Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Young Children

DRIVING CHANGE IN EARLY EDUCATION

JUDITH J. CARTA
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Driving Change in Early Education

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Dr. Carta is a senior scientist in the Institute for Life Span Studies and professor of special education at the University of Kansas. She has directed a number of federally funded research centers and projects focused on developing practices that teachers and parents can use to promote children's early learning, particularly in vulnerable populations. Her key research and policy interests include tiered intervention models for advancing children's language, early literacy, and social-emotional development; methods for monitoring children's progress; and communitywide interventions for promoting early learning. She was the co-director of the Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood. She currently co-directs the Bridging the Word Gap Research Network, a collaborative of over 150 researchers, program implementers, civic leaders, and policymakers seeking to find better ways to enhance young children's language-learning environments. She was formerly a teacher of young children with special needs, a member of the Federal Advisory Panel on Head Start Research and Evaluation, a commissioner on the Division for Early Childhood's Commission on Recommended Practices, and the editor of *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*.

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Dr. Young is currently an assistant professor of early childhood education at Northern Illinois University where she prepares future teacher leaders to employ evidence-based practices to identify assets and provide services to meet the needs of children and families. Prior to her present position, Dr. Young guided development of MTSS frameworks while serving on classroom and administrative leadership teams at Prairie Children Preschool (Aurora, IL). The community preschool has operated as an ECE/ECSE blended program since 1998 and has won awards for developing and operating systemwide practices that effectively integrate early

learning and social-emotional tiered-instructional models. Her professional partnership work includes direct services, consultative supports, and coaching strategies for moving programs into MTSS frameworks. Additionally, she ensures that professional preservice and in-service training and licensure efforts to create a workforce prepared to provide effective and efficient services in this framework. Dr. Young's scholarship includes grant-funded work resulting in numerous presentations, published curricula, book chapters, and data-based and practitioner-oriented articles. She is currently examining methods to prepare early childhood educators to design and deliver multi-week, interdisciplinary instructional units that develop children's vocabulary skills within proactive social-emotional settings. Dr. Young is also examining preparation of directors/principals and teacher-leaders who can engage in leadership behaviors that will continue moving early learning programs into effective and efficient MTSS frameworks.

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Dr. Alisha Wackerle-Hollman is an educational psychologist whose research addresses both development of English, Spanish, and Hmong early literacy and language measures for preschool-age students as well as the design and evaluation of parent education programs. She is the co-director of the IGDIlab, a research lab at the University of Minnesota where she has secured over 5 million dollars in funding since 2012. Dr. Wackerle-Hollman's work focuses on measurement systems designed to evaluate progress on language and literacy in English- and Spanish-speaking preschoolers and the adaptation of these measures for use on tablet devices. She is specifically interested in using data from these measurement platforms to support effective data-based decision making in the context of multi-tiered systems of support.

1

Introduction to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in Early Education

Judith J. Carta

Despite the increasing availability of quality early education programs in recent years, a sizable portion of young children leave preschool lacking many of the skills needed to engage in and benefit from instruction in quality kindergarten classes. Some children have limited vocabularies, whereas others lack social-emotional skills and have difficulties with self-regulation (Child Trends Databank, 2015). Some may not have acquired skills in early literacy, math, or science that pave the way to academic success. The reasons for these challenges are many. Some children have come from homes with limited opportunities to learn these skills and behaviors that will be needed in kindergarten (Blair, 2010). Many may not have received the necessary support for language and social-emotional development from their teachers, caregivers, or family members. In addition, some may not have had opportunities to attend high-quality preschool and been able to learn school readiness skills. Other children may have delays in acquiring these skills in spite of ample opportunities to learn them.

The learning needs of students entering preschool programs are complex and growing in number. Early education programs are increasingly aware that higher proportions of their students may be at risk for later learning and behavior problems and are seeking ways to provide more timely interventions. While programs face growing challenges of providing children with instruction of varying levels of intensity to match their needs, new evidence-based practices can reduce the achievement gap while children are still in early education settings. If children's delays are identified early, and they receive an appropriate level of instructional intervention in a timely manner, many children will acquire the skills they need to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) offer programs and a framework of evidence-based practices to ensure that children receive the support they need without having to demonstrate failure first.

MTSS offers a new paradigm that shifts the ways programs respond to students—a shift from trying to fit students into specific programs and services to a new approach focused on designing services and support around the needs

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of the individual student. In this way, programs employing MTSS have a quicker way of identifying students showing the first signs of delay and addressing these delays with individualized supports, therefore preventing problems and improving the likelihood that students will be ready to succeed in kindergarten.

We, the authors, have written and organized this book to help those who are striving to organize early education programs into systems that provide preschool children with carefully designed instruction that matches their level of need. MTSS offers a framework with useful tools that helps educators address children's diverse learning needs through a set of practices for identifying children who need more instructional support, implementing those practices, and quickly determining whether the practices are working. The purpose of this book is to describe each of the components of MTSS and to illustrate for practitioners how the practices work together within a larger MTSS framework within a school, program, or state. Our goal is to help practitioners, program administrators, and researchers alike understand those practices, learn about the evidence supporting them, and provide information to guide the implementation of MTSS, resulting in improved learning proficiency of all children. We hope this book will help readers to understand the many practices of MTSS, comprehend how the components of MTSS work together, and recognize how team members can work together to support their implementation.

We also have designed this book for use in graduate and undergraduate teacher education programs in early childhood education (ECE) and early childhood special education (ECSE). We realize that students who go on to teach young children will be working in programs that are addressing the needs of children with and without disabilities. The information presented in this book should be relevant to teachers in ECE or ECSE programs and should help them apply evidence-based practices to all children. Although the content in this book should be relevant to the entire early childhood age range (birth to age 8), it will be most applicable for programs serving preschool-aged children. We think that the information in this text will be most relevant to program directors and practitioners within center-based settings such as state-funded prekindergarten classes, Head Start, or other center-based programs (including private, tuition-based programs).

Programs that implement MTSS use a systematic problem-solving model and data-based decision-making process that can be applied at any number of educational grade levels or to programs serving students varying in ability levels. This book describes the application of MTSS to early education. Depending on the specific early education setting, the key players that form the leadership team that drives the MTSS initiative in preschool programs will vary. In a state-funded prekindergarten program, for example, the players may include individuals such as the speech therapist, school psychologist, school social worker, early childhood coordinator, literacy specialist, positive behavior support specialist, and school principal. In a Head Start program, individuals involved may include the Head Start director, disabilities coordinator, coaches, or teachers. In all cases, programs must choose the most appropriate staff members to design the system, select screeners and interventions, carry out the universal screening, engage in data-based decision making to determine how children are identified for higher tiers of intervention, implement each tier of intervention, and monitor children's progress in response to intervention.

The fundamental promise of MTSS is that all students will be engaged in educational programs founded on evidenced-based instruction and progress-monitoring practices to increase the likelihood that they will master early academic and developmental competencies. When these systems are implemented in early education settings, children will more quickly receive the level of instructional support that meets their needs. The promise of this approach is *prevention*. More timely, efficient, and individualized support to young children through MTSS means children will be less likely to need special education services when they enter elementary school (Greenwood et al., 2011).

WHAT IS MTSS?

MTSS is a "whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems" (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a, p. 1). The goal of MTSS is to organize the resources available in a system or program to meet the needs of all students. At the core of MTSS is a data-based, decision-making problem-solving process that guides differentiated instructional supports to students based on their demonstrated need (Batsche et al., 2005; Colorado Department of Education, 2015b; Deno, 2016; Stoiber & Gettinger, 2016). MTSS is based on the following core principles:

1. All children can learn and achieve when they are provided with high-quality supports to match their needs.
2. Instruction should focus on both academic and behavioral goals.
3. Children showing signs of delay should be identified as early as possible and provided with a level of instructional intensity to match their needs.
4. Interventions to address children's needs should be designed by collaborative teams that include parents, administrators, teachers, and other instructional staff, and should be guided by student data and informed by evidence-based practices.
5. Children's responses to intervention should be continuously monitored, and explicit data-based decision rules should be in place for making adjustments in intervention.
6. All intervention should be based on evidence-based practice implemented with fidelity.

MTSS is based on an earlier instructional framework, Response to Intervention (RtI), and both approaches have focused on identifying and addressing students' learning needs at the earliest possible time. RtI paved the way for MTSS and incorporates many of the same principles as MTSS, including high-quality, research-based instruction of all students, universal screening of all students to identify those showing the earliest signs of learning difficulties, evidence-based interventions that increase the intensity of instruction to address students' problem areas, frequent progress monitoring for tracking students' response to targeted interventions, and decision making based on progress-monitoring data. In most past approaches to RtI, the focus was primarily on providing support for struggling

learners in the academic areas—primarily in literacy, language, and sometimes mathematics. In contrast, MTSS moves beyond RtI in that it focuses on creating a continuum of systemwide strategies and structures that aim to address barriers to student learning in both academic and behavior areas. Thus, MTSS offers the potential to create systemic change resulting in improved academic and social outcomes for all learners. In addition, MTSS puts a greater focus on systemwide support for teachers' delivery of instruction that will benefit all students. In school districts, this systemwide support means that practices, programs, and policies are aligned at the classroom, school, and district levels. This typically means that teachers, administrators, and instructional support personnel often change the way they work together and shift to a more collaborative and cohesive culture.

Core Components of MTSS

A number of MTSS models exist across states and school districts, and these vary somewhat in their content and manner of delivery. The following core set of components outlines the basic features of MTSS that can be found across most models.

1. *Evidence-based instruction and intervention practices:* The foundation of MTSS is its use of research-based instructional and intervention practices that have been proven effective in improving outcomes for students. The use of scientifically based interventions within RtI was originally stipulated within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10). In MTSS, the assumption is that evidence-based practices (EBPs) will be implemented within both academic and behavioral domains. EBPs are defined as "instructional techniques that meet prescribed criteria related to the research design, quality, quantity, and effect size of supporting research, which have the potential to help bridge the research-to-practice gap and improve student outcomes" (Cook & Cook, 2011, p. 73). Whereas some interventions and instructional practices may have been validated as effective, the number of practices that have been validated for use in early education settings is still quite limited. However, EBPs can also include those for which demonstrated outcomes have been obtained by practitioners using progress monitoring or program evaluation data (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2016). An important caveat about EBPs is that they will not necessarily be effective for all students or in all contexts. One important aspect of the effectiveness of a practice will depend on the quality or fidelity of its implementation. Thus, programs should be sure to gather ongoing fidelity data on their selected instructional interventions to be sure that these strategies are implemented as designed and intended (Gresham, MacMillan, Beebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000). (More information about EPBs can be found in Chapter 5.)

2. *Emphasis on ensuring implementation fidelity:* When instructional practices are implemented with fidelity, it means that the essential components of the practice are being implemented as designed. The validity of MTSS depends on the effective implementation of each aspect of the system: the universal screening, intervention at each of the available tiers, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making. When each aspect of the system is implemented

as designed, the entire system should be self-correcting and continuously improving based on the cycle of data gathering, action, further data gathering, reappraisal, and refinement (Mercier Smith, Fien, Basaraba, & Travers, 2009). When a practice is not implemented as designed or with the frequency or consistency needed, students are less likely to show improvements in targeted skills. Measuring intervention fidelity is critical in determining if a student's progress is traceable to the intervention used in a multi-tiered system. Failure to examine how well an intervention is delivered can lead to a potentially erroneous conclusion that a student's lack of progress is a result of the student's disability or delay when in fact the intervention was not implemented with fidelity. (More information about implementation fidelity can be found in Chapter 8.)

3. *Universal screening and progress monitoring:* A unique feature of MTSS and RtI is ongoing universal screening and progress monitoring on multiple occasions throughout the school year. Review of these data may be useful for two purposes; first, they may reflect the effectiveness and efficiency of the core instruction being provided to all children. If a high percentage of children are not meeting benchmarks on universal screening measures or showing inadequate growth on progress monitoring measures in response to the core curriculum, then the program leadership teams might use these data to justify modifying the core curriculum to enhance the likelihood of success for all learners. Second, universal screening of all children on an ongoing basis provides a means of identifying those children who may need additional instructional supports to acquire academic skills or address behavioral challenges. Once additional interventions are implemented, progress monitoring is used to determine whether children have demonstrated growth on targeted skills in response to the additional instructional support. (More information about universal screening and problem solving can be found in Chapter 4.)

4. *Layered continuum of supports:* A common feature of MTSS or RtI is the provision of multiple levels or tiers of instructional support to meet the needs of all students—from those making adequate progress in response to the core curriculum to those who may be struggling to master skills. Tier 1 encompasses effective core curriculum and intentional teaching to all students. This ensures that all students have access to a purposefully organized educational environment, a curriculum with evidence-based scope and sequence, and instruction that provides opportunities to learn essential skills in developmentally appropriate activities. Tier 2 typically provides targeted instruction, often in small groups, to those children needing additional academic or behavioral support to help overcome specific learning gaps. Within an MTSS framework, the school/program leaders can determine the type of Tier 2 supports needed for various groups of children. For example, analysis of student performance data might reveal that a significant number of children would benefit from supplemental instruction in phonological awareness skills beyond that provided in the Tier 1 curriculum. Rather than creating multiple individual tutoring plans, the school/program may decide to create a standard Tier 2 phonological awareness intervention or acquire a commercially available intervention that focuses

on this domain, both of which can be implemented in small groups for effective and efficient delivery of the necessary instruction. Tier 3 is more intensive and is typically individually designed and often, though not exclusively, provided in one-to-one interactions between adults and children with significant learning needs. With this type of continuum, instructional or behavioral supports are arranged from least to most intensive, and children are matched to the tier most closely aligned with their needs.

Several other aspects of the tiered model include the following:

- The tiers are *additive*, meaning that learners who need the most intensive intervention receive Tier 1 interventions whenever possible plus those that are appropriate at upper tiers
- The boundaries between tiers are seamless so that the provision and removal of supports is fluid, depending on children's needs
- A learner does *not* have to progress from less-intensive tiers through more-intensive tiers in order to receive highly intensive interventions.

The MTSS framework is not a "wait to fail" model (DEC/NAEYC/NHSA, 2013); instead, interventions and supports of the appropriate intensity are provided whenever the need for such intensive intervention is determined. Consequently, some children may start at the highest tier (most intensive) and move to lower tiers (less intensive) as their needs dictate (see Figure 1.1).

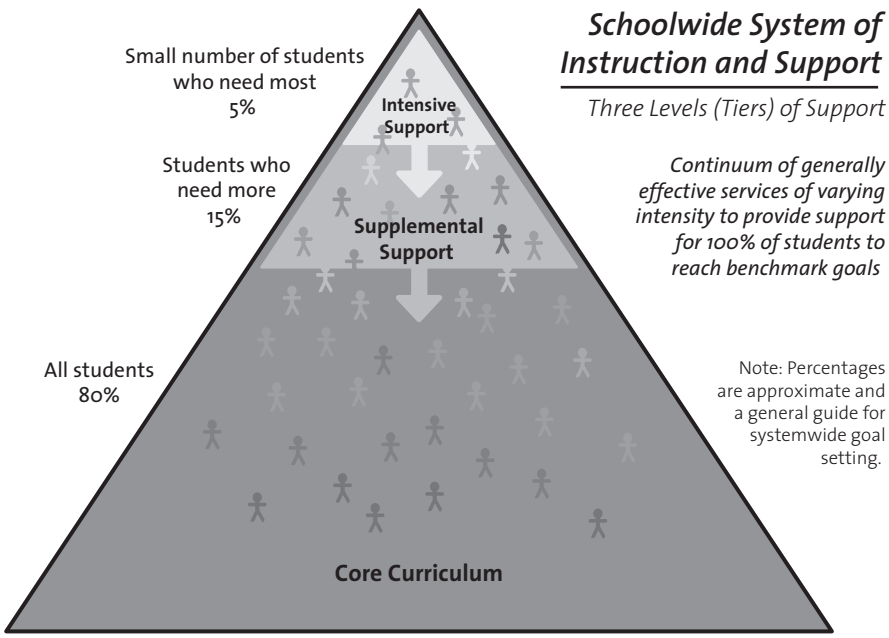

Figure 1.1. Schoolwide system of instruction and support: Three levels (tiers) of support. Reprinted with permission from Dynamic Measurement Group (2009) in Kaminski, R. (2009, September). Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood. Presentation at the RTI Innovations Conference, Salt Lake City, UT.

5. *Data-based problem solving and decision making:* A fundamental component of MTSS is the use of the problem-solving process by instructional teams to determine student's needs (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010). The problem-solving process was first introduced with the early implementation of the early RtI models (Marston, 2002; Reschly & Tilly, 1999). The problem-solving process typically includes four steps, beginning with *Problem Identification*, in which what a student should be able to know and do are clearly defined and the problem or discrepancy is laid out between these behavioral/academic expectations and what is actually occurring. During the second step, *Problem Analysis*, hypotheses are developed by the instructional team and multiple sources of data are gathered to confirm or refute the hypotheses. In the third step, *Intervention Plan Development and Implementation*, intervention strategies or interventions are proposed to match the student's need identified in Step 1. Practitioners implement the intervention and receive appropriate support to ensure that the intervention is implemented with fidelity. In the fourth step, *Evaluation of Response to Intervention*, data on the student's progress are examined and evaluated after the intervention has been implemented with fidelity for an adequate amount of time. The instructional team uses the data to determine whether the student's current intervention should be modified, continued, or terminated. (More information about data-based problem solving and decision making can be found in Chapter 4.)
6. *Shared leadership:* A key feature of MTSS is the notion that leadership teams are necessary at both the district and school levels. While some early education programs may not function within school districts, the need for leadership teams at levels beyond the "building" or immediate program level is important. The purpose of these teams is to ensure effective implementation across the multiple levels of the system, which in local education agencies are the district, school, classroom, and individual student. The data-based, problem-solving, and decision-making processes use school–level progress data to identify system support needs such as how best to allocate available resources and funding and how best to target professional development. (More information about leadership teams can be found in Chapter 2.)
7. *Family, school, and community partnering:* An important feature of MTSS models is the development of strategies to encourage family involvement in their child's learning. Parents are critical to the child's success in school and successful MTSS models include parents on their child's instructional team. Programs should have clear protocols for obtaining families' input and involvement in each of the tiers of instructional support and should carry out professional development focused on approaches to promote the engagement of families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. (More information about engaging families in MTSS can be found in Chapter 12.)

MTSS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Most current approaches to educating young children in preschool programs assume that students are benefiting from the core curriculum. If parents or teachers suspect a child may need additional support, it often is not until the student

is showing significant problems with learning or behavior—and then the student must go through a process to determine his or her eligibility for special education services. Once the student is determined to be eligible, an instructional team and the parent will design an individualized education program (IEP) that outlines the student's instructional goals and objectives. Specialized interventions to address those goals may or may not be implemented in the general classroom environment.

In contrast to that more traditional framework based on a response to students' lack of adequate progress or "failure" to grow in skills or fluency of performance, MTSS focuses on preventing and providing support for all students, with a more rapid intervention for individual students based on their demonstrated need (Gersten et al., 2008). MTSS employs a unique measurement approach based on universal screening of all children on multiple occasions across the school year. Data from these screenings help identify students not demonstrating expected rates of growth on progress monitoring measures and who might benefit from more intensive instruction. Interventions of increasing intensity (or tiers of instruction) are used to provide an appropriate level of intensity to match individual students' level of need. Students receiving higher tiers of instruction also receive frequent monitoring to ascertain whether the increased level of instruction results in increases in their growth. In this way, programs employing MTSS have a quicker way of identifying students showing the first signs of delay and addressing these delays with individualized supports, therefore preventing problems and improving the likelihood that students will be ready to succeed in kindergarten.

While MTSS may seem a novel concept to many early educators or other professionals who serve preschool students, some principles underlying the MTSS framework should be relatively familiar to early educators (Greenwood et al., 2011). First, early education is founded on the importance of early intervention as a means of preventing or reducing delay. Through universal screening, MTSS attempts to find children who are showing the first signs of learning difficulties instead of waiting for them to demonstrate a significant delay before providing them with additional instructional supports. Second, many early education programs attempt to individualize children's instruction to address the diversity of children they serve. MTSS provides a systematic approach to identifying struggling learners and providing them with a level of instructional intensity to match their needs. Third, the use of progress monitoring has been an important feature across early education settings as programs attempt to determine whether children are making growth in response to the instruction being delivered. Similarly, in MTSS, programs use progress monitoring to examine children's responses to intervention to determine whether changes are necessary in the instruction targeted to a specific child or children within a classroom or program.

Tiered models have been developed for young children and increasingly are being adopted by programs, districts, and states. One of the most popular tiered models, the Pyramid Model, a framework that outlines a set of practices for promoting the social-emotional competence of all young children including children with persistent challenging behavior, is currently being used by hundreds of programs across several states (see Chapters 7 and 11). The practices in the Pyramid Model are defined in tiers to highlight the universal supports necessary for promoting the social-emotional outcomes of all children, the prevention practices designed to provide additional instruction and support to children at risk of challenging

behavior or social-emotional delays, and the intervention practices targeted for children with persistent challenging behavior or social-emotional delays. Worth noting is the fact that this popular tiered approach is being implemented by the wide variety of programs serving young children, including community-based child programs, Head Start programs, and Part B and Part C programs, as well as family child care. Studies of implementation of the Pyramid Model have documented its effectiveness in changing teachers' practices for preventing and intervening in children's challenging behavior and improving children's social skills (Hemmeter, Snyder, Fox, & Algina, 2016).

Tiered models have also been developed and shown to enhance young children's early academic skills. The Recognition and Response Model (Buysse & Peisner-Feinberg, 2010) is an example of a tiered instructional model focused on language/early literacy and numeracy skills. Like other tiered models, Recognition and Response is organized around four components:

1. *Recognition* of children needing additional support using screening, assessment, and progress monitoring
2. Research-based instruction for all children and validated instruction for specific children who need additional supports *(Response)*
3. A hierarchy of interventions
4. A collaborative problem-solving approach involving the instructional team and parents working together

Two studies have recently confirmed the effectiveness of Recognition and Response for improving children's outcomes in the areas of language and early literacy (Buysse, Peisner-Feinberg, Soukakou, Fettig, Schaaf & Burchinal, 2016).

Finally, some of the necessary individual components of MTSS systems have been developed specifically for preschool-aged children. Universal screening and progress measures are now available that have been specifically designed for use in guiding data-based decision making in MTSS systems in early childhood. Chapter 4 describes some of the My-IGDI measures that have been designed specifically to identify children who might be most likely to benefit from Tier 2 and 3 interventions in early literacy and language (Wackerle-Holman, Rodriguez, McConnell, Bradfield, & Rodriguez, 2015). Similar measures are available to identify dual language learners who might need additional support (see Chapter 9) or those needing more intensity of instruction in mathematics (Hojnoski, Silberglitt, & Floyd, 2009). These tools will help early education programs easily identify those students needing support and quickly provide them with intervention aligned to their level of need.

Another critical component of MTSS now available to programs serving young children are interventions specifically designed to promote short-term growth that ultimately leads to improved school readiness. A number of these interventions for children needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 support in early literacy and language have been designed and proven to be effective (see Chapters 6 and 8; Goldstein, 2016; Goldstein & Kelley, 2016; Goldstein, Kelley, et al., 2016; Goldstein & Olszewski, 2015; Kaminski & Powell-Smith, 2017). These interventions have been designed to increase children's opportunities to respond and practice important skills. Moreover, these interventions have been designed to address some of the challenges of early childhood settings—they are inexpensive and relatively easy to implement.

Current Challenges to Implementation of MTSS in Early Education

While many advances have taken place to provide early education programs with the knowledge and tools they need to implement tiered models, a variety of barriers still remain as administrators, teachers, and instructional teams seek to implement MTSS to support young children and their families. It is important for programs to consider these as they strive to put these tiered approaches into place.

Lack of a Trained Workforce Although a number of new tools are now available to support MTSS in early education, there remain a number of challenges to successfully implementing this approach in programs for young children. One of the most significant challenges is the training and expertise of the workforce in many early education settings. In a recent national survey, state directors of early education programs indicated that the major challenge to carrying out RtI, a forerunner to MTSS, in settings for young children was the lack of a trained workforce who could implement the essential components of RtI (Linas, Greenwood, & Carta, 2012). Programs that are serious about adopting MTSS will have to commit to providing the sustained professional development that will be necessary to promote the high-fidelity implementation of MTSS components. They will need to appreciate that more than one-day workshops are necessary for meaningful change to occur in their programs that will result in high-quality instruction. Programs will also need to create the infrastructure necessary to carry out ongoing coaching and supports to build the capacity to sustain an MTSS model.

Knowledge and Appreciation of Evidence-Based Instruction Another challenge to implementing MTSS in early education is the scarcity of evidence-based instruction in all tiers. While research is available that describes evidence-based instruction in areas such as language, literacy, and social-emotional behaviors (e.g., Bierman & Motamedi, 2015; Powell & Dunlap, 2009; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006), many early education teachers may not have received systematic instruction on how to implement these powerful interventions within their own classrooms (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008). As a result, the types of explicit instructional strategies known to promote children's growth in learning are frequently missing in typical early education programs. Many individuals in programs for young children will need to adjust their thinking about implementing the types of intentional instructional strategies necessary to support children's early learning and change children's trajectories to put them on a track toward success. Moreover, a greater awareness among early education professionals will be necessary to understand that they can shape children's growth in academic skills and social behavior by increasing children's opportunities for learning and that this intentional instruction can be carried out in developmentally appropriate ways.

State and Federal Influences on MTSS in Early Education An additional challenge to the implementation and scaling up of MTSS in early education is having support at federal and state levels. While MTSS approaches continue to evolve and take shape in various forms across the states, multiple factors influence what MTSS looks like in each state and locale. Because ultimately public education in the United States is driven by the states, they will be the entities that determine how MTSS in early education is operationalized. Nonetheless, the federal government provides funding and guidance that supports initiatives like MTSS and quality education.

For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 (PL 108-446) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (PL 114-95) both have provided funds to compensate states for meeting certain mandates and adhering to certain restrictions.

Professional organizations also act as major influences on the way MTSS is developed and implemented. For example, in 2013 three prominent national organizations—the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Head Start Association (NHSA)—collaborated to create a joint paper on RtI. Although the purpose of the paper was primarily to define and describe RtI, it provided an opportunity for early childhood professionals across general and special education to hear from professional organizations in a way that de-mythologized RtI. It offered all early educators a common ground that has proven useful to begin conversations about the possibility of moving toward RtI. A next iteration of a joint paper across national early education organizations will help states and the federal government develop policies to guide programs in establishing successful MTSS models.

Administrative Support and Resources One final challenge to mounting successful MTSS initiatives in early education is leadership for carrying out and maintaining MTSS. Programs that are undertaking the shift to MTSS must have the administrative support and leadership to guide them through the essential steps of systems change that will result in a successful shift into full implementation and sustainability of MTSS. Many early education administrators have not had the opportunity to learn about strategies for leading their programs toward this new way of individualizing for all children. Successful leaders must have the skills to create a vision, the knowledge about how to allocate time and staff to design the system, and the means to acquire the resources to carry out and evaluate the new system. These leadership assets are often limited, so systems must focus on enhancing these leadership resources to enhance programs' capacities to grow and change.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book provides the reader with an introduction to each of the critical components necessary to implement MTSS at the individual child and classroom levels, and to illustrate for practitioners how the components work together within a larger MTSS framework. The book brings together some of the best experts in the field of intervention to promote language, early literacy, and social-emotional development. Chapter authors have extensive experience carrying out research on intervention strategies to promote learning and development, developing tools for identifying children who need more instructional support, guiding teams in using data to make instructional decisions and monitor children's progress, and scaling up these practices through evidence-based professional development within states and programs. Often, authors have included in their chapters many items that can help the reader more easily apply the concepts about MTSS to classroom practice. These items include useful tools such as measures, checklists, data collection sheets, and examples of graphs and reports. In addition, each chapter includes resources and links to online material where readers can access the most current information about MTSS and material that supports its implementation. Each of the chapters also includes vignettes to help personalize the content of the chapter and integrate the practitioner's perspective with that of the MTSS expert.

Finally, an added feature of the book are videos that help illustrate some of the important steps a program might take as it moves through the process of adopting MTSS. The videos will allow viewers to get a close-hand look at the following:

1. How the various members of a program come together to consider MTSS and, with a principal's leadership, achieve consensus about trying out MTSS in their program
2. How the program team uses Implementation Science to guide them in the process of considering adoption of MTSS and obtaining commitment from the classroom teams
3. How the team members study program-level data to examine how well the program is meeting the needs of all children and what they can do to enhance the quality of their curriculum and instruction
4. How they discuss and use class-level data to evaluate areas of strengths and needs in instructional areas and provide strategic instruction to those students needing additional support beyond the core curriculum
5. How they use data-based decision making to examine how to individualize instruction for a child who is showing signs of learning difficulties, and how they use data to evaluate how well their more intensified instruction works over time.

Throughout the book, several chapters include callouts for relevant videos that demonstrate content covered in that chapter. To access the videos, please visit www.brookespublishing.com/carta/materials.

We hope that the videos will help bring MTSS to life and illustrate the staff dispositions, attitudes, and values that will increase the success and sustainability of MTSS. We know that MTSS will only work well when program staff work together from the very beginning as they think through the process of adoption of this new approach, gather data to see how they will integrate MTSS into their existing ways of operating, and use data to inform their practices at the program, classroom, and individual-child levels. The Introductory Video will help you learn about this book and its accompanying video series. We hope that seeing teams in action will be helpful to instructional teams who are considering MTSS for the first time as well as veteran MTSS implementers. Moreover, we hope the videos that show the various members of the team working together will be useful to school/program administrators as well as practitioners who may be teachers, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, social workers, family members, or other members of a school instructional team.

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"Carta and Young have gathered the best-of-the-best in early education to operationalize how MTSS is implemented by early childhood educators and is experienced by young children and their families. Their research, practices, examples, and explanations make this book the best available go-to resource on MTSS and young children."

—George Sugai, Ph.D., Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut at Storrs

"A change-driver...walk[s] the reader through making the needed [system improvement] upgrades with specific examples, checklists, and video demonstrations. Drs. Carta and Young have provided a book that can equip readers to make a difference in the lives of young children."

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Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework for delivering effective and efficient services and supports to meet the needs of all young children and their families so they can achieve essential developmental and early academic learning outcomes. With this evidence-based planning guide, you'll discover how to design, implement, and monitor successful MTSS for children ages 3–5 across various early learning environments, including classrooms, programs, districts, and the state level.

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LEARN HOW TO

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- set up a successful system of data-based decision making
- identify children needing targeted or intensive interventions
- deliver evidence-based primary, secondary, and tertiary programming
- provide effective instruction in key areas, including language and social-emotional skills
- meet the needs of dual language learners and children with disabilities
- engage families in designing and delivering services and supports
- scale up MTSS implementation to broaden impact throughout system levels
- evaluate your MTSS model's strengths and identify areas for improvement

Filled with the wisdom and research findings of more than 25 experts, this book brings you foundational information about MTSS plus concrete guidance on creating a system to help all learners reach their potential. Practical tools (reproducible and available online) help your team with key steps of MTSS implementation, and six videos enhance your application of important concepts covered in the book.

The ultimate MTSS guide for leaders at all system levels—and a visionary textbook for tomorrow's professionals—this book will help educational professionals usher in big-picture change that will benefit all young learners.

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