

# **1. Districtwide Student Support Strategies**

## **MTSS and School-Wide Support Plans**

In SY 2022-23, the District required all schools to use Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and develop support plans for high-risk students through an MTSS team. Teams met weekly or bimonthly. The District assigned a dedicated MTSS Facilitator to 38 high-needs schools. Sites that were not designated as “high need” used Title 1 or ESSER funds to hire a dedicated facilitator. Schools without a full time MTSS Facilitator designated an MTSS Lead to coordinate team efforts and document tiered interventions.

MTSS Facilitators and Leads provided site training regarding the MTSS process, Synergy MTSS, and best practices in implementing interventions. MTSS Facilitators and Leads regularly documented MTSS meetings and student support using Synergy. Specialists from the African American (AASSD), Native American (NASS), Asian-Pacific Islanders and Refugee services (APARSS), and Mexican American (MASSD) student services departments served on the site MTSS team to provide additional Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 support for these populations.

The MTSS team continued to monitor systematic practices and provide support to the MTSS Facilitators and MTSS Leads to ensure that the MTSS process was implemented. Site visits were frequent and there was increased support for first year MTSS Facilitators and MTSS Leads.

In the 2022-23 school year, the MTSS team focused on creating an MTSS Needs Assessment Action plan by bringing together a group of stakeholders and using existing information to strengthen the MTSS process across the district. An MTSS Committee was formed in Spring 2023 and an action plan was finalized during the summer (Appendix-#, **MTSS Needs Assessment Action plan**). To implement the plan in SY2023-24, the MTSS team will provide professional learning opportunities through the Academic Leadership Team (ALT), Instructional Leadership Academy (ILA) and Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Academy (CIPDA) to ensure that all administrators and MTSS Facilitators and Leads are equipped to implement the plan.

## **Drop-out Prevention**

Dropout Prevention Specialists provide services to all schools within the District. Specialists make an in-person visit to elementary schools each semester and are on call throughout the entire school year. Middle schools receive in-person visits quarterly. Middle school dropout rates and attendance are monitored during the year and interventions are provided as needed. Services at the high school level are much more hands on. Efforts are made to keep students from leaving school prior to graduation and to return students to school should they leave. Dropout Specialists act as liaisons between the school and the family, advocate for students, and collaborate with site-

based staff to develop plans to support the student's efforts towards graduation.

The Dropout Prevention team uses various strategies to support students and families who may be at risk for dropping outs. These include:

- **Home visits:** Dropout Prevention Specialists visit students in their homes to facilitate the student's return to an academic setting. Whether the student has been dropped due to excessive absences, is demonstrating a decline academically, or exhibiting negative behaviors, Dropout Prevention Specialists will meet with the family to try to find a compromise that ensures the student's return to school. Home visits are made on as needed basis, and the Specialists meet with the family at the family's convenience day or night. During the 2022-2023 school year, over 550 home visits were completed by eight Dropout Prevention Specialists.
- **Monitoring and Mentorship:** Dropout Specialists work diligently to build a rapport with students during the school year. Acknowledging their presence, words of encouragement, advocating for, and providing a safe space for students can dramatically increase the student's desire to be in school.
- **Providing Alternative options:** Dropout Prevention staff often collaborate with Teachers, Counselors, MTSS Facilitators and Site Administration to find alternative options to keep students in school. Options include credit recovery classes, schedule reduction, work-study credits, and concurrent classes.
- **Site-based Steps to Success:** Site-based Steps to Success is a "boots on the ground" program where Dropout Prevention Specialists and members of that site's faculty and staff, make an unscheduled visit to a student's home. The goal of the visit is to have the student return to school and graduate. Sites determine the criteria they want to focus on for each Steps to Success. Dropout Prevention also initiates Steps to Success visits based on monitoring student absences at sites that could result in an increase in student dropouts. All Site faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in these site visits.
- **Step by Step:** Step by Step is Dropout Prevention's transition to high school program for all 8th grade students. This presentation helps 8th grade students to understand how grades, credits and attendance are tied together, what to do if they become credit deficient and the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.
- **Pima County Shelter Collaboration:** In SY2022-23, Dropout Prevention began working to identify students who were not attending school due to homelessness. Many of these families are not familiar with the opportunities

available to them and their students. Dropout Specialists met with families experiencing homelessness to inform them of the services and support available to support students return to school. The drop-out prevention team made quarterly visits to the shelters.

### **Community Schools and Preschool Programs (CSPP)**

Research has shown that high-quality preschool programming and after school programming is instrumental in dropout prevention. The CSPP standards-based curriculum promotes social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development and the teachers create a high-quality learning environment that follows best practices and provides individualized instruction. This approach to learning promotes routines and supports meaningful experiences and relationships with peers and caregivers. Children explore, discover, and develop critical thinking through intentional experiences and studies.

In SY 2022-23, the district expanded preschool services and options for families, providing both part- and full-time hours as well as free and tuition programming to meet the needs of our diverse populations. The district offered services at two infant and early learning centers, Brichta and Schumaker, serving children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years of age. All the programs provided priority placement for TUSD employees, McKinney Vento, and refugee families. The department also provided families at elementary schools with school aged before and after school programs and partners with KIDCO to expand services at more TUSD schools.

In addition, the CSPP department partnered with schools for Kinder Round Up and hosted Kinder fairs at Bricht and Schumaker. Through grant funding, before and after school programs were provided to families free of cost for this school year.

### **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)**

In SY22-23, the AVID Elective course was offered at 8 middle schools and 7 high schools. The AVID Elective curriculum is designed to engage students in the development and growth of foundational skills for college and career readiness. The curriculum also includes a learning log in which students reflect on their growth as a student, GPA tracking, and credit completion. In addition, exploration of post-secondary opportunities occurs through field trips, guest speakers, and research. To strengthen the pathway into high school, AVID middle school students visit feeder high schools to explore course options including ALE and CTE courses. In SY2022-23 AVID Partnership Days between Doolen and two AVID elementary feeders, Davidson and Wright were established. In this initiative eighth grade students mentor 5th graders in organization, reading skills, and the writing process.

To support the mission statement of AVID in closing the opportunity gap, professional learning is facilitated throughout the school year for AVID and non-AVID

site educators. The focus includes building relational capacity, use of WICOR strategies to increase student engagement and higher order thinking and breaking down barriers for students to engage in learning and academic pathways.

### **Catalina Online Learning Experience (COLE)**

For the 2022-2023 school year Catalina Online Learning Experience (COLE) worked with the Waters Center for Systems Thinking to provide staff professional development on how to create and implement operational processes within the school. For example, the school developed a protocol for reaching out to students who were not making adequate progress in completing their courses. Teachers divided up students and made personal phone calls to help motivate students to complete their courses. As a result of this strategy, COLE was able to increase the number of students who graduated. In December there were 27 graduates on-track to graduate; by May, 71 students had graduated; and by the end of the school year the total number of graduates was 108. In SY2023-24, the Tucson Unified Virtual Academy (TUVA) will merge with COLE to offer asynchronous courses.