



# Georgia's Tiered System of Supports Connection

Georgia Department of Education

Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students

December 2018

## SUPPORTING THE WHOLE CHILD

### Understanding the "Why"

*"If I Could Offer A Gift" by Dr. Zelphine Smith-Dixon*



If I could offer a gift to every district, school, and classroom, I would provide the infrastructure and supports to implement Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students. Our families share their students with us, and all 1.8 million of them deserve an

equitable opportunity for success.

What if I told you that many of the isolated remedies that consume countless resources, personnel, and time could be addressed through a systemic change framework with greater efficiency and effectiveness? I believe that a multi-tiered system creates the pulse of continuous improvement for all schools and all students.

Leaders, teachers, and families must partner to meet the whole child needs of every student and enrich the promises and passion of each. High-Leverage Practices are effective teaching strategies, and Evidence-Based Practices are specific to content areas. When coupled, they provide a continuum of supports that result in a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs.

Often, I am asked, "How can I 'fix' special education?" Special education is a microcosm of general education; therefore, access to the general education curriculum and a positive school climate will work every time! I invite all Georgians to learn more about Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students; let's create the possibilities of student success for everyone.

*Zelphine Smith-Dixon, Ed.D.,*

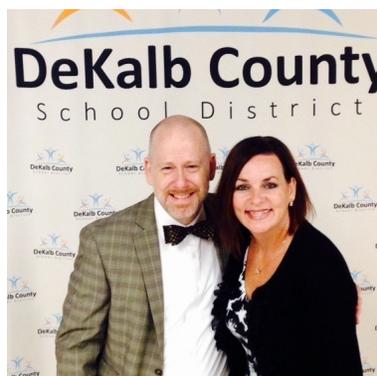
State Director, Division for Special Education

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## DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

DeKalb County Schools leaders are aiming to inspire a community of learners to achieve educational excellence. Educators say they are using data to guide their students on the road to success.



*Dr. Scott McManus and Ms. Kanessa Fain*

DeKalb's MTSS/RTI Coordinator, Kanessa Fain. "Data helps us to identify students' struggles and pinpoints supports that are matched to their specific skill need."

MTSS is the cornerstone of DeKalb's school improvement effort and includes instructional and behavioral supports aligned with Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students.

"We view this framework and system of supports as a fundamental student right," said Fain.



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## DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

"It is the foundation for wraparound services and a robust continuum of care."

DeKalb County Schools is part of Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students Cohort 1. Fain and her team support and provide guidance to schools and build leaders with their individual School Improvement Plans. Team members coordinate the



DeKalb County School District

collection and analysis of relevant data, including universal screeners, academic risk indicators, and intervention integrity.

Scott McManus, Ed.D., is also a District

MTSS/RTI Coordinator. "Data analysis provides a snapshot of what students know, what they should know, and what can be done to meet their academic needs," said Dr. McManus.

DeKalb has 137 schools with tier 2 and tier 3 intervention plans within Infinite Campus for Literacy, Math, Writing, Communication, and Behavior support. Fain and McManus' roles include interpreting the data gathered while helping schools determine appropriate tier 2 and tier 3 supports/interventions. In addition, they work together to monitor implementation of the MTSS/RTI process across the district to ensure that the framework and interventions are implemented with fidelity. With the appropriate analysis and interpretation of data, educators are making informed decisions that positively affect student outcomes.

"We monitor our student performance data for indicators of struggle or risk, said Dr. McManus. "Our students are provided with a universal screener, which might, for example, identify an area of risk to rule

out the possibility that the student had a bad test day. We look for agreement between the universal screener and other sources of data to validate the risk. Then, we perform informal diagnostic assessments to determine the specific skill along the learning continuum that is a foundational gap for students."

While DeKalb County's journey to improving outcomes for all students continues, leaders are armed with reliable tools to ensure they reach their destination. Fain said, "We will increase school and student performance to produce young citizens that are better able to take care of themselves and their families as they follow a path to the lives of their choosing."

## COACHES' CORNER

### Metro Atlanta Regional Coach: Christy Jones

Impactful, challenging and exciting are three words Christy Jones uses to describe educators who have shaped her life. "I was surrounded by leaders who were influential and passionate about their work," said Jones. Those positive influencers led her to pursue a career in education and ultimately fueled her decision to become a Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students regional coach.



Christy Jones with her husband Rick, and their daughters Hagen and Palmer

"There are so many aspects of this work that I enjoy. Collaborating with school and district personnel to make informed decisions is one of the most rewarding experiences of being a coach."

Jones provides MTSS implementation coaching and training to DeKalb County Schools, Marietta City Schools, and City Schools of Decatur. She said districts are using a variety of data sets and making decisions



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## COACHES CORNER

that are advancing students' learning trajectories.

"We are using data to tailor enrichment and intervention supports for students. DeKalb has a team of dedicated educators who have rich resources available for all staff to access throughout the entire district. The district team is truly committed to supporting improved outcomes for every student."

The mother of two envisions the impact Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students will have on her own daughters' future and their peers. "I feel privileged to be a part of the conversation about how to serve our students and help educators throughout the state implement multi-level prevention systems that will give my girls and others the tools to select career paths and make their dreams come true."

## INTEGRATING OUR WORK

### Building an Infrastructure to Support the Next Generation

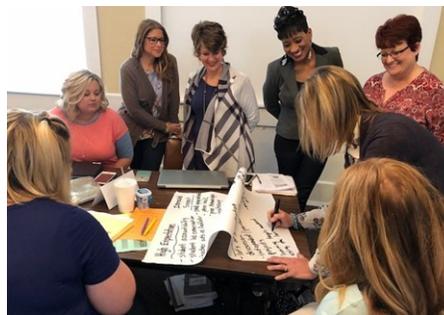


One of the essential components of Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students is Infrastructure. *To implement the framework with fidelity, Leadership, Effective Teaming, Professional Learning, and Family*

*and Community Engagement must be in place.* The elements are also critical to successful implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES).

"Teamwork and collaboration are inherent components in specific standards in the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), in the rubrics applied to rating TAPS standards, and in the implementation of TKES," said Melinda Moe. Moe is the TKES and LKES program manager in the Division of Teacher and

Leader Support and Development (TLSD). She was inspired by her second-grade teacher and her father, W.L. Stephens, who did not have a college degree. He pushed her to further her education and develop a love for training educators. Moe and her team work with leaders throughout Georgia to provide TKES and LKES initial credentialing, recertification, and inter-rater reliability training. They also conduct matched pair observations with administrators in actual classrooms.



TKES and LKES training

"Effective Leadership and Teaming are aligned and supported throughout our work," she said. "The work of TLSD requires ongoing professional learning

for teachers and leaders. It's a one-stop shop to capture evidence, encourage reflection, and collaborate with districts and teachers on the progress students are making."

The TLSD training and support incorporates Family and Community Engagement. "Continued support through recertification, familiarization, and match paired observations further highlights the importance of including families and the community in the shared leadership of the school," Moe said.

TLSD was created to implement a common effectiveness system that ensures consistency and comparability across districts in the state. Moe said Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students involves teachers and leaders in data-based problem-solving and decision making, and lays the foundation for systemic, continuous school improvement. "No stone is left unturned. This support drills right down to the classroom level, thus



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## INTEGRATING OUR WORK

enhancing teacher and leader effectiveness.”

Moe said working together to establish effective leaders, like her early childhood influencers, can deliver direct results that benefit the next generation. “[Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students] addresses the needs of all learners by providing a school-wide multi-level prevention system. It looks at every student in a school who is or could be at risk and prepares all students to become successful high school graduates.”

## IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

To deliver statewide implementation support to schools and districts, a series of webinars will provide information on Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students. The first webinar on [Infrastructure](#) is now available on the Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students webpage. Upcoming professional learning topics include: “How does House Bill 740 impact my school?” and “How to communicate MTSS to Families.”

If you have questions or would like to suggest a topic for discussion, email us at [gamtss@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:gamtss@doe.k12.ga.us).

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### Registration is Now Open for Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): Progress Monitoring

Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students will host two Progress Monitoring workshops with national speaker Dr. Tessie Rose Bailey of American Institutes of Research.

The one day trainings will take place on **January 14 and January 15, 2019**. Participants choose one day to attend.

Progress Monitoring is one of the essential components

of Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students. Visit [www.gadoe.org/TieredSystemofSupports](http://www.gadoe.org/TieredSystemofSupports) to register your team today!

**12th Annual SSTAGE Promising Practices Conference is January 16, 2019** at The Classic Center in Athens. For more details, visit: <https://www.sstage.org/promising-practices-conference>.

## RESOURCES

### Professional Learning Modules Now Available!

In an effort to ensure Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students becomes a guiding framework for schools and districts to identify student needs, professional learning units of study will be available at [www.gadoe.org/TieredSystemofSupports](http://www.gadoe.org/TieredSystemofSupports) each month.

Units 1, 2, and 3 include: [Overview and Expectations](#), [Needs Assessment](#), and [Screening](#).

### High-Leverage Practices

The CEEDAR Center has created a library of resources to help guide your understanding of implementing MTSS including:

[A crosswalk between general and special education HLPs](#)

For additional resources, visit: <http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/GA-HLP-Webinar-1-Promo.pdf>.

## DECEMBER NEWS

From everyone at the Department of Education, we want to thank you for your commitment to ensuring all students receive an equitable education in Georgia.

We want to especially thank our families and community partners who remind us daily to work harder to reach every student in this state.

From our families to yours here’s a story of love and joy that is sure to get you in the holiday spirit: [https://twitter.com/georgiadepofed/status/1061718182115926016\\_status/1061718182115926016](https://twitter.com/georgiadepofed/status/1061718182115926016_status/1061718182115926016).