

A primary goal of the Illinois MTSS Network is to provide research-based professional learning and coaching to assist school districts in building educators' capacity and confidence in implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The purpose of this guide is to share information about the role of diagnostic assessment at Tier 2(group)/Tier 3(individual) for academic and behavior skills.

Definitions and Critical Features

Data are collected from Universal Screeners/district set entrance criteria to determine

1. students who need Tier 2/Tier 3 support;
2. what kind of support students need;
3. whether students are making progress with Tier 2/3 interventions;
4. which interventions are most effective; and
5. when students have closed the achievement gap and/or need less intensive support.

Through diagnostic assessment, at Tier 2 or Tier 3, educators review or gather various student responses and samples to determine student needs. Key features of diagnostic assessments include:

- production-type responses—observable academic or behavior skills such as reading aloud, timed math sample, writing a specified sample, and self-regulation frequency in the classroom
- a sufficient number of items to accurately determine skill strengths and deficits
- specific skill items to provide detailed information about where skills break down

Sample Diagnostic Tools

Diagnostic tools are used to accurately measure skills in reading, math, and the SEL competencies. This allows for students with like needs to be grouped at Tier 2 and for an individualized plan to be developed at Tier 3.

- Adaptive Screening Measures- i.e., NWEA, STAR, Fastbridge, Panorama, etc.
- Specific skill assessments- writing, phonics, vocabulary, math, skill-based behavior survey, etc.
- In class unit assessments- common assessments from core curriculums
- Curriculum Based Evaluation (Tier 3)- informal assessment which provides a decision-making framework for considering the assumed causes of a student's academic or social problems, validating these hypotheses, and linking the results to a teaching recommendation.

Application

Many schools use a standard treatment protocol where teams use existing data to match students with a small number of pre-selected interventions to determine which would best support the student. Existing data may come from benchmark screeners and/or additional classroom information that the teacher provides. If that data is not sufficient in determining groups of students based on skill areas, further diagnostic assessment and problem solving might be needed to ensure the group skills are matched to the intervention. Whether implementing standard treatment protocol, problem solving, or a hybrid approach, the focus of assessment and intervention at Tier 2 is on *targeted groups of students* rather than on individual students (Tier 3).

At Tier 3, the team utilizes the problem-solving process with a focus on the problem analysis step, often including a diagnostic skill assessment, for reading, math or behavior to ensure success. In addition, school psychologists are often trained to perform Curriculum Based Evaluation's (CBE) which is an expanded five step problem solving process that is often informed by the use of Curriculum Based Measurements. These evaluations assist the Tier 3 team in making the best plan for the individual student.

For more information:

- Hosp, J. L., Hosp, M. K., Howell, K. W., & Allison, R. (2014). *The abcs of curriculum-based evaluation: A practical guide to effective decision making*. The Guilford Press.
- McMaster, K., Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., & Compton, D. L. (2002). Monitoring the academic progress of children who are not responsive to generally effective early reading intervention. *Assessment for Effective Intervention, 27(4)*,–23–33).
- Metcalf, T. *What's your plan? Accurate decision making within a multi-tier system of supports: Critical areas in Tier 2*; Available online at: <https://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tier2/whats-your-plan-accurate-decision-making-within-a-multi-tier-system-of-supports-critical-areas-in-tier-2>
- Wixson, K.K. & Valencia, S.W. (2011). Assessment in RtI: What teachers and specialists need to know. *The Reading Teacher, 64(6)*, pp. 466-469. Available online at: <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1598/RT.64.6.13>