DRAFT

# Hawai‘i Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS)

# A Guide for School Faculty and Staff

This dialogue guide is intended for school faculty and staff, and may benefit families and community members as well. Its purpose is to share general concepts and information around Hawai‘i multi-tiered system of supports (HMTSS) so everyone can understand what it encompasses and the common language used. This understanding will aid school leadership teams, faculty, staff, families, and community members as they come together to design, implement, and monitor their school’s plan.

Inside you will find:

1. An infographic titled "Hawai‘i Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS)" that illustrates on page 1 the components of the state’s tiered model of prevention and provides an example student’s multiple needs supported across tiers. Page 2 includes common language used and clarifies common misunderstandings.
2. An HMTSS dialogue guide to facilitate conversations among and between school leadership teams, faculty, staff, families, and community members about core components of tiered models of prevention.

**You are encouraged to print and reproduce all documents.**

*These infographics and dialogue guides were developed by the Hawai‘i Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) in partnership with the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE). SEAC is mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) to advise the HIDOE on the unmet needs of children with disabilities.*

*SEAC is committed to developing infographics as a means of sharing important information regarding complex special education issues in a visually appealing and concise manner. Each infographic is targeted toward certain stakeholders in the special education community. Accompanying dialogue guides provide the opportunity to create a shared understanding and generate feedback that will help to improve services for students with disabilities.*

# Hawai‘i Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS) Dialogue Guide

for school faculty and staff

## Introduction

Historically, students with academic, behavioral, or social skills challenges had to struggle a long time before a school could provide individualized supports beyond what all students received. Without an identified disability and accompanying special education services, most schools were unable to allocate extra resources. Only with a long enough history of academic failure or discipline referrals could a student be referred to formal assessments and eventually receive a disability label and special education services, finally getting needed supports. This is often referred to as the “wait to fail” model.

In the late 1990s schools began to shift away from this reactive approach to a proactive, prevention-based system. In this new model, schoolwide, systematic procedures are in place to identify students at the first sign of concern and connect them to supports before challenges become irreversible. With a prevention mindset, all students receive the supports they need to be successful at school across academic, behavior, social, and physical domains, regardless of ability or labels.

What developed out of this shift to prevention-based thinking was a systems-level approach with tiers of support provided to students in increasing level of intensity.

* Sometimes the system is specific to academics only, like reading, and might be called *response to intervention* (RtI).
* Sometimes it is specific to behavior and is referred to as *positive behavioral interventions and supports* (PBIS).
* Sometimes schools implement both academic and behavior frameworks concurrently, but often separately, in a *multi-tiered system of supports* (MTSS).
* Some schools add a validated social skills or social-emotional learning curriculum and integrate the three domains (academic, behavior, social) into a *comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered* (Ci3T) model of prevention.
* In Hawai‘i, academic, behavior, social-emotional, and physical domains form the base of the *Hawai‘i multi-tiered system of supports* (HMTSS).

These systems can prevent the need for labels by simply providing supports to any and all students who need them, when they first need them. For example, only 0.5% of K-12 students have a severe enough emotional and/or behavior disorder (EBD) to qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 category of emotional disturbance (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). However, according to prevalence estimates, about 12% of students have a moderate form of EBD and up to 20% of students have at least a mild form of EBD (Forness et al., 2012). Through HMTSS, these students, and all students with and without an identified disability, receive supports they need at the earliest sign of concern. Additionally, the tiered approach is supported by IDEA as a method to identify students with a learning disability when needs persist after Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are implemented with integrity.

HMTSS supports **all students**, those with, those without, and those at risk for disabilities.

**Explore the Infographic**

SEAC members developed the following two-page infographic to support the HIDOE rollout of HMTSS across the islands. The goal is to support educators’ understanding of HMTSS so they can have meaningful conversations with families at the first sign of concern for a student in any domain (academic, behavioral, social, physical) and as students receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports.

As you look over the first page, notice the following:

* The left side shows a triangle with three tiers, representing from bottom to top the levels of increasing support intensity available to all students within a school.
  + When HMTSS is implemented with integrity, it is expected about 80% of students will be successful with Tier 1 supports, 10-15% will need Tier 2 supports, and 3-5% will need Tier 3 supports.
* Tier 1 in green represents everything all students have access to at school by virtue of attending, such as high-quality academic instruction, explicit instruction in behavior expectations, validated social-emotional curriculum, and physical education. The goal in Tier 1 is to prevent harm.
* Tier 2 in yellow represents targeted supports provided to some students who need more than Tier 1, often small group instruction. The goal in Tier 2 is to reverse harm.
* Tier 3 in red represents the most intensive level of supports, often individualized. The goal of Tier 3 is to reduce harm.

Now look at **Meet Keoni** in the lower-right. Keoni’s story represents how a first-grade student may be successful in Tier 1 for some domains and subjects but need Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 supports for other domains and subjects. Note that Keoni’s multiple needs are supported across all tiers simultaneously, as movement across the tiers is fluid. This further illustrated why we would not label anyone as a “Tier 2 kid” or “Tier 3 student.” Instead, we use person-first language and refer to “students with Tier 2 needs” or “students receiving Tier 3 supports.”

As you read through page 1, think about the following:

* Why is it important for a school to establish their foundational beliefs as part of HMTSS?
* How does systematic universal academic and behavior screening provide data (along with other sources) to connect students to supports at the first sign of concern?
* How can low-intensity strategies be provided to all students at Tier 1 to prevent academic, behavior, social, and physical challenges?
* What Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are available at my school, and what are the entry criteria for students to receive them?

Now look at page 2. It offers meanings for common phrases used in HMTSS and in the right column clarifications for common misunderstandings. As you read through page 2, think about each definition and clarification carefully to analyze the logic behind each.

For example, sometimes people mistakenly think Tier 3 *is* special education. The fourth clarification reminds us, however, students with IEPs receive supports across the tiers, wherever they have need and meet entry criteria. Tier 1 is for *all* students, with Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports available to all students who meet entry criteria regardless of disability or other label.

**Participating in a Dialogue**

Dialogue is a special kind of two-way conversation. It differs from discussion or debate:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| What do we mean by dialogue? | | |
| **Debate** | **Discussion** | **Dialogue** |
| Participants accept assumptions as true | Participants bring up various assumptions | Participants examine/ question assumptions |
| Presents one position in an argument, then presents the opposite or contrasting position | Majority rules (the idea or position with the most agreement wins); people agree to disagree | Looks for common ground; tries to reach consensus on an issue |
| Tries to persuade the participants | Tries to inform the participants | Asks participants to reflect on an issue |

There are two types of questions that help to focus a dialogue:

Reaction questions are intended to uncover what people know and believe about the topic. A good practice is to have everyone in the group have a chance to respond to a reaction question before participants comment further or ask questions of each other.

In dialogue, the participants are not trying to convince anyone of their position. They are seeking to understand each other's perspective that may contribute to a greater understanding of the topic.

**Sample Reaction Questions:**

1. Why is this topic important to you
   1. in terms of supports for students?
   2. in terms of your role and responsibilities at school?
2. What would be the positive impacts of HMTSS for a struggling reader?
3. Were you aware of the shift from reactive models to proactive, prevention-based systems?

For educators and their classrooms:

1. Do you have students who struggle with academics or behavior in your classroom?
2. Have you monitored your implementation of Tier 1 components to ensure Tier 1 is being implemented according your school’s HMTSS plan?
3. Did you complete all screeners at the requested time points?
4. Have you provided low-intensity strategies like precorrection, instructional choice, and behavior-specific praise to all students?
5. Have you used screening data alongside other schoolwide data to connect your students to Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, including supports you can provide in class?

Application questions help participants use the information they have gained in addressing a challenge they face. They help the group to think and act together, identifying key allies, leverage resources, and come up with action steps.

**Sample Application Questions:**

1. Given the information on both pages of the HMTSS infographic, what information would be important to share with families? School staff?
2. What would be the best way to share this information?
3. What community members or groups should be aware of our school’s HMTSS plan and invited to participate?
4. What more do you want to know about HMTSS?

**Hosting a Dialogue**

The purpose of a dialogue is to help people discover they have a common need to work together on improving supports for all students, including students with an at risk for disabilities. Given the long-term implementation of HMTSS, how can your school leverage resources and interested stakeholders to come up with successful strategies for supporting success? Can your dialogue yield some new and innovative ideas? Find creative solutions?

An important consideration in putting together a dialogue session is to choose a facilitator to manage the conversation and guide interaction. An ideal facilitator is one who is welcoming and neutral in interacting with the group. More information on facilitating dialogue sessions can be found in the Facilitator's Guide created by the IDEA Partnership.

**Taking the First Step**

This material is meant to help you begin important conversations about implementing HMTSS. It can also support conversations about other important issues.

**Additional Resources**

* [HIDOE](https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/) > [Office of Student Support Services](https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/Organization/Offices/StudentSupportServices/Pages/home.aspx) > [Student Services Branch](https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/Organization/Offices/StudentSupportServices/StudentServicesBranch/Pages/default.aspx)
* <http://rtinetwork.org>
* <https://mtss.org>
* <https://mtss4success.org>
* <https://pbis.org>
* <https://ci3t.org>
* <https://intensiveintervention.org>