"Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

R.W. Emerson

Be a Trailblazer!

How to Guide Districts Through the Launch of MTSS in Five Easy Steps

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Summary of the MTSS Implementation Pilot, January-June 2015

In the spring of 2015, OCDE and Implementation Scientists, LLC piloted an innovative blended learning workshop series, designed to facilitate the implementation of Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at three diverse Orange County districts.

MTSS is a framework to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed academically, behaviorally, and with social-emotional support in school. MTSS integrates these three components with a focus on

- Providing high quality instruction and interventions matched to student need;
- Monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals;
- Using data to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.

Leaders within OCDE recognized the growing local need to not only understand what MTSS means, but actually how to translate MTSS into their own schools and districts. As a result OCDE worked with Implementation Scientists, LLC to launch a pilot series based in the principles of **Implementation Science** to help districts assess their unique needs and create an inclusive plan for putting interventions and supports in place at all levels. Using Active Implementation Frameworks and practice expertise, the process allowed multiple entry points for districts and schools.

The OCDE series was designed by Dr. Michelle Duda to help districts explore the systems and processes that can ensure MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Supports) would be implemented with fidelity and would promote sustainability. The curriculum was shaped by the initial cohort-the "Trailblazers"- to help them identify current system strengths for supporting MTSS and to provide them with practical tools and strategies to assist with alignment of programs and to address any gaps. Through this series, districts learned about the theory behind Implementation Science and how to apply principles of Applied Implementation Science to any evidence-based program or practices. Each district team and the OCDE team worked through each of the frameworks and utilized related tools on-site and in-between sessions. As a result, each individual collaborated in leadership teams to evaluate their current practices, create a shared vision for what MTSS "looks like," articulate the key components of that vision, and determine their core team members' roles and responsibilities. The capstone to the series was that each team created working agreements linked to their LCAPs and completed a district implementation capacity assessment to begin to build an action plan.

Hillary Wolfe, Coordinator, Academic Intervention Supports, carefully designed selection criteria for recruitment of districts that were most advanced with their district wide launch of MTSS and were able to commit to participating in the entire series as a team. Three districts were selected for this pilot, including Anaheim Union High School District, Buena Park School District, and Lowell Joint School District (see demographics below).

	Total Student Population	Grades Served	# of Schools	% White	% African/ American	% Asian	% Hispanic/ Latino	% ELL
District A	31,889	6-12	21	12.3%	2.6%	12.3%	64.8%	21.5%
District B	3,217	TK-8	6	28.8%	1.2%	3.1%	63.8%	10.9%
District C	4,985	TK-8	7	8.2%	4.3%	14.1%	66%	43.9%

OCDE managers were joined by faculty from Concordia University to participate as learners alongside the district teams, so that we could build our own capacity to replicate this work in years to follow. The series was facilitated by OCDE managers and led by Dr. Michelle Duda, an expert implementation consultant and coach since 2008.

District leadership teams were inspired by the protocols they learned and the tools they used. Some of their comments appear below.

- ✓ "Thank you for doing this, it is revolutionary and we are excited to be part of this new vision of reframing our practices in education."
- ✓ "Using the tools, we've been able to clarify and refocus our goals and objectives."
- ✓ "I love the idea of fidelity measures, and we are using the matrix/grid to identify essential program components and map them out. We need to focus on implementing one thing well as a place to start."
- ✓ "[With the district initiative inventory,] we were able to define and group initiatives and begin thinking about focus. Clarified current practices and priorities. It created a lot of dialogue."
- ✓ "[The Terms of Reference document] created a common language for the team to use and common expectations for time and responsibilities."
- ✓ "[The Terms of Reference document] helped us focus the direction of our team."

Currently, the Trailblazers (cohort 1) continue to receive distance coaching to help ensure that lessons learned from the series can be sustained and supported. OCDE has since launched a second series with much success and is now ready to offer this series again for the third year in a row.

For information about the series and how to participate, contact Hillary Wolfe, Coordinator, Academic Intervention Supports, at 714 966 4401, hwolfe@ocde.us

Active Implementation Frameworks

National Implementation Research Network

In 2005, the National Implementation Research Network released a monograph[i] synthesizing implementation research findings across a range of fields. Based on these findings, NIRN developed five overarching frameworks referred to as the Active Implementation Frameworks. In order to achieve sustainable and scalable programs/practices to improve outcomes for all consumers, the following frameworks need to be fully integrated and applied across all levels of the health and human services system.

Usable Interventions
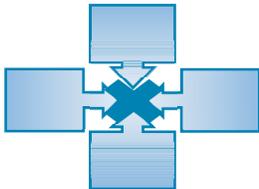
Usable interventions are the "non-negotiable" core components that are critical to building an implementation infrastructure. Usable interventions include: Clear Description of the intervention, Essential functions, Operational Definitions and Performance Assessment.

Drivers

Implementation Drivers are key components of capacity and infrastructure that influence a program's success. They are the core components needed to support practice, organizational, and systems change.

Teams
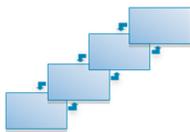
The role of Implementation Teams is to leverage implementation science principles and systems change best practices to support the widespread use of evidence-based programs and practices.

Stages

Conducting stage-appropriate implementation activities is necessary for successful service and systems change.

Cycles

Improvement Cycles are the purposeful process of change. Implementation teams use improvement cycles to change on purpose.

Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the literature. The National Implementation Research Network.

MTSS Questions to Consider/Implementation Science Tips

Know your "it" (Usable Intervention Framework)
- o Are the components of MTSS clearly defined in your school/district?
- o How do you know?
- o How do you measure the core components?
- o Who facilitated that work?

Invest in People (Implementation Teams)
- o Who introduced MTSS or other EBPs/EIIs into your school/the schools you are supporting/district?
- o Who is responsible for ensuring implementer's needs are met (e.g., training, coaching, and resources)?
- o Who is collecting fidelity data and student outcome data?
- o How do teams or groups currently share information—within school or district or across schools in the district?

Be Intentional and Systematic (Implementation Drivers)
- o Do current systems support the high fidelity use of MTSS as a whole "package" or does it tend to focus on some key components?
- o Does professional development (training, coaching, and recruitment process) align to fidelity?
- o Does the organization make adaptions to elements such as scheduling, time allocation, use of data systems for decision-making, to ensure support of MTSS and the practices under its umbrella?
- o How are leadership supported with information they need, or opportunities to participate in team functions?

Create a Culture of Trial and Learning (Improvement Cycles)
- o How are new innovations viewed?
- o Is there time and space for people to learn about new programs and practices?
- o Are there effective communication strategies among stakeholders?
- o Are opportunities for information sharing supported? How?
- o Is there transparency about how/why decisions are made?
- o Are data collection strategies used and shared back in a timely fashion?

Implementation Takes Time (Stages of Implementation)
- o What Stage of Implementation is MTSS currently in within your school/district (exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation, refinement)?
- o What are key activities within those stages?
- o What are lessons learned moving from one stage to the next?
- o How does knowledge of the stage of implementation help protect and honor the work?