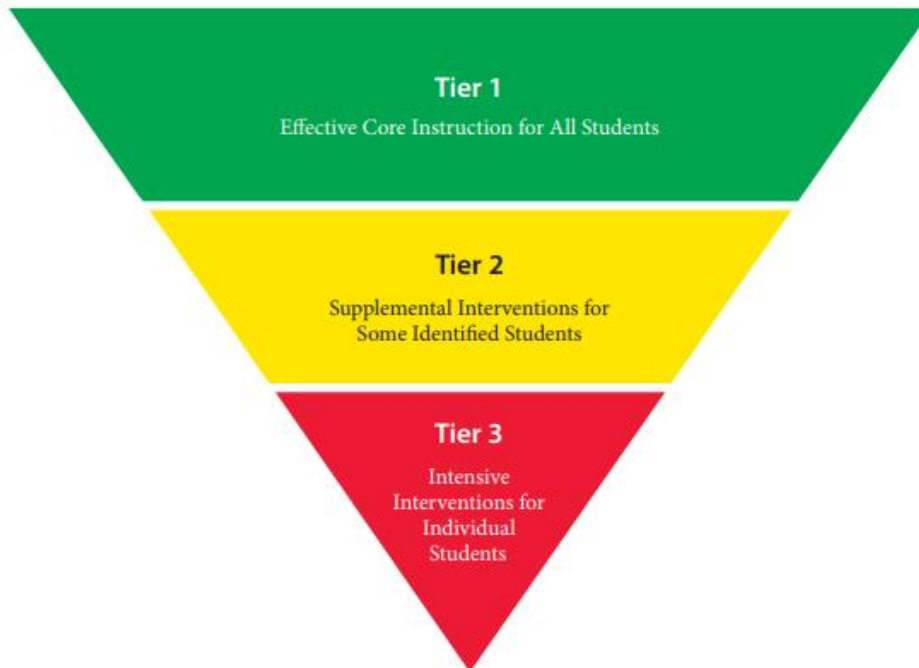


**Introduction**

Buffalo High School is committed to effectively serving the needs of all students. In reviewing student survey and academic data, it is evident there is a need for improvement in providing a more intentional and systematic approach to develop students’ social, emotional and academic skills. A proactive, instead of reactive, approach is needed to best provide supports for students. A framework of Multi-Tiered System of Supports is necessary for adoption at BHS.

“Providing supports using a layered framework – often referred to as a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) – is one way to help ensure that all students are receiving relevant interventions matched to their individual needs. MTSS is most often conceptualized as a three-tiered system, in which Tier 1 (Universal Level) represents supports provided to all students, Tier 2 (Targeted Level) represents a secondary level of intervention for some students who require additional support and Tier 3 (Intensive Level) includes individualized supports for relatively few students. This recommendation supports using a tiered framework to organize and deliver strategies that can increase student engagement and the likelihood of high school graduation” (“Implement a Tiered Framework of Supports”, 2017).



## **Background of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at BHS**

### *Current Supports at BHS*

Tier 1 Interventions are focused on the resources accessed by all students in the building, such as: classroom accommodations, peer tutors and mentors. Tier 2 has been reserved for intentional small group opportunities that staff identified during problem-solving meetings that were essential for student growth and development, such as: co-taught classes, access to a resource room/learning commons, and the summer Transitions Course. Tier 3 was meant to be very individualized and intentional for some of the highest need students in the building, such as specific class placement.

### *9th Grade Transition Support*

In the early stages, 9th grade staff gathered as a cohesive group to discuss students struggling in multiple classes through ASSET 9, our 9th grade problem solving team. This later morphed into smaller group meetings that were more intentional in identifying the students' strengths and needs, as well as the accommodations and interventions that were needed.(i.e., Intervention Referral Team/Problem Solving Team meetings).

### *Academic Supports*

Opportunities continued to grow to address the academic needs of students. Students' options to address specific academic struggles in reading and math included courses such as Algebra B, Read 180/Literacy Enhancement, co-taught classes for core academic classes, and Math/Science skinny course (i.e., every other day). Students have also had opportunities to develop study habits and skills in GenEd Skills or REACH classes. At times, BHS has been able to offer students additional support after school with homework help. However, these supports are no longer available due to financial restraints for instruction and transportation.

### *Relationship Building*

BHS continues to connect students with each other, as well as connect staff and students. Historically, impact leaders were used each spring to introduce eighth grade students to the high school setting on a day that was reserved for them. This past year, BHS launched a "Freshman 1st Day" to allow 9th grade students to explore their new building without being overwhelmed with upperclassmen. In considering the unique transitioning needs of some 9th grade students, BHS has offered a summer school Transitions Course to work with at-risk students helping acclimate them into a new environment. The newest course addition, REACH, allows students to obtain academic support and skill development as well as social/emotional learning. Upperclassmen continue to make an impact by offering support as peer coaches and mentors.

### *Conclusions*

Although BHS staff has continued to address what students need, there seem to be only a few options to assist students with academic and social/emotional skill development. Those options were to either continue strategies that were not consistently meeting the students' needs or refer them for a special education evaluation. BHS has focused primarily on trying to bridge the gaps with academic and executive function needs that are present for students, however, little

has been done to address the social/emotional/behavioral needs that are still prevalent in the building. Many of the academic struggles experienced by students are comorbid with the emotional state of the student, whether the emotional element surfaces from the academic struggles or the emotional element is the barrier to being engaged with the academic content. Therefore, it is time to move forward with establishing a more effective social/emotional/behavioral tiered support system, in conjunction with improving the academic supports available to BHS students.

### **Evidence of Need for Change**

As noted in the intervention background, BHS has prided itself on doing what's best for kids and getting supports in place for students. In most cases, BHS staff have reacted to struggling students, rather than taking a more proactive approach to failures. The data supports that BHS needs to get ahead of student challenges and implement strategies and interventions that will be proactive in nature to support the student needs, especially in regards to social/emotional/behavioral well-being.

Historically, most interventions have taken an academic approach, with some potential social/emotional benefits (i.e., smaller class sizes, opportunity for small group reviews). In reviewing the "F lists" for the past five years, along with withdrawal data, students show a need for more and/or different opportunities. This lack of social/emotional intervention has led to a large number of initial special education evaluations.

### *Academic Needs*

In reviewing the "[F Data by Grade and Year](#)" the number of failures tends to remain relatively stable between 9th and 10th grade, with a slight increase in the 11th grade. It should be taken into consideration that 11th grade is when many of the co-taught courses are no longer an option, and the GenEd Skills and REACH courses have typically been reserved for the 9th and 10th students. As a result, these students are left to have minimal options for academic intervention during the day, outside of 20 minutes during AAA, where a teacher may be overwhelmed with a variety of student needs to address. AAA does not require individualized support or smaller group support for students. If students need additional support, they must have access to personal transportation to come in before school or after school to access teachers. The lack of opportunities for intervention for the 11th graders greatly impacts their ability to access the supports they need to be successful in classes.

Upon further study, students are being identified as at-risk, and counselors and their educational teams are identifying different interventions to be put in place to support them prior to their withdrawal from BHS. However, part of the concern is that the interventions are not aligning directly with the specific needs that the student displays. Students are placed into intervention courses (i.e., REACH, co-taught classes) to provide the student with a smaller setting to allow for staff to individualize their support, collect more information, and develop a more personalized relationship with the student (i.e., social/emotional benefit). Many of these students continue to struggle because these interventions are unable to be individualized to their specific needs at this time. All students placed into these intervention courses/options may have similar needs,

but some of the specific needs are unable to be addressed at this time. Additionally, these interventions are more academically-focused, with the exception of the newest edition of REACH, which has embedded more social/emotional learning into the curriculum. The number of students struggling is greater than these courses can support for enrollment to maintain their effectiveness. The enrollment demographics of co-taught courses for Math, Science, and English, show that on average, 43% of students enrolled in those courses are receiving special education services (i.e., 2018-2019 Quarters 1 and 2) due to IEP requirements. This reduces opportunities for our general education students struggling to have the opportunity to access the extra teacher support, small group review opportunities, and smaller testing situations.

*Withdrawal Data*

<b>Number of students withdrawing from BHS</b>				
	<b>Drop Outs</b>	<b>ALC</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Total</b>
2018-19 (Sept 4 - Dec 1)	5	7	16	28
2017-18	8	21	20	49
2016-17	13	21	18	52

Many of the students who have withdrawn from BHS have a history of struggling academically. Students want to be successful; they want a high school diploma. Parents want them to earn their diplomas as well, and as a result, when a parent observes his/her student consistently struggling in classes, working with teachers, and seeing that interventions/strategies are being tried with no results, parents are left to wonder, “What could be different?” “Are there other options that would be more successful for my student?” BHS has seen students open-enrolling to neighboring schools, exploring the online opportunities, or taking an alternative approach. But what parents may not recognize is that the interventions being tried are not the intervention that aligns best with their student’s need at this time. Their student is being placed in an intervention or strategies are being tried based upon what is available at this time at BHS. BHS needs to be able to expand and be more intentional with intervention opportunities for all students, or the withdrawal rate will continue to grow.

*Special Education Evaluations*

Due to a lack of intentionality with interventions, the options remain minimal to address the needs of our struggling students. Staff continually try to do what is best, but an effective strategy is not always to keep trying things that have not previously been effective. When the course opportunities are minimal for General Education students, many staff, and parents alike, start inquiring about special education. Special education is not intended to be an intervention nor “quick fix” for these struggling students. Special education is meant for students who have a disability that interferes with their ability to make progress with the General Education curriculum. These students have unique needs that require individualized and specialized instruction to help them make educational progress. There is no “one size fits all” approach to special education. It is tailored to meet each student’s needs, which can be provided in different ways and in different settings. For individuals who have continued to struggle academically, this

opportunity is exactly what they need to ensure their student is making progress and being successful in school. In reviewing the special education evaluations completed over the past five years, there were a total of 67 initial evaluations, with 59 of those qualifying. Thirty-four of those qualifiers were rooted in social/emotional/behavioral needs and resulted in a classification of EBD. Thirteen of those qualifiers met the threshold based upon an academic skills deficit and resulted in a classification of a Specific Learning Disability. This would suggest that 58% of the initial evaluations at a secondary level were emotionally/behaviorally based, with ultimately these students also struggling academically. Twenty-two percent of the initial evaluations were purely academically based, even with students having more access to academic intervention opportunities.

### *Conclusion*

This data suggests that the true needs with which students are presented may not be directly aligning with the interventions the students are receiving. BHS students are demonstrating a tremendous need for social/emotional/behavioral support within the general education setting. Two questions rise to the surface: “Would these students have needed special education IF there were other ways for them to receive instruction on how to better support their social/emotional needs?” and “Are there other ways to ensure students get the academic skill interventions they need during the day that is not within a restrictive special education setting?” The time is now to make a change and meet students’ needs more effectively than has been done in the past, both academically and social/emotionally.

### **Site Vision for MTSS at BHS**

MTSS at BHS will be a collaboratively-developed system of supports for all students, involving all staff. The following is an outline of work our MTSS committee completed to establish a purpose/mission for both our suggested Advisory and Support time at BHS.

#### ADVISORY:

A viable Advisory program is an integral part of the MTSS programming. Collectively, the MTSS team at BHS developed the following vision for Advisory:

Advisory Purpose Statement: To create a community environment of learners where students and staff experience belonging, foster healthy relationships, develop academic skills, and enhance school culture.

#### Core Values:

- Belonging
- Personal connections
- Academic growth
- Safe environment

#### Outcomes:

- All BHS students feel connected to a caring staff member and peer group.
- All BHS students are aware of their academic and graduation progress.

- All BHS students grow in SEL skills that are applicable to school and life.
- All BHS students, prior to graduation, have a viable post-secondary plan.
- All BHS staff feel connected to a group of Advisory students and have experienced personal growth collectively.

#### SUPPORT TIME:

In order to support the various positive ways in which this time block could be used, the MTSS Committee collectively developed the following vision:

Support Time Purpose Statement: To provide targeted, timely and systematic learning opportunities for all BHS students based on student academic, support, and enrichment needs.

#### Essential Components:

- All students are a part of systematic scheduling and mandatory attendance during this time.
- All students experience timely and accurate support and enrichment.
- All students experience opportunities for large group or individual study/personal growth, as well as activities involvement.
- All students and staff are involved in collectively determining needs and locations for student support based on standards mastery within content curriculum.

A block of time, twice per week, will also be devoted to flexible support and intervention time for BHS students. There are varied purposes for this time: interventions, re-teaching, activity meeting times, test prep and review sessions, enrichment for students excelling in classes already, structured personal study time, etc. In best utilizing and supporting the flex time/intervention time, teachers would utilize their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to reflect on standards in their courses and the data that shows which students are not meeting/learning course standards and thereby are in need of intervention time with teachers in their content area.

#### **Summary of Process for Review of Programming Options**

Change can be a difficult discussion. At a workshop last spring, the MTSS committee spent the day hearing Dr. Mike Mattos speak to the positive changes a building can experience when the appropriate multi-tiered system of supports are implemented. It was during this workshop that the groundwork for this fall began.

The beginning of the school year signaled the start of discussions that would ultimately change how BHS staff would approach this work. Staff were individually invited by administration to participate on the committee, and there were district staff that were also invited to participate based upon their backgrounds. Once the team was developed, a schedule was established to outline the core elements that the team needed to discuss. Those elements included the academic interventions, social/emotional learning supports, and schedule changes.

#### *Modifying Approaches & Feedback*

Following that initial meeting, the committee agenda revolved around three core components: academic intervention, social/emotional learning, and scheduling. Through monthly discussions, the committee made modifications to the agenda, recognizing the importance of discussions of scheduling, academic intervention, and Advisory planning. Following the first area meeting of the year, the committee determined that this was not the most effective way to share information with the staff. Communication would better be disseminated during faculty meetings by administration, rather than individual staff to ensure the message was clear and consistent.

With changes in scheduling, the committee also felt it was imperative to obtain full staff feedback. By soliciting feedback from the teaching staff, the committee hoped for alignment between staff and committee pending questions, as well as affirmation of the positives for which the schedule changes would allow. The committee implemented the input to drive the proposal.

#### *Proposal Development*

Throughout monthly meetings, small group work allowed for collaborative opportunities to identify the purpose statement, core values, and desired outcomes for the two key elements for implementation: academic intervention/enrichment and Advisory time. The committee summarized and co-authored the information that was discussed for this board report.

#### **Recommendations**

In order to meet the needs of all students, a schedule change is recommended. This will create a systemic approach to academic intervention and support, as well as provide all students with a strong basis in social and emotional learning integrated into the culture of Buffalo High School.

A thirty-five minute block of time will be utilized for student academic support twice a week. This time will occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:12-10:47. Teachers will schedule students for interventions as needed, and students will also have the option to indicate their need for support and/or enrichment, as well partake in school activities during this time. Infinite Campus' responsive scheduling will allow students' schedules to vary, while maintaining the integrity of attendance and accountability. All teachers will be involved in this support time, with the ability to work with interventions, activities, and enrichment.

This support time will establish a systemic response to academic interventions which can be accessed by all during the school day. This will counter the fewer opportunities available during the school day presently for upperclassmen. The structure will also allow for smaller groups to receive the targeted help that will move their learning forward, instead of the large varied groups that currently voluntarily attend AAA. Students will still be able to participate in activities and enrichments. With a 35 minute period of time, students and teachers will be able to utilize the time period with purpose and depth.

In addition to time for intervention and support, all students and staff will meet twice a week for an Advisory period. Advisory will occur on Mondays and Fridays from 10:14-10:44. Students will work with the same staff member all four years at Buffalo High School, developing a strong

adult connection along with peer support. Common curriculum will be developed and provided to ensure strong social and emotional learning for all students. This will foster healthy relationships and enhance our school culture.

This Advisory period will begin the introduction of intentional social/emotional learning at Buffalo High School. Through interactions with the same staff member over four years, each student will increase his/her connection to an adult who can also serve as an advocate for students as they navigate their four years at Buffalo High School. The consistent work with a group of peers will also bridge the gap in students' feelings about peer support, which is currently lower than the support they feel coming from adults. The number of initial special education evaluations focusing on emotional and behavioral disorders is another piece of the puzzle that demonstrates an increased need in social and emotional learning.

### **Programming Implications**

#### *Curriculum Writing*

The MTSS committee has researched curriculum options through some of our current connections (i.e., Josten's and AVID), as well as previous professional development (i.e., Developmental Designs). However, as with all instructional materials, it will be imperative for staff to have the opportunity to collaborate and collectively review all of the materials to create a more comprehensive package of elements from each, and develop a curriculum that will be more tailored to BHS students. In addition our committee will explore other SEL options, such as Class Catalyst, which will aid our staff in identifying where students are emotionally.

We request financial support for a team of teachers to create a scope and sequence for our Advisory program. The request would be comparable to the funding for a new semester course which is 40 hours of writing time. In addition, we may request initial support to purchase the curriculum materials needed to carry out this plan.

#### *Professional Development*

Workshop days during the 2018-2019 school year have allowed for opportunities for continued collaboration amongst common core teachers for the establishment of Promise Standards for their courses, which is the core of the support time scheduling for students with academic needs. The identification of Promise Standards by course is essential for referrals to tiers of intervention for students. Beginning in April 2019, BHS staff will receive professional development training to support the implementation of Advisory during in-service times. A number of opportunities are being reviewed to discern the best tools for staff.

District PPD Coaches and administration currently coordinate, plan and lead professional development opportunities related to PLC work, Promise Standards, Common Assessments and refinement of courses. Building and District level AVID TOSAs currently coordinate, plan and lead professional development related to AVID strategies including culturally relevant teaching and specific WICOR strategies used school wide. This proposal would include a financial request for a .333 FTE Advisory TOSA to coordinate, plan and lead professional



development opportunities as we implement an Advisory program with uniformity and fidelity at Buffalo High School.

### *Scheduling System*

In order to ensure all students can be effectively and efficiently scheduled into the support time each week, a system must be in place to manage students needing to be scheduled. Through researching other districts implementing similar systems of support, it was identified that Infinite Campus has the capability to accomplish the desired results being sought for this implementation. However, staff would still want the opportunity to explore its current uses with these districts to identify their procedures. Time will be necessary with the registrar, as well as those familiar with Infinite Campus, to ensure the same or similar procedures can be transitioned into BHS's system. BHS is committed to continuing to work towards scheduling systems that support students in the transition from BCMS to BHS.

This proposal would include a financial request to support two site visits to high schools that have implemented similar academic support programs. This would include sub costs for 9 teachers (MTSS committee members). Additional training sessions will be needed with Infinite Campus to answer any questions that may not be addressed.

### **Scheduling Implications**

#### *Current Schedule*

The current schedule at BHS offers opportunities for students to obtain some extra academic support through specific courses, as well as some types of relationship-building activities through Bison Time and AAA. However, the data collected and anecdotal evidence from staff and students suggests that a shift in schedule is needed to better serve students in an MTSS model.

#### *Proposed Schedule Modifications*

Incorporating Advisory and a support block of time into the schedule will allow a relationship-centered approach with all students and for targeted and intentional academic growth. The Advisory period will serve as the home base for students to stay connected with one adult in the building, as well as consistently connect with a group of peers. The support block dedicates time during the school day for students to receive additional instruction of Promise Standards, have allocated and supported work time, as well as opportunities for enrichment through participation in school clubs and activities. The schedule is adjusted by adding an Advisory and a support work block and removing Bison Time and AAA.

Specific schedule options were developed, discussed, and narrowed by the MTSS team at BHS. Of the numerous options, three were decided upon as viable. Options were presented to staff and the best specific schedule decided upon follows:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
08 AM					
09 AM	08:50 AM Block 1 (77 Minutes)	08:50 AM Block 1 (75 Minutes)	08:50 AM Block 1 (86 Minutes)	08:50 AM Block 1 (75 Minutes)	08:50 AM Block 1 (77 Minutes)
10 AM	10:14 AM Advisory (30 Minutes)	10:12 AM Intervention (35 Minutes)	10:23 AM Block 2 (86 + 30 Minutes)	10:12 AM Intervention (35 Minutes)	10:14 AM Advisory (30 Minutes)
11 AM	10:51 AM Block 2 (77 + 29 Minutes) Lunch Block	10:54 AM Block 2 (75 + 32 Minutes) Lunch Block	Lunch Block	10:54 AM Block 2 (75 + 32 Minutes) Lunch Block	10:51 AM Block 2 (77 + 29 Minutes) Lunch Block
12 PM	12:44 PM Block 3 (77 Minutes)	12:48 PM Block 3 (75 Minutes)	12:26 PM Block 3 (86 Minutes)	12:48 PM Block 3 (75 Minutes)	12:44 PM Block 3 (77 Minutes)
01 PM					
02 PM	02:08 PM Block 4 (77 Minutes)	02:10 PM Block 4 (75 Minutes)	01:59 PM Block 4 (86 Minutes)	02:10 PM Block 4 (75 Minutes)	02:08 PM Block 4 (77 Minutes)
03 PM	03:25 PM	03:25 PM	03:25 PM	03:25 PM	03:25 PM

### *Scheduling Process*

Advisory students will be scheduled for four years with the same teacher to ensure the opportunities for relationship building.

The academic support time for students will be scheduled in a few different ways. Interventions will be scheduled based upon teacher recommendations, as well as student requests through Infinite Campus capabilities. Student activities will also have allocated time during these blocks to allow for student enrichment.

### *Scheduling and Planning*

Upon board approval, staff development will begin in April of 2019 in preparation for the opening of the 2019-2020 school year. Per the request of additional TOSA FTE and summer curriculum writing, staff will begin to create a framework for Advisory planning. Throughout the remainder of the 2019 school year, staff will continue to refine Promise Standards for common courses. With access to fluid scheduling, students' time will then be spent on Promise Standards identified by the common course team. BHS will partner with the Human Resources department to address contract language for all employee groups to ensure schedules are supported within existing contracts.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation of the programming change would be dependent upon our student and staff survey

data and data collected regarding grades and academic success. To be specific, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) outlines the BHS school culture, academic success, and ACT score data.

BHS has been collecting student and staff survey data for the past eleven years and will continue to collect similar data. After implementation of MTSS programming, BHS would be evaluating program success based upon an increase in positive responses to questions in the student and staff surveys regarding student perceptions about teacher care, student desire to attend BHS again, and student connections to their school environment. A successful Advisory program would positively impact survey responses.

Support time evaluation would be determined via data review of grade improvement (total number of F grades), academic success, increase in graduation rate, decrease in special education referrals, and a decrease in students withdrawing from BHS. Successful implementation of the support time interventions would allow teachers and students to collaboratively focus on learning, thereby showcasing the data set named above. A focus on ACT scores each year will also support evaluation of the flexible time.

### **Next Steps**

#### **Immediate Next Steps: Spring 2019**

Upon approval, the MTSS committee would complete scheduled meetings for February, March, and April. The committee will focus on planning and logistics for the new schedules, research and plan necessary trainings for staff, identify key staff member roles in implementation, and finalize follow up communication to staff, students, families, and the community. The MTSS committee will start working to determine Advisory components and logistics, how students will be divided for Advisory, and develop/coordinate Advisory curriculum for the 19-20 school year.

#### **Short Term Next Steps: Summer 2019**

Summer 2019 will involve continued planning for Advisory, including curriculum writing. There will also be training and preparation for the scheduling of students for Support Time. This would involve primarily the BHS registrar and administration, as well as Advisory TOSA, to determine the best plan of action for a smooth transition to this new scheduling program. Professional development for staff would also occur at this time, during end of summer Workshop Week. as well as finalizing Advisory curriculum planning and student Advisory grouping.

#### **Long Term: 2019-2020 School Year**

The 2019-2020 school year will bring the full implementation of the MTSS program to fruition. Advisory programming will be implemented with a structured curriculum on Mondays and Fridays at BHS. The Advisory curriculum, with guidance from the Advisory TOSA, will be utilized each week and adapted, if needed. Advisory activities may also include Student-Advisor planning for Tuesday and Thursday support time. The Support time will provide a myriad of opportunities for students to engage in learning and communication with their teachers, as teachers being able to re-teach material, support students in standards mastery, test-prep study sessions, enrichment for students, and activity club meetings. Additionally, BHS would continue

to communicate regularly with families and the community regarding the shift in schedule and new components as the year progresses.

### **Conclusion**

The adoption of a structured MTSS model at BHS would be of strong benefit to all students, both academically and socially/emotionally. The approaches to reaching all students must be systematic and the components of this proposal will allow Buffalo High School staff and students to work together to purposefully improve school culture and academic successes.

### **Bibliography**

“Implementing a Tiered Framework of Supports.” *Grad Minnesota*, Minnesota Alliance with Youth, 1 Mar. 2017, [mnyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/Framework-of-Support-Supporting-Research.pdf](http://mnyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/Framework-of-Support-Supporting-Research.pdf).