

What is the Difference Between RTI and MTSS?

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Many educators view [Response to Intervention \(RTI\)](#) and [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) as one and the same. The terms' similar definitions don't provide a strong distinction.

Response to Intervention (RTI):

The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decision.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

A coherent continuum of evidence based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each student to achieve to high standards.

While RTI and MTSS share some philosophies, the two are different. RTI is part of an MTSS framework, but the inverse is not true. MTSS provides a more complete solution. It not only implements an intervention process (RTI), but addresses behavior issues, provides support for educators and recognizes the need to incorporate outside influences. RTI, Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS), educator support including professional development and technology tools, additional support staff, district-school collaboration and both parental and community involvement all fall under the MTSS umbrella.

What is the same among RTI and MTSS?

RTI plays a huge role in MTSS. RTI is the primary strategy used in helping students reach Tier 1. RTI and MTSS share many foundational philosophies such as:

- Data driven instruction
- Regular assessments
- Evidence-based instruction and student placement
- Multi-Tiered support for increasingly aggressive interventions

The Difference Is...

RTI and MTSS espouse common traits, but MTSS tends to reach beyond typical Response to Intervention implementations. The chart below walks through some of the differences.

	RTI	MTSS
Interventions:	Academic	Academic, Behavioral, Social, Emotional
Target Audience (in practice):	Students in danger of failing or becoming designated as special education students	All students
Resources & Support:	Students in the target audience	All students, teachers and support staff
Collaboration:	General educators and special educators work together on Tier2 & 3 support	Even greater focus on collaboration between general and special education
Focus:	Intervention and remediation	Intervention, remediation and a stronger sense of prevention
Problems Addressed:	Student level problems addressed	Both student and system level problems addressed
Intervention Universe:	Interventions centered within the school	Intervention centered in the school, community and in the home

Multi-tiered System of Supports and Response to Intervention frameworks both provide student interventions designed to improve academic progress. Recently, many state educational agencies and individual school districts have adopted an MTSS approach over RTI because of the more comprehensive outlook of MTSS.

Summary of the Difference Between RTI and MTSS

MTSS uses the RTI model for intervention, then provides support for factors that help make learning more effective. Behavioral and emotional interventions occur where needed. Teachers and support staff receive access to additional resources and professional development. School-wide and district-wide adjustments are considered. Partnerships form between educators, parents and the community to better provide direction for students. Proponents see MTSS as the evolution of the RTI model.