



Vermont’s Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Each and every young child (birth through Grade 3) and family in Vermont has diverse strengths rooted in their unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. They have gifts and abilities that should be celebrated and nurtured. Full participation means promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and early childhood professionals to gain the competence and confidence to positively impact the lives of each and

We believe that each and every child . . .

- *Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.*
- *Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.*
- *Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.*

For each and every family, we will...

- *Respect and support them as experts, partners, and decision makers in the learning and development of their children.*
 - *Pledge to be open, genuine, reflective, and respectful listeners and communication partners.*
 - *Build caring communities that are accepting of differences and foster a sense of belonging.*
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every child and their family. To ensure each and every child thrives in Vermont, [the ‘Supporting Each and Every Young Child’s Full and Equitable Participation’](#) guiding principles were created by a cross sector stakeholder group and adopted in 2018 by [Vermont’s Building Bright Futures Early Childhood State Advisory Committee](#) (SAC) and state agency partners. The ‘guiding principles’ serve as a foundation for Vermont’s Early MTSS.

[Act 166/Universal Prekindergarten Education \(UPK\)](#) was passed in 2014. UPK provides all 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds (not age eligible for kindergarten) with public education for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks per year. In addition to services in school-based classrooms, children are also served in Head Start programs, licensed child care programs, private preschool and child care programs, family child care, as well as within their home.

These partnerships allow school districts to provide more options for each and every child, particularly for children with disabilities to participate in regular education settings with their same-age peers.

Early MTSS implemented to fidelity is key to ensuring each and every child receive a high quality inclusive UPK education.

EARLY MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS HIGH-QUALITY INCLUSION FOR EACH AND EVERY CHILD

The Vermont Agency of Education has implemented a **multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)** as a major component of its school improvement and effectiveness work. MTSS is an evidence-based approach to assessing and maximizing learning opportunities for all children. The MTSS framework helps educators individualize teaching and learning.

The Vermont Agency of Education used funding from the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant and a State Professional Development Grant (SPDG) to expand and sustain the State's Foundations for Early Learning professional development initiative, which is now known as the **Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Early MTSS)**.

Vermont also has used special education funding and local funding to support training in the classroom.

Early MTSS aims to improve early learning, social and emotional well-being, and competence for children from birth through age 8. Using lessons learned from previous professional development efforts, Vermont Early MTSS focused on building a **two-prong approach**. Early MTSS balances **building a system of support** for school-based programs, families, health providers, and community partners with **supporting evidence-based inclusion practices** in the classroom. Figure 1 lists the five inclusion goals of Vermont's Early MTSS.

Early MTSS Inclusion Goals

- To provide high-quality inclusive learning opportunities for young children with disabilities
- To enhance practitioner knowledge and the use of evidence-based practices as well as practices recommended by Division for Early Childhood to support inclusion
- To provide systems design to ensure program-wide implementation and the sustainability of evidence-based practices
- To increase local education agencies' capacity to offer a full continuum of educational placement options
- To build a sustainable statewide system of high-quality inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments for each and every 3, 4 and 5 year old child

Figure 1. Vermont's Early MTSS Inclusion initiative includes five goals.

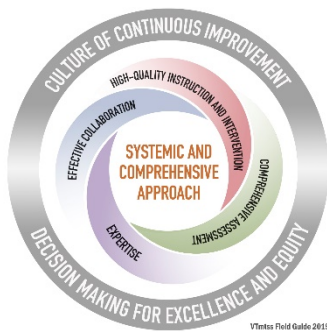
To establish an Early MTSS infrastructure, Vermont relied on research and a tiered framework of evidence-based practices developed by two national, federally funded research and training centers, the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), the Pyramid Model Consortium and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI). Early MTSS continues to seek out and utilize

extensive research, materials and practices developed by following sources:

- The Pyramid Model Consortium www.pyramidmodel.org
- The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovation <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/>
- Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) www.earlyliteracylearning.org
- *Inclusive Classroom Profile* by Elena P. Soukakou;
- *Recommended Practices in Early Intervention Early Childhood Special Education* by the Division for Early Childhood;
- *Planning Guide to Statewide Implementation, Scale-Up, and Sustainability of Recommended Practices* by the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center;
- *Quality Indicators of Inclusive Early Childhood Programs/Practices* developed by the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center; and
- Fact sheets about early childhood inclusion and multiple resources created by Colorado's Pyramid Plus www.pyramidplus.org

EARLY MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM ALIGNS WITH K-12 MTSS

To achieve these goals, Early MTSS adapted and adopted the **five key components** from Vermont's established K–12 MTSS Field Guide (figure 2):



Systemic & Comprehensive

- Shared belief that all students learn
- Educational equity within an inclusive school culture at every level of the system
- A common vision and shared understanding of VTmtss
- Integration of service delivery
- A culture of continuous improvement that is focused and sustainable

Effective Collaboration

- Intentional and ongoing practices to increase family and community involvement
- Teams include multiple perspectives and make decisions together
- Shared responsibility and respect for all students
- Structures and processes aim at continuous improvement to improve outcomes for all students.

High-quality Instruction/Intervention

- Staff support the academic, behavior, and social-emotional needs of all students
- All students are engaged in grade level core instruction with layered supplemental intervention provided as needed
- Structures and policies provide access and equity, are student-centered, culturally-responsive, and designed to eliminate barriers to learning opportunities
- Coherent, consistent curricula for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning

Comprehensive Assessment

- a comprehensive and coordinated system that can be used to communicate to parents and students about proficiency, behavior, and social-emotional well-being

- Data is examined, discussed, reflected on and used to make decisions
- Schools use all available data to address issues in a timely manner
- Schools allocate resources that are responsive to the needs of all learners and staff
- Assessments identify and address gaps to better provide equitable learning opportunities for every student

Expertise

- Expectation that all staff will participate in on-going, embedded professional learning (PL)
- Professional learning is available to all staff to ensure student progress within universal education environment
- Equitable allocation and use of resources to implement evidence-based practices is responsible and intentional
- Staff expertise matched to student need

EARLY MTSS SYSTEMS INVENTORY

Early MTSS offers professional development to regional leaders and early childhood practitioners based on a **tiered framework of evidence-based practices of promotion, prevention, and intervention**. This tiered framework is the model for delivering information about evidence-based practices, strategies, and resources to families and early childhood practitioners. The framework was developed by two federally funded research and training centers: The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI).

Vermont developed an **Early MTSS Systems Inventory**, which is a tool used by program leadership teams to evaluate the effectiveness of a program regarding the five key systematic components (as listed above). The Systems Inventory was designed for school districts and community based childcare programs (including Head Start) to assess whether each of the components of the Early MTSS framework is being implemented with fidelity, is sustainable, and benefits children and families.

The professional development component of this initiative is emblematic of Vermont’s philosophy that the State should support teachers in the ways they need to be supported to accomplish the goals set by the State. The professional development component of the Early MTSS Systems Inventory, shown in figure 3, allows program leaders to:

- identify staff needs;
- provide systemic staff support;
- assess professional development learning; and
- assess how well the professionals have implemented what they have learned.

“For every increment of performance, I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation.”

- Richard F. Elmore, “Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Achievement: The Imperative for Professional Development in Education”

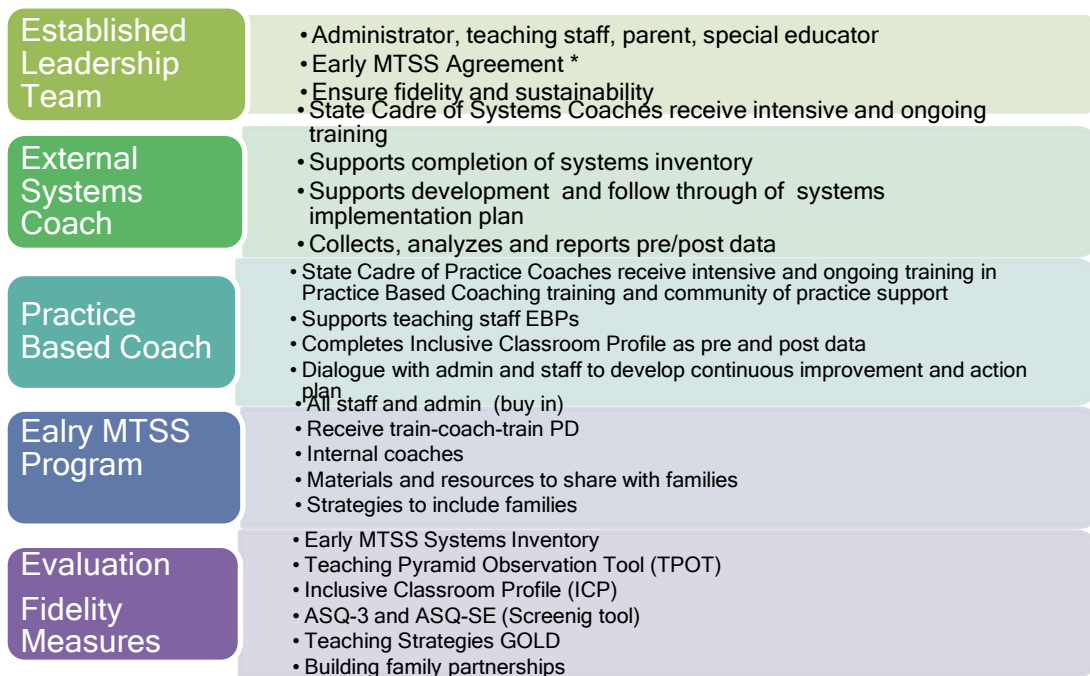
This inventory includes a rating system as well as a place to identify priority areas for improvement. A separate document, the Early MTSS DATA Summary and Goal Setting Tool, allows leaders to set goals based on the results of the Program Inventory.

EARLY MTSS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS

There are many steps with multiple opportunities for feedback and support in the process of implementing an Early MTSS Inclusion Professional Development System (figure 4).

- Early childhood programs establish a leadership team and complete the systems inventory and goal setting tool.
- Early childhood programs have access to a designated External Systems Coach. This coach supports the leadership team as it completes the inventory tool to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Early childhood programs identify an ‘internal’ systems coach to train with State-level systems coach to build capacity and sustainability.
- A Practice-Based Coach supports the early childhood program The practice-based coach supports classroom staff in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The practice-based coach conducts observations of classroom practices on inclusion. The Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) and Teaching Pyramid Observation tool (TPOT) is used for pre/post and on-going data collection on practice implementation.
- The early childhood program staff receive training on Pyramid Model practices and other evidence-based practices to support knowledge and increase use of evidence-based practices in classrooms.
- Training includes a focus on family modules, partnerships and resources.
- Evaluation is three pronged:
 1. Building Systems-Systems Inventory (includes family partnerships)
 2. Teacher Practice -Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP), Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
 3. Child Progress Data – TSGOLD, ASQ-3, ASQ-SE, Individual Education Plans (IDEA)

Figure 4: Early MTSS Professional Development Components.



RESOURCES!

National Technical Assistance Centers

- The Pyramid Model Consortium <http://www.pyramidmodel.org/>
- The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/>
- The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center <http://ectacenter.org/>
- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>
- Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention <http://challengingbehavior.fmbi.usf.edu/>

Publications

CONNECT: The Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge. *The 5-Step Learning Cycle*TM
<http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/5-step-learning-cycle>

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC). *Recommended Practices*
<http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>

DEC and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. *Joint Position Paper: Early Childhood Inclusion*. 2009.
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC_NAEYC_EC_updatedKS.pdf

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. *Planning Guide to Statewide Implementation, Scale-Up, and Sustainability of Recommended Practices*
http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/implement_ebp/ECTA_RP_StateGuide_2-2015.pdf

Elena P. Soukakou. *Inclusive Classroom Profile*
http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/meetings/inclusionMtg2012/Soukakou_ICP-bandout.pdf

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. *Quality Indicators of Inclusive Early Childhood Programs/Practices: A Compilation of Selected Resources*.
<http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/qualityindicatorsinclusion.pdf>

Webinar: *Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities, Session 3: State Professional Development Strategies to Support Inclusive Practices*

Presentation slides: <http://ectacenter.org/~calls/2014/inclusion/inclusion.asp-session3>

Webinar recording: <http://ectacenter.org/~stream/calls/2015/inclusion-2015-06-02/>

Webinar Summary: *Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities, Session 1: Challenges and Strategies from the 2014 Preschool Inclusion Survey*
<https://elc.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/7578>

Webinar Summary: *Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities, Session 2: State Strategies to Promote Inclusive Practices*

<https://elc.grads360.org/-/communities/pdc/documents/7922>

Pyramid Plus Fact Sheets

- Fact Sheet of Research on Preschool Inclusion
<http://www.pyramidplus.org/sites/default/files/images/Inclusion%20Fact%20Sheet%202014.pdf>
- Brief Summary: Fact Sheet of Research on Preschool Inclusion
[http://www.pyramidplus.org/sites/default/files/images/Brief Inclusion Fact Sheet .pdf](http://www.pyramidplus.org/sites/default/files/images/Brief%20Inclusion%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)
- Inclusion for Preschool Children with Disabilities: What We Know and What We Should Be Doing
- IDEA Provisions Supporting Preschool Inclusion
[http://www.pyramidplus.org/sites/default/files/images/IDEA Provisions Supporting Preschool](http://www.pyramidplus.org/sites/default/files/images/IDEA%20Provisions%20Supporting%20Preschool.pdf)

