

# Information Guide

## **What is MTSS/RTI?**

The multi-tiered system of supports, or MTSS, refers to a school-wide prevention and intervention framework for organizing varying levels of academic and behavior support for all students (refer to Parent Guide for MTSS). The primary purpose of MTSS is to improve outcomes by providing multiple tiers of integrated academic, behavioral and social-emotional support matched to student need. Student performance data, or student response to instruction, helps identify students needing additional support. When a student needs more support, a school-based team will use a problem-solving process to find ways to improve learning. Although MTSS and RTI are often used interchangeably, MTSS refers to comprehensive framework while response to intervention (RTI) refers to the student performance data used monitor progress in the multi-tiered prevention/intervention system. MTSS tells you what is being done to support your child; RTI tells how your child is responding.

## **How do I know if my child is making progress?**

The school uses multiple measures to screen and monitor student progress in mastering grade-level standards. Results of the universal screening (brief assessments given to all students) data are shared with parents multiple times a year (typically three). These results will tell you whether your child is on track to meet end-of-year standards. If your child needs additional support, data on their response to intervention will be collected and shared more frequently (monthly, weekly, or daily, depending on the intervention support). This is called progress monitoring. Progress monitoring data is typically communicated in a graph format that shows your child's progress relative to grade-level expectations, peer performance, and specific intervention targets/goals. The graph indicates how your child is responding to intervention and the extent to which they are closing the gap between expectations and performance of peers.

## **What happens if my child is not making sufficient progress?**

Students at Level 1 or Level 2 on the statewide reading or math assessment must be evaluated to determine the nature of the difficulty, the areas of need, and the academic supports for improving performance. Additionally, their progress must be monitored by a school-wide system of progress monitoring or an individualized progress monitoring plan. If your child is not making adequate progress, you will be invited to be a part of the team that explores why your child is struggling and what works best to help to them. The school-based team will use a problem-solving approach and student data to identify and analyze the area or areas of concerns, select and implement interventions, and monitor progress. Based on student response to intervention, the team may adjust the intervention or intensity. The team's decisions is guided by four critical questions:

- What is the gap between current performance and expectations?
- Why is the gap occurring?
- What will we do to close the gap?
- Is the intervention working?

If your child needs additional academic and /or behavior support, you can expect to be:

1. Included in the problem solving/intervention planning process.
2. Aware of the level of support and intervention support that will be provided to your child.
3. Informed about the student data that will be used to monitor your child's progress.
4. Receive progress monitoring data indicating your child's response to intervention.

## **How does MTSS help inform whether my child may need special education?**

The screening and progress monitoring components of MTSS identify students who need additional support to experience success. The problem solving process will help identify the nature of your child's learning difficulties, the specific intervention and supports to implement, and the intensity of support needed to improve outcomes and sustain growth. The school team discovers what works for a student through the ongoing process of problem solving and monitoring response to intervention. Your child's response to instruction and to intensive, evidence based interventions will help determine whether they may need specialized instruction.

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If your child does not make adequate progress after they have received effective core instruction and intensive, evidence-based interventions, the team should consider whether he or she may be a student with a disability who needs specialized instruction.

If your child is making adequate progress with intensive intervention support, but their progress can only be maintained by providing and sustaining a high level of support over time, this may also be an indicator that your child may need specialized instruction. Your child does not have to fail to need special education if their success is dependent on intensive services sustained across time.

Your child's response to intervention is one indicator of potential need for special education; however, just because a student is not meeting grade level expectations or is receiving intensive intervention support does not necessarily mean they are a student with a disability or need special education.

## **What if I think my child needs special education?**

Parents can request an evaluation for special education at any time. The request may be written or verbal, but it is important the date the request was made and the person to whom it was given be you documented. Communicate your request to the school counselor, ESE coordinator, or administrator at your child's school; or to the district Exceptional Student Education (ESE) office.

In order to receive special education services, a student must qualify for one of thirteen IDEA eligibility categories AND because of the disability, need specially designed instruction. Not all students with a diagnosis need special education services. Information on IDEA disability categories and eligibility criteria, visit the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services website at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/ease-eligibility/>

## **What happens after I request an evaluation?**

The school (or district) must respond to your request for an evaluation within 30 calendar days by one of the following:

1. Obtain your written permission to conduct the evaluation. The district cannot conduct a special education evaluation without your written consent. Prior to obtaining your written consent, the school team should discuss the evaluation procedures that they are proposing to conduct with you, so that you are fully informed about the evaluation procedures that will be included. The school has 60 calendar days, with exceptions for vacations and holidays, to complete the evaluation.
2. Provide a formal, written refusal with an explanation for the refusal.

The school (or district) should also provide you with a copy and explanation of your procedural safeguards when they respond to your request.

## **What if my school tells me that they cannot initiate an evaluation until the RtI "process" is completed?**

Parents can request an evaluation for special education at any time regardless of the level of tiered support your child is currently receiving. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) clarified in a January 21, 2011 memo, that response to intervention cannot be used to deny or delay an evaluation. The school has 30 days to respond to your request. Unless the school provides a written notice of refusal, the school must provide you with the opportunity to provide consent for the evaluation within 30 days. If an evaluation is initiated, the response to intervention data required for eligibility is collected during the 60-day evaluation period.

## **Where can I obtain more information about MTSS/RTI and evaluations for special education?**

- Florida's Multi-Tiered System of Supports <http://www.florida-rti.org>
- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptionalstudent-edu/index.shtml>
- National Center on Response to Intervention <http://www.rti4success.org> – [Parent Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) about Response to Intervention](#)
- National Center for Learning Disabilities – A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention
- Family Guide to Response to Intervention <http://www.rti4success.org/resource/family-guide-responseintervention> ; [http://famielstogtherinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/MTSS\\_KS\\_Booklet\\_Final.pdf](http://famielstogtherinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/MTSS_KS_Booklet_Final.pdf)
- RTI Action Network – Resources for Parents and Families <http://www.rtinetwork.org/parents-a-families>