

**DONNA BLACK CONSULTING**

# MTSS & SEL

What's the difference and how do we implement both?

NOV. 9, 2024    donnalordblack.com

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## Objectives

- ▶ **Identify...**  
the foundational underpinnings of a prevention-focused framework;
- ▶ **Differentiate...**  
between the MTSS and SEL frameworks and identify the purposes and goals of each;
- ▶ **Recognize...**  
the challenges of implementation within each framework;
- ▶ **Expand...**  
knowledge, skills, and resources for integrating the MTSS and SEL frameworks.

Learning, Wisdom, Innovation, Solutions, Practice, System, Process, Approach

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## About the Speaker

**Donna L. Black**

- Author and nationally recognized expert in social-emotional learning (SEL);
- Seasoned practitioner with 30+ years experience in education and clinical practice;
- Public servant with nearly 12 years service as a Governor-appointed member to the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP);
- Co-Founder and President of the Social-Emotional Learning Alliance for Texas (SEL4TX);
- Faculty member at the Academy for SEL in Schools.

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### Let's begin with a poll...

Which of the NASP practice domains, if any, are most relevant to the work you do in promoting MTSS and SEL in your school/s? Choose as many responses as you like.



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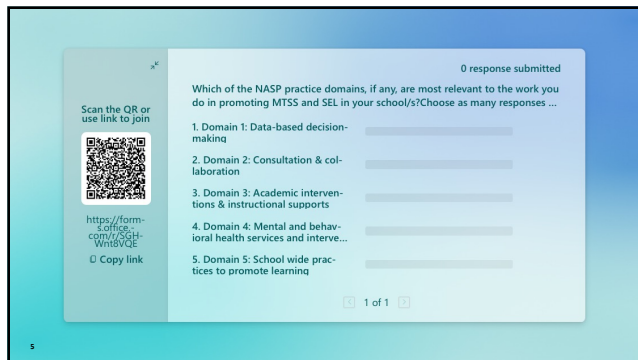
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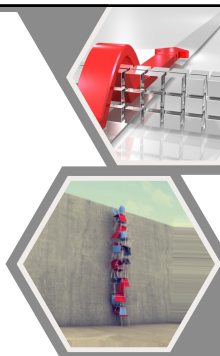
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### How are we doing?

What are some of the barriers that keep us from moving the practice model forward when it comes to MTSS and SEL?



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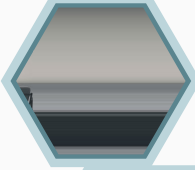
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*Before getting started, let's talk about the elephant in the room...*

*Are Texas schools allowed to implement SEL?*



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Why is there so much controversy?

- What's the confusion?
- Is it misunderstanding or misperception?
- Why the opposition?



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*Words matter!*



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### The Role of Language in Public Discourse

- 1 Conveys ideas, emotions and experience
- 2 Shapes our perception of the world
- 3 Cues us to think about something in a specific way
- 4 Shapes public opinion

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### SEL Begins with a Common Language

Common understanding      Common perspective      Common goals

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### Young People Need SEL

- Emotions are heightened
- Stress is greater
- Feelings of loss & anxiety are constant
- Relationships are strained
- Creativity is taxed
- Polarization is up & listening is down

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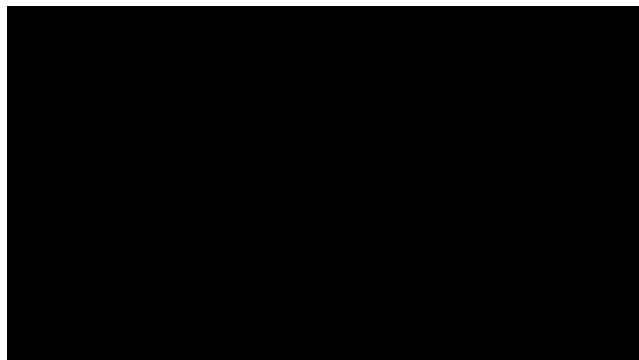
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### The CASEL 5

- ▶ Self-awareness
- ▶ Self-management
- ▶ Social Awareness
- ▶ Relationship skills
- ▶ Responsible decision-making

\*The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that works to advance the science and evidence-based practice of social and emotional learning (SEL). Web site: www.casel.org

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## IS SEL REQUIRED IN TEXAS?

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Senate Bill 11 and House Bill 18, passed in 2019, require schools to address the mental health and wellness of students.



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TEC 21.462(2) - Resources Regarding Students with Mental Health Needs

The agency, in coordination with the Health and Human Services Commission, shall establish and maintain an Internet website to provide resources for school district or open-enrollment charter school employees regarding working with students with mental health conditions or who engage in substance abuse. The agency must include on the Internet website information about:

- (1) grief-informed and trauma-informed practices;
- (2) building skills related to managing emotions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision-making;
- (3) positive behavior interventions and supports; and
- (4) a safe and supportive school climate.

<https://schoolmentalhealthtx.org/best-practices/>

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TEC 28.002 (a)(2)(B)(ii) - Required Curriculum

(a) Each school district that offers kindergarten through grade 12 shall offer, as a required curriculum:

- (2) an enrichment curriculum that includes:
  - (B) health, with emphasis on:
    - (iii) mental health, including instruction about mental health conditions, substance abuse, skills to manage emotions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision-making; ...

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**TEC 29.906 - Character Traits and Personal Skills Instruction**

(a) The State Board of Education (SBOE) shall integrate positive character traits into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for kindergarten through grade 12, as appropriate.

(b) The State Board of Education must include the following positive character traits and personal skills:

- (1) Courage
- (2) Trustworthiness, including honesty, reliability, punctuality, and loyalty
- (3) Integrity
- (4) Respect and courtesy
- (5) Responsibility, including accountability, diligence, perseverance, and self-control
- (6) Fairness, including justice and freedom from prejudice
- (7) Caring, including kindness, empathy, compassion, consideration, patience, generosity, and charity
- (8) Good citizenship, including patriotism, concern for the common good and the community, and respect for authority and the law
- (9) School pride
- (10) Gratitude



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**TEC 37.0013 (a)(5)(C)- Positive Behavior Program**

(a) Each school district and open-enrollment charter school may develop and implement a program, in consultation with campus behavior coordinators employed by the district or school and representatives of a regional education service center, that provides a disciplinary alternative for a student enrolled in a grade level below grade three who engages in conduct described by Section 37.005(a) and is not subject to Section 37.005(c).

The program must:

- (5) Provide behavior management strategies, including:
  - (C) social and emotional learning



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**TEC 38.013 (a) - Coordinated Health Program for Elementary, Middle, and Junior High School Students**

(a) The agency shall make available to each school district one or more coordinated health programs in elementary school, middle school, and junior high school. Each program must provide for coordinating education and services related to:

- (2) mental health education, including education about mental health conditions, mental health well-being, skills to manage emotions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision-making.



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TEC 38.351 (c)(2) – Mental Health Promotion and Intervention, Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention, & Suicide Prevention

(c) The list provided under Subsection (a) must include programs and practices in the following areas:

- (1) early mental health prevention and intervention;
- (2) building skills related to managing emotions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision-making;
- (3) substance abuse prevention and Intervention
- (4) suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention;
- (5) grief-informed and trauma-informed practices;
- (6) positive school climates;
- (7) positive behavior interventions and supports;
- (8) positive youth development; and
- (9) safe, supportive, and positive school climate




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If it looks like a duck,  
walks like a duck, and  
quacks like a duck...

**it is a duck!**




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**SEL**  
PREVENTION-FOCUSED FRAMEWORK




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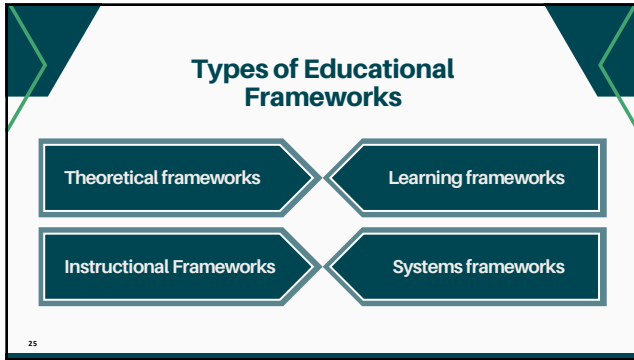
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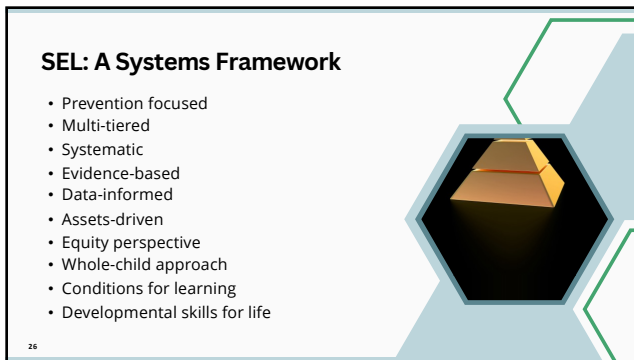
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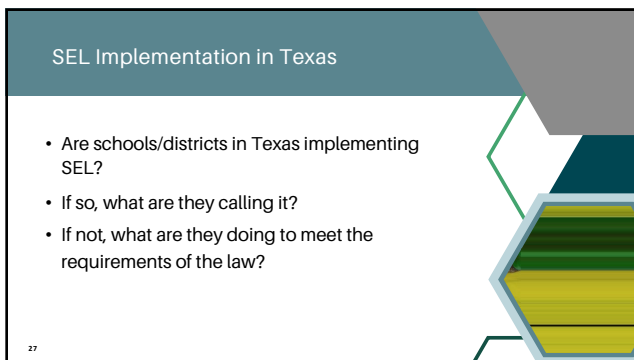
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**De-bunking the myths**

Myth #1: SEL is a program.

- A schoolwide process.
- Focuses on skill development.
- An evidence-based practice.

Myth #2: SEL indoctrinates students with extremist ideas.

- SEL teaches concrete skills that have been identified as essential for success in life and in the workforce.
- SEL helps remove barriers that prevent many students from accessing educational opportunities.

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**De-bunking the myths (cont.)**

Myth #3: SEL is just another thing on the teacher's plate.

- While SEL skills should be explicitly taught, it is not solely the responsibility of the classroom teacher.
- Embedding SEL pedagogy and practice throughout the school day and in all school activities provides opportunities for reinforcement and practice of skills as they are being learned. Thus, it is everyone's responsibility.

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**De-bunking the myths (cont.)**

Myth #4: SEL requires a background in counseling or mental health.

- While SEL does not require training in mental health, adults in the school/district should be trained in instructional strategies and practices for teaching SEL competencies. Teachers should not be expected to provide instruction in SEL until they have been adequately trained.

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**Social-emotional Learning (SEL):  
A multi-level, developmentally-focused process**

**Ensures conditions for learning**  
Using a coordinated set of activities, schools/districts can develop a self-portrait of the learning environment to identify areas where gaps may exist in learning needs, resources & supports, or in school structure, governance, & management.

**Focuses on the whole child**  
Moves beyond the traditional cognitive and academic approach toward one that includes the social and emotional dimensions of learning.

**Unique to each school/district**  
Recognizes and understands the diverse needs of the school community and helps ensure culturally responsive practices and fair and equitable opportunity and treatment for all students.

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**Equity Perspective**

The promise of social and emotional development as a lever for increasing educational equity rests on the capacity of educators to understand that all learning is social and emotional and all learning is mediated by relationships that sit in a sociopolitical, racialized context – for all children, not just those who are black and brown.

*-The National Equity Project*

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**SEL Foundations**

**Consensus**  
Uses a common language and understanding of the problems and issues to establish buy-in and develop a common vision for SEL.

**Supportive Infrastructure**  
Employs a systems approach to the review and analysis of programs, resources, and the learning environment to determine where infrastructure improvements are needed.

**Coordinated & collaborative process**  
Includes a systematic process for developing a multi-phased, multi-year plan of implementation that includes efforts to collaboratively engage families, communities, and policy makers with ongoing school efforts.

**Progressive Improvement**  
Identifies a process for collecting data to help inform decisions about progress, sustainability efforts, and system-altering improvements.

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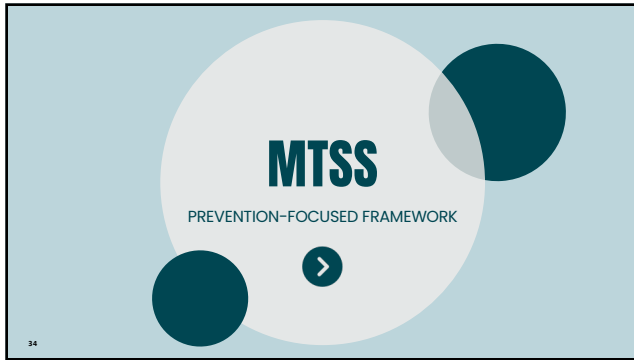
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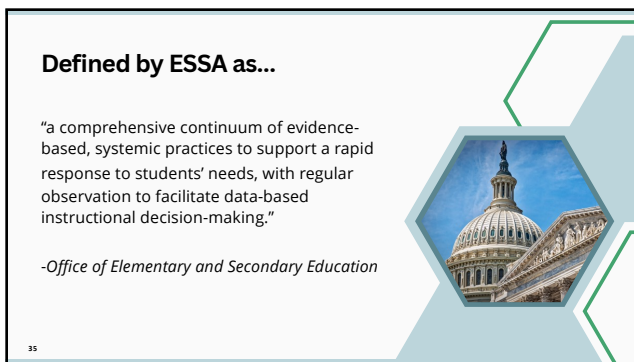
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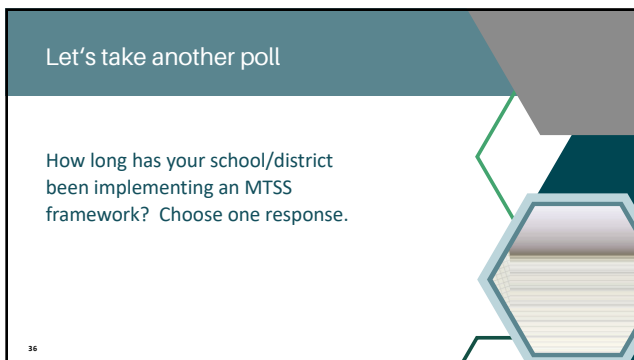
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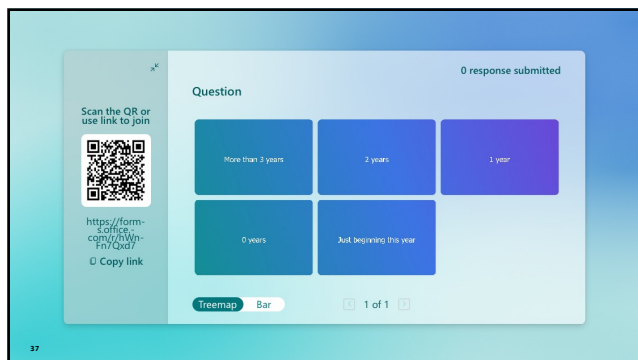
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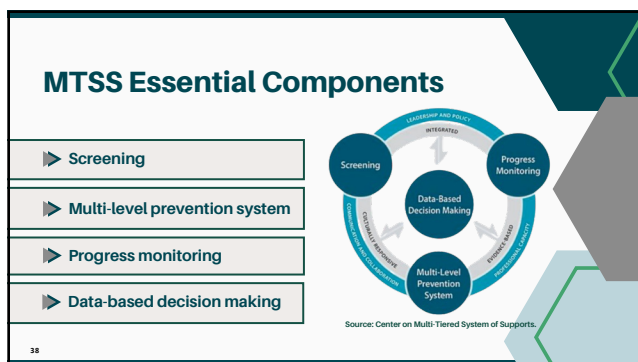
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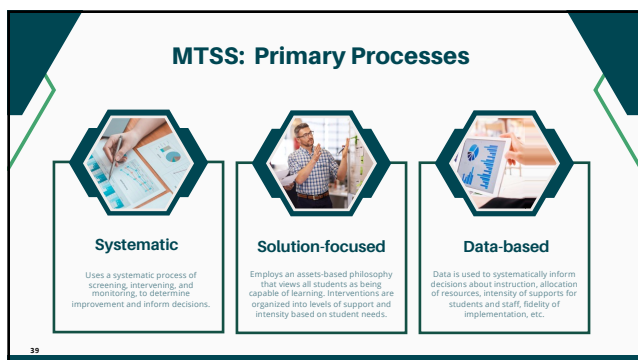
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**Remember...**

It is the supports that are tiered, not the students.



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**Underpinnings of MTSS**

1. Assets-based philosophy
2. Equity perspective
3. Evidence-based practices
4. Implementation fidelity
5. Data-informed decision-making



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**Underpinning #1: Assets-based Philosophy**

**4 Basic Assumptions**

- Every child has unique strengths;
- Children are influenced and motivated by how others respond to them;
- Rather than viewing a child with deficiencies, it is assumed the child has not had the opportunities to learn, develop, and master skills;
- When intervention planning is based on strengths, children and families are more likely to become involved in the process.

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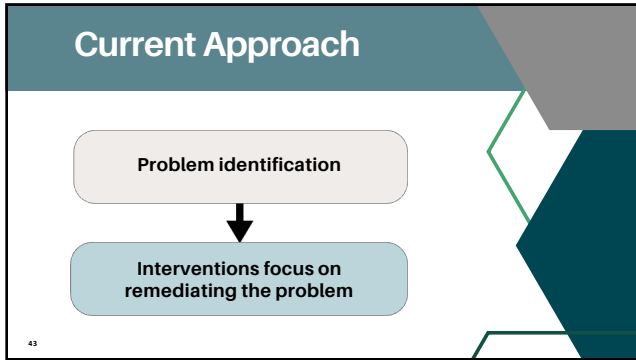
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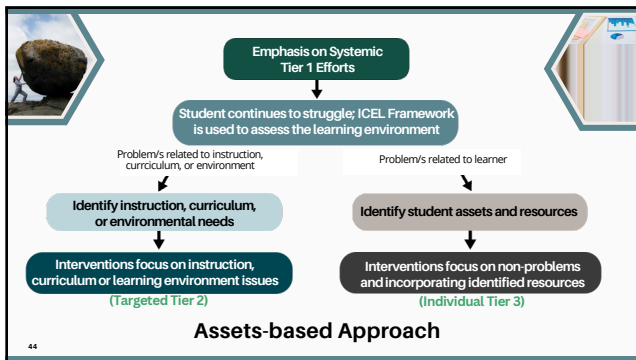
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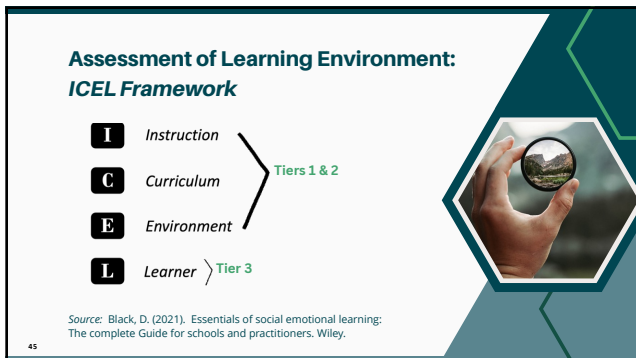
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**Assets-based Intervention Plan**

- Includes student/parent collaboration
  - Identify exceptions to the problem
  - Explore potential resources
- Builds on non-problems
- Incorporates resources



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
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**Benefits of Asset-based Approach**




**Efficient**

More efficient than starting from scratch since existing strengths and resources are incorporated into the plan.



**Positive**

Conveys faith in student's ability to change by applying qualities and resources they already possess.



**Engaging**

Engages students and parents in the process by focusing on what is right with the student as opposed to focusing on what may be wrong with them.

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**Underpinning #2: Equity Perspective**

*MTSS ensures*

- Equitable access to educational opportunities for all students
- Equitable leadership that engages all stakeholders
- Culturally and linguistically sensitive programming, curriculum, instruction, assessment, pedagogy, and practices



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**Underpinning #3: Evidence-based practices**

*Schools/districts identify effective approaches\**

1. Designed for improving student outcomes in
  - o Instruction
  - o Intervention
  - o Assessment
2. Ensured to be
  - o Equitable
  - o Inclusive
  - o Developmentally appropriate

\* Research on student outcomes has proven it to be effective



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**Underpinning #4: Implementation Fidelity**

*Requires:*

- Knowledge & understanding of implementation science
- Intentional effort
- Cultural and racial sensitivity in the selection and implementation of programs, practices, and interventions



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**Underpinning #5: Data-informed Decision-making**

*Effective management and use of data demands:*

- Analytic expertise in evaluating the data
- A process for evaluating qualitative data
- A view of data through a lens of equity and diversity



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**MTSS Implementation**

- Committee Membership**
  - Ensure diversity & equity in membership
  - Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Procedures**
  - Initiating and conducting meetings
  - Prioritizing interventions
  - Collecting data
  - Establishing fidelity of interventions
  - Documenting outcomes
- Equity focus**
  - Cultural, racial and linguistic sensitivity to programs, processes, interventions and supports
- Professional Development**
  - Training and educating of MTSS for all relevant stakeholders

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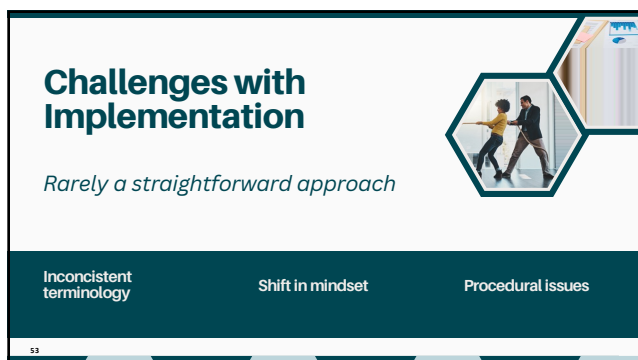
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**Challenges with Implementation**

*Rarely a straightforward approach*

Inconsistent terminology      Shift in mindset      Procedural issues

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**INTEGRATING MTSS & SEL**

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### Why Integrate?

Complementary frameworks → Builds coherence → More effective & efficient → Greater chance of achieving equity

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Element	MTSS	SEL
• Prevention-focused	✓	✓
• Multi-tiered process	✓	✓
• Systematic process	✓	✓
• Evidence-based	✓	✓
• Data-informed	✓	✓
• Assets-driven	✓	✓
• Equity perspective	✓	✓
• Whole-child approach	✓	✓
• Conditions for learning	✓	✓
• Developmental skills for life *		✓

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### Systems Thinking Approach

- Encourages a comprehensive approach when designing/implementing changes
- Acknowledges that different components of the system interact
- Delivers results for learners

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**Key Terms**

Source: Ndaruhutse, S., Jones, C., & Riggall, A. (2019). *Why systems thinking is important for the education sector*. Education Development Trust.



At Scale	System-wide	Systems thinking
An intervention or set of interventions that are being implemented throughout the school or in several schools of a district.	An intervention or set of interventions that are being delivered throughout the system's infrastructure.	An approach that recognizes the dynamic complexity of an education system and works with the end goal of improving learning outcomes at scale.

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**Multiphased Approach**

- Assemble a diverse team
- Conduct a self-assessment (e.g., SELFI®)
- Develop a logic model/theory of change
- Develop a multi-phased, multi-year strategic plan
- Implement with intention
- Monitor for fidelity and adherence to the rules of implementation science
- Evaluate for progressive improvement



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**Social-Emotional Learning Foundations Inventory (SELFI)®**

- Suite of tools and templates
- Fillable forms
- Paints a self-portrait of the school
- Facilitates planning and implementation



Source: Black, D. (2021). *Essentials of social emotional learning: The complete Guide for schools and practitioners*. Wiley.

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### Establish SEL as a Core Tier 1 Process

- Establish a caring and supportive school culture and climate
- Develop a systematic process where SEL is at the **core** of Tiers 1 & 2 and delivered to all students in all aspects of the school day
- Ensure SEL instruction is comprehensive, developmental, and sequenced
  - a. Select an evidenced-based SEL curriculum
  - b. Create your own SEL curriculum
  - c. Systematically integrate SEL instruction/pedagogy into all subject areas across all grade levels
- Avoid deficit-based thinking and 'tiering' of SEL



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### Successful Integration

#### Accelerators

- Vision & leadership
- Collaboration & buy-in from key stakeholders
- Clear structures, roles & responsibilities to help create coherence
- Systemic implementation
- Collaborative partnerships
- Evidence-informed policy & learning
- Professional development



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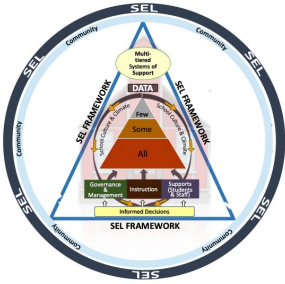
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### INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

Source: Black, D. (2021). Essentials of social emotional learning: The complete Guide for schools and practitioners. Wiley.



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**Moving Forward**

-  Think BIG,
-  Start small,
-  Move at a steady pace!



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**Resources**

- ▶ **Essentials of Social Emotional Learning: The Complete Guide for Schools and Practitioners**  
Wiley, 2021
- ▶ **Adolescent Public Mental Health**  
Springer, 2024



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**Additional Resources**

- Black, D. (2021). Essentials of social emotional learning: The complete guide for schools and practitioners. Wiley.
- SEL MTSS Toolkit for State and District Leaders
  - <https://753a0706.flowpaper.com/CCSSOSELMTSSToolkit/#page=1>
- Texas School Mental Health Website
  - <https://schoolmentalhealthtx.org/>
- TEA website: Counseling, Advising, and Student Supports
  - <https://schoolmentalhealthtx.org/>
- TEA website: Mental Health & Behavioral Health
  - <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/mental-health/mental-health-and-behavioral-health>

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### Additional Resources (cont...)

- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
  - [www.case.org](http://www.case.org)
- The Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services
  - 2023 External Report: <https://schoolmentalhealthtx.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/HS-906-Mental-Health-Task-Force-Year-1-Report.pdf>
- The National Equity Project
  - <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/>

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### Contact Information

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