

The MTSS Cycle Meeting Guide

Who's in the room, what they bring, and what to ask.

01 Assign roles at the start

Every meeting. Out loud. Thirty seconds.

Facilitator	Keeps the conversation moving toward decisions
Timekeeper	Protects the time allotted per teacher or grade level
Notetaker	Records decisions in the team's tracking document
Data navigator	Pulls up records in your student information system
Special populations navigator	Pulls up records in your special education system

WHY THIS ONE MATTERS

Naming a navigator for each system matters more than it sounds. Meetings stall while someone hunts for a login.

02 What each person brings

Nobody arrives empty-handed. Send this out before the first meeting of the year so it isn't a surprise.

Administrator	• The plan for required intervention-plan signatures and deadlines • The coverage schedule so teachers can attend • Updates and the current action plan • Keeper of the master tracking log
General education teacher	• Quiz, test and assessment data, and student work • Attendance, behavior and grades • Progress in core instruction • Progress of students on the watch list

Interventionists Title I · EL · resource room · teacher consultant	• Progress monitoring results • Scaffolding and support suggestions • Building contact point for intervention questions
Counselor	• Progress on social-emotional groups and attendance plans • Support suggestions and narrative notes • Building contact for general education SEL support • Home connection and family contact
Dean or ISS coordinator	• The referral and in-school suspension log • Which supports ran during placement, and whether they held afterward • Scaffolds, accommodations and modifications already in use
Itinerants Social worker · Speech-language pathologist · Psychologist	• Progress monitoring for their caseloads • Building contact for special education SEL support • Special education watch list notes • The evaluation and testing calendar

03 How the meeting runs

Open with norms and the clock. Each teacher, or group attending together, reviews the norms and sets the timeline for their portion. This takes a minute and saves ten.

Then work through the three question sets, in order. They move from students you're already supporting, to students who may need more, to students you're keeping an eye on.

First 3 minutes	Welcome the teacher or team, review the norms, set the clock for their portion.
5 to 10 minutes	The teacher names the concern and shows what they have: what has been tried, what the data says, what families have been told.
5 to 10 minutes	Everyone else adds what they are seeing and what support is already running.
Last 5 minutes	Keep the plan, change it, or replace it. Nobody leaves the student without one of those three sentences.
Before you move on	The notetaker records the decision as it is made. Written afterward, it is already someone's memory of it.

04 The questions

This is the part worth printing and keeping in front of you.

THE THREE EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

Attendance, behavior and course performance - the ABCs of Michigan's EWIMS work - predict more at this level than any screening score does. Take them in that order. A surprising share of course-grade problems turn out to be attendance problems wearing a different label.

STUDENTS CURRENTLY RECEIVING SUPPORT

How is this student doing on attendance, behavior and course grades?

Name which of the three you are looking at before anyone proposes a support. The answer usually decides who owns the next step.

How are students responding to their intervention?

What are your next steps for this student or group?

The question that turns a description into a plan. Ask it every time, even when the answer feels obvious.

Are there students ready to exit?

Rarely asked, and the reason caseloads only ever grow. Put it on the agenda so it gets asked whether or not anyone thinks of it.

STUDENTS WHO MAY NEED MORE

Are there students who need more structured support, or an adjustment to what they're already getting?

Who has crossed a threshold since we last met?

A new attendance percentage, a first referral, a grade that slipped to failing. Early warning data is only early if somebody looks at it between cycles.

Are there students new to the district or building?

Transfer students are the most commonly missed group in any MTSS system. They arrive mid-cycle, after screening, and nobody owns noticing them.

THE WATCH LIST

Are these students showing a need for support with foundational skills?

Has anything changed since we last looked at this list?

A watch list nobody revisits is just a list.

05 What changes across the year

The questions stay the same. What surrounds them shifts by cycle.

Before the year begins	Update the tracking log · set the master schedule so staff can attend · identify students qualifying for intensive support from screening data and last year's course performance · articulate groups, plans and schedules · set intervention-plan signature deadlines
Quarter 1 · fall	Team updates: current plan, successes, challenges · adjust groups and address new needs · first course-failure check before grades close · plan for the winter screening window before the break, not after it
Quarter 2 · to the semester break	Team updates · adjust supports · intervention-plan signatures by the mid-year deadline · semester schedule changes: the one point in the year when a placement can actually move
Quarter 3 · winter	Team updates · adjust supports · credit recovery decisions for semester one failures · state assessment planning: building schedule, student goals, support staff
Quarter 4 · spring	Team updates · adjust supports · exit decisions · hand off transitioning grade levels to receiving buildings · carry this year's supported students onto next year's log

ONE SCHEDULING TRAP TO CONSIDER

If a cycle meeting is meant to prepare for a screening window, it has to happen *before* that window opens. A planning meeting held after testing has started is a debrief wearing the wrong name.

Check your assessment calendar against your meeting calendar before you set dates. They are usually built by different people who never compared them.

06 Make it yours

This is scaffolding, not the work.

A structure your team didn't help build is one they won't commit to using. Take this to your first meeting of the year and decide together: which roles you actually have, which questions matter in your building, what you'd add, what you'd cut.

The point isn't to run the protocol well. The point is to have the conversation that changes what happens for a student on Monday.

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I build MTSS systems for districts that don't have someone doing this job full-time.

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