Integrated Universal Data-based Decision Making: Identifying Students In Need of Additional Support

Advancing Evidence. Improving Lives.

Pennsylvania's Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (PA I-MTSS; 2026)

PURPOSE

- This protocol is designed to help grade-level and middle school-high school (MS/HS) content area teams using academic and social-emotional behavioral (SEB) screening and other student-level data to identify students who may need additional support beyond universal instruction and supports (Tier 1).
- Teams will identify data patterns and then develop an action plan to strengthen Tier 1 for individual students. This could include continued monitoring within Tier 1, adjustment to access or engagement, Tier 2 or 3 interventions, caregiver communication, or referral to another appropriate school support process.
- This protocol is intended to be used **after** the *Integrated Universal Data-based Decision Making: Examining and Improving Tier 1 Instruction* so student-level decisions are made in the context of grade-level data patterns.

Who Should Use this Protocol?

Grade-level or MS/HS content-area teams use this protocol after each universal screening or benchmark period. Teams should include educators with the expertise needed to interpret multiple data sets (e.g., academic, SEB, implementation data) and act on the results. This may include one or more of the following:

- Grade-level or content-area educators responsible for universal instruction and supports
- Educators with SEB, mental health, PBIS, and/or counseling expertise
- Specialists, such as interventionists, special educators, English learner specialists, school psychologists
- Administrators or other staff with decision-making authority, as needed

Team Roles

Before beginning, assign team members to the following roles. One person may serve in more than one role.

Role	Responsibility
Facilitator	Keeps the team focused on integrated universal patterns, action planning, and follow-up
Data lead	Prepares or orients the team to the integrated data display
Recorder	Documents key decisions, action steps, owners, and timelines
Follow-up owner	Ensures action steps, communication, and next review steps are completed

Before the Meeting: Prepare Integrated Student-Level Data

The facilitator, data lead, or other assigned team member prepares the student-level data display that allows the team to team to review multiple data sets during the same meeting. These data may come from the same system or from multiple systems, but they should be available together for decision making.

Data to Prepare	Examples	Ready?
Academic screening data	Reading and math composite scores, subskill data, benchmark/risk levels, classroom data	☐
SEB and/or behavior screening data	SEB screener data, behavior event patterns, office discipline referrals, minor behavior data, counselor referrals, teacher nominations	☐
Attendance data	Attendance rate, chronic absence indicators, tardies, early checkouts	☐
Engagement and participation data	Work completion, class participation, active engagement, nurse visits	☐
Implementation data	Fidelity checks, classroom walkthrough data, coaching notes, use of expected instructional or SEB practices	☐
Context and access data	Language proficiency status, cultural/contextual information, special education status, accessibility needs, relevant family/contextual information	☐
Local decision rules	School or district guidance for identifying students for continued monitoring in Tier 1	☐
Tier 1 instruction pattern summary	Completed summary from the protocol, *Integrated Universal Data-based Decision Making: Examining and Improving Tier 1 Instruction*	☐

DECISION-RULE REMINDER

Decision rules are agreed-upon guidelines teams use to interpret data and determine next steps. The rules may describe when students should continue to be monitored within Tier 1, be considered for Tier 2 support, or begin Tier 3 supports. This protocol does not prescribe specific decision rules because guidance may vary by school, grade level, assessment tool, and district. Apply the school's decision rules consistently, and document the data and rationale used during decision making.

Meeting Information

School:		Grade/Content:	
Date:		Screening Window:	
Facilitator:		Recorder:	
Participants:		Expertise Represented:	
Data Sources Used:			

Step 1. Begin With the Tier 1 Context

Briefly summarize the grade-level Tier 1 instruction patterns before identifying students for additional support. This helps the team avoid treating every concern as an individual student issue when there may also be a need to improve Tier 1 instruction.

Tier 1 instruction improvement identified in the companion protocol	
Academic, SEB, attendance, or contextual patterns	
Summary of Tier 1 action plan currently being implemented	
How will the Tier 1 action plan influence student-level decisions?	

Step 2. Review Student-Level Integrated Data

Use the table below or an existing data system to review each student flagged by academic, SEB, attendance, or combined indicators. Add rows as needed.

Student	Reading	Math	SEB	Attendance and Engagement	Context and Access	Integrated Pattern	Needs Team Review?
Example: Student A	Below benchmark; phonics subskill concern	At benchmark	Elevated SEB screener; frequent off-task behavior noted	92% attendance; several tardies; Incomplete independent work; low participation during reading	Current universal supports in place; no new access concerns noted	Reading risk appears connected with engagement/off-task behavior during independent reading routines	Yes — review for possible targeted support

Step 3. Apply Decision Rules and Determine Next Steps

For each student, apply decision rules and determine the most appropriate next action steps (e.g., continued Tier 1 monitoring, an adjustment to Tier 1, or moving to Tier 2 or Tier 3 support).

Student	Data Pattern / Concern	Decision Rule or Rationale Used	Next Step	Assigned Staff / Timeline

Step 4. Check The Match

Before finalizing next steps, check whether the planned support is matched to the student's need and whether academic and SEB factors have been considered, when relevant.

Check	Team Response	Notes / Action Needed
Does the available data suggest the concern is primarily academic, primarily SEB, attendance, engagement-related, or across areas?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure	
Does the planned support match the student's specific need rather than only the student's risk level?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure	
Is the student able to access Tier 1, or are there barriers that need to be addressed first?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure	
Have language proficiency, special education status, cultural background, and other contextual factors been considered?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure	
Do staff with relevant academic and SEB expertise agree with the proposed next steps?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure	

Step 5. Plan Communication and Follow-Up

Document how information will be communicated to relevant staff and caregivers and when student progress or additional data will be reviewed.

Student	Who Needs to Know: (Caregiver, Staff, other)	Communication Plan	Data to Review Next	Review Date

Step 6. Summarize Student-Level Patterns for School-Wide Continuous Improvement

Summarize patterns that may indicate a school-wide or grade-level system need. This summary should be shared with the school-level MTSS/continuous improvement team.

Summary Question	Team Summary
How many students were identified for continued Tier 1 monitoring, Tier 2 consideration, Tier 3, or additional diagnostic review?	
What, if any, common data patterns exist across students?	
Are current Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports sufficient to meet individual student's identified needs?	
What does the school-level MTSS/continuous improvement team need to know or address?	