

# Michigan's Children

Linking Early Childhood to the Early Elementary  
Years to Improve Student Outcomes and Reduce  
the Achievement Gap

November 10, 2012

[www.michiganschildren.org](http://www.michiganschildren.org)

# Who We Are

- Michigan's Children is a statewide, independent voice for children and their families. We work with lawmakers, business leaders, and communities to make Michigan a place where all children have the opportunity to thrive.
- At Michigan's Children, we advocate for programs and services that support children and their families from cradle to career, with a focus on Michigan children of color and children from low-income families.

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which  
you can use to change the world.”*

— Nelson Mandela

*“Education is our passport to the future, for  
tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for  
it today.”*

— Malcolm X

We Know What It Takes to Get a Child to  
College and Career Readiness

AND

We Know What It Takes To Reduce  
Disparities in Educational Achievement

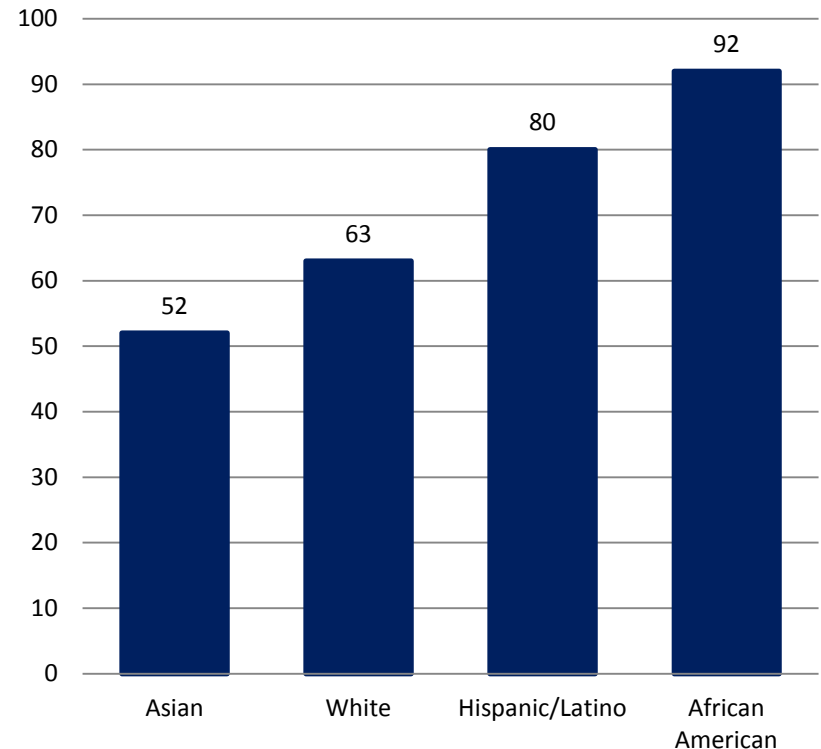
# The Achievement Gap Begins Early and Grows Over Time

- Begins prenatally with adverse conditions before or during pregnancy
- Evident at birth with low birthweight and prematurity
- Differences in cognitive development emerge as young as nine months of age
- Differences in vocabulary by age 3
- Differences in school readiness at start of kindergarten
- Differences in reading and math skills by the end of third grade
- Differences in high school completion
- Differences in earning potential in adulthood

# The Third Grade Reading Benchmark

- Up until the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, most children are learning to read; and beginning in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, they are reading to learn.
- Nearly half of 4<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks of any subject require grade-level proficiency in reading.
- In 2011, Michigan had the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest achievement gap in the nation between White fourth graders and African American fourth graders.
- Children who have lived in poverty and are not reading proficiently in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are 3 times more likely to dropout of school than children who have never lived in poverty.

Percentage of MI 4th Graders Not Proficient in Reading by Race



(Source: 2011 MI Kids Count Data Book)

# Why Start in Early Childhood?

- We know that high quality early care and education works and has the greatest impact on kids most at-risk of being unprepared for school
- GSRP:
  - improves school readiness
  - increases early math and print awareness among kindergarten students
  - reduces grade retention
  - increases the 4<sup>th</sup> grade MEAP scores
  - Increases on-time high school completion, particularly for students of color
- Evidence-based home visiting programs have shown to increase literacy and improve school readiness while promoting a safe and healthy home environment and ensuring healthy development

# Why Does a Birth to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade (B-3<sup>rd</sup>) Frame Matter?

- The K-12 system alone cannot tackle the educational disparities that begin before students enter kindergarten and continue to grow. Issues that the K-12 system faces with limited ability to adequately address include the following.
  - Too many children start school unprepared due to limited access to high quality early learning programs
  - With nearly 1 out of 4 MI kids living in poverty, too many students are distracted by hunger, housing insecurity, and family mobility issues
  - Under-invested public health care and mental health systems result in too many students with unidentified and/or untreated socio-emotional/behavioral health issues, physical health issues, and learning disabilities
  - Students who miss too much instructional time due to chronic absence
  - Too many children lose ground during the summer months



# Why Does a Birth to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade (B-3<sup>rd</sup>) Frame Matter?

Existing high quality early childhood programs aren't sufficient to reduce disparities in child well-being due to the following:

- Insufficient funding and capacity to serve all eligible infants and toddlers in evidence-based 0-3 programs and 3-4 year olds in pre-k programs
- Structural barriers to access high quality child care programs
- Vastly insufficient funding to address the socio-emotional needs of young children ages 0-5 and their families
- Too many children from low-income families and children of color can't access a pediatric medical home to address health and development needs
- Children who access high quality early education programs may then go on to achieve varying educational success in elementary schools

# Evidence of Success

- Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland began implementing the PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> approach in 2000. During that time:
  - The district's population of English Language Learners increased 103%
  - The number of students receiving a free or reduced lunch went up 44%.
- Their aligned program had astonishing results.
  - Improved the proportion of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders reading proficiently or above to 88.9%,
  - Shrank its 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement gap by 29 percentage points
  - Increased the number of students taking at least one Advanced Placement exam by 25 percentage points to 61.5% – almost 2.5 times that of the national average.
  - nearly 77% of all graduating seniors enroll in college.

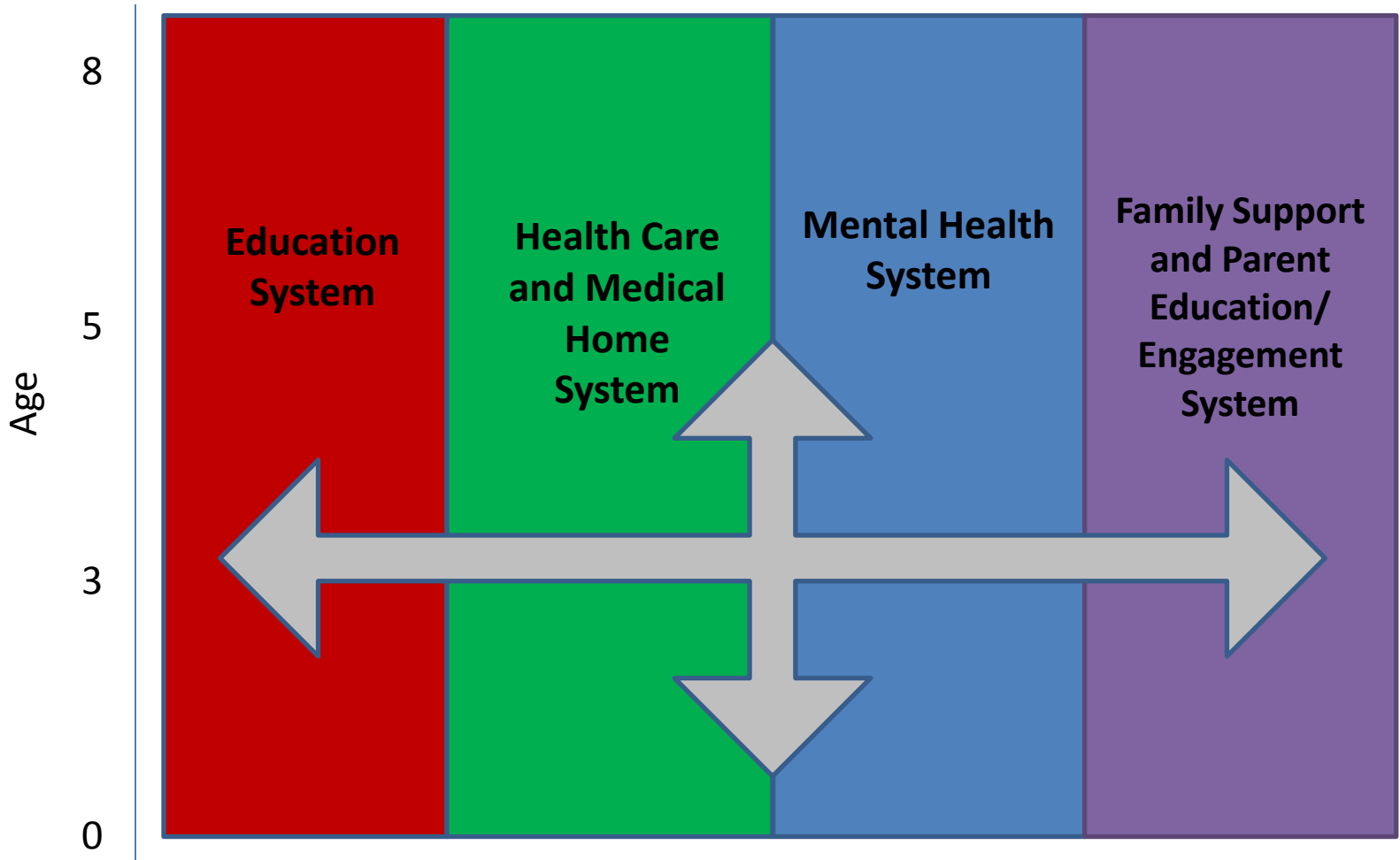
# What is a Birth to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade System?

- Purpose of a B-3<sup>rd</sup> system:
  - Merge the best and most critical components of early childhood and K-3/K-12 that result in better outcomes for kids
  - Create seamless transitions between early childhood and K-3
  - Reduce/eliminate educational achievement gaps
- A B-3<sup>rd</sup> system will ensure students:
  - Develop strong foundational skills (literacy/communication and math)
  - Develop social and emotional competence
  - Establish patterns of engagement in school and learning

The systems that touch kids were set-up in silos and we know there are challenges in both early childhood and K-3/K-12.

A comprehensive B-3<sup>rd</sup> system aims to coordinate and integrate all of these systems to best serve children, particularly children who are likely to struggle the most.

# What Does a Comprehensive B-3<sup>rd</sup> System Look Like?



Systems working together

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# Critical Early Childhood Components

- The early childhood system was created to serve children who are most at-risk of adverse outcomes like being unprepared for kindergarten, so *quality* has become a key component.
- Key quality components of early childhood programs that can continue into elementary schools include:
  - Activities and an environment that promote all domains of children’s development: cognitive, physical, social, emotional, language and literacy, and approaches to learning.
  - Small group sizes and low child-to-provider ratios.
  - Formative observational assessments.
  - Parent/family engagement and responsiveness to the needs and issues of parents /families.
  - Culturally competent policies and practices.
  - Developmental screenings at regular intervals.
  - Linkages for families to health, mental health and other community supports.

# Critical K-3/K-12 Components

- The K-12 system was created for mass public education; and the structures, policies, and practices that have been in place for many years have made it more difficult for the K-12 system to adapt to students' changing needs.
- BUT, in an ever changing political world, some components of K-12 have changed like the notion of accountability and data driven outcomes.
- Some key components of K-12 that can be brought down to early childhood include:
  - Data to inform practice
  - Age-appropriate assessments
  - Understanding expectations of the common core curriculum in K-12 and what that means for learning before kindergarten

# Strategies for a B-3<sup>rd</sup> System

- Embrace at all levels a P-20 or cradle-to-career system rather than separate early childhood education and K-12 systems
- Foster and promote leadership that will embrace other sectors and push for a coordinated and integrated B-3<sup>rd</sup> system
- Adequately fund a B-3<sup>rd</sup> system
- Create common understanding of core quality components that must be part of a B-3<sup>rd</sup> framework
- Align common standards, curricula, and age-appropriate assessments
- Create a data system that strengthens and extends the current K-12 data system down to early childhood to inform policies and practices
- Provide professional development that focuses on the needs of a B-3<sup>rd</sup> system with a developmentally appropriate, child and family-focused lens
- Encourage co-location of early childhood programs within elementary schools to foster collaboration
- Ensure family and community engagement throughout B-3<sup>rd</sup> system and address family needs utilizing community networks



# Ingham Intermediate School District

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# 2005-2006

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## Where we started...

- Started building awareness of achievement gaps for subgroups across special education and general education administrators based on new accountability pieces put in place from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) -AYP and Special Ed quality benchmarks
- High special education referral rates across county
- With these groups started building consensus that we needed to do something different
  - started working with consultants, researching models, brainstorming options



# Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Formally known as Response to Intervention (RtI)

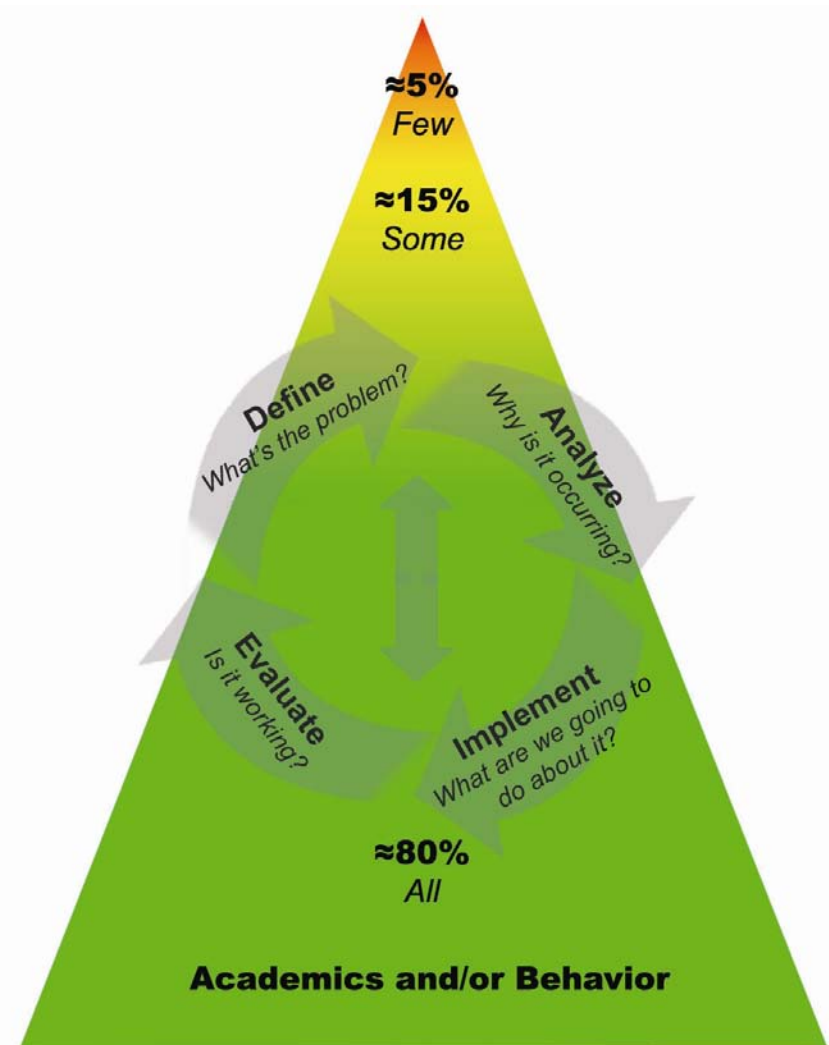
- ... provide high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and
- ... use learning rates over time and level of performance to
- ... make important educational decisions.



# Key Features Of MTSS

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- Research-based instruction, strategies and interventions
- Universal screening
- Data-based decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Progress monitoring
- Shared leadership
- Family and community involvement



# 2008

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- IDEA ARRA stimulus funding became available; all of our local districts agreed to pool their money together ( $\approx 10$  Million) to implement MTSS to start addressing these gaps K-5
- Worked with Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) to begin implementation at a building level  
(our work has since scaled up to district wide implementation in all our locals, including many charters in our catchment area)
- Started universal screening in literacy and behavior and based on the results, started focusing on K-3 literacy instruction as a starting place



# 2009

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- After looking at kindergarten screening data, we started brainstorming ways to address literacy achievement before kindergarten
- Decided that since all districts were working in an MTSS framework, we would begin looking at Pre-K in an MTSS framework
  - What that looks like
  - How can we align the EC standards of quality to the GLICKS? (at that time, now common core)
  - How do we build a data and assessment system that moves from pre-k to early elementary?
  - In districts where programs are co-located, we had an advantage, but how do we complete the work in districts where programs are not co-located?



# 2009-2010

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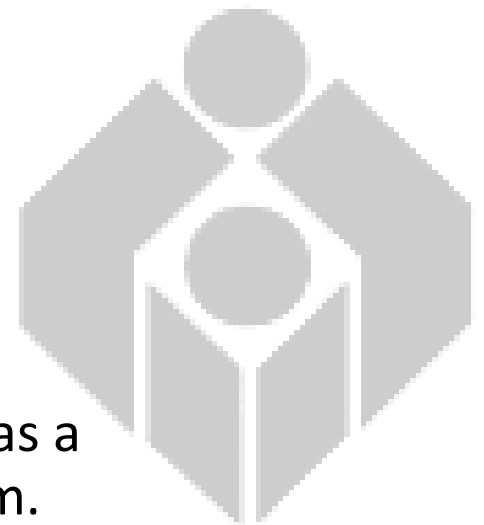
- Ingham was granted as a ReImagine district and we wrote for an Early Childhood ReImagine grant through Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) to begin the work
- The identified goal was to create a strong Pre-K thru 3<sup>rd</sup> grade alignment using MTSS as the vehicle to do this work
- At this same time, our local Head Start, Capital Area Community Services (CACS) had the opportunity to write for a federal mentor/coaching grant
- Through our relationship with Head Start from our work on the Ingham Great Start Collaborative we were able to combine our ReImagine money with CACS Head Start's mentor coaching money to kick off this pilot of working in an MTSS framework in preschool with 20 classrooms



# 2009-2010

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- We went back to our local higher level administration, educated them on the process and asked them to help us build the plane while we fly it
- Sites were chosen on a voluntary basis by districts who felt the importance of the work
- Partnered with UNC-Frank Porter Graham to help us build a model
- Began working with teachers to build consensus
  - We had originally wanted to bring Pre-K-3 teachers together, but we realized that Pre-K and K-3 leadership were not at the same table, so we had to back up and work on the consensus of collaboration and partnership amongst these 2 leadership teams
    - A challenge of this is that each local district has a different relationship with their Pre-K program.





# 2010-2011

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- Trained teachers on the model and began training on emergent literacy-implemented research based early literacy strategies with whole group and small group instruction
- Used a universal screener for emergent literacy
- Worked on improving the overall classroom quality
- Continued to work on administration collaboration from the ISD to the Local, to the Preschool



# 2011-12 Pilot Expansion

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- Ingham ISD supported the expansion of the project using general funds along with the remainder of the Mentor/Coaching grant from CACS Head Start
- A second cohort of 20 preschool classrooms were added in a voluntary process
- Engaged both cohorts in Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) work
- Expanded the emergent literacy work with Cohort 1
- Training focused on use of instructional strategies and assessment data to improve student outcomes



# Early Years MTSS Initiative Participation 2012-2013

- Elimination of Cohorts-all participants will be engaged in emergent literacy and positive behavior interventions and support work
- Professional development workshops will be jointly offered for all program staff (director, teacher, associate teacher, etc.)
- Continued integration with district level leadership teams to increase the collaboration of Pre-K and K-3 administrators
  - Pre-K-3 joint implementation action planning
  - Joint ownership of Pre-K Programs

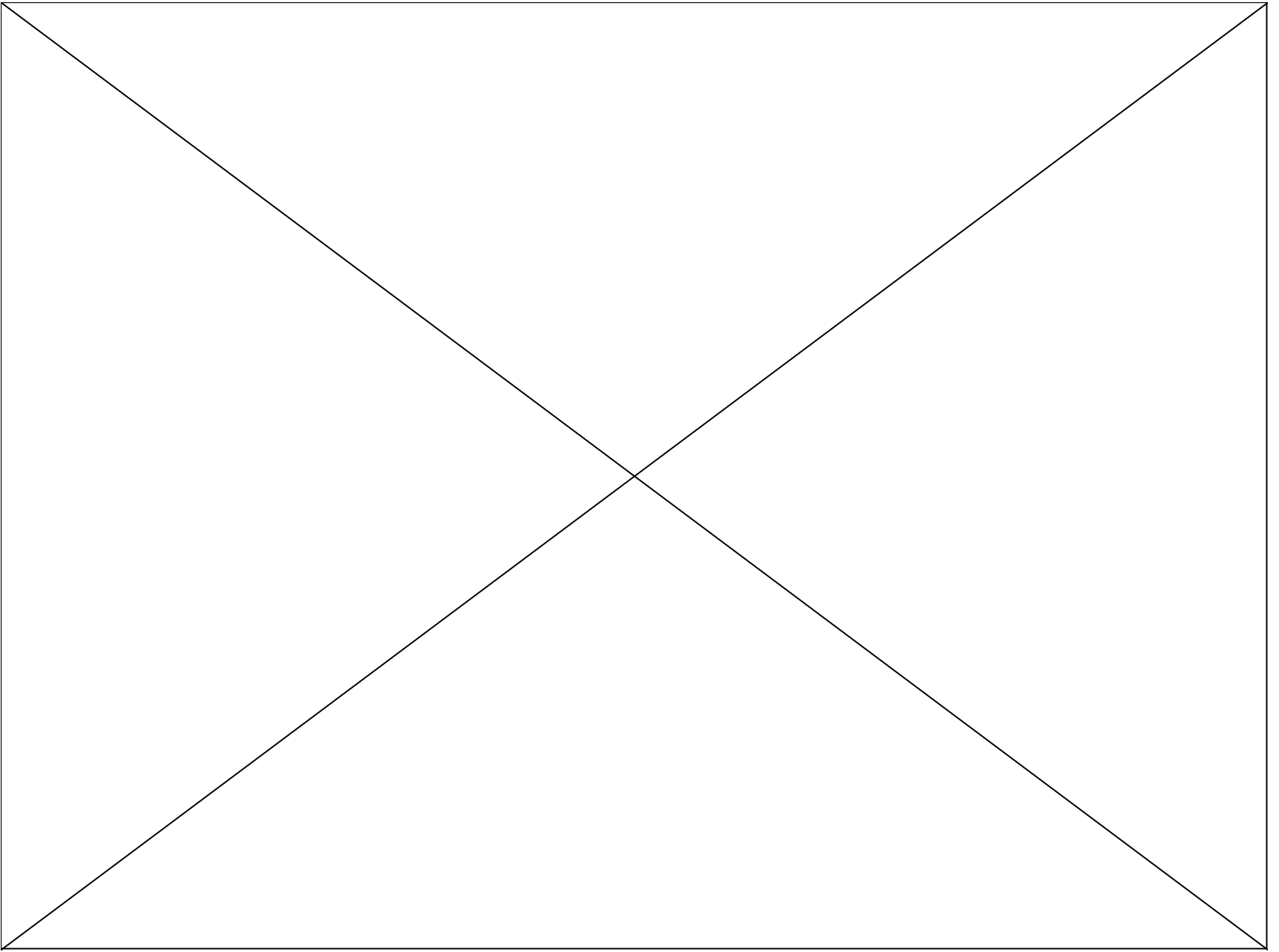


# Next Steps

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- Continue training and PBIS and Emergent Data Review Workdays in 12-13
- Continue to stay current with emerging research in the field of Early Childhood MTSS
- Continue to work with leadership teams to have K-12 take ownership and collaborate with Pre-K
- For 13-14 build Early Years MTSS into our larger K-12 MTSS academy structure





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