

MLSS NEWSLETTER

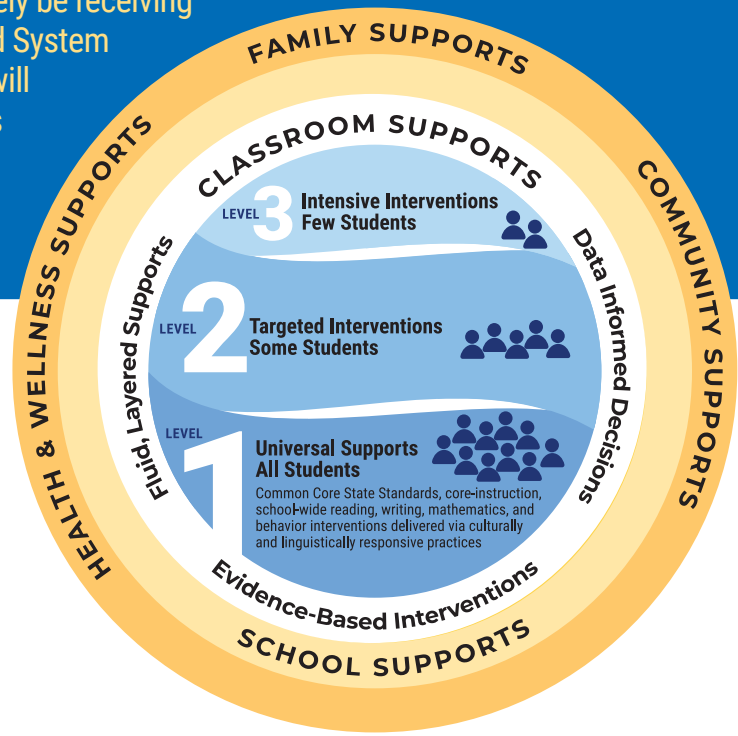


Autumn is upon us, which means we are midway through the first semester of the 20/21 school year. Typically, at this time of the year we have collected data and observations about students who are flagged in our early warning systems or have demonstrated some behavioral or academic concerns. These students may become Student Assistance Team (SAT) referrals but should definitely be receiving Layer 1 Interventions as a part of the school’s Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS). In this issue of “All Things MLSS” we will explore the foundational components of MLSS with a focus on how these components work synergistically to allow schools to meet the needs of all students in real time with the goal of ensuring that ALL students are successful.

Components of Layer 1 in the MLSS

New Mexico’s Multi-Layered System of Supports is a “framework for school personnel to support students by delivering a range of layered interventions based on data-driven and data-informed student needs” (NMPED MLSS Manual). This system allows school personnel to provide appropriate classroom, family, community, health and wellness supports for students in all layers. Evidence-based interventions and data are used to monitor the efficacy of interventions and to determine how a student may need to move through the layers.

The key to providing the correct interventions at each layer lies in having a solid foundational framework. The MLSS Seven Core Components provide a comprehensive structure that describes how an effective school would operate. They are like a pieces of yarn that are woven together to create a blanket of support. Each adds equal value in creating a successful system for addressing the needs of the whole child. But, what are observable and measurable traits of Layer One Components in a typical school?



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1. Data Based Decision Making:

- teacher teams meet regularly to analyze student outcome data
- small group instruction is designed
- evidence-based interventions are selected, monitored and adjusted based on these data
- interim assessments are used in all grade levels in addition to screening tools

2. High Quality Core Instruction and Interventions:

- each grade level has a CCSS aligned core curriculum in math and English
- core curriculum and supplementary materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate and delivered via culturally and linguistically responsive instruction
- the same high-quality curriculum is used for students in all three layers
- school and district leadership monitors the implementation of the core curriculum

3. Informed and Effective Leadership:

- there is a collaborative approach to identifying and providing data-driven interventions to achieve the best outcomes for students
- instructional leaders use non-evaluative observation and feedback cycles to monitor and support teachers in using effective evidence-based interventions
- teachers receive on-going, job-embedded professional development with follow-up mentoring and coaching

4. Collaboration Processes to Provide a Continuum of Supports:

- teachers and wellness staff schedule weekly meetings to collaborate and identify interventions to promote student health and success
- school teams (grade level, department etc.) meet weekly to analyze data, share strategies, plan lessons, and assess the impact of instruction and interventions on student achievement
- School leaders support collaborative structures and hold teams accountable for student achievement and wellness goals

5. Positive School Culture and Climate:

- school-wide behavior norms and expectations are taught to all students
- students practice behavior expectations until they become routine
- core behavioral norms and expectations are consistent across all school environments (classrooms, playground, cafeteria etc.)
- teaching of behavioral expectations is location-specific and the entire staff participates in teaching and supporting these norms
- non-punitive supports are in place for students to focus on appropriate behaviors

6. Health and Wellness Supports:

- districts and charter schools implement an approved Wellness Policy
- all staff acknowledge the impact that physical and behavioral health can have on student learning and academic success
- school and behavioral health services are provided and resources are made available to students and their families through a Community School Framework
- every school has an approved safety plan on which staff and students are trained

7. Family and Community Supports – Family Engagement:

- Family engagement underlies all other components
- School provides training and support for families to understand the process for moving up and down layered interventions
- Schools provide comprehensive academic and health/wellness services for students and their families

The long-term goal of schools using MLSS is to establish school-wide, comprehensive systems that encompass all of the seven essential components. With strong structures in each component, it is easier to identify where and how to provide assistance to students in Layer 1 and, if necessary, more intensified interventions in Layers 2 or 3, with the end resulting in more students achieving success in Layer 1.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- [A short video about how one high school serves all kids using the MLSS approach.](#)
- [Watch a short video about how one elementary school serves all kids using the MLSS approach.](#)
- Community Schools offer an integrated approach to academics, health, social services and community engagement that leads to improved student achievement, stronger families and healthier communities. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

Administrator's Role in PLC – An Essential Element to Students' Success

Some schools call them Professional Learning Communities (PLC); some call them Professional Learning Teams (PLT). Regardless of the name, these groups have the same goal in mind: to positively affect student achievement. But what, exactly, does the PLC do? According to the work of Dufour, Dufour and Eaker, the three big ideas of the PLC are:

- 1. Focus on Learning** – ensure high levels of learning for all students
- 2. Build a Collaborative Culture** – create a system of success for students not “pockets of greatness”
- 3. Focus on Results** – continually analyze the work of the PLC to determine the impact on student success

When you take a closer look at the PLC process and MLSS it evident how the two structures are intertwined and that the work of the PLC drives the success of the universal interventions in Layer 1. The administrator also plays a crucial role and is responsible for ensuring that the time spent in these meetings results in a positive impact on student achievement.

The table on the following page compares the function of the administrator and the PLC with the Seven Core Components of Layer 1 in MLSS. This table makes visible the synergy required to create Layer 1 in a Multi-Layered System of Supports. It requires the hard work and collaboration of a group of highly qualified educators as well as the sound leadership and support of an actively involved administrator to ensure that all students receive the supports they need.



BIG IDEAS OF THE PLC	CORE COMPONENTS OF MLSS	APPLICATION IN THE PLC	ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
<p>Focus on Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Quality Core Instruction and Interventions • Data Based Decision Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC discusses the expected learning outcomes based on CCSS & NM state standards • TLC analyzes the data used to measure student outcomes (examples: student work samples, interim assessment, early warning data) • PLC creates action plans with evidence based interventions and instructional strategies to utilize with students who are experiencing difficulty and for students who need to be challenged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in PLC meetings • Set the agenda for the meeting • Communicate to the teachers the materials they are required to bring to the PLC • Analyze student data before the meeting • Direct data conversations during the PLC • Ask probing questions • Keep the meeting solution oriented • Encourage the PLC and communicate to them that you believe they have the expertise to make an impact on student achievement
<p>Build a Collaborative Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed and Effective Leadership • Collaboration Processes • Positive School Culture • Family and Community Supports • Health and Wellness Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC pools the resources and expertise to select the appropriate interventions and strategies for students • PLC shares the leadership for selecting high-quality instructional materials • PLC collaboratively creates action plans and determines the measurement for success • Determine professional development needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make data accessible in a format that is easy to read, bring in experts to train staff on interpreting data • Teach collaboration and conflict management skills • With PLC, develop norms or learning agreements • Teach PLC members to lead meetings and share decision making • Schedule professional development targeted to the needs of the PLC
<p>Focus on Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Core Components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine how data and intervention plans will be communicated to families • Execute interventions and action plans with integrity • PLC hold each other accountable for results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor action plans and deliverables for efficacy • Perform frequent, non-evaluative observations and feedback sessions with teachers • Set goals with teens and celebrate success with teachers, students and families



OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:

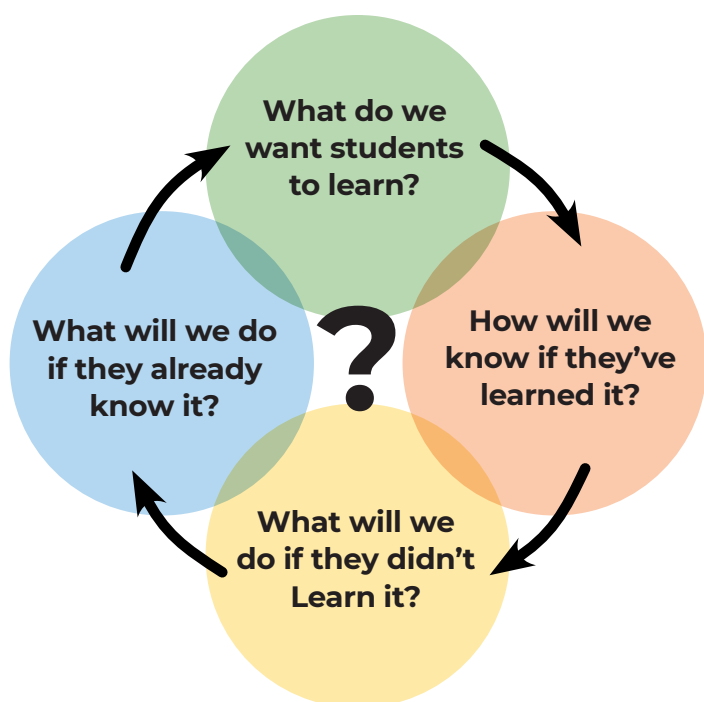
- The crucial role of the administrator in the PLC process in this article: Educational Leadership, February 2009/ Volume 66/Number 5. [Read the article by clicking here.](#)
- The Professional Learning Community and how to improve PLCs at your school by visiting this website: [Click here to visit the website.](#)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Best Practices Revitalized In New Mexico’s Multi-Layered System of Supports

Imagine a restaurant that served only one dish made the exact same way with the exact same ingredients for every customer every day. You would imagine that restaurant would not appeal to the tastes and nutritional needs of a broad clientele and would probably go out of business. It is a well-known adage that one size does not fit all—not in the world of foodies and certainly not in education. Over 25 years ago CAST, a nonprofit education research and development organization began using brain science to study how we learn. This research resulted in the creation of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework that is used all over the world to make learning more inclusive for all students.

In short, the UDL Framework offers guidance to educators to tailor instruction, learning goals, assessment and materials to meet the needs of ALL students. The UDL Framework puts learners first. It suggests that educators be flexible and plan lessons in a way that will minimize barriers while maximizing learning. UDL includes recommendations for educators to consider when asking the following questions about instruction:

- What do I want kids to know?
- What are the barriers to learning?
- How will I eliminate the barriers?



The goal of maximizing learning and minimizing barriers is addressed via the Three Principles for Educators in the UDL Framework:

The first principle is **Student Engagement**. It focuses on why students should choose to engage in learning by finding a purpose and motivation for the task. It is important to understand that not all students engage in learning in the same way. Some may prefer group work while others may work best individually. Some students prefer a strict schedule or routine while others may work best in a more spontaneous environment. Planning a variety of ways for students to engage in their lessons will give them a voice and choice and will increase active engagement in the task.

Allowing multiple **Representations** for students to acquire knowledge is the second principle. Teachers should provide instruction in many ways for students by utilizing models, graphics, and animations and by activating students' background knowledge to support vocabulary development in the academic environment. This principle reminds educators to ask, "What do my students need to learn and how can I best help them learn?"

Allow students to be resourceful in how they will demonstrate their learning. This is the third principle of **Action and Expression**. Some students may better express their learning orally while others may be more skilled with writing. Some students may be skillful using charts or visual representations to show understanding, while others may convey knowledge better in a narrative format. Some students shine during collaboration times or group presentations. Media and technology could be the conduit to success for others. Providing a menu of options from which students can choose will provide a more robust way for teachers to assess student learning.

The Universal Design for Learning guidelines support New Mexico educators to teach ALL kids in our classrooms. Our schools are filled with students from many cultures and backgrounds, who speak many languages and have a variety of strengths and challenges. UDL provides ideas for educators to use to lift these scholars to embrace their uniqueness and become confident learners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[View current guidance and access online resources.](#)