MTSS Jumpstart:

8 Free Resources from IgnitED!

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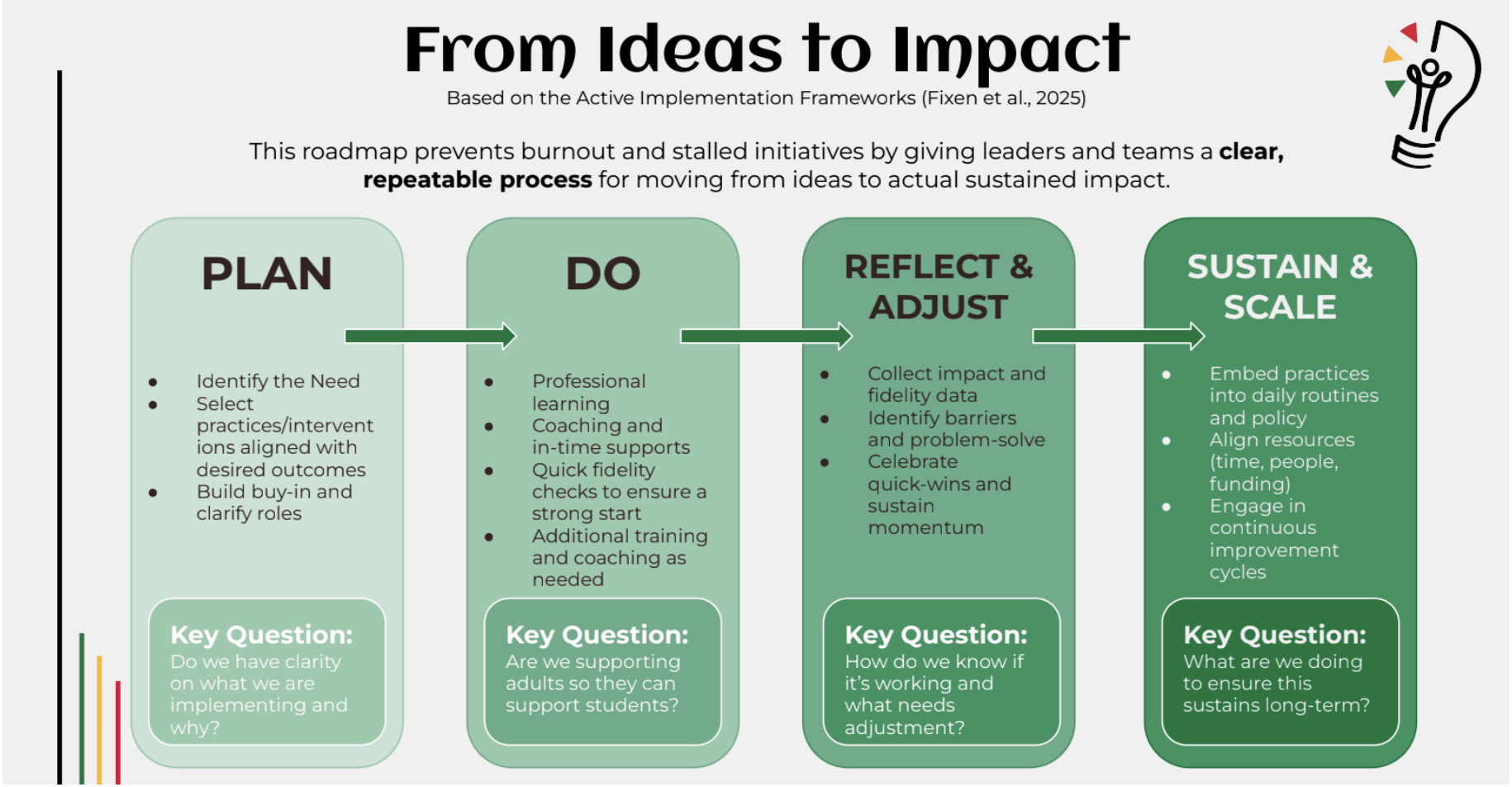
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From Ideas to Impact

Based on the Active Implementation Frameworks (Fixen et al., 2025)

This roadmap prevents burnout and stalled initiatives by giving leaders and teams a **clear, repeatable process** for moving from ideas to actual sustained impact.



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MTSS Launch Essentials: 30-Day Quick Start Checklist

Start your school year with a strong Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) foundation. This 30-day checklist guides your team through essential actions to set up structures, processes, and systems that lead to lasting student success.

MTSS Category	Action Item	Complete
Team & Roles	Identify MTSS leadership team members and ensure balanced representation.	
Team & Roles	Clarify roles and responsibilities for each member.	
Team & Roles	Schedule regular MTSS team meetings with at least 45 minutes dedicated to problem-solving.	
Data Systems	Confirm universal screening tools and schedule administration dates.	
Data Systems	Define decision rules for identifying students needing Tier 2 or Tier 3 support.	
Data Systems	Set up progress monitoring tools and protocols.	
Tier 1 Foundations	Review Tier 1 academic, behavioral, and SEL practices for fidelity	
Tier 1 Foundations	Ensure staff have access to Tier 1 support resources and strategies.	
Intervention Menu	Update Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention options.	
Intervention Menu	Communicate how staff can request and initiate interventions.	
Communication	Develop a plan for sharing MTSS updates with staff, students, and families.	
Communication	Establish feedback loops to gather input from staff and stakeholders.	

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Psychological Safety in MTSS Tip Sheet

Do's	Don'ts
Normalize uncertainty and questions. Encourage phrases like, "I don't know," or, "Can we explore that?" to model openness and reduce fear of appearing uninformed. Research shows teams learn better when members aren't worried about being judged for not knowing something.	**Punish or shame mistakes.** Treating errors as grounds for blame creates fear, discourages open communication, and stifles learning. Teams with strong psychological safety respond to mistakes with curiosity and problem-solving, not judgment.
Model vulnerability by admitting your own mistakes or gaps. Leaders who own mistakes communicate that errors are opportunities for team learning, reinforcing a safe culture.	**Leave ambiguity around decision-making.** Vague roles or hidden agendas breed anxiety and discourage open dialogue. Clarity and transparency are essential.
Invite input explicitly. Questions like, "What concerns haven't surfaced?" or "What's missing here?" help ensure diverse perspectives are heard. Inclusive leadership behaviors boost psychological safety and innovation.	**Ignore identity threats.** Overlooking inclusion in team culture, language, and representation sends a message that not all belong. This damages trust and safety.
Provide identity-safe cues in your environment. Visuals or messaging representing inclusivity (e.g. diverse imagery, affirming statements) signal belonging and reduce identity-related threats.	**Focus only on awareness without action.** Knowing about psychological safety isn't enough—teams must embed behaviors and systems that make it real and sustainable.
Reinforce learning over blame. When discussing setbacks, frame them as learning opportunities. Teams that feel safe reporting and examining errors show higher learning and performance.	**Neglect measuring and reinforcing psychological safety.** Without ongoing assessment and reinforcement, psychological safety initiatives tend to falter.

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Tier 1 Classroom Connection Menu

Daily Strategies

- ☐ **Greet each student by name at the door.** Builds belonging and positive tone for learning (Cook et al., 2018).
- ☐ **2-minute "non-academic" conversation.** Strengthens trust by showing genuine interest beyond academics (Pianta et al., 2012).
- ☐ **Use affirmations or positive feedback ratio (at least 5:1 positives to corrections).**
  Reinforces positive behavior and fosters a supportive climate (Reinke et al., 2013).
- ☐ **Incorporate student choice in small ways.**
  Students choose between two activities or resources to build autonomy and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Weekly Strategies

- ☐ **Shout-out board for student strengths.** Encourages peer recognition and boosts classroom morale (Fredrickson, 2004).
- ☐ **Class meeting on teamwork or problem-solving.** Creates space for collaborative SEL skill practice (CASEL, 2023).
- ☐ **Peer-pair check-in.** Students share one success and one goal with a partner to build peer connections (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).
- ☐ **Integrate a "What's going well?" discussion.** Reinforces strengths-based thinking and collective efficacy (Hattie, 2012).

Monthly Strategies

- ☐ **Student-led "interest share."** Encourages self-expression and cultural sharing, building inclusivity (Gay, 2018).
- ☐ **Goal-setting reflection.** Students track and discuss progress toward personal or academic goals (Locke & Latham, 2002).
- ☐ **Service or kindness project.** Plan a class-based act of kindness to foster prosocial behavior (Layous et al., 2012).
- ☐ **Family connection moment.** Invite families to contribute a "message to the class" or attend a showcase (Epstein, 2011).

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5 Data Points That Matter

1. Attendance %	
Definition	The percentage of students attending school each day, plus the percentage meeting the “chronic absenteeism” threshold (missing 10% or more of instructional days).
Why it Matters	Chronic absence is a strong predictor of academic risk, social disengagement, and eventual dropout, and disparities in attendance often reflect systemic barriers.
Equity Lens	Review attendance patterns by student subgroups (race/ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, language learner status) to identify inequities in access and engagement.
Possible Sources	SIS reports, state attendance dashboards.
2. Behavior Referrals	
Definition	The number and type of administrative behavior referrals is recorded over a given time period, including location, time of day, behavior category, and demographics.
Why it Matters	Behavior data can uncover patterns that signal school climate issues, instructional gaps, or inconsistent expectations.
Equity Lens	Disaggregate by demographic group to detect disproportionate discipline, especially for exclusionary practices like suspensions.
Possible Sources	SWIS, PBISApps, local SIS behavior logs.
3. SEL Competencies	

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Definition	Measures of student social-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and social awareness. Often gathered through student self-reports, teacher ratings, or validated SEL screeners.
Why it Matters	SEL skills are foundational for academic success and behavioral regulation, and growth in these areas can be a leading indicator for improved outcomes.
Equity Lens	Use data to ensure SEL instruction and supports are inclusive and culturally responsive; avoid deficit framing of students' skills.
Possible Sources	SISS SEL, SAEBRS, SEARS, DESSA
4. Academic Progress	
Definition	Performance on short-cycle benchmark or formative assessments that measure grade-level proficiency in core subjects such as reading fluency, math fact fluency, etc.
Why it Matters	Frequent, low-stakes checks allow for timely instructional adjustments before gaps widen.
Equity Lens	Compare growth rates, not just proficiency levels, to understand the impact of interventions across student groups.
Possible Sources	i-Ready, NWEA MAP, Acadience, teacher-created formative assessments.
5. Early Warning Indicators (EWI)	
Definition	A composite risk profile that combines attendance, behavior, and academic data to flag students who may need additional support before they fall behind.
Why it Matters	EWIs are proactive, identifying students months before traditional "failure" markers like course failure or dropout.

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Equity Lens	Ensure that EWI criteria are transparent, applied consistently, and paired with intervention opportunities rather than punitive measures.
Possible Sources	SIS EWI module, Excel/Google Sheets tracking, state-level EWI systems.

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MTSS Role Clarity Matrix

Purpose: When responsibilities are aligned across tiers, teams can collaborate seamlessly, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure students receive the right support at the right time. This role clarity matrix ***example*** illustrates how each member of the school community contributes uniquely to Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports in a shared commitment to whole-child success. Use this as a sounding board to align role responsibilities in your system.

Role	Tier 1 (Universal)	Tier 2 (Targeted)	Tier 3 (Intensive)
Administrators	• Communicate MTSS vision and priorities • Allocate resources (time, staff, PD) • Ensure core practices are consistent schoolwide	• Approve and resource intervention groups • Support schedules and staffing for interventions	• Convene and chair student support/ wraparound teams • Coordinate with district and community agencies
School Counselors	• Support teachers in delivering SEL lessons • Support schoolwide prevention programs (PBIS, RP, SEL) • Provide staff consultation on Tier 1 supports	• Facilitate small group counseling (e.g., anxiety, organization, social skills) • Track and share progress monitoring data • Lead TIer 2 / Tier 3 team meetings	• Provide short-term individual counseling • Collaborate on individualized plans (504, behavior, crisis response)
Social Workers	• Promote family- school-community connections • Support Tier 1 attendance and engagement initiatives	• Run groups for targeted needs (attendance, trauma, grief, social skills) • Connect families with needed resources	• Provide intensive case management • Conduct home visits • Coordinate with outside mental health agencies

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Teachers	• Implement core instruction and classroom expectations • Use proactive classroom management • Collect formative assessment data	• Document and refer students needing extra support • Deliver targeted academic/behavior supports in class • Collaborate with support staff	• Adjust instruction based on student plans • Provide consistent feedback to support teams • Implement accommodations and modifications
Paraprofessionals	• Support classroom routines and Tier 1 instruction • Build positive relationships with students	• Assist with small group instruction or interventions under teacher direction • Provide reinforcement and encouragement	• Deliver individualized support per IEP/behavior plan • Document observations for team review
Psychologists	• Provide input on schoolwide mental health initiatives • Support universal screeners and data interpretation	• Conduct targeted assessments • Provide consultation on intervention strategies • Co-lead SEL/behavior groups	• Conduct formal evaluations for eligibility (special education, mental health) • Provide crisis intervention • Participate in wraparound planning
Family Liaisons	• Communicate MTSS framework to families in accessible ways • Promote family involvement in Tier 1 events	• Help families access resources to support targeted interventions • Assist with family engagement in school-based groups	• Act as a bridge between families and support teams • Coordinate family participation in Tier 3 planning and services

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Intervention Plan Template

Details of the Plan	
Date of Plan:	**Plan Review Date:**
Team Members Developing Plan:	**Team Point of Contact:**
Student Name:	**Teacher Point of Contact:**
Intervention:	**Hypothesized Root Cause:**

Essential Elements of Intervention		
Element	**Delivery Date**	**Person Responsible**

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Progress Monitoring	
Intervention Fidelity	**Student Progress Monitoring**
Person Collecting Intervention Fidelity Data:	Person Collecting Student Progress Monitoring Data:
Fidelity Data Tool:	Progress Monitoring Tool:
Intervention Fidelity Collection Dates:	Baseline Data Collection Date:
	Progress Monitoring Data Collection Dates:

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MTSS Meeting Agenda Template

Details of the Meeting		
Date:	**Time:**	**Location:**
Roles & Responsibilities		
Facilitator:	**Note Taker:**	**Time Keeper:**
Other Members Present:		
Welcome & Norms (2 - 3 min)		
One Word Check-In		
Norms Reminder		
School-wide Student Data Review (10-15 min)		
Attendance Data	Notes:	
Academic Data	Notes:	
Behavior Data	Notes:	
Social Emotional Data	Notes:	

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Problem Solving Protocol (15 - 20 min)	
Student	Identified Barrier(s):
	Proposed Intervention:
	Intervention Coordinator:
	Timeline:
Student	Identified Barrier(s):
	Proposed Intervention:
	Intervention Coordinator:
	Timeline:
Progress Monitoring Updates (10 min)	
Student	Intervention Fidelity Data:
	Student Response Data:
	Adjustments Needed:
	Notes:
Student	Intervention Fidelity Data:
	Student Response Data:
	Adjustments Needed:
	Notes:

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Action Items & Next Steps (5 min)			
Task/Action	**Person Responsible**	**Due Date**	**Status/Notes**

Reflection & Closing (2-3 min)					
Today's Meeting Effectiveness:	1 = Not effective			5 = Highly effective	
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Comments:					

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