

Tiered System of Supports - Collaboration Phase: Two Approaches to Discussing Students and Creating Student Support Plans

PURPOSE

The purpose of this story is to illustrate the difference in two approaches in preparing and collaborating around a student during a Tiered System of Supports meeting. One approach is a more traditional way of addressing student needs, and the other approach offers an example that is more aligned with whole-child design.

DIRECTIONS:

Read the sample stories below. Reflect on how you might prepare for and your current experience in participating in meetings for the purpose of supporting and developing plans for students. Notice the similarities and differences of both approaches to your experience as you read. Consider the changes you might make in preparation for or recommendations you have for meetings about students moving forward.

The scenario below is a continuation of the story about Anisha and the two approaches a teacher might take to support her. Approach A is the traditional MTSS approach, one that applies “quick fixes” and in most cases reflects the perception that the child as the problem that needs to be fixed. It often only limitedly considers contextual factors that often contribute to the challenges a student is facing. Approach B is more aligned to a whole-child purpose, as it leverages a student’s context, is more reflective of teacher mindset and practice and acknowledges the significance of relationships.

In the Referral Phase, we analyzed the steps a teacher might take when completing the *Referral Form* to request support for Anisha, who has some difficulty in school with regard to her attendance, emotional well-being and academic functioning. She is in 7th grade, is new to the school and her mother is actively involved in her education. Anisha has some strengths in the area of art and in her ability to try to regulate her emotions. [Click here](#) to revisit the full story.

The last step in the Referral Phase is below and will help set the stage for reflection in the Collaboration Phase.

Traditional MTSS Approach A Recap	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B Recap
Within the next day or two, the teacher is informed that Anisha will be discussed at next week’s grade-level Tier 2 meeting.	Within a day or two, the teacher is informed that Anisha will be discussed at next week’s Tier 2 grade-level meeting. The teacher informs Anisha’s mother via email and reminds her that questions are welcomed.

Let’s now see what each approach looks like in the Collaboration Phase. We will examine the approach to conducting a Tier 2 meeting and how the support is documented on the *Student Support Plan*. There are specific things that happen before, during and after a Tier 2 meeting.

Before the Meeting	
Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
Before the meeting, the teacher collects the academic and social emotional data, Anisha's attendance record, and the her parent communication log to support the referral.	Before the meeting, the teacher collects the academic and social emotional data to support the referral. Data collected includes notes from conversations with mom and the teacher's 1:1s with Anisha.
The instructional coach places Anisha's name on the calendar to be discussed during their next meeting and prepares the agenda.	The instructional coach places Anisha's name on the shared grade-level team calendar to be discussed. The agenda is sent out via email a day before the meeting. The agenda has time delineations and includes roles like timekeeper and note taker. The team has agreed to maintain a digital folder for each student in which to store referral information.

Reflection Question:

1. What impact will having the agenda a day in advance of the meeting have on the productivity of the meeting?
2. How might the inclusion of data about the teacher's interaction with the caregiver have an effect on the development of a plan to support the student?

Notice the difference in preparation in advance of the meeting. The whole-child Approach B places more emphasis on both the teacher and team preparing for the meeting. The lead facilitator ensures team members are aware and have access to the data. In the traditional Approach A, the teacher and lead facilitator prepare, however the data is limited, and team members will not have knowledge of the student until the meeting. The more preparation that occurs before the meeting allows for increased time to consider the student context and reflect on and asking probing questions about teacher practice before and during the meeting. These processes contribute to a higher quality *Student Support Plan*.

Let's now see what occurs during the Tier 2 meeting...

During the Meeting	
Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
The instructional coach is the facilitator and begins the meeting by sharing the names of students that will be discussed. Next, the facilitator asks for volunteers to take notes and keep time. Two team members agree to fill those roles after about a minute. Then, the teacher is invited to start presenting the student.	The instructional coach is the facilitator and opens the meeting (virtual or in-person) ensuring everyone has access to or can see the agenda. The norms are reviewed, and the team is reminded of the student names and any additional topics on the agenda. The instructional coach also confirms the team members who are taking notes and keeping time; those were decided in advance and written into the agenda. The teacher is then invited to begin sharing about Anisha and is reminded of the time allotted for the presentation.
The teacher begins to discuss their concerns about Anisha. This includes Anisha's academic challenges, attendance and the limited contact with Anisha's mother. The teacher also shares how the challenges have been addressed to date.	After sharing demographic data, the teacher begins to talk about Anisha's strengths, concerns and the relationship with Anisha's mother. Some highlights include: Anisha's interest in dance, leadership skills, growing up in a bilingual home and the teachers' growing relationship with Anisha's mother. A description of Anisha's circumstances at home is discussed, followed by her areas for growth. The challenges shared include the recent death of her father, Anisha's responsibilities and academic functioning. The teacher also shares that Anisha previously had some difficulty with tardiness, however, this was resolved after a conversation with her mother. The teacher supports the referral with some samples of Anisha's work and data on how she has supported her to date.
One of the team members suggests working toward improving Anisha's behavior. The suggestion is to let Anisha talk about what her challenges are and the two decide together what the reward will be if Anisha improves her behavior. A team member asks about why Anisha is late. The teacher is unable to give a confident answer, however, responds that the mother might have some role to play in Anisha's tardiness. The discussion continues as the teacher begins to talk more about her unsuccessful outreach to Anisha's mother.	While time has not yet been called to end the presentation, the teacher and team members are offered the opportunity by the lead facilitator (the instructional coach) to share anything else that might be relevant for the team members to know. The lead facilitator invites team members to ask questions. The timekeeper is asked to reset the time for questions as indicated on the agenda.
Another team member suggests utilizing alternative ways to reach out to the mother. The teacher agrees to try that. The discussion transitions to ideating on some alternative academic supports. The strategies identified include using illustrations to help analyze text meaning, having Anisha demonstrate her understanding of the text by writing about it and using context clues to assist with comprehending the text that is being read. A third team member mentions reaching out to the school counselor to see what else might be going on with the student.	Members ask questions about how the student appears to be functioning emotionally in reaction to the death of her father. The teacher shares that there is some indication Anisha might be experiencing negative emotions because she uses drawing as a way to help cope with difficult feelings. Team members also inquire about how the teacher has leveraged and highlighted student strengths to date. There are also some questions around the integration and interaction between Anisha and her peers, given that she is a new student. Another question is about Anisha's perspective on how she is doing in school.
The teacher begins to acknowledge that the suggestions thus far might not be the most effective at addressing Anisha's challenges with reading.	The questions prompt the teacher to begin thinking about other supports that could enhance Anisha's academic experience and support her social/emotional needs.
Time to transition is called by the time keeper; this prompts the lead facilitator to transition the team to begin documenting what the goals would be on the Anisha's support plan.	Time is placed on the clock for the team/teacher to reflect on the data and consider some realistic goals to start with. They will then share out their ideas and the note taker will keep track.

Questions for Reflection:

1. In MTSS Approach A, the team immediately begins considering ways to support Anisha. What impact might this have on the success of the *Student Support Plan*?
2. In the Approach B, the team asks about how Anisha is coping with the loss of her father. Why might this question be important?

SCROLL DOWN

In both approaches to conducting the meeting, team roles are established, and follow an agenda. However, in Approach A, there is a risk that team members may not volunteer to take on roles in the meeting and time might be taken away from conducting the meeting due to delays in operations of Tier 2 or Tier 3 meetings. Approach B leverages the time before the meeting to ensure the meeting can operate efficiently with a focus on supporting the teacher and developing the best plan possible for the student. While the lead facilitator chose in Approach B to select names, before the meeting. The roles can stay the same for each member based on input from the team. This will avoid an extra step in preparation.

The team now moves into student support planning...

Student Support Planning (Goal Setting and Intervention Support Planning)	
Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
<p>The team documents the following on their action plan for the student:</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to engage Anisha's mother through email and inquire about the best ways to reach her. 2. Revise the behavior plan with more input from Anisha to include rewards and consequences for her behavior 3. Use sentence starters to support Anisha's reading comprehension (I didn't get _____, so I _____.) 4. Reach out to school counselor to see if she can determine what else might be going on with Anisha. 	<p>Once time is called, the instructional coach encourages team members to share what might be some goals (2-3) to aim for in support of the teacher and Anisha. Many of the goals shared include goals around supporting Anisha's emotional needs, expansion of student's peer network and reading comprehension.</p> <p><i>Optional for brainstorming of goals:</i> Team members might keep their own notes to capture their thoughts and share them out individually, or thoughts can be captured on chart paper, or other digital program (word, google docs).</p> <p>The Team agreed on the following goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 12/3/21, the teacher will increase their capacity to proactively support students' social emotional needs as well as improve in the effectiveness of implementing the predicting and questioning comprehension strategies. 2. By 12/3/21, Anisha will learn and utilize 1-2 additional coping strategies to reduce manage difficult emotions as evidenced by verbal reports and usage from the student and Student Support Staff Member working with her. 3. By 12/3/21, Anisha will improve in her reading comprehension by 20% as measured by reading comprehension quizzes through using predicting and questioning strategies.
<p>The teacher agrees to the above goals. The lead facilitator announces a date that is six weeks from today to follow up on the progress Anisha has made on the above goals.</p>	<p>The next step as identified as the facilitator was to brainstorm some strategies that will assist the teacher in meeting the needs of the student. The process is similar to that of determining goals. After time is called team members share out their ideas. Many of their ideas are address the environment, relationship and skill and mindset to impact teacher practice and support Anisha.</p>
<p>The following day the teacher sends an email and mails a letter home to schedule a meeting with Anisha and her mother to discuss the plan.</p>	<p>The team agreed on the following strategies to support goals:</p> <p>To support Goal 1: The teacher will work closely with the student support team to consider some things that can be proactively included in the classroom environment to support Anisha and other students when difficult emotions arise. The instructional coach will support the teacher with using predicting and questioning comprehension strategies during small-group reading lessons.</p> <p>To support Goal 2: Refer Anisha to student support staff, discuss concerns and goals for student. Increase opportunities for non-academic interaction amongst students. Leverage Anisha's ideas, invite her and other students to facilitate those activities. The teacher will work closely with student support to consider some things that can be proactively included in the classroom environment to support Anisha and other students when difficult emotions arise.</p> <p>To support Goal 3: The instructional coach will support the teacher with using predicting and questioning comprehension strategies during small-group reading lessons. The teacher will meet with Anisha to introduce one strategy at a time, modeling how to use it and providing time for Anisha to practice independently. The teacher will check-in regularly with Anisha and provide feedback and any necessary scaffolding to support Anisha in utilizing these strategies effectively.</p>

	The <i>Student Support Plan</i> also included who and what will be monitored prior to the next meeting. For example, the teacher will monitor Anisha's growth in relation to her application of coping skills, reading skills and homework completion. The school counselor (from the student support team) will focus on noting the progress made in learning new coping skills. The teacher had the opportunity to talk about any support needed to implement the strategies. The teacher requested support from team members. A date was set for review within about 4 weeks.
	A day after the meeting, Anisha's <i>Student Support Plan</i> is uploaded for team members to access as needed. The teacher reaches out to Anisha's mother to discuss the details of the plan. The next step will be for the teacher to have a discussion with Anisha about the plan and solicits her feedback about the details within it. The teacher will reflect on their implementation of the plan and Anisha's response in preparation for the review meeting.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What goals might you have for Anisha? What other strategies with regard to relationships, skills, mindsets or supportive environment would you consider?
2. How do you think Anisha's mom responded to the goals and strategies in the plan?
3. What activities before, during and after the meeting contribute to an equitable meeting and equitable outcomes for the student?

In the scenario above, both approaches have a plan where they document the next steps for a student. In Approach A, the team list strategies rather than goals. This will make it challenging to know if the student is making progress. While the team set a date to review progress, there is not a clear way to determine what will be different. In Approach B, there is some careful consideration of goals and supports to help the student meet those goals. You will also see a goal for the teacher in support of building their capacity in service of Anisha meeting her goals. This is intentional because student context is at the center of whole-child design. The strategies in Approach B consider the environment, relationships, and skills and mindsets that support the student in developing a new skill as aligned to whole-child design. If the team were to consider strategies primarily in one area of a student's context, it would not be reflective of a holistic plan of support.

During the Implementation Phase, we will talk more about the process of implementing supports in preparation for the review meeting.