VTmtss (Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports) Tools - Strengthening the System for the Benefit of All Students

Purpose

To introduce new district-level EST oversight guidance, the EST: Making Connections with VTmtss Self-Assessment tool and share how the VTmtss Team can support the systems-level work in implementing the goals of Act 173.

Slide 1

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact:

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Slide 2

Special Education Rule Change Delays

- Rule 2362 – adverse effect

- Rule 2362.2.5 - allowable methods for determining specific learning disability

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First, for anyone who has not been following the progress of H.716 - a bill that includes a one-year delay of implementation of two of the special ed rule changes, this was signed by Governor Scott last Thursday.

Today's presentation is not specific to these delays, but we hope it will help you in your planning to be ready for July 2023.

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Objectives

This Office Hour consists of two parts:

- A review of the foundations of a system of supports

- A review and discussion of opportunities to improve systemic supports focused on LCAS and EST.

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The first part of today's presentation will be a brief overview of some fundamental elements of a system of supports. This is likely to be familiar material but there will be a few important points of emphasis.

The second part of our presentation will include some discussion about how to prioritize your work on a system of support over the coming year. We will be sharing some new information about the tools we are making available to support you in this work.

VTmtss Tools - Strengthening the System
for the Benefit of All Students
(Revised: June 8, 2022)

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Introduction
- An understanding of VTmtss is crucial to this work.
- Avoid language such as "using your mtss"
- VTmtss is one model of an entire educational system that includes descriptions of supports.
- Any tiered system of supports encompasses all students.

Any multi-tiered system of supports contains *multiple* tiered systems of support such as RtI, PBIS, and Restorative Practices.

MTSS is not a program or thing we do or something that happens. It is a conceptual model that can be useful in organizing and categorizing supports. VTmtss is Vermont's own version of an MTSS and has a strong focus on systemic analysis and improvement. The overall intention of any MTSS model is to create coherence and connection, to avoid piecemeal responses to student concerns and proliferation of disjointed initiatives.

All MTSS models rest on a universal foundation that includes all students. It is not about sorting and separating. It is about building system capacity for inclusion, with a preference for expanding the system to support the student instead of fitting the student to the system.

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Using Data

A well-designed, responsive data system is essential for:

- adjusting instruction to meet student needs
- Identifying students who experience difficulties at the earliest opportunity
- communicating information about what difficulties are arising and;
- documenting how students respond to supports

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There is no way to overstate the importance of good data. It alerts us to student needs and serves as a check on our implicit biases. It helps make our communications clear. We believe that focused work on student data over the next year would be an area to consider. One way to think about the coming rule changes is that they are changes in the type and sources of data used to make decisions about special ed eligibility.

Also, consider metadata – data about the system itself – e.g., when, and where do most eval requests occur? Are our support teams effective? What resources could we add?

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Providing a Continuum of Supports

- Supplementary supports in the classroom
- Consultation with professional peers
- Consultation/planning with teams
- Consultation/support with specialists
- Educational Support Team

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This slide gives a general continuum of supports that we would expect in all schools. We recognize that schools and districts often have unique configurations for teaming and availability of resources – the bullet points on the slide are not meant to indicate an expectation that each point will correspond to a discrete step or team – These are just a general flow of levels of support. There is also no expectation that all students experiencing challenges will necessarily move through all these supports in a stepwise manner.

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Educational Support Team (EST)

- EST will likely become more essential to support special ed evaluation
- EST will need to be focused, developing specific plans and highly reliant on data.
- There will be a greater need for standardization of procedure and equitable use of resources
- District-level oversight of EST across schools is necessary

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Currently, the role and process for the EST varies considerably from school to school and district to district. At the AOE we have been recommending the model of a focused, data-driven EST that typically creates and coordinates intensive, short to medium-term interventions. In the language of tiers, it would be situated at the upper end of tier 2 and into tier 3.

The role of the EST should continue to be to provide supports intended to supplement instruction and facilitate student inclusion in the general ed classroom.

However, it is likely that EST data will be increasingly important if a student is referred for special ed evaluation. This only amplifies the need for good data and good processes. To achieve this uniformly and equitably across schools in an LEA, we are promoting the adoption of formal District level oversight.

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Points of Emphasis

- Effective student supports rely on a progressive system of planned, collaborative teaming.
- A comprehensive data system is essential for determining needs, communicating about needs, and measuring outcomes.
- EST requires District-level oversight and standardization to ensure equity.

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For today, we would like to underline these three points of emphasis. It is important to remember that while our focus today is on some specific areas of school systems, there should always be an awareness of the entire system and the inter-connectedness of the components of the system. In the long run, this intentional systems work will be your best preparation for dealing with the variety of unpredicted changes you will certainly face. The next part of our presentation will include some discussion about how to begin planning and some tools that may be useful.

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Improving Systems of Support

- Culture of all staff responsible for all students

- Assess your current status of LCAS and EST.

- Prioritize - what can you begin to work on immediately that will help you be more ready a year from now.

- Remember long-term systemic improvements

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Every district and sometimes every school in a district is in a different place in terms of their systems of support. And while we wouldn't expect to see every educational environment look exactly the same, we would expect to see a culture of collective responsibility, where every staff member feels responsible for working collaboratively with each other, the community, families, and students to meet every child's needs.

Some of you may have well-developed data systems and procedures for supporting students (your local comprehensive assessment systems or LCAS), while others may feel this is an area of growth. Perhaps your EST does not meet often enough or conduct efficient meetings while a neighboring LEA may have spent the past year creating district-level expectations for all its EST and will begin implementing those procedures in the fall.

Consider the area(s) of student support that can most help you prepare for the year as well as the systemic improvements that will take years to accomplish.

Wherever you are along the continuum, the VTmtss Team can provide support.

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Time to Reflect

1. How do you currently evaluate your local comprehensive assessment system?
2. How do you currently evaluate your EST?
3. What do you learn from these evaluations?
4. How do you use this information to prioritize your work?

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The Waterfall Protocol

For each question, please respond in the chat with the question number and your response, but do not submit your response until I ask you to do so. This provides time to reflect and then the responses to a single question are revealed before the next question is offered.

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Tools to Understand Your
Current Practice

- Making Connections with VTmtss (self-assessment of each essential element of Act 173)
  - EST
  - District-level EST Oversight
  - LCAS

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With the overall system always in mind always, how do you improve and expand your system to address the essential elements of the Act 173: EST, LCAS, CC, and NBPD?

If you haven't yet identified a priority, where might you begin? Or if you are not confident about the fit or rigor of what you have in place, how might you find out what an element should look like, its best practices?

The *Making Connections with VTmtss Act 173 Needs Assessment* series consists of documents in a common format for evaluating current practice in a district and its schools. The series includes one document for each Systems Lever of Act 173 – Educational Support Teams, Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems, Coordinated Curriculum, and Needs-based Professional Development. This series has been revised as a needs assessment tool, ideally to be used in conjunction with the VTmtss Systems Screener, the VTmtss Framework, the VTmtss Driver Diagram, and continuous improvement goal-setting. A recommended process for using these resources to assess and respond to your Act 173 Systems Lever needs can be found on this web page. We encourage all SU/SD to consider their EST and LCAS first.

In addition, the Agency of Education (AOE) has recently identified several critical responsibilities that we recommend that SU/SD assume, as a part of their support of school-level EST work. These responsibilities can be assumed by a new team, or by an existing team of district staff and school administrators (see Recommended Practices below). For the purposes of our guidance, the AOE refers to the LEA team conducting this work as the "District EST Oversight Team." The guidance document describes the core responsibilities and recommended practices for district-level EST oversight.

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EST work begins at the District level

- District Level Oversight

- Making Connections

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We strongly recommend that each district establish an oversight team to standardize EST practice in the schools, assure equitable allocation of district resources, and use EST data to help determine areas for professional learning and system growth. This process is intended to bring representation from each school's EST to a district-level team, to improve communication and a real understanding of the situations schools are encountering.

One task for the district-level oversight team would be to use the EST Making Connections document to assess EST practices.

District-level EST Oversight

https://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-district-level-est-oversight

EST MC online

https://www.cognitoforms.com/VermontAgencyOfEducation/EducationalSupportTeamESTMakingConnectionsWithVTmtss

EST MC print

https://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-est-making-connections-with-vtmtss

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An Effective System of Supports
Needs a Strong LCAS

- Some Special Education rule changes will require gathering data from different resources
- There is a greater need for shared responsibility of all staff to gather and communicate data to communicate student concerns as well as intervention strategies

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In a comprehensive system, there is a place for different types of assessment tools and processes, used for different purposes at different levels of the system: national, state, district, school, and classroom.

Excellent instruction and systemic decision-making require high-quality assessment information. Assessment plays a central role in the assurance of equitable outcomes for all students. When we ensure that our assessment system provides comprehensive and meaningful information, then decisions about students are more likely to be accurate, students are better able to judge their own performance and set new goals, and families are more knowledgeable about how their children are doing and more likely to be partners and advocates for them.

In addition, a comprehensive system can help the district and its schools make positive decisions about their own work – to support effective practices and initiate change when needed. A balanced system recognizes that no single assessment can capture all important aspects of standards and curriculum, nor important outcomes in every domain. Multiple, varied, and recurring assessments are needed for that, particularly well-documented formative assessment in classrooms and progress monitoring of interventions.

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Tools to Help Measure Effectiveness

The Making Connections with VTmtss Series (self-assessment of each essential element of Act 173)
- Coordinated Curriculum
- **Educational Support Teams**
- *Local Comprehensive Assessment System*
- Needs-based Professional Development

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LCAS MC online

https://www.cognitoforms.com/VermontAgencyOfEducation/LocalComprehensiveAssessmentSystemLCASMakingConnectionsWithVTmtss

LCAS MC print

https://education.vermont.gov/documents/lcas-making-connections-with-vtmtss

As I mentioned earlier the Making Connections with VTmtss series address the four essential elements of Act 173 and the recommendation that you begin with EST, LCAS, or both.

Rather than simply tell you about the tool I'd like to take some time to show its value.

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If you are not sure where to begin…

VTmtss Team can provide support by:
1. Phone call Tracy at 802-828-5012
2. TA Request
3. Facilitation of our tools:
   - VTmtss System Screener (identifies the strengths and areas of growth of the components in your system)
   - VTmtss Driver Diagram (organization of a theory of improvement)
4. Alignment with Recovery or CIP Goals
5. Alignment with the goals of grants (e.g., Project AWARE, Restorative Approaches)

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TA Request Form
https://www.cognitoforms.com/VermontAgencyOfEducation/VTmtssTeamTechnicalAssistanceRequestForm

VTmtss listserv

Webpagehttps://education.vermont.gov/student-support/vermont-multi-tiered-system-of-supports/vtmtss-framework-tools

Our tools are designed to work in tandem with the CNA process. We are prepared to support you in identifying a priority goal or in exploring ways to collect additional data about the system to support the goal through the facilitation of our tools (SS, DD, MC).

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Questions & Comments

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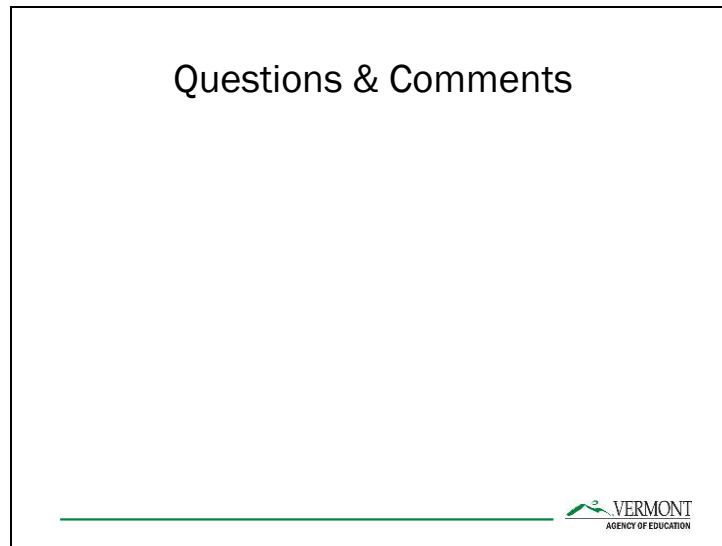
In summary:

Next steps for using VTmtss tools to strengthen your system to the benefit of all students:

Create a culture where all staff are responsible for all students.

Assess your status of your LCAS and EST (school and district-level).

Prioritize your work - What can you begin to work on immediately that will help you be more ready a year from now?

Remember to keep in mind long-term systemic improvements.