

Tiered System of Supports – Implementation Phase: Two Approaches to Implementing and Progress Monitoring Student Support Plans

PURPOSE

The purpose of this story is to illustrate the difference in two approaches to implementing the *Student Support Plan* following 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 whole-child aligned.

DIRECTIONS:

Read the sample story below. Consider how you might implement strategies listed on the *Student Support Plan* for Anisha.

We are wrapping up the final phase in the process of supporting a student through Tiered Systems of Support, and that is the Implementation Phase. This phase focuses on the action steps taken by educators and internal and external stakeholders as documented in the *Student Support Plan*. There are three main activities that occur in this phase 1) actual implementation of the support plan, 2) data collection on the quality of implementation, and 3) determination of how much progress has been made toward the identified goals.

The scenario below is a continuation of the story about Anisha and the two approaches a teacher might take implementing the strategies in the *Student Support Plan*. Approach A is the traditional MTSS approach, one that typically applies “quick fixes” and looks primarily at the child as the problem. Very often this approach limitedly considers contextual factors that are often at the source of a student’s struggle. 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 positive developmental relationships on student achievement.

In the Collaboration Phase, we compared a more traditional approach to discussing students during the meeting to an approach more aligned with whole-child design. At the end of the scenario, in both approaches, the team of teachers developed goals and next steps. In an effort to provide context to action steps in the Implementation phase of the scenario:

[Click here](#) to revisit the whole-child aligned sample *Student Support Plan* created for Anisha.

[Click here](#) to revisit the full story. You can follow the two teachers’ journeys in supporting Anisha through the phases of Tiered Systems of Support [here](#) and [here](#).

The scenario below begins with a recap of the next steps after the Tier 2 meeting.

Traditional MTSS Approach A Recap	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B Recap
The following day, the teacher sent an email and mailed a letter home to schedule a meeting with Anisha and her mother to discuss the plan.	The following day , Anisha’s <i>Student Support Plan</i> was uploaded for team members to access as needed. The teacher reached 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 solicit 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.

Now, let's look at what happens with regard to how the plan is shared with both Anisha and her mother.

After the Meeting	
Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
<p>While awaiting a response back from Anisha's mother, the teacher meets with Anisha during lunch for a 1:1 to discuss her student support plan. Anisha is somewhat anxious to participate in the meeting. The teacher begins to share with Anisha the necessity to make some revisions to her behavior plan to include rewards and provide some clarity on consequences. The teacher solicits Anisha's perspective on the rewards, so that they might feel more beneficial to her. Anisha shared that she would like extra time on the computer or to create art. The teacher informs Anisha that they will use a point system where she will get points taken away if she doesn't meet her goals for the week. The teacher then discusses the plan to support Anisha's reading comprehension. Anisha will be taught to use sentence starters to write about the story to try to improve her comprehension. The teacher also discusses with Anisha that a referral will be made to the school counselor, as it seems there might be something going on that is contributing to her difficulties in school. Anisha insists that there is nothing wrong and refuses to go to see the counselor. The teacher informs Anisha that it will be up to her mother to give permission. Anisha leaves the meeting, worried about meeting with someone new, losing points if her behavior doesn't improve, and what her mother might say about seeing the counselor. While Anisha is engaged in class, she remains quiet the rest of the day.</p>	<p>The teacher emails Anisha's mother and attaches an electronic copy of Anisha's plan. The teacher suggests that Anisha's mother read the plan and consider questions she might have before they discuss it over the phone. Included in the email is the option to continue communication via email in lieu of a phone call if it is more convenient for the mother's work schedule. The teacher further explains that the next step is to have a discussion with Anisha about the plan.</p>
<p>A day later, Anisha's mom replies to the teacher's email and agrees to a phone call that gets scheduled for the end of the week. During the phone call, the teacher shares details of the plan, including the desire to obtain permission for Anisha to meet with the school counselor. Anisha's mom has several questions about the role of the school counselor. The teacher reassures her that the school counselor will reach out to address her questions. Later that day, the teacher sends an email to the school counselor about referring Anisha to her for support and a request to talk with Anisha's mom.</p>	<p>The following day, the teacher schedules a lunch meeting with Anisha to discuss the goals and the strategies to support those goals. The teacher inquires about Anisha's understanding and feedback about the details of the plan. While Anisha indicates she is in support of the goals, she expresses some reservation about meeting with the counselor. Anisha also tells her teacher that she is surprised (in a good way) that the details of the plan are being shared with her, and that she has an opportunity to share her ideas. The teacher asks Anisha how she is feeling, and she shares that she is a little less anxious about school and wants things to get "better".</p>

Questions for Reflection:

1. In both approaches, it was recommended that Anisha meet with a member of the student support staff, the counselor. In Approach B, what might be some of Anisha's reservations about meeting with the counselor? How would you have handled it?
2. In Approach B, Anisha's teacher continues to be transparent and consistent in communicating with Anisha's mother. How might this impact the relationship between the teacher and Anisha's mother?
3. In Approach A, what do you think the outcome of using a behavior plan like this (one that takes points away) might be on Anisha's performance in the class?

In both approaches, the details of Anisha’s support plan is shared with her, however, in **Approach A**, the teacher only sought input from Anisha on the reward side of the behavior plan revisions suggested in the Tier 2 meeting. Each approach relates to both Anisha and her mother differently. Anisha’s mother, in **Approach B**, has a deeper relationship with the teacher, and her perspective is sought after around decisions made to support Anisha. As mentioned in previous phases, **Approach A** primarily emphasizes consequences as a way to motivate or change Anisha’s behavior. **Approach B** places more emphasis on building a relationship with Anisha and on her context.

While the two approaches might have similar goals, the strategies and steps to implement them, reflect mindsets held about students. If the belief is that students are responsible for their own challenges, the strategies might be more punitive as indicated in **Approach A**. If the belief is that students are influenced by the context of their environment, the strategies are less likely to focus solely on the student and are inclusive of changes in their environment. Many schools often struggle with monitoring student progress because the expectation is that the goals and/or strategies are not applying a whole-child lens.

Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
<p>The following Monday, the teacher meets with Anisha and suggests it is an ideal time to start her refined behavior plan because it is the start of a new week. While Anisha is relieved to have an opportunity to start over, she is also wondering how successful she would be at earning the points. Anisha asks if the school counselor has spoken with her mother. The teacher is not sure but will follow up with the counselor later in the day.</p> <p>During lunch, the teacher stops by the school counselor’s office to get an update on contact with Anisha’s mother. The counselor has not yet reached out and asks about what the call should focus on. The teacher explains the mother’s reservation behind Anisha receiving counseling support. The school counselor states that outreach to Anisha’s mom will occur tomorrow before the end of the day.</p>	<p>In response to Anisha’s concern about the intent of meeting with school counselor, the teacher briefly explains that the role of the counselor is to help students feel better by listening and supporting with difficult feelings. The teacher offers to provide time for Anisha to spend with the school counselor in order to learn more about the ways in which they support students. Anisha agrees with the idea. The teacher also reassures Anisha that the same details of the plan would be discussed with her mother. Anisha begins to think about how her mother might respond to her meeting with the school counselor in an ongoing way.</p> <p>The following day, the teacher receives an email response from Anisha’s mother to talk over the phone. During the phone discussion, Anisha’s mother indicates agreement with the overall student support plan. However, the mother has some questions, specifically about how Anisha’s time would be spent with the school counselor. The teacher responds by explaining that the school counselor will reach out to her directly to answer any questions, obtain permission, and then begin officially meeting with Anisha. The teacher sends an email to the school counselor with the details of the student plan/goals along with the concerns of the family.</p>
<p>The teacher introduces some sentence starters to Anisha during reading class while others are working independently. The teacher explains that Anisha is to use them when she is struggling to understand what she is reading. Anisha is having a hard time focusing on what the teacher is saying and does not comprehend much of the text because it is above her instructional reading level. She begins shutting down.</p>	<p>To address Anisha’s academic needs, the teacher meets with the instructional coach to discuss the predicting and questioning comprehension strategies to support Anisha’s reading. Anisha’s support plan indicates that the teacher will introduce one strategy at a time, modeling how to use it and to give Anisha time to practice independently. The coach provides some examples for the teacher to start with, and the two engage in role playing to ensure that the teacher understands how to use the strategy with Anisha. The instructional coach schedules a time next week to go in and observe the teacher implementing one of the shared strategies with Anisha.</p>

	<p>The teacher asks Anisha to take a teacher-generated reading comprehension quiz in order to have a baseline score before starting to implement the predicting and questioning strategies with Anisha during small-group instruction. Anisha scores a 60%.</p> <p>The next day, Anisha and the other students who are in the small group are engaged as the teacher models how to use the first predicting strategy and are excited to give the strategy a try while reading their group novel that is at the students' current instructional reading level.</p>
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Questions for Reflection:

1. In Approach A, how successful do you think Anisha's behavior plan will be?
2. In Approach A, why do you think Anisha is having challenges participating in class? Why might Anisha begin to shut down?
3. In Approach B, the teacher sends the school counselor the details about the goals for Anisha. How might this help in supporting Anisha's progress?

In **Approach A** and **B**, there is some communication and collaboration between the school counselor and the teacher. The integration of support is in alignment with a whole-child approach. With that said, **Approach B**, takes it a step further as the teacher follows up to make sure the school counselor has an actual copy of the plan. This will increase quality collaboration as the school counselor does not have access to the same level of student context given that they don't participate in Tier 2 meetings. This level of communication supports the likelihood of achieving the goals for the student as the school counselor is now an added resource on the *Student Support Plan* and is working in a more integrated way with the teacher.

In **Approach A**, Anisha appears to be feeling a little more nervous about meeting with the counselor. The teacher in **Approach B** provides more information around decisions made and reassurance for both Anisha and her mother. The effort put into supporting the caregiver and incorporating their feedback creates a more equitable environment for families and students. The collaboration with stakeholders beyond school staff contributes to shared leadership and ownership, a component of whole-child design.

In terms of the academic goal, in **Approach A** the use of sentence starters are not helping Anisha understand the text because it is too complex for her current reading level. In **Approach B**, Anisha and the other students who are practicing using the comprehension strategy that the teacher modeled are engaged and experiencing success in using the strategy because the text is accessible to them.

Let's see what happens next...

Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
<p>The following afternoon, the counselor reaches out to Anisha's mother via email to schedule a phone conference. During the phone conference, the mother expresses some reservations about using a behavior plan and the referral to a school counselor. The counselor discusses the purpose of the referral along with information regarding the services offered. The mother agrees for Anisha to begin meeting with the school counselor. The counselor encourages Anisha's mom to discuss her reservations about the behavior plan with the teacher. After some thought, Anisha's mom decides to not inform the teacher about her reservations, thinking she would wait to see how effective it would be.</p> <p>The teacher continues using the sentence starters to support Anisha improving in her reading comprehension. Anisha asks for clarity around how they are supposed to help her better understand a text that she is assigned to read. The teacher goes over an example with her and then asks Anisha to complete one on her own. Anisha yells out, "I don't understand this stupid book," and puts her head down on the table.</p> <p>The teacher is not sure how to respond and decides to lean over and quietly ask Anisha if she needs to go to the restroom to compose herself. Anisha asks to go see the counselor. While meeting with the counselor, Anisha expresses that the text she is being asked to read in class are too difficult for her.</p>	<p>A few days later, the counselor and teacher schedule some time to discuss what might be helpful to make Anisha feel more comfortable. They agree to invite Anisha to lunch after the school counselor has spoken with Anisha's mother. Then they discuss some proactive classroom strategies that might be helpful in supporting all students with managing their feelings in the classroom. A few ideas include 1) providing paper and writing utensils (pencil, crayons, etc.) so that students can draw, write, or color; 2) have some pre-printed ideas for calming down; 3) positive affirmations, and 4) squishy balls or other items to help ease tension. The space set aside for students to engage in these activities will be timed. The teacher agrees and begins to reflect on how they can convey the importance of mental health and support the use of strategies throughout the day that also includes student voice would be helpful. The teacher's next steps includes discussing the ideas with the class. The school counselor agrees to reach out to Anisha's mother by the end of the day and to send home some information about the services offered proactively for all students beginning in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Anisha's mother immediately responds to the school counselor and schedules a phone discussion the following day. The counselor and Anisha's mother meet to discuss the counselor's role in school, services available to families, as needed, and the plan to support Anisha. The counselor explains that Anisha would meet on a weekly basis until she has met her goals. Her mother agrees to allow Anisha to spend time with the counselor on a weekly basis. The counselor shares that the next step will include talking with Anisha to process some of her feelings about meeting regularly. A few days later, Anisha meets with the counselor during lunch to help build a rapport and an understanding of how she will be supported by the counselor.</p> <p>The teacher continues working with Anisha and the other students during small-group instruction on their reading comprehension by introducing a new strategy every few days while also revisiting and practicing the previously learned strategies. The instructional coach come to the teacher's classroom to observe the small group lesson using the comprehension strategies and provides the teacher with some bite-sized, actionable feedback. The teacher administers a reading quiz to monitor Anisha's progress and she scored 10% better than she did on the initial quiz that was administered to determine the baseline score.</p>

Two weeks later, the teacher notices that Anisha has not made progress toward her reading goals. Anisha is completing work but is making little effort to participate in class, especially during whole-group instruction. She has earned some points for homework completion, but it has not been enough to earn points toward extra free time to create art or extended time on the computer. The teacher considers sharing the challenges Anisha is having with reading comprehension as an additional topic to work on with the school counselor and decides to wait until the progress review meeting to provide the update and receive support from colleagues. The counselor has the first session with Anisha and does most of the talking in order to provide information and develop a relationship. Anisha indicates that she feels more comfortable going back to see the counselor.

The teacher introduces the proactive strategies and asks students to help her model what they look like and sound like in use. The teacher gives all students a chance to interact with the proactive supports that were placed in a quiet part of the classroom.

The next day, the teacher asks Anisha to meet during lunch to eat together and to discuss the first non-academic interaction among her classmates. Anisha shared an idea and offered to co-facilitate the activity with the teacher. They spend another lunch period together before introducing the activity to the class.

During class the next day, the teacher introduces the activity and engages the students in coming up with shared norms and expectations for how the class interacts with one another. Once that is finished, the students engage in the first non-academic interaction activity and many are fully engaged. They enjoy learning a little bit more about one another. When the activity ended, the students ask when they will do this again. The teacher says they will do these on a regular basis throughout the week.

Questions for Reflection:

1. In Approach B, how might creating an environment supportive of mental health, support Anisha in her goals?
2. In Approach B, what else could the school counselor do to continue building a relationship with Anisha's mother, reflective of whole-child design?
3. In Approach A, how would have the teacher asking Anisha's mother to share additional information about the behavior plan/chart helped her in making potential changes to the plan/chart?

A whole-child design approach places emphasis on proactive strategies to support students. It includes changing teacher practice as well as developing skills for students. **Approach A** places more emphasis on the changes the student will make and less about how to change the environment in which the student is learning. To support students more effectively, it will be important to utilize both proactive and responsive strategies. In **Approach A**, the teacher relies on the scope and sequence in dictating what resources are used during instructional time. There has not been thought or reflection put into ways the teacher can scaffold and provide extra support as Anisha improves in her comprehension and her instructional reading level. In **Approach B**, the teacher reflects to determine what shifts can be made in teacher practice so that all students' needs are met. In this case, the teacher is providing scaffolding/differentiated support by providing texts that are Anisha's instructional level. When grade level texts are used in class, the teacher either records the story for the below level students to listen to or begins each small group reading lesson with reading parts of the text aloud to the students.

Let's see what happens as staff begins to prepare for the upcoming Progress Review Meeting.

Preparation for the Progress Review Meeting	
<p>Another two weeks go by. Anisha's time with the counselor has been helpful, and the two plan to talk to the teacher about the level of text Anisha is being asked to read. During the conversation, the teacher's response is that she is expected to expose students to grade level content reading because that is what is in her scope and sequence for 7th grade reading. Anisha appears discouraged; after the meeting, the counselor reassures Anisha there will be a follow-up conversation that will hopefully help Anisha's progress in reading. The counselor follows up with the teacher and suggests the teacher schedule time with the instructional coach to discuss differentiation strategies for working with students who are reading below grade level.</p>	<p>About a week before the progress review meeting, the teacher begins to look at the data documented with regard to implementation of Anisha's student support plan and its effectiveness. While the strategies are fairly newly attempted, at this point, the teacher has implemented strategies to address the academic and social emotional needs of Anisha and the students. It appears as though Anisha has increased engagement with her peers. She was the first student to co-lead a team building activity with the teacher. The school counselor noted that Anisha is in the process of building trust and has begun a discussion about feelings and their impact on functioning and the brain. The teacher is unable to determine the overall effectiveness of the reading comprehension strategies at this time but has taken steps during small group sessions to implement them. This data will be prepared to be shared at the progress review meeting. The teacher will reach out to Anisha's mother to get feedback on how things are going at home and remind her of the review date. A meeting has been scheduled with Anisha about her experience of school since the teacher has made some changes in the classroom. Anisha shares that she feels better and doesn't feel "that bad" about her academic challenges.</p>
<p>The follow-up meeting to provide updates on Anisha's progress is in a few days. The teacher puts together the data that reflects Anisha's limited progress toward her reading goals. The teacher is also prepared to share the perspective of Anisha's mother. The one positive outcome of the plan is that Anisha seems to be comfortable with the school counselor. The teacher feels unsure about how to address the behavior plan and considers addressing it in the review meeting. Anisha's behavior plan is not warranting the results it was intended to produce.</p>	<p>One reflection the teacher has is about the power of student voice in creating a supportive environment in the classroom. The students have provided informal feedback that they look forward to engaging in non-academic interactions, and even taking some lead on planning them. This has increased positive relationships among peers and how the teacher relates to students. The teacher also reflects on the lack of proactive mental health and well-being promotion within the school environment. The teacher will raise their concerns with the student support team to determine what might need to happen on a school wide level to support all students.</p>

	Before the meeting, the teacher makes sure to have all the data necessary to respond to the status of the strategies indicated on Anisha's student support plan. To support the data, Anisha's mom provided a written (email) update on Anisha's functioning at home. The meeting participants receive an email from the facilitator confirmed the names of students before the meeting to assure students are discussed according to schedule and or need.
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Questions for Reflection:

1. In the Approach B, it took some time to begin actual implementation of Anisha's student support plan. What are the barriers to begin applying the strategies immediately?
2. What would you share about the status of Anisha's progress in Approach A?
3. How have the strategies discussed around increasing non-academic activities intended to create a positive environment for all students in the classroom? supported Anisha's individual goals?

SCROLL DOWN

In both approaches, you will notice that there is some preparation required before beginning to execute on the student's support plan. Support strategies that require collaboration with other stakeholders can take some time and effort to start. This is often where schools struggle to ensure the plan is implemented. It is important to recognize this step in the process, as it impacts the speed in which a student makes progress. The challenge of beginning to implement further supports the necessity to document progress and take note of the context that has impacted it. While it may feel like the strategies or goals are not appropriate, in many cases there may be a break down or delay in actually executing on the support. Having an understanding of the full picture allows the teacher and team to make better decisions about how best to support the student.

Let's now see what happens during the Progress Review Meeting.

Progress Review Meeting	
Traditional MTSS Approach A	Whole-Child Aligned Approach B
<p>The meeting opens with the names of students being discussed during the meeting. The teacher is told they have 5 min to provide updates and then a decision will be made about next steps.</p> <p>The teacher explains that all of the strategies were executed on, however there has been little progress. Some progress in communication with Anisha's mother and Anisha's comfort level with school counselor has improved. However, the concerns about reading have remained the same, and the behavior chart seems to be ineffective.</p> <p>Time is called, and the team is encouraged to ask questions. Team members agree to continue to monitor the support provided to Anisha. They suggest the teacher uses texts that are on Anisha's instructional reading level and to meet with the instructional coach to see if there is an assessment that could help identify the reason Anisha is not understanding what she reads. With regard to the behavior plan, the teacher is encouraged to leverage the school counselor for support. A date is set to follow up in 2-3 weeks given the limited progress in academics that Anisha has made.</p>	<p>The facilitator opens the meeting by reviewing the norms and the items the agenda and reminds everyone about roles during the meeting. The timekeeper sets the timer, and the teacher is invited to begin updating the team on the degree of progress made since the last meeting. To start, the teacher reminds the team of the goals, and the note taker documents it on the <i>Progress Review Form</i>. Next, the teacher updates the team on the progress on execution of the plan and the student's response. The teacher explains that "some" progress has been made. The implementation data is shared as evidence to support that determination. Team members are invited to ask probing questions. The Facilitator asks if there is a need to make any edits to the student support plan with regard to goals or supports. The teacher recommends that the status of the plan is to "continue" given the limited time between initiating the plan and the review meeting. The team discussed prolonging the follow up review date from 4 weeks to 6 weeks to allow more time for monitoring the effectiveness of the plan. All team members agree, and a new review date is determined, 1/21/22 (taking into account the upcoming winter break). After the meeting, the note taker shares the plan with team members, and the teacher emails Anisha's mother to share the outcome of the review.</p>

Questions for Reflection:

1. What are some differences between an [initial meeting](#) and a review meeting?
2. Are there any edits or changes you would have made in determining status and next steps in Approach A?
3. What might be some barriers to monitoring and documenting implementation in the way it is described in Approach B? What might need to be done proactively to support quality implementation?

As noted in **Approach B**, it is just as important to have data available at the review meeting as it is when making an initial referral for a student. Observations of implementation (both challenges and successes) and student responses support the understanding that no two students are the same. As mentioned in other phases, student context impacts the strengths, needs, and progress that students make. To improve responsiveness and the student's ability to thrive, we must ensure that the collective energy of all stakeholders is utilized effectively. This increases quality collaboration among stakeholders, more time spent on ensuring that appropriate supports are provided to students and supports the goal of successfully supporting students in a timely manner.

As the scenario outlines, both approaches are going to continue supporting Anisha and will come back together to see if Anisha's response has changed and/or if additional progress is being made. In subsequent Progress Review Meetings, the Tier 2 team may decide to change course (e.g., revise the goals, attempt different strategies, seek other sources of support).

An important part of any system is continuous improvement. We will next look at how a Tiered System of Supports team can use all data collected throughout the process from referral to implementation to continuously improve the quality of support and school experience for all students to thrive equitably.