, instruction is just a best guess.

The purpose of progress monitoring is to determine if the instruction provided is working and beginning to close the gap. It should provide a teacher not with summative information but more of a GPS to determine what comes next for each student. Therefore, it is critical for the progress monitoring tool to match the focus of the intervention.

“A progress monitoring protocol that includes assessment frequent enough to make informed and student-centered decisions is important to any intervention system” (Riccomini & Witzel, 2010). The building leadership team will determine the frequency of progress monitoring data collection and review for the building. When determining the frequency of progress monitoring data collection, it is important to consider: 1) how quickly students typically learn the skills that are the focus of instruction and 2) how frequently collaborative teams will meet to review progress monitoring data for instructional adjustments based on the decision rules of the system. The frequency of progress monitoring is influenced by how quickly instructional adjustments can be made. The recommended frequency of progress monitoring for instruction and weekly for students receiving intensive (Tier 3) instruction.

Progress monitoring of students in intervention is critical to ensure appropriately targeted instruction leading to student growth. Students whose teachers monitor progress regularly and use that data to make instructional decisions demonstrate more academic progress than students whose teachers do not monitor progress. Teachers' accuracy in judging student progress increases when progress monitoring is used consistently (Stecker & Fuchs, 2000). It is through frequent progress monitoring that the ultimate goal of returning students to less intensive instruction in a short time period can be achieved.

Before informed decisions can be made regarding whether students receiving interventions are making progress, it is important for the building leadership team to review any issues that may be impacting the validity of the progress monitoring data, including whether the directions of the test administration were followed, if shadow scoring was used, the level of staff training, and whether time recommendations of the assessment were being followed.

At the same time, the building leadership team supports the collaborative teams in determining whether individual students receiving interventions are making progress. The leadership team also needs to consider whether any patterns or trends can be seen across all the progress monitoring results. If most students are progressing sufficiently, then all staff members can celebrate how well the system is succeeding. However, if a large percentage of students are not making progress, the leadership team needs to consider the effectiveness of the interventions and what might be changed to enhance their effectiveness.

The building leadership team's responsibilities for progress monitoring include:

- Determining the frequency of progress monitoring data collection for supplemental and intensive intervention.
- Determining the frequency with which collaborative teams should meet to review the progress monitoring data.
- Reviewing the decision rules regarding the number of data points needed to determine if student performance indicates that adjustment to instruction may be appropriate.
- Conducting fidelity checks to ensure that the collaborative teams are following the guidelines for frequency of progress monitoring.
- Considering whether the staff has been informed about the data point decision rules of the system.

Matching Progress Monitoring to Instructional Need

Some curricular materials contain measures for assessing student growth that are frequently labeled progress monitoring measures. However, these measures are actually pre- and post-assessments in that they reflect whether students are learning the skills taught by that program. While the assessments serve an important role in guiding the curriculum, they do not measure whether students are improving in all the critical skills measured by an integrated screening and progress monitoring data system. Progress monitoring using CBM measures and carefully identified behavioral measures can provide information about the effectiveness of the curriculum, whether students in intervention are closing the achievement gap with their grade level peers, and whether instruction needs to be adjusted. The tools recommended for academic progress monitoring should match the universal screener that was originally used to identify students requiring interventions (Torgesen, 2006).

Setting Ambitious Progress Monitoring Goals

A common practice in the past has been to progress monitor a student at a lower grade level instead of the actual grade in which the student is currently enrolled. Consult your assessment system to determine if this practice is appropriate for the tools you are using. As a general rule, if a student is performing close to grade level, then the progress monitoring materials used and goal should be set at grade level. Grade-level end-of-year benchmarks and target scores should be used for the goal.

If a student is not performing close to grade level, the collaborative teams will need to refer to their assessment system for progress monitoring guidelines. For many systems, the recommendation is to progress monitor the skill being taught or even to progress monitor at grade level. In other systems, backward testing will be used to determine the appropriate level for progress monitoring.

When setting goals within your system, it is important to have an end-of-year target that is both ambitious and realistic. It is more effective to involve students in setting their own goals and in monitoring their own progress (Chappuis, 2005). Research has indicated that ambitious goals produce better results than less ambitious goals (McCook, 2006). Without ambitious goals, students in interventions can make progress but continue to lag behind grade level without closing the achievement gap between themselves and their peers who are receiving high-quality interventions. It is appropriate to expect more than a year's growth in a year's time, even if the student has not achieved that rate of growth in the past. Fuchs, Fuchs, and Deno (1985) found that, when teachers and students established high goals and increased them based on the data, the student's progress was faster than that of students who had lower performance goals that remained fixed.

Many progress monitoring systems set the aim line for teachers using an algorithm with the expected rate of improvement (ROI). Teachers should ensure that the system is not setting a goal far above the benchmark. If a student is scoring at benchmark for that time of year, teachers should be aware of this and change their intervention placement. While there are many factors to consider, a good starting place for setting a goal if the system does not do this automatically is to start with the rate of improvement goal that corresponds to the students' instructional reading level rather than their current grade level (Hasbrouck, 2010). Below is a general guide of what might be expected.

Expected Rate of WCPM Increase by Week		
Grade Level	Realistic Goal	Ambitious Goal
1	2.0	3.0
2	1.5	2.0
3	1.0	1.5
4	.85	1.1
5	.5	.8
6	.3	.65

When reviewing progress monitoring data, it is important to look at both the increase in accuracy as well as the rate. It is common for the accuracy to improve before the rate improves. Educators must make sure a skill is accurate before working on increasing a student’s fluency with that skill. Reading fast is never the end goal; reading for understanding is the ultimate goal.

Using Progress Monitoring to Guide Intervention Instruction

Perhaps the most innovative use of progress monitoring tools is the ability to rapidly and frequently ascertain whether an intervention is actually working and make instructional adjustments based on this data. Placement in an intervention should be flexible. It is not necessary to wait until the next universal screening date to consider changes. Instead, the data should drive continual evaluation of student progress. In this manner, instructional adjustments and self-corrections should allow gaps to close much more quickly.

Teams must meet frequently enough to review progress-monitoring data and make instructional adjustments based on the decision rules of the system. Building and collaborative teams must ask the following key question: Do we have enough data to make a confident instructional decision? It is important that teams collect a reasonable number of data points to establish a trend; to do so, teams should examine the most recent consecutive scores to determine instructional success. The analysis of progress monitoring data is a two-step process: (1) determine whether the student is making progress, and (2) determine whether the rate of growth is sufficient to close the achievement gap. The most valid means of defining progress is through analysis of slope and level (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). When analyzing slope, the team determines whether the student is making progress by comparing the student's current level of performance to the identified goal. When looking at levels, the team determines if the student's progress is sufficient to close the achievement gap by comparing the student's current performance to the final desired level of performance, which is typically the grade-level benchmark. Thus, the analysis of progress monitoring data involves two steps: (1) determine

whether progress is being made (slope) and (2) determine whether the achievement gap is closing (level).

The following are some general patterns teams may encounter as they analyze an individual student's progress monitoring data. Consider these two questions when looking for growth:

- Is the student growing?
- Is the growth enough to close the achievement gap?

Consecutive Data Points Above the Aimline

If a student has data points consecutively above the aimline, team members know the intervention is having a positive impact and progress is being made. The intervention needs to continue until the student meets the criteria based on the decision rules determined. Collaborative teams will need to ensure that the decision rule is followed. Once the criteria for the decision rule is met, options include:

- Regrouping to work on the next missing skill.
- Increasing the student's end-of-year performance goal until he/she is at grade level (academics).
- Exiting the supplemental intervention and continuing the student in the core curriculum with periodic progress monitoring, only if the student has met the benchmark for his/her grade level.

The ultimate goal for students in intervention is to close the achievement gap between where the student is currently performing and the grade-level performance of peers. The chart of a student who is closing the gap will show a trend line that will intersect with the goal line before the end of the year (or another monitoring period of time).

Consecutive Data Points Below the Aimline

If consecutive data points are below the aimline, an adjustment to the intervention may be needed. Many things can influence whether a student makes progress, so it is important to have a systematic process for analyzing the cause, starting with the most basic and easiest adjustment.

How to Adjust an Intervention

In analyzing a lack of progress, the team must look into each of the following adjustments in sequence:

1. Check to ensure that the skill being progress monitored is the same as the instructional focus (what is being taught).
2. If the skill and the progress monitoring measure are consistent, check the fidelity of instruction.
3. If both of the previous adjustments are happening, consider increasing the pace of the instruction. Academically, teachers often respond to a student having difficulty in learning by slowing the pace of instruction, when in fact they need to increase it. Slowing the pace of instruction can result in lower levels of student attention and motivation, while a faster pace can keep students engaged. The pace of instruction is related to the number of student-teacher interactions per minute. For intensive intervention with groups of three or fewer, students should be expected to provide five correct responses per minute (via choral or individual

responses).

4. Consider modifying the pace of intervention. For example, the pace of intervention can be slowed by reducing the number of new skills introduced each week. If new skills are being introduced at the rate of five per week, consider introducing only three per week and providing a greater amount of practice on each skill before moving to the next skill.
5. Ensure the alignment of programs. Teams should ensure that vocabulary and instructional routines are used the same way in both core curriculum and interventions.
6. Adjust the instructional materials. Examples include:
 - Add manipulatives.
 - Use decodable text until ready for authentic text.
 - Change the intervention program.
 - Move the student to a different intervention group.

Again, the slope and level of the progress monitoring graph can support teams in making decisions regarding changes to intervention and must be analyzed.

Sometimes, a minor adjustment is not enough to change the trajectory of a student's progress. In this case, we are looking at two specific slope and level types.

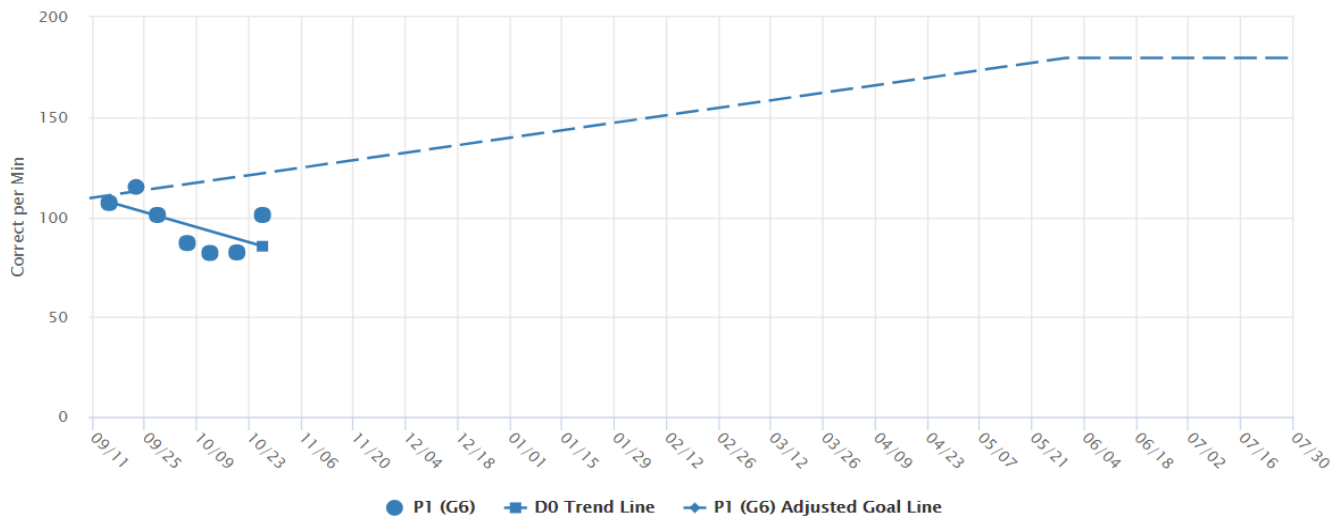
In the first example graph below, the student is making progress, but not at a fast enough rate to close the gap. If the team determines the student is showing growth, but at a rate insufficient to close the gap, the team should determine how to increase the intensity of the current instruction (see below).

- Increase the number of student responses in a minute by reducing group size.
- Increase the number of questions and error corrections the student receives in a minute.
- Increase the scaffolding by breaking down the task into smaller steps or providing more structure so the student can succeed.
- Spend more time using "I do" and "We do" guided practice activities before the student practices independently.
- Increase the number of repetition cycles for each skill before determining whether mastery is achieved.
- Use a more systematic curriculum so that skills are taught in a prescribed manner, with the teacher asking questions and cueing with the same language for each routine (Hall, 2008).

Not Making Progress – Customize the Intervention

In this example, both slope and level are cause for concern. If the graph of student performance shows a nonresponse by level and slope, then teams should consider customizing the intervention.

CBMreading English Progress Monitoring Report



When a student receiving intervention fails to show progress, teams should consider issues related to the instruction, curriculum, setting, and the individual when reviewing student progress monitoring data. The research-based practices tool (found in the Appendix) offers a way for teams to discuss underlying causes of the student's lack of progress.

How to Customize an Intervention

1. Make sure the student is receiving an intensive protocol intervention with fidelity.
2. Determine whether a revision to the program is needed to boost the student's rate of improvement. Add one researched instructional practice to the protocol intervention.
3. Analyze the progress monitoring data on the added instructional practice before adding another instructional practice.

Responsibilities of the building leadership team for this step are to:

- Communicate regularly with all collaborative teams to ensure that progress monitoring data is collected, reviewed, and used to inform instruction.
- Consider any needs for professional development.
- Consider whether staff members have the needed materials and know the procedures for maintaining an intervention log.
- Consider how staff members and resources are currently allocated to support instructional groups and whether any changes in staff/resource allocation are warranted.
- Conduct fidelity checks to ensure that the collaborative teams are following the progress monitoring guidelines for their assessment system.

Step 6: Document Interventions

It is critical for teams to keep a record of what has occurred for a student in addition to their progress monitoring data. Both universal screening and progress monitoring data need to be organized so they are usable for teams to determine when to make an adjustment in intervention. Keeping both data sources easily accessible for all stakeholders is a good method to ensure its use by interventionists and core classroom teachers.

There are different ways to keep these data visible and usable. Charts are best for visual representations to help staff members interpret the progress monitoring data in relation to the student's goal. Assessment cards are an additional option for displaying both screening data and progress monitoring information to staff members. Examples from schools in Kansas are shown below. Whatever method of data display is used, it is important to ensure that the data is maintained in a confidential manner but is readily available to staff members who work with the students.



Building leadership teams also need to consider how individual student data will be shared with parents. Specific suggestions on how to share data with families can be accessed through KPIRC, the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc).

Interventions also need to be logged once students are placed in the appropriate groups. The student intervention log and the progress monitoring graph should be consistently updated so that an accurate record of the interventions and results can be maintained. It is critical for teachers to document both the instruction they are providing and the intervention sessions that each student actually attends. This documentation is pivotal as a source of information when analyzing student growth. This cycle of assessing, adjusting, and adding to the data graph or log continues as long as a student requires intervention. Some assessment systems currently allow teachers to keep all of this within the progress monitoring system.

Among students who continue to be non-responsive to interventions, it becomes critical to begin moving from a group problem-solving model to a more individualized format. The individual student problem-solving process is what schools have traditionally used for general education interventions, often conducted by student improvement teams. Within the Kansas MTSS model, the collaborative teams conduct the work of the general education intervention or student improvement team. In any case that a building leadership or collaborative team suspects a student could have an exceptionality, the team must refer the student for an initial evaluation. Any parent request for a special education evaluation must be reported to the building administrator or to the appropriate staff member, as designated by district special education procedures. The Kansas MTSS should not delay a student from receiving a special education evaluation. A student does not have to move through all the tiers before a referral for a special education evaluation is made. Conversely, having received all tiers of instruction or needing Tier 3 instruction alone does not indicate that a student should be referred for a special education evaluation.

When the Kansas MTSS is implemented, all parents/guardians must be informed of the nature of student performance data being collected, the general education services being provided, strategies for increasing a student's rate of learning, and parents' right to request an evaluation (K.A.R. 91-40-10(f)(2)). Staff members and parents need to understand that a student can be referred for a special education initial evaluation when: (1) the school has data-based documentation indicating that general education interventions and strategies would be inadequate to address the areas of concern for the student or (2) the school has data-based documentation that:

- The student was provided appropriate instruction by qualified staff members in regular education.
- The student was provided repeated assessment of academic achievement to demonstrate the student's progress during instruction.
- The assessment results were shared with the parents.

The results indicated that an evaluation is appropriate (K.A.R. 91-40-7(c)).

Ongoing Problem-Solving and Refining Your System

Continuous Improvement of Your Kansas MTSS

This section should be utilized as a reference for addressing fidelity to the system and provide a process for improvement and continual refinement of the systems pieces of the Kansas MTSS framework.

Just as data drives student instructional decisions, data also needs to drive system-level decisions. Beginning as early as the start of implementation, District and Building Leadership Teams should begin to take a hard look at your system and, using the Self-Correcting Feedback Loop, develop an action plan for refining for next fall.

The synthesis and analysis of all data provide the Building Leadership Team an opportunity to analyze the progress made toward the goals set during Structuring and at the beginning of each year by comparing current building-level data to those desired outcomes. This is the first step in bringing together all the Kansas MTSS components within the building and across the district and refining them to build a system that truly supports student learning. Several tools are provided in this section for your teams to use in the spring as part of the system evaluation.

Integrated MTSS Implementation Scale

The Integrated MTSS Implementation Scale (IMIS) is used to inform staff members of their progress toward implementing the Kansas Multi-Tiered System of Supports and Alignment.

Core Beliefs/Mission Statement Review

Teams often find a deeper level of understanding of the core beliefs and a more honest picture of the true values held within a district after the first year of implementation. This is a great time to review the core beliefs developed during the structuring phase. After the district and/or building leadership

team and/or all building staff members have completed a reflection on the core beliefs, the district and/or building leadership team should work through the feedback received and make this a part of their systems reflection.

Family Engagement Survey Results (FES)

This survey is provided through an electronic link supplied to districts as part of the Kansas MTSS implementation training series and compiled by the KU evaluation team. This data provides a great window into how families are seeing the district system as a whole meeting their needs and communicating well.

Final System Progress Determination

Once data has been collected from all stakeholders through these various tools, districts and buildings are ready to take a reflective look at how the system is functioning and the possible gaps that may need to be addressed.

The district and building leadership team must evaluate the data in its entirety. Based on a final evaluation of the data, considering convergence of data and confidence in data (e.g., number of data points), the building leadership team will make a final determination for each item as to the progress toward full Implementation that has been made.

Prioritizing and Allocating Resources

With an understanding of limited resources (time, staff, and funds) and the need to effectively support and monitor practices, the district and building leadership teams must prioritize items that will be the focus of attention. Early in implementation, it is critical not to make hasty decisions for change.

During the first year of implementation, the focus will most likely be refinement to improve the practices identified in the original Implementation plan or the addition of new practices to fill holes within the system. Decisions to make significant changes in the curricula protocol/matrix, instructional practices, or comprehensive assessment system are typically addressed during the second or third year of implementation. This provides staff members with an opportunity to become proficient with instructional, curricular, and assessment practices while enabling the leadership team to have complete confidence in the data. However, in some instances, such as when there is questionable evidence for a practice, if multiple sources of data indicate the practice is ineffective, then change should be considered at any point in time.

The building leadership team must take these considerations, reflections, and data into account and prudently determine how to proceed. There may be critical aspects that need to be addressed immediately. The building leadership team must determine which should be addressed first and which could be addressed at a later time.

One way to approach the process of prioritizing is to consider the impact of each item/action/practice on student success and the difficulty of implementing the change. Using the following quadrant to evaluate the impact and difficulty of the solution may assist the team in prioritizing where to best place efforts for next fall.

		Difficulty	
		High	Low
Impact	High		
	Low		

Teams should remember that the level of difficulty does not determine whether action will be taken on any single item. Sometimes the more difficult fix takes precedence. The prioritizing action form can be used to complete this work. Once all actions are carefully considered, the building leadership team develops a plan or modifies an existing plan to reflect the prioritized actions and timeline for implementation.

Planning Improvement Actions

Teams should consider how many priorities for system refinement will be addressed to ensure that meaningful implementation can take place. Trying to do too much or too little will not result in lasting

system change! The optimal level of system change depends upon building needs, student needs, and the school's established culture. Attention should be given to items identified as high impact. An implementation plan for each selected action needs to be developed and recorded on an action plan or the professional development plan. Invariably, other tasks/responsibilities/obstacles will come up during the course of planning for system refinement. Often these are logistical issues that are important to maintaining the system, but they may not necessarily reflect prioritized actions for system refinement.

These actions should be presented in a to-do list so they are accomplished, but they will not be reflected on a formal action plan.

Providing Communication of System Progress and Improvement

As the district and building leadership teams adjust to meet the ever-changing needs of the system, it is imperative that bi-directional communication continues to flow among all sections of the self-correcting feedback loop. Changes in the system must be documented and communicated to the collaborative teams and the district leadership team for future reference.

After action planning is completed, attention must be given to effectively communicate the actions to be taken. As the building leadership team identifies and prioritizes actions to be taken, the Planning for Communication tool should be updated, and a plan to share all actions with respective stakeholders developed. Effective communication procedures ensure the building leadership team has the knowledge of and input into decisions flowing from the collaborative teams. The principal and leadership team must:

- Ensure that the team represents all stakeholders and add missing representation.
- Make wise decisions about how to proceed.
- Know when to publicize.
- Create unity so that the pieces fit together.
- Run interference if key players begin to resist the initiative.
- Make decisions in a very deliberate manner (Hall, 2008).

As the building leadership team identifies and prioritizes actions to be taken, each should be recorded on the Planning for Communication tool and a plan be developed to share all actions with respective stakeholders. It is also important, as part of the process for the building leadership team, to communicate strengths of the system with collaborative teams, the district leadership team, and families.

Reflecting Effort in the School Improvement Plan and KESA

The building and district focus on the Kansas MTSS should clearly connect with KESA goals and school improvement plans. For this reason, KESA planning, the school improvement plan, the results-based staff development plan, and the district plan should be easily aligned. It is prudent to ensure alignment

so teams can use resources in the most efficient way to maximize instruction and curriculum effectiveness and support relevant professional development. A multi-year plan will better address the diverse needs for professional development and support. Keep in mind that the MTSS is not a plan that can or will happen overnight; therefore, the building leadership team must continually encourage, celebrate, and challenge each aspect of the Kansas MTSS framework.

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Appendix

Recommended Grade Levels	Skills Measured	Example Sub-tests
Pre-K	Language and vocabulary, letter names and sounds, first sounds, rhyme and alliteration	Early reading composite
K-1	Automaticity in letter name Identification and/or segmenting phonemes	Letter naming fluency (LNF) Letter sound fluency First sound fluency Onset sounds Phoneme segmentation Word segmenting
1	Proficiency and automaticity in the Alphabetic Principle	Nonsense word fluency (NWF) Nonsense words
1-3	Reading connected text accurately and fluently	Oral reading fluency (ORF) CBMreading
4-6	Reading connected text accurately and fluently	Oral reading fluency (ORF) CBMreading
	Basic comprehension	Re-tell/Comprehension Questions aReading Maze/Daze
7-8	Reading connected text accurately and fluently	CBMreading Oral reading fluency (ORF)
9-12	Reading Comprehension	aReading STAR reading NWEA MAP

Appendix: Reading Diagnostic Assessments			Five Essential Reading Components				
NOTE: Informal diagnostic tools are highlighted in gray							
Reading Assessment (listed in alphabetical order)	Grade Level Assessed	Type	Phonological	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
Comprehensive Reading Inventory (CRI) 2007 Edition	K-12	Criterion Referenced	X	X	X	X	X
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)	K-12+	Norm Referenced	X				
Diagnostic Decoding Surveys	1-12	Criterion Referenced		X			
Developmental Reading Assessment – 2 (DRA-2)	K-3	Criterion Referenced	X	X	X	X	X
Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR)	K-12	Criterion Referenced	X	X	X	X	X
Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests, 4th Edition	K-12+	Norm Referenced	X	X		X	X
Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation, 2001 Edition (GRADE)	Pre-K-12+	Norm Referenced	X	X		X	X
Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT IV)	K-12	Norm Referenced		X	X		X
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 4th Edition (PPVT)	Pre-K-12+	Norm Referenced				X	
Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)	1-3	Criterion Referenced	X	X	X	X	X
Phonological Awareness Skills Test	K+	Criterion Referenced	X				
Test of Word Recognition Efficiency (TOWRE)	K-12+	Norm Referenced	X	X	X	X	X
Qualitative Reading Inventory- 4(QRI-4)	K-12	Criterion Referenced		X			X
Quick Phonics Screener	1+	Criterion Referenced		X			

Tiered System of Support Comparison of Models

Model	Considerations	Advantages	Disadvantages	Scheduling	Resources
Pull Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works best when numbers of students needing assistance is small and/or done across grade levels. • Students in the group need to have the same instructional needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most similar to traditional practice. • Minimal logistical planning needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition time to resource needed. • Most schools have more students to serve than this model accommodate s. • Coordination with planning and reviewing progress monitoring data between teachers is needed. • General education teachers need to make sure students being pulled out are not missing core curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, each grade level receives support ½ hour to one hour each day. • Students served with this model are not pulled out of the general education curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model rarely requires extra or changes in resources.
In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works best when numbers of students needing assistance is small. • Students in group need to have same instructional needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students stay in class for intervention time. • Classroom teacher works with at least one group of his/her own students. • Students may be moved more flexibly in and out of intervention time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most schools have more students to serve than this model accommodate s. • Coordination with planning and reviewing progress monitoring data is needed between other teachers who help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, each grade level receives support ½ hour each day. • Can be done while other students are rotating through centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom supervisor may be necessary to protect uninterrupted intervention time.

Model	Considerations	Advantages	Disadvantages	Scheduling	Resources
Intervention Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most likely used when number of students needing intervention is large or beyond what can be done by the teacher and one support staff member. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A team can accommodate a larger number of groups. • Larger numbers of groups can create more options when students' needs change. • Allows time for additional support for Tier III. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition time to new groups needed. • General education teacher disconnected from student and instructional planning. • Interventionists report wanting to have the students for longer periods of time. • Training and support need to be coordinated. • May be easy to overlook the need to make core curricular changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, each grade level receives support ½ hour each day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the number of intervention groups necessary, resources may need to be rethought in the school. • Adequate training and support is built into the model. • Students most in need should have the most qualified interventionists.
Walk to Intervention Cross-Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to intervention team approach, but grade-level teachers used as interventionists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated time by grade level ensures that all students receive extra reading time without conflicts to missing general education curriculum. • Allows for several certified staff members to provide reading interventions. • Easier to develop intervention groups for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition time to new groups needed. • General education teacher sometimes disconnected from student and instructional planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each grade level coordinates intervention time with other reading teachers (reading specialists/ special education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the number of intervention groups necessary, teachers may be able to provide more guided assistance to students barely on track. On the other hand, other building or district personnel could be called upon to assist.

Model	Considerations	Advantages	Disadvantages	Scheduling	Resources
		<p>students needing enrichment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When teachers have built in collaborative time, discussions about groupings and individual students can be built in. Allows time for additional support for Tier III. 			
Walk to Intervention Cross-Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider when the number of students on track is considerably less than those not on track. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for more individualized and intense instruction based on reading and skill level. Increased focus on reading due to no transition time necessary. Teacher provides time to gauge students' skill level and increased time allows him/her more flexibility in meeting needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires difficult decisions to be made regarding other important curriculum matters. Requires thinking about things very differently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduling takes into consideration resources needed and grade-level requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources can be allocated in larger chunks of time.
SECONDARY ONLY: Alternative Class (Required Elective)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with similar needs are scheduled with an intervention teacher for basic skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works well in high school schedule. Enables students to progress in core content classes while 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students lose the choice of what may be a preferred elective class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires that students with common needs be available during the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of students and their needs will determine how many class periods the

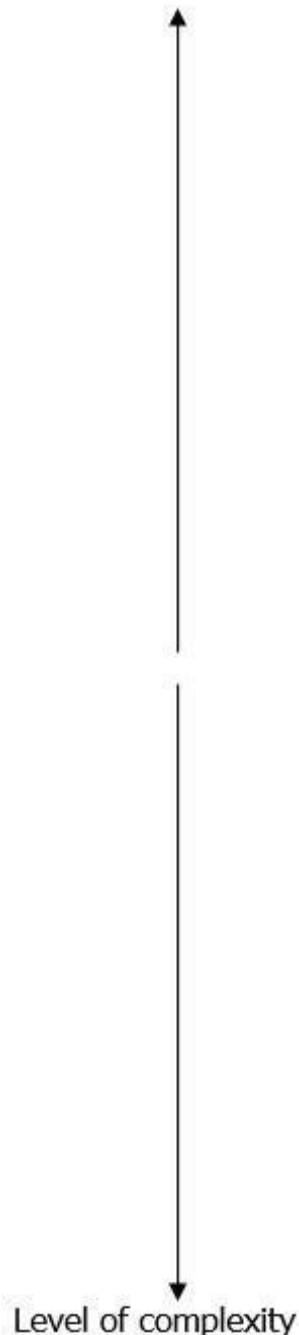
Model	Considerations	Advantages	Disadvantages	Scheduling	Resources
	<p>instruction while remaining in the core English/Language Arts (ELA) or math course.</p>	<p>improving basic literacy or math skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interventionist may be able to provide both student instruction and teacher consultation. Convenient for using purchased curriculum for struggling readers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires having a staff member with specialized knowledge of basic skill instruction. 	<p>same class period.</p>	<p>interventionist needs to schedule.</p>
<p>Intervention Team (Homeroom)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each teacher takes a group of students for intervention, including students at benchmark or above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works well in middle school schedules. Providing intervention during homeroom time helps with fluidity of grouping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires common planning time for teachers to collaborate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional groups can be matched to teachers' individual skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some buildings may need to increase the amount of time allowed for homeroom.
<p>SECONDARY ONLY: All School Seminar or Advisory Period</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students receive extensions, additional practice, or supplemental or intense instruction during seminar time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many secondary schools already have an advisory or seminar period built into their schedules. Ensures that all students (advanced learners, benchmark students, and students with learning difficulties) receive some type of intervention. Enables departmental planning for interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires that focus of seminar be changed to instruction. This may mean a loss of time for student organizations and may also conflict with scheduled teacher planning times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way students are scheduled into seminar may need to be reorganized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changed purpose of seminar will require that more teachers be engaged in instruction during that period.

SECONDARY ONLY: Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All English/Language Arts (ELA) classes are scheduled throughout the school day and are grouped heterogeneously. • A reading support elective (mandatory) is added to the schedule to allow for enrichment for Tier 1 or Tier 2 intervention. • Students in need of Tier 3 intervention receive 2 periods of intense instruction in addition to the ELA class. • Intervention classes are blended across grades and populations based on student need. • Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention classes are scheduled during the same period as much as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA classes are scheduled throughout the day. • ELA classes are heterogeneously grouped. • Students are pulled out for Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention during other classes. • Tier 2 intervention may occur within another class (e.g., social studies). • Intervention classes are homogeneously grouped based on student need. • Intervention classes are blended across grades and populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA classes are double blocked (one period core credit and one period elective). • ELA classes are scheduled at the same time of day as much as possible. • ELA classes are homogeneously grouped based on assessed need and grade level. • Pacing, intensity, content, exposure to the core, and explicit instruction are based on assessed student need. • Classes are blended across populations. • This option is useful when large numbers of students need intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA classes are heterogeneously grouped for students in Tier 1 and Tier 2. • ELA classes are scheduled throughout the day. • Students requiring Tier 3 intervention are removed from grade-level curriculum and receive 2 blocked periods of intense intervention. The class counts for one grade level and one elective class. Classes are blended across grade levels and populations. • Tier 2 classes are homogeneously grouped and replace one elective class. Classes are blended across grade levels and populations. • Tier 2 and Tier 3 classes are parallel scheduled as much as possible.

Grade Level group: 8th Grade

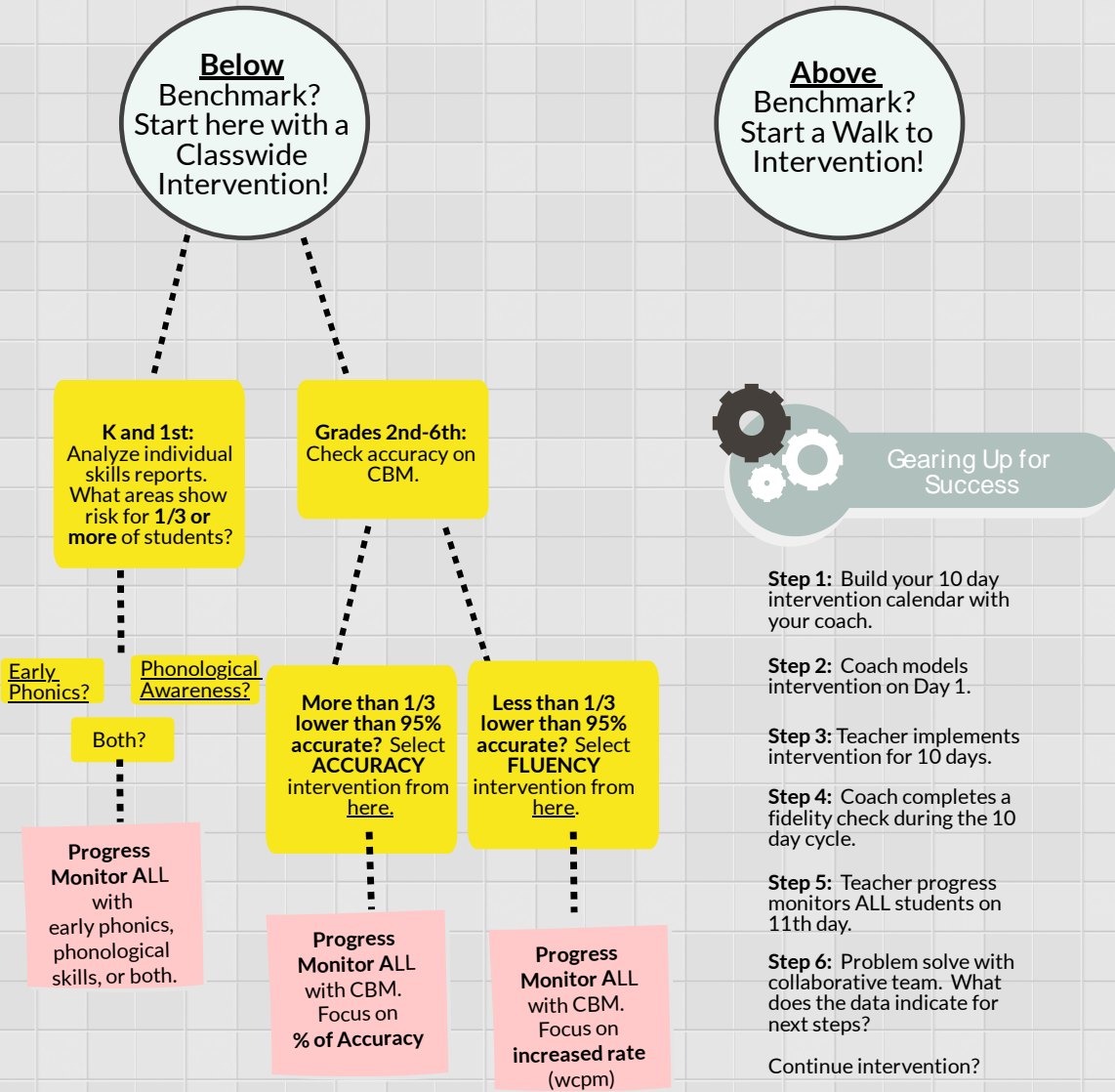
Strategy or Activity: To demonstrate understanding of what ozone is and why it is important.

Level of Complexity



<p><i>Adapt Activity.</i> Debate the issue of whether there is an ozone problem to which humans contribute.</p>
<p><i>Original Activity.</i> Write a position paper on the degree to which human activity may or may not negatively impact the ozone cycle.</p>
<p><i>Adapt Activity.</i> Conduct a survey of peer awareness and understanding about the ozone.</p>
<p><i>Adapt Activity.</i> Write a public service television or radio announcement for citizens of New Zealand.</p>

Step 1: Find your class median (middle) score.



(Adapted from PRESS, 2019)
6/2023

General Recommendations 2nd-12th

Individual Student Decision-Making

Step 1: Administer Screening Assessment(s)

Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and/or
Comprehension Measure

Step 2: Validate the scores

(compare to course grades, state assessments, standardized tests, attendance, etc.) Note: Students in Grades 7-12 with a validated below benchmark comprehension score will need an ORF administered.

Step 3: Place students in appropriate groups based on assessments.

GROUP 1:	GROUP 2:	GROUP 3:	GROUP 4:
At or above ORF AND comprehension benchmark criteria.	Below ORF benchmark criterion, BUT has equal to or greater than 95% accuracy.	Below ORF benchmark criterion AND less than 95% accuracy	At or above ORF benchmark criterion, BUT below comprehension benchmark criterion.

Group 1:
LOW RISK
Include:
extension of core curriculum, quality Tier 1 instruction, and core knowledge enrichment.

Group 2:
Relative focus: FLUENCY
Include:
fluency at word, phrase and passage level, vocabulary, and/or background knowledge.

Group 3:
Relative focus: PHONICS
Include:
target phonics deficits, focus on improving both accuracy and rate, daily practice in connected text, vocabulary and/or background knowledge.

Group 4:
Relative focus: COMPREHENSION
Include:
comprehension and vocabulary. Use an intervention that develops background knowledge, oral language, and vocabulary.

Adapted from PRESS Intervention Manual, 2019
Rev. 6/15/2023



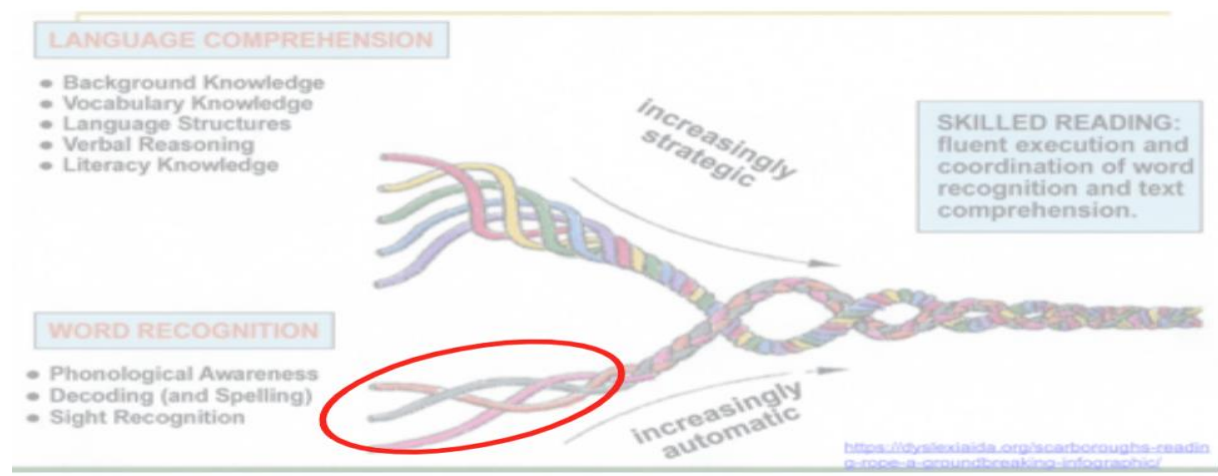
Group 2: Strength includes accuracy; low fluency including word count per minute (wcpm) (accurate and slow).

Relative Focus of Instruction: provide **daily oral reading (phrasing, prosody, automaticity)**, decoding with multisyllabic words, word analysis, background knowledge and vocabulary, and comprehension checks (both oral and written). Instruction should be fast-paced, fluidly moving from one component to the next, with many opportunities to respond and receive immediate, corrective feedback.

Considerations:

Students with Tier 3 needs may require an informal diagnostic assessment (QPS) to ensure automaticity with basic phonics patterns (orthographic mapping). If there is a need for phonics instruction, automaticity at the word level may be a more appropriate instructional focus.

Student Name:	aReading Benchmark:	CBM (wcpm) Benchmark:	CBM % Accuracy
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+
			95%+



Group 3: Low accuracy and low fluency including word count per minute (wcpm). (inaccurate and slow)

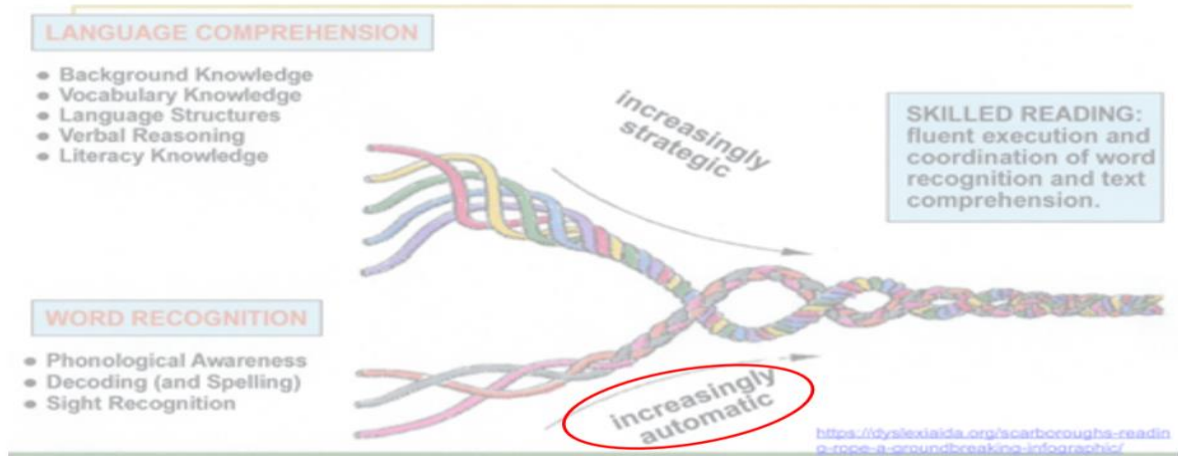
Relative Focus of Instruction: provide **decoding and encoding**, fluency work with daily oral reading of **decodable text** matched to phonics skill pattern, background knowledge and vocabulary, and comprehension checks. Instruction should be fast-paced, fluidly moving from one component to the next, with many opportunities to respond and receive immediate, corrective feedback.

Considerations:

An informal phonics screener (QPS) should be given to **each** of these students to better grasp the extent of missing phonics patterns.

Also, for students with Tier 3 needs who are inaccurate with letter sounds, additional work at the letter sound and blending level may be necessary before moving through other phonics patterns.

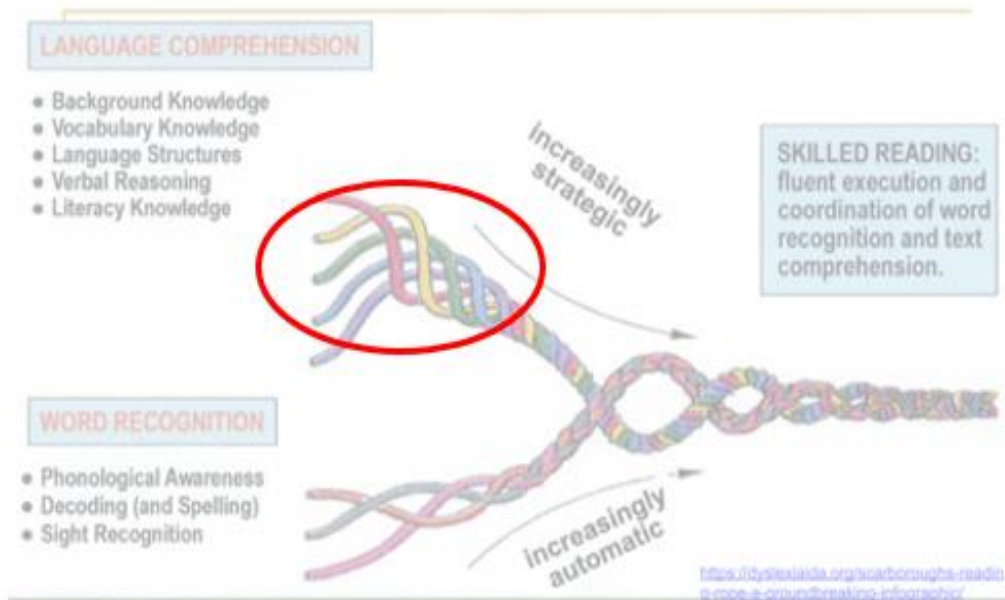
Student Name:	aReading Benchmark:	CBM (wcpm) Benchmark:	CBM % Accuracy
	_____	_____	



Group 4: Strengths include accuracy and fluency (wcpm); low comprehension (accurate, fluent, but low comprehension).

Relative Focus of Instruction: provide **vocabulary and background knowledge, daily oral reading from grade-level core content with teacher modeling, discussion and comprehension strategies, comprehension checks (both oral and written), and word analysis including multisyllabic words and/or morphology.** Instruction should be fast-paced, fluidly moving from one component to the next, with many opportunities to respond and receive immediate, corrective feedback.

Student Name:	CBM (wcpm) Benchmark: _____	aReading Benchmark: _____



Small Group Intervention Log

Week of _____

Intervention Teacher _____

Assessment Measures:

Date:

Names of Students in Group	FSF	LNF	PSF	NWF	ORF/R-CBM	MAZE
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						

Time - Intervention Provided

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Teams Met					
Total Minutes/day:					

Instructional Focus:

Intervention/Materials:

Attendance and Observation Records:

Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F	Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F
Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F	Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F
Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F	Student Name: Attendance: (Circle if absent) M T W Th F

Add additional boxes on back for more than 6 students

Prioritizing Action Directions for Sorting

- Review the items on the System Progress Summary form identified as In Progress and/or Needs Attention/Effort and assign items to the following table.
- Assign all of the items from the Needs Attention/Effort rating.
- Assign items from the In Progress rating that may require additional action.

		Difficulty	
		High	Low
Impact	High		
	Low		

Order of Initial Action/Focus *(to support sustainability, most items should be High Impact):*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

KANSAS MULTI-TIER SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MTSS) & ALIGNMENT



Preschool Reading Supplement



2023-2024

Introduction to Document

The *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports Guides* have been created to assist teams in documenting the structures necessary to begin the implementation of a Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). This document might contain tools to be used in conjunction with content-area-specific documents for reading, mathematics, behavior, and social-emotional content areas. All Kansas MTSS and Alignment documents are aligned with the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Innovation Configuration Matrix (ICM)*, which describes the critical components of a MTSS, the features of a fully implemented MTSS, and the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Research Base*, which provides a basic overview of the research support for the MTSS.

<https://ksdetasn.org/>

Acknowledgements

Significant time and energy commitment from numerous Kansas educators and their districts, organizations, and partners made this document possible. This document reflects their efforts to learn and help others understand what it takes to make MTSS a reality within schools. This grassroots effort on the part of Kansas educators indicates a commitment to meeting the needs of every student and sharing wisdom from the field and the research. As the list of individuals and districts that have contributed to this effort over the past years has become too long to detail, a collective expression of gratitude is offered here to everyone who has contributed to the concepts, ideas, and knowledge that are reflected in all Kansas MTSS and Alignment documents.

The contents of this resource were developed under an agreement from the Federal Department of Education to the Kansas State Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Kansas State Department of Education or the Federal Government should not be assumed. Kansas MTSS and Alignment is funded through Part B funds administered by the Kansas State Department of Education's Special Education and Title Services. Keystone Learning Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in this program and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Keystone Learning Services Executive Director, 500 E. Sunflower Blvd, Ozawkie, KS 66070, 785-876-2214. Authorization to reproduce in whole or in part is granted. Permission to reprint this publication is not necessary.



Introduction

In Kansas, there is a belief that all children can learn. Fundamentally, every student should be challenged to achieve high standards, both academically and behaviorally. An aligned, systemic framework for ensuring that all students have this experience is referred to as the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment (MTSS). Simply put, Kansas MTSS and Alignment is a set of evidence-based practices implemented across an aligned system to meet the needs of all learners. Kansas MTSS and Alignment builds an aligned system of prevention, early intervention, and support to ensure all children learn. Additionally, Kansas MTSS and Alignment establishes a system that intentionally focuses on leadership, professional development, and an empowering culture in addition to a focus on student learning.

Kansas MTSS and Alignment incorporates a continuum of assessment, curriculum, and instruction. This systemic approach supports both struggling and advanced learners through the selection and implementation of increasingly intense evidence-based interventions in response to both academic and behavioral needs. The Kansas MTSS system of alignment establishes a Self-Correcting Feedback Loop that includes ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of instruction to ensure that each Kansas student achieves high standards.

Across the nation, schools use a variety of curricula, interventions, and methods to monitor student learning, both academically and socially. The goal of Kansas MTSS and Alignment is to provide a systemic approach to meeting the needs of all students. To achieve this, resources must be used in a manner that is both effective and efficient. While Kansas MTSS and Alignment does not necessarily require additional resources or supplements for existing practices, it does involve evaluating your current practices to identify those that yield evidence of effectiveness, address areas that are missing, and replace ineffective or inefficient approaches with those that are supported by research evidence. Kansas MTSS and Alignment is an approach to school improvement and accreditation activities that address the academic and behavioral achievement of all students.

After intentional planning and time spent building the structures of your Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Alignment, your preschool program is ready to implement the plans you have put in place. For an MTSS structure to function at an optimal level, system-level supports continue to be necessary during the implementation phase of your plan. It is the intent of this guide to provide assistance regarding the implementation of a preschool literacy MTSS; however, it is critical for teams to develop an ongoing process for reflection and revision of their MTSS structures to ensure that the process is sustainable over time and not dependent on any single person working within the system.

Kansas MTSS and Alignment is graphically represented by three arcs around the outside of a triangle. Each element represents a foundational concept that supports all of the work within the system.



Leadership: Strong and functioning leadership across the *Self-Correcting Feedback Loop* ensures information consistency, refined decision making, fidelity of implementation, and the support of stakeholders.

Professional Development: Supporting ongoing professional development within Kansas MTSS and Alignment requires a carefully designed and executed plan. Comprehensive professional development tied to your MTSS must be planned and monitored for fidelity to ensure that all staff members receive initial and ongoing training and support for selected assessments, curriculum, and interventions.

Empowering Culture: In a sustainable system, it is important that stakeholders be actively involved in the process of school improvement. Leadership teams must not only plan differentiated professional development opportunities for the entire staff, but also train collaborative teams to be effective problem solvers. Other stakeholders' active involvement should be encouraged and recognized in the decision-making process.

Curriculum: Curricular materials should be evidence-based and align with the *Kansas Early Learning Standards*. The particular curriculum you use is not as important as ensuring that all essential literacy components are addressed, materials are readily available, and staff members are trained and use the curriculum with fidelity.

Instruction: An evidence-based instructional design ensures that instruction is developmentally appropriate, explicit when necessary, differentiated, systematic, and scaffolded.

Assessment: In a multi-tier system, a comprehensive assessment system allows staff members to make essential instructional decisions based on valid and reliable data. In preschool, multiple

assessments are used for a variety of purposes, which can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. It is important that those administering and interpreting assessments have a good understanding of the purposes and uses of each assessment.

Literacy and Preschool MTSS

Literacy development starts early in life and is highly correlated with school achievement (NELP, 2008). In fact, the literacy experiences that occur between a child's birth and eighth birthday are particularly important to later reading development (IRA & NAEYC, 1998), which makes the application of the Kansas MTSS and Alignment for literacy in preschool especially important. The primary prevention of reading difficulties involves ensuring that young children develop strong language skills and engage in meaningful experiences filled with print, literacy play, storybook reading, and writing (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) (2008) conducted a synthesis of the scientific research regarding the early literacy skills of young children from birth through age five. Based on the NELP Report, four areas emerged as important for young children's early literacy development: oral language (which includes vocabulary knowledge), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge (National Institute for Literacy, 2009). Kansas MTSS and Alignment was designed to utilize these key areas to support all learners.

Scholars have highlighted the need for more intentional and explicit literacy instruction in preschool classrooms. Teaching all students to read requires a system for the early identification of students who are at risk as well as a system for providing those students with the interventions they need to become proficient readers. Good classroom curriculum and instruction generally meet the needs of most students, but an efficient system for providing high-quality interventions is required to ensure that the needs of all students are met.

At times, the application of the Kansas MTSS and Alignment in preschool will be slightly different from what might be put in place for school-aged children; however, the basic processes and practices are similar. For appropriate application to occur, leadership teams must understand the similarities and differences between programming for very young children and the approaches used in more formal schooling. It is important that programs use evidence-based instructional practices that have been shown to be effective with young children, including developmentally appropriate teaching strategies.

Creating the Structure for a Preschool MTSS

The guidance for creating the necessary structure for a preschool MTSS currently focuses on the following:

- Implementation of an evidence-based core curriculum (aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards) that supports the acquisition of early literacy skills and serves as the

foundation for meeting the needs of *all* children.

- Instructional strategies and interventions that support the acquisition of early literacy skills through differentiated instruction (e.g., small flexible groups, embedded learning opportunities).
- Determination of preschool, end-of-the-year learning targets based on information gathered from curriculum-based assessments, early literacy general screening tools, and/or other means (e.g., Kansas Early Learning Standards) as identified by your leadership team.
- Universal screening and progress-monitoring activities that assess the areas of early literacy that are predictive/precursor skills to the essential skills identified as necessary for reading proficiency in later grades, specifically oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness.
- Identification of preschool children for whom the core curriculum and instruction do not appear to be sufficient and who might need more intensive instruction.
- Provision of tiered support (Tier 2/3) through instruction targets specific skills, with opportunities for practice and corrective feedback through engaging activities carried out in additional small groups and/or embedded learning opportunities and explicitly taught.

Standards and Curriculum

The [*Kansas Early Learning Standards \(KELS\)*](#) provide a starting point for teachers and curriculum committees. The KELS document provides information and guidance to preschool providers on the developmental sequence of learning for children from birth through kindergarten. Aligned with the Kansas K-12 standards, the KELS are structured around domains for learning that include a whole-child perspective.

The KELS were not designed to serve as an assessment or a curriculum. Rather, the *Kansas Early Learning Standards* were designed to guide educators in selecting curricula and assessments focused on the skills and knowledge young children should have as a result of participating in high-quality preschool programs. An understanding of early literacy development, the four essential areas of early literacy instruction, and evidence-based instructional strategies are fundamental considerations when selecting preschool early literacy curriculum materials.

The Kansas MTSS system of alignment advocates for the selection of a comprehensive, evidence-based preschool curriculum that addresses all domains of learning outlined in the *Kansas Early Learning Standards*. While your MTSS efforts are focused on academics and/or social behavior, when it comes to intervention, it is important that programs use curricula that address the needs of the whole child. Programs are encouraged to use resources such as the [Head](#)

[Start Preschool Consumer Reports](#) and/or the [What Works Clearinghouse](#) to examine the evidence base of different preschool curricula.

Additionally, programs should examine their selected curriculum to determine whether the four essential areas of early literacy instruction are adequately addressed. Some comprehensive curricula provide strong support for early literacy, while others might not include all four essential areas with equal weight. If this is the case, supplemental early literacy materials might also be needed to strengthen your overall program and ensure that student outcomes are maximized.

Assessments

Preschool programs use a variety of assessment tools for a variety of purposes. Developmental screening tools (e.g., DIAL, ASQ) are used to determine which students might have developmental delays and need further assessment. Diagnostic assessments (e.g., Braken, Brigance, PLS, Peabody Motor Scales) often compare children to a standardized sample and are most generally used to determine whether a child might qualify for special education or other services.

Curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Carolina, Teaching Strategies Gold) are used multiple times per year to measure a child's progress over time and help teachers in planning core curricula. Program assessments (e.g., COSF, Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot) are used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of programs. In the Kansas MTSS and Alignment process, the first step to creating a comprehensive assessment plan is to consider the assessment tools you are already using, the purposes for which you are using those tools, and whether there are tools or practices that are duplicative in purpose or no longer necessary. This information should be documented on your district's/program's *Comprehensive Assessment Plan* along with other decisions your leadership team makes about the assessments that will be used in your program.

Universal Screening

A primary step in Kansas MTSS and Alignment is to determine what your program will use as a universal screening tool. Unlike developmental screening tools, a universal screening tool is used to compare students to a normative sample or standard for the purposes of identifying which students might be at risk for later learning difficulties based on indicators that are predictive of later achievement. A developmental screening tool identifies children who might have a developmental delay, while a universal screening tool identifies students who might be at risk and ranks them based on that risk into levels/tiers. This distinct difference makes the data from universal screening tools particularly helpful for examining the effectiveness of your curriculum and supports a process for tiered intervention.

Universal screening tools appropriate for early literacy assess the predictive elements of early literacy: oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. They are valid and reliable for this purpose, can be used with confidence to make instructional decisions, and can be given at least three times per school year. Leadership teams should ensure that they have the tool or tools to assess all three predictive elements of early literacy (i.e., oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness). Keep in mind that some tools do not assess all three elements; programs might consider using more than one universal screening tool when one tool does not contain all three elements.

Creating a comprehensive assessment system is one of the major tasks that must be completed by your leadership team. Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends screening preschool students at least three times per year using a universal screening tool. This information should be reviewed alongside elementary universal screening data to support discussions related to the adequacy of your preschool curriculum, the match between your preschool and kindergarten scope and sequence, and the information necessary to meet the needs of individual students. However, when comparing preschool and elementary data, leadership teams should keep in mind the make-up of their preschool population. In most school systems, not all kindergarten students attend a public preschool program. Additionally, the students who do attend preschool in a public school often meet at-risk criteria or are receiving preschool special education services.

Your leadership team will use the universal screening data to examine the adequacy of your curriculum and your system's need for professional development. The classroom staff members will use the universal screening data to plan for differentiated instruction within the core curriculum and to identify students in need of additional support for literacy to determine the focus of that intervention. Each universal screening tool sets the criteria for determining which students are at or above the benchmark and which students need Tier 2 or Tier 3 support. Programs should follow the decision rules for the tool they select when using this information to group students into levels of tiered support.

Progress Monitoring

When teachers monitor progress regularly and use the data to make instructional decisions, students make more academic progress than when teachers do not use progress monitoring. For preschool students at Tier 1, progress monitoring is often done through the use of curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Teaching Strategies Gold) administered three to four times per year. These assessments are tied to content-area instruction and help teachers determine whether students have learned the concepts and skills taught so instruction can be adjusted to re-teach concepts or provide additional practice of skills not yet mastered. For students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction, progress-monitoring data is used to chart the growth of individual students on targeted skills. Progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental or intensive instruction answers two questions:

1. Is the instructional intervention working?
2. Does the effectiveness of the intervention warrant continued, increased, or decreased support?

Unlike in a K-12 MTSS, preschool universal screening tools can generally not also be used as progress monitoring tools, because they cannot be given at enough frequency to monitor intervention effectiveness or to make changes to a student's intervention focus. Instead, preschool programs are encouraged to use mastery monitoring strategies as a means to assess and monitor the progress of students receiving tiered intervention. Mastery monitoring strategies are teacher designed and involve directly collecting data on students' mastery of specific skills. Typically, changes to the level of tiered instruction a preschool student receives will only happen after each universal screening benchmark period; however, teachers can use the data they collect through mastery monitoring and their knowledge of the student to make changes when the intervention efforts do not seem to be effective or indicate that a change is needed.

Collecting and graphing progress-monitoring data over a series of weeks provides a visual pattern of skill acquisition for students receiving additional support. Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that mastery monitoring data collection in preschool occur at least one time every two weeks for students receiving Tier 2 support and one time every week for students receiving Tier 3 support.

Diagnostic Assessments

It is not generally necessary for leadership teams to identify a formal diagnostic process to determine instructional focus in preschool. The skills being assessed at the preschool level do not warrant deeper evaluation. In a K-12 MTSS and Alignment assessment system, diagnostic assessments are used to help narrow down the focus for intervention. Preschool early literacy intervention will focus on: 1) oral language/vocabulary, 2) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, and 3) a comprehensive approach that targets all areas. Some protocol interventions might have informal assessments that can be used to place students into the appropriate level of the program.

Preschool Integrated Implementation Protocol

Leadership teams will develop a Preschool Integrated Implementation Protocol that includes early literacy. A protocol outlines a procedure or system of rules that govern the selection of intervention methods and materials based on the intervention area identified by the universal screening tool. Just as leadership teams determine the core curriculum, it is imperative that they consider what the staff members will use to provide early literacy intervention. A protocol makes it easier for the staff members to implement interventions because they do not need to design

individualized interventions for each student. It also helps leadership teams as they examine their data. If teachers are selecting from the same few interventions and students are not making the expected progress, leadership teams have documentation that different intervention materials and approaches are needed.

Leadership teams should identify the current materials and critically evaluate them to ensure that essential skills are represented and the materials support the targeted areas. Leadership teams must also consider the evidence base of different interventions and instructional approaches. Prior to selecting, purchasing, or using any instructional materials, it is critical to carefully review the research base and match it to your student population. A variety of evidence-based interventions can be found to match learner needs.

In Kansas MTSS and Alignment, the curriculum protocol incorporates a portion of the protocol methodology and the problem-solving model. This is referred to as the hybrid approach. Under this approach, a set group of interventions is defined to be used throughout the system. The interventions are chosen from a list of evidence-based approaches designed for specific areas of concern. Collaborative teams determine which intervention will be used first based on the universal screening data. Once the intervention begins, progress monitoring data is used to determine if the intervention needs to be adjusted, intensified, or customized based on pre-established decision rules (McCook, 2006). Once the curriculum protocol is developed, leadership teams need to determine a management system for organizing and using the materials selected to ensure that all staff members providing supplemental and intensive intervention know where materials are located and how they are organized.

The goal of interventions should always be to accelerate learning and close learning gaps. If student performance indicates that this is not happening, the intervention needs to be adjusted. “If instructional groups are too large, instruction is not properly paced or focused, or too many intervention sessions are canceled, then impacts on student performance will be reduced” (Torgesen, 2006, p. 4).

According to Torgesen (2006, p. 4), one of the biggest risks of intervention groups is that we begin to expect a lower standard of performance for students who require them. He states that, in order for intervention groups to work properly, intervention systems require school-level monitoring and regular adjustments. This is accomplished in Kansas MTSS and Alignment through collaborative teams meeting on a regular basis to analyze students’ progress, adjust instruction, and use the Self-Correcting Feedback Loop for communication.

At least eight key aspects are involved in developing and maintaining an effective intervention system:

1. Strong motivation on the part of teachers and school leaders to be persistent in their

efforts to leave no child behind.

2. A psychometrically reliable system for identifying students who need interventions in order to make normal progress in learning to read.
3. A similarly reliable system for monitoring the effectiveness of interventions.
4. Regular team meetings and leadership to enforce and enable the use of data to adjust interventions as needed.
5. Regular adjustments to interventions based on student progress. The most frequent adjustments should involve group size and time (intensity) but can also involve a change of teacher or program.
6. Enough personnel to provide the interventions with sufficient intensity (small group size and daily, uninterrupted intervention sessions).
7. Programs and materials to guide the interventions that are consistent with evidence-based research.
8. Training, support, and monitoring to ensure that intervention programs are implemented with high fidelity and quality (Torgesen, 2006).

Tier 1 – Curriculum and Instruction in Early Literacy

Preschool populations by their very nature include children with a wide range of skill levels. Therefore, preschool daily schedules are designed to provide multiple opportunities for differentiated instruction along the developmental continuum. *All* children, including those needing Tier 1, 2, or 3 support, should participate in the core early literacy curriculum with differentiation provided. Differentiation of core curriculum is considered at Tier 1 for all students.

Once a program has determined what its comprehensive and/or early literacy curriculum will be during its MTSS efforts, the leadership team should record this information on its Preschool Integrated Protocol with enough specificity to ensure that all teachers can implement the curriculum with fidelity. Typically, curricula contain more components/content/days than can be implemented within a classroom day or year. Leadership teams should decide what parts of their curriculum are essential elements and what are left up to teacher discretion. It is important when comparing data across classrooms that there be some consistency regarding what and how the preschool curriculum is taught. It is also important to keep in mind what the curriculum itself considers critical elements. For research-based curricula that have demonstrated positive outcomes, decisions to eliminate or reduce the time spent on an essential element might impact the results.

Leadership teams will also want to make decisions about expectations regarding the daily schedule. A preschool program's daily schedule is a critical component of curriculum and

instruction. Depending on your program's philosophy and/or requirements, you can determine how much time children should be expected to have for self-directed learning, how much time should be teacher directed, the maximum duration of a teacher-directed activity, etc. This step will ensure that leadership teams have outlined an achievable and developmentally appropriate use of their preschool curricula and also help provide consistency in implementation across classrooms. Teams should create a sample schedule with expected time allotments for the day. Decisions about what parts of the curriculum must be implemented, in what types of settings (whole group, small group, play), and the duration (how long a typical whole group should last, how much time should be spent outside or in play) should then be documented and communicated to teachers.

Foci of Early Literacy Instruction

From birth, young children begin developing knowledge and skills that build a foundation for later reading ability. These skills do not develop in isolation but are intertwined with other developmental domains (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). As young children explore their world, specific interests spark in-depth investigations, and playtime provides meaningful opportunities to practice and become proficient. Preschool teachers must intentionally create environments and utilize instructional strategies to build children's language and conceptual knowledge, while also promoting the development of specific code-focused skills. The NELP synthesis identifies oral language (speaking and listening), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge as essential preschool early literacy curricular areas (National Institute for Literacy, 2009).

Oral Language

Children learn to understand and use language through conversations within meaningful contexts and daily activities (Hart & Risley, 1995). Preschool teachers must incorporate opportunities and design activities that encourage children to talk and interact (Wasik, Bond & Hindman, 2006). Conversations include more than listening to others model language; they are opportunities for children to express their thoughts, get needs met, resolve conflicts, and learn from adults and one another.

A language-rich classroom provides multiple daily opportunities for children to be engaged in conversations with their peers, individually with adults, and in group settings. It also involves a rich and engaging environment that sparks young children's interests and fuels their conversations. Educators create opportunities for children to engage in conversations by designing spaces, activities, and routines as opportunities for rich conversational talk. They also take time to listen and respond to the things children are saying and ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas and thoughts.

Young children's vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading, listening

comprehension, and decoding. Beginning readers use their word knowledge to decode by matching a phonological representation to a known word (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). For comprehension tasks, vocabulary can be thought of as "little pieces of knowledge" providing the background information necessary to comprehend both oral and written language (Neuman, 2011). Intentional vocabulary instruction is an important but often neglected instructional area in preschool. The extent of a child's vocabulary at age three is one of the strongest predictors of their third-grade reading achievement (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). In addition, vocabulary skills are a significant predictor of reading comprehension after the third grade (Biemiller, 2005).

Unfortunately, the vocabulary skills of many preschool children considered at risk are already drastically behind their peers by the time they are three (Hart & Risley, 1995). For this reason, it is important for the preschool early literacy curriculum to include explicit vocabulary instruction that focuses on both contextual and definitional information along with multiple word exposures across settings (Coyne, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2004).

Learning new vocabulary begins with word curiosity or "word consciousness" (Graves, 2000). Once a word is noticed, students use the context to create an initial meaning (Carey & Bartlett, 1978). As children link this new word to additional contexts, their understanding increases, and they further refine their definition (Christ & Wang, 2010).

Storybook reading provides an excellent opportunity for exposure to both language and new vocabulary (Neuman & Dwyer, 2008). An interactive storybook reading approach encourages children to talk about books through the use of open-ended questioning. Interactive reading can be done in whole-group settings but is most effective for promoting oral language development when it occurs in small-group and one-on-one book-reading contexts.

Phonological Awareness

Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds is fundamental to learning to read. Phonological awareness is a term that describes an individual's ability to detect and manipulate the sound structure of words independent of their meaning (Lonigan, 2006) and is an important and reliable predictor of later reading ability (NELP, 2008).

Strong early literacy preschool curricula provide opportunities for children to practice recognizing the sound structure of words in increasingly complex ways using whole words, syllables, onset/rimes, and phonemes (Vukelich & Christie, 2004). While these skills can be easily embedded into meaningful and playful preschool activities (e.g., singing songs, playing games, and storybook reading), it is important for preschool programs to have a systematic approach to teaching phonological awareness skills.

The development of phonological awareness is the foundation for later phonics instruction, which is necessary for students to become capable readers. An important goal of early literacy instruction and intervention in preschool is to maximize the number of children who enter kindergarten with sufficient phonological skills to benefit from more formal phonics instruction.

Phonological awareness in preschool embraces more than rhyming. The development of phonological awareness proceeds along a continuum, from awareness of larger to smaller units of sound (words to syllables to individual phonemes [sounds]). However, this is not a stage model in which a child masters one level before learning the next. Instead, the levels overlap, and children show beginning levels of skill on more complex tasks while still mastering less-complex tasks (Philips, Clancy-Menchetti & Lonigan, 2008). Phonological awareness also involves a range of manipulation and detection skills specific to the sound structure of words. The chart on the following page describes the approximate developmental acquisition of basic phonological awareness skills.

	2-3 Years	3-4 years	4-5 years
Rhyming (Match and produce word endings) (rhymes)	Participate in rhyming activities	Match rhyming words	Produce words that rhyme
Alliteration (Match and produce words with the same initial sounds)	None	Recognize words with a common initial sound	Produce words with a common initial sound
Blending (Combine syllables and sounds to make words)	None	Combine a sequence of isolated syllables to produce words	Combine a sequence of isolated sounds to produce words
Segmenting (Pull words apart into syllables and sounds)	None	Identify syllables in words	Identify initial sounds in words

(Paulson & Moats, 2010)

Preschool educators must understand the complexities of different types of phonological awareness tasks. Differing units of sound can make a task more or less challenging. Tasks that involve larger units of sound are generally easier for a child than smaller ones (e.g., clapping out syllables is easier than clapping out the sounds of a word). Tasks can also be more or less difficult depending on what the child is asked to do. Identity tasks (e.g., rhyme oddity, first-sound matching), synthesis tasks (e.g., syllable or phoneme blending), or analysis tasks (e.g., word or syllable segmenting or deleting, phoneme-counting tasks) can change the complexity. Blending tasks are normally easier than analysis tasks, and tasks that involve generating a response are more difficult than recognition tasks (Philips, Clancy-Menchetti & Lonigan, 2008).

Preschool schedules provide multiple daily opportunities to teach phonological awareness skills. Singing songs, reciting poems, reading storybooks, writing, playing transition games, and engaging in play all provide a context that can be used to think about and manipulate sounds and words. The challenge is to ensure that teachers have a curriculum that outlines a scope and sequence for instruction and that they also understand the developmental continuum so they can provide appropriate scaffolding to support each learner.

Alphabet Knowledge

Young children must also be intentionally taught about letters and letter sounds. They need hands-on exploration of letters and the opportunity to use letters and sounds in meaningful contexts (e.g., environmental print, name labels, writing notes) and in their play. Just surrounding children with letters, alphabet books, and letter activities isn't enough; to take advantage of a literacy-rich environment, children need instruction about letters and their sounds.

Learning the alphabet is a key component of early literacy. Preschool educators agree that letter knowledge is important, but there is a lot of variability on what this learning should look like. Alphabet knowledge is the understanding of letter forms, letter names, and corresponding sounds (NELP, 2008). This set of skills includes:

- *Recognition:* Asking a child to point to a particular letter
- *Production:* Showing a letter to a child with the request to name it and provide the sound
- *Writing:* Asking a child to write a particular letter

The learning outcomes included in early learning standards and kindergarten standards, along with a number of assessment procedures, include these skills:

- *Letter-name knowledge:* The letters a child can name
- *Letter-sound knowledge:* The letter sounds a child can provide
- *Letter-name fluency:* How many random letters a child can name quickly
- *Letter-sound fluency:* How many letter sounds a child can provide quickly
- *Letter writing:* The letters a child can write

Each of these learning outcomes contributes to letter knowledge at different times through periods of early literacy and early reading and writing.

Alphabet knowledge leads to the development of the alphabetic principle, which is the understanding that there is a systematic relationship between speech sounds and letters. When young children make this important connection between letters and sounds, they transition from the early literacy stage into the early reading and writing stage. The skills required for understanding the alphabetic principle build the foundation for phonics.

Code-Focused Instruction

Code-focused instruction is the systematic, sequential, explicit, and intentional instruction of phonological awareness skills and alphabet knowledge. While these skills can be taught independently, there is a greater impact when they are taught in conjunction (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). For this reason, as you look at intervention materials, Kansas MTSS recommends grouping phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge into a single intervention focus.

Because code-focused skills are so strongly related to learning to read and spell successfully, it is important that preschool educators use related instructional strategies to promote skill development. Whether children are in preschool or kindergarten, focusing instruction on phonological awareness skills can have a significant effect on children's literacy learning. This is particularly important for teachers working with children considered to be at risk for reading difficulties, because most children who have difficulty reading also have problems with code-focused skills. Effective code-focused instruction can and should be provided in the context of a developmentally appropriate preschool classroom that includes direct instruction as well as play and discovery learning (NELP, 2008).

Print Awareness

Children begin to understand how print works long before they learn to read and write. Multiple exposures to print during the early years help build the foundation children need for literacy acquisition and the motivation for learning to read and write. A central literacy goal during the preschool and kindergarten years is teaching print concepts and learning how print works (Bredekamp, & Copple, 1998). Highlighting print in the environment enhances young children's literacy skills and their motivation to attend to written symbols (Neumann, Hood, & Ford, 2013).

Print concepts that are important for young children to gain exposure to include:

- *Recognizing print in the environment:* Children learn to recognize the form of written symbols in their environment, such as the logo of their favorite fast-food restaurant. Their beginning understanding is a visual recognition based on how the symbol or word looks. They learn that letters are a special kind of symbol system with specific shapes. With experience, children learn that they should start reading at the top of the page and then continue to the bottom. They learn to sweep their index finger across the words, moving left to right and then pointing to each word individually.
- *Understanding that print carries meaning:* As children are exposed to environmental print and participate in book reading with adult guidance and instruction, they learn that the pictures represent the real thing and begin to associate the written label with the object.
- *Knowing that print is used for many purposes:* With multiple, varied, and different exposure, children learn that print is nearly everywhere.
- *Experiencing print through writing:* When young children see others pick up a writing tool like a pen, crayon, or marker and write with it, they want to do the same. They learn the difference between drawing and writing, and they learn to make what they recognize as letters on a paper.

With adult support, young preschool children extend their understanding of written language as they learn that the letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphic that can be

individually named. They recognize many signs and logos in their environment. They know that print is read in stories and understand that print has different functions (e.g., lists for groceries, logos for favorite places and things, longer lines of print in books). Children this age show a greater interest in books, and they make reading and writing attempts. They might also look for the first letter of their name in print (Paulson and Moats, 2018).

Older preschoolers learn that writing conveys messages and has a specific form and symbol structure. They recognize and read some words in the environment and also recognize, name, and write many alphabet letters. They are developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle. At this age, children might try to sound out and write simple words, want to write and dictate stories, and display reading and writing attempts (Paulson and Moats, 2018).

For further information on the NELP report and the essential areas of preschool literacy, the document, [*What Works: A Teacher's Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction*](#), provides additional information.

Recommendations for Providing Preschool Literacy Interventions

When considering how to provide intervention for students needing Tier 2 or 3 support, Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that preschool programs not follow the walk-to-intervention model typically used in K-12 programs. Instead of grouping students across classrooms or bringing in someone the child does not know to provide intervention, Tier 2 or 3 intervention should ideally be provided in a child's classroom by familiar adults. It is especially important for young children to develop positive and secure relationships with a small number of adults.

In addition, familiar adults who already work with students are more likely and able to provide distributed practice on target skills during the day. Research suggests that preschool teacher-child relationships play a significant role in influencing young children's social and emotional development (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). Therefore, children identified through universal screening as requiring more support should receive that support through additional small groups and/or embedded learning opportunities within the daily routine and play.

Using the decision rules determined by your universal screening tool, children needing additional instruction in key early literacy skills will be identified to participate in intervention focused on 1) oral language/vocabulary, 2) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, or 3) a comprehensive intervention targeting all three areas (i.e., oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness).

Tier 2

Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that classroom teams consider at least one of two approaches when designing schedules of early literacy intervention for individual students. Classrooms can use a combination of both approaches to meet the individual needs of their students.

The first option involves the design of an additional small group (e.g., three or four students, two to three times per week, for 10 to 15 minutes). Students needing Tier 2 support would be assigned to an intervention group based on the need identified by the universal screening tool. Small groups could be conducted in a variety of ways in a preschool classroom. Interventionists might pull students for a short time during self-directed learning activities or during other flexible times of the day (e.g., arrival/opening activities, transitions, snack time). Times for intervention can also be built into the daily schedule. Adults might work with all of the students in small groups of varying sizes and purposes. Interventions should be selected from the district's Tier 2 Protocol.

For some students/classrooms, it might make more sense to use the evidence-based strategy of embedded learning opportunities to provide students needing Tier 2 intervention with distributed practice across the daily schedule on selected intervention targets. Therefore, another option would be to design an intentional schedule that provides students with frequent, daily documented embedded learning opportunities on targeted skills. The key to this option is the documentation of who, what skills, how, and when the embedded learning opportunities will occur each day and a method to ensure that each student has the specified opportunities to practice each day. For this approach, teams will narrow down the learning target to a small set of skills that can be embedded based on developmental progressions. The use of a matrix, with the daily schedule listed vertically and the activities listed horizontally, will allow teams to create a process for when/who/how embedding will occur. The specific learning targets should be listed on each student's matrix, and the opportunities provided should be documented.

To increase opportunities for practice, it is also recommended that, whichever option is used, one or two learning centers be intentionally designed based on early literacy targets (e.g., a language/vocabulary focused center and a phonological awareness focused center). Classroom staff members should encourage students needing Tier 2 support for early literacy to participate in these targeted centers multiple times per week. These learning opportunities should be designed to complement and extend what was learned in the core curriculum.

Tier 3

Students who are identified as needing Tier 3 early literacy intervention require more intensive opportunities to learn early literacy skills, and the skills being taught should be more focused and

narrower in scope. Recommendations for Tier 3 look similar to those for Tier 2, but the intensity of the intervention is increased through smaller group sizes and added frequency.

One option at Tier 3 also involves small-group instruction; however, the group size should be smaller and the frequency extended (e.g., 1 or 2 students, 4 to 5 times per week for 10 to 15 minutes) to provide students more intensive support. Students needing Tier 3 support would be assigned to an intervention group based on the need identified by the universal screening tool. Interventions should be selected from the district's Tier 3 Protocol.

The use of embedded learning opportunities can be an especially useful strategy for some students needing Tier 3 early literacy intervention. Therefore, another option within Tier 3 is to design a schedule that provides a student with more frequent, documented embedded learning opportunities with targeted skills. This option also requires documentation of how, with whom, and when the embedded learning opportunities will occur each day and a method to ensure that students receive the planned embedded learning opportunities daily.

To increase opportunities for practice, it is also recommended that instructors encourage students in Tier 3 to participate in learning centers proactively designed based on early literacy targets multiple times per week.

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