Marshall Street

Conclusion

NAVIGATING DATA FOR MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

Conclusion

Many schools utilize a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) — a comprehensive framework that centers individual student needs within the wider scope of instruction, differentiation, behavioral support, and intervention (see the California Department of Education definition) — to meet the variety of needs of their students. When implemented effectively, MTSS empowers schools and networks to meet the needs of every student at their current level. It can be a challenge, though, for schools and networks to utilize the framework effectively. It involves:

- identifying the right data,
- disaggregating data in a way that highlights the students most in need of support,
- creating and executing tiered plans to close the gaps, and
- accurately monitoring the implementation of those plans.

Despite having an immense amount of data at their fingertips, schools often need support in creating the systems and routines that are necessary to ensure their most marginalized students are receiving the support that they need.

Over the course of three years, the Marshall Street Networked Improvement Community (NIC) saw teachers and leaders from 10 participating charter networks implement, study, and adjust various best practices for improving outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities who are experiencing poverty. This collection — itself an outcome of the work these schools have done — describes some of the strongest of these practices, focusing specifically on how the participating schools improved their existing MTSS structures. It highlights three best practices: routine data cycles, student conferencing, and site-based teams. There are also two case studies, one focusing on how network leaders at **Green Dot Public Schools** use data effectively at the network level and another on **STRIVE Prep**'s approach to improving family engagement.

Through their work with the NIC, the participating schools honed their already-present MTSS structures, focusing on making changes that prioritized the NIC's target population and would lead directly to positive outcomes for all students. At **STEM Prep**, introducing a gradebook dashboard to support teachers in monitoring student grades in more frequent data cycles led to an increase in the percentage of students with disabilities who had As or Bs in their classes, from 25% to 81%. Additionally, the dashboard helped improve the experience of all students, as the percentage of students without

disabilities who had As or Bs improved from 49% to 77%. At **Collegiate Academies**, leaders honed a data teaming system that led to huge growth for students with disabilities showing mastery on their statewide graduation readiness projects, increasing from 44% to 92%.

Similarly, using data to effectively implement 1:1 conferences with students yielded promising results. At STRIVE Prep, a special education math teacher piloted student conferences in his math class. Every student with an IEP from that class who conferred with the teacher passed all of their classes. As he expanded the practice beyond just his class, 80% of students with IEPs who participated in these conferences increased their GPA that semester. **KIPP Northern California** also piloted student conferencing for students with disabilities and found that every student who participated increased the number of classes they were passing, and 75% of participating students passed all of their classes. Based on this success, KIPP has built additional periods into their schedule so that special educators can meet with more students to confer.

Key Takeaways

THE TYPE AND QUALITY OF DATA THAT SCHOOLS UTILIZE MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE.

One of the biggest challenges participating schools faced at the start of their work with the NIC was that, although they had an immense amount of student data, including academic, behavioral, and social data, they weren't consistently focusing on the data that would drive impact on student learning and growth. As schools work to improve their MTSS structures, an important first step is to consider what their data tells them and what it doesn't tell them. From there, they can focus on the actions needed to either gather the right information or make a plan to solve for the problems they're seeing.

SCHOOLS MUST DISAGGREGATE DATA TO BE ABLE TO DESIGN FOR PRIORITY SUBGROUPS.

Disaggregating data, or looking at data for groups of students rather than the whole student population, is an effective way to see which students' needs are not being met by the current system. Too often, schools miss gaps for subgroups, such as students with disabilities, because those gaps don't show up when looking at the school's entire student population. To accurately identify which students need higher-touch support services, schools and networks should ensure that they are examining data across grade levels, schools, and student demographic characteristics such as English language proficiency and special education status.

ALIGNMENT ACROSS ALL LEVELS ALLOWS THE SYSTEM TO FUNCTION SMOOTHLY.

In order for collaboration between educators to be effective, there must be specific time set aside for deliberate co-planning. Not only that, but the time must be used intentionally to increase access to learning for all students. The collaborating teachers and co-teachers in the NIC found that simply meeting together is not enough. Rather, meeting with a plan and with support led to the growth in practice and student impact that they were looking for.

The United States education system was not intentionally designed to respond to the varying needs of students positioned furthest from opportunity in our society, including Black and Latinx students with disabilities who are experiencing poverty. As a result, year after year, students with disabilities repeatedly underperform their peer groups in schools across the country.[1]

Multi-tiered systems of support that are designed to fit into the current education landscape, while nominally focused on providing support to all students, frequently miss the mark by focusing on the middle, rather than the edges.

This collection of practices highlights the important work that members of the NIC did to ensure that their students – all of their students – received the targeted instructional and behavioral support that they both need and deserve. Schools must follow the lead of the NIC participants and begin by asking *which of their students are not being served well by the current system*. The answer will allow them to consider how their practices might change so that every student can succeed.



[1] US Department of Education. "Focus on NAEP: Students With Disabilities and NAEP Assessments." The Nation's Report Card. Accessed March 1, 2024. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/focus_on_naep/student_groups/#/students-with-disabilities/performance