

# TIER

Tiered Interventions Using  
Evidence-Based Research

## Getting Certified to be a TIER/MTSS Trainer



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## About TIER

Tiered Interventions Using Evidence-Based Research (TIER), an initiative funded by the Texas Education Agency, develops and disseminates information about best practices for the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework. The project goal is to improve the quality of interventions provided to students by increasing local education agency (LEA) capacity for implementing an effective, integrated, comprehensive framework for intervention that both is grounded in differentiated instruction and aligned with the systems that are fundamental for all students' academic, behavioral, and mental health achievement.

TIER has developed a series of 10 modules, or broad topic areas, each focused on a particular aspect of MTSS. Each module contains a set of learning pathways, or individual trainings, that support the implementation of an MTSS framework. Some modules and pathways are in development, but a brief description of each module is outlined below.

- **Introduction:** Learn about the MTSS framework and how it can be used to meet the academic, behavior, and mental health needs of all students.
- **Leadership:** Review essential structures and practices necessary for districtwide or schoolwide implementation of MTSS.
- **Communities:** Learn about working with caregivers and important outside-of-school stakeholders.
- **Behavior:** See how to incorporate positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) within an MTSS framework.
- **Mental Health:** Explore how to integrate mental health supports such as trauma-informed care and restorative practices within MTSS.
- **Screening:** See why screening is an essential practice in MTSS. Learn about common screening measures in academics and behavior.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Explore progress-monitoring measures as well as how to analyze progress-monitoring data and make data-based decisions.
- **Decision Making:** Learn how to use progress-monitoring and diagnostic data to make decisions and plan interventions.
- **Academics:** Dive into evidence-based practices that should be included within universal, targeted, and intensive supports.
- **Data-Based Individualization:** Learn about data-based individualization and how it can be used to improve student outcomes in reading, writing, behavior, and mathematics.

# TIER Certification Overview

## Purpose of This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide clear information for individuals interested in becoming a TIER/MTSS certified trainer. It outlines the purpose and process of certification, who is eligible to apply, and the steps to complete the training-of-trainers (TOT) model. In addition, this guide highlights the areas of certification available, opportunities to maintain certification, and resources to support trainers after certification. By using this guide, prospective trainers will gain a practical understanding of how to pursue certification and build local capacity for effective implementation of MTSS.

In addition to understanding the process of becoming certified, it is important to recognize the value certification provides for both trainers and the districts they serve.

## Purpose of Certification

A primary goal of TIER is to develop and disseminate information about best practices for an MTSS framework. One way this is accomplished is through a TOT model, which increases the number of TIER certified trainers across the state. TIER certified trainers can deliver training in their region or district in their areas of certification.

In addition, certification reinforces the broader purpose of MTSS, which is to provide an integrated system that does the following:

- Supports the academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of students
- Uses assessment data to drive differentiated instruction for all learners
- Assists in identifying students who need additional support
- Provides evidence-based interventions to reduce academic and nonacademic gaps
- Promotes collaboration among educators
- Communicates student progress with caregivers

By becoming certified, trainers are equipped not only to teach MTSS content, but also to help schools and districts put these principles into action to improve outcomes for all students.

## Benefits of Certification

Becoming a TIER/MTSS certified trainer benefits both educators and the broader school community. Certification allows trainers to do the following:

- Gain deeper knowledge of the MTSS framework and evidence-based practices
- Build the skills needed to deliver high-quality professional development
- Support districts and campuses in implementing MTSS with fidelity to improve student outcomes
- Expand leadership capacity within their region or district through the TOT model
- Access TIER training materials and resources to strengthen ongoing MTSS implementation
- Join a statewide network of certified trainers committed to collaboration and continuous improvement

Through certification, trainers play a key role in promoting equitable, data-driven systems that meet the academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of all students.

## Who Can Become Certified

Staff members from education service centers (ESCs) and LEAs responsible for turning around training are eligible to attend TOTs and complete the certification process. LEA staff seeking certification should be members of a district leadership team that oversees the implementation of MTSS in their district.

The TIER Essentials and MTSS Foundations certifications are foundational series, serving as a prerequisite for subsequent certifications. The TIER Essentials certificate, though still valid, will no longer be offered. The MTSS Foundations certification replaced the Essentials training. The MTSS Foundations certification aligns with the MTSS Fidelity of Implementation Rubric from the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, which incorporates the essential components and infrastructure shown to support the successful implementation of MTSS. By aligning the focus of the MTSS Foundations certification with the rubric, we aim to help leaders and trainers focus on actionable strategies that improve MTSS implementation and fidelity in schools and districts across Texas. However, ESC staff members who work in specialized areas outside of MTSS—such as reading, mathematics, behavior, or other content areas—without a foundational certification can attend TIER training in their specialized areas after completing assigned asynchronous coursework. This allows ESC specialist staff to become certified in TIER content related to their field of expertise without having to complete the full TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification. It is expected that a TIER Essentials and/or MTSS Foundations certified trainer will support ESC specialist staff to answer questions and ensure a connection with TIER foundational content. Prerequisites for TIER trainings are listed below in the **Areas of TIER Certifications** section.

## How to Become a Certified Trainer

TIER has developed a series of synchronous trainings and asynchronous online courses based on the modules and pathways. Synchronous trainings may occur in person or through a virtual setting. The length of the trainings varies. TIER Canvas courses mirror face-to-face trainings led by TIER certified trainers. The courses engage learners about various aspects of MTSS in a self-paced, interactive manner. TOTs may include a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning through Canvas, and, in some cases, course completion may be required as a prerequisite before attending a TOT.

To become a TIER certified trainer, a participant must meet the following requirements within the time frame set at each training:

- Attend and actively participate in all parts of the TOT in the area of intended certification
- Complete online, asynchronous coursework (if required as a prerequisite or assigned during the training)
- Score a minimum of 80% on content-related posttests
- Successfully meet the artifact submission criteria (when applicable—not all TOTs require an artifact)

For TOTs that require a summative artifact, participants will receive guidance on the specific certification criteria and artifact submission. The artifacts are tailored to each certification and should demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the ideas and concepts presented in the training. Each participant will submit their own original artifact. Once reviewed, participants will receive electronic communication on whether they met the submission criteria. Participants who do not meet the criteria will be offered support and will have another opportunity to submit their artifact to complete their certification.

## Types of Certifications

A participant can become certified in a training series, which is a combination of pathways from different modules designed by TIER; an individual module; or, in some cases, a standalone pathway. Details of the

different types of certifications endorsed by TIER are outlined in the **Areas of TIER Certifications** section below. Certification series offered may change from year to year to align with the needs across the state. See Appendix B for a list of past certification groupings that, while still valid, are not currently offered.

## Turnaround Training

Once a participant is notified by TIER that they have met the certification requirements, they can offer training in their area of certification in their region or district. Certified trainers will have access to training materials in the TIER Trainer's Portal on the Texas SPED Support website. The only exceptions are the Overview of MTSS pathway in the MTSS Foundations series and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports pathway in the Behavior and Mental Health series. If a participant scores 100% on the posttest for these specific pathways, they will be allowed to offer turnaround trainings for that individual pathway while they work toward finishing the remaining certification requirements.

## Maintaining Certification and Available Support

To maintain certification, certified TIER trainers are expected to engage annually with TIER content through one or more of the following:

- Leading training on TIER content in the area of certification (ESC and LEA trainers)
- Submitting training information to TIER (ESC and LEA trainers)
- Providing coaching support related to TIER content (ESC trainers)
- Supporting MTSS implementation with TIER content (ESC and LEA trainers)
- Facilitating TIER Canvas courses on TEALearn using the TIER Canvas Implementation Support Plan, which is available in the TIER Trainer's Portal (ESC and LEA trainers)
- Attending TIER member meetings (ESC trainers)
- Attending the TIER Community of Practice for Certified Trainers (ESC and LEA trainers)

Trainers who do not actively engage with TIER content will be notified, recognized as "inactive," and may lose access to the TIER Trainer's Portal.

Certified trainers are strongly encouraged to attend the community of practice to receive support. Certified trainers from an LEA may also reach out to a TIER certified trainer at their ESC.

# Areas of TIER Certifications

## TIER Training Series

### MTSS Foundations

**TOT length:** 5 days

**Canvas courses required** for certification

**Artifact required** for certification

The MTSS Foundations TOT is designed for instructional leaders, district-level specialists, and other educators responsible for training and/or implementing MTSS in their region or district. It provides participants with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to facilitate high-quality MTSS training aligned with the MTSS Fidelity of Implementation Rubric from the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. TOT participants will enhance skills necessary to do the following:

- Convey MTSS principles clearly and effectively to stakeholders
- Ensure effective knowledge transfer and engagement
- Develop and lead MTSS problem-solving teams for data-based decision making
- Design assessment and instructional plans that align with important components of MTSS to support all learners
- Integrate linguistically sustaining practices within MTSS
- Use structured planning for ongoing professional learning and implementation

**Please note that this foundational series is a prerequisite for most subsequent certifications.**

MODULE	PATHWAYS
<b>Introduction</b>	Overview of MTSS
<b>Leadership</b>	Creating the Instructional Program Creating an Assessment Plan Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team Ongoing Professional Development and Support (Canvas course) MTSS: Relationship With Other Programs Implementing MTSS
<b>Behavior</b>	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Canvas course)
<b>Decision Making</b>	Using Data to Problem Solve

## Behavior and Mental Health

**Prerequisite:** TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team

**Artifact required** for certification

In this TOT, participants will learn how to guide educators in incorporating PBIS and mental health supports, such as trauma-informed care and restorative practices, within an MTSS framework. This TOT will provide participants with the tools to guide educators in effectively implementing PBIS and mental health practices at the universal, targeted, and intensive levels.

MODULE	PATHWAYS
<b>Behavior</b>	Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports Partnering With Families Within PBIS Universal Examples of PBIS Implementation Targeted PBIS Implementation Intensive PBIS Implementation
<b>Mental Health</b>	Supporting Student Mental Health Within MTSS Social and Personal Competencies Restorative Practices Trauma-Sensitive Schools

## Behavior and Mental Health Extension: Interconnected Systems Framework

**Prerequisite:** Behavior and Mental Health certification **or** specialized background in behavior and mental health with completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team
- Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

**Artifact required** for certification

In this TOT, participants will be equipped to guide educators in establishing an interconnected systems framework (ISF) leadership team and identifying foundational steps for implementing ISF at both the school and district levels. This TOT will also prepare participants to teach others how to evaluate evidence-based practices. The ISF pathways are offered as an extension to the Behavior and Mental Health certificate.

MODULE	PATHWAYS
Behavior	Interconnected Systems Framework: Introduction Interconnected Systems Framework: Getting Started at the District/Community Level Interconnected Systems Framework: Getting Started at the School Level

## Screening and Progress Monitoring

**Prerequisite:** TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team
- Creating an Assessment Plan

This TOT prepares participants to lead educators in effectively implementing screening and progress monitoring within the MTSS framework. Participants will learn how to guide teachers, campus, and/or district leaders in selecting and administering academic and behavioral screening measures, interpreting results, and using data to inform decisions that support student success. Emphasis will be placed on helping educators integrate screening and progress monitoring into a continuous improvement cycle, ensuring that interventions are responsive, targeted, and aligned to student needs. Leaders will leave equipped to train others in building a data-driven culture that strengthens MTSS implementation.

MODULE	PATHWAYS
Screening	Importance of Universal Screening in Academics and Behavior Interpreting Data
Progress Monitoring	The Importance of Progress Monitoring Decision Making

## Standalone Pathway Trainings

### A Shared Vision of MTSS

**Prerequisite:** *TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification*

**Artifact required** for certification

This TOT equips participants with essential strategies and facilitation skills to develop and communicate a shared vision for MTSS with prekindergarten to grade 12 school administrators, MTSS team members, and other stakeholders. Participants will deepen their understanding of MTSS content and facilitation skills to lead collaborative discussions around MTSS to align all stakeholders with a shared vision of MTSS.

### Sharing MTSS Data and Decision Making

**Prerequisite:** *TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification*

This TOT, for ESC trainers only, prepares participants to guide educators in promoting meaningful family and community engagement within an MTSS framework. Participants will learn how to do the following:

- Emphasize shared learning
- Honor contributions from both educators and families
- Apply collaborative strategies for data sharing and decision making

### Building Partnerships Within Families and Communities

**Prerequisite:** *TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification*

This TOT, for ESC trainers only, prepares participants to provide educators with research-based strategies to build meaningful family and community partnerships within an MTSS framework, highlighting the value of collaboration and showcasing real-world examples of effective engagement.

### Implementing MTSS

**Prerequisite:** *TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification*

This TOT, for ESC trainers only, prepares participants to guide educational leaders in implementing an MTSS framework. The training outlines the stages of implementing MTSS at the district, campus, classroom, and student levels. It explores how MTSS can support both academic and nonacademic outcomes, and provides resources, policies, procedures, and professional learning opportunities to strengthen MTSS implementation at the district and campus levels. Additionally, the training discusses districtwide systems and practices that ensure the long-term success of MTSS while fostering continuous improvement and student support.

### Explicit Instruction

**Prerequisite:** *TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification* **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- *Overview of MTSS*
- *Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team*

This TOT prepares participants to guide educators through the explicit instruction framework, exploring how explicit instruction supports student learning. Participants will also examine classroom examples of each feature.

## Reading Instruction: Elementary

**Prerequisite:** TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team

This TOT prepares participants to support effective implementation of MTSS in elementary reading instruction. Participants will learn how to guide educators in deepening their understanding of the core components of the MTSS framework and in exploring how high-quality instruction across all tiers can meet the diverse literacy needs of students. The session will focus on the essential practices of universal (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) reading interventions, emphasizing how these tiers function together to promote student success. Participants will gain practical insights to guide educators in delivering aligned, evidence-based reading instruction that supports improved outcomes for all students.

## Reading Instruction: Secondary

**Prerequisite:** TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team

This TOT prepares participants to guide educators through instructional practices that support the teaching of reading to secondary students. The training delves into how to teach reading across instructional tiers, emphasizing how instruction can be intensified.

## Writing Instruction: Elementary

**Prerequisite:** TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team

This TOT prepares participants to lead educators in implementing MTSS for elementary writing. The training delves into how to use high-quality writing instruction across instructional tiers and identifies how tiered interventions work together within MTSS to increase students' achievement in elementary writing.

## Mathematics Instruction: Elementary

**Prerequisite:** TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations certification **or** completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):

- Overview of MTSS
- Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team

This TOT prepares participants to lead educators in implementing MTSS for elementary mathematics. Participants will learn how to guide teachers and campus and/or district leaders through the foundational knowledge, tools, and practices needed to strengthen MTSS capacity. The training covers the essential components of a cohesive MTSS framework and how to apply high-quality, evidence-based math instruction across all tiers—universal (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3)—to address the diverse needs of students. Emphasis will be placed on helping educators connect tiered supports, use data to inform instruction, and create an aligned system that drives student achievement. Participants will gain practical insights to guide educators in delivering aligned, evidence-based math instruction that supports improved outcomes for all students.

## Using Data to Problem Solve

**Prerequisite:** *TIER Essentials or MTSS Foundations, Screening and Progress Monitoring, and/or District Leadership Team certification* **or** *completion of the following Canvas courses (for ESC specialist staff only):*

- *Overview of MTSS*
- *Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team*

This TOT teaches participants how to use data to problem solve within an MTSS framework. It begins with how to set goals to identify problems and then moves into how educators can use those goals to determine student response to intervention in both academics and behavior. Problem analysis and intervention design at each tier are also reviewed, allowing participants to see how to make the best decisions and plan effective interventions.

## Certification Opportunities

If you are responsible for turning around MTSS training and are interested in becoming a TIER certified trainer, you may register for opportunities as they become available on the Texas SPED Support website. As more content is created and approved, TIER will release additional certification opportunities. Some certifications are only available to ESC staff at this time. Upcoming TIER TOT events and registration information are available on the Texas SPED Support website (<http://sped.support/mtss-tot>). For more information about becoming a TIER certified trainer, email [tier@meadowscenter.org](mailto:tier@meadowscenter.org).



## Appendix B: Certification Groupings No Longer Offered

Each year, a limited number of certifications are offered based on identified needs from an annual needs assessment. By focusing on select certifications annually, we can ensure that participants receive the best possible learning experience while balancing program capacity and demand. The following groupings, while still valid, are not currently offered.

### TIER Essentials

MODULE	PATHWAYS
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of MTSS</li> <li>Roles and Responsibilities Within a Problem-Solving Team</li> <li>Data-Based Individualization Within MTSS</li> <li>Student-Centered Approaches</li> <li>Examples of MTSS Implementation</li> <li>Supports for Special Education Referrals</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating the Instructional Program</li> <li>Creating an Assessment Plan</li> <li>Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team</li> <li>Ongoing Professional Development and Support</li> <li>MTSS: Relationships With Other Programs</li> <li>Your MTSS Plan</li> </ul>

### District Leadership Team

#### Level I: Getting Started With MTSS

MODULE	PATHWAYS
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of MTSS</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team</li> <li>Creating the Instructional Program</li> </ul>
<b>Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Shared Vision of MTSS</li> </ul>

## Level II: Pave the Way With MTSS

<b>MODULE</b>	<b>PATHWAYS</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	Creating an Assessment Plan Your MTSS Plan
<b>Screening</b>	Interpreting Data
<b>Behavior</b>	Partnering With Families Within PBIS

## Decision Making

<b>MODULE</b>	<b>PATHWAYS</b>
<b>Decision Making</b>	Using Data to Problem Solve Diagnostic Assessments in Mathematics Diagnostic Assessments in Behavior