

## *Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage*

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### **Practical Handbook of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Building Academic and Behavioral Success in Schools**

By Rachel Brown-Chidsey and Rebekah Bickford

New York, NY/USA: The Guilford Press, 2016, 346 pages

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#### **Reviewed by/ Revu par**

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Today's schools are charged with implementing academic assessment practices that include high-quality instruction that is culturally and linguistically appropriate; responds to changes in academic instruction; and reflects changes in evidence-based intervention. This "response to intervention" assessment practice has been used to assess, monitor student progress, and make data-based decisions regarding student performance. In addition to ensuring that teachers are providing high quality, research and evidence-based instruction to all students, it has been used as a data source in the referral process for special education services. Concurrently, educators have worked to establish school-wide frameworks that provide positive, proactive strategies for supporting students' social, emotional, and behavioral development. Creating a more comprehensive assessment paradigm that combines elements of both academic and behavior aspects while also supporting high levels of collaboration, professional development, and sustainable school improvement has led to a multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) model. Rachel Brown-Chidsey and Rebekah Bickford have authored a text that describes this expanded MTSS model in a practical, detailed, and comprehensive manner.

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The *Practical Handbook of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support* outlines the MTSS process in six sections that begin with a section on prevention science. This section sets the foundation for the MTSS paradigm that asserts the model, when implemented with fidelity, is appropriate for all students. The section includes a history of school policies that have impacted teachers in their day-to-day interactions with students and concludes with a chapter that provides an alignment of MTSS procedures with common core standards. An important aspect of the final chapter in this section is the emphasis on confirming that any alternative program, whether for academic or behaviour skills, is not only aligned with the core curriculum, but that a team decision is reached as to the implementation in addition to, or instead of, the core curriculum.

The second section emphasizes the importance of collaboration and teams. Each of the three chapters in this section describes ways to create and maintain working teams. There are also suggestions for identifying roles for team members that ensure maximum effectiveness of working teams regardless of school size. The final chapter in this section outlines a problem-solving strategy for the effectiveness and efficiency of teams that incorporates the analysis of data at each step in this problem solving approach.

School systems that have not yet adopted a full assessment system or are just beginning the process may find Section 3, “Making Change Happen,” particularly helpful. However, all school systems will find useful and practical information in this section to help evaluate the effectiveness of their process for students and teachers. The chapters in this section provide a background on the science of change, describe the stages of change in organizations, give detailed information on the first steps needed to make change, and conclude with chapters on implementation, sustainability, and effective practices that will support MTSS.

The fourth section, “Effective Instruction within an MTSS,” combines the essential element of providing the most effective evidence-based instruction at all levels of the MTSS with the concepts of treatment integrity and the necessity of having learners achieve 80% of the learning targets in the general education classroom at Tier 1. The chapters in this section build from the ideas in the previous sections, particularly prevention science. Implementing appropriate instruction and intervention within the MTSS framework, with integrity, should provide schools with the data needed to verify that students have or don’t have the necessary skills to be successful. The authors assert, “...if schools attempt to help struggling students without first having at least 80% of all pupils

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meeting the learning goals, they are not likely to succeed because it will be like trying to bail out the Titanic with a thimble” (p. 191).

Section 5 emphasizes the importance of a strong infrastructure to manage MTSS. It begins with detailed information on universal screening, but also includes chapters on problem-solving, progress monitoring, and student progress data. If schools are familiar with the assessment process, most of this information is not new. For schools just beginning to implement the process, these chapters are very relevant. In addition, the chapter on problem-solving is critical for institutions that find their MTSS process is not working as effectively as it should.

The final section of the text delves into the process and procedures needed when a student is not making progress at even the most intensive tier of the MTSS. It provides important information about making decisions regarding referral for special education services and concludes with a case study. This section also provides suggestions for additional supports that may be beneficial to students.

In summary, *Practical Handbook of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support* is a book that should be on every educator’s bookshelf. The six sections are designed in such a way that any one section can be read to provide a good overview of one important component of an MTSS. When taken as a whole, the text provides valuable information and suggestions for novice practitioners, veteran practitioners, school teams, and administrators. The text is straightforward and applicable to educators in all grade levels and content areas. For novice practitioners this book outlines information that is critical to an understanding of MTSS processes. For more advanced practitioners and administrators, the book includes numerous ways to refine and fine-tune an existing MTSS.