



Exploring MnMTSS Implementation with Special Education and COMPASS

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Purpose/objectives/goals

- **Participants will understand how MnMTSS functions as a comprehensive, systemic framework and identify the roles of special education within each component of the system** (e.g., infrastructure, family engagement, tiered supports, assessment, and data-based decision making).
- **Participants will be able to analyze whether their current systems include special education perspectives by design**, including aligned professional learning, collaborative team structures, data sharing, and inclusive Tier 1–3 practices that ensure access and fidelity for all students.
- **Participants will apply key takeaways from the Special Education Leadership Lens** to strengthen decision rules, feedback loops, assessment literacy, and sustainable staffing structures that support equitable outcomes for students across tiers.

MnMTSS Definition

Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MnMTSS) is a **systemic, continuous improvement framework** for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and academic outcomes for every student.

MnMTSS provides access to layered tiers of culturally and linguistically responsive, evidence-based practices and relies on the understanding and belief that every student can learn and thrive.

In addition, it engages an anti-bias and socially-just approach to examining policies and practices and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunity.

Encompasses all programs, policies, processes, and initiatives in the system

All parts of the system interact with and influence each other

- Problems with one part can affect other parts
- Strengths in one area can positively impact other areas



An Integrated & Comprehensive System Framework

Debunking Myths: MnMTSS is **NOT**

- **NOT** narrowly focused on interventions or tiered instruction
- **NOT** a process used to identify students in need of Special Education services
- **NOT** a teaching role
- **NOT** a classroom space
- **NOT** only for students with “below benchmark” assessments
- **NOT** only for academics

Spread the word!



Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports



**Infrastructure for
Continuous
Improvement**



**Family and
Community
Engagement**



**Multi-Layered
Practices and
Support**



Assessment



**Data-Based
Decision
Making**

Component 1: Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

The physical, relational, and procedural mechanisms in a system that supports people as they coordinate and work efficiently together. **These components provide the structural stability for initiatives to be implemented, sustained,** and improved independent of particular individuals. An effective school infrastructure increases the likelihood that improvement efforts are focused and aligned and that educators are empowered to ensure equitable, healing-centered, assets-based social, emotional, behavioral, developmental and academic outcomes for every student.

- 1.1 District Mission, Vision, Policies, and Procedures
- 1.2 Leadership
- 1.3 Core Beliefs
- 1.4 School Climate
- 1.5 Professional Learning
- 1.6 Collaborative Linked Teams



Component 1: Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

Subcomponent 1.5: Professional Learning

- Evidence-based & aligned professional learning is provided to educators
- Professional learning communities provide a structure to support collective efficacy and continuous improvement
- Professional learning is evaluated
- Fidelity: Quality and impact of professional learning are evaluated and improved upon

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Are special education staff receiving the same, aligned professional learning as their general education colleagues?
- Are PD calendars structured so SPED doesn't get left behind?



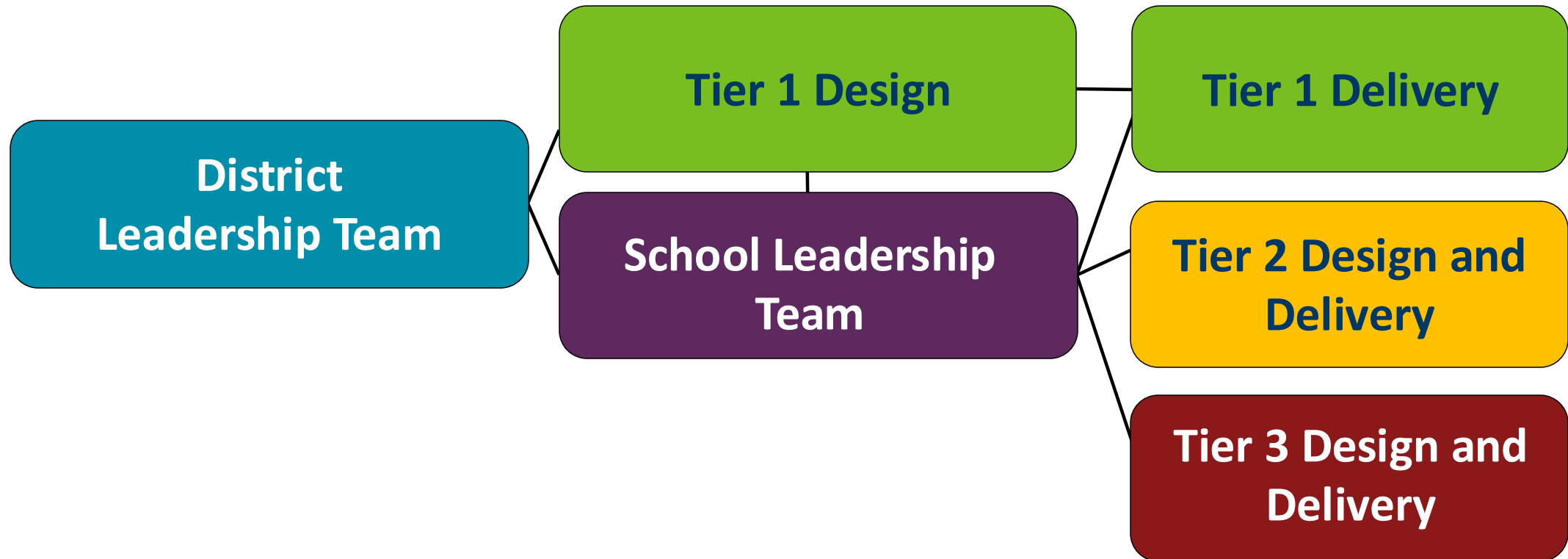
Component 1: Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

Subcomponent 1.6: Collaborative Linked Teams

- District, building, grade level/content, and individual student MnMTSS teams are linked and communicate effectively
- MnMTSS teams have clear roles and follow effective processes
- Fidelity: Teams evaluate their effectiveness and find ways to improve team functioning



Teams and Functions



Component 1: Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

Subcomponent 1.6: Collaborative Linked Teams

- District, building, grade level/content, and individual student MnMTSS teams are linked and communicate effectively
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Designing Inclusive Systems

- Are special education staff included in all collaborative teams across the system? (*valuable expertise, inclusive representation of student needs*)
- When capacity of special education staff is limited, systems should define when teams tap these colleagues in to avoid ad hoc, inequitable practices.



Special Education Leadership Lens

- SPED teachers serve students across multiple tiers.
- Leadership must ensure SPED perspectives are integrated by design, not siloed.
- Leaders must set **systematic decision rules** for PLC participation so SPED teachers are not expected to be everywhere simultaneously.
- Create sustainable structures so SPED teachers can manage **trade-offs** when assigned to multiple grades, roles, or initiatives.
- Leadership must set limits so SPED teachers aren't stretched to unsustainable levels.



MnMTSS COMPONENT 1:
Infrastructure for
Continuous Improvement

Component 2: Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement (FACE) is a process and a practice **rooted in relational-trust** which creates opportunities for equitable partnerships between families and school and district staff. These partnerships, from birth to graduation, nurture shared responsibility for students' academic, social and emotional success and **honor the lived experiences, expertise, and cultural knowledge of all educational partners** - students, teachers, families, and communities.

- 2.1 Sustain High-Trust and Reciprocal Relationships
- 2.2 Amplify Family & Community Voice
- 2.3 Link Families to Learning
- 2.4 Expect All Departments and Staff to Partner with Families
- 2.5 Commit to Continuous Improvement of the Family and Community Engagement Process
- 2.6 Inclusive and Transparent Communication
- 2.7 Schools as Community Space



Component 2: Family and Community Engagement

Subcomponent 2.2: Amplify Family & Community Voice

- Educators focus on families from systematically disadvantaged groups
- Educators engage in intentional and sustained family collaboration
- Educators transform power dynamics
- Educators engage in responsive programming and practices

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Are you engaging in intentional, sustained family collaboration?
- Is partnership reciprocal & mutually beneficial? (dual capacity-building)
- How are you sharing power and positioning caregivers/families as co-designers?



Component 2: Family and Community Engagement

Subcomponent 2.3: Link Families to Learning

- Educators enable self-determination
- Educators communicate clear learning expectations
- Educators communicate meaningful and timely assessment of learning strengths and needs
- Educators recognize caregivers as experts
- Educators facilitate a shared understanding of the MnMTSS framework

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Are learning expectations shared with *and understood by* families?
- Are assessment results communicated honestly and meaningfully?
- Are caregivers invited to share their expertise and support learning?



Special Education Leadership Lens

- SPED case managers must be included legally, but **should not become the only communicators**.
- Systems should empower all educators to communicate with families (rather than defaulting everything to the SPED case manager).
- Promote staff skills in cross-cultural collaboration and communication.



MnMTSS COMPONENT 2:
Family and Community
Engagement

Component 3: Multi-Layered Practices and Supports

Tiered service facilitation is a school-wide, culturally and linguistically sustaining, **multilayered system** of practices that **differentiates and intensifies instruction and supports as needed** so that each student meets rigorous and meaningful social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and academic benchmarks. The tiers described refer to levels of support students receive, not to students themselves.

3.1 Tier 1 (Core) Practices

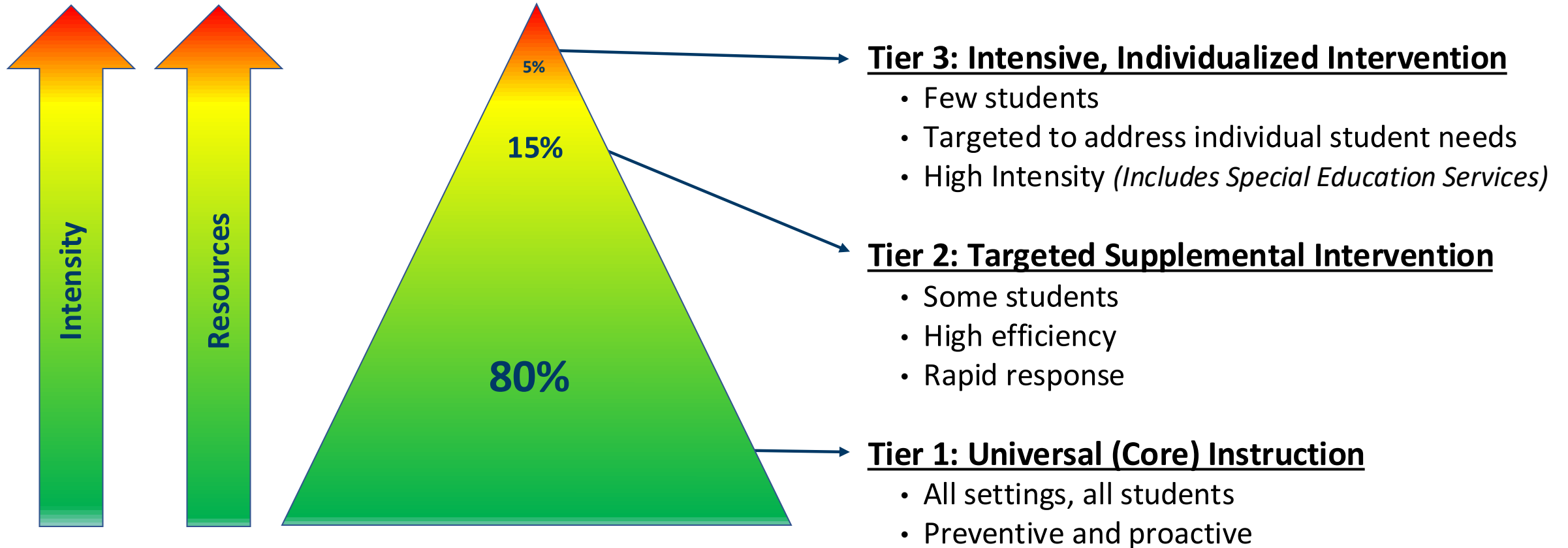
3.2 Tier 2 (Supplemental) Intervention

3.3 Tier 3 (Intensive) Intervention



A SMART SYSTEM STRUCTURE

Academic, Social Emotional, Behavioral Systems



Tiered Instruction

Component 3: Multi-Layered Practices and Supports

Subcomponent 3.1: Tier 1 (Core) Practices

- Districts and schools select evidence-based instructional materials
- Educators engage in evidence-based instructional practices
- Schools meet Tier 1 student performance targets
- Tier 1 horizontal and vertical alignment clarifies expectations and builds student skills from one grade level to the next
- Fidelity: High quality Tier 1 instruction and programming is provided to every student

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Is Tier 1 instruction & support designed to include all students?
- Is Tier 1 alone effective for the majority (80%) of students?



Component 3: Multi-Layered Practices and Supports

Subcomponent 3.2: Tier 2 (Supplemental) Intervention

- Evidence-based Tier 2 instructional materials are provided to students who need supplemental support
- Evidence-based Tier 2 instructional practices are likely to be effective for most students
- Tier 2 supports are aligned with Tier 1 and designed to help students meet Tier 1 expectations
- Fidelity: High quality Tier 2 intervention for those receiving it

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Do your interventions avoid misalignment that can confuse striving learners? (*e.g., different terminology, sequences, criteria*)
- Are you monitoring intervention fidelity/integrity with clear look-fors to ensure they're delivered and received as intended?



Component 3: Multi-Layered Practices and Supports

Subcomponent 3.3: Tier 3 (Intensive) Intervention

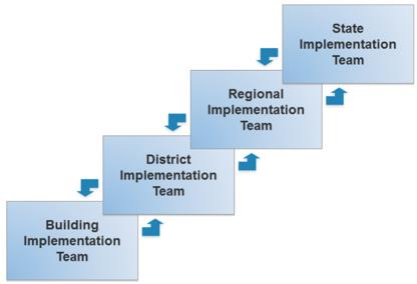
- Evidence-based Tier 3 instructional materials are provided to students who need intensive support
- Evidence-based Tier 3 instructional practices intensify and individualize supports for students who require customized programming
- Tier 3 interventions are aligned to specific student needs to ensure success with grade level standards
- Fidelity: Tier 3 interventions are monitored to ensure fidelity

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Do you use purposeful intensification? (*e.g., more time, more opportunities to respond, more gradual release of responsibility, narrowed focus, smaller group*)
- Tier 3 support \neq Tier 1 + Tier 2 + Tier 3 students receive more intensive support not stacked, disparate intervention programs.



Create Feedback Loops Between Teams



	Grade Level Teams	Intervention Teams	Sped Eval Teams Managing the Change	School Improvement Teams	District Level Teams
Functional Goal	Progress of all students in a grade level standards Vertical and horizontal alignment of language, practices, routines, etc.	Closing gaps in targeted skill(s) Aligned but intensified instruction	Access and progress in standards	Close gaps in achievement	Support practitioners
Data used for instruction and performance			Includes data from... Additional diagnostic for programming...		
Autonomy for decisions	Decides...				
Dependency for decisions	Does not decide....				
Communicates barriers and solutions to					

Special Education Leadership Lens

- Special Education teams need to have functional and consistent feedback loops between tiers.
- Data sharing and actionable improvements needs to be communicated across teams and leadership to enable system-wide support.
- SPED evaluations require evidence of:
 - ✓ Access to high-quality Tier 1.
 - ✓ High-quality interventions aligned to need
 - ✓ Fidelity of intervention delivery and receipt
- Leaders must ensure the continuum of support is defined, observable, and monitored.



Component 4: Assessment

Assessment is the process of **gathering evidence aligned to a specific purpose** to be used in making educational decisions that improve the learning conditions for every student. A variety of assessment types and tools are used within the education system, and the results should be interpreted according to the intended purpose and the level of specificity of the information produced. Assessments are designed for specific purposes and uses, and validity evidence must be available to support intended interpretations and uses.

- 4.1 Systems Evaluation
- 4.2 Universal Screening
- 4.3 Progress Monitoring
- 4.4 Diagnostic Assessment
- 4.5 Outcomes Assessment for Summative Purposes



Component 4: Assessment

Subcomponent 4.3: Progress Monitoring

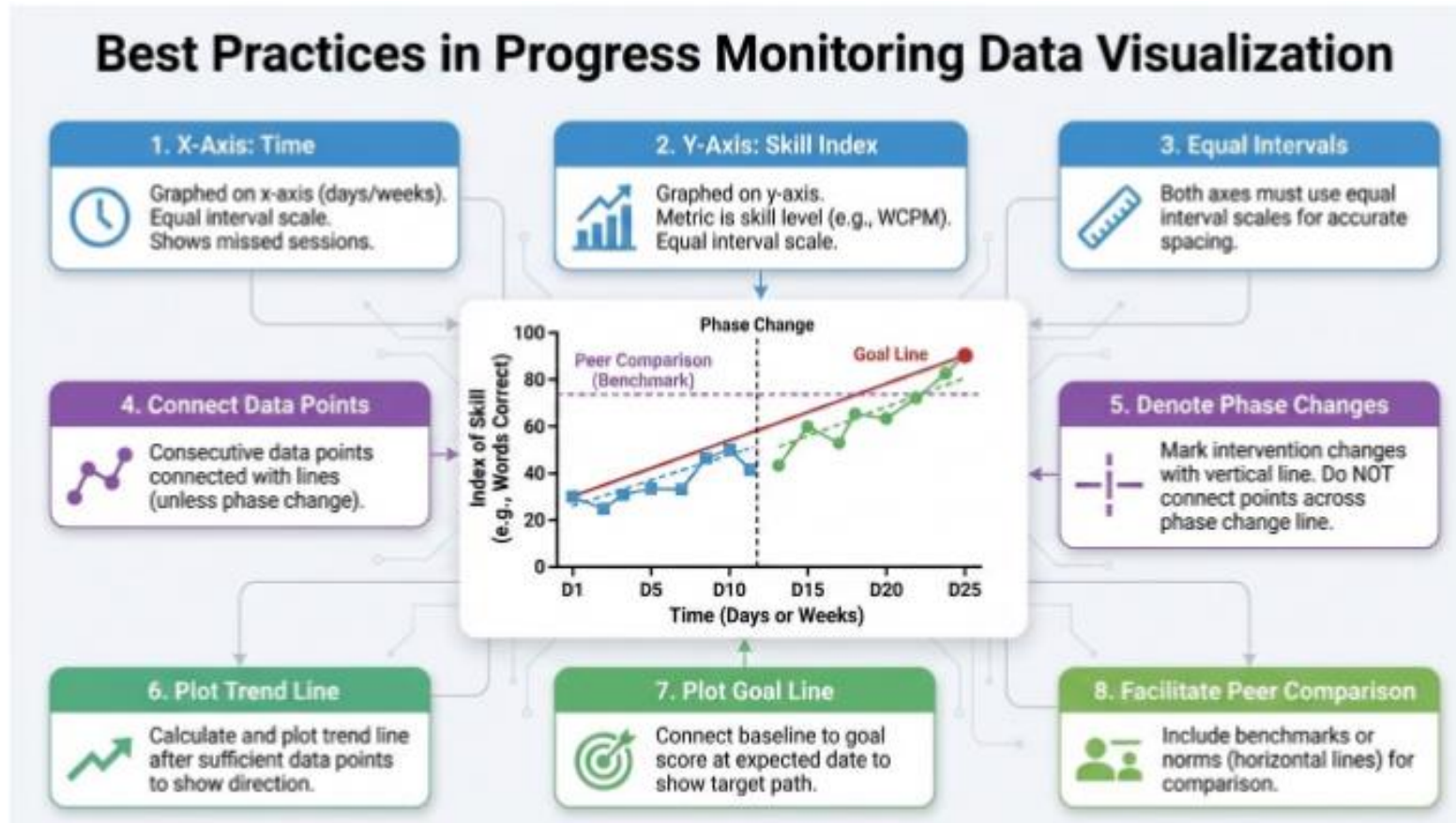
- Progress monitoring tools with sufficient validity evidence are available to educators so they can determine whether students are benefitting sufficiently from current instruction
- Progress monitoring process is defined, understood and followed
- Those administering progress monitoring have been adequately trained and there is a process to assess accuracy of administration and scoring

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Are you using valid and reliable progress monitoring tools?
- Are the progress monitoring tools being used matched to the focus of the intervention?



Best Practices in Progress Monitoring Visualization



[Best Practices in PM Data Visualization - Google Docs](#)

Component 4: Assessment

Subcomponent 4.4: Diagnostic Assessment

- Diagnostic assessment procedures are available to educators so they can determine what to teach and how to intensify instruction
- Diagnostic assessment process is defined, understood and followed

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Are you leveraging special education and school psychologist expertise on assessment to build *system-wide* trust in data?
- Are you leveraging special education expertise in learning progressions and how to identify precise student needs?
- Is diagnostic information shared with all relevant educators?



Special Education Leadership Lens

- Promote SPED expertise in what assessment results actually mean.
- Address lack of trust in data across staff.
- Build assessment literacy across the district to increase educators' capacity to use data responsibly.
- Aim for lean, balanced assessment system – avoid duplication and use of assessments that do not drive instructional decision-making (More testing ≠ better results)



Component 5: Data-Based Decision Making

Data are used to solve problems and make important decisions that impact student academic, behavioral, and social-emotional well-being. Such decisions should create a **continuous cycle of systems improvement involving educator support, policy enhancement, and procedural/instructional improvement**. Data sources might include existing academic and demographic records, surveys, interviews, observations, program/policy/process data and fidelity data.

5.1 Accessible and Integrated Data

5.2 Educational Decision Making

5.3 System Performance



Component 5: Data-Based Decision Making

Subcomponent 5.1: Accessible and Integrated Data

- Data system integrates academic, behavioral, and demographic information for analyzing equity questions and to illuminate where support resources need to be applied
- Data system is accessible to those who require it for making educational decisions
- Educators and caregivers have a shared understanding of data that are collected and how they are used in decision-making

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Do all instructional staff have access to the student data they need to guide their work?
- Have all staff that engage in data-based decision making received adequate training and support to know where to find the data.



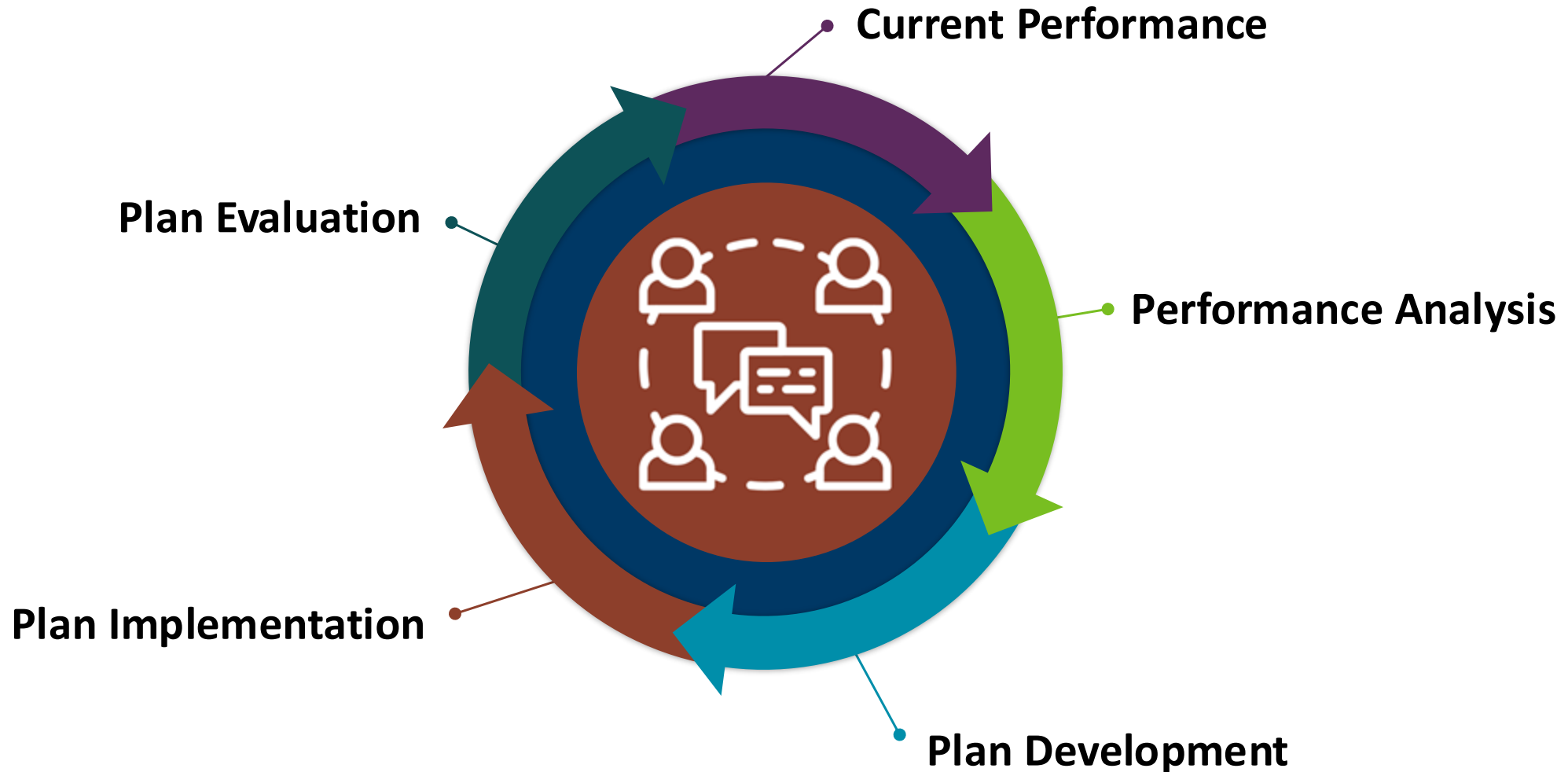
Component 5: Data-Based Decision Making

Subcomponent 5.2: Educational Decision Making

- Decisions are made by teams composed of people with appropriate expertise and authority to make and carry out effective plans
- Steps of the data-based decision making process are implemented effectively
- Decision-making process is evaluated and improved



MnMTSS as Scientific Inquiry at Every Level



Component 5: Data-Based Decision Making

Subcomponent 5.2: Educational Decision Making

- Decisions are made by teams composed of people with appropriate expertise and authority to make and carry out effective plans
- Steps of the data-based decision making process are implemented effectively
- Decision-making process is evaluated and improved

Designing Inclusive Systems

- Is a consistent data-based decision making process used for continuous improvement across all levels of the system?
- Have clear decision rules been established? (*when intervention is needed, when to intensify, when to change interventions, when to fade support*)



Special Education Leadership Lens

- Address one of the major SPED concerns:
General Education teams are not using or collecting data in ways that SPED trusts or can use for evaluations.
- Leaders should ensure:
 - Alignment between general education and special education data processes.
 - Access to intervention data.
 - Use of intervention data in comprehensive evaluations.

