

Transforming a Regional Education Agency through MTSS Implementation

BRIAN JONES, JULIE CASSIE, CARYN WARD

Introduction

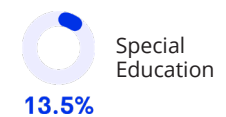
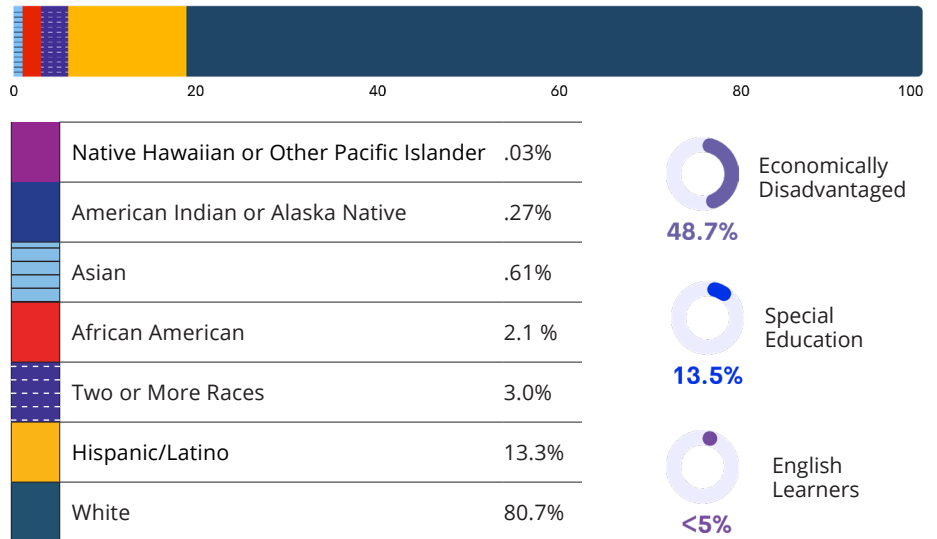
It's a cold, sunny day in Michigan for the Intermediate School District (ISD) Superintendents Association meeting. The Chief Deputy of the Michigan State Department of Education is describing a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) capacity building opportunity to improve outcomes for all students, especially students with disabilities. Specifically, the state agency, in collaboration with the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Technical Assistance (TA) Center, is looking for learning partners to further develop the Michigan MTSS model. There are mixed reactions in the room, ranging from skepticism to excitement for the various possibilities. The ISD Superintendent at Lenawee County Intermediate School District (LISD) takes the opportunity back to his cabinet leadership team to discuss the possibilities.

Six years later -

LENAWEE ISD HAS SUSTAINED AND SCALED MTSS FROM



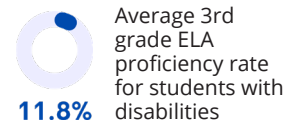
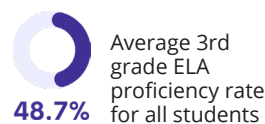
Student Race Demographics



Lenawee ISD Demographic Data

11 Districts **35** Schools **15,152** Students

Lenawee Baseline Outcome Data



In several districts, students, including students with disabilities, have demonstrated improved behavioral outcomes. Internal processes within the ISD have shifted. There are new ways of selecting practices and programs, new roles for coaching districts, and a revised process for how districts and schools are engaged and supported. Read on to find out how this was accomplished.

Key Learnings

Context matters in implementation. The LISD navigated implementation through major changes in their school districts' administration and the COVID-19 pandemic. The district highlighted in the data below experienced leadership change in the District Superintendent position and three school principal positions. The district and LISD credit the sustained use of MTSS to the accomplished system work. The initial cohort of districts reported their ability to respond quickly and proactively to the COVID-19 pandemic due to their teaming and systems being in place.

As the LISD implementation team reflects on their MTSS implementation journey to date, several key learnings are generated.

“MTSS has had a profoundly positive impact on our schools. MTSS has ensured that every student's unique needs are met by fostering a common language and framework for intervention and support. This unified approach has enabled us to identify early warning signs in students and provide timely interventions, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes for all students. MTSS promotes a culture of continuous improvement, creating a supportive environment where every learner can thrive.”



IMPLEMENTATION TAKES:

Trusting teams.

Trusting relationships between ISD team members and their district and school teams are critical.

Time.

The implementation journey is a marathon and not a sprint.

Active support.

Changing the actions, beliefs, and hearts of staff members takes coaching of both teams and instructional staff.

Champions.

ISD leadership visibly promoting MTSS and creating enabling conditions for implementation (e.g. time, resources) is key.

Well-defined practices.

Outcomes are still being sought for literacy as the LISD team works to refine their literacy practices and core instructional programs.

HOW- CREATING REGIONAL, DISTRICT, & SCHOOL CAPACITY

A Lenawee ISD (LISD) implementation team was formed of staff and leaders from various departments within the agency, including instruction, special education, early childhood, career and technical education, and business office. The team engaged in a professional learning series on 1) MTSS, 2) implementation science strategies and 3) coaching model of Cognitive Coaching. The LISD Implementation team met twice a month and received individual coaching support from a team of implementation specialists from the Michigan Department of Education and the SISEP TA Center.

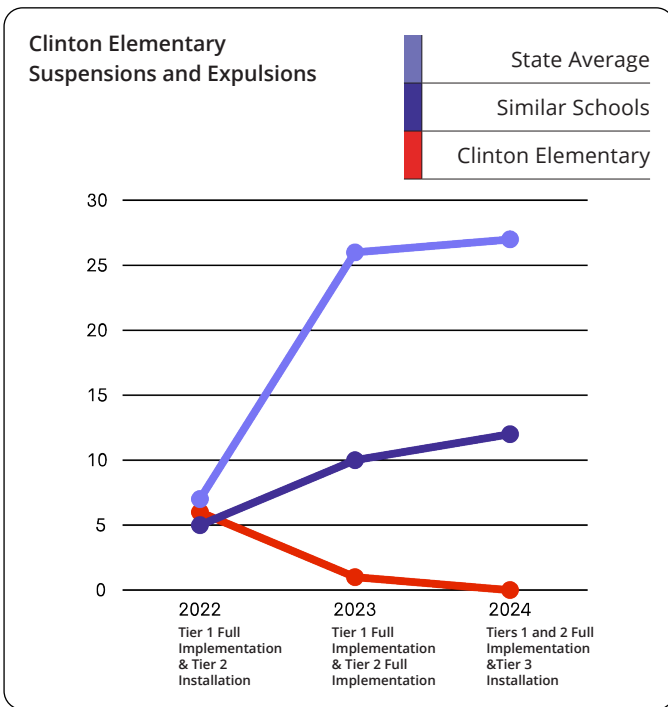
As the team worked internally on their ISD processes, such as selecting practices/programs within a continuum of supports, they also supported the capacity development of their initial cohort of districts and schools. Specifically, they engaged the district and school teams by guiding development of district and school-based implementation teams and providing professional learning and coaching on MTSS and implementation science.

"The systems that our schools have been able to install as a result of this work have dramatically changed our approach to learning in the district. We have now created a solid foundation at all levels and, as a result, the district is beginning to see the payoff, especially in explicit instruction."

District Superintendent

Impact

As implementation work for sustaining and scaling MTSS continues, the initial impact can be seen in several areas.



STUDENT OUTCOME DATA:

Districts and schools experienced a decrease in discipline incidents. For example, Clinton Elementary experienced a significant decline in the number of suspensions and expulsions as compared to schools with similar demographics and the state average. Similar trends are seen at the middle and high school in this district of Clinton Community Schools. It is important to note that LISD is still working hard to improve literacy outcomes. Inconsistent progress with student literacy achievement has been seen in different districts and schools across the county.

FIDELITY DATA:

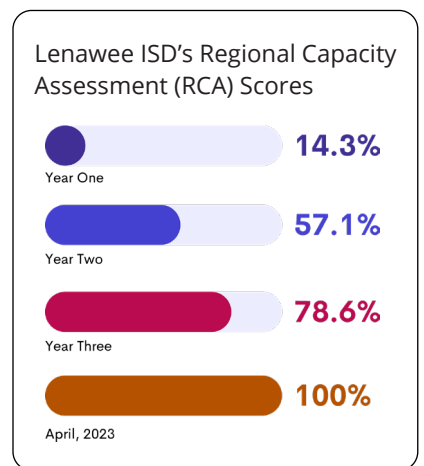
MTSS implementation efforts in Lenawee County are based on the understanding that Tier 1 is the foundation for high quality instruction and supports. Without that strong foundation, intervention systems fail to thrive. As a result, staff support districts to focus heavily on the importance of reaching the fidelity threshold for Tier 1. Of 16 participating buildings from 7 local districts, 15 have reached the 70% fidelity threshold on the Tier 1 Fidelity Inventory. The only building to not reach 70% just began implementation in 2023. Despite being early in implementation, they are still within 5% of the threshold.

DISTRICT CAPACITY:

Initial participating districts have been able to maintain and strengthen their infrastructure to support MTSS implementation as evidenced by high District Capacity Assessment scores (80% or higher). Strengths are seen in their leadership, professional learning, and communication processes. Coaching and data processes are continued areas of need and continue to be developed.

REGIONAL CAPACITY

Lenawee ISD's capacity to use implementation best practices in support of MTSS has grown significantly over a 4 year period. LISD continues to use their learnings and new ways of working to refine and strengthen their different supports for districts and schools and collaborate internally across departments.



For more information about LISD Implementation, please contact Brian Jones, Executive Director of Instruction & General Services at brian.jones@lsid.us