# Section 3:

## Development of Multidisciplinary Teams and Accompanying Processes

Establishing efficient and aligned multidisciplinary teams is essential for implementing coordinated student support systems. This section provides guidance on how schools and districts can streamline and consolidate teams to promote alignment with the NJTSS framework. The following areas will be explored in this section:

- Aligning I&RS, RTI, and NJTSS through team structure and consolidation,
- Selecting multidisciplinary team members based on expertise and system needs,
- Defining team roles, responsibilities, and norms,
- Establishing team procedures, documentation practices, and decision-making processes, and
- Scheduling and managing time effectively to ensure capacity for team operations.

The New Jersey Administrative Code provides guidelines for district boards of education to establish intervention and referral services:

- District boards of education shall establish and implement in each school building in which general education students are served a coordinated system for planning and delivering intervention and referral services designed to assist students who are experiencing learning, behavior, or health difficulties, and to assist staff who have difficulties in addressing students' learning, behavior, or health needs. District boards of education shall choose the appropriate multidisciplinary team approach, such as the Response to Intervention (RTI) or a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model, for planning and delivering the services required under this subchapter (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8.1).
- As part of this coordinated system, the development of multidisciplinary teams, at the district and school levels, are essential to the overall functioning of the system and the delivery of supports and services (Burns et al., 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2020).

## Where to Start?

As a function of daily operations as well as compliance and quality assurance requirements, many schools have established several multidisciplinary teams to assist with carrying out a wide range of tasks (Burns et al., 2005). There is also a tendency to develop new teams each time a new requirement is identified. For example, having a school climate team and school-wide positive behavior support team or an intervention and referral services team and a New Jersey Tiered System of Support team existing simultaneously (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

Prior to creating a new team or revising current multidisciplinary teams for the purpose of meeting the intervention and referral services requirements, it is recommended that district and school leadership teams complete an evaluation of all current team structures as well as the teams' levels of functioning (Sugai & Horner, 2020). This evaluation consists of identifying which teams are in place and the purpose, goals, proposed outcomes, and membership of each team (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). It is important to take the time to examine each team process to ensure that team outcomes are clear, reasonable, and focused to meet the needs of the school community.

Once this is complete, the next step is to determine the extent to which there is any duplication in team purpose, goals, and membership. From there, decisions to eliminate, combine, or create new teams can be made. A simple team evaluation matrix, such as the one provided below, can be helpful when evaluating teams. Although this assessment is provided here in the context of developing an NJTSS framework, we suggest completing this matrix periodically at the district and school levels to ensure that teams, regardless of their purpose, are effectively operating and driving continuous school improvement (McLeskey et al., 2018).

**Figure 3.1: Team Assessment Matrix**

**Team Assessment Matrix**
Directions: Assemble district and/or school leadership teams for the purpose of identifying all teams that currently operate at the district or school level. District or school leadership teams can work collaboratively to complete the Team Assessment Matrix using the following steps as a guide:

1. Identify all current operating teams.
2. For each team identified, identify the team's purpose, goals, proposed outcomes, staff members associated with the team, and the time commitment needed.
3. Once the matrix is complete, analyze the degree to which there is overlap and/or duplication across team purpose, goals, proposed outcomes, and team membership.
4. Where there is overlap and/or duplication or teams are not clearly defined in terms of purpose, goals, and proposed outcomes (i.e., teams that are disorganized or no longer serve a purpose or school improvement need), consider merging or eliminating teams.

| Team Name | Team Purpose | Team Goals | Proposed Outcomes | Team Membership | Time Commitment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

After completing the Team Assessment Matrix and deciding whether to create a new multidisciplinary team, use an existing one, or a combination of existing teams, the next step is to identify team membership. With team members identified, the group can work together to develop the team purpose, goals, proposed outcomes, policies and procedures, and logistics related to team meeting schedules and other operational tasks.

## District/School Leadership Team Support

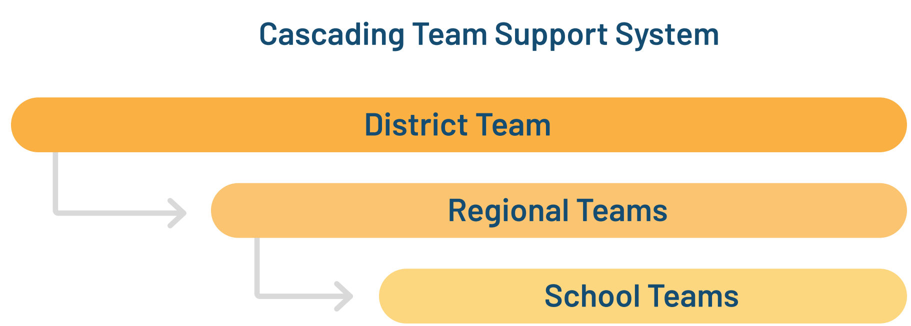
Before discussing the steps for establishing building-level teams, it is important to touch on the role district and school leadership teams play in the development of a coordinated system of supports (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Leadership teams provide a level of support for making administrative decisions in relation to the coordination of school personnel, selection of protocols and procedures for student assessment, instructional/intervention practices, staffing, professional development, annual and long-term fiscal decisions, programmatic planning, and establishing criteria for data-based decision making (Sugai & Horner, 2020). A level of oversight is also needed to ensure compliance and quality control requirements are being met (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017).

## Cascading Team Support

With the designation of district and school leadership support, it is recommended that a system of cascading teams be created to establish a communication feedback loop in which leadership teams are organizationally designated to provide ongoing support to building-level teams (Burns et al., 2005).

For some districts, the consideration of developing regional teams may be necessary if there are large numbers of schools within a district. In this capacity, breaking the district into smaller regions would assist with the overall functioning of the system (McLeskey et al., 2018).

**Figure 3.2: Example of Cascading Team Support**




## Communications Process

**Figure 3.3: Communications Process**

In addition to developing a system of cascading teams, district leadership can designate organizational support that clearly establishes a hierarchy for communication feedback and decision making (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Having this type of structure in place ensures that all levels of NJTSS programming and implementation are sufficiently supervised, supported, and monitored (Sugai & Horner, 2020).

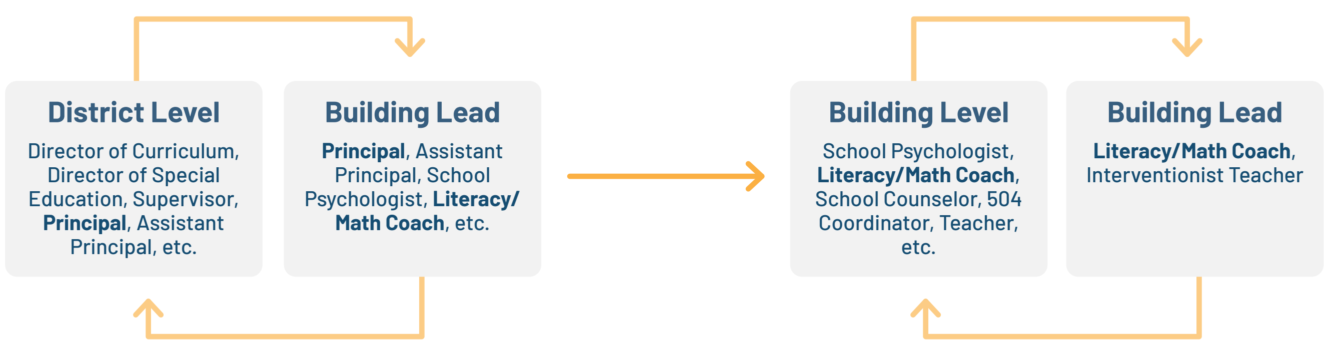
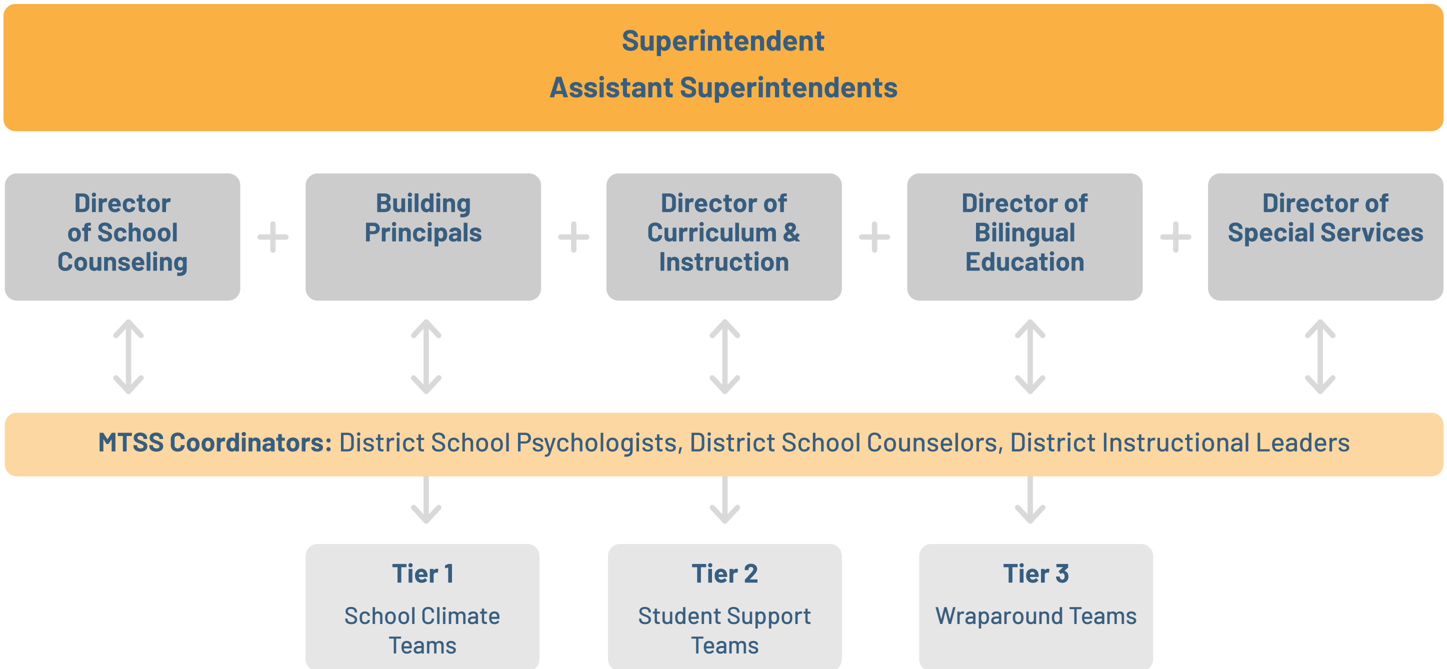
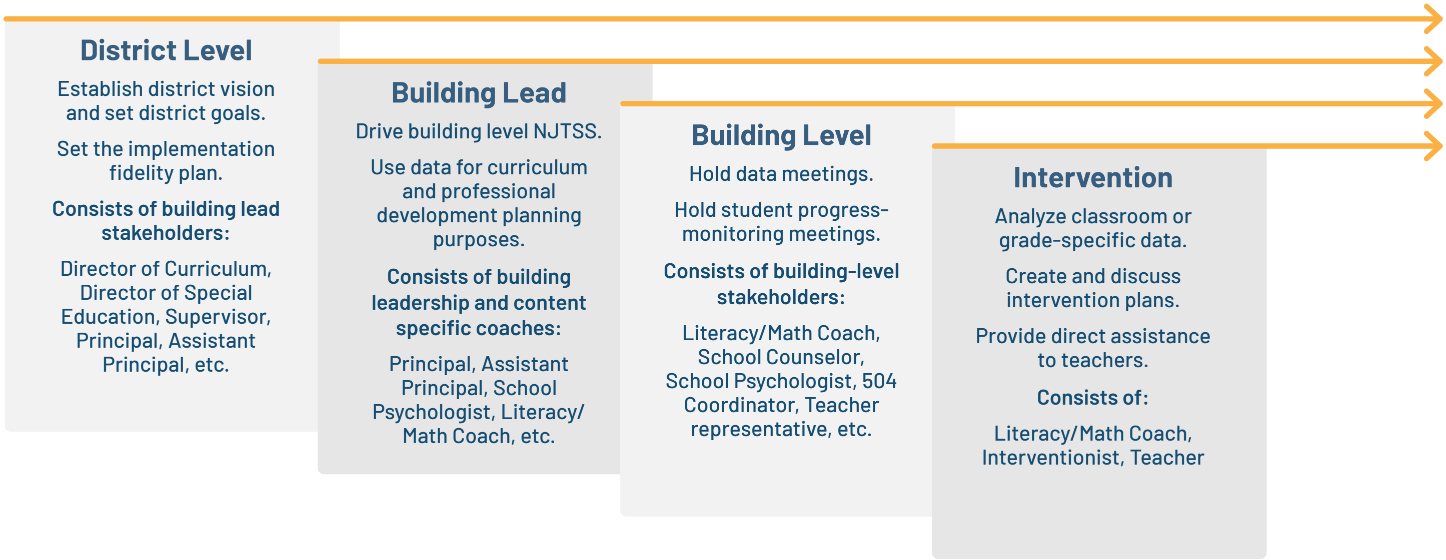


Figure 3.4: Example of Organizational Support




Keep in mind that this example may not fit every district's current organizational structure. The aspects of this example that are noteworthy are the clear delineation of reporting structure as well as NJTSS coordinators who act as liaisons between central administrators and building principals and each of the tiered teams (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). The number of designated coordinators will be contingent on the size and the needs of the district. When there is a need for more than one coordinator, each coordinator should have clearly designated roles and responsibilities within the district's model (Sugai & Horner, 2020). For example, the district school counselor may be responsible for supporting all the Tier 1 teams throughout the district, the school psychologist may be responsible for providing support for the Tier 2 and Tier 3 team facilitation as well as supporting the behavioral and social-emotional programming needs at those levels, and the instructional leader may be assigned to support all teams in terms of curriculum and instructional supports and programming (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017).

Figure 3.5: Sample Layers of Leadership



## Establishment of School-Level Multidisciplinary Teams

The formation of school-level multidisciplinary teams is necessary to carry out many of the components and operations associated with a coordinated tiered system of support (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). At this stage, the first step is to identify team purpose, goals, and proposed outcomes (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Completion of this task should be a joint effort between the district and school leadership teams (Sugai & Horner, 2020). In general, leadership teams can establish guidelines for building-based teams to use when determining the purpose, goals, and proposed outcomes for the school-level teams. These guidelines can identify the district's purpose, goals, and proposed outcomes for developing a coordinated system of support, including state requirements and building-level expectations for how multidisciplinary teams should operate (Burns et al., 2005). After this information has been finalized and disseminated, building leadership and designated staff have three key initial teaming decisions to make in establishing their school's multidisciplinary team and coordinated system of support:

- Will there be one team established to coordinate the supports and services at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 or will separate building-level teams exist for each tier?
- What professional positions will be included in the multidisciplinary team (i.e., what is the team composition)?
- Who specifically will represent those disciplines?

In addition to these three key decisions, other considerations to think about during this process include team size, stability of membership, and member skills and abilities. Research has shown that having team members with diverse roles and functions leads to improvement and better decision-making processes (Rosenfield et al., 2018). Additionally, team composition, taskwork, teamwork, administration, and organizational support have been shown to have a direct impact on team performance (Rosenfield et al., 2018). Therefore, taking the time required to make sound teaming decisions will be critical to the functioning and overall success of each multidisciplinary team.

## One Multidisciplinary Team Versus Three Tier Teams

The decision to have one multidisciplinary team versus three separate teams may come down to resources and the availability of school personnel (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). In smaller school districts, the only option may be to have one team in which team members serve multiple functions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). In this situation, team members will need clearly designated roles and responsibilities, and teams will need to establish a rotating schedule that allows time and attention for carrying out tasks at each tier (Burns et al., 2005). Where possible, it is recommended that schools establish one team for each tier. The benefits to having teams established for each tier include establishing equitable workload distributions across administrators, teachers, and support staff (Sugai & Horner, 2020). In addition, having multiple teams allows for a clear separation of roles and responsibilities, procedures, and protocols as well as a delineation of supports and services available at each tier (McLeskey et al., 2018). In doing so, teams work both separately and collaboratively across the tiers to ensure that all students have access to the necessary supports and services (Glover & Albers, 2007).

When determining the team configuration, it is also helpful to determine team-level tasks which will be based on the purpose of each team. For each team, answer the following guiding questions:

- What is the purpose of the team?
- What types of data will this team use?
- What are the actions/tasks to be carried out by the team?
- Are the actions/tasks for this team realistic or should additional teams be created to distribute the workload?

Asking these types of questions when determining what teams, how many teams, and team purpose will be explored later in this section's discussion on the specific tier teams. Needs Identification processes will also be discussed later in this section, but for now keep in mind that while the way the team data is used at each tier may change, the needs identification process stays the same.

### Table 3.1: One Multidisciplinary Team

| Student Support Team | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Responsible for activities across the three tiers. | • Develops, oversees, and evaluates school-wide procedures and data.<br>• Includes members representing all stakeholder groups in the school.<br>• Uses screening data to identify school-wide instructional, social-emotional, and behavioral priorities for each academic year. | • Reviews progress-monitoring data for students participating in Tier 2 interventions.<br>• All members understand how to make sense of single-case design (SCD) and data graphs.<br>• Shares their collective expertise about interventions likely to be effective at Tier 2, especially standard protocol interventions. | • Reviews progress-monitoring data for students participating in Tier 3 interventions .<br>• Understands SCD data graphs and district and state rules about referrals for special education services.<br>• Reviews data for students participating in Tier 3 interventions.<br>• Makes determinations regarding student referral for special education evaluations. |

(Adapted from Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016)

### Table 3.2: Example of Three Multidisciplinary Tier Teams

| Tier | Team Responsibilities | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | • Develops, oversees, and evaluates school-wide procedures and data.<br>• Includes members representing all stakeholder groups in the school.<br>• Uses screening data to identify school-wide instructional, social-emotional, and behavioral priorities for each academic year. | School Climate Team |
| 2 | • Reviews progress-monitoring data for students participating in Tier 2 interventions.<br>• Understands how to read and interpret single-case design (SCD) and data graphs.<br>• Shares their collective expertise about interventions likely to be effective at Tier 2, especially standard protocol interventions. | Student Support Team |
| 3 | • Reviews progress-monitoring data for students participating in Tier 3 interventions.<br>• Understands both SCD data graphs and the district and state rules about referrals for special education services.<br>• Reviews data for students participating in Tier 3 interventions.<br>• Makes determinations regarding student referral for special education evaluations. | Wraparound Team |

(Adapted from Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016)

## Descriptions of Tier Teams

Multidisciplinary teams have three general functions to carry out: (a) reviewing large amounts of student data to identify global, small-group, and individual programming needs as well as students who are at risk; (b) reviewing individual student data; and (c) using a data-based decision-making process to determine what types of additional supports students need (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016).

### Tier 1 Team

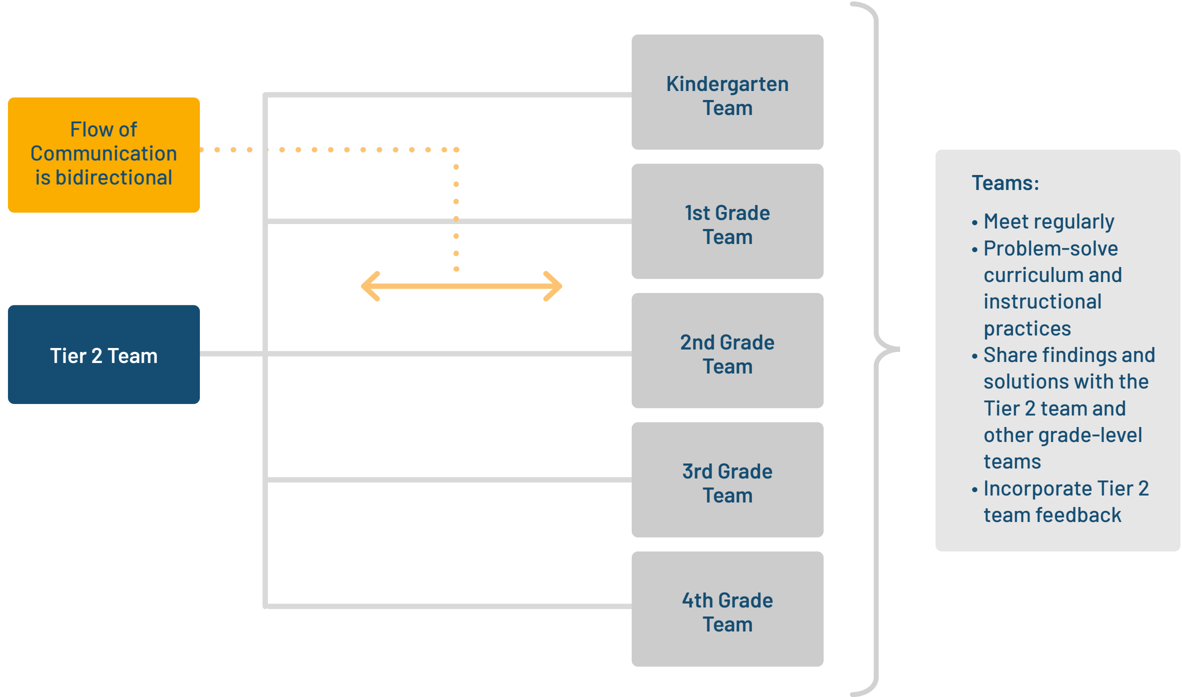
The primary role and function of the Tier 1 team is to gather and review data from all students with the goal of identifying global trends in the data that would indicate instructional, behavior management, and social-emotional prevention programming needs. Tier 1 teams are typically responsible for aggregating and reviewing academic and social-emotional universal screening data, office discipline referrals, attendance data, annual targeted grade-level assessments, state assessments, and district-selected assessments. These teams should strive to have membership representation that matches the school community population, paying particular attention to including individuals from diverse backgrounds and those from historically minoritized populations (Elias et al., 2003). Additionally, it is important to include team members with experience gathering, analyzing and interpreting the various data that is collected. Since there is the potential for Tier 1 teams to be large, there should be an attempt to keep the team size manageable. Typically, somewhere between 8 to 10 people is an effective size. Any larger, and teams run the risk of low productivity. Conversely, small teams run the risk of burnout and not having good representation of the school community (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

### Tier 2 Team

The primary role and function of the Tier 2 team is twofold. The initial data review at Tier 2 consists of universal screening results in both academic and behavior/social-emotional learning in which teams are looking for groups of students with similar academic and behavior/social-emotional needs who will be assigned to small-group targeted interventions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The secondary data review at this level is initiated by teachers who believe there are students, who were not identified through the review of universal screening data, but would benefit from Tier 2 interventions. Tier 2 teams are then charged with reviewing data for these individual students and working collaboratively with their teacher(s) to determine if students are eligible for Tier 2 supports and services. At this stage, the Tier 2 team may seek additional information to determine if Tier 2 supports are warranted. If students are not found to be eligible, the Tier 2 team should provide teachers with evidence-based classroom strategies to assist the teacher with providing Tier 1 supports as well as assisting with data collection and progress-monitoring steps (Gresham, 2009).

It is important to note that at Tier 2, teaming structures include grade-level data review. Schools will need to decide how they will develop this process. For example, will the Tier 2 team include grade-level review as part of their process or will there be separate teams designated at each grade level charged with looking at individual students and making curriculum and instructional decisions based on their data analysis? In the scenario in which this is determined to be the responsibility of the Tier 2 team, then there needs to be significant consideration of key grade-level teachers and support staff who must attend meetings when reviewing and discussing grade-level data (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). On the other hand, having separate grade-level team meetings in which grade-level teachers meet on a regular basis may make more sense in terms of efficiency. In the former example, grade-level teachers and support staff would be invited to a Tier 2 meeting to review and discuss grade-level data as well as identify needs around grade-level concerns. This process may lack efficiency and not provide sufficient time to complete all tasks. In the latter example, grade-level teachers would meet regularly throughout the school year to review, address needs, and make continuous improvements to curriculum and instruction. In tandem, Tier 2 teams would schedule time in their meetings throughout the school year for grade-level team representatives to attend meetings to share progress and seek feedback from the Tier 2 team. This type of structure allows grade-level teachers autonomy and empowers them to be active participants in school improvement practices (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Additionally, in smaller districts where team members hold multiple roles, having this type of support from grade-level teams may be beneficial in terms of spreading out Tier 2 responsibilities. Below is an example of the shared responsibility structure at the elementary level.

Figure 3.6: Shared Responsibility Flowchart




### Tier 3 Team

The primary role and function of the Tier 3 team is to support students' individualized and intensive intervention needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Tier 3 teams review individual student data to determine what types of intensive interventions can be added or how to increase the intensity of current interventions (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). At this level, students are typically assigned a case manager and are receiving one-to-one intervention and supports at high frequency (Burns et al., 2005). The progress of interventions is continuously monitored (Gresham, 2009). In addition to a case manager and the assigned administrator, the team configuration at this level consists of the student's school-based team (i.e., school counselor, teachers, parents, other key personnel) and representation from any community agencies that may be solicited for support at this time. Many students at this level experience some degree of academic, behavioral/social-emotional, and even mental health concerns requiring wraparound level intervention (Elias et al., 2003). When students show little to no progress with the addition of more intensive individualized intervention, the Tier 3 team may determine a child study team referral is needed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

## Team Member Selection

### Identifying the Positions

When establishing which professionals to include on a tier team, the purpose of the team must be considered (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Ideally, teams should have representation from a range of disciplines with varying degrees of expertise and technical knowledge (i.e., professional knowledge of literacy or numeracy development, expertise in data management and analysis, behavior/mental health professionals, etc.) and include at least one administrator who has decision-making and resource allocation authority (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Team membership will also vary by grade level. For example, elementary teams may include reading specialists, where secondary teams may include student-assistance counselors when substance use is a concern (Elias et al., 2003). It is also important to note that when selecting team positions, building administrators are considered a fixed team member of a team regardless of the type of team you are creating. Lastly, if establishing tier teams, consideration needs to be given to which positions will support which tier teams (Burns et al., 2005).

When deciding what positions to include within a tier team, it's helpful to use the following questions as a guide for selection:

- What is the role and function or purpose of the team within the larger tiered system?
- Will the team be addressing academics as well as behavior and social-emotional learning, or both?
- For each tier team, are there certain positions that are necessary to the functioning of the team? Are there any positions that overlap between teams?
- For each team member included on a tier team, what is the rationale for the inclusion of that position?

With the exception of Tier 3, teams must consider how to include parents and guardians and, when developmentally appropriate, students in the process (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Teams also need to determine the degree to which community members or agency representatives will participate. Given the individual intensity of Tier 3, parents and students are considered a fixed position within the constellation of the team (Burns et al., 2005). Lastly, when considering the time constraints for certain positions, consider limiting their participation to an as-needed basis. For example, teams may only need to involve the school nurse in the decision-making process when there is a medical concern (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Along the same lines, once teams begin to engage in the intervention and referral process, it is acceptable to add any additional professionals that are needed. After team membership by discipline has been established, the next step is to identify the individual professionals who will participate in the team process. The table below provides an example of potential disciplines to consider for team membership by tier team.

**Table 3.3: Identification of Team Membership by Position**

| Tier | Identification of Team Membership by Position |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Fixed Position:** Administrator<br>**Core Positions:** General Education (GE) Teacher, Special Education Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Support Staff (i.e., school counselors, child study team members), School Nurse, Home School Liaison, Attendance Officer, Head Security Officer, Secretary, Head Custodian, Food Service, Bus Drivers<br>**As Needed Positions:** N/A |
| 2 | **Fixed Position:** Administrator<br>**Core Positions:** School Counselor, School Psychologist, Learning Consultant, Student Assistance Counselor (secondary only), GE Teachers, Academic Specialists, Behavior Specialists, CST Representative<br>**As Needed Positions:** Home School Liaison, Nurse, Attendance Officer |
| 3 | **Fixed Position:** Administrator<br>**Core Positions:** School Psychologist, Social Worker, Student's Teachers, Academic Specialist, Behavioral Specialist<br>**As Needed Positions:** CST Representative, Community Agency Representatives, Nurse, Home School Liaison |

### Identifying the People

When thinking about specific individuals who will be part of a team, time must be dedicated to discussion with individuals around the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for each potential team member (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Depending on the position identified for team inclusion, there may only be one person available, which can be the case with a school psychologist or learning consultant (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). In these instances, take time to elicit engagement and consider coordinating involvement in a way that does not have an impact on core job responsibilities. It may be determined that core responsibilities do not allow for team participation (Gresham, 2009). In general, multidisciplinary teams can consist of individuals who are committed to carrying out the tiered process; knowledgeable of the students, culture, and school community; and dedicated to working collaboratively to improve student outcomes. Teams can also consider the following when selecting team members:

- Is there more than one person to solicit for team membership for a particular position?
- Is this person currently participating in another team or more than one team?
- Does this person have the necessary skills to be a productive member of the team?
- Does this person work well with others?
- Does this person have a willingness and time in their current schedule to participate?

On the following page is a Team Development Matrix for school leadership to use when selecting personnel to participate in a multidisciplinary team. For each tier team, school leadership can complete the matrix below when selecting team members.

## Figure 3.7: Team Development Matrix

**Team Development Matrix**
Directions: Assemble the school leadership team for the purpose of identifying tier team membership. The school leadership team can work collaboratively to complete one Team Development Matrix for each tier team using the following steps as a guide:

1. Identify all positions that will be included for each tier team.
2. For each position identified, identify the specific personnel who hold that position. If multiple people hold the position, list each person for that position, before going to the next position (see the example below).
3. For each person listed, indicate the number and names of all the other teams in which they currently participate.
4. For each person listed, answer the questions related to their knowledge and skills, availability, and the willingness to participate in the team.
5. Once the matrix is complete, school leadership can utilize each tier's Team Development Matrix separately and collectively to make final membership determinations.

**Team Development Matrix**
Tier Level:
Team Name:
Team Purpose:
Needed Skills:

| Team Positions | Personnel | Current Team Membership | Knowledge and Skills | Availability | Willingness to participate? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School Counselor | Jane Doe | | | | |
| School Psychologist | Lisa Foster | | | | |
| Teacher | Sally Lekwa | | | | |

If after reviewing the completed tier team matrices, certain team members are determined to be necessary for the team, but the individual doesn't have the availability and/or willingness, school leadership can brainstorm solutions to address these areas. Such solutions might include changes to their work schedule or caseload or a more pointed discussion that explores the root causes of their unwillingness to participate.

Once team members have been identified, there can be a period of team building that includes building skills in multi-tiered systems of support, orientating team members to the multidisciplinary team process, collaboratively developing a team mission statement, and assessing the team's readiness for change.

**Team Purpose, Goals and Objectives, and Proposed Outcomes**

Once teams have been formed, the initial team meetings can focus on developing the team's purpose, goals and objectives, and proposed outcomes for the team (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). The purpose of the team can be linked to the district's vision for NJTSS implementation and the team purpose identified by the district leadership team (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Alignment here is important, as when the building teams meet their goals and objectives, their results also contribute to the larger district mission (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Having said that, team goals and objectives should also be developed based on the identified needs of the students they serve (Gresham, 2009). Below are some helpful tips for teams to utilize determining their goals and objectives.

Teams can use specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) criteria to guide the development of goals and objectives in a clear, realistic, and meaningful way.

The following are questions to consider when developing SMART goals and objectives:

1. What does our team want to accomplish and what data led the team to this decision?
2. Are our goals and objectives consistent with the team's purpose and in alignment with the team's role and responsibilities?
3. Who will be involved in accomplishing each goal and objective?
4. How will our team meet these goals?
5. How will our team track and measure progress towards their goals?
6. How will our team evaluate if they met the goals and objectives at the end of the school year?
7. How long should it take to meet each of the goals and objectives?
8. Are there any goals and objectives that should be prioritized and completed first?

All team members should participate in setting the team purpose, goals and objectives, and outcomes (Rosenfield et al., 2018). In doing so, team members will feel a sense of collaboration, ownership over team responsibilities, and become more committed to meeting the team's purpose and achieving the team's goals and objectives (Miller & Hudson, 2006).

Consider tying team goals and objectives to incentives that will motivate team members into action. Incentives can be reasonable, not overshadow team goals, and appropriate to the school setting and district policies.

Set timelines for achieving goals. Having clear deadlines will create a sense of urgency among team members (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). As part of this process, it is also important to track the team's progress towards goals by scheduling regular check-ins and progress report due dates (DuFour et al., 2016).

It is important to note that the purpose of each team will vary depending on whether there is one multidisciplinary team or if there is one designated team per tier (McLeskey et al., 2018). Regardless of the team configuration, it is recommended that teams define their purpose in a way that focuses on eliminating student-deficit mindsets among team members by concentrating on exploring the needs of students and improvements that can be made to instructional practice, curriculum, and the learning environment (Marzano, 2003).

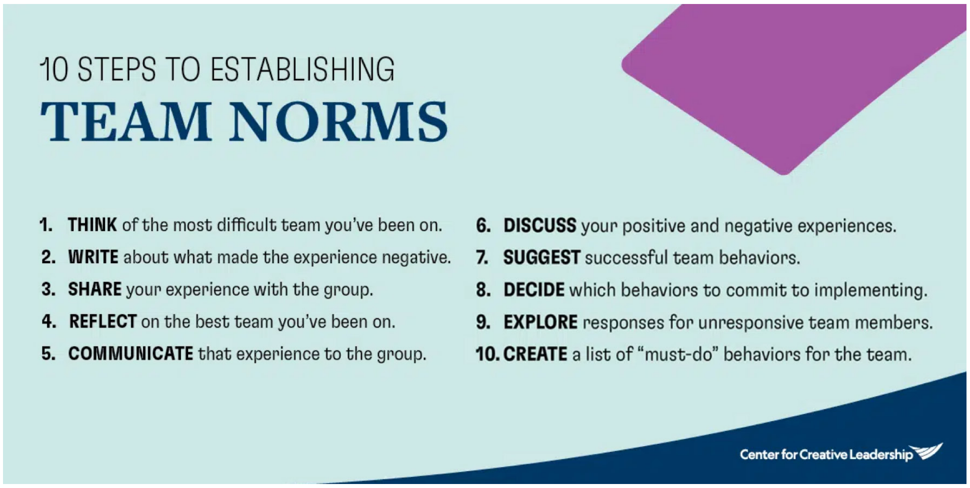
Once the team has agreed on the team purpose, goals and objectives, and proposed outcomes, these can be reviewed frequently during initial meetings to ensure that all team members are sufficiently familiarized and knowledgeable when sharing information with staff members outside the team. Similarly, the team outcomes can be reviewed, at minimum, each marking period to assess the team's progress towards meeting these outcomes (Guskey, 2000).

## Norms, Roles, and Responsibilities

### Establish Norms

The first step to developing an effective team is to develop team (i.e., group) norms that will guide how team members conduct themselves during team interactions. Team norms should be determined with input from all team members and establish clear, professional expectations; how the team will approach and complete work; and what team members can expect from each other. The Center for Creative Leadership has outlined 10-steps that lead to establishing sound group norms.

**Figure 3.8: Center for Creative Leadership's 10 Steps to Establishing Team Norms**




*Note.* Taken from "The Real-World Guide to Team Norms," by Center for Creative Leadership, n.d. Copyright by Center for Creative Leadership. Reproduced with permission.

Team norms can also focus on using a collaborative approach to team tasks. Garmston and Wellman (2016) provides a set of norms that teams may adopt that will help to facilitate team member interactions and promote teamwork. Garmston and Wellman have also created a quick self-assessment that can be used by teams at any point to check the degree to which teams and their members are operating consistently with the norms of collaboration.

The Seven Norms of Collaboration (Garmston & Wellman 2016)

- **Promote a spirit of inquiry:** Learning is, at its root, a questioning process. True collaboration requires questioning one's own and others' thinking.
- **Pause:** Pausing before responding or asking a question allows group members time to think and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision making.
- **Paraphrase:** Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you: "So ..." or "As you are ..." or "You're thinking ..." and following the starter with a paraphrase helps members of the group hear and understand each other as they formulate decisions.
- **Probe:** Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries such as "Please say more ..." or "I'm curious about ..." increases the clarity and precision of the group's thinking.
- **Put ideas on the table:** Ideas are the heart of a meaningful dialogue. Label the intention of your comments. For example, you might say, "Here is one idea ..." or "One thought I have is ..." or "Here is a possible approach ...."
- **Pay attention to oneself and others:** Meaningful dialogue is facilitated when each group member is conscious of himself or herself and of others and is aware of not only what he or she is saying, but also how it is said and how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning style when planning for, facilitating, and participating in group meetings. Responding to others in their own language forms is one manifestation of this norm.
- **Presume positive intentions:** Assuming that others' intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and eliminates unintentional put-downs. Verbalizing supposed positive intentions is one manifestation of this norm.

Figure 3.9: Self-Assessment of the Seven Norms of Collaboration (Garmston & Wellman 2016)

**Norms of collaboration:**
**Assessing consistency in a group or key work setting**

1. Promoting a spirit of inquiry

Low • ————— • High

2. Pausing

Low • ————— • High

3. Paraphrasing

Low • ————— • High

4. Probing

Low • ————— • High

5. Putting ideas on the table and pulling them off

Low • ————— • High

6. Paying attention to self and others

Low • ————— • High

7. Presuming positive intentions

Low • ————— • High

## Roles and Responsibilities

Team meetings can be more effective when each member has well-defined and understood roles and responsibilities (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016). Common roles and responsibilities for multidisciplinary teams include the following:

- Team Facilitator (NJTSS Coordinator)
- Team Administrator
- Team Leader
- Data Manager
- Meeting Minutes Recorder
- Timekeeper/Process Observer
- Team Archivist
- Implementation Coach
- Subject/Domain Area Specialist

### Team Facilitator (NJTSS Coordinator)

Team facilitators are district-level coordinators who act as liaisons between central and school administrators and the tiered teams (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). These individuals have expert-level understanding of NJTSS and the district's vision for programming and a high level of understanding regarding district-wide policies and practices (Sugai & Horner, 2020). In this capacity, district coordinators regularly attend school-building meetings to assist the team administrators and team leaders in their facilitation of the tier team meetings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). In particular, district coordinators coach the team towards optimal functioning, while supporting their professional development needs and maintaining compliance with district and state policies (Gresham, 2009).

### Team Administrator

The team administrator is assigned to a specific team to monitor implementation and make administrative decisions in relation to the coordination of school personnel, scheduling, professional development, budgets, and allocation of resources (McLeskey et al., 2018).

### Team Leader

The team leader is a team member with a strong command of tiered process, particularly for the tier team in which they facilitate. The team leader is responsible for scheduling meetings and sending reminders, creating and sending the agendas for meetings with input from the team, running each meeting, and leading the team in the needs identification process. Lastly, the team leader maintains communication with the building administrator and the district-level NJTSS coordinator. Good team leaders have the skills to guide members through the meeting process by demonstrating respect for the opinions of team members and asserting themselves when needed (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016).

### Data Manager

The data manager for the team is responsible for generating and maintaining aggregation/disaggregation of data and providing preliminary data analysis for the team using different types of qualitative or quantitative data, such as universal screening data, standardized assessment data, observations, focus group summaries, student interviews, classroom assessments, etc. The data manager has a strong command of large-scale data management, statistics, and manipulation of data using spreadsheets and graphs (Kennan, 2016).

### Meeting Minutes Recorder

The meeting minutes recorder must have the ability to efficiently and accurately record the discussions that take place during each meeting. When documenting a meeting, the minutes recorder must sufficiently detail all discussions, tasks, and outcomes that take place during a meeting. After the meeting has ended, the meeting minutes are disseminated to the team and always made accessible (i.e., stored in a shared folder) to all team members, building leadership, and team facilitators (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). At the beginning of each team meeting, the recorded minutes from the prior meeting should be reviewed.

Teams can consider using electronic tools to capture meeting minutes. In those cases, the meeting minutes recorder will still catalog, disseminate, and revise the meeting minutes (DuFour et al., 2016).

### Timekeeper/Process Observer

To ensure that meetings run smoothly and efficiently, a team member is designated timekeeper and process observer (Gresham, 2009). This individual provides updates regarding progress towards completion of tasks during a meeting, keeps meetings moving according to allotted time for each task, and keeps track of time left during a meeting. In this role, the process observer also assists in redirecting discussions to keep the meeting on track and challenges the team when any level of bias enters the discussion. Process observers, when needed, will also remind team members of the parameters around eligibility for tiered supports and services (Sugai & Horner, 2020).

### Team Archivist

Teams put significant effort into developing policies, procedures, yearly operations, and documentation of their work (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). It is important to team operations to have a team archivist who maintains all evidence of a team's work in a way that can be retrospectively accessed when needed. Additionally, when teams document their process, programming, intervention implementation, evaluations, and outcomes well, this information will be used by receiving teams to continue to support students who transition between grade levels (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). In this age of advanced technology, it is recommended that districts develop or invest in electronic systems for archiving and accessing team documentation. Having an electronic system in place will allow for easy access when needed by receiving schools and for central administration who may need to access information for state reporting (McLeskey et al., 2018).

### Implementation Coach

Teams may also want to consider the inclusion of an implementation coach on their teams. The purpose of an implementation coach is to guide teachers and those responsible for implementing student interventions. An implementation coach can be beneficial to developing sound interventions, training staff to implement interventions, and providing feedback in real time to teachers and other staff members responsible for intervention implementation (Fixsen et al., 2005).

### Subject/Domain Area Specialists

Each tier team will need to identify subject (i.e., reading, math, etc.) or domain (i.e., behavior/social-emotional, mental health, medical, etc.) area specialists who can provide input in their area of expertise when identifying needs and making programmatic decisions related to instruction and intervention (McLeskey et al., 2018). These individuals are critical to the identification and selection of evidence-based instruction and intervention at all three levels in an NJTSS framework. Individuals selected for these roles will have expert-level knowledge in a subject or domain area, have a sound understanding of building operations and available resources, and strong relationships with the school community (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Although these are designated roles with specific tasks associated with each one, it is important to remember that individuals may also have other roles and responsibilities on the team that are linked to their professional position in which they will be expected to provide expert area input during the need identification process (Burns et al., 2005). For example, the school psychologist may be designated the role of data manager but would also be expected to provide their skills related to students' cognitive abilities and interpretation of assessment results.

## Team Scheduling, Procedures, and Documentation

### Scheduling and Time Management

The teaming process that drives an NJTSS framework can be a complicated endeavor for schools to navigate (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). During the early phases of developing team procedures, scheduling and time management must be considered (Gresham, 2009). In addition to creating teams, school leaders need to coordinate time for teams to meet regularly throughout the school year to complete all the tasks associated with their team purpose and goals (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Team schedules, including meeting time and location, should be established prior to the beginning of the school year and no later than the first week of school (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Meeting time should be protected by school leadership and attendance by all team members should be expected (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Additionally, time management of tasks before, during, and after meetings should also be treated with a high level of expectation by team members as well as school leadership (Burns et al., 2005). Teams that have loose compliance expectations around team members' participation and adherence to team schedules and time management will typically have poor functioning and less than desired outcomes.

### Team Operations and the Decision-Making Process

The team decision-making process is critical to the success of the multidisciplinary team but can be overshadowed by poor organization and an overall lack of procedural guidelines for team operations (McLeskey et al., 2018). Team operations include everything from starting meetings on time, having efficient discussion around agenda items, and managing time during meetings to the team process around the identification of student needs, data-based decision making, assigning appropriate interventions, and documenting team efforts (Gresham, 2009). Multidisciplinary teams have several tasks that need to be completed simultaneously to facilitate the team process (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). See the Table below for a summary of tasks that are essential to a successful team process.

**Table 3.4: Summary of Essential Tasks for Successful Team Process**

| Meeting Procedures | Data Management & Decision Making | Documentation |
|---|---|---|
| Starting the meetings on time | Data analysis and review | Team attendance |
| Taking attendance | Student Identification | Meeting agendas and minutes |
| Reviewing previous meetings minutes | Intervention identification | Student action plans |
| Addressing the agenda | Progress monitoring | Intervention implementation |
| Recapping the meeting and assigned tasks for the next meeting | Management and maintenance of student data | Progress monitoring |
| Sending out the meeting minutes | Referring/receiving students across the tiers | Student outcomes |
| Sending reminders prior to meeting | Determination for a higher level of support | Team outcomes |

In addition to the above team operations, tier teams also need to engage in a systematic, cyclical needs identification process that should be incorporated into the teaming procedures (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). By having this process in place, teams ensure that the identification of student concerns, intervention selection, planning, implementation, and the evaluation process do not get overshadowed by only focusing on task completion (Gresham, 2009). The next section provides an overview of a five-step needs identification Continuous Improvement Cycle process – Inform, Select, Plan, Implement, and Analyze - recommended for inclusion in team operations. As illustrated in the graphic, these phases are iterative rather than linear, with stakeholder engagement occurring throughout the process.

**Using a Five-Step Needs Identification Continuous Improvement Cycle Process**

A foundational component of team procedures is developing a systematic way to analyze data to identify areas of concern (i.e., school-wide, in small groups, or for individual students) and then develop, implement, and evaluate programs or interventions that will address those areas of concern (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). For many teams, this is a complicated process and often a process that is rushed due to time constraints and lack of resources (Burns et al., 2005). However, teams that embed systematic needs identification into their team operations will generally find that the process leads to increased reflection on current practices and a team's ability to more effectively address the needs of students (McLeskey et al., 2018).

### Inform

The goal of the inform phase of a continuous improvement cycle is to define needs in clear, measurable, and operational terms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). During this first phase, teams should be able to describe the difference between current and desired levels of academic or behavioral performance and use this information to define needs in observable and measurable terms (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

- What do we want students to know and be able to do?
- Based on what students should know or be able to do, is there a need?
- Is the need presented the right need to address? Is there a need that is more urgent (i.e., is the need really reading comprehension or is that a foundational skill that should be addressed first)?
- What is the magnitude of the need (i.e., how does this student compare to other students who meet proficiency levels or display developmentally appropriate behaviors)?

### Select

The select phase of a continuous improvement cycle starts with the team generating multiple ideas about why the need is occurring (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). During this phase, the team must stay focused on things that people can control (Gresham, 2009). Once the list of ideas is developed, the team then needs to determine which of the ideas have sufficient evidence to support them as viable options to consider (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). It is important to note that ideas that lack evidence during this discussion should not necessarily be discounted; rather, additional time may be needed to gather more support to either rule in or rule out the option (Burns et al., 2005). From there, the team will work together to develop a hypothesis about why the need is happening. The following are some questions that can help guide teams through this process:

- Is the concern a skill or a performance need?
- Is there sufficient data to confirm or refute the proposed hypothesis?
- Is the hypothesis related to alterable factors within the school's control?
- Is there sufficient expertise on the team to determine if the need analysis is getting at the root cause?

### Plan

Now that a hypothesis regarding the need has been identified, the next phase is to create a plan to address the root cause for the need using strategies or interventions that are evidence-based (i.e., solutions that have research support for their effectiveness in addressing specific needs; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). The plan should not only include the strategy or intervention to be implemented, but it can also include the goal of the strategy or intervention being used, the resources needed to implement the plan, and how progress will be monitored (i.e., how accurately the plan was followed; what is the effectiveness of the plan; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Questions that guide this phase include the following:

- What is the goal of the strategy or intervention?
- Has the strategy or intervention shown to be effective for this type of need?
- Is there treatment acceptability from those responsible for implementation?
- Is there a plan for outcome data collection?
- Are there sufficient resources and support for implementing the plan?
- How will implementation integrity be monitored and measured?

### Implement

Implement phase of a continuous improvement cycle, the plan is being implemented, and this is the point at which implementation of the plan is being closely monitored and improved when needed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). The goal of the plan implementation phase is to obtain a high level of implementation fidelity (Gresham, 2009).

Questions to guide monitoring at this phase include the following:

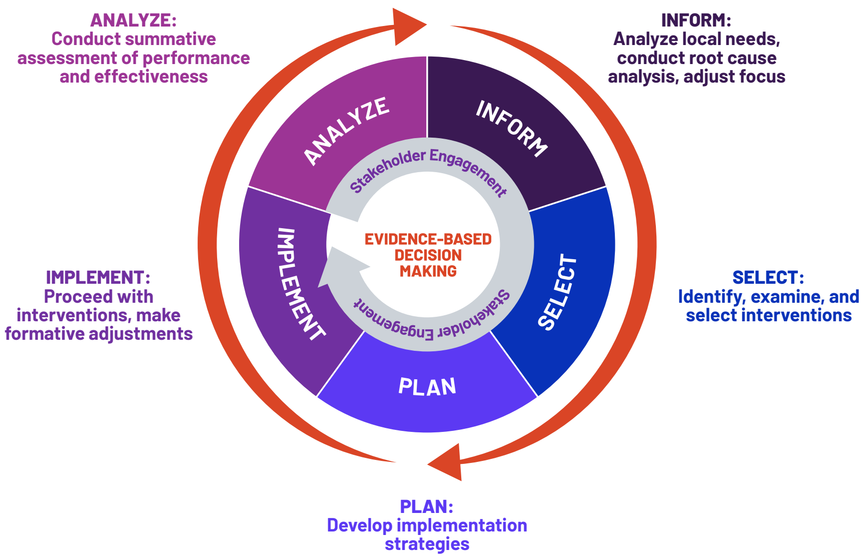
- Has everyone been trained on the plan?
- Is the plan being implemented as intended?
- Are there regular meetings scheduled to review how implementation is going?
- Does anyone need additional coaching to implement the plan?
- Is there a communication feedback loop in place?
- Are there changes that need to be made to improve the implementation?
- What measures are in place to measure fidelity and feasibility of the interventions?
- What is the level of implementation fidelity?
- What can the team do to improve implementation fidelity?

### Plan Evaluation

The last stage of the needs identification model consists of evaluating whether the plan was effective by reviewing all outcome data (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). When plans are working, the team will need to determine how long to keep the plan in place, whether to scale back the intervention, or to discontinue the intervention when the goals of the plan have been met (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). When there is little to no progress, teams will need to determine if they will revisit previous stages in the needs identification process to reengage in the stages to revise the plan or decide if a higher level of support is needed (Gresham, 2009). Questions to guide this stage include the following:

- Is the plan successful? If so, what is working?
- Were the goals met? If not, why?
- Are there any adjustments that can be made to the plan to make it more successful? If so, what stage of the needs identification approach should be revisited?
- What are the next steps? Should the team continue with the plan, modify the plan, or terminate the plan?

**Figure 3.10: Five-Step Needs Identification Continuous Improvement Cycle Process**



### Tiered Team Procedures

As previously mentioned, one of the main tasks for tiered teams is to manage large amounts of student data and to use this data to make meaningful decisions about how to improve instruction, intervention practices, and student outcomes. When teams use data from assessments and then link that data to intervention programs that have strong evidence for improved outcomes, there is a high probability that students' skills will increase (Hosp et al., 2020). In order to make this happen, teams need to develop a high level of efficiency and functioning. One way to ensure that teams meet this need is to develop operational procedures that create a systematic and organized approach to team tasks. Teams can achieve this level of structure by instituting a set of standardized procedures around team operations and documentation and by developing a systematic approach to efficiently investigating students' needs and generating evidence-based solutions.

First, teams need to develop a set of standard procedures that guide team operations. These operations can be clearly delineated by tier-level team to ensure that teams are task oriented and focused only on the purpose identified for their particular team. This will eliminate any inefficiencies and the potential for duplication of supports and services across teams.

Hosp et al. (2020) outline a clear roadmap to assist tiered teams in articulating procedures, starting with defining the purpose and aim of the team, identifying which data sources to be utilized, the teaming process for data analysis, and team documentation. The table below provides a quick snapshot of the sources of data utilized by most teams, the general data analysis process, and information about team documentation. In the next section, we layout how this roadmap looks for each tier team.

**Table 3.5: Team Data Use, Analysis, and Documentation**

| Sources of Data | Data Analysis Procedures | Documentation |
|---|---|---|
| Academic:<br>• Statewide tests,<br>• Universal screening data/benchmark assessments,<br>• Drill down assessments, and<br>• Progress monitoring data.<br><br>Behavior:<br>• Previous years' behavior data,<br>• Office discipline referrals (4 months into school year),<br>• Universal screening data, and<br>• Other ancillary data depending on the presenting need. | • Data preparation,<br>• Preliminary team data analysis,<br>• Team engagement in the needs identification process, and<br>• Development of program improvements, small-group intervention plans, or student action plans. | • Team forms for guiding and documenting meetings and group work,<br>• Meeting agendas,<br>• Documentation of data analysis,<br>• Documentation of decision making, and<br>• Documenting tier action plans and progress monitoring. |

(Adapted from Hosp et al., 2020)

Before going through each tier team process, it is important to note that at the beginning of each school year there is to be an initial analysis of all student data that includes both the previous year's state assessments (if available), student attendance, and the initial round of universal screening data from the current school year. The purpose of this global-level review is to identify the preliminary performance outcomes for all students, generally by grade level, to determine those students who are meeting grade level proficiencies, those students in need of group intervention, and those in need of individualized plans (Hosp et al., 2020). From the global review, Tier 2 and Tier 3 teams can then initiate their initial student data analysis process. All teams will meet regularly throughout the course of a school year to complete designated tasks, monitor team and student progress towards goals, and complete a team evaluation process at the end of the school year.

### Tier 1 Team Procedures

Team Purpose: To conduct a review of whole-school data by grade level in order to examine academic and behavioral trends and set goals to address global areas for improvement in terms of curriculum and instruction and school-wide positive behavior supports (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

#### Data Preparation and Analysis

Data is disaggregated by grade level only, and data summaries are provided to all team members for review. This review can be completed solely by the Tier 2 team (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). However, if school leadership has determined the need for grade-level data teams, then each grade-level data team would meet separately to carry out the analysis for their grade level and report their findings and recommendations back to the Tier 2 team (Sugai & Horner, 2020).

#### Team Needs Identification

Initial examination of the data is conducted by the team leader. If the Tier 1 team is reviewing data for all grade levels, then the process should be systematic with data reviewed one grade level at a time in chronological order (Gresham, 2009). When teams are reviewing academic data, they should be looking at the various performance levels indicated by the chosen assessment measures (McLeskey et al., 2018). When teams are reviewing behavioral data, they should be identifying behaviors that are occurring at a high frequency and/or are most disruptive to daily/classroom operations (Burns et al., 2005). When teams begin the needs identification process, they should follow the five-step needs identification framework previously discussed to determine how they will address areas that need improvement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017).

#### Documentation

The Tier 1 team or designated grade-level teams will complete specific forms to indicate the data reviewed, the results of the team analysis, and the recommendations for improvement (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). The teams will then develop an improvement plan that includes the goals for improvement, how they will track and monitor progress, designated meetings for check-ins, and timelines for goal completion (i.e., winter, spring, etc.) (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

### Tier 2 Team Procedures

Team Purpose: To use the available data from universal screening and other sources to identify groups of students who have similar academic and behavioral needs beyond what is being provided at the Tier 1 level (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). At this point, it is reasonable to have additional individual student data available to allow team members to explore and clarify student challenges (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). When students with similar concerns are identified, they are put together in small groups to target their needs collectively (Burns et al., 2005).

#### Data Preparation and Analysis

In order for teams to be efficient in their data analysis, data can be prepared prior to the meeting and indicate which students are below proficiency based on the screening assessments that were utilized (Gresham, 2009). Data can be visually organized, from highest to lowest, so that teams can review quickly and group students according to their needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). The first step is to determine the group of students who fall just below the proficiency level based on the screener results (McLeskey et al., 2018). While these students are technically below proficiency, they are not so far off that it would be unreasonable to consider that they could reach proficiency with the improvements being made by the Tier 1 team in terms of curriculum and instruction and positive behavior supports (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Once this is complete, the remaining students should then be grouped together based on their collective level of need (Gresham, 2009).

#### Team Needs Identification

Once the data have been reviewed and students have been grouped together by need, the next step is to address needs around each grouping of students to develop a group intervention plan to address their common needs (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). At this point in time, the team would engage in the needs identification process for each group identified to develop a targeted intervention to meet the needs of all students within a particular group (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). At the Tier 2 level, there are typically logistic issues that need to be considered when implementing interventions for small groups of students. Some issues include scheduling students from multiple classrooms, determining the frequency of intervention, deciding when it is feasible within student and staff schedules to deliver the intervention, and finding suitable locations to work with small groups of students (Burns et al., 2005). All logistical issues should be resolved by the team prior to the start of the intervention (Sugai & Horner, 2020).

### Documentation

The Tier 2 team will complete specific forms to indicate the data that was reviewed, the results of the team analysis, and the recommendations for each student group intervention developed. The teams will then create for each group an intervention plan that includes the goals for improvement, who will be providing the group intervention, when the group intervention will be provided, and how they will track and monitor progress and evaluate student outcomes.

## Tier 3 Team Procedures

Team Purpose: To identify individual students with significant academic and/or behavioral challenges and develop individual student action plans (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Students at this level typically experience high levels of academic difficulty and/or chronic levels of behavioral challenges and will need a comprehensive level of support (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017).

### Data Preparation and Analysis

Data preparation and analysis at Tier 3 is similar to Tier 2. At Tier 3, teams review screening data along with other sources of important data to develop a comprehensive understanding of each student in need of Tier 3 supports and services (Gresham, 2009). The data being reviewed at Tier 3 should also be visually organized; however, at this level, time is taken by the team to review each student's case individually (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). At Tier 3, additional data review may also include looking at assessment data and intervention outcomes from the previous school year (Burns et al., 2005). It is important to note that after an initial review has been conducted, the team may also determine that additional data should be collected before moving into the team needs identification process (McLeskey et al., 2018).

### Team Needs Identification

Once the team agrees that there is enough information gathered, the team will engage in the needs identification process for each student with the goal of developing a comprehensive student action plan that will likely address multiple domain areas (i.e., academic, behavioral, social-emotional, mental health) (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). At this point in time, the team engages in the needs identification process for each student (Gresham, 2009). At the Tier 3 level, interventions are typically delivered directly, in a one-to-one ratio, and monitored daily (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Interventions may span across school, home, and community domains and include interventions provided by agencies outside of the school setting (Sugai & Horner, 2020). At the plan development stage of the needs identification process, it is critical to the success of each student action plan that there be a high level of coordination between the teachers, specialists, parents, administrators, and outside agencies to ensure that interventions are being implemented consistently and with fidelity (Burns et al., 2005). At this level, it is important to note that students are typically assigned a case manager who is a member of the Tier 3 team and responsible for the coordination of each student's plan as well as daily monitoring of the student's progress (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Students who continue to struggle with Tier 3 supports and services in place may be considered for a referral for special education and related services (Gresham, 2009).

### Documentation

The Tier 3 team will complete specific forms to indicate the data that was reviewed, the results of the team analysis, and the recommendations for each student (McLeskey et al., 2018). The team will then develop a comprehensive and highly detailed student action plan for each student. Action plans will include the goals for improvement, who will be providing specific interventions, when interventions will be provided, and how the team will track and monitor progress and evaluate student outcomes (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Due to the intensity of interventions provided at the Tier 3 level, a highly detailed level of documentation is required for closely monitoring student progress and making quick adjustments to student action plans as needed (Gresham, 2009). This level of documentation is extremely important when Tier 3 teams consider referrals for special education and related services, as the referring team will need to provide enough documentation to support the request (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Readers are referred to Appendix 3 for sample team guidance documents and sample forms for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

## Key Takeaways

- Schools often operate multiple overlapping teams (e.g., I&RS, RTI, NJTSS), which can result in duplication and inefficiencies. Conducting a team assessment and consolidating teams when appropriate ensures coherence, reduces redundancy, and strengthens the implementation of tiered supports.
- Effective multidisciplinary teams include members with diverse roles, expertise, and decision-making authority. Team membership should be intentional, with consideration for availability, relevant skills, and the ability to represent the school community equitably.
- Successful teams rely on well-established norms and clearly defined roles—such as facilitator, data manager, team leader, and process observer—to structure meetings, promote collaboration, and drive data-based decision-making.
- Protected time for meetings, task management before and after meetings, and structured scheduling are vital for maintaining consistent team operations. Without dedicated time and expectations, teams struggle to meet their goals and sustain effective practices.
- Establishing consistent procedures, including a five-step need identification process and clear documentation protocols—helps teams make informed decisions, track student progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions at all tiers.

## Additional Resources

- The New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS)
- NJTSS-Early Reading
- New Jersey Literacy Framework
- New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools
- Behavioral Supports and Interventions-Special Education
- New Jersey Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Resources Guide