



Implementing MTSS in Cambridge Public Schools

Background & Core Challenge

Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) serves just under 7,000 students across 17 schools, from pre-K through grade 12. Despite a low student-teacher ratio and strong community support, CPS confronted persistent achievement gaps in literacy and numeracy, uneven implementation of core instruction, and fragmented intervention processes. District leaders recognized that, without a unified system of supports, students who struggled academically lacked consistent and timely help.

To address these challenges, CPS committed to a full-scale rollout of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in the 2023-24 school year. The district partnered with EduSolve to anchor MTSS in best practices and evidence-based protocols, ensuring that every decision, from universal instruction to intensive intervention, was grounded in data and aligned to district priorities.



Laying the Foundation: Tiered Instruction & Intervention

At the heart of MTSS is a three-tier model of instruction and support:

- Tier 1 (Universal Instruction): High-quality, differentiated teaching delivered to all students in every classroom.
- Tier 2 (Targeted Supports): Small-group interventions for students identified through universal screening as needing extra help.
- Tier 3 (Intensive, Individualized Support): One-on-one or very small-group instruction tailored for students with the greatest instructional needs.

EduSolve's Role

- **Universal Instruction Audit:** We observed and scored Tier 1 classrooms against a rigorous observational tool, identifying variability in differentiation strategies, use of formative assessments, and engagement techniques.
- **Calibrating Intervention Intensity:** Using a "propensity-matching" approach, EduSolve helped CPS fine-tune the length, frequency, and instructional focus of Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports—ensuring students received precisely the dose of intervention needed to accelerate learning.
- **Staffing & Resource Alignment:** By mapping student needs to existing staff roles, the district redeployed reading specialists and math coaches into school-based teams, reducing reliance on occasional pull-out tutors and strengthening in-building capacity.

Outcome

Within one year, CPS achieved over 90% fidelity to the Tier 1 instructional framework, with all teachers implementing at least three evidence-based differentiation strategies weekly.



Early Identification: Universal Screening & Diagnostic Assessment

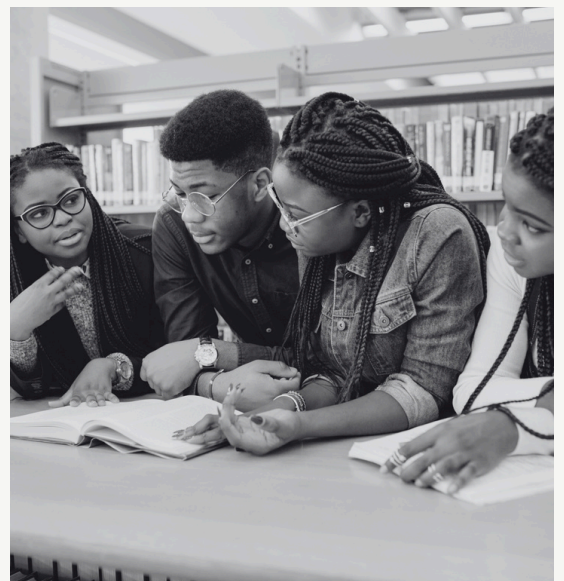
A core MTSS principle is to catch learning gaps before they widen. CPS instituted universal literacy and numeracy screenings three times per year, using research-validated measures.

EduSolve's Role

- **Screeners Selection:** Guided district teams to choose brief, reliable tools for phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and computational fluency.
- **Data Interpretation Training:** Led professional learning sessions for teachers and coaches on setting cut-scores, interpreting risk profiles, and making data-driven placement decisions.
- **Diagnostic Follow-Up:** Developed site-based protocols for quick in-depth diagnostics when screeners flagged students—ensuring that Tier 2 or Tier 3 placements were based on both screening and diagnostic evidence.

Outcome

Screening participation hit **100%**, and identification timelines shrank from eight weeks after school start to **two weeks**, allowing interventions to begin far sooner.





Ensuring Progress: Ongoing Monitoring & Data-Based Decision Making

MTSS demands continuous feedback loops. CPS now employs weekly or biweekly benchmark checks, paired with structured team meetings to review student trajectories.

EduSolve's Role

- **Dashboard Development:** Built a simple, school-level dashboard that tracks each student's benchmark progress, intervention group adjustments, and goal attainment.
- **Team Protocols:** Established three levels of data meetings:
 - Universal Team Meetings (Tier 1): Review district-wide trends—attendance, screening data, and overall proficiency rates.
 - Targeted Team Meetings (Tier 2): Focus on small-group data, adjusting group composition or instructional strategies as needed.
 - Intensive Case Conferences (Tier 3): Convene a planning team (including specialists, families, and classroom teachers) to design highly individualized learning plans.
- **Rapid Cycle Problem-Solving:** Trained staff in a structured "Plan-Do-Study-Act" approach, enabling swift adjustments when students stalled.

Outcome

Over the year, Tier 2 students averaged a growth of 1.2 grade levels in reading and math, and Tier 3 students saw a 1.5 grade-level gain.



Building Leadership & Infrastructure

Sustainable MTSS requires more than good practices—it demands robust leadership and systemic supports.

EduSolve's Role

- **Role Definition:** Worked with CPS's central office to embed an MTSS coordinator role within Teaching & Learning and to realign job descriptions for coaches and specialists.
- **Performance Goals:** Integrated MTSS-related objectives into principal evaluation frameworks, ensuring site leaders prioritized the model's fidelity.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Launched quarterly PLCs where teachers shared successes, vetted intervention strategies, and refined screening and progress-monitoring practices.

Outcome

By year's end, all 17 school leaders reported confidence in MTSS processes, and CPS began planning for peer-led coaching cycles to deepen instructional refinement.

→ Strategic Alignment & Core Academics Focus

Aligning MTSS to district priorities ensures that resources—and student learning—remain central. CPS's strategic vision prioritizes "Rigorous Core Academics" and "Equitable Access to Instruction."

EduSolve's Role

- **Crosswalk Exercises:** Facilitated workshops where MTSS goals and strategies were mapped directly to the strategic plan's academic priorities.
- **Resource Reallocation:** Guided budget realignments so that savings from reduced contract redundancies were invested in reading coaches, high-impact tutoring, and expanded math instructional materials.
- **Ongoing Review:** Established a semi-annual MTSS strategic review with district leadership to ensure interventions remained tightly linked to performance goals.

Outcome

CPS rechanneled over \$600,000 into core academics initiatives within the first year, reinforcing both universal instruction and targeted supports.

→ Leadership Insight

Dr. Karyn Grace, CPS's Chief of Student Services, captures the district's transformation: "We're hyper focused on core academics and literacy for all, with streamlined interventions that have led to a 12% boost in ELA in a single year." This emphasis on literacy and numeracy underscores Cambridge's commitment to ensuring every student thrives.

Broad Impacts & Next Steps

- **Improved Inclusion (LRE):** With robust Tier 1 instruction and early supports, fewer students require pull-out special education services, increasing in-class participation in the Least Restrictive Environment.
- **Cohesive Tier 1 Instruction:** Universal Differentiation fidelity now exceeds 90%, creating a consistent, high-quality instructional experience across all classrooms.
- **Data Culture:** Teachers and leaders alike speak the same data language—screeners, benchmarks, and growth metrics—enabling sharper decision-making at every level.

Looking Ahead, CPS plans to:

- Expand MTSS into advanced content areas (e.g., algebra readiness, early writing fluency).
- Pilot peer-coaching networks to sustain instructional improvements from within.
- Refine predictive analytics to anticipate student needs even before screening flags concerns.

By integrating MTSS deeply into its systems, Cambridge Public Schools has not only built capacity for targeted supports but has also elevated universal instruction—ensuring that every child experiences the rigorous, responsive teaching they deserve.