



## Step Three: ADAPT MULTI-TIERED FSCP TOOLS, INCLUDING SPECIFIC SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORTS (More About How)

### Demonstration Tiered Stories from the Field

Stories help people think about how new ideas or shifts in practice can be applied to their day-to-day lives. As stakeholders shift to family, school, and community partnering, it might be helpful to begin collecting their own stories. A strategy might be to share ideas in faculty or PTO/PTA meetings, or have a venue where both families and educators highlight positive experiences – such as a link on a website or an entryway bulletin board. Stories can lend courage and practical guidance during times of change. They can celebrate successes and demonstrate challenges. These stories are categorized by tiers focus on implementing data-based action plans by applying tools and resources, but most have implications for all families and educators. These stories have been shared by stakeholders during the past six years or taken from the literature and in some cases, are a combination of experiences.

#### Universal Tier: Family-Teacher Organization and Technology Partnering

A school's family-teacher organization decided to ask the school leadership for a possible task force to work with teachers, technology staff and families so as to assess needs and develop a family technology partnering plan. The organization had been reaching out to every family, welcoming those that were new to the school and personally inviting, through family to family calls and emails, every family to become involved in their child's learning, in a way that works for them. In doing so, it became apparent that there seemed to be confusion and disparity in the use of the school's technology. Also, there seemed to be a wide range of accessibility and skill among family members and differences in staff's use of the electronic systems from class to class, teacher to teacher. The leadership team welcomed the idea, as this had been on a "to do" list for some time, but hadn't seemed a priority and staff seemed to be challenged in meeting other requirements and solving other issues. The idea of tapping family knowledge, skill, and resources seemed important and helpful. The team asked for staff volunteers and was pleased that so many were eager to join in and address the issue. A suggestion was made to include students – as they have expertise in technology, home (what their families might need to partner electronically), and school. It became apparent that by "putting the 'virtual learning community' on the agenda" important issues surfaced immediately. These included: diverse languages, accessibility, norms for timely posting of electronic grade book information, continuum of staff skills in creating websites, unclear texting policies and practices, and unclear expectations for students and families. The multi-stakeholder task force developed various committees that researched resources, effective partnering practices, existing tools, and performed a school-community technology needs assessment, reaching out to every family. They used the data and information to create a "living" partnering technology plan which is implemented in numerous venues, by all stakeholders and is continually available, updated, and revised according to needs, feedback. There is now consistency among classes and teachers; and families have clear expectations for how to engage in technology for supporting learning, communicating with staff, and partnering with their students. Students were empowered to



partner with all the adults in their lives and actually instructed many in workable solutions between home and school.

## **Targeted and Intensive Tiers: MTSS Behavioral and Academic Individualized Problem Solving Teams and the Multi-Disciplinary IEP Team**

A school had three different teams that supported students who might be struggling in academic or behavioral learning: one devoted to behavioral concerns, one focusing on academic concerns, and one who led the special education process. The teams had some common members and also, some unique to each. The school mental health professional (in this situation, the school psychologist) was on each team and had been exploring resources and options for how to specifically and effectively include families as active team members. He and other team members were not directly doing so, except in the special education process as required by law, ensuring sharing of rights, due process procedures, and compliance. The school psychologist had been talking to colleagues and they together had been sharing research, information, tools, and resources. He talked with his three teams and they were open to the idea, but worried about how it could all happen time-wise and how staff would react. He talked with the school leadership about possibly shifting some teams and also, developing a consistent protocol for supporting families as team members.

At first there was hesitation, as the perception was that the process seemed to be working. The school psychologist asked if he might have some time on a faculty meeting agenda to share some of the research about how families can support learning at home to improve student achievement and behavioral outcomes. With permission, he also shared some articles and sample tools with staff, tied to the information that was presented. Some classroom teachers were unsure about his, feeling that teams needed to meet without families so as to comfortably share issues and expertise. It was decided to take a few months and study the issue, develop some possible protocols and systems to present. A group with a classroom teacher representative, all three teams representatives, and leadership met and mapped out a pilot plan. They also included some family representatives from the parent-teacher organization and school accountability committee, and those who have students with disabilities.

The final plan was presented and accepted as a pilot for the coming year. It included the following components:

- Beginning of the year: sharing information about MTSS, the individualized problem solving team, and special education process with all staff and families from both leadership and individual classroom teachers;
- Putting links on the website for families and staff with information on how teams work, how families and staff are active partners, and specific team member roles;
- Specifying a staff person to help collaboratively consult with family members and staff before team meetings; include a video of how a team might work;
- Creating one MTSS “individualized intervention team” with members fluctuating depending on specific student concerns (academic or behavioral), grade levels, involved adults etc.; families will participate as team members when their individual student’s progress is the focus;



- Linking “IEP” team with MTSS individualized intervention team with representatives participating as needed in supporting families so there is seamless process and service delivery if a disability is suspected and/or identified;
- Focusing on the student’s learning in multiple settings and with coordinated, layered supports from the adults in his/her life.

There would be ongoing feedback collected from participants and monitoring of student progress would take place in the team at regular intervals as indicated by student need. Team partnering effectiveness review would occur quarterly with revisions made according to results.

More information on how to compile and share partnering stories is available from the Harvard Family Research Project: *Create Your Own Toolkit: Building Your Family Engagement Skills and Knowledge*. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/professional-development/create-your-own-case-toolkit-getting-started>