



CONNECTING SCHOOLWIDE SEL WITH OTHER SCHOOL-BASED FRAMEWORKS

Some of the most common frameworks for organizing student supports are Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Adopting schoolwide SEL does not mean that a school must abandon these existing frameworks. Rather, schoolwide SEL offers an opportunity to enhance or refine existing systems of support.

Here, we define Schoolwide SEL, MTSS, and PBIS, then describe how these frameworks can align with and complement one another.

What is Schoolwide SEL?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults develop and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. When implemented systemically in the school, classroom, home, and community, schoolwide SEL provides a powerful coordinating framework for supporting student success (see Figure 1).

Schoolwide SEL is a systemic approach to integrating academic, social, and emotional learning across all school contexts. This approach provides a learning environment that infuses SEL into all aspects of instruction and promotes equitable outcomes for all students. Central to this system is high-quality professional learning and the use of data for continuous improvement. When fully implemented, schoolwide SEL contributes to more successful and equitable outcomes for young people, and is evidenced by the following indicators:

Figure 1: A framework for schoolwide SEL



Indicators of Schoolwide SEL

Explicit SEL instruction

Students have consistent opportunities to cultivate, practice, and reflect on social and emotional competencies in ways that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive.

SEL integrated with academic instruction

SEL objectives are integrated into instructional content and teaching strategies for academics as well as music, art, and physical education.

Youth voice and engagement

Staff honor and elevate a broad range of student perspectives and experiences by engaging students as leaders, problem solvers, and decision-makers.

Supportive school and classroom climates

Schoolwide and classroom learning environments are supportive, culturally responsive, and focused on building relationships and community.

Focus on adult SEL

Staff have regular opportunities to cultivate their own social, emotional, and cultural competence, collaborate with one another, build trusting relationships, and maintain a strong community.

Supportive discipline

Discipline policies and practices are instructive, restorative, developmentally appropriate, and equitably enforced.

A continuum of integrated supports

SEL is seamlessly integrated into a continuum of academic and behavioral supports, which are available to ensure that all student needs are met.

Authentic family partnerships

Families and school staff have regular and meaningful opportunities to build relationships and collaborate to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.

Aligned community partnerships

School staff and community partners align on common language, strategies, and communication around all SEL-related efforts and initiatives, including out-of-school time.

Systems for continuous improvement

Implementation and outcome data are collected and used to continuously improve all SEL-related systems, practices, and policies with a focus on equity.



What is MTSS?

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) refers to a systemic, prevention-focused framework for addressing student needs through the integration and continuous improvement of systems and services. A well-designed MTSS includes:

- Multiple tiers of integrated support for academics and behavior.
- Screening to determine which students could benefit from additional supports.
- Progress monitoring of evidence-based strategies.
- Data-driven decision-making (National Association of School Psychologists).

An MTSS has the following structure:

MTSS Tier 1

Supports at Tier 1 represent a universal approach to ensure that all students experience a safe, supportive environment and receive high-quality core academic instruction and prevention-focused systems that promote positive behavior. The district selects evidence-based supports based on the needs of the entire student population, which are then made available to all students. Tier 1 supports must be fully operational before schools can most effectively support more intensive needs. Without this foundational tier, supports at Tiers 2 and 3 may become over-accessed by students who may have otherwise been adequately served by Tier 1 supports.

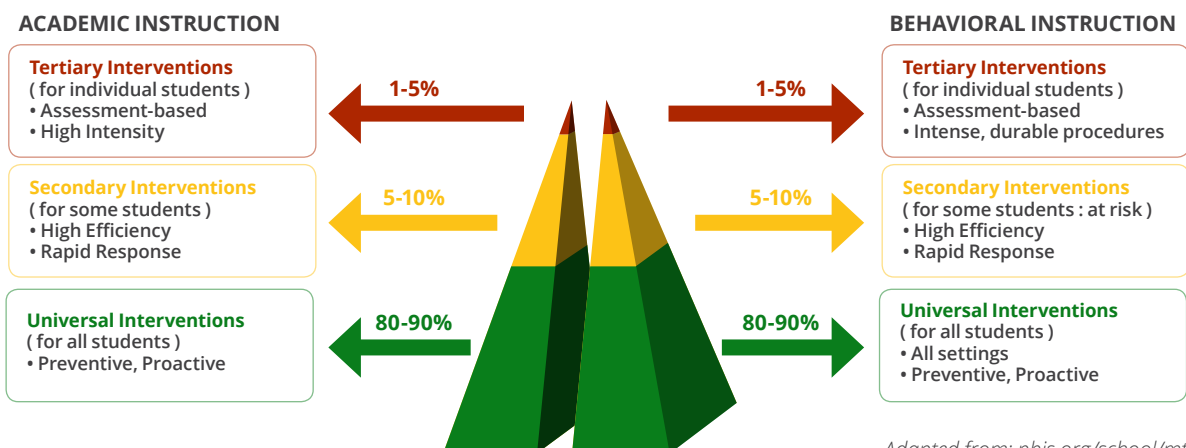
MTSS Tier 2

At Tier 2, schools provide targeted, evidence-based academic and behavioral supports to students for whom Tier 1 supports are insufficient. These supports may include classroom-based interventions or small-group interventions facilitated by a qualified professional. These supports supplement and align with Tier 1 supports, and may be provided by teachers, support staff, or community partners.

MTSS Tier 3

Tier 3 provides highly intensive and individualized academic and behavioral supports to students for whom Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports are insufficient. The evidence-based supports in Tier 3 are layered on and aligned with the supports that students are receiving at Tiers 1 and 2. These supports may be provided by teachers, support staff, or community partners (<http://www.rtinetwork.org/>).

Figure 2: This figure provides an overview of MTSS



Adapted from: pbis.org/school/mtss



The MTSS framework provides general guidelines for structuring each tier of support, but does not prescribe specific supports and interventions at each tier. This is because each school has different needs depending on the students they serve.

At its core, MTSS is driven by a decision-making process that uses high-quality data. Schools use this decision-making process to determine which supports will be needed to meet students' academic and behavioral needs at each tier. A Tier 1 system is effective when it meets the needs of at least 80% of the student population as determined by various data points (e.g., grades, attendance, behavior, test scores, surveys, etc.). While one school may get 80% of students to proficiency in math using only the core curriculum, another school may need the core curriculum plus trauma-informed teaching strategies. Another school may need the core curriculum plus additional instructional minutes.

The same is true for interventions at Tiers 2 and 3. A team of individuals assesses the needs of the 20% of students who need additional academic and/or behavioral supports and layer in interventions to meet the needs of those specific students (Rtl Network).

What is PBIS?

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered framework for adopting and organizing behavioral supports for all students, and is one possible strategy for fulfilling the right side (see figure 3) of the MTSS framework. A complete PBIS framework takes into consideration the environmental factors that influence students' academics and behavior. The goal of the framework is to prevent factors that negatively affect student behavior through universal screening, data-based decision-making, integrated evidence-based interventions (where available), and fidelity of implementation (PBIS, "Tier 1 Supports").

PBIS does not recommend specific curricula, teaching strategies, or reinforcement methods. Instead, it is left to each school's discretion to choose evidence-based strategies that meet the needs of their unique student population at each tier (PBIS, "Tier 1 Supports").

Figure 3: This figure shows how PBIS focuses on the behavioral components of MTSS

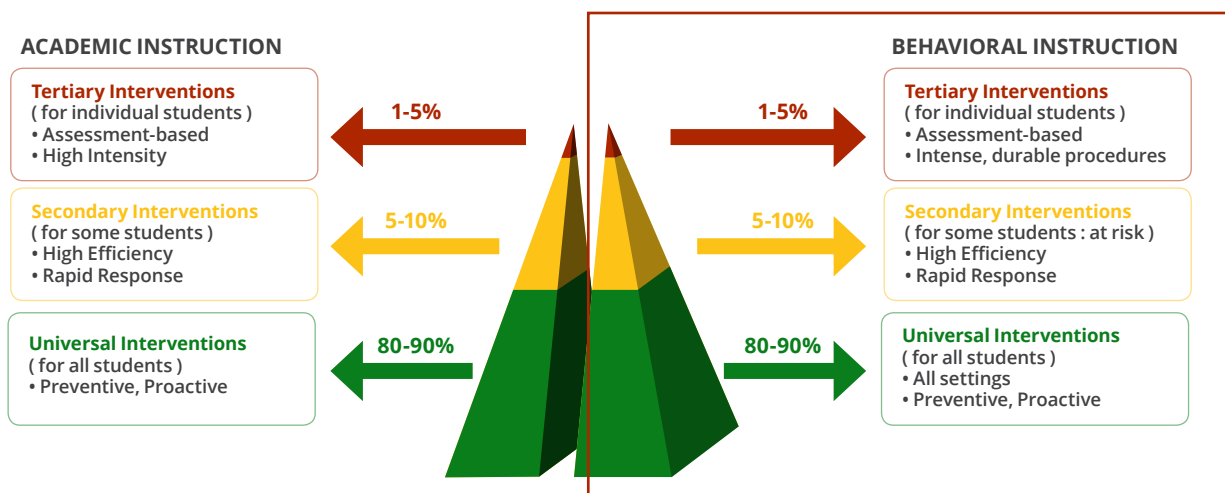


Image adapted from: pbis.org/school/mtss



PBIS Tier 1

Building the first tier of supports requires that the school identify the kind of environment and conditions that would enable all students to exhibit appropriate behavior. Then, a set of universal behavioral expectations are established, taught, modeled, and acknowledged. Schools may choose to implement additional schoolwide strategies, which might include classroom management strategies, evidence-based social and emotional learning programs, efforts to promote a positive school climate, discipline policies and practices, etc.

PBIS Tier 2

At Tier 2, schools provide targeted behavioral supports to students for whom Tier 1 supports are insufficient. These supports may include classroom-based interventions or small-group interventions facilitated by a teacher, qualified professional, or community partner. All Tier 2 supports occur in addition to and in alignment with Tier 1 supports.

PBIS Tier 3

At Tier 3, schools provide highly intensive and individualized behavioral supports to students for whom Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports are insufficient. Tier 3 supports are layered on and in alignment with Tier 1 and 2 supports, and may be provided by teachers, support staff, or community partners (PBIS, “PBIS FAQs”).

How are Schoolwide SEL and MTSS Connected?

When schoolwide SEL is implemented, its impact is felt on both sides of an MTSS framework (see Figure 4). This happens because social and emotional competence is essential for all kinds of learning—whether a student is learning behavioral expectations, exploring how to partner with another student to solve a math problem, mastering how to join a game of kickball on the playground, or practicing taking the perspective of a character in a story.

Learning is an intrinsically social and interactive process. When all students have opportunities to develop and practice social and emotional skills, mindsets, and attitudes, students are empowered and the demands of school and life become easier to navigate. Schoolwide SEL, then, is neither solely a behavior support nor solely an academic support, but positively influences both “sides” of an MTSS framework.

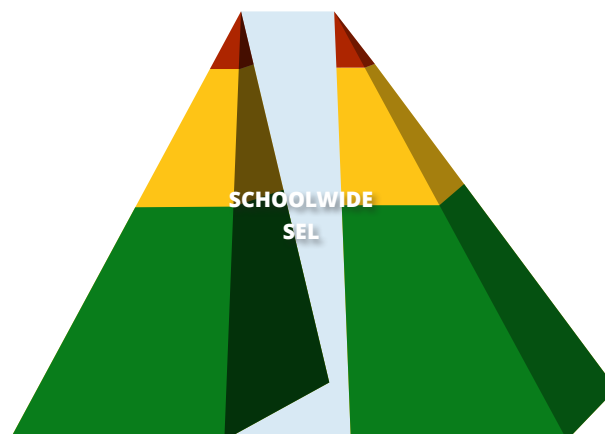
Figure 4: This figure shows how systemic SEL has positive impacts on both academics and behavior within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

ACADEMICS:

Learning is a social and emotional process. For this reason, students are most successful academically when they:

1. Know themselves and can manage themselves;
2. Take the perspectives of others and relate effectively with them; and,
3. Make sound choices about personal and social decisions.

(Durlak et al., 2015)



BEHAVIOR:

Social and emotional learning provides students with the foundational competencies that they need in order to follow behavioral expectations, reflect on and learn from mistakes, navigate complex relationships, and, ultimately, make responsible decisions. (Durlak et al., 2015)

Adapted from: pbis.org/school/mtss



How are Schoolwide SEL and PBIS Connected?

PBIS and SEL have many similar features, but are not the same. Both schoolwide SEL and PBIS focus on creating safe and supportive environments, teaching students new skills, and using data to make informed decisions. Their explicit goals, however, differ in that PBIS seeks to ultimately increase positive behavior, while schoolwide SEL seeks to empower students and promote more equitable outcomes by helping them build skills and competencies (e.g., understand themselves and others while forming strong relationships and building decision-making skills) that help students learn and navigate the world more effectively. The primary reason for this difference is that SEL and PBIS are grounded in different theoretical frameworks. While these two frameworks are different, they are not necessarily in competition and often achieve similar outcomes (Bear et al., 2015)

Schools that are deeply invested in PBIS can leverage their existing PBIS team to lead schoolwide SEL integration efforts. While continuing to use Tier 1 PBIS strategies (e.g., teaching, modeling, and acknowledging schoolwide expectations, data practices, etc.), schools can focus on **Key Activity 3: Cultivating Adult SEL and Key Activity 4: Promoting SEL for Students** within the CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL to begin integrating Schoolwide SEL.

These Key Activities can strengthen any Tier 1 PBIS system by helping adults cultivate skills to effectively interact with students and create a positive school climate while simultaneously helping students build the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to be able to carry out schoolwide expectations and excel academically.

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