



Five High-Impact MTSS Supports You Can Use Tomorrow

Practical Strategies to Improve Behavior, Engagement, and Staff Well-Being

February 10, 2026

Presented by

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Introduction

Who is eLuma?

eLuma

- ▶ Dedicated to helping students achieve their full potential. We strive to provide a systemic solution in the areas of mental health and special education.
- ▶ Provides live services online, hybrid and on-site with dedicated therapists
- ▶ Founded in **2011**
- ▶ Comprised of **400+ dedicated team members**
- ▶ Over **62,000 students served** in 38 states



Agenda

Introduction	2:00 pm EST (5 minutes)
Presentation	2:05 pm EST (40 minutes)
Q&A/Discussion	2:45 pm EST (15 minutes)

Dr. Alexander Kurz



- › Current Associate Research Professor for Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
- › Senior Fellow at the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE)
- › Co-developed the Data-Driven Instructional Coaching Model (DDICM)
- › Secured over \$50 million in federal funding to advance outcomes for diverse learners through research on instructional coaching, educational technology, and opportunity-to-learn (OTL) for students with disabilities.
- › Former Special Education Teacher and Behavior Analyst

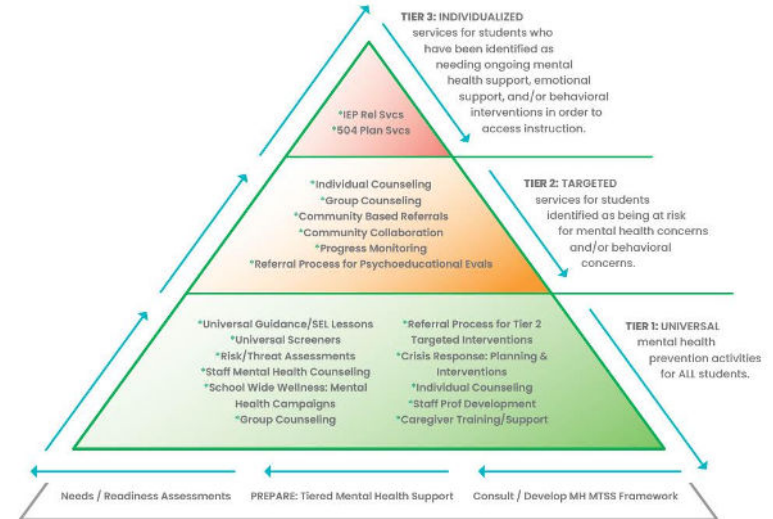
Brandy Samuell, M.Ed.



- › Current Director of Mental Health & Related Services at eLuma
- › Completed Post-Master's work in Educational Diagnostics and Educational Leadership
- › Certified in Critical Incident Stress Management
- › Former 32+ Year Public Educator serving roles such as:
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Special Ed Director
 - Special Education Teacher
 - Crisis Response Leader
 - Behavior Intervention Specialist
 - Counselor

Objectives:

- How Tier 2 supports reduce behavioral disruptions and increase instructional time
- Five **immediately actionable** Tier 2 strategies
- How efficient Tier 2 supports protect Tier 3 capacity
- How to enhance collaboration across general and special education staff



Q: What is MTSS? How is it different from RTI?

- **The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA introduced RTI**
 - ◆ Focus: Alternative pathway for identification
- **MTSS emerged to offer a comprehensive school improvement framework designed to meet the needs of the whole child**
 - ◆ ESSA (2015) described MTSS as a “comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students' needs.”
- **Current operating assumptions use MTSS as the “overarching infrastructure”**
 - ◆ RTI (academic support)
 - ◆ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - ◆ Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL)

MTSS operates on the premise that all students are general education students first.

Why MTSS? Documented Outcomes

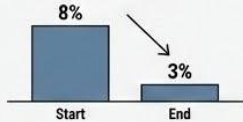
1. STUDENT BEHAVIORAL & DISCIPLINARY OUTCOMES



57%

Fewer out-of-school suspensions (with high fidelity implementation vs. comparison).

Reduction in Students Disciplined (Case Study)



- Improvements in student behavior.
- Decrease in disruptive behaviors and internalizing problems.
- Improved graduation rates and reduced dropout rates (with high fidelity).
- Reductions in Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs).

Citations: Bohanon et al., 2024; Nitz et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2019; Vetter et al., 2024.

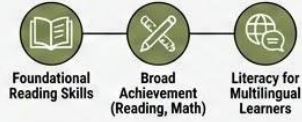
2. STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES



Moderate to Strong

Effects on decoding, word reading, and reading fluency (ECRI model for at-risk first graders).

Academic Achievement Areas



- Potential to improve academic performance, especially early reading.
- Contributes to achievement on statewide assessments.
- Mixed findings on direct correlation between fidelity and school-level standardized test scores.

Citations: Bahr et al., 2023; Fien et al., 2021; Santiago et al., 2025; Scott et al., 2019.

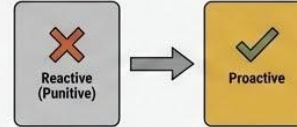
3. INSTRUCTIONAL & TEACHER OUTCOMES



Increased

Proactive management and teacher self-efficacy.

Shift in Management Strategies



- Shifts teacher practices.
- Positively impacts school climate and workforce.
- Reduced teacher burnout.
- Higher quality explicit instruction and group practice opportunities (in reading models).

Citations: Bradshaw et al., 2021; Fien et al., 2021; Nitz et al., 2023.

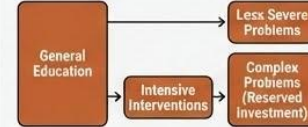
4. SYSTEMIC & EFFICIENCY OUTCOMES



Reduced

Special Education Referrals (prevented through support).

Resource Efficiency Process

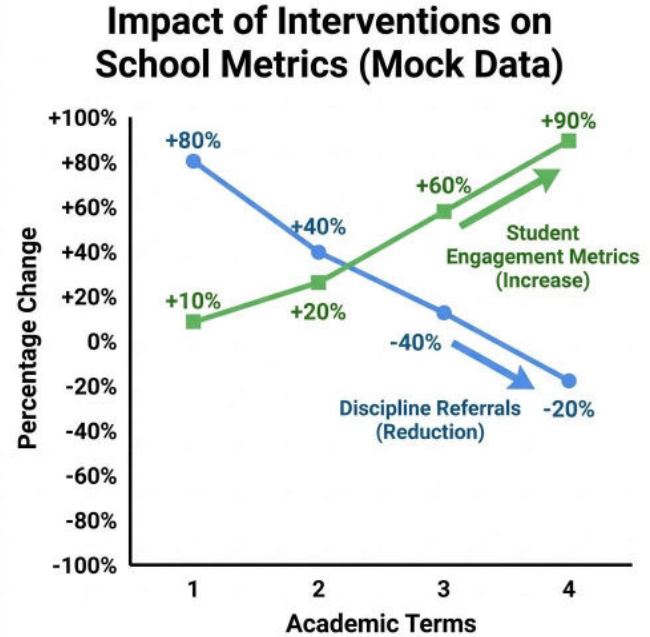


- Framework for resource management, equity, and decision-making.
- Equity-Based Inclusion: Instructional match for all, including extensive support needs.
- Supports legal compliance and equitable access for multilingual learners.
- Improves school leadership quality through technical assistance.

Citations: Bahr et al., 2023; Brown-Chidsey, 2024; Choi et al., 2019; Robles et al., 2025; Sailor et al., 2021.

Why Tier 2 Matters

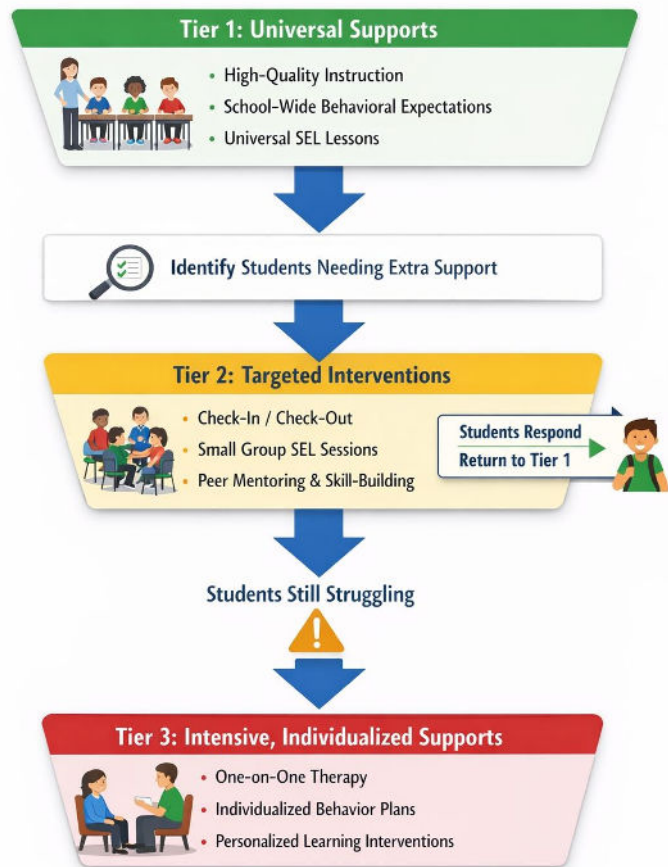
- Reduces office discipline referrals (Center for Student Achievement Solutions)
 - ◆ Research shows that schools implementing PBIS experienced up to:
 - ✓ **69% fewer office discipline referrals**
 - ✓ **62% fewer in-school suspensions**
- Increases student engagement
- Improves classroom climate



Tier 2 Supports Protect Tier 3 Capacity

- Early intervention prevents escalation
- More individualized supports are available for students who truly need them
- Supports sustainable caseloads for special education teams

How Tier 2 Supports Protect and Enhance Tier 3 Capacity



Top Tier 2 Behavior Interventions

- The three most effective Tier 2 behavior interventions identified by their effect sizes:
 - ◆ **Social Skills Instruction**
 - ◆ **Group Contingency Interventions**
 - ◆ **Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)**

Social Skills Instruction

- **Strong for reducing problem behavior:** Large impact on problem behavior reduction ($\text{Tau-U} = 0.91$), and significantly stronger than CICO on that outcome.
- **Moderate for building replacement skills:** Only a medium effect on increasing appropriate behavior ($\text{Tau-U} = 0.59$), so gains may be more targeted than broad.
- **Practice implication:** Use SSI to address specific skill deficits, and pair with reinforcement/behavior supports to generalize and sustain appropriate behavior.

Group Contingency Interventions

- **Strong across both outcomes:** Large effects for reducing problem behavior (Tau-U = 0.91) and increasing appropriate behavior (Tau-U = 0.85).
- **Underused relative to impact:** Despite strong effects, implemented in only 19.2% of reviewed studies (less common than CICO).
- **Practice implication:** Best when you can define clear group expectations and deliver consistent reinforcement, leveraging peer-supported motivation and efficient classroom-wide implementation.

Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)

- **Most common Tier 2 option:** Represents 50% of studies; widely used because it's efficient and feasible to run at scale.
- **Reliable, moderate effects:** Medium effects on problem behavior reduction ($\text{Tau-U} = 0.72$) and appropriate behavior increase ($\text{Tau-U} = 0.75$); smaller on problem behavior than SSI.
- **Best fit for attention-maintained behavior:** Works especially well when problem behavior is maintained by adult attention, because it structures frequent, positive adult contact and feedback.

Context Matters

→ **Three-Tiered Prevention Model**

- ◆ **MTSS structure:** SWPBIS organizes behavior supports into Tier 1 (universal), Tier 2 (targeted), Tier 3 (intensive), similar to RTI, matching intensity to student need.
- ◆ **Tier 2 is built for feasibility:** Targeted supports are designed to be quick, accessible, and cost-effective, with minimal added burden on classroom teachers, and should align with Tier 1 expectations.
- ◆ **Tier 3 is individualized:** Intensive supports are reserved for students with complex, persistent needs who are not responsive to Tier 2.

Context Matters

→ Reliance on Tier 1 Fidelity

- ◆ **Tier 1 is the foundation:** Tier 2 is meant to be supplemental, not a substitute—students should continue receiving strong Tier 1 supports.
- ◆ **Fidelity drives valid identification:** If Tier 1 isn't implemented with integrity, it's hard to know whether a student truly needs Tier 2/3 or whether Tier 1 is simply not working as intended.
- ◆ **Fidelity links to outcomes:** Higher Tier 1 implementation fidelity is associated with reduced problem behavior (e.g., fewer ODRs/out-of-school suspensions).

Context Matters

→ Data-Based Decision Making

- ◆ **Continuous data cycles:** SWPBIS depends on ongoing data collection and review to identify need, select interventions, and monitor response.
- ◆ **Match intervention to function/resources:** Teams use data to align supports with student needs and what the school can implement well (capacity matters).
- ◆ **Avoid single-gate identification:** Many schools still rely heavily on teacher nomination or ODRs; stronger practice uses multiple data sources (screeners + ODRs + attendance + academic indicators + progress data).

Context Matters

→ Positive and Proactive Focus

- ◆ **Prevention-first discipline:** Emphasis is on teaching and reinforcing expected behavior rather than reacting punitively after problems occur.
- ◆ **Build prosocial behavior + engagement:** The goal is improved social behavior and academic engagement, not just behavior suppression.
- ◆ **Reduce exclusionary discipline:** SWPBIS aims to lower reliance on suspension/expulsion by strengthening supports and reinforcing positive behavior.



1. Check In/Check Out

- Short daily check-ins to reinforce positive behavior
- Provides quick data for teachers and support staff
- Can be implemented with minimal training



Check-In / Check-Out Tracker

Name: _____ Week of: _____

Day	Morning Check-In	Classroom Behavior	Daily Points	Afternoon Check-Out	Teacher Initials
Monday	😊 _____	Goal = 0-4 Points		😊 _____	_____
Tuesday	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓ 44	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓✓ 4	_____
Wednesday	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓ 34	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓✓ 4	_____
Thursday	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓ 34	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓✓ 4	_____
Friday	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓ 34	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓✓✓✓ 4	_____
		Weekly Points	_____		

Notes:



Student Name	Date	Morning Check-In	Goal for the Day	Period 1-6 Behavior (or Classes)	Afternoon Check-Out	Teacher Initials	Notes
John D.	1/15	5 min check-in with counselor	Attend all classes on time, participate in discussions	P1 ✓ / P2 ✓ / P3 △ / P4 ✓ / P5 ✓ / P6 ✓	2 min check-out with counselor	AD	Improved focus in 3rd period
Sarah M.	1/15	5 min check-in with counselor	Complete all assignments & participate	P1 ✓ / P2 ✓ / P3 ✓ / P4 △ / P5 ✓ / P6 ✓	2 min check-out with counselor	LM	Needs reminder for group project

Key Features for Secondary Students

1. **Morning check-in:** Quick 2–5 minute conversation with a counselor, teacher, or mentor to set daily goals.
2. **Class-period tracking:** Instead of general behavior, track performance or engagement per class period.
3. **Afternoon check-out:** 2–5 minute reflection on successes and areas to improve.
4. **Teacher initials:** Ensures accountability from staff across the day.
5. **Notes:** Allows student or staff to capture brief observations, progress, or adjustments.

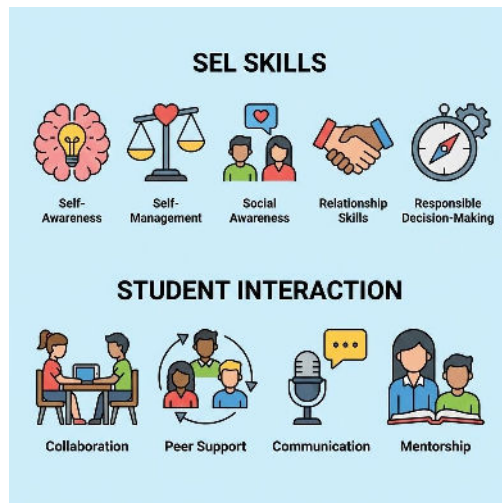
Tips for Secondary Implementation

- Keep the format **digital or printed** depending on student access. Google Forms or Excel sheets work well.
- Use **points or color coding** (green/yellow/red) to quickly show if goals were met.
- Encourage students to **self-rate their performance** to promote ownership.
- Focus on **skills like punctuality, participation, assignment completion, and behavior** instead of only "good/bad behavior" metrics.



2. Social-Emotional Learning Mini Lessons

- Brief lessons embedded into homeroom or advisory
- Focus on empathy, self-regulation, and problem-solving
- Supports both general and special education classrooms



3. Targeted Small Group Interventions

- Small groups based on common skill gaps (academic or behavioral)
- 10-20 minute sessions, 2-3 times per week
- Monitored for progress using simple metrics



4. Positive Peer Mentoring

- Pairs students for social and academic support
- Builds student ownership and peer modeling
- Reinforces SEL skills and improves engagement

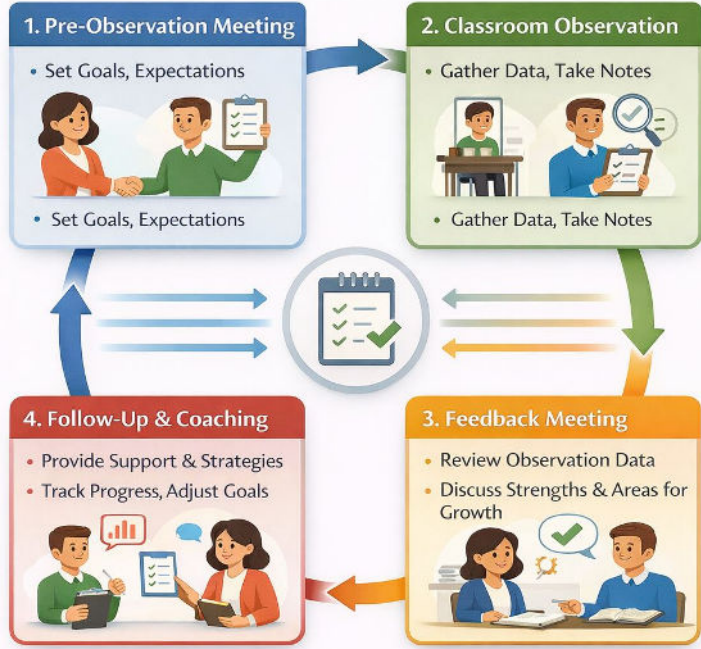




5. Teaching, Coaching & Feedback Loops

- Quick, actionable feedback for classroom management
- Reduces staff burnout
- Ensures consistent Tier 2 implementation across classrooms

Teacher-Observer Feedback Loop



MTSS: GENED & SPED Collaboration

- A **fundamental goal of MTSS** is to move away from the segregation of students with disabilities and the siloed work of general and special education staff. A key driver to facilitate collaboration:
 - ◆ **Integrated MTSS leadership teams** comprised of administrators, general education teachers, and special education representation to make regular data-based decisions.

MTSS: GENED & SPED Collaboration

Collaborative Strategy	Practical Recommendation	Implementation Benefit
Integrated DBDM	Teams review academic and behavioral data together in one meeting.	Prevents duplicative intervention plans and reduces staff meeting fatigue.
Shared Professional Learning	GenEd and SpecEd attend joint training on explicit instruction and HLPs.	Ensures a common language and consistency in student experience across settings.
Co-Teaming/Co-Teaching	Strategic use of staff roles (e.g., specialists supporting students in core).	Increases student access to specialized support in the least restrictive environment.
Innovation Configurations	Use rubrics to guide staff in installing MTSS with fidelity.	Clear role definitions and benchmarks for successful collaboration.

Q: When an MTSS coordinator is not a feasible option for your school, who is best suited to assume leadership of the process?

- **School psychologists** are well positioned to serve as coaches and team facilitators because of their specialized training in data-based decision-making, evidence-based interventions, and program evaluation.
- **Principals** must function as an “adaptive leader” modeling data use, setting schedules, managing resources.

A functional MTSS leadership team in a school without a coordinator should include specific roles assigned to existing staff:

1. **The Facilitator (Principal/AP):** Sets the agenda, keeps the meeting focused, and authorizes decisions.
2. **The Data Manager (School Psych/Counselor):** Prepares the data visualization (graphs, charts) prior to the meeting. Time should not be spent *finding* data during the meeting, but *analyzing* it.²⁴
3. **The Timekeeper/Recorder (Teacher Leader):** Documents decisions and action items.
4. **The Content Specialists (Reading/Math Specialists):** Provide expertise on intervention strategies and curriculum alignment.

MTSS: Capacity Management

To protect Tier 3 capacity, school teams must move beyond simply "placing" students in interventions and instead conduct precise capacity assessments and selections⁸

1. **Determine Intervention Slots:** Teams should calculate the total number of students they can support with fidelity across their available interventions. This calculation must account for staff time, grouping sizes, and frequency/duration of delivery.⁸
2. **Use the Tier 3 Assumption:** To ensure the system remains manageable, practitioners should assume that at least 5% of their total student population will require Tier 3 intensive supports. This 5% should be "protected" in the schedule and budget before Tier 2 capacity is determined.⁸
3. **Calculate Realistic Tier 2 Capacity:** The system's capacity is defined by the formula:

$$\text{Capacity \%} = \frac{\text{Total Available Intervention Slots}}{\text{Total Students in Grade Level}} \times 100$$

Understanding this percentage prevents the common error of "over-identifying" students and overwhelming the system, which inevitably leads to poor outcomes.⁸

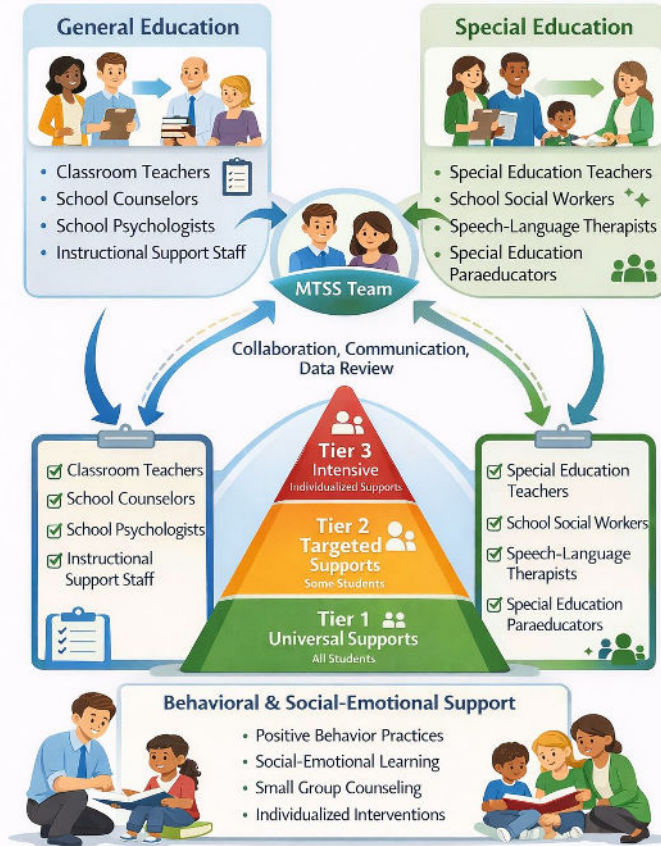
4. **Prioritize by Greatest Need:** If the number of at-risk students (e.g., 35) exceeds the calculated capacity (e.g., 25 slots), the team must prioritize those with the greatest need for Tier 2 while providing augmented Tier 1 supports for others.⁸
5. **Focus on Risk Verification:** To avoid wasting slots on "false positives," teams must verify a student's risk status using secondary data before beginning a Tier 2 intervention.⁶

Supporting Collaboration Across Staff

Making Tier 2 Work for Everyone

- General + Special Education alignment
- Shared language and expectations
- Use MTSS team meetings for planning and data review

General & Special Education Staff Working Together Under MTSS Framework



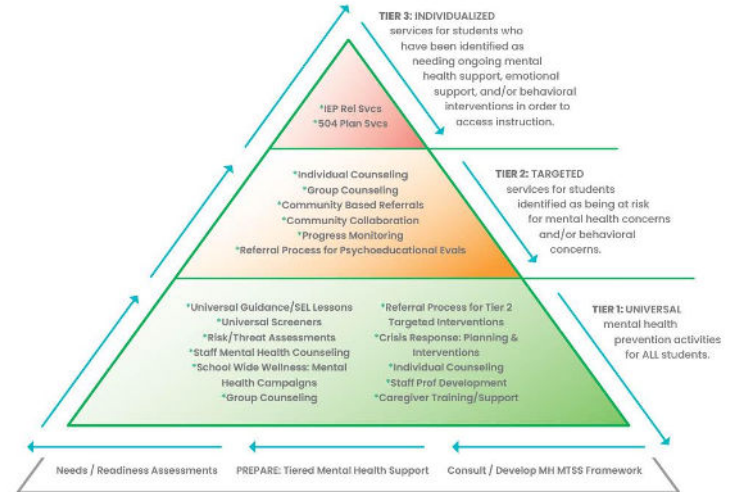
Next Steps...Action Plan

Implementing Tier 2 Supports...Tomorrow

- Identify 1-2 Tier 2 supports to implement this week
- Assign staff roles and responsibility
- Use quick data tracking for early wins
- Celebrate small successes to build momentum

Key Takeaways

- Tier 2 is powerful for student behavior and engagement
- Five actionable supports can be used immediately
- Tier 2 efficiency preserves Tier 3 capacity
- Collaboration is essential for sustainable MTSS impact



MTSS: High-Quality Resources

- **MTSS Implementation?** Check out the **MTSS Center** ([Link](#))
- **Behavior Interventions?** Check out **Ci3T** ([Link](#))
- **High-Leverage Practices?** Check out **CEEDAR** ([Link](#))

Q&A



Thank You

For more information contact:

www.eluma.com

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