



Section 4: Self-Assessment and Resource Mapping



Effective implementation of NJTSS requires strategic planning and thoughtful resource allocation, both of which are strengthened through a comprehensive self-evaluation and resource mapping process. This section of the manual outlines a step-by-step approach for schools and districts to assess each component of the NJTSS framework. The components are essential for establishing and maintaining a well-functioning tiered system of support. The insights gained from this self-assessment will guide the development of an implementation plan, helping to identify programming priorities and optimize resource allocation for sustained success. Specifically, this section will cover the following areas:

- Self-Assessment: Current System Versus Desired System
- Steps for Resource Mapping

Self-Assessment: Current System Versus Desired System

Districts often struggle with where to start once they have committed to implementing NJTSS as their framework for establishing their intervention and referral services model. A good place to start is by assessing your district's current referral system by identifying which NJTSS components exist, the degree to which they are being implemented, and which components are missing. It is likely that through this self-assessment, districts will find that they have several NJTSS components already in place, needing only organizing, fine-tuning, and/or expansion. Before beginning the self-assessment process, it is important that your district or school NJTSS team become familiar with all sections of this guide. Paying particular attention to [Section 1](#) will ensure a unified understanding of each NJTSS component and subsequent implementation needs. Once the review is complete and teams are confident in their understanding of the NJTSS framework, the following steps can be completed to determine what aspects of the model are currently being implemented and what is needed to achieve the desired NJTSS framework.

Using the New Jersey Department of Education's NJTSS framework, school and district teams will engage in a series of "Look For" sessions across each of the eleven NJTSS components to determine (a) which practices exist and are aligned with the framework and (b) which need to be developed or refined to achieve the desired intervention and referral service system. The following section will take schools and districts through the self-assessment steps.

Step 1: Identify Existing Components (Current State)

For each of the 11 NJTSS components, school and district teams utilize the self-assessment spreadsheet to assess each area by examining their current practices and then completing the item assessment column of the spreadsheet by answering each of the questions (Yes, No, Unsure). Answering each of the questions may require additional exploration by engaging in data collection (e.g., surveys, interviews, document reviews, observations) and analysis.

Step 2: Document Gaps and Opportunities

Once the item assessment column is complete, the next step is to go back through each component and review any items that were identified as “No” or “Unsure.” For each of these areas, teams work to determine what they need to do next by completing the recommended actions column of the spreadsheet for any areas that need to be developed or improved. It is important to note that the development of successful recommendations may be contingent on working collaboratively with other school members or gathering additional information. For example, for the NJTSS component Collaborative Teams, school-level teams may need to be solicited for more in-depth analysis of the teaming process. When teams are unsure whether an item is being implemented, the recommendation may include gathering additional information for making more informed decisions, such as reviewing school and organizational structures/systems, policies and procedures, and student outcome data related to current intervention and referral service practices. As teams move through each of the NJTSS components, it may also be beneficial for teams to identify current or anticipated barriers to successful implementation. These barriers may include things such as leadership needs, staffing concerns, the need for professional development, lack of systems or infrastructure, and lack of resources (i.e., time, funding, etc.).

Step 3: Summarize by Component

For this step, teams will summarize the strengths (i.e., items that are fully implemented), opportunities for improvement (i.e., areas that are partially implemented), and critical gaps (i.e., items that are not currently being implemented) for each of the 11 components. Teams use the chart below to develop a working document that can then be used to prioritize areas and develop an action plan for fully developing their NJTSS framework.

Table 4.1: Identification of NJTSS Strengths, Opportunities, Gaps

NJTSS Component	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement	Critical Gaps
	1	1	1
	2	2	2
	3	3	3
	4	4	4
	5	5	5
	6	6	6

Step 4: Prioritize Areas of Focus

The last step in the self-assessment process is to rank the opportunities for improvement and the critical gaps for each component. When doing so, teams can consider items in each of these areas in terms of urgency and feasibility using the following prompts:

- Which gaps have the most direct impact on equitable student access to support (High)?
- Which gaps pose compliance risks (Medium)?
- Which areas are “low lift” and could be improved quickly (Low)?

Instructional Programs and Materials

Instructional programs and materials refers to structured curricula, teaching resources, and educational tools used to deliver academic, behavioral, and social-emotional instruction to students. Instructional programs include comprehensive, standards-aligned curricula designed to guide instruction across subjects and grade levels, while instructional materials encompass textbooks, digital content, manipulatives, assessments, and other resources that support learning. Consider the following academic, behavioral and social-emotional resources:

Curriculum

Identify the core instructional materials used for all students across all subject areas and behavioral and social and emotional domains.

Questions to ask:

- Do these materials align with state and district standards?
- Do these materials align with research-based practices?
- Are these materials culturally responsive to the diverse backgrounds of students?

Supplemental Materials

Identify any additional resources used for intervention services. Examples include supplemental literacy programs, math supplemental programs designed to further support or enrich student mastery, behavioral management systems, social-emotional learning curriculum, etc.

Technology Resources

Identify any digital platforms and educational technologies that support instruction and intervention. Examples include learning management systems, online assessments, or adaptive learning software.

Screeners and Other Assessments

In addition to the state-mandated assessments outlined in Chapter 8 of the New Jersey School Administrative Code, teams are encouraged to strategically incorporate supplemental screeners and assessment tools as needed to create a more comprehensive understanding of student performance. While performance on state assessments is essential for monitoring district accountability and identifying system-level trends, these assessments alone do not provide timely or specific enough data to guide daily instructional or intervention decisions. Therefore, the use of additional screeners and assessment tools is critical to informing tiered supports and individual student needs. These targeted assessments help teams identify specific skill deficits, tailor instruction, and monitor the effectiveness of interventions over time. By triangulating data from multiple assessment sources, teams can make more informed, equitable, and responsive decisions that support improved student outcomes at both the individual and systems levels.

Screeners are brief, standardized tools administered universally to all students, typically multiple times per year, to identify those who may be at risk for difficulties and in need of additional support. Assessment tools include a broader range of instruments—such as diagnostic assessments, formative and summative assessments, and progress monitoring tools—used to evaluate specific skills, guide instruction, inform intervention planning, and track student progress over time.

In this area, teams will identify and inventory which universal screeners, progress monitoring tools, diagnostic assessments, and/or other assessment tools or protocols are currently being used to assess academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes. Once all the assessment tools and protocols have been identified, teams can review each of the assessment tools to determine if the tools are being utilized in the ways they were intended to be used (see the table below). In addition, teams can explore the degree to which culturally responsive assessment practices are being utilized. When reviewing assessment tools, teams can ensure that all assessment tools allow for the disaggregation of data by race, ethnicity, language status, disability, and other demographic factors. Once the information is compiled, teams will need to make decisions about the intended use and degree to which assessments are considered culturally responsive. These determinations will drive decision making about which screeners and assessment tools will be kept, replaced, or no longer used.

Table 4.3: Assessments

Resource Area	Academic
Universal Screeners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to assess all students and identify those that are not meeting grade-level or developmental expectations Measure academic, behavioral, and social-emotional indicators
Progress Monitoring Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to track the progress of students receiving more intensive interventions Tools should allow for frequent assessment and adjustment of intervention based on student performance data
Diagnostic Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to pinpoint specific areas of need for students requiring more intensive interventions Diagnostic assessments help to ensure that interventions are targeted and effective

Intervention Programs

Intervention programs refer to structured sets of instructional practices and supports designed to address specific academic, behavioral, or social-emotional needs of students who are not meeting grade-level expectations. Intervention programs are evidence-based, progress-monitored, and tailored to accelerate learning, close skill gaps, and promote equitable access to educational success.

In this area, teams can inventory the intervention programs currently being used to support students who are not meeting academic or behavioral expectations for their grade and development level, respectively. Teams also evaluate each program’s research base to determine whether or not the program has the potential to improve current programming and/or close critical gaps. More specifically, teams consider the following:

- Does the intervention program explicitly address the skill and knowledge gaps identified and is there adequate staffing available to implement the programs with fidelity?
- Which interventions have research support for their effectiveness in improving student outcomes and which do not?
- Does the intervention program address the needs of students from various cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds?

Lastly, when inventorying intervention programs, data indicating the effectiveness of the programs should be considered. Specifically, teams should seek to determine if the current interventions are yielding the desired academic or behavioral outcomes. When interventions are not yielding the desired outcomes, teams can determine if this is due to insufficient resources, lack of implementation fidelity, or if there are issues with the program itself.

Staffing

Staffing refers to the intentional allocation and coordination of school personnel to ensure the effective delivery of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports across all NJTSS tiers. This includes general and special education teachers, interventionists, school psychologists, counselors, behavior specialists, social workers, administrators, and other support staff who work collaboratively to implement, monitor, and refine NJTSS practices.

In this area, teams evaluate whether there are sufficient personnel to support NJTSS implementation at all tiers. Considerations are given to the need for professional development to ensure staff have the skills to fulfill their role on the multi-disciplinary team or to deliver instruction or interventions effectively. Below is a good, better, best example of staffing options for a behavioral support tiered system:

Table 4.4: Examples of Good, Better, Best Staffing

Rating	Tier 1: Universal Supports	Tier 2: Targeted Supports	Tier 3: Intensive Supports
Good	General education teachers and administrators implement a school-wide behavior system (e.g., Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) with support from a school counselor who provides occasional guidance lessons and reinforcement strategies.	The school counselor and/or social worker provides small group counseling to students with emerging behavioral needs, in addition to their general caseload responsibilities.	A part-time behavior specialist or contracted service provider consults on individual student behavior plans when referred by the intervention and referral team or child study team.
Better	A school-wide team (e.g., PBIS team) with representation from multiple staff roles (teachers, counselor, administrator) meets regularly to review behavioral data and support Tier 1 implementation. A dedicated staff member (e.g., behavior coach or school counselor) is assigned to coordinate Tier 1 behavioral supports.	A school counselor and behavior interventionist co-facilitate structured Tier 2 interventions (e.g., Check-In/Check-Out, social skills groups) with clear referral pathways and progress monitoring systems.	A full-time behavior specialist or board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) works in collaboration with the child study team and classroom teachers to design and monitor individualized behavior intervention plans (BIPs) for students with high-level needs.
Best	A full-time behavior support coordinator leads the implementation of school-wide behavior frameworks, delivers ongoing staff training, and ensures data-informed Tier 1 practices are equitably applied. Teachers and support staff receive regular coaching and professional development in proactive behavioral strategies.	A dedicated Tier 2 behavioral team (e.g., behavior interventionist, social worker, school psychologist) provides ongoing small group and individual interventions, tracks student data weekly, and adjusts supports based on progress monitoring. Clear systems exist for teacher referrals, and services are embedded into the school schedule.	A multidisciplinary team—including a BCBA and school counselor, school psychologist, or clinical social worker—provides intensive, wraparound supports, conducts functional behavior assessments (FBAs), collaborates with families and community providers, and ensures fidelity of high-quality individualized interventions. Staff are trained in de-escalation and trauma-informed practices, and Tier 3 students receive daily check-ins and supports.

See [Section 3](#) of the manual for more detailed information related to personnel needs related to teaming.

Training

Training refers to ongoing professional development provided to educators, administrators, and support staff to build the knowledge, skills, and practices necessary for effective NJTSS implementation. This includes training on evidence-based instruction and intervention strategies, data-based decision making, progress monitoring, culturally responsive practices, and the use of screening and diagnostic tools.

In this area teams assess the quality, relevance, and impact of existing training resources. This involves reviewing what professional development has been provided, evaluating its usefulness, and identifying gaps in training that may be hindering successful implementation.

Teams begin by compiling a list of all training sessions, workshops, coaching activities, and professional development modules that have been provided to staff related to NJTSS. Categorize them by topic (e.g., evidence-based instruction, progress monitoring, culturally responsive practices, behavior supports, team-based needs identification, etc.), audience (e.g., general educators, interventionists, administrators), and format (e.g., in-person, virtual, job-embedded coaching).

Next teams use participant feedback data gathered from previous training sessions and consider questions such as the following:

- Was the training relevant to the staff member’s role?
- Did the training improve understanding or implementation of NJTSS practices?
- Were there opportunities for practical application and follow-up support?
- Have observable changes occurred in instructional or intervention practices?

Data from implementation walkthroughs, fidelity checks, or outcome measures (e.g., progress monitoring trends) can also provide insight into whether training has translated into practice.

Next, determine areas where training has been insufficient, inconsistent, or missing entirely. Look for gaps across content areas (e.g., lack of training on social-emotional learning strategies), staff roles (e.g., paraprofessionals or new teachers not receiving onboarding), or specific NJTSS practices (e.g., using data to guide team-based decisions or implementing Tier 2 interventions with fidelity). Also assess whether training has adequately addressed culturally responsive practices and whether staff are equipped to meet the diverse needs of students, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students from marginalized backgrounds. Lastly, based on the data collected, determine which training resources can be sustained, revised, or discontinued. Identify high-priority areas where new or enhanced training is needed and develop a plan for how and when these training opportunities will be delivered. Consider aligning professional development efforts with district goals, NJTSS implementation stages, and staff evaluation data.

Areas to consider when evaluating training resources:

- Are staff confident in selecting and using appropriate screening and diagnostic tools?
- Do teachers understand how to implement evidence-based interventions across tiers?
- Have administrators received training on facilitating NJTSS implementation and team-based decision making?
- Are there regular opportunities for job-embedded coaching or peer collaboration?
- Is professional development differentiated by role and responsive to staff feedback?

Community Partnerships

Community Partnerships refers to collaborative relationships between schools and external organizations—such as mental health agencies, healthcare providers, youth services, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses—that enhance the range and depth of supports available to students and families. These partnerships help extend the school’s capacity to address academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and basic needs that impact student learning and well-being.

For many school districts, community partnerships provide additional resources and can be easily incorporated within the NJTSS framework. When inventorying community resources, planning teams can identify what resources are currently being utilized and then determine where there is the need for the expansion or development of additional services. The table below highlights the types of community services that are commonly used by districts and schools to expand their community-based resources within their NJTSS frameworks.

Table 4.5: Examples of Community Partnerships

Type of Resource	Examples	Resources Offered
Local Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local agencies, nonprofits, and businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health services. After-school tutoring. Family support services.
Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with community health providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local hospitals, physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, specialized treatment programs, etc.
Family Engagement Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs that involve parents in the educational process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent-teacher organizations, family resource centers, parent workshops.
Local Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic units that provide consultation, professional development, and psychological services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation in curriculum and instruction. Mental health services. Internship and practicum student programs. Consultation with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Funding

Funding refers to the allocation and management of financial resources necessary to implement, sustain, and scale a comprehensive system of tiered supports for students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. This includes funding for personnel (e.g., interventionists, specialists), professional development, evidence-based programs and materials, data systems, and collaboration with community partners. Funding sources may include federal (e.g., ESSA, IDEA, Title I, Title II, etc.), state, and local budgets, as well as grants, foundation support, and donations.

Adequate funding is essential for the sustained implementation of NJTSS. Teams can spend time in this area to ensure that there is adequate funding to support programming, staffing, and professional development needs across all components of the NJTSS framework. See [Section 8](#) for a more detailed discussion. To start, teams can assess the following:

- What supports and services in your NJTSS framework are federally funded?
- How are state and local funds being allocated for NJTSS-related activities (district-specific initiatives, staff support, instructional materials, technology, etc.)
- Is the district currently receiving any grants, foundation support, or donations that can be redirected to support NJTSS initiatives?
- Is funding being equitably distributed to support programming across all the tiers of NJTSS?
- Is funding being utilized in a manner that maximizes its impact, or can more students benefit from allocating funding differently?

Step 2: Categorize Resources by Tier

In this step, the resources identified during the inventory process can be organized according to the three tiers of support within the NJTSS framework. This categorization helps districts and schools align their resources with the level of intervention that students need, ensuring that supports are appropriately allocated based on student needs. Below is a summary of how resources can be organized by tier:

- **Tier 1:** Universal supports that all students receive. These include core instruction, SEL programs, school-wide behavior expectations, school climate initiatives, and other general supports designed to meet the needs of most students.
- **Tier 2:** Targeted interventions designed for students who require additional support beyond what is provided at Tier 1. These are often small-group interventions or other specialized supports aimed at addressing specific academic, behavioral, or social-emotional learning challenges.

- **Tier 3:** Intensive, individualized interventions for students with the most significant academic, behavioral, or social-emotional needs. These supports are highly personalized and typically involve more frequent progress monitoring and specialized instruction or behavior plans. These interventions may also include supports provided through community resources.

By categorizing resources in this way, school leaders can ensure that they are effectively utilizing available resources to support all students across the full continuum of needs.

Step 3: Identify Necessary Resources

Once resources have been categorized by tier, the next step is to perform a thorough analysis to determine what additional resources are required. This process involves examining the distribution and availability of resources across all three tiers to determine where deficiencies exist and where improvements are needed. The goal is to ensure that the available supports adequately meet the needs of all students, including those with diverse academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. During this analysis, key questions can be addressed to guide decision making:

- Are there adequate resources at each tier to support the varying levels of student needs?
- Are specific programs underfunded or lacking sufficient staff to operate effectively?
- Do the current resources adequately address the diverse needs of all students, including students from different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and students with disabilities?

This detailed analysis will help planning teams identify areas where additional resources, such as staffing, funding, or specialized programs, may be required to ensure that all students have access to the supports they need. Pinpointing these system deficiencies is essential for strategic planning and ensuring that the NJTSS framework is implemented effectively across a school or district.

Step 4: Engage Stakeholders in Resource Mapping

The last step in resource mapping involves collaborating with a broad range of stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and effective approach. Just as in the needs assessment phase, diverse voices and perspectives help provide a fuller picture of the available resources and potential deficiencies. This process should not only include school staff, such as teachers, administrators, and support personnel but also extend to external community partners, local businesses, social service agencies, and community organizations that can offer valuable resources and support that schools may be able to utilize to enhance their NJTSS implementation. Engaging these stakeholders fosters collaboration, encourages shared ownership of the process, and can lead to creative solutions that schools may not have been able to identify on their own. This inclusive approach helps ensure that the resource mapping reflects the full range of supports available to students, both within and outside the school environment.

Summarize the Needs Assessment and Resource Mapping Findings

Summarizing the findings from the self-assessment and resource mapping is the final step needed to guide the NJTSS implementation planning phase. A comprehensive summary report can highlight the identified needs, existing resources, and recommendations to address any gaps for each tier of support. For Tier 1, the report will detail any gaps in universal supports, such as core instruction or school-wide behavior programs, and inform a plan for addressing these through additional training, materials, or programs. For Tier 2, the summary can focus on the availability or lack of targeted interventions, including small group supports, and outline steps to ensure adequate staffing and resources to fill identified gaps. Tier 3 can examine the most intensive interventions, determining if the current supports and resources meet the needs of students requiring individualized attention and identifying areas where additional expertise, programs, or other resources are necessary. Additionally, the report can include financial recommendations that align with the identified resource needs across all tiers, ensuring sustainable funding is allocated to support the NJTSS framework.

The summary should be detailed enough to provide meaningful insights for planning and decision making while remaining clear and concise for a wide range of stakeholders. It is recommended that the report include specific examples of programs, practices, or interventions currently in place—such as naming a school-wide behavior program or a literacy intervention used at Tier 2—along with any available data on their effectiveness. When

Key Takeaways

- Districts and schools begin by evaluating their current practices across 11 NJTSS components, using a structured self-assessment process to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and critical gaps. This reflection sets the stage for effective planning and implementation of tiered supports.
- Following the self-assessment, teams conduct a thorough resource inventory across academic, behavioral, and social-emotional domains. This includes programs, staffing, training, funding, and community partnerships, which are then categorized by tier to ensure alignment with student needs.
- The process emphasizes the use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of current resources and training. Teams are encouraged to determine which tools and practices can be sustained, improved, or replaced.
- Teams evaluate whether staff are adequately trained and if sufficient personnel are available to deliver instruction and interventions with fidelity across all tiers.
- The final summary report should present findings in a clear, accessible format with specific examples, outcome data, and actionable recommendations. This report informs implementation planning and supports transparency and stakeholder collaboration by making the information usable across audiences.

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](#)