



Concurrent Session: Leveraging MTSS to Support Students with Disabilities

Jason Harlacher: So, welcome, everyone. Again, this is titled, Leveraging MTSS to Support Students with Disabilities. I'll get into introducing myself, but I'd like to always start with just a little bit of information from you all. So if you could share just your role, your location, and then what's a question you have around MTSS and students with disabilities? So, I'd like... always like to start...kind of getting a sense of what you're all thinking about, and what's on your mind there.

As you're doing that, I'll introduce myself—so I have the prompt up there in the top right corner— my name's Jason Harlacher. I'm a senior researcher with American Institutes for Research. As part of that role, I direct our MTSS Center, co-direct our Wyoming MTSS Center, and then I provide some technical assistance for our National Center on Intensive Intervention. My background's in school psychology. I'm someone who moved all around growing up. My dad was in the Air Force, so we moved a lot for that, and then I kept moving, as I got older. I live in Denver. I was born in Pennsylvania, mostly grew up in Ohio, so I consider Ohio home. I went to Ohio University for undergrad. And then moved out to Utah, went to Utah State for my Master's, and then University of Oregon for my doctorate, so I definitely own and take pride in being an Oregon Duck. Very excited for football season here in a few weeks with them.

So, I see folks Arkansas, Wisconsin, El Paso. We've got a new MTSS coordinator, welcome. How to make MTSS effective for all students, great. Parent mentor, okay, Michigan. I don't own Ohio too much, so you're okay being from Michigan. Note, I went to Ohio University, not Ohio State. Sometimes I get mistaken for that.

Let's see, so good questions here. Good old Nevada. I worked as a school psych in Reno for Washoe County for a few years. So nice to see someone, Bobby, if you want to share where in Nevada you are, I'm curious. But how do you use MTSS as... excuse me, how can MTSS be used as a norm instead of specifically state these levels of supports and IEPs, yeah, good, we're going to talk about that.

Well, thanks so much, everyone. So, I mentioned I move... moved around a lot, so I wanted to start with kind of my typical view growing up as a kid. My family would move, we lived in, Ohio, Idaho, New York, New Mexico, so I'd always drive around, and if you've ever driven across the country, most of the time the view is this, especially if you drive through Kansas. It looks a lot like this, so it's a road and trees.



So, growing up, I was always kind of sensitive to students who moved, especially if they came into the school mid-year, or if they were a new student, right?

So, I want you to imagine, kind of, if you're working in a school, and you have a student that moves in, and they have these services on their IEP. So perhaps there's a daily 45-minute of direct instruction and reading, perhaps there's speech services as well that they need. Audio enhancement, right, within their instructional settings, and then they also might need behavioral support. So, you have a range of services that they need. So, I'm just curious, where would you start to make sure the student is provided these services, or how would you meet the needs within their IEP? So, I'll give you a second to kind of think through that, and I'm going to look more at the chat here.

Any... so again, any kind of questions, like, where... excuse me, not questions... thoughts on where you would start? You have these extensive services, literacy, speech, audio, audio hearing, and then behavioral as well, and so...

You might start by going teacher by teacher, right, and figuring out, okay, how do we provide these different services? So, you're the case manager, and then you're having lots of one-on-one conversations. Maybe you're looking at programs to see if it aligns. All of that can take a lot of time.

I see, Jennifer, yeah, starting with baseline data, so figuring out is this the right services, or where are they at currently?

And so...I want you to think about the amount of time, like, a student moves in with an IEP, and then you're trying to have all these conversations and juggle making sure your school can provide these services. And so, our key message today really is, if you have MTSS in place, you can tap into those existing structures and supports.

So, I just saw...So John's saying, we've got processes in place for the... yeah, the student comes in, and if you've got a tiered system, if you have all these different services already, it's a lot easier to provide that.

So... That's kind of the overall message for today, is that schools that have MTSS in place, you already have existing structures and systems you can leverage, so you're able to tap into those to more easily or efficiently provide those services for students.

So, I want you to just kind of keep some things in mind today as we're talking through some of the content I have prepared.

MTSS is a structure for all students, which includes students with disability...disabilities, they are not separate from MTSS.

Schools who implement MTSS experience a lot of positive outcomes, not just for staff, but also for, excuse me, not just for students, but also for staff and that includes, those students with disabilities.

And then, implementing that tiered system can help you meet your obligations under IDEA as well.

So, what I want to cover specifically, I want to talk just a little bit about what is MTSS, get us all on the same page, and then I want to talk through how does MTSS support students with disabilities by talking through those kind of four bullet points. So, we'll go through what that could look like.

So, what is MTSS? Let me pause, I just want to catch up on the chat here.

I think we'll... some good information and comments in there, Bobby. We'll come back to that probably more towards the end and make sure we chat through that.

So, let's go back in time. So, I mentioned moving a lot. My father was in the Air Force for 26 years, and so he was born in York, Pennsylvania, my whole family was as well. And so this was his grade-level classroom in rural Pennsylvania. I like to joke that this is my father not looking at the camera. I think he's the only one not looking, and then this is actually my, my uncle, who is my dad's fraternal twin there.

But take a look, how many teachers do you see? And then, how many students do you see? And then, are those students all the same age, or do you see maybe a little bit of range in those ages there?

And so I think of education historically, I think of my father's classroom, and maybe there's some classrooms like this today, but you've got one teacher, a pile of students, so to speak, and then that teacher is not just the teacher, they're the principal, the supervisor... playground supervisor, the lunch person, you know, maybe the custodian, all sorts of different roles, it all falls on them.

And it reminds me of, historically in education, where we would have general education, and maybe we had a supportive community and different families that supported the school. Maybe there were tutors that were accessible. But over time, we started to add programs and services as we saw the needs arise among students, so second language needs, special education, Title I, gifted and talented. And you probably notice all of those, or most of those, require a label or some sort of evaluation. And so if we draw this school around it, you kind of get a picture of a school. You can think of kind of a word that comes to mind when you look at this image, but I think of things like scattered, disconnected, and... And siloed, right?

I think historically in education, we would have siloed schools where I'm a teacher, I have my students, this is my classroom, you have your classroom, and maybe we talk, maybe we don't, but we all kind of operated in isolation to some extent from each other. And so we have general education and the teachers doing everything.

And then if there was a need for additional support, it was on the teacher, the onus was on the teacher to raise concerns, maybe the parent raises concerns, to get that additional support.

And it's...as I mentioned, like, it usually took some sort of label. If you've all worked in that system, it's probably not the easiest thing to navigate, but there's some sort of evaluation, and then the kid gets a label, and then they get support.

So the nice thing with MTSS is that it breaks down those silos. We create a structure where we have a range of supports, and all students can access those supports, including students with disabilities. And all it takes is just data showing that they need that support.

So if you go back to my story of a student moving in, some of you might have mentioned this in the chat, but...if you have a range of supports already existing in your school with MTSS, you can then plug that student in where it's appropriate. Perhaps the 45 minutes for reading might align with the intensive support that your school has. So the...providing those services just become a lot easier if you have those systems and processes in place.

And to me, that's really the heart of MTSS. We have a range of supports and services, all students can access them, and our goal is to match the supports that we have to the data-based needs of students.

It's not isolated to one location or to one intervention or tier, right? Students, including students with disabilities, have access to all of that. And so you have this backdrop of support and services that students can access.

And I think special education providers can access that to provide support for their students, but also even as part of the evaluation process, you can look at the data and information throughout the different tiers. And so, special education is not separated from that, so we'll talk more on some of the questions, but the question around where does MTSS and special education fit, like, it's not... they're not separate sort of entities special education is a part of to me, a part of your MTSS.

So let me share definitions around MTSS, and then we'll talk a little bit on the mindsets, a couple of key mindsets that go there. At the MTSS Center, we define MTSS as a school-wide framework. It's proactive and preventative. Proactive in that we're actively screening and identifying students, to see what their needs are, as opposed to being passive or reactive and waiting for them to tell us.

I think we all know students will tell us in ways that we, you know, are maybe a little bit more overt than we would like.

And then it's preventative, in that we have layers of support, and we try to have a really strong foundation to prevent the need of students needing additional support. We want to try to meet their needs immediately with that core instruction.

And I like to point out, you know, the components are in the dark blue circles, database decision-making is in the middle, and that's because it ties everything together. You can screen students, but if you're not looking at the data and using it, you're not really doing much with it. You can progress monitor or have different tiers in your multi-level prevention system, but nothing comes together until you start making data-based decisions for students.

Let me talk through the components in a little bit... a little more detail here. Screening is that systematic process where we screen all students to identify those who are at risk. That does include students with disabilities, and that's because screening not only helps us identify who's at risk or not progressing, but it gives us an overall measure of the performance of our school. So we want to include every student so we have a very accurate measure. You don't want to separate students out. You want to screen every student that you have, because there's more than just identifying risk as part of, sort of, the information we pull from screening.

We screen students, we then match them to a level of support using the tiers within the multi-level prevention system, so we have a range of increasing intensity of services and supports for students.

We then provide that support and monitor how it's going. So we'll gather progress monitoring data to see if students are progressing towards their goal.

And then, like I mentioned, all of that comes together with database decision making, but we use database decision making to make all sorts of decisions, not just around individual students or groups of students, but also our school as an entire system, and so school leadership will look at different things there.

All of these components and MTSS is easier to implement when you have very supportive infrastructure and support mechanisms in place.

These are the knowledge, resources, and structures that help support and facilitate implementation and the ongoing support there.

And so I... sometimes I joke that the infrastructure is sort of like apps running in the background. When they're working well, you don't know it, but then when there's an issue, you begin to notice it.

So we'll... we'll get into some more of that, but this leads into, for me, really, two different mindsets that really support MTSS.

And so it's not just kind of the technical pieces or things that you put in place, but there is also this buy-in and mindset that's needed to really help MTSS and our work with students with disability really come to life to me. Let's do... I want to talk through this analogy here.

So I want you to imagine, if you've ever owned a goldfish, or maybe one of your kids owned one, or maybe a niece or nephew, right?

And let's say you come into the room one day, and the goldfish isn't looking too well. Perhaps they're swimming slow, perhaps they're just floating there and not really moving, or worst-case scenario, they're floating upside down or on their side.

And so, if you could take a minute in the chat—If you came into a room and saw this situation, what would you do? What would you begin to look at? What questions would you have around, kind of, this fish here?

So I see the tank, yeah, looking at the food. Too much, too little food. The water, we could look at the temperature, the pH balance, is it clean? Yeah, great. Water's a big one. The environment... let's see... yeah, was it fed? Did something happen?

Yeah, so these are all... you're all naming things that we have control over. These are all, sort of, what we call alterable variables that we can begin to adjust that are around the fish to support the fish.

And to me, what it speaks to is how we approach things with students. Do we have high expectations? Do we believe all students can learn? And if we believe all students can learn, we then problem-solve and focus on those alterable variables, like what you're naming. The water, the bowl, food, and so forth.

My colleague does the goldfish analogy a lot and jokes that we don't come in and look at that fish and go, well, maybe they have a swimming disability, that's why they're not floating right.

Instead, you're starting with the environment, the water, the food, and so forth. So we want to apply that same kind of mentality to students. Yes, there might be a disability that we need to consider, but we want to focus on what can we do around that student to support them.

So, for me, it comes down to what is the instruction, the curriculum, and the environment? Another way to think of that is the methodology, the content, or the delivery. So, we'll talk more about this here in a second, but for me, it's first that mindset of do we believe all students can learn, given the right support, and then are we doing right by them? And for me, a good test is, if this was your kid, would you be happy with the services provided, or the attitude provided, you know, with the staff for that student.

And so, in order to provide the right support for students, though, it also taps into this other mindset around, we can't do it alone. One teacher can't do it. So if you're a Lord of the Rings fan, Frodo didn't do it all alone. He had support around him. And so, one teacher, we can't expect them to do it all, so it taps into this idea of... it's all of our students, it's not my kids and your kids, it's not gen ed kids and special education kids, it's just kids, it's students.

So we all must own student achievement in order for all of our students to progress and be successful in school. And so, it's this collective efficacy notion where we all have to believe we can do it, we have to work together to do it, and then we have to co-own student achievement. So, I'm sure you've all run into kind of this belief where it's, well, these are my kids, and then if they have special education, the special education teacher will take care of that. And that's not the right sort of approach. With MTSS, or with students with disabilities, we have to think of them as, these are our kids, not your kids and my kids there.

So, kind of with that, then, as the backdrop, I want to talk through some of the essential elements that the PROGRESS Center explored and found related to, kind of good programming for students with disabilities. So you're probably thinking or beginning to see some of the connections between MTSS and these five sort of components that are list... excuse me, five elements listed in the graphic, but I just want to talk through a few of them today.

I'll see if there's any questions or comments right now. A lot of good problem solving for the fish.

Tessie, I see you're kind of responding with Bobby's questions. I'll come back towards the end and kind of read all that. So, Tessie's giving good info in the chat there.

We'll come back. So, let's start with that effective general curriculum. So, we know that MTSS outlines kind of a range of support and services for all students, and then special education students, we can leverage those tiers to support the student, throughout the day or throughout all the kind of environments. We want to make sure... make sure students with disabilities can access all aspects of that curriculum.

And so I, you know, I'm big on analogies, so I'm going to start with, kind of an exercise routine analogy, but I want you to think about, you know, getting healthy, or people that go and work out. It's not just the gym, right? So, let's say you're trying to get healthy, so you go to the gym a few times per week.

But getting healthy doesn't start and end at the time you're at the gym, it extends throughout the whole, kind of, part of your day, or the whole day. So the gym is part of it, but if you're truly changing your lifestyle, you have to do other things, such as changing your diet and eating different foods. It might also include getting the right amount of sleep, or drinking enough water, as well. So it's not just limited to one location or one time period. And so with MTSS, we want to coordinate supports across those settings and across the interventions we're providing, so similar to a, you know, an exercise routine, it's not just that gym.

Special education is not just the time the student, is in the special education room or the resource room, it's the entire day. So, can your students with disability, disabilities access interventions and the general education curriculum? So yes, they are probably provided some additional time, that other students don't receive, but they also will need access to that general education curriculum. They may need accommodations or related services to access certain information, so the example at the beginning, probably, maybe they need a hearing, that audio enhancement to do so, maybe they need, supplementary aids and services to support them, some note-taking or quiet breaks as well, or they may need, you know, wraparound services or support from multiple teachers to kind of access everything. So all of that we can provide a lot easier if we have MTSS as that backdrop. We have a range of support and services, and so we can just leverage those existing structures.

And, to me, the reality is it's easy to think of students as being one location or one service, but students are not just SPED students, or special education students, right? They are students first, and then they get their services and need... they get their needs met across all these different tiers and services.

We kind of got into this bad habit of saying SPED student, and then we... MTSS came about, and we started saying Tier 2 student or Tier 3 student. And I would encourage you to get rid of that language and just think of students and then what support do they need? And so in this graphic on the screen.

This is a student who, yes, they need intensive support in phonics and fluency, but then they have all these other needs that are just met throughout the different tiers and setting, just like any other student in the school.

So, so... Making sure students have access to the range of curriculum across the tiers.

These are some really good resources from the PROGRESS Center. There are different kind of effective practices to support students with disabilities, and then also some webinars and leverage as well. Or, excuse me, webinars and modules as well. Yeah, I'll go back to that. It's a great graphic, it really does to me, shows the... the rounded individuals that we have, that we work with, yeah.

Again, it... hopefully you can see that connection, too. We all have to co-own student achievement, and so...we have to coordinate Tier 1 supports with Tier 2 and, and with Tier 3. Credit George Sugai for that. So, retired professor, I believe, now from UConn, but just a great educator in person there.

And I believe the slides are available, so I'm glad you screenshotted it, but I think you can get a PDF copy, Tessie, if you want to clarify in the chat.

Tessie Baliey: Yes, all the handouts in the side deck will be on the website.

Jason Harlacher: Great.



Okay, so general education, excuse me, general curriculum there, but now let's talk about individualizing instruction.

That's really, to me, you know, one of our big roles as educators, with students with additional needs or intensive needs is figuring out exactly what they need.

And so here, I think about what are we adjusting to individualize and match what students need? And so, I'll start with a graphic on the right, the little sort of triangle graphic there, but for me, the idea is that students learn when the methodology, the content, and the delivery all work together to support them. So if a student is not progressing or making goals, there's some sort of breakdown among one of those things, or all of those, where perhaps the methodology isn't intense enough, that's kind of the instruction that we provide, how we teach them.

The... perhaps, maybe there's a mismatch with the content, what we're teaching, maybe we're not targeting the right skill, or maybe there's an issue where we teach, or how we kind of deliver some of those services, so there's something amiss there in the environment.

And so our role as educators is to figure out what's that right combination, or what little lever can we move and push to support that student. So just like...looking at the water, the food, etc. for the goldfish, we want to apply that same mentality to supporting students. What is it that we need to get that perfect match for that student?

Among how we teach them, what we teach them, and where we teach them.

And so, what do we change exactly? So, generally speaking, we'll individualize across...excuse me, individualized instruction across methodology, content, and delivery. So, things within methodology might include the dosage, so the amount of time within intervention.

Excuse me, it might include the explicit... the amount of explicit instruction, which can include the rate of opportunities to respond, or the amount of corrective feedback.

So methodology is some of those instructional factors around explicit instruction, feedback, practice opportunities. We might also look at the content, which is the focus of our instruction, the skills we're teaching. Are we targeting the right skill for the student?

Or are they lacking, kind of, a foundational skill that we need to focus on and teach?

Or are we not activating the background knowledge well enough for them to engage with the instruction?

Or it might be something with a delivery, and so this kind of touches on some of the instruction in terms of the feedback, the praise that we give the student, but also kind of that setting in terms of how supportive is that environment? Does the student feel welcomed into the classroom? Is there good



classroom management strategies being used so that we can have high engagement and minimal disruption? And does the environment consider unique, sort of, learner characteristics? So, you know.

Does it include, for example, the hearing... the audio enhancement we discussed with the example earlier? Does the environment accommodate that? Is there a vision issue that we need to address as well, and so forth?

So I want to start with the content one, so if we were to focus in on that kind of factor, where would we start, or what are some things we can look at? And so, keeping with moving and driving across the country, I'm going to pose a question to you all. —What was your first car that you owned or drove?

So if you want to take a minute and put that in the chat.

My first car was a 86 Chrysler Laser, paid \$50 for it. My dad drove it home from the neighbor we bought it from and then it never left the driveway because it broke.

My dad was a big, kind of car mechanic, but he could not get this one running, so technically, the first car I drove was a, I think it was a 87 Ford Festiva, which...ironically enough, it's like driving a goldfish bowl. It just sort of was a round car driving around on the road, so...

We've got... oh man, an 87 Mustang as your first car?

Christine, winning there. Plymouth Horizon, so Amy, that's like a Festiva, kind of similar shape.

Okay, so I, I'd like to, ...touch on your first car, because it reminds you of when you first learned to drive, and so I want you to think about what was it like when you were first learning to drive?

Yeah. Sorry, I'm laughing at your comment, Tessie. Yeah, driving a Mustang, some of the coolest kids in high school, driving a Ford Festiva, not so much.

But...Perhaps when you first learned to drive, it might have looked like this, where your hands were 10 and 2 or 10 and 4, so you got both hands on the wheel. You probably have the radio off, no one's talking to you, and that's because you're really trying to focus on all the different things you're processing. It requires a lot of working memory when we're first learning a skill, so we have to really focus. We're just trying to get it down and be accurate with it.

Then, over time, what happens? Then we start to get more comfortable. Our working memory doesn't need as much active processing, it kind of runs on autopilot, so then we can put our active attention to other things. Hopefully you're not doing all the things in this image, but we begin to listen to music, talk to people, unfortunately, get on our phone while we're driving, right? And that's because we... we just can devote energy elsewhere, because we've learned the skill, and it starts to become a fluent part.

Then... so we acquire the skill, we become fluent, and then you begin to apply it in different settings and contexts. So, perhaps going from driving in a cul-de-sac or the highway to then learning how to park in a parking garage where it's a lot of tight quarters.

Or perhaps... .. You know, if you learned in one car, and then you get in a friend's car or a rental car, and it feels similar, but it's, like, a little bit of transition as you generalize.

And so the instructional hierarchy is important for students with disabilities because—sorry, my dog's making noise behind me—it's important for students with disabilities, because we, as we figure out what stage they're in with this skill, our instruction changes and our feedback changes depending on what stage they're in. So as we're trying to match the content to them, we might have to change, kind of, our approach with that student.

Instructional hierarchy, four different stages here, and so I only covered the first three...Adaptation is where you kind of take the essence of the skill and begin to apply it

in sort of completely novel situations, so if you've driven a car, and then you get behind the wheel of a boat, or a car to a motorcycle, you kind of have a general idea, and there's a little bit of adjusting of the skill there to learn it.

So I want to talk about generalization, because that's often a need among students with disabilities. They go to one setting. They are taught, perhaps in the special education setting, and then they come back to the gen ed setting or other settings, and we're hoping that they transfer skills. The reality is, you have to plan for and intentionally teach generalization. We can't just hope that it spontaneously happens.

So I'm going to give you a non-example, an example. The non-example is probably fairly common. I can remember working as a school psych, and I would teach kids in a social skills group. And back in the day, I would teach them and just kind of hope that they would learn it and begin to apply it, but what we've learned over the years is you can teach them the skill, they acquire it, get fluent with it in one setting, but then we have to intentionally plan for teaching in the transfer setting or different settings. So, for example, I might work with students, and I teach them what respect... respect looks like, or certain, you know, functioning within a classroom environment, but then when they would go back to the gen ed setting, there was no teaching within that setting. There was no, here's what it looks like in one setting, here's what it looks like in the other. I would do a lot of prompting and feedback during my social skills group, but then they would go back to the environment, and that would kind of drop off. And so what we hope to do, or what we should be doing, we teach respect, for example, in one setting, examples and non-examples of what that looks like, and then we have also teaching in other settings.

So I had a colleague who would... was teaching kids to follow directions more, so a group of elementary students, and she would teach them in her social skills group of what that would look like, which was essentially looking at the teacher and saying yes, like, agreeing to follow the direction that's given, but



then she would go around the school building, practicing that skill, so trying to show them, this works in all settings, not just when you're in my office there.

So we have teaching in both settings, and then prompting and feedback in one setting, but then when they go to the other one, we have prompting and feedback there.

And then maybe there's a, you know, a check-in at the start of the period for a student, or some sort of visual cue to remind them of the skill, so...

Tessie Bailey: So, Jason, can I just stop you there? Because I think this is really at the crux of the overlap or alignment of special education in a tiered system of support, and Steven mentions it. We, as special educators, are providing specially designed instruction to address the needs that result from the impact to the disability. And while we design a really great program using explicit instruction, we... if we don't see that transfer to the general curriculum, then it means our IEP is not reasonably calculated to promote progress. And so, while IEP goal progress is one thing, and we see that sometimes in our special education space, the ultimate you know, responsibility is to provide an IEP that's going to help the student in the general education curriculum. And I think that's what you're really sort of highlighting, is that generalization, that practice opportunities and gen ed is what MTSS really provides for students with disabilities.

Jason Harlacher: Yeah, it's back to...kind of the exercise routine. If we think the time in the gym is going to fix everything, it's ignoring kind of the goal of the gym is to leverage everything into the other settings to me, so we want to give some of that teaching in the special education setting, but really the goal is for it to transfer to other settings.

So, a great resource we have on our website at the National, or excuse me, the MTSS Center is our infographic, which just kind of briefly summarizes the four different stages, and then gives you a summary of the different instruction and feedback that changes based on that. So, for me, when I'm looking at a student and they're not progressing, with the instruction, we can look at, okay, where is that... what is the skill we're teaching, and where are they at with the level of mastery with it? And then, does the instruction match that? And so, I've seen a few times where we give a literacy intervention to a student needing intervention, and it's a fluency-focused intervention, but then when you look at the student closely, you realize they need phonics. That's the skill that they need, so you have this mismatch between the skill they need and the skill they're receiving, because they haven't progressed to that fluency stage yet.

So, content is one. One of my favorite ways to individualize is related to opportunities to respond, which kind of gets into that methodology or some of that instructional delivery. So, you're probably familiar with OTRs, but OTRs are anytime a student can respond and demonstrate a skill or practice a certain skill, so...You can see on the screen, there's some sort of prompt, that can be a teacher prompt, or a prompt from a worksheet or something, or from some sort of computer program. There's a



prompt, the student responds, and then there should be some kind of feedback on the back end, whether it's praise or acknowledgement for a correct response, or corrective feedback for that.

And you never want a student to end on an error, so you would give another... you'd correct the error and then give another chance to demonstrate the right skill. So we can use OTRs as a way to provide a lot of practice and repetition across those settings. So thinking of one way to generalize or to coordinate across, kind of services and tiers is to think about the amount of practice and OTRs that the student has not just within the special education setting, but also across all those different settings.

We can think of OTRs as who responds, and then how they respond. So, we can do coral responding with OTRs, so you know, a teacher teaching a class and saying, you know, that word is cat. What word? And then everyone responds.

We can do peer-to-peer, so a lot of peer tutoring, or small group, you might do peer-to-peer or just turn and share. I think we all know the think-pair-share format, where students are sharing one-to-one, typically. And then, obviously, individually, I can call on one person or provide individual OTRs there.

And then how they respond can vary, and we want to use a variety here, not just to build engagement, but also to kind of engage those different modalities. So, obviously, there's verbal, we can do written OTRs, such as guided notes, or writing on whiteboards and holding them up. And we can do action or gestures, so thumbs up, if students are texting in, answers can count as a kind of a gesture.

You'll see teachers do a lot of, like, give me a fist of five, how well you understand this, a 1, I don't understand, a 5, I got it. So again, a variety of OTRs in different formats, and that's helpful when it comes to students with disabilities, particularly, because they often need a lot more repetition and practice compared to other students. Most of us can learn, for example, a word in about 3 to 8 repetitions. Students with disabilities, there's some research where it can take up to 30, so when I worked as a school psych, I would hear, well, they get it one day, but then the next day, it's like they forgot it. And what that tells me is they just need more practice and repetition to really ingrain that skill, and so don't be surprised, kind of, at the amount of practice and repetition that's needed for students.

So, a couple resources to share with you around all that. We have a OTR assessment that you can use on our National Center. So again, these slides are online, so you can click the links directly when you get a copy. But you can use this to track you know, you can observe... have someone observe you, but often teachers will just record 10-15 minutes of instruction and then go back and listen to it, and you can tally the OTRs. You can look at just the normal rate, but if you're really wanting some more nuanced detail, you can look at the accuracy with those OTRs to give you a sense of how well a student's mastering that. It's just a little more tricky, because you have to hear their response or check it, kind of, afterwards.



Tessie Bailey: Jason, can I share? I think this is a really valuable resource provided by the Center, particularly in helping identify the intensity of the delivery adaptations necessary to be documented in the IEP, because it... We need to know, does this kid need 30 practice opportunities rather than 10? Because it... it helps us make a better decision about the dosage that you were mentioning earlier.

Jason Harlacher: Yeah, and often I would go as part of my evaluations, or just problem solving, and just count the OTRs and get a sense of... It tells you a lot, the pacing, the amount of engagement, and then the mastery of the content for the student, and so there's a lot of information. And the best part is, it is free to have OTRs. You don't need to buy a program. You don't necessarily need too much training to use it. We're all used to, kind of, the practice on responding.

And this is, I think, going to your next slides, is a great opportunity for general ed and special ed to be able to collaborate. Because a special ed teacher can't provide all those practice opportunities, and neither can a general ed teacher. That's why the student is in special ed. So, how do we ensure kids get those across the tiered system?

Yeah. We can get the link in the chat, probably. Tessie, if you can do that now, or... Yeah, I'll get that. Yeah.

Yeah, so that's one of my favorite resources we have, and then this classroom management one, I kind of started my career with behavior management and PBIS, and so I created this kind of quick self-assessment of classroom assess... or classroom management practices. So just a short little questionnaire to see, does... do you have kind of the essentials for classroom management there so it can help create that supportive environment?

And then I mentioned my colleague in the goldfish analogy, Jon Potter, so him and I went to grad school together, but he's great at presenting this information and problem solving, so there's a recorded webinar that we have and then an infographic on the right there of just some good resources around problem solving and those different kind of instructional factors.

So, our goal... one of the benefits of MTSS, it can help us, kind of provide that instructional plan or that IEP, by leveraging a lot of those tiers. We can leverage a lot of that individualization across, you know, kind of that methodology, content, and delivery there.

Let me share just a couple more things. Collaboration is essential, we've been highlighting that a little bit throughout. With MTSS, you have different teaming structures, and so I encourage you all to just kind of leverage those teams to facilitate the communication and collaboration. Generally speaking, MTSS, there should be a leadership team that oversees the school-wide implementation of MTSS, what's our vision, what are our systems that we need? But then there's those student-focused teams that talk about individual kids or talk about groups of kids. So you might have a... your Tier 1 PLC team, and then there might be intervention teams that meet. And then, of course, there's the IEP teams, or



the multidisciplinary teams, and so there's not a standard structure for teams across schools, it just depends on the context, the number of staff, and so forth.

But special education can use those team meetings or attend those meetings as a way to communicate and facilitate that coordination as you're all kind of planning and problem solving.

Excuse me.

Another good resource we have on the Center is our Team Audit. I saw so much of the... you've probably seen the Working Smarter, Not Harder matrix, which was essentially a team audit, and so we just adapted from that and created our own tool around teaming structures where leadership can use this activity to identify the right teams for your MTSS structure, and how to support all students with those teaming structures.

Student belonging is a key piece. I think it's foundational and important for all the students to feel welcomed and valued in the school, but particularly students with disabilities or students with different needs. So, student belonging is just that amount of connection and attachment students feel to the school community.

The PROGRESS Center has, like, 10 different dimensions related to student belonging, but I just want to talk about two of them here briefly. One being, do your students feel welcome? Do they feel received by other students at the school or by others at the school? So how welcoming of an environment is it? And then, for your students with disabilities, are they receiving the assistance they need to participate in all aspects of the school? Do they feel supported with what they need and want to accomplish?

So... let me talk through, kind of, two different things.

One related to being welcomed and one being supported. I think we're all used to, sort of, guidance and expectations out in the world. Certainly, speed limit signs, traffic lights, those are all sort of prompts and expectations that we're reminded of as we're kind of out driving around, and then I was recently at a concert, and they did a really good job of outlining the expectation of having a clear bag.

So, their bag policy was a clear bag with certain sizes, but they emailed you. As you were walking up to the venue, there were signs, and then they had vendors there to sell you clear bags if you didn't have one, so they were avoiding, people coming up and getting to security, and then being told, you can't bring that bag in, or you need a different bag. So, having really clear expectations. So within a school. School-wide expectations are just those short statements around expected behaviors, or behaviors or actions associated with, kind of, school success. So, the most common ones you'll see are be safe, be respectful, be responsible, so you have a little bit of a spin on them here with the graphic on the screen. But those expectations outline, pro-social skills and kind of the culture and climate, and so you can intentionally build belonging as one of those expectations, so you create that foundation from which you can build from and provide additional support to students.



And so this is an image of a poster a team I worked with...They had their poster hanging on a window, so that's... you see the light coming through, and then the bar is darker there under the eye, but it was pride, positive attitude, respect myself and others, independent thinker, do my best, and then everybody belongs, so they explicitly state, this is our expectation. We expect everyone to feel welcomed and belonged in our school.

So that's part of having students feel welcomed, and then you can think about, with feeling supported, you can access the screening systems and connect with students around what support they need. We know that students who have at least one adult that they're connected to, it greatly reduces their risk for dropout, so you can actively screen students and ask them just a simple question, name an adult you feel connected to. And if they can name one, great. If they don't name one, then they might be at risk, and they might need some follow-up. And so you can certainly adjust the question, you know, do you have a favorite teacher, do you have a high caring adult on campus?

So...So, we make them feel welcome with expectations, and then we can make sure they have the right support through screening. So, overall, then, you know, the key point here is MTSS can really make providing special education services and supports easier.

Students with disabilities have access to the full, excuse me, have full access to the Gen Ed curriculum, and then we leverage those systems and structures to provide the exact services and supports that they need there.

I have a couple more things, I'll just pause there for a few minutes and see, if there's any questions or anything...

Tessie Bailey: There was a question earlier, and I just want to make a point of clarification around how the IEP and MTSS intersect. Generally, we don't write in an IEP anything related to a tiered system of support, and that's because under IDEA, there is deference to the district or the school in how they implement the IEP. So some schools might use a tiered system, leverage the structures to do that, but other schools might not have that. So in the IEP, what we end up documenting are the needs.

So, to what you said, Jason, like, they need a certain number of opportunities for practice, they need a level of intensity, a focus on generalization, content adaptations. And then a school can take that IEP and leverage their MTSS to successfully implement it.

And I think there was also a question just around how does this apply? You know, if I have a self-contained setting, or maybe, like, a different type of school structure, can MTSS, even private school, how does this apply?

Jason Harlacher: Yeah, I... I know you... you can speak to that as well, Tessie, but for me, MTSS is about providing that range of services. And it starts with that foundation, and sometimes we get stuck thinking, it's Tier 2 and Tier 3, and then if it's a different setting, suddenly MTSS doesn't exist, but the



idea is right at the heart of MTSS is assessing students of where they're at, and then providing what they need based on the data, and so you create a range of supports. Private schools, alternative settings can still have MTSS as a system, it just would look a little different. Your, you know, alternative setting, let's say you have a behavior high school, or kids who, you know, need a lot of support. In a gen ed setting, Tier 1 might look like, you know, 60 minutes in literacy a day with some good high-leverage practices. But that same Tier 1 literacy in an alternative high school might be high leverage practices, but then really intensive behavior support and engagement with it, right?

But the idea of a foundation for all students to reduce the need for additional support still exists there.

Two things I'll end on then is just, we're here to help, the MTSS Center. We have a lot of great resources on there, continually updating and providing new ones. So, feel free to log on to our website and kind of explore. If you click on the resource library in the upper corner, you can then search keywords and things like that. And then we certainly have a lot of consultants available to do professional learning and coaching and so forth as well. I would encourage you to follow us on X or on LinkedIn, because we'll post on social media around when new resources and articles are coming out. I'm actually doing a webinar next week, on... as well, that you can attend around, kind of, general MTSS implementation.

And then I really like this sentiment from George Sugai, who also had that graphic of the student with the different needs, but...thinking of the goldfish, right? Like, MTSS is not about how we organize our kids, but it's how we organize ourselves for collective impact. So how do we create that system or that environment that supports all students? And so...I really like that, that sentiment there.

I...Don't know if there's any last-minute questions, but feel free to reach out and connect if you have additional questions. [mtsscenter at AIR.org](mailto:mtsscenter@AIR.org), or you can email me directly at [jharlacher at AIR.org](mailto:jharlacher@AIR.org).