A Study of the Implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports in One School

Ranya Elhady

National Louis University
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Ranya Elsayed Elhady

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

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Chair, Dissertation Committee

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Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Dean's Representative

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Director, Doctoral Program

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Dean, National College of Education

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ABSTRACT

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is designed to help schools identify struggling students. This study aimed to determine the perception of MTSS through the lens of kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers and teacher leaders who participate in the school-wide MTSS process. The context of this inquiry was one elementary school in a large urban district where teachers had implemented MTSS for several years. I used a mixed methods research design. A survey of classroom teachers with Likert scale items and open-ended questions and data from a focus group interview of teacher leaders provided quantitative and qualitative data. I found a disconnect between the perceptions of teachers and teacher leaders regarding what the teachers needed to support them to implement MTSS effectively. I recommended a policy change that requires teachers to have MTSS certification and developed a change leadership plan based on Kotter's (2014) 8-step process.

PREFACE

My teaching career extends to 12 years in the profession. My journey started at a Title 1 school where I was a first-grade teacher for three years. I then relocated to another Title 1 school and taught fifth grade for five years, followed by teaching fourth grade at a school that did not have Title 1 designation. Upon entering my fourth-grade position, which is my current position, I noticed the differences in MTSS implementation within each school for the same district. As a teacher who experienced MTSS implementation in various ways, I wondered how I could try to make a change that would provide for a much more successful MTSS. The examination of the school's MTSS implementation based on teacher perception was essential to me. It would provide the information needed to enact an MTSS plan that is consistent within the district and perhaps the entire state to meet the educational needs of all students.

The experience taken from this study has made me a stronger educator, and I am confident in my ability to be a successful and strong leader in the future. Throughout this process, I have learned the value and importance of acquiring information from teachers and teacher leaders to gain insight from their perceptions of what is happening within the allotted MTSS time. As a teacher and team leader, I know now, even more than before, that leader support is the most vital element that can contribute to student achievement within the school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom and dad, Wafaa Elhady and Elsayed Elhady, who supported my dream and knew I could complete this journey. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my siblings- Nermeen, Shaimaa, Mahmoud, and Nahlah, who supported me and told me to believe in myself. To my daughter, Omayma Kishk, who is too young to understand what I was going through as I was pregnant and then taking care of her all while trying to complete this journey. I know she will grow up and live a life full of endless possibilities.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Improved student achievement is the goal for public school educators. For this to happen, there must be change and higher levels of accountability for educators. The setting of my study was one large suburban elementary school with a population of 800 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, where 73% of students scored at or above the proficient level for reading on the state standards assessment. The demographics in this elementary school were as follows: 40.5% Hispanic/Latino, 34.2% White, 10.9% Asian, 9.6% Black or African American, 0.5% Native Hawaiian, and 0.1% American Indian. There were approximately 45 full-time certified teachers, with 73.7% of teachers having three or more years of experience.

Educators are required to know and understand the individualized needs of their students. To prepare students for achievement, school district leaders provided time within the school day in elementary schools for teachers to incorporate research-based methods into their classroom instruction, known as multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). It is important to understand teacher perception of the MTSS process to maximize student achievement.

MTSS is a framework designed to serve students in a tiered format. The power of MTSS is it ensures all students receive the most optimal level of instruction possible. Teachers and school leaders place students in a tier based on their current academic needs. There are three tiers in MTSS:

- Tier 1- All students receive Tier 1 instruction and are screened to determined who is and who is not responding.

- Tier 2- Some students receive Tier 2 instruction. Students are placed in smaller

groups to meet their academic needs.

- Tier 3- A few students who are still not successful in Tier 2 will require Tier 3 instruction which provides an additional layer of intensive support that will address the needs of the student in a smaller group setting focusing specifically on the skill needed to meet their academic needs.

Throughout my study, much of the research on MTSS upon which I based my work references Response to Intervention or RTI. This is because RTI evolved into MTSS. In 2006, the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities identified RTI as an "assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data" (p. 2). In 2020, the Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports provided an updated model with behavior added to academics. Although numerous models of MTSS exist, they are all similar in that they contain a tiered process of narrowing the scope of interventions to target the individual needs of students.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The purpose of my study was to evaluate, based on teacher perception, the effectiveness of MTSS framework within one elementary school. Every teacher uses interventions with any student to help them succeed in the classroom (Response to Intervention, 2013), and MTSS is a framework used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson. The MTSS process in the school under study was established at the district level and executed at the school level using time allotted by the district leaders in the daily schedule.

Teachers need support and a better understanding to implement MTSS effectively to increase student achievement. As stated by Burns (2010), "It is perhaps the most discussed educational initiative in the country today. School districts in every state in the country are currently implementing RTI (MTSS), and some have been doing so for over 20 years with impressive results" (p. 1). As a result of my study, I generated a list of best practices to be included in the school's MTSS plan of implementation.

Rationale

I started my career as a first-grade teacher. At the end of the school day, there was time allotted for MTSS. As a beginning educator, the MTSS process altogether was very confusing to me because the leaders of the school did not provide professional development on expectations for MTSS. All I can remember was the first-grade team dissected the data to divide the students into different tier groups, and school leaders assigned each teacher their tier group. I am not surprised that so many teachers did not understand its importance and found it confusing.

By my ninth year of teaching, I had implemented the MTSS processes in more than one school. In my experience, teachers implemented MTSS ineffectively. To provide students with the appropriate tiered instruction, each teacher taught students across the grade level in each of the different MTSS tiers. Teachers and students did not want to switch to other classes. Both teachers and students made it seem like switching classes was a dreadful process and just another task to complete. No one seemed to understand the reasoning behind why MTSS was essential and how it would impact students academically.

I evaluated the program to understand teachers' perceptions of how they were meeting students' needs and helping them make progress toward grade level expectations. My program evaluation was vital to stakeholders, the district, and the community because it focused on student academic achievement. My program evaluation revealed the teachers' perception of the MTSS process. With the district leaders allotting time for MTSS, I addressed how effective the process was and how it impacted students. My evaluation included an understanding of the MTSS process based on teacher perception.

Goals

The goal of my evaluation was to study the effectiveness of MTSS based on teacher perception. I used the results to develop a list of best practices to be included in the school's MTSS plan of implementation. This study supported the High Expectations for Student Learning objective in the district under study. High expectations for academic outcomes included using the MTSS framework to ensure teachers met the individual needs of students as well as to engage and instruct students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout my research presentation. The definitions that follow clarifies how these terms are used:

MTSS

An instructional framework that integrates data and instruction within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and support students' social, emotional, and behavior needs from a strengths-based perspective (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, n.d.)

Progress Monitoring

An assessment technique required by RTI regulations. Teachers administer quick assessments (1-5 minutes) frequently to gauge the improvement of a student. The assessments provide information about the student's rate of learning and the effectiveness of a particular intervention (National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, 2006).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

An assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data (National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006).

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

A plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services (University of Washington, 2022).

Research Questions

To drive my evaluation research, I had the following primary and secondary questions:

1. What happens within the school day during the allotted time provided by the district to implement MTSS?

a. What level of knowledge do teachers have regarding the MTSS process?

b. From the teacher perspective, what supports are needed to implement MTSS effectively?

2. How can leaders in a school support teachers to establish a better understanding of the MTSS process within a classroom to ensure a higher success rate?

Conclusion

MTSS is a process for implementing proactive data-driven decision making. It provides teachers with better, more timely information about their students to improve student learning and performance. As mentioned by Burns (2010), MTSS is the most important educational initiative in the country being discussed. School districts in every state in the country have been implementing MTSS for over 20 years with impressive results. It is perhaps the most discussed educational initiative in the country today. School districts in every state in the country are currently implementing RTI (MTSS), and some have been doing so for over 20 years with impressive results. To reach my goal of understanding teacher perception of MTSS, I want to expand the understanding of MTSS by researching teacher perception of MTSS in greater depth.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

It is vital for educators to teach with an understanding of what they have learned and to be prepared to expand this knowledge to ensure students are receiving the best education possible. Student achievement is the highest priority of a teacher. To be able to target the student's needs, a teacher follows the framework of what is currently known as MTSS and RTI. "It is a process used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson; every teacher will use interventions with any student to help them succeed in the classroom" (Response to Intervention, 2013). Articles and materials selected for this literature review explained MTSS, the teacher's perception of MTSS, implementation, and district guidelines.

The literature presented in this chapter ranged in publication years from 2006-2022. National Louis University's library database Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO) and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) were the sources for most of the articles. I also presented information I collected from various websites dedicated to Response to Intervention (RTI). I selected the literature related to the importance of MTSS/RTI in education, the process of RTI and how teachers engaged in the process. My intent of this literature review was to establish a clear picture of MTSS/RTI, its function, essential components and the processes needed to support implementation.

Overview of MTSS

It is every teacher's job to help students succeed and provide students with the best education. "The purpose of RTI was to identify struggling students early, to provide them with evidence-based interventions, to closely monitor their progress, and to adapt or intensify interventions based on progress monitoring data" (Fuchs et al., 2010, p. 301).

Teachers provide students with evidence-based instruction and intervention to match their needs and improve their educational outcomes.

MTSS is not only a process for children with special needs or a learning disability. If a student struggles to master an academic skill, a teacher will intervene using the MTSS model and help the struggling child. The MTSS model has levels of interventions divided into three tiers. The first is Tier 1; this tier is the basis of the MTSS process. Tier 1 is where all students receive their whole group instruction within the classroom with all students. Averill and Rinaldi (2011) stated, "Tier 1 refers to the core curriculum delivered to all students that has a high likelihood of bringing the majority of students to acceptable levels of proficiency" (p. 2).

The next tier of the MTSS model is Tier 2, in which the teacher meets with a smaller group of students, no more than seven, and the interventions become more intensive because this means that students are at a higher risk of not mastering the targeted skill. Averill and Rinaldi (2011) stated, "Tier 2 provides supplemental instruction to those students who display poor response to the core instruction provided at Tier 1" (p. 2). The last tier of the RTI (MTSS) model is Tier 3. In this tier, students receive instruction in an even smaller group of about three or four students. In Tier 3, students receive the most intense and consistent interventions, which target the needs of that specific student. Averill and Rinaldi (2011) stated, "Tier 3 involves the application of intensive instructional interventions designed to increase the rate of student progress" (p. 2). Although aligned with Chapter 504, part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination based on disability and special education, not all children in Tier 3 are special education students (Response to Intervention, 2013).

Educators cannot purchase a set program for MTSS. Every school is responsible for implementing the framework while providing professional development to the teachers. "It is a decision-making framework composed of evidence-based practices in assessment and instruction. Hahn (2015) stated, "RTI asks, what do we do when kids do not learn?" (p. 10). As soon as teachers observe an academic difficulty in a student, the RTI (MTSS) method requires interventions immediately. The two intervention outcomes based on research conducted by Maier et al. (2016) included:

1. If the child responds favorably to the interventions, then these supports are continued as long as the concern remains.

2. However, if the child does not respond to the interventions by making satisfactory growth towards grade level standards as expected, then this failure to respond is conceptualized as an indicator of a specific learning disability. The child may then be provided more intensive services and supports through special education programs until such time that the child can achieve adequately towards meeting grade level standards without specialized education (p.1).

Fuchs and Fuchs (2017) explained the first component of RTI (MTSS) as universal or class wide, the purpose of which is to identify students likely to experience poor academic outcomes if their instruction is limited only to classroom, Tier 1 instruction (p. 1). The teacher must monitor the academic performance of these students and begin providing more intensive instruction. The general goal of Tier 2 interventions is to strengthen the student's performance and bring them back to Tier 1.

Although numerous models of MTSS exist, they are all similar in that they contain a tiered process of narrowing the scope of interventions to target the individual needs of students. In 2006, the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities identified that "RTI is an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data" (p. 2). The National Center on Learning Disabilities used a support pyramid to illustrate RTI. "As interventions become more intense, the temptation is always to drill down on the skill, increase pressure and push harder" (National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, p. 1). The pyramid illustrates a one-way model for support.

Figure 1.

RTI Support Pyramid
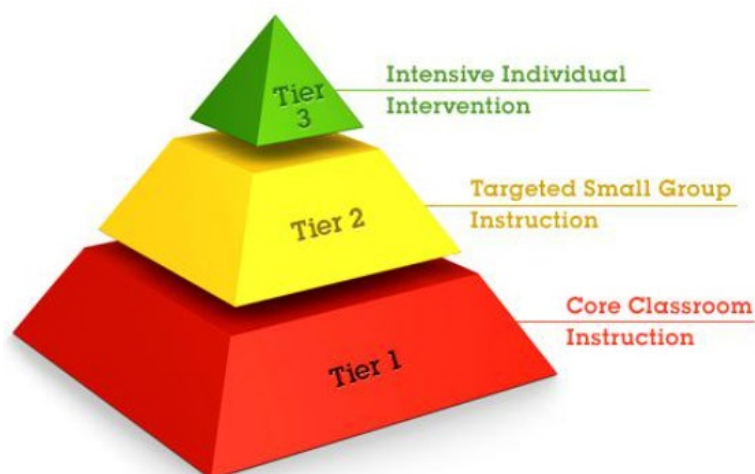
Note. The RTI support pyramid provides an overall description of each tier and how the teacher will target each group.

In 2020, the Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports provided an updated model with behavior added to academics. The model illustrated how the tiers are fluid

rather than fixed as depicted in the support pyramid. Figure 2 depicts MTSS in a public school district's framework to ensure all students are prepared to succeed in life academically, behaviorally, and socially/emotionally (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020).

Figure 2

MTSS Framework Tiers Explanation
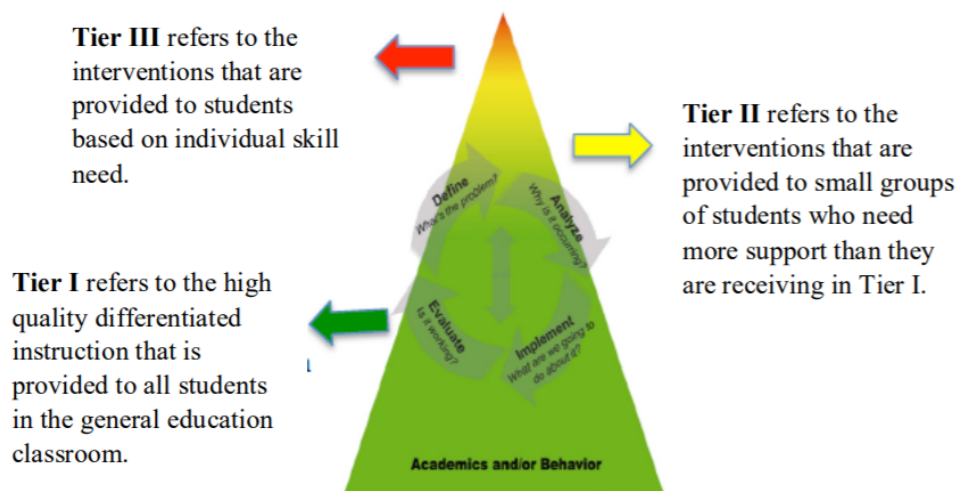
Note. MTSS framework tiers 1, 2, and 3 are explained and show the varying levels of intensity based on student need (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020).

District and School Leaders

Implementation of MTSS included five components as a primary focus for leaders. (MTSS Implementation Components, 2015). The first step was to "ensure that a common-language, common-understanding exists around the rationale, the purpose and expected outcomes of implementation" (p. 2). The second step was to "clearly identify who has the responsibility for what and how those individuals will be held accountable" (p. 2). The district leaders must develop an implementation plan within schools that included explicit explanation for job roles and what each teacher leader will be

responsible for in the MTSS framework. The third step of the implementation

components was to "ensure that district policies are supportive of, and not barriers to, the

implementation model" (p. 2). The fourth step was to "provide sufficient support such as

professional development and technical assistance to ensure that the implementation plan

and timelines can be achieved" (p. 2). Providing professional development is essential to

set clear expectations for all involved with the MTSS implementation. The last step built

within the component structure was to "clearly identify the district and school-level

leaders who will have implementation expectations" and be held responsible for proper

support (p. 2). Assisting teachers is the key to a successful MTSS and being able to

identify who will provide the support is vital to affect positive student outcomes.

The effective implementation of MTSS needs to involve a plan for school leaders.

The plan would reflect teacher support and incorporate analyzing data. Branching Minds

(2022) MTSS School Leadership Guiding Questions was created to assist leaders in

working with teams to answer system-level guiding questions to support effective

implementation.

The initial question was, "Is the core curriculum supporting 80% of students (i.e.,

are 80% of students on grade level)?" (para. 1). This question will help school leaders

develop an MTSS plan and be able to assist in resources. If the core curriculum is not

supporting 80% of students, then the core curriculum will need to be examined.

Another guiding question was, "Are students progressing and do we see healthy

tier movement?" (para. 3). Tier movement is an essential part of the MTSS framework.

The point of MTSS tiers is to determine if students are making progress and, by having

healthy tier movement, students will progress and show academic growth. Healthy tier

movement means that students are benefitting from MTSS, and teachers are meeting the needs of those students.

Leaders must ask teams, "Are students progressing equitably?" (para. 2). Progressing equitably means students receive proper instruction in their areas of need. Subgroups of students are not struggling more than others. "Are evidence-based interventions being delivered with fidelity?" (para. 5) was an additional guiding question. School leaders must consistently monitor MTSS instruction and data to determine if teachers delivered interventions with fidelity. Monitoring is a significant part of MTSS and must be part of the school-wide MTSS plan.

The final question was, "Are efficiencies being found through creating small groups for intervention work?" (para. 6). Data monitoring and data meetings will show if efficiencies exist in the small groups for intervention work. This will also be part of the school MTSS plan to monitor the small groups to see if they serve effectively or not.

In order for MTSS to be effective, school leaders need to develop a consistent school-wide plan. Glanz (2006) stated, "A principal must possess the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (p. 2). Principals must be knowledgeable of MTSS to develop the plan.

The Intervention Resources Triangle by a school district (2021) provided specific resources for every tier. Specific resources stated in the triangle are available and ready to be used for the interventions. Based on my professional experience, a major challenge faced by educators is trying to find effective resources to meet the needs of all students. The Resource Triangle addressed this problem.

Figure 3

Intervention Resources Triangle
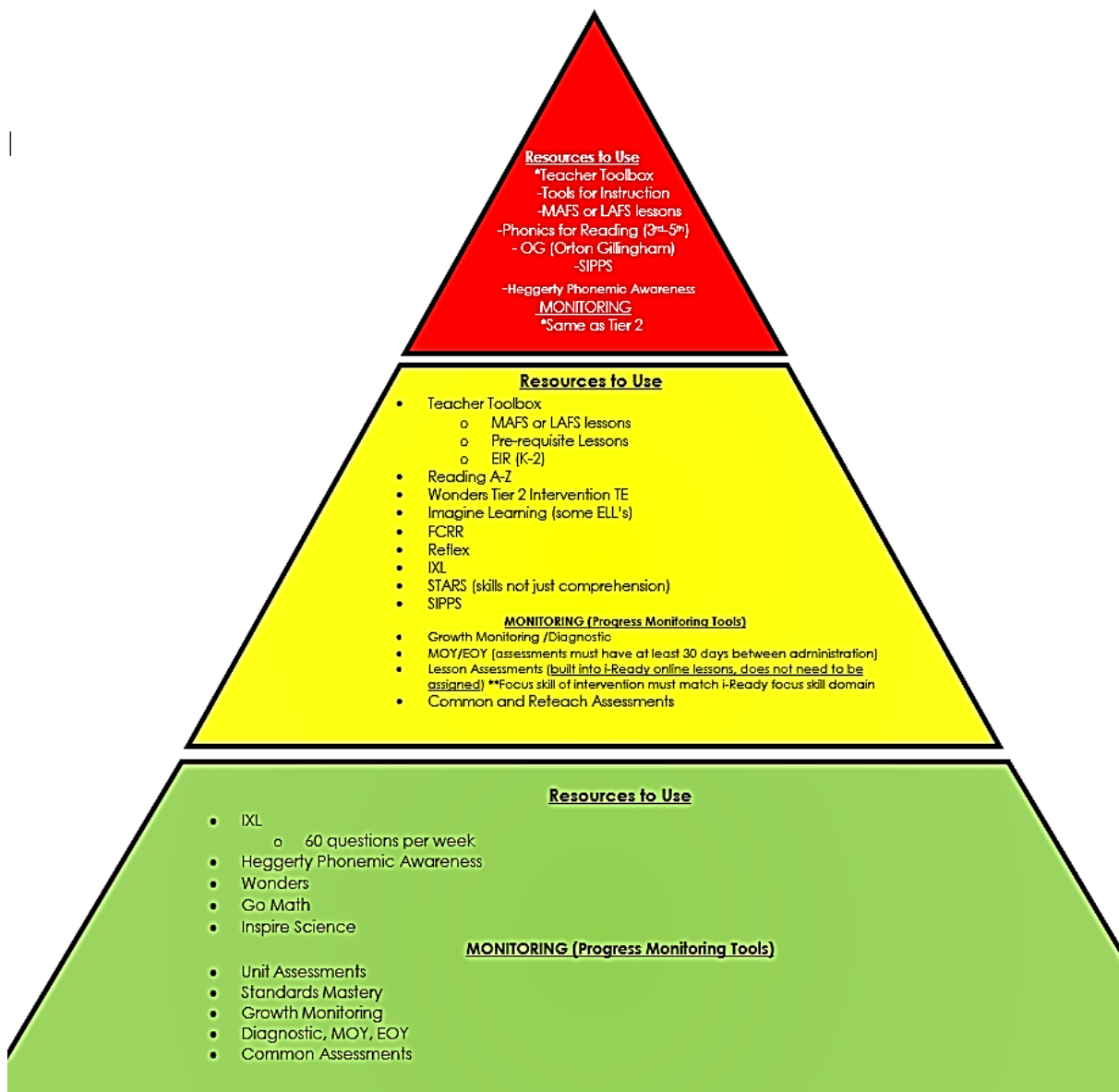
Note. Intervention Resources Triangle by a school district (2021) (withheld citation)

Proper MTSS implementation needs a team-based process to be effective. "Successful MTSS implementation is a highly complex process that involves the following tasks:

- Gathering accurate and reliable data

- Correctly interpreting and validating data

- Using data to make meaningful instructional changes

- Establishing and managing increasingly intensive tiers of support

- Evaluation of the process at all tiers to ensure the system is "working"

    (Metcalf, 2015, p. 2)

Leaders, along with teacher leaders, in a school building oversee and coordinate the

MTSS allotted time. There are many components to the MTSS framework. Metcalf

(2016) stated, "Accurate and timely data are also crucial to effective problem solving.

MTSS is a framework, not a rigid filter, so teams may make decisions based on student

performance data that has established benchmarks or effectiveness based on empirical

studies, especially in the areas of screening, progress monitoring, and intervention

effectiveness" (p. 2).

Leaders should ensure that teachers understand all components of the MTSS

process. Branching Minds, 2022, emphasized "strong administrative support that ensures

clarity around protocol and commitment to time and resources" (para. 2) was vital.

According to Chidsey and Bickford (2015), because of the importance of details in

making MTSS effective, a checklist for educators to consider the level of readiness for

implementing an MTSS should be used (p. 40).

Figure 4

MTSS Readiness Checklist

1. **Training and Staffing**
   - ☐ Facilitate the community of educators in discussing the school's culture and teachers' beliefs, and coming to agreement about shared beliefs and values.
   - ☐ Provide existing staff with sufficient training, feedback, and ongoing support in the specific assessment and data management methods to be used.
   - ☐ Recruit and hire new staff with the necessary skills to implement an MTSS.
   - ☐ Carefully allocate resources to ensure adequate funding for the MTSS initiative.
   - ☐ Ensure that the education leaders are engaged and active participants in the development of the MTSS.

2. **Assessment Integrity**
   - ☐ Fully and properly train educators to use the specific measure(s) prior to administering, scoring, and interpreting student assessments.
   - ☐ Confirm the integrity of the assessment process with checklists and/or observations.

3. **Data Verification**
   - ☐ Verify the accuracy of collected data using the "What?" test.

4. **Treatment Integrity**
   - ☐ Based on the data collected, develop instructional plans that meet students' needs.
   - ☐ Provide any instruction, intervention, or treatment deemed necessary.
   - ☐ Ensure that instruction, intervention, and treatments are provided as intended (i.e., with integrity) using treatment integrity checklists.

Note. Chidsey and Bickford (2015)

This checklist identified four areas where school leaders should plan out implementation details in advance. The four areas are training and staffing, assessment integrity, data verification, and treatment integrity. "As school teams' work on developing MTSS plans, using this checklist will help them to include important details of implementing that might otherwise be overlooked (Chidsey & Bickford, 2015, p. 41). It is imperative for leaders and educators to use this checklist as part of their MTSS plan to be effective.

Teacher Preparation

Teachers are the most crucial part of MTSS because they are in charge of implementing the framework while collecting and analyzing data. "The success of RTI is largely dependent on elementary teachers' knowledge about RTI implementation, because these teachers are the first line of defense against reading difficulties" (Al Otaiba et al., 2019, p. 2). Proper training and preparation to implement MTSS are vital. Chidsey and Bickford (2015) stated, "Ironically, educators have a history of not providing themselves with sufficient training when learning new practices. There are recognized standards for effective preparation to implement an MTSS, but these standards are not always employed" (p. 33). Al Otaiba et al. (2019) stated that teachers are responsible for using student data from Response to Intervention (RTI) to inform instructional decisions for students, so it is necessary to understand the knowledge they have about the structure of RTI in their individual schools (p. 1). A teacher who does not understand the framework of MTSS may negatively impact student achievement.

Al Otaiba et al. (2019) stated teachers often report they understand broadly what RTI is, how to administer assessments, and how to locate data (p. 3). As teachers provide MTSS instruction, it is imperative that they collect data to be able to ensure each student is receiving the appropriate instruction. "Hence, teachers are responsible for applying the intervention procedures with fidelity in order to ensure the accuracy of intervention implementation. Moreover, teachers have to make sure that the intervention and instruction are implemented with fidelity" (Alahmari, 2019, p. 1). Teachers not trained correctly in MTSS may have implementation struggles that impact student success. "Despite the fact that virtually all resources and guides for implementation indicate that

intensive training is an essential prerequisite, many teachers have ended up being expected to implement tiered supports with little or no training in the specific steps" (Chidsey & Bickford, 2015, p. 34).

Alahmari (2019) declared teachers need to possess knowledge of evidence-based instruction, tiered instruction, multiple assessment tools, progress monitoring, and fidelity of implementation in order to implement RTI efficiently, (p. 9). "Improving educator effectiveness and school functioning requires continuous attention to practice selection, implementation fidelity, and progress monitoring, especially in the context of systemic school reform efforts" (Freeman et al., 2017, p. 1).

As crucial as the MTSS framework is to student success, there is a lack in the basic skills teachers have to address the needs of all students. Prasse et al. (2012) reported that teachers are called on to have an ever-expanding knowledge base and skills that support working within a multi-tiered system of supports, including Response to Intervention (MTSS/RTI). Yet, most teachers do not possess these skills (p. 1). Stakeholders expect students to leave school ready to apply real-life application skills, and the general education teacher must provide the support. The teacher must provide support in small groups and individual settings with tracked data to determine if students are demonstrating proficiency. "Further, there is evidence that suggests that partial implementation of RTI or MTSS models may not improve student outcomes, particularly students with, or at risk, for learning disabilities" (Coyne et al., 2019, p. 111). The MTSS framework must be completed with fidelity and not used partially. Coyne et al. (2019) stated, "although many schools implement practices and components of MTSS at a surface level, they have not established the systems and tools that make accurate, deep,

and sustained implementation possible" (p. 111).

According to O'Connor and Freeman (2012) there are important professional developments and training considerations that schools and districts need to address before any tiered supports are offered to schools. These are:

- Focused training in specific assessment and data management methods to be used

- Discussion and agreement about the school's culture and teacher beliefs

- Targeted staff recruitment to hire individuals with necessary skills

- Careful resource allocation

- Engaged leadership

- Sufficient time to adhere to the five areas before the actual use of tiered supports (p.1)

Student success in MTSS relies on teacher knowledge, and school leaders must take the time to provide in depth training for all educators involved in the framework. "The best training approach is one that provided initial direct instruction followed by embedded practice in teachers' everyday work" (Chidsey & Bickford, 2015, p. 35). If teachers are not trained properly in embedding MTSS, the allotted time within the school day will be meaningless.

MTSS Implementation and Data-Decision Making

There are four essential components of MTSS reported by the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. The four essential components of an MTSS/RTI framework are screening, progress monitoring, multi-level or multi-tier prevention system, and data-based decision making (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020). Figure 5 from

the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (2020) explains the four essential

components:

Figure 5

Essential Components of MTSS
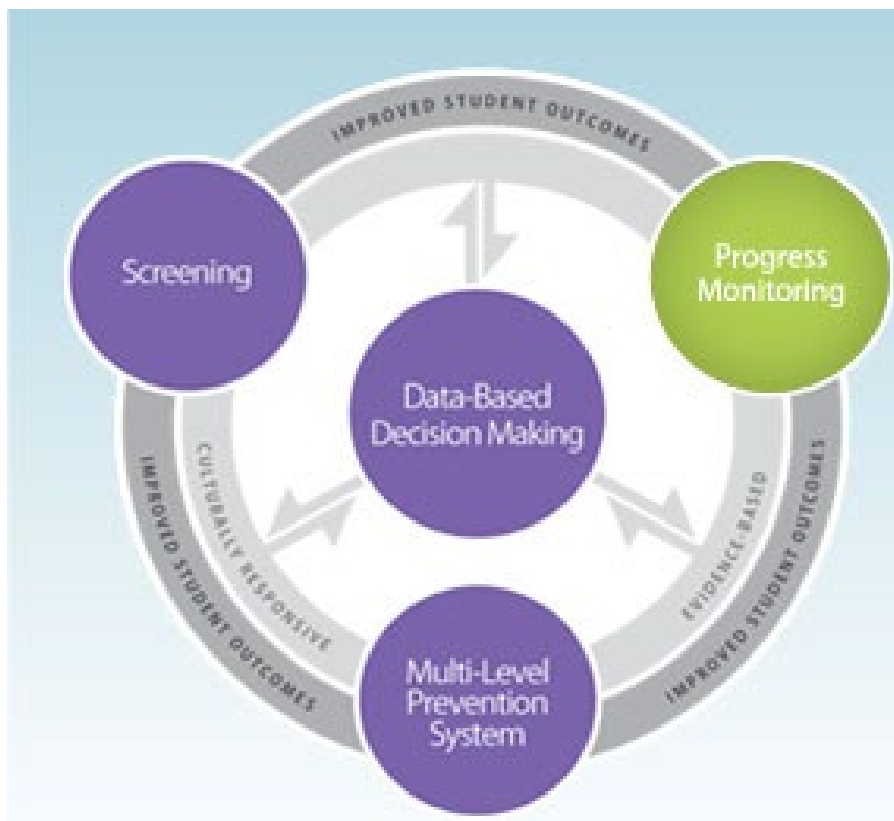
Note. Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020

Teachers initiate screening to identify students who may be at risk of not reaching

proficiency and may have poor learning outcomes. The data gathered in this step will

include assessments conducted with all students in the same grade level. Progress

monitoring is a practice that assists teachers in using student performance data to evaluate

their teaching effectiveness continually. The teacher continuously monitors the

performance data to make decisions, and when learning seems insufficient, the teacher

can intervene and adjust instruction by providing interventions. Data-based decision

making should occur during all stages of MTSS implementation. "Student assessment data provide information that can guide teachers and schools in aligning instructional supports to student needs" (Coyne et al., 2019, p. 114). Teachers can make better informed instructional decisions for all students when they analyze data.

The implementation of MTSS at the individual school level varies from one school to another. Forman and Crystal (2015) stated that school administrators, especially principals, are seen as having the ability to develop a supportive organizational environment for MTSS (p. 277). The need for effective leadership is vital. It will support proper data decision making and effective implementation strategies. Forman and Crystal's study (2015) found the following:

> Effective implementation leaders, sometimes called change agents, help organizations and staff through inspiring, guiding, goal setting, conflict resolution, resource provision, and adjustment of organizational policies and procedures, so that appropriate implementation strategies are used and barriers to implementation are addressed. A leader for implementation does not need to hold a formal title of leadership. Implementation is an iterative process that involves continual efforts to test the effectiveness of an intervention and of implementation strategies. This allows implementation leaders to develop new strategies when implementation outcomes and/or client outcomes are less than what is expected and desired. (p. 279)

Teachers and school leaders should emphasize data-based decision-making and progress-monitoring data to make decisions about continued implementation. "The supportive organizational structure for a program within a school, which is practiced regularly will

lead to successful implementation" (Weisz et al., 2022, p. 281). Ongoing and consistent sustenance within the school will allow all students to receive the same initial quality instruction.

Shapiro et al. (2012) stated, "Within an RTI model, team decision-making processes play a major role" (p. 1). Data decision-making teams begin with universal screening to determine the appropriate tiered intervention matched to the needs of the student. Teams must examine data collected through the RTI process to decide when to modify instruction and when students need to change tiers. "Fully understanding how teams of educators examine data and weigh evidence in their decision-making process is critical to a complete understanding of the RTI process" (Shapiro et al., 2012, p. 1). The data sources teachers rely on within RTI models "are administered usually at least three times per year to all students" (Shapiro et al., 2012, p. 1). Embedded assessments weekly or unit assessments help to shape the data-decisions regarding student performances. In addition to embedded assessments, school-wide diagnostic assessments play a role in screening measures for the RTI decision making process.

Glover's (2017) five-phase framework began with the needs identification which leads the teacher "to identify needs relative to desired performance benchmarks" (2017, p. 16). Goal setting with the student using data, plan implementation to practice the achievement of goals, and plan evaluation to progress monitor follows the needs identification. "This approach supports ongoing instructional planning that is continuously adjusted to students' needs" (Glover, 2017, p. 16). Figure 6 illustrates Glover's (2017) framework for RTI data-driven decisions.

Figure 6

Five-Phase Framework for Data-Driven Decisions

Note. The five-phase framework for data-driven decisions uses 5 strategies to explain data decisions to be completed for a teacher's success.

Outcomes

The overall objective of the MTSS framework is to provide targeted support to struggling students. The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD) (2006) stated, "RTI is an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data" (p. 2). Interventions are selected and implemented under rigorous conditions to determine what will work for the student. All students begin with instruction in Tier 1, and screening takes place in this initial phase. After screening, teachers move any student who needs further instruction to Tier 2. Harlacher (2020) stated, "This first layer of additional support, Tier 2, occurs outside of the time dedicated to core instruction, in groups of 5–8

students, and focuses primarily on providing increased opportunities to practice and learn skills taught in the core" (p. 1). When Tier 2 progress is unsatisfactory and does not meet the need of the student, teachers move the student into Tier 3. "Compared to Tier 2, Tier 3 is more explicit, focuses on remediation of skills, is provided for a longer duration of time" (Harlacher, 2020, p. 1).

The MTSS delivery model has instructional tiers to ensure proper support for each student, and a traditional school can provide resources to students who need more intensified instruction. It is the duty of the teacher to progress monitor students frequently using a systematic approach. Harlacher (2020) stated students receiving Tier 2 support are monitored once or twice per month, compared to weekly or twice a week at Tier 3. Tier 2 students are usually monitored once per month; however, many suggest monitoring every 2 weeks. Tier 2 supports should include instruction provided regularly and in small groups and frequent progress monitoring. Tier 3 should consist of more intensive and individualized instruction for students who do not respond to Tier 2 supports.

Conclusion

The research revealed common components of the MTSS/RTI process and delineated needs for successful implementation. Support structures and delivery frameworks were noted with a strong emphasis on the team cooperation needed to sustain the process. Without the proper support for teachers, there will be no effective implementation of MTSS. Due to frequent changes in school-wide implementation of MTSS, educators encounter many struggles and feel confused about the process. Gathering data will identify teachers' understanding of the MTSS process, tiered

interventions, and their experiences with MTSS.

Chapter Three: Methodology

I analyzed teacher perception of MTSS in one school. I implemented a mixed-methods research design using quantitative and qualitative data. I used Likert-scale questions for the quantitative data. I used an open-ended survey with teacher leaders to serve as the qualitative data.

Research Design Overview

Patton (2008) stated, "The primary criterion by which an evaluation is judged is *intended use by intended users*" (p. 98). This evaluation included only the perception of teachers who participated in the school wide MTSS process. The MTSS framework provides a three-tiered approach that is designed to improve student achievement in academic areas.

For my program evaluation, I used quantitative data in the form of responses to Likert-scale questions from a teacher survey. My qualitative data included responses from open-ended survey questions and responses given during a group teacher leaders' interview. Both data sets provided a deeper understanding of teacher perceptions of the MTSS framework and the implementation at the school level. Patton (2008) stated two questions based on the effectiveness focus:

1. To what extent is the program effective in attaining its goals?

2. How can the program be more effective? (p. 301)

The teachers spent an important part of their day instructing students based on their individual needs and even have time allotted in the school day for MTSS. Looking at teacher perception is a great opportunity to examine both quantitative and qualitative data

in order to identify the areas of need for teachers and to direct school leaders in supporting the teachers to establish a better understanding to ensure a high success rate.

I used a knowledge focus (Patton, 2008, p. 303) to determine what can be learned from this program's experiences and results to inform future efforts. The knowledge focus allowed me to consider the teachers' perception of MTSS, how they were implementing it, and what steps they were taking to make use of the allotted time. My evaluation on teacher perceptions, along with the input from the teacher leaders is important for future efforts to ensure a higher success rate with MTSS implementation.

Participants

There were two stakeholder groups in this program evaluation. The first group of participants were 20 kindergarten through fifth grade teachers who implemented MTSS during the school day. The second group of participants for my study were two school based teacher leaders: an instructional coach and a staffing specialist. All participants were females, with an age span of 22-65 years.

Data Gathering Techniques

I implemented a mixed method design in this study by collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data consisted of Likert scale surveys. The open-ended survey questions and focus group interview generated the qualitative data.

Teacher Survey

I invited all kindergarten through fifth teachers at the school under study to participate in a voluntary survey. Of the 40 teachers receiving the email invitation, 20 teachers agreed to participate. This survey helped me gain insight into the level of understanding of the teachers of the MTSS implementation process. The survey had 13

Likert-scale questions and five open ended questions for a total of 18 questions (See

Appendix A: Survey Questions). I provided all survey participants with an informed

consent form prior to receiving the survey. All participants acknowledged consent for

inclusion in this program evaluation.

Interviews

I invited two teacher leaders to participate in a focus group. The instructional

coach and the staffing specialist participated in the interview. I asked the focus group

questions about the implementation process to understand the degree of support provided

to teachers during implementation of MTSS. I asked seven open ended questions during

the focus group interview (See Appendix B: Focus Group Questions). I conducted the

focus group interview remotely using Microsoft Teams. With the permission of the

interviewees, I recorded and transcribed the interview for accuracy. To protect the

confidentiality of the participants, I saved the recording to the hard drive on my personal

computer which is password protected.

Data Analysis Techniques

I analyzed the responses from the Likert- scale by collating it and looking at the

numbers in percentage form for each question. I also analyzed the open-ended questions

from both the survey and interview for similar themes. I transcribed the recording of the

interview for similarities in answers from both focus group members.

The survey I created was completed anonymously by each teacher who

participated in the MTSS process. I gathered survey data for each Likert-scale question in

a percentage format on Google Docs and a pie chart I created with the percentages for

each of the responses. In the survey, I compared teacher responses to each open-ended

question to look for similarities. I looked at each question and wrote down all the responses, then I re-read the responses and highlighted the answers which showed similar themes. I also compared the responses of the interview with the teacher leaders to the open-ended questions from the survey to look for similar themes by listening to the interview. I listened to the recorded interview completed virtually to transcribe the answers for each question each teacher leader answered. Finally, in the last comparison, I analyzed the data to compare the teachers' answers to the open-ended questions in the survey vs. the teacher leaders' answers to the interview questions to identify similarities in themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Ethical Considerations

I contacted teachers in the school who taught students in the MTSS process via school district email, requesting them to participate in a brief survey for the program evaluation voluntarily. Those who were willing to participate filled out a consent form which included details about the purpose of the study. After completing the consent form, participants completed the anonymous survey via google forms. Additionally, I sought permission from the staffing specialist and instructional coach to participate in a brief focus group interview. The focus group completed a virtual interview that was recorded, and all answers remained confidential. No one else was allowed in the virtual conference during the interview to ensure confidentiality. With the permission of the interviewees, I recorded and transcribed the interview for accuracy. I analyzed the responses for similar themes by coding phrases and sentences. I kept the transcripts from the interview t in a locked file cabinet in my home. The consent forms provided the full disclosure of the methods for data collection, how the data will be utilized, and the option to abstain from the study without any form of consequence. The anonymity of each participant, the

school district, and the state was maintained throughout the entirety of the program evaluation.

There were no anticipated risks to participants in this program evaluation beyond that of everyday life. Participants taking part in this study may have benefitted by realizing their implementation of MTSS in their classroom can be enhanced. Involvement in my study may have resulted in improvements to the implementation of MTSS in one school because I shared my findings with the administrators within the school. The administrators will use the findings to enhance the MTSS process across the school to benefit students.

Limitations

My study of MTSS in one school, based on teachers' perceptions, had the following limitations:

- Only conducted in one elementary school

- Small sample size for teacher leaders- at the school under study there were only two teacher leaders I was able to interview, due to the third teacher leader relocating to another job.

- COVID – change of how MTSS was implemented- teachers were responsible for all tier levels during the allotted time. Usually there were specific groups for each teacher in which they focused on one tier level for Tier 2 and 3. Due to COVID students were to remain in their class and the teacher would provide MTSS instruction.

Conclusion

I collected both quantitative and qualitative data for my program evaluation.

Having 20 out of 40 teachers consent to do surveys and completing the focus group

interview with teacher leaders was a success. I collected and analyzed data for similar

themes. In the next chapter I will discuss the results and findings.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of my study was to evaluate, based on teacher perception, the effectiveness of MTSS framework within one elementary school. Every teacher uses interventions with any student to help them succeed in the classroom (Response to Intervention, 2013), and MTSS is a framework used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson. The MTSS process in the school under study was established at the district level and executed at the school level using time allotted by the district leaders in the daily schedule. In this section, I present the data results from the surveys completed by teachers implementing MTSS and from the focus group interview I conducted with teacher leaders. I present the findings through the lens of Wagner et al.'s (2006) 4 Cs: Contexts, Culture, Conditions and Competencies. I provide my interpretations, judgments and recommendations based upon my findings.

Findings

The findings from my program evaluation provided answers to my research questions about the implementation of MTSS in one school. I interviewed a focus group and teachers completed a survey about their perception of MTSS. I analyzed and compared data between teacher leaders and teachers about the school-wide implementation process.

Teacher Survey

I gathered information from teachers who completed a survey about their perception of the MTSS process. I asked participants to respond to a series of statements regarding their knowledge of MTSS. The first survey statement was: "I am confident with my knowledge of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and my ability to

implement it with fidelity." The results indicated that 15% disagreed they were confident with their MTSS knowledge, and 85% agreed they were confident with their MTSS knowledge (See Figure 7).

Figure 7

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Confidence with Knowledge of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Ability to Implement it with Fidelity
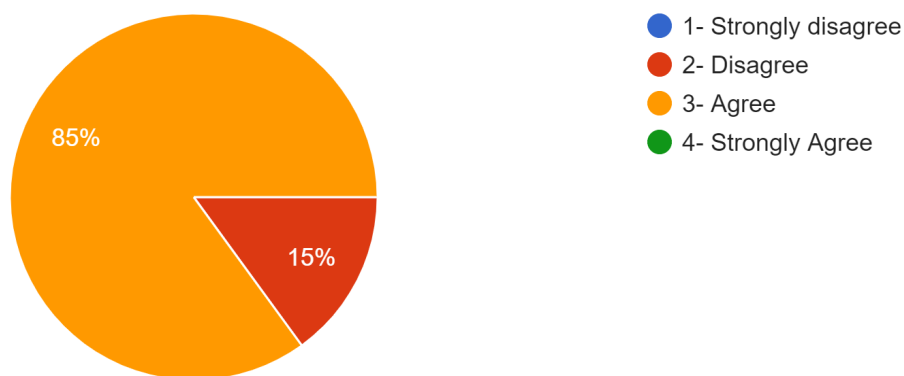
Note. N = 20

I asked participants who chose to agree or strongly agree to explain why. Participants said they knew how to differentiate instruction within each tier in which a student is placed and how students are placed in groups where differentiated instruction is given based on the tier. Participants stated that they felt they could implement MTSS with fidelity because of their training. They were trained in MTSS and used the process multiple times throughout the years with various students. A participant stated they did not choose strongly to agree because there are always changes in the process. (See Appendix C.)

Statements 2, 3, and 4 were related to the teacher's ability to meet student needs based on each tier level. Statement 2 was: "Tier 1 interventions are meeting student

needs." Data indicated that 85% of teachers agreed that Tier 1 interventions met student needs and 10% of teachers disagreed that Tier 1 interventions are meeting student needs, and 5% strongly disagreed. (See Figure 8)

Figure 8

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Tier 1 Interventions are Meeting Student Needs
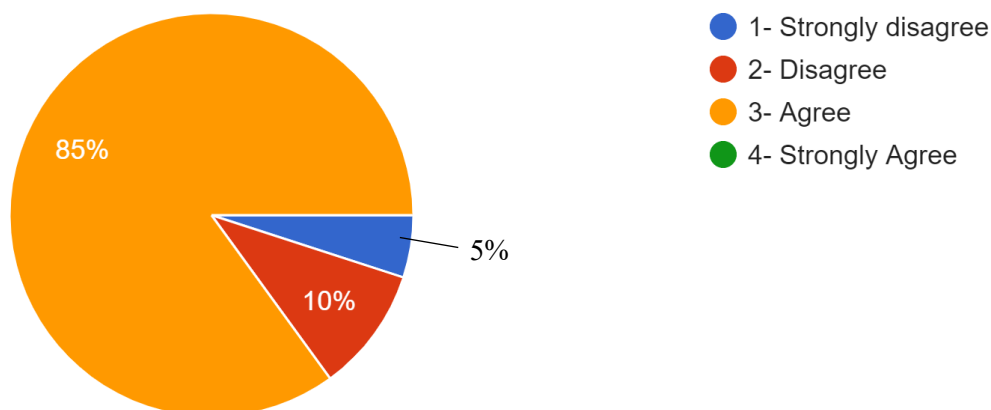
Note. N = 20

Statement 3 was: "Tier 2 interventions are meeting student needs." The data indicated that 85% of teachers agreed they were meeting student needs in Tier 2 interventions and 15% disagreed about Tier 2 interventions meeting student needs (See Figure 9).

Figure 9

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Tier 2 Interventions are

Meeting Student Needs
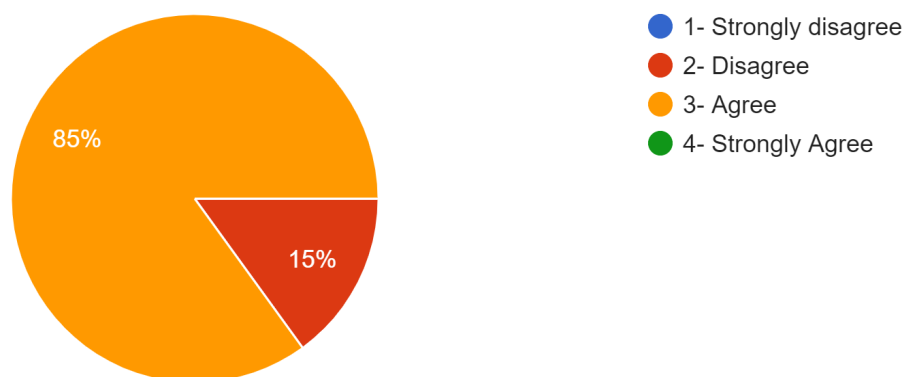
Note. N = 20

Statement 4 was: "Tier 3 interventions are meeting student needs." Results indicated 5% of participants strongly agreed, 60% of participants agreed that Tier 3 interventions were meeting student needs, 25% of participants disagreed that Tier 3 interventions were meeting students' needs, and 10% of participants strongly disagreed that Tier 3 interventions were meeting the needs of the students (See Figure 10).

Figure 10

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Tier 3 Interventions are Meeting Student Needs
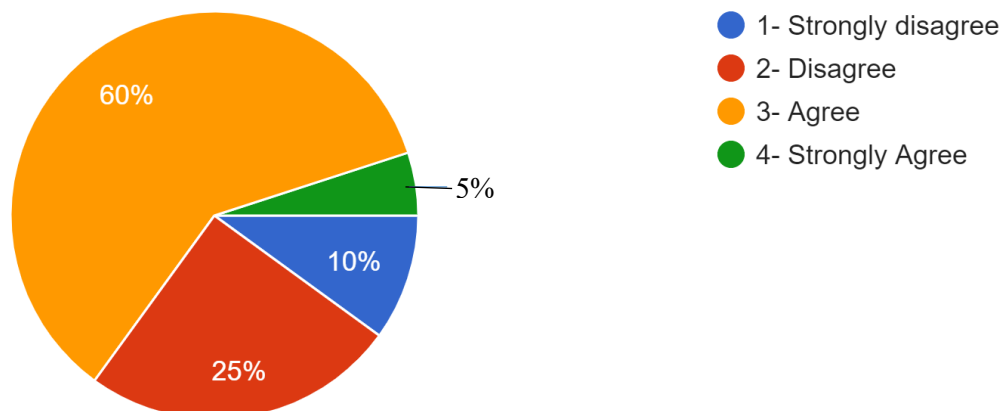
Note. N = 20

Statement 5 was "MTSS is an extra program implemented by the district." Results displayed 5% of participants strongly agreed that MTSS is an extra program implemented by the district, 45% of participants demonstrated they agreed it was an extra program, 35% of participants disagreed about MTSS being an extra program implemented by the district, 15% of participants strongly disagreed (See Figure 11).

Figure 11

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: MTSS is an Extra Program

Implemented by the District
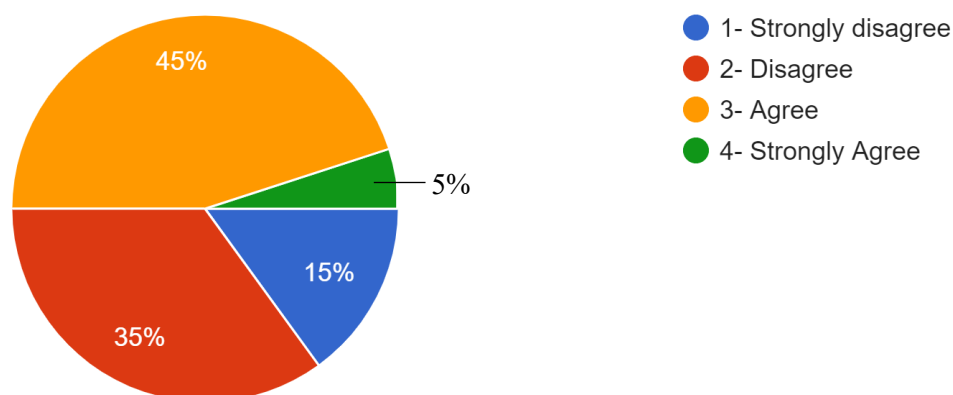
Note. N = 20

  I asked participants to respond to the following in Statement 6: "MTSS is only geared toward Special Education students." The data showed 10% of participants agreed MTSS is geared only for the purpose of targeting the needs of Special Education students within the school, 60% of participants disagreed, 30% of participants strongly disagreed (See Figure 12).

Figure 12

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: MTSS is Only Geared Toward Special Education Students
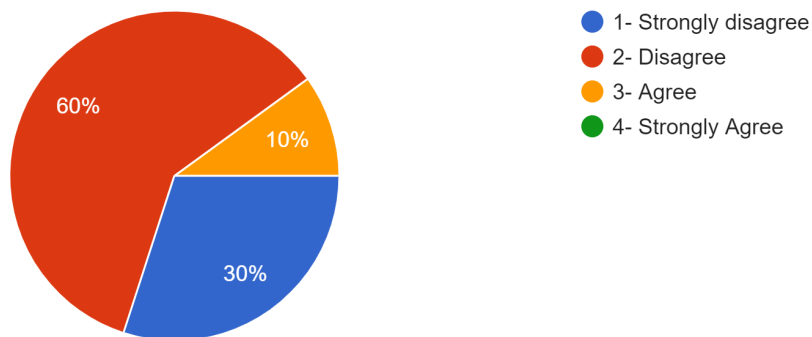
Note. N = 20

In Statement 7, participants responded to the following statement: "All students in Tier 3 interventions have an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan)". The data indicated 10% strongly agreed, 10% agreed all students in Tier 3 interventions have an IEP, 30% of participants disagreed all students in Tier 3 interventions have an IEP, 50% strongly disagreed (See Figure 13).

Figure 13

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: All Students in Tier 3

Interventions have an IEP
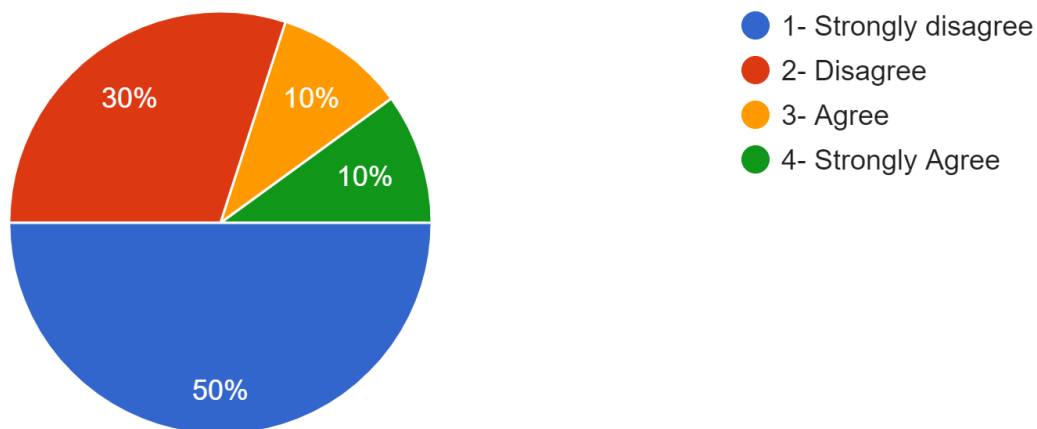
Note. N = 20

In Statement 8, I gathered participants' perceptions regarding the following: "Once a student begins receiving Tier 3 interventions, they no longer receive Tier 1 or Tier 2 interventions." The data indicated 0% strongly agreed, 5% of participants agreed, 30% of participants disagreed, and 65% strongly disagreed (See Figure 14).

Figure 14

Teacher's Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Once a Student Begins

Receiving Tier 3 Interventions, They No Longer Receive Tier 1 or Tier 2 Interventions
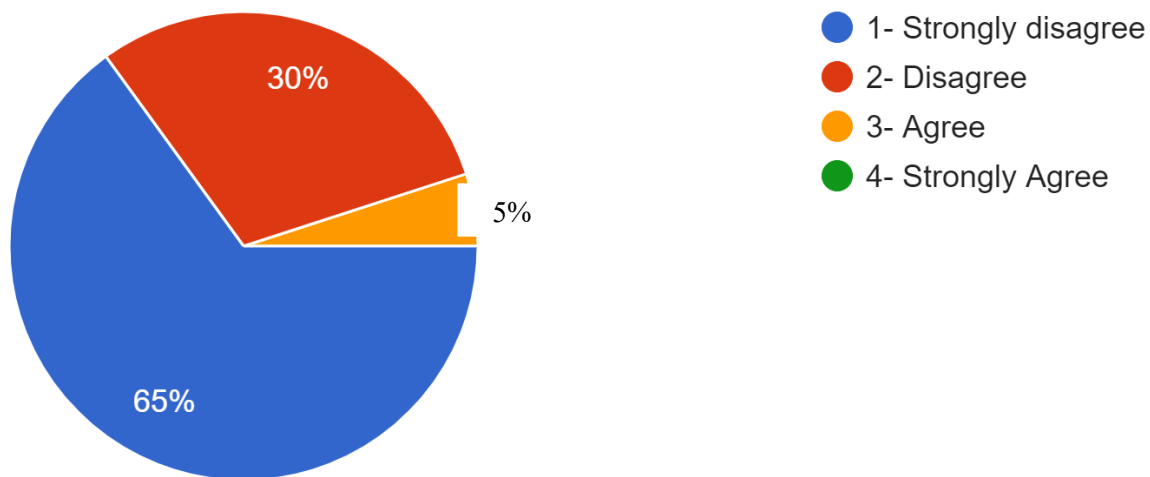
Note. N = 20

In Statements 9, 10 and 11, I collected data on teachers' perceptions of the MTSS model used at the school under study. Statement 9 was: "In the MTSS model, Tier 1 consists of research-based core instruction and supports designed to meet the needs of students in the general curriculum." Based on the results, 60% of participants strongly agreed Tier 1 consists of research-based core instruction and supports designed to meet the needs of students in the general curriculum and 40% of participants agreed (See Figure 15).

Figure 15

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Tier 1 Consists of

Research-Based Core Instruction and Supports Designed to Meet the Needs of Students

in the General Curriculum
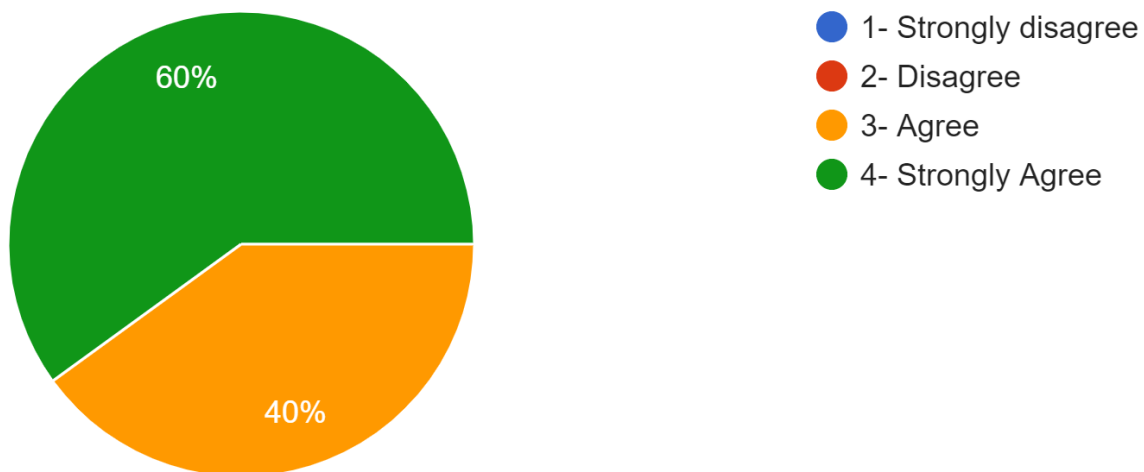
Note. N = 20

Participants responded to Statement 10: "In the MTSS model, Tier 2 consists of supplemental instruction targeted towards a small group in addition to the core instruction that students receive in Tier 1." Results indicated 50% of participants strongly agreed and 50% of participants agreed (See Figure 16).

Figure 16

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Tier 2 Consists of Supplemental Instruction Targeted Towards a Small Group in Addition to the Core Instruction that Students Receive in Tier 1
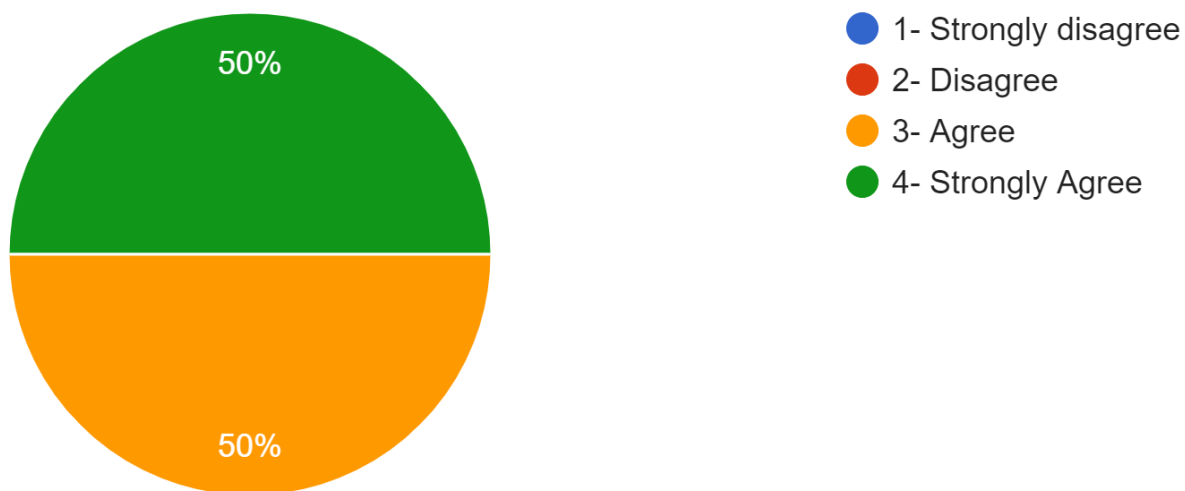
Note. N = 20

In Statement 11, participants responded to the following: "In the MTSS model, Tier 3 consists of an intensified instructional intervention in addition to the core instruction, which serves as a goal to improve the student's rate of progress." Data showed 55% of participants strongly agreed, 40% of participants agreed, and 5% of participants disagreed (See Figure 17).

Figure 17

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Tier 3 Consists of an

Intensified Instructional Intervention in Addition to the Core Instruction, which Serves as

a Goal to Improve the Student's Rate of Progress
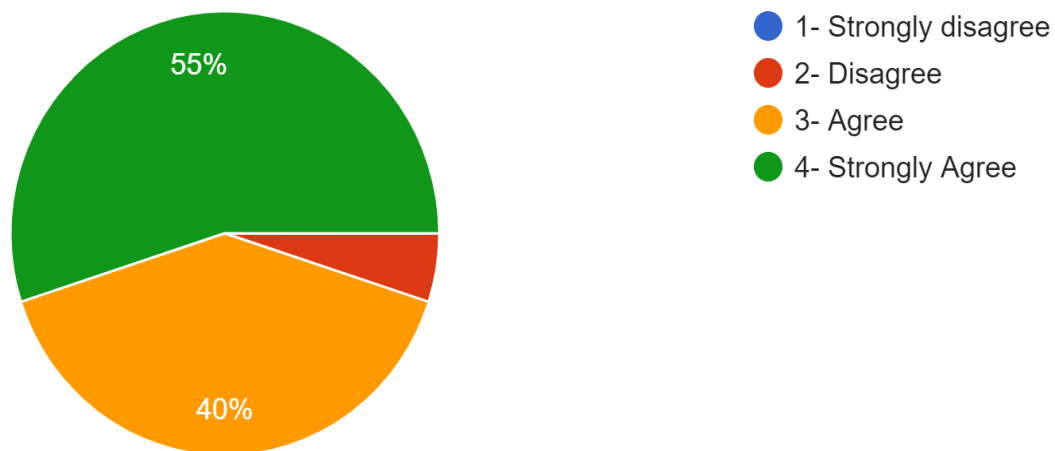
Note. N = 20

In Statement 12, I asked participants to respond to: "My students with an IEP are

served in all three tiers of the MTSS model." Results indicated 35% of participants

strongly agreed, 45% of participants agreed, 15% of participants disagreed, and 5% of

participants strongly disagreed (See Figure 18).

Figure 18

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Students with an IEP are Served in All Three Tiers of the MTSS Model
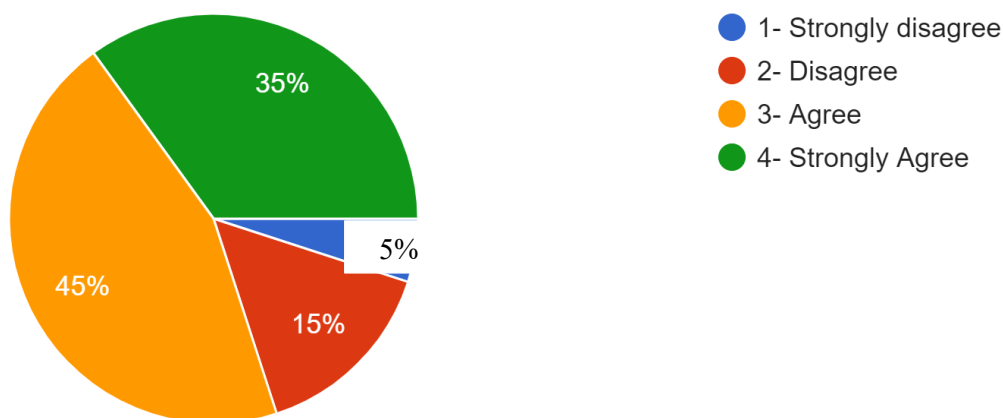
Note. N = 20

Statement 13 focused on the teacher's perception of MTSS and English Language Learners (ELLs): "Parents of English Language Learners can choose not to participate in MTSS." Results expressed 20% of participants agreed, 60% of participants disagreed, and 20% of participants strongly disagreed (See Figure 19). Based on the Department of Education (2017, citation withheld to protect confidentiality) of the state where the school under study is located "any parent whose child is receiving ELL programs or services has the right to decline or opt a child out of the program" (p. 1). Parents do not have the right to choose to opt their child out of MTSS.

Figure 19

Teachers' Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS: Parents of English

Language Learners can Choose not to Participate in MTSS
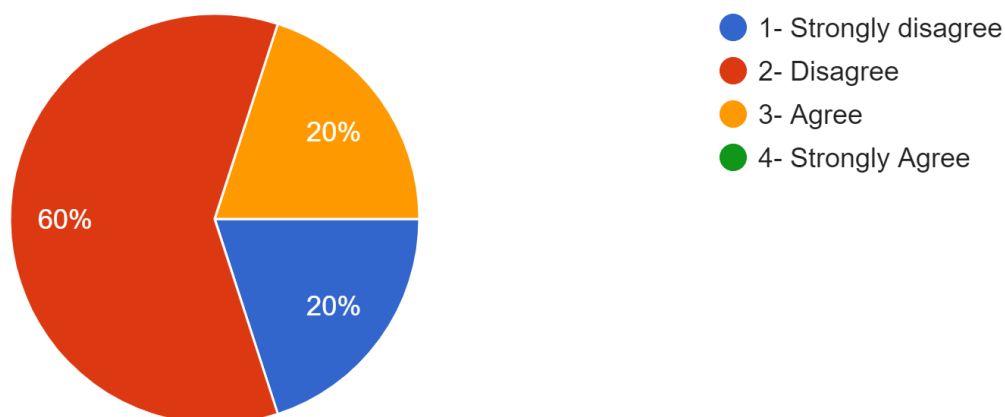
Note. N = 20

In Question 14 of the survey, I gathered information on the materials teachers

needed for the MTSS process to work. In this question, I asked, "In order to make the

MTSS process work what materials do you need?" There were 19 responses from the

participants. A common theme for 11 out of the 19 responses was the need for materials

and resources. Specific responses from the survey were: An actual MTSS curriculum

which is differentiated to target students in Tier 2 and Tier 3; Supplemental materials that

would break down specific skills for students in Tier 3; More engaging workbooks for

students; Resources targeting the specific skill a student need. (See Appendix D.)

I asked in question 15: "What professional development (PD) do you need to

make the MTSS process work?" Participants stated training on the specific MTSS

program, how to implement the program, a school wide MTSS PD that provides specific

steps, and specific training on how to implement interventions. The most common answer

of participants (10 out of 16) was the need for a school wide PD. (See Appendix E.)

In question 16 of the teacher survey, I asked: "What instructional support do you currently need to make the MTSS process work?" The results from 18 participants indicated that examples are needed of what MTSS should look like. Teachers expressed the need for materials and resources to support the different tiers. They also needed more support to assist struggling students. Teachers communicated the need for a teacher leader who is available to answer questions and model the MTSS process, and assist teachers when making the decision when a student needs to move from one tier to another. Teachers also wished to have all hands-on deck including administrators to assist with MTSS time. (See Appendix F.)

In statement 17, I gathered information on: "What questions do you have about MTSS?" Out of the 20 participants completing the survey, eight participants answered the question. Participants stated various questions and there was not a common theme. Participants asked what curriculum first grade should use; why does a child who is already under the ESE umbrella have to go through the tiers; can MTSS be more streamlined; what types of resources are available right now; is it possible (post COVID) to service only your homeroom?

In question 18, I asked participants: "Is there anything else you want to let me know about MTSS?" Participant responses included:

- I feel that the MTSS process is a great system, but there is not a lot of guidance on it for teachers.

- We are told to be doing the MTSS process but are not told how to effectively implement it.

- We are not given any materials and are left to our own devices to find

curriculum to use with our most fragile students.

- I believe it would be much more effective if we were given more guidance and materials to use with our students.

- There should be more flexibility and trust in what the teachers are doing for MTSS. There should not be more work added to the teachers' plates."

- We need a cheat sheet to help remind us of dos and don'ts for each level, suggested activities and a curriculum that covers all aspects of reading and math to use as intervention. MTSS needs to go deeper than just fluency and reading comprehension. If we do not fix the structure and foundation, we are failing our students in the tiers.

Focus Group Interview

I interviewed teacher leaders to gather information on MTSS and how the leaders supported teachers in the process for the entire school. I asked in Question 1: "How are you providing MTSS support to the instructional staff?" When I analyzed these answers, the teacher leaders' support for the teachers in the MTSS process was providing organization for initial grouping of students, monitoring student data, and determining student movement between instructional tiers. Teacher Leader 1 stated,

Teachers are provided support by leadership by me creating a google folder for the school year that is called MTSS data and then we meet with the teams to create intervention groups based on our two data points of iReady and [State Standards Assessment]. Each student is uniquely grouped based on their data. After the groups are created, I go back in and add the students by grade level into the MTSS Google folder, so I am able to monitor student data. Groups can be

changed based on student data. In December there is another iReady data point we use to switch students to the appropriate tier groups and leadership meets with each grade level for that process. Teachers are not allowed to switch students without leadership approval.

Teacher Leader 2 stated, "Reviewing paperwork has not changed due to COVID-19. I review the graphs and make sure teachers are inputting data and assist teachers in any questions they have about the graphing process."

In Question 2, I asked, "How do you differentiate curricula in Tiers 1-3?" Teacher leaders at this school indicated Tier 1 is not differentiated. Tier 2 is differentiated by reteaching using a different curriculum through the use of a workbook, and Tier 3 is student specific. Teacher Leader 1 stated,

Tier 1 is not differentiated because all students receive Tier 1 instruction and that is all grade level instruction. They may receive different supports, but the instruction remains the same. Tier 2 performance coach workbooks are a reteach of standards just in a different mode using different curriculum, and teachers are able to differentiate by using the lower level performance coach workbooks. For example, if you have a group of fourth graders that are really struggling, you can use the third grade performance coach workbooks. Tier 3 has never changed. That is always part of the reading process that the child needs, and it is extremely student specific whether they need phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension, which again depends on the student.

Teacher Leader 2 stated,

From my perspective, on top of the reading piece we are using Tier 1, 2, and 3 for

behavior support, for students who are possibly ASD or ADD kids that are

coming in and have behavior issues or concerns and they have an individual

behavior plan, and the county coach comes in and takes a look at those students

and teachers are also graphing behavior stuff.

I asked in Question 3, "What materials are used for MTSS?" Teacher Leader 1

stated: In Grades 2-5 for Tier1 teachers use performance coach workbooks. For Tier 3

depending on the student needs, teachers use FCRR, EIR, I-ready toolkit lessons and

would depend on what the student needs are. Teacher Leader 2 did not provide any

responses to this question.

I asked in Question 4: "What is the process for data collection from the teachers?"

(Tier 2 and Tier 3). The teacher leaders indicated the data collection process was looking

at teacher provided charts every four weeks for students in Tier 2. For Tier 3, it was once

every five days.

Teacher Leader 1said,

The process for data collection from the teachers for Tier 2 is roughly every 4

weeks and we mostly look at the lessons completed on iReady, and that's what I

used to look at regardless of what they're working on and for Tier 3. It is the

graph that the teachers have to fill out every five days based off of whatever

specific skill they're working on.

Teacher Leader 2 stated,

Sometimes it is multiple graphs. It could be multiple graphs, so for certain kids,

especially if they are moving toward testing, it could be just their reading graph. It

could be reading and a math graph. It could be a reading, math, and a language

graph. Those graphs are still in our shared folders and on the Google Drive, and teachers are updating regularly. The graphs for MTSS are collected for data purposes; the teacher collects data based on the student results and adds the progress to the graphs using percentages.

I asked in Question 5: "Who will analyze the data collected on students receiving interventions?" Data at the school under study was analyzed by the instructional coach and administrators. Teachers were not included in the analysis of their student data. Teacher Leader 1 stated, "The data must be analyzed by the instructional coach, and the admin team. The data is also analyzed when there is a new data point, such as the middle of the year iReady diagnostic, and we switch students' tier groups when necessary." Teacher Leader 2 did not offer any response to this question.

I asked teacher leaders in Question 6: "Are you fully implementing the MTSS process specifically following district procedures- why or why not?" Teacher leaders at the school under study indicated district procedures are followed because students could not be referred for exceptional student services testing or may not be found eligible for placement in an ESE program if district procedures were not followed. Teacher Leader 1 stated, "Yes, we are following district procedures."

Teacher Leader 2 stated,

Yes, we follow district procedures. And in addition to the district wide process, I'm held responsible for state compliance, so it's not just because [the district under study] wants to do it their way. The paperwork has to meet state compliance. The district support person comes in monthly and looks through all the folders of the staffing meetings that have been held. Whether it's a new

staffing, an annual review, or if we've tested someone and they're ineligible for a program, she looks through all of my paperwork to make sure not only does it meet the district [expectations], but that everything we're doing meets all state standards.

I asked teacher leaders in Question 7: "What do you feel teachers need in order to implement MTSS with fidelity?" The teacher leaders stated the teachers at the school under study need training, so they understand the basics of the MTSS process.

Teacher Leader 1 stated,

I think teachers need a training to understand the basic process. They need to learn why a student from Tier 1 does not just automatically go to Tier 3 and vice versa. Considering the years that we have been working through whether we call that RTI or MTSS, I still do not believe that teachers at the classroom level truly understand what that process looks like. That Tier 1 is your core instruction, Tier2 is what you do in your small group, and Tier 3 is your lowest of your lows and really looking at how you are going to close those gaps.

Teacher Leader 2 stated,

 I really feel like, honestly, one of the things is a structured walk to intervention time because everybody has to be ready, and you have to hold each other accountable. If we say we will do it in our classroom during the time allotted for it, teachers tend to say they might need 10 extra minutes to finish a math lesson or reading lesson because they are the only person it is impacting, and you can cheat on your minutes. I also think teachers need an understanding of what MTSS really means and what constitutes a tier two student and a tier three student.

In the next section, I analyzed the findings of my study using the 4 Cs (Wagner et al., 2006), context, culture, conditions, and competencies. Context refers to skill demands students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens. Culture is how we would characterize the level of expectation for all students' learning and the school agenda. Conditions indicate how well problem solving is taking place for learning and clear priorities and focus for each person's work. Competencies refers to how well a school thinks strategically, identifies students' learning needs, gathers, and interprets data, and the extent of collaboration within the school.

Contexts

At the school under study, teachers fully implemented MTSS per district guidelines. Teacher leaders grouped students, monitored data, moved students between tiers, and ensured compliance with graphing. When I asked for teacher feedback on the MTSS process, the results indicated that teachers needed more support to provide intensive instruction to the struggling students. Participants indicated the need for a leader to be available to answer questions about MTSS and to model the process for teachers. There was a lack of guidance from leaders as to how they wanted MTSS implemented, and teachers were not fully aware of how to utilize the time allotted effectively. Participants' comments on the teacher survey indicated they needed implementation support. One participant stated there was not a lot of guidance on MTSS for teachers and that leaders told them to be doing MTSS but not how to implement it effectively. Another concern from a participant also stated they are not given any materials and are left to find their own curriculum to use with fragile students.

Leaders believed teachers were not needed when interpreting the data. In an interview with teacher leaders, it was stated the data interpretation process was analyzed by the instructional coaches and administrators. The data was also analyzed when there was a new data point, such as the middle of the year diagnostic tests, and leaders regrouped students within tier groups as needed. Teachers were not involved in making MTSS decisions for students other than submitting progress monitoring charts.

Based on the survey, teachers did not feel supported in implementing MTSS. Participants stated a need for professional development to help with the structure of MTSS and when students should be switched between tiers. There was also a lack of support in MTSS because teachers lacked guidance from leaders as to how they wanted MTSS implemented. Some expectations lacking direction were stated in the teacher survey, such as tracking progress and providing the proper instruction for Tier 3. Many participants stated they needed additional resources to support their struggling students. The materials were just not enough and were not being provided to the most fragile students.

Culture

Through my study, I found that teacher perception of MTSS in one elementary school revealed a culture of leaders within the organization who valued MTSS as a method of identifying students for ESE services. In an interview with teacher leaders, they stated they provided support to teachers by creating a Google folder for the school year, then meeting with the teachers to create intervention groups based on the two data points. The first data point was from the iReady diagnostics that were administered three times, at the beginning, middle and end of the year. The second data point was taken

from the state standards assessment. The support provided by the school leaders for teachers was not academic; the support provided teachers with information on their students and the placement of the student in a tier group. Teacher leaders also organized the students per intervention group in the Google folder for teachers so they could input data. The data proved teacher leaders were only responsible for the MTSS administrative duties.

Leaders were not fully aware of the struggle that many teachers were experiencing during the allotted MTSS time. There was a disconnect between what teacher leaders thought the teachers needed and what teachers actually needed. Participants' statements in the teacher survey supported that a onetime professional development was not adequate. In one survey question asking participants about the support they needed for MTSS, 10 out of 18 stated they needed additional support from administrators. Teachers indicated the support needed was for the overall MTSS structure and someone who could model the process for teachers. One participant also stated there was a lack of support for MTSS and there was very little direction on expectations such as tracking progress and the proper instruction for Tier 3. The teacher leader responses indicated that the faculty implemented MTSS and followed district guidelines for the focus on identifying ESE students. The lack of communication between school leaders and teachers was very evident. Each side had a different view of MTSS and, although teachers did understand the process, the issue, based on the teacher survey, was the lack of leadership to provide appropriate direction or training on MTSS.

Conditions

Leaders at the school under study allotted time during the day for MTSS

interventions. There were no formal procedures for teachers to follow during that time.

Participants stated they needed examples of how MTSS should look. Part of the job role

of a teacher was to conduct MTSS with fidelity, but leaders did not explicitly define the

teacher roles. When the outcome of MTSS is tied with student achievement there must be

proper procedures in place. Based on another survey question, participants needed

support on specific steps and specific training on how to implement interventions.

In addition to no formal procedures for teachers to follow for MTSS, participants

stated there was a lack of resources for students in Tiers 2 and 3. The lack of resources to

support all tiered students was evident. In the responses in the teacher survey, participants

asked how they would know the best materials for Tier 3. Another participant stated the

need for professional development on specific skills that targeted Tier 3.

Competencies

The survey results showed teachers were knowledgeable about MTSS. The

teacher survey showed 85% of teachers who participated were confident in their ability to

implement MTSS with fidelity. Many participants commented they had been using the

MTSS process for several years. They understood how to differentiate based on the needs

of their students; they understood the purpose of the different tiers, and what it meant for

a student to be placed in each tier.

Overall, teachers needed support with the school's MTSS implementation.

Teachers needed help with identifying specific skill targets for students. One participant

stated they needed professional development in determining the specific targeted area of

reading a Tier 3 student required. For example, a participant stated, "students who need

help in Tier 3 phonics, which is a broad topic and not specific enough, makes it hard to determine how interventions for this specific need should begin."

Tier 3 is a critical part of the MTSS process and focuses on the most fragile students. Teachers were not sure what instruction to provide to students during this time which means the time was not used effectively. Participants stated they needed professional development on specific Tier 3 skills they could implement with their students. Although school leaders provided the materials to the teachers for Tier 2 instruction, they did not specifically provide training on how to use the intervention materials. Participants stated the need for more materials for each tier and a differentiated curriculum. I asked in one survey question about what instructional support was needed for MTSS. Participants replied they needed more teacher support, a more hands-on deck from administrators to assist with students, and possibly pull groups. One participant stated they needed help specifically with instruction on vowel rules and phonics lessons.

Teachers lacked necessary skills for graphing and charting student progress. Many participants requested professional development on the MTSS process. Participants also stated they specifically needed professional development on how to graph and chart student progress. Other participants stated the need for assistance in completing the data sheets.

Teacher leaders had a lack of depth in their MTSS foundational knowledge and in how they could support teachers in the process. One teacher leader a basic knowledge about the MTSS process Teacher leaders had a lack of depth in their MTSS foundational knowledge and in how they could support teachers in the process. One teacher leader indicated through her responses only a basic knowledge about the MTSS process. In the

interview, her responses indicated a lack of consistency in how they helped teachers. The second teacher leader provided minimum answers to some questions and did not respond to others.

Interpretation

The data showed that teachers at the school under study were knowledgeable of the MTSS process but wanted more support from teacher leaders on how to effectively implement MTSS, including staff development on differentiation of instruction and curriculum to support the students in Tier 3. The teacher leaders reported that teachers needed a better understanding of the basics of the MTSS process. The leaders supported the teachers in implementing MTSS by focusing on district compliance, monitoring MTSS student data teachers provided, grouping students into tiers and making sure ESE staffing paperwork was complete.

The findings of this study are significant because they identified a gap in the perceptions of the teachers and the perceptions of the teacher leaders about MTSS at the school under study. There is a disconnect between the support the teachers state they need and what the teacher leaders have provided. One possible reason the findings turned out this way could be due to the loss of the instructional coach at the school under study. The instructional coach would have focused on helping the teachers with MTSS implementation in the classroom.

Judgments

I sought to answer the following research questions in this study:

1. What happens within the school day during the allotted time for provided by the district to implement MTSS?

a. What level of knowledge do teachers have regarding the MTSS process?

b. From the teacher perspective, what supports are needed to implement MTSS effectively?

The answer to the first research question of this study showed that the participants followed the school schedule, and they provided MTSS instruction during the allotted time. The results of Likert scale and open-ended survey questions results were positive in that teachers had a high level of knowledge of MTSS. However, from the teachers' perspective of being supported with implementation, the results were negative. Teachers stated they needed support from teacher leaders in implementing the curriculum effectively, providing appropriate instruction to the students in Tier 3, helping students progress between tiers, and training in MTSS from the school-based leaders to be able to know and understand the expectations in depth.

- How can leaders in a school better support teachers to establish a greater understanding of the MTSS process within a classroom to ensure a higher success rate?

The second research question of this study served the purpose to clarify how leaders supported teachers in the MTSS process. When comparing the results of the teacher leader interview to the results of the teacher survey, the results indicated a misconception of needed support. While the teacher leaders were clear on how they supported teachers with paperwork, materials, and grouping students into tiers, they did not provide any support in terms of working with teachers in meeting the needs of students.

Recommendations

I propose a statewide policy that mandates all teachers to have an MTSS endorsement on their teaching certificate. The endorsement will occur in two different methods. The first method will require all teachers who are enrolled in a college teacher preparation program must graduate with the MTSS endorsement by completing course work that proves they understand the process. They will need to be enrolled in at least two MTSS classes or six semester credits and must pass the exam at the end of their college degree. When the students pass the MTSS exam, it will be indicated on their teaching certificate they are MTSS endorsed. Teachers who already have a teaching certificate but are not MTSS endorsed will use the second method. Current educators who teach in a public school will enroll in two MTSS classes taken at the college level equivalent to six semester credits and will have to complete the coursework within one year to be able to continue teaching or coaching.

I recommend this specific policy because, based on my research, teachers at the school under study struggled with the implementation of MTSS. The teacher leaders were unsuccessful in providing adequate support for teachers to implement it effectively. The interview with the teacher leaders demonstrated that they lacked confidence in providing the teachers with the support they needed.

The policy will effectively address the MTSS struggle with all educators. The required coursework for the endorsement will provide all teachers with an understanding of the full process based on each tier. This will provide teachers and leaders the same content and therefore, there would be more structure in the MTSS process and less confusion. The MTSS certificate would provide the knowledge needed for

implementation, graphing, and how to move students from tier to tier. It would also provide academic success to the most fragile students who need the guidance, especially in Tier 3.

Conclusion

In this study, I have demonstrated the importance of understanding teacher perceptions in the MTSS process. The school under study showed that teachers are well-informed in the MTSS process and have expressed the need for more leadership support. Success in implementing MTSS involves an administration team that has a vision for implementation and sharing the vision to ensure a smooth and organized MTSS time.

Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

Through my MTSS evaluation in one elementary school, I discovered several issues impacting implementation and support. Addressing the issues will lead to a successful implementation of MTSS without any confusion or hardships. My change leadership plan focuses on MTSS implementation with fidelity. Leaders will effectively lead the teachers to meet the needs of the students.

I found teachers in the school under study were knowledgeable about the processes involved with MTSS and had experience with implementation. However, there was a disconnect in communication between what teacher leaders thought teachers needed and what teachers reported they actually needed. I discovered a lack of guidance from leaders as to how they wanted teachers to implement MTSS and a lack of resources for teachers to use with students in Tiers 2 and 3. In the MTSS framework Tier 1 is the universal core instruction, Tier 2 focuses on targeted or strategic instruction in a small group, and Tier 3 is intensive instruction in a group of three to five students (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports 2020). I propose a change leadership plan focused on providing a school-wide MTSS plan and more support in helping teachers with resources.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

My vision of the To-Be for the school's MTSS implementation includes ideal contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2006). In my To-Be organizational analysis, school leaders will provide staff development on the components of MTSS, have ongoing communication with teachers to facilitate the MTSS process, and ensure the fidelity of implementation. Leaders and teachers will communicate to understand and support one another to provide quality MTSS instruction for students.

Future Contexts

In my study, I found the school district under study provided time within the school day for MTSS instruction. Leaders and teachers at each elementary school are responsible for using this allotted time in their day to meet the needs of the students in the tiers. The school under study follows the district guidelines and plans for MTSS instruction within the school day. In my future context, this will continue.

Leaders will build a common understanding of MTSS that results in the thoughtful implementation of MTSS in the school building. Ongoing collaboration and communication between leaders and teachers will ensure MTSS is implemented with fidelity. The teacher leaders' involvement will consist of grouping students, monitoring data, and moving students between tiers. Also, school leaders will check data that teachers input to progress monitor and ensure compliance with graphing. In an ideal context, leaders will guide teachers in how to implement MTSS by creating a school-wide MTSS plan to provide consistency across the school. The school leaders will commit to monitoring MTSS time and will go into classrooms to ensure all teachers are supported. They will create a schedule and observe teachers who ask for additional support. Leaders will support any teacher, and leaders will devote their time during the MTSS to ensure teachers have reached mastery level with the implementation of MTSS.

Teacher collaboration is essential in the MTSS process and leads to improved outcomes. Teachers will have input in the MTSS process for each student and will be involved in making decisions concerning placement in tiers for students. Teachers and leaders will collaborate to analyze appropriate student data and a determination will be made together if the student is to move tiers or not.

Future Culture

       Proper participation from all teachers involved with MTSS is vital in establishing and maintaining a positive culture. This is essential for implementing and sustaining MTSS. The Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (2021) stated, "when implemented with fidelity, MTSS helps districts and schools create positive environments and the conditions for learning for all students, which in turn, can improve and maintain a positive school culture" (p. 1).

       In my vision for the future, school leaders and teachers will recognize and acknowledge that MTSS is an instructional framework for academic improvement for all students. A strong MTSS establishes positive conditions for learning, and students feel safe. It provides an increased academic achievement by meeting the needs of the students (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2021).

       The MTSS culture within the school will focus on communication. Communication is a crucial part of the process and will provide positivity within the school. Teacher leaders will be responsible for supporting the teacher needs in MTSS beyond administrative duties. Teacher leaders and teachers will communicate at the end of the weekly data meetings with leaders; there will be an MTSS open discussion which will serve as a question-and-answer session. During this session, teachers will communicate any concerns, questions, or needs pertaining to MTSS.

       In my vision for the future, school leaders will follow the recommendations of the Center on MTSS at the American Institutes for Research (2021) and work to build the school's MTSS implementation following a three phased plan:

- Phase one: plan for success, conduct needs assessments, develop collaborative vision, and develop the implementation plan

- Phase two: Implementation, training/coaching and evaluate data to make decisions

- Phase three: sustainability of the implementation plan, engage stakeholders, review lessons to improve student outcomes

Additionally, school leaders will include a school-wide professional development plan to address MTSS implementation every month as part of the school improvement plan. School leaders will realize that "understanding the essential components of MTSS is an important part of its implementation, but research suggests effective implementation is a major challenge for educators" (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020, p. 1).

The Center on MTSS at the American Institutes for Research (2021) explained a three phased plan for implementation. The three phased plan (based on the bullet points stated above) is outlined below:

- In phase one, teams will focus on building the infrastructure and start with the vision. Then they will move into establishing what they may need by conducting a needs assessment, which will serve as a guide for implementation.

- In phase two, the focus is to implement, monitor and improve. This needs communication and ongoing professional development to focus on improving MTSS with the use of the data that has been gathered from teachers.

- The final phase is to sustain and expand MTSS with continuous improvements with the activities and resources.

School leaders will strengthen the school culture by articulating a clear school-wide MTSS plan which will include teacher input. Although school leaders know teachers provide MTSS within the school day, they do not have a plan explicitly written for teachers to follow. School leaders will make sure there is a school-wide explicit plan for implementation and teacher leaders will be partners in helping teachers implement MTSS. This will shift the school culture; teachers will be able to know the exact expectations and they will be able to integrate MTSS with fidelity.

Future Conditions

Parameters affecting MTSS within the school under study are resources and lack of understanding of teacher roles and teacher leader roles. School staff follow district guidelines and use the time allotted for the MTSS block; however, teachers are directly affected by the lack of resources, especially for the students in Tier 3. In future conditions for the school, the leaders will provide various curriculum resources for all students within each tier, explicitly defined teacher and teacher leader roles, and MTSS time will continue to be part of the school day according to the district guidelines.

My program evaluation revealed the most needed request from teachers was a need for continuous support. The support from teacher leaders is the solution. In future conditions, the school leaders will attend a series of professional training for the purpose of understanding MTSS in greater depth. The teacher leaders will make their roles clear so they are understood by teachers, and they can reach out for proper support. With a dedicated leadership team to provide MTSS assistance, the school will be able to support teachers in delivering a quality instruction to students. The teacher leaders will have more opportunities to collaborate with the teachers and work with them to serve as a resource.

Future Competencies

I found in my study that while the teachers were well versed in their core job skills for MTSS, teacher leaders were not, and this disconnect often led to a lack of general awareness of the MTSS framework. Future competencies of the school will include professional training at the district level for the teacher leaders. As a result of this training, teacher leaders will have the depth of foundational knowledge for MTSS. The value of MTSS will increase greatly and teacher leaders will then be able to share that expert-level knowledge with the teachers. Additionally, teacher leaders will start to recognize the support needed to assist the teachers. They will provide MTSS sessions to the teachers who need help in identifying specific skill targets for students.

Another future competency is for administrators and school leaders to designate times to ensure teachers are properly trained and are able to use the MTSS materials. Although I found teachers knowledgeable in MTSS, further professional developments were needed to ensure materials were used with fidelity. Teacher leaders will support all teachers by providing a collaborative training for the whole school before MTSS materials are distributed in the beginning of the year. The teacher leaders will actively monitor the teachers on a monthly basis by checking and observing to ensure they are utilizing the materials correctly.

Administrators and school leaders will establish a school-wide MTSS structure for teachers. In this plan, the structure will be the same across all grade levels. Teachers in kindergarten through second grade will have their MTSS time in the morning, and third through fifth grade will have MTSS at the end of the day.

The last future competency is teachers will understand how to graph and chart student progress through professional development provided by teacher leaders. Part of the MTSS framework is to keep track of student data to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction using valid and reliable measures (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020). Teachers and teacher leaders will use progress monitoring to assess students' performance and graphing and charting student progress will track their rate of improvement.

Conclusion

I discovered several issues with the MTSS process within the school under study. Through my change leadership plan, I aim to increase teacher leader support by addressing teacher concerns, professional development, and a school-wide plan to keep MTSS consistent. I propose a change leadership plan addressing a school wide MTSS plan, teacher leaders providing more support to the teachers, and focusing on more resources for student instruction.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

After completing my "As Is" 4Cs analysis diagram, along with my "Vision of the Success to Be" diagram, I realized that I must plan a series of efficient steps to lead the school under study toward achievement. The next step is to identify research-based strategies and actions to help the school under study realize that vision (See Appendix G). With these strategies and actions, I am able to envision the future for a successful MTSS sustainability.

Strategies and Actions

Initiating a change requires creating experiences for people that reveal new possibilities. Leading others through change requires a crucial skillset to accelerate learning. The 8-Step Process for Leading Change created by Kotter has identified and extracted the success factors and combined them into a methodology (Kotter, 2014, p.1).

Sense of Urgency

According to Kotter (2014), I must first create a sense of urgency. That begins with a meeting with the school administration team which includes the principal, the assistant principal, and me. We will look at the teacher survey results and discuss teacher concerns. We will review and analyze the data from the focus group interview. I will share my research data from the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports at the American Institutes for Research. I will present the research on implementation compared with the survey and interview results. Once the principal and assistant principal clearly see the urgency in the data collected from the school under study about the school wide MTSS implementation issues, the second step will be to share the urgency with a guiding

coalition. The school-based administrator who supports teachers with MTSS, the district level coach and two experienced teachers will form the guiding coalition.

Strategic Vision and Initiatives

The guiding coalition will be a strong group and address Kotter's third step of developing the change plan. According to Kotter (2014), forming a strategic vision and initiative begins with clarifying how the future will be different from the past and how to make that future a reality through initiatives linked directly to the vision. The guiding coalition will develop a strategic vision for a consistent MTSS implementation within the school.

The first part of developing the change vision will focus on the teacher leaders. Teacher leaders will partake in a district-level MTSS training to strengthen their MTSS foundational skills. My research of the school under study revealed that the teacher leaders did not have the foundational knowledge to lead and support teachers. After this training, the teacher leaders will develop a plan of support to assist teachers in MTSS implementation. As I mentioned in my "To Be" goals, the value of MTSS will increase greatly and teacher leaders will then be able to apply that expert-level knowledge to the teachers and will be able to assist teachers.

The next part of developing the change vision will focus on the school administrators developing a school-wide plan which all grade levels will use. The plan will include specific details for the teachers to guide them step by step for the 45 minutes of the MTSS block. Then teachers will participate in professional development on how to use the MTSS resources. The professional development will enable teachers to provide effective quality instruction to the students in various tier levels.

Volunteer Army

Kotter's (2014) fourth step for leading change is to enlist a volunteer army. Kotter (2014) stated, "Large-scale change can only occur when massive numbers of people rally around a common opportunity. They must be bought in and urged to drive change-moving in the same direction" (p. 1). The volunteer army will consist of experienced school-based retired teachers, retired MTSS district coaches and school-based coaches and retired university professors. The volunteer army will be a team of strength and determination to drive the change. With their expertise, they will assist the guiding coalition in meeting the vision. They will collaborate to create a smooth and successful MTSS implementation plan.

Removing Barriers

Kotter's (2014) fifth step is to enable action by removing barriers. One clear barrier is the inconsistent MTSS district implementation. Based on my experience within the same district, there has been inconsistent MTSS implementation among schools. By implementing Kotter's first four steps, I will be able to provide a consistent and successful MTSS implementation. School administrators will remove the school-wide implementation barrier by implementing a new consistent MTSS plan. Lack of teacher support is a barrier that will be removed by having one-on-one support from teacher leaders. The educators providing this support will be able to address the teachers' struggle with the implementation.

Leaders will remove the barrier of teachers not understanding how to use MTSS materials through professional development targeting those materials. The volunteer army will provide their expertise to support teachers and the barrier of implementation

struggles will be removed and replaced with implementation support. The last barrier that will be removed will be the teacher leaders not having depth of knowledge about MTSS. Based on the interviews I conducted in my study, teacher leaders were unable to provide guidance in the key elements of the MTSS process. Also, they did not provide a solid MTSS plan for the teachers to follow, and implementation of MTSS was a struggle for many teachers. Administrators will address this barrier by having teacher leaders attend monthly training about the MTSS foundation.

Generate Short-Term Wins

Kotter's (2014) sixth step recommends the celebration of short-term wins. Kotter (2104) stated, "Wins are molecules of results. They must be recognized, collected, and communicated (p. 6)." To generate short term wins, there will be monthly structured meetings. Leaders will have monthly structured meetings to generate short-term wins where staff will celebrate goals achieved. Along the way of making sure students are in the correct tier and receiving proper academic instruction, it will be important to celebrate the short-term wins when students are showing academic gains. The benefit of the short-term wins will accelerate learning and will motivate other teachers to work towards meeting the goals for their classes.

Sustain Acceleration

Kotter's (2014) seventh step is to sustain acceleration. This is when the leaders will continue to meet with the guiding coalition. The leaders will make sure there is consistent support with implementation on a weekly basis. Leaders will provide professional development opportunities at the beginning, middle and end of the year for teachers on how to use resources. Leaders will review and analyze the data monthly for

student progress and move students between tiers as needed. The principal will host monthly check ins with teachers and teacher leaders to ensure MTSS support is adequate and meeting the needs of the teachers consistently and properly.

Institute Change

Kotter's (2014) final step is to institute change. Kotter (2014) stated, "Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, making sure they continue until they become strong enough to replace old habits" (p.1). In order for step eight to be effective, there must be strategies in place and consistency. My plan to institute change will begin at the state level. The state level department of education and university professors will meet to review MTSS implementation across the state and develop a consistent plan for each district. Then, each district-level MTSS department will meet to follow the state plan and all schools will follow the same plan of implementation. If each district has a consistent plan of implementation, then all schools will offer the same quality of support to students through MTSS. This will benefit all leaders, teachers, and teacher leaders. It will provide for a higher rate of student achievement, and when teachers are transferred or move to another school within the district, there will be no confusion. To continue instituting change, there will be steady professional development. The professional development will include state level, district level, school leaders and teachers to ensure there is consistency.

The change will begin at the state level. The state department of education will have an entire department designated for MTSS. In this department, the leaders will be in charge of articulating a plan of action for MTSS. The plan of action will include a plan for implementation, resources, data tracking, and detailed information about how students

can move from tiers. After the state plan has been completed, it will then be passed down to the district level. The district level will begin with moving the plan to school principals, and school principals will begin implementation within their schools. When each school follows the MTSS plan, there will be consistency throughout the district.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Strategies and Actions

To assess the effectiveness of strategies and actions, I intend to look at the percentages of the students moving through the tiers of MTSS. I will assess this by creating an Excel spreadsheet for each grade level. I will include every child in MTSS and their tier in the Excel spreadsheet. After the spreadsheet is completed, I will then keep track of the percentage rate of when students move to a different tier. The overall goal is to have the students move up in the tiers. For example, a student who begins the school year in Tier 3 and moves to Tier 2 means they are showing academic success and the change plan is working.

In order to assess the effectiveness of strategies and actions of the teachers and teacher leaders, I will look at evidence of the MTSS process. "One method of assuring clarity is for teachers to be prepared for meetings. Preparation includes organization of student data, exhibits of students' work, records of interventions, promptness to meetings, adherence to meeting agendas, and team norms (Multi-Tiered System of Supports in the Classroom, 2022, p. 24). Teachers will provide evidence such as data sheets and work samples and come fully prepared to meetings.

Community Stakeholder Involvement

Parents play an important role in their child's education. According to the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (2020), families are critical partners in the effective

implementation of MTSS. As states and school districts work to implement an RTI/MTSS process that provides early help to struggling students, parents need to understand the essential components of RTI and the roles they can play supporting their child's success.

Leaders in the school under study did not follow the parental involvement requirements for MTSS. I will work with the principal and teacher leaders to ensure the parents and guardians of each child who is in Tiers 2 and 3 of the MTSS process are invited and encouraged to participate in making decisions. I will begin by hosting an after-school event to familiarize the parents with MTSS. This session will serve as an introduction and will explain all the essential components of the MTSS process. After this meeting, parents will follow up with their child's teacher about MTSS. Leaders will provide a letter for each parent explaining their child's tier. Also, MTSS meetings will take place every few months with the parents to ensure they are engaged in their child's MTSS process. Teachers will share the data with the parents about their child's progress.

Conclusion

Leading change is challenging but not impossible. As stated by Kotter (2014), "Transformation is a process, not an event" (p. 17). Using the 8-step process by Kotter will help the school under study with MTSS implementation. It will provide sustainability to the MTSS process, and it will be implemented with fidelity.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

Policies are important for the reason that they help a school establish procedures and provide a quality education. Without these, schools would not run efficiently or effectively. Williams (2020) stated, "These rules determine how students are taught, what they are taught, and how schools manage students and school personnel" (p. 1). In my study, a policy has been established to support student success.

Policy Statement

I propose a statewide policy requiring all teachers to have an MTSS endorsement on their teaching certificate. This policy will involve teachers who are still in college and teachers who have obtained a teaching certificate. I recommend this specific policy because I found in my program evaluation a need to increase general foundational knowledge about MTSS. I found many barriers in my MTSS study, including a lack of communication, implementation struggles, and non-effective teacher leader support. These barriers create MTSS challenges in the school under study.

This MTSS endorsement policy will take effect using two different methods. The first method requires all teachers enrolled in a college teacher preparation program to graduate with the MTSS endorsement and pass the endorsement exam. They will complete coursework that will allow them to experience MTSS just as they would when they graduate and work in a school. They will need to be enrolled in at least two MTSS classes or six-semester credits and pass the endorsement exam at the end of their college degree. It will be indicated on their teaching certificate when students pass the MTSS certification exam. Teachers who already have a teaching certificate will use the second method. Current educators who teach in a public school will enroll in two MTSS classes

taken at the college level equivalent to 6-semester credits and will have to complete the coursework within one year to continue teaching or coaching.

My program evaluation revealed inconsistency with teacher knowledge pertaining to the MTSS framework and teachers encountering difficulties with implementation. I found the barrier of miscommunication between leaders and teachers in my data, which affects student achievement. The school allotted time for MTSS within the school day, but there was no implementation plan set in place. Teachers were unassisted and struggled with finding resources for students in Tier 1 and Tier 2. The MTSS policy in place at the time of this study mandated schools to provide time in the day for MTSS interventions. This policy should be revised and should include my recommendations for an endorsement.

The policy will effectively address implementation barriers by allowing teachers to learn about MTSS during their teacher preparation college classes. This policy will also affect current teachers who have a teaching certificate. Teachers will have the opportunity to be exposed to MTSS before implementing MTSS procedures in any school. The endorsement will provide teachers with enough knowledge to increase student achievement. I recommend using the sequence and content provided by The Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (2020) that targets the following areas:

- Overview of MTSS

- Universal Screening

- High Quality Tier 1 Instruction and Assessment

- Evidence-based Tier 2 Intervention

- Tier 3 Intensive Intervention

- Progress Monitoring

- Data-based Decision Making

Analysis of Needs

In the following subsections, I analyze my policy recommendation through six distinct disciplinary areas to better explain how it will impact all stakeholders. For my policy recommendation, the six distinct disciplinary areas I will discuss are educational, economic, social, political, legal, and ethical lenses. I will use those lenses to provide a deeper understanding of how my policy recommendation will help teachers have a depth of knowledge of the MTSS framework and implement it with fidelity.

Educational Analysis

Meeting the various needs of all learners takes strategy, planning, practice, and guidance. Researchers in the field of education designed the MTSS framework to differentiate and provide support to all learners. The policy I recommend will affect student academic success in a positive manner. The policy will allow teachers to have the background knowledge of MTSS to provide quality instruction to meet the needs of all students. Schools use MTSS to identify struggling students in the early stages and allow teachers to intervene quickly (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020). MTSS focuses on each individual child's needs and supports academic growth with proper implementation.

A policy to add MTSS as an endorsement to teacher certification will increase student learning and the teacher's ability to implement it with fidelity. Student learning will increase within the MTSS framework because teachers will know how the process works. Studies have shown that successful implementation of MTSS demands ongoing

planning, continuous improvement, and sustaining and expanding efforts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020).

For the policy to take effect, the state level department of education will meet with university professors to review MTSS implementation across the state and develop a consistent plan for each district. Then, each district-level MTSS department will meet to follow the state plan and all schools will follow the same plan of implementation. If each district has a consistent plan of implementation, then all schools will offer the same quality of support to students through MTSS. This will benefit all teachers and provide for a higher rate of student achievement, and, when teachers are transferred or move to another school within the district, there will be consistency. The impact of this policy on the education of students will be consistent intervention support.

Economic Analysis

The economic impact of a policy proposal to include an MTSS endorsement on a teaching certificate has many benefits to the school district, state, and society at large. The graduate will incur a minimal financial cost to add the required endorsement on the teaching certificate. Another minimal financial cost will be the responsibility of the educator to add the endorsement on their certificate. School district leaders will cover the cost of the endorsement classes at the district level, and the teacher will not pay any fees. District funds already pay for the resource teachers who will provide the staff development, and the materials needed for training are available for free through the state website. Any additional funding will be provided through district staff development funds.

The larger economic impact of a policy to add an MTSS endorsement on teaching certificates ultimately increases student achievement and economic success. Teachers will be able to meet the needs of the students. Students will receive quality instruction and exceed their proficiency levels. The overall goal of the school district is to award high school diplomas to students, and the MTSS endorsement policy will provide students with an opportunity to strengthen their academic skills because implementation will be effective. MTSS interventions will have a positive economic impact because students will be able to function in the real world.

Whether students are college-bound or not, my policy will help students during all stages of their learning in elementary, middle, and high school. King and Newman (2000) state, "Since teachers have the most direct, sustained contact with students and considerable control over what is taught and the climate for learning, improving teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions through professional development is a critical step in improving student achievement" (p.44). The students will be successful in their learning, graduate high school on time, and will be college or career ready.

Economic impacts of a policy proposal to add MTSS as an endorsement on educators' teaching certificates, will include positive learning experiences for children, strengthened instructional expertise to meet the needs of students, development of life-long academic success, and positive outcomes for student learning in the future.

Teachers will communicate effectively with parents and share their student data on a monthly basis to foster ongoing parental relationships. Jennings (2011) shared that the importance of parents partnering with their child's teacher is a well-documented research-based strategy. There is significant evidence of the impact of parent involvement

on student grades, test scores, attendance, behavior and social skills, graduation, and

pursuit of postsecondary education (p. 4). In my professional experience, such benefit

would occur with regards to the MTSS policy once it takes effect and teachers start to

implement MTSS properly.

Social Analysis

The social impacts of my policy proposal to add an MTSS endorsement to

teaching certificates will have a life-changing effect on students. The MTSS framework

is directly in proportion to student needs. Teachers use the data collected for each tier to

monitor students' receptiveness to the instruction provided. If students are not successful

in Tier 1, immediate interventions begin to take place. These interventions may not take

place quickly or efficiently if my policy is not in effect.

When teachers are MTSS endorsed, they can be cognizant of the needed

interventions and will be able to meet the needs of the students effectively without

hesitation or confusion. In my professional experience, I have seen many teachers unable

to intervene quickly and unable to meet the needs of students. I have witnessed many

teachers unable to understand the MTSS framework. My policy will support teachers in

all aspects of the MTSS framework. According to the Department of Education in the

state under study, "Supporting the implementation of MTSS system is to inform the

development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of an integrated, aligned, and

sustainable system of delivery that prepares all students for post-secondary education and

successful employment within our global society" (Citation withheld to protect

confidentiality). It is always the educator's responsibility to meet the needs of all

students.

Political Analysis

A policy proposal to add MTSS as an endorsement on the teachers' certificate may have a political impact. This policy will require teachers to complete classes and take an endorsement exam. The MTSS endorsement classes will be completed outside of teacher contract hours and will require teachers to use their own time. Although teachers will use their own time and will have a time frame to complete the MTSS endorsement, they will not have to worry about paying any out-of-pocket fees.

A political issue that may arise from this new policy is that teachers may not want to have more responsibilities added to their workload. Teachers may complain to the local teachers' union, and, on behalf of the teachers, the union will try to push back on this new policy. The State Department of Education will have to be involved in order for this policy to take effect in the entire state. The state commissioner will speak with the superintendent of each district to finalize the policy. Representatives of the State Department of Education and the local teachers' union may encounter push back from each other and may need to compromise to have this policy take effect.

Legal Analysis

In the United States, all students have the right to an equal educational opportunity. The MTSS framework offers a differentiated education for most students. Each student has an individualized targeted skill in Tier 2 and Tier 3 to allow the student to receive evidence-based interventions matched to their needs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the nation's primary education law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, n.d.). IDEA guides the state on how to provide early interventions to students with disabilities. Like all students, the

school-wide implementation of MTSS benefits students with disabilities. "Most students with disabilities (95%) receive at least part of their instruction in general education, as a result they benefit from the positive MTSS outcomes found in numerous studies" (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, para. 1, 2020). Implementation of MTSS as a school-wide approach supports students with disabilities through the tiers. "Students with disabilities are able to receive intensive intervention through data-based individualization at Tier 3 and while ensuring access to aligned Tier 1 programming as well as Tier 2 intervention in other areas of identified need" (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, para. 2, 2020). MTSS also supports the development and implementation of a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). After school staff develops a child's IEP, MTSS interventions will continue to assist in re-evaluations.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

It is the obligation of all educators to deliver quality instruction to students. Based on the Principles of Professional Conduct (2022), the educator's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity (p. 1). Teachers must provide what students need in order to be successful. The MTSS framework allows for teachers to intervene and differentiate instruction based on tiers. My policy will expand teachers' knowledge in MTSS and will allow teachers to understand the framework in depth fully.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

The policy to add an MTSS endorsement on teacher certificates will strengthen relationships between the leaders and teachers. All educators will accept and participate

in the universal training that will invigorate relationships. This will be better because there will be no disconnect between what the school leaders are supposed to know and what the teachers are supposed to know. The policy will also strengthen relationships with teachers and parents. Teachers will be knowledgeable about the MTSS process, and they will be able to communicate with parents by providing insight into their child's learning and development.

Based on the Center on Multi-tiered system of supports (2020), monitoring fidelity of implementation is critical, and teams should identify and address barriers to implementation through collaboration and problem-solving. In my professional experience, working as a team to problem solve is important for student success and with the new policy, teachers will be able to have effective conversations about their MTSS students. "Research on professional development shows that teachers need long term support in order to improve their practice" (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020, p. 1).

The MTSS policy will also strengthen community relationships in a positive manner. When parents see that their child's school grade increases, the community will be happier and realize the students' needs are being met. Parents will start to interact with teachers in a more positive manner and will recognize that teachers are doing what is best for their children.

Conclusion

Inconsistent MTSS implementation can be changed by the school district with a new policy. The new policy will increase MTSS foundational knowledge for all educators. School district leaders, parents, students, and the community at large have an

opportunity to realize the educational, political, ethical, and social benefits of a new policy that creates opportunities to support equitable academic success for all students across the school district.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The purpose of my study was to evaluate the effectiveness of MTSS framework within one elementary school based on teacher perception. In my program evaluation, I provided information about MTSS in one school from the teachers' perspective about MTSS in general. School leaders will realize the sense of urgency to support teachers in MTSS by incorporating my change leadership plan and other findings from my program evaluation.

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to evaluate one school's MTSS implementation based on teacher perception. The teacher survey and teacher leaders' interviews helped explicate current knowledge about MTSS. Study results suggested that the teachers are further along in the implementation process than I had anticipated. However, the teacher leaders' lack of depth in the knowledge of MTSS was not as expected. When I first chose the topic of MTSS to study at this school, I predicted the results would show that the teachers were not knowledgeable about MTSS and that the teacher leaders were knowledgeable. I gathered qualitative and quantitative data revealed the opposite of what I thought it would.

I found out the teachers were overwhelmingly unsupported during MTSS. Most teachers expressed they needed more support, and there was a lack of resources. They also expressed the need for school leaders to offer more professional development in order to assist with the 45-minute time block. Although the survey revealed that teachers were knowledgeable about MTSS, the school leaders lacked a consistent plan of implementation, which had a negative impact on teachers.

In my evaluation, I demonstrated that teachers needed more leadership support and more resources for MTSS implementation. My study also revealed that teacher leaders needed to be trained to gain knowledge about how to effectively support teachers during implementation and to communicate effectively. I will share the following findings with the school administrators to enhance the school-wide MTSS process to benefit the students:

- Administrators need to send the teacher leaders to a MTSS training to gain insight on the framework

- There should be a consistent school-wide MTSS implementation plan

- Teachers should be provided with resources rather than finding random resources on their own

- Communication between teachers and teacher leaders should be clear and concise

- Provide data procedures to teachers and how the data should be graphed explicitly

I discovered several issues impacting teachers during their MTSS block. My change leadership plan focused on MTSS implementation with fidelity. Using my plan, leaders will effectively lead the teachers to meet the needs of the students.

I developed a change leadership plan using Kotter's (2014) 8 step process. In this organizational change plan, I addressed the issues raised by the program evaluation. The overall issues raised by my evaluation were inconsistent implementation issues, lack of communication with school leaders and teachers about the MTSS process, teachers needing more resources and beneficial MTSS professional development. I will meet with

the school administration team to create a sense of urgency, and I will form a strategic vision and engage the school leaders in the creation of a school wide consistent MTSS plan for implementation. The policy I have advocated will address these issues because it will provide consistent MTSS knowledge, which will lead to a better and more successful MTSS implementation.

Leadership Lessons

One leadership lesson I learned was how to communicate effectively with teachers. Through my study, I learned the importance of communication, and I recognized how it could positively or negatively impact teachers. The communication barrier existing in the school under study affected MTSS implementation. There was a disconnect in communication between what teacher leaders thought teachers needed and what teachers reported they actually needed. School leaders must have open communication, and the leaders at the school under study thought they were providing open communication to the teachers about MTSS.

Another leadership lesson I learned during my doctoral journey was gathering and analyzing qualitative data. When I began creating the open-ended questions for the teacher survey, I was not familiar with how to gather and analyze data. I created the questions with a Google survey and then sent out the invitation and link to the participants. After I had gathered the data, I could begin analyzing it. Overall, my data analysis taught me how to articulate results from qualitative data such as transcripts and interviews and code data accordingly for patterns and trends. When I first gathered my data, I was very hesitant to write chapter four, and I was unsure how I would analyze the data. As I learned in my classes and professors began to share ways to articulate data, the

process made sense. Gathering and analyzing qualitative data was a big challenge and another leadership lesson I have learned. I had the opportunity to interview two teacher leaders to gather qualitative data. The hardest part about analyzing qualitative data was listening to the interview repeatedly to be able to articulate the results. I also had to look for similar data trends between the qualitative and quantitative data. Interviewing two teacher leaders was a vital leadership lesson because it challenged me and was uncomfortable. It also taught me to be strong and able to exhibit confidence when asking questions.

Another leadership lesson I learned was how to use the steps of change leadership to implement an initiative. The model I used for my program evaluation was Kotter's (2014) 8-step process. Using Kotter's (2014) 8-step process gave me an eye-opening experience of how to approach a change leadership plan to initiate change. As a future educational leader, it is vital to have a change leadership plan, and being exposed to this has been a great experience. I am grateful for the change leadership experience and being familiar with Kotter; this will serve as a great asset as I become an educational leader. I will have the background knowledge and expertise to be able to be successful at initiating a change leadership plan.

I have grown as a leader in my ability to use scholarly research to support my points while writing this dissertation. This dissertation has strengthened my knowledge of MTSS greatly. I am now well versed in MTSS, and my contributions of analyzing data and creating a list of best practices to share with school leaders will assist and allow the school to focus more on student achievement. I hope to use my knowledge, experience, and expertise to develop a stronger MTSS for schools within the district. One of my goals

is to continue to educate teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators on the value of a proper MTSS implementation with support to continue meeting the needs of students.

As a leader, I will be mindful of the need to have a schoolwide comprehensive MTSS plan. This plan will allow all teachers to have structure, the ability to implement without a struggle, and resources will be provided. I am now cognizant that there may be a need to support teachers in the MTSS block, and I will ensure that teacher leaders provide adequate support. I want to ensure that teachers implement MTSS with fidelity and that the allotted time is used wisely to maximize instructional time.

Conclusion

The MTSS framework has a crucial role to play in supporting student achievement. Successful and robust implementation of the tiers starts with a strong leadership team working hand in hand with the teachers to provide the best possible outcome for our students. School districts must provide one consistent and reliable MTSS plan to raise student literacy performance. "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything" (Shaw, 1944, p. 330).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

Appendix C: Teachers Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS

Appendix D: Resources Needed

Appendix E: Professional Development Suggestions

Appendix F: Instructional Support

Appendix G: Strategies and Actions Chart

Appendix H: As Is and To Be charts

Appendix A

Survey Questions

<u>Rating Scale Questions:</u>

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. I am confident with my knowledge of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and my ability to implement it with fidelity. Please explain why (if you chose agree/strongly agree)

2. Tier 1 interventions are meeting student needs

3. Tier 2 interventions are meeting student needs

4. Tier 3 Interventions are meeting student needs

<u>True or False Questions:</u>

5. Is MTSS an "extra" program implemented by the district

6. MTSS is geared only towards Special Education students at our school

7. All students in Tier 3 interventions have an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan)

8. Once a student begins receiving Tier 3 interventions, they no longer receive Tier 1 or Tier 2 interventions

9. In the MTSS model, Tier 1 consists of research -based core instruction and supports designed to meet the needs of students in the general curriculum

10. In the MTSS model, Tier 2 consists of supplemental instruction targeted towards a small group in addition to the core instruction that students receive in Tier 1

11. In the MTSS model, Tier 3 consists of an intensified instructional intervention in addition to the core instruction, which serves as a goal to improves the students rate of progress

12. My students with an IEP are served all three tiers of the MTSS model

13. Parents of English Language Learners can choose not to participate in MTSS

Open Response Questions:

14. In order to make the MTSS process work what materials do you need?

15. What professional development do you need to make the MTSS process work?

16. What instructional support do you currently need to make the MTSS process work?

17. What questions do you have about MTSS?

18. Is there anything else you want to let me know about MTSS?

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. How are you providing MTSS support to the instructional staff?

2. How do you differentiate curricula for tiers 1-3?

3. What materials are used for MTSS?

4. What is the process for data collection from the teachers? (Tier 2 and Tier 3)

5. Who will analyze the data collected on students receiving interventions?

6. Are you fully implementing the MTSS process specifically following district procedures why or why not? (District person as well to see if miscommunication of what is expected)

7. What do you feel teachers need in order implement MTSS with fidelity?

Appendix C

Teachers Perceptions of their Confidence Level using MTSS

Teacher Responses	
I've done MTSS for several years now. I did not choose strongly agree because there's always changes in the process	I have been using the MTSS process for several years and feel confident in providing my students with the necessary support
I understand and know how differentiate my small groups based on my students needs and standards they have mastered and/or need support in mastering.	I have been trained in MTSS and have used the process multiple times throughout the years with various students.
I have a basic knowledge and have had to implement in my classroom.	I feel that I understand the MTSS process and am able to implement it in my reading classroom in a way that works for the students. I can see my lower students making growth on the areas where they have learning gaps.
I know the tiers and how to separate the students into their tiers. But, I never really know what is expected of each group as the focus & times always seems to change and there usually is no clear answer.	We do walk to interventions. Students are placed in groups where differentiated instruction is given based on the tier. Within those groups I create specific learning goals and activities to focus on the needs and Reading strategies for those students.
I understand the purpose of the different tiers, and what is means for a student to be placed in each tier.	From my trainings, I feel I could implement MTSS with fidelity, but I do not think I could do it within the confines of our day with fidelity.
I agree with this statement because I am confident in the support, I am giving these students.	

Appendix D

Resources Needed

Teacher responses to statement 14	
MTSS curriculum	I will need materials that provide scaffolded instruction for the different levels of learners that I have. Some materials will need to be on grade level passages that break down the standard more than the general instruction would, and some materials need to be on a lower grade level depending on the needs of my tier III learners.
Being provided an actual MTSS curriculum for Tier 2 & 3 would be amazing. Multiple teachers are working to reinvent engaging materials to provide intense instruction.	We just received intervention workbooks for math and reading.
We need an intervention curriculum that is not just Reading A to Z, there should be differentiated levels of curriculum to meet the needs of students in K-2 and 3-5. (Wilson, Fundations, Fountas and Pinnell, past textbooks that are no longer being used as core instruction).	Workbooks provided by the school
A specific detailed curriculum targeted for each tier that is all in one place and easily accessible. Often, I have to come up with and gather my own materials to provide interventions for my students.	I would need a curriculum that is differentiate for each tier. Book studies within the Tier 1 group, iReady for Tier 2 and 3 with their path being differentiated for them and a reading comprehension program that we could do small groups with. Like STARS.
We have the materials we need.	Something besides the Coach books that are more engaging for the students would be great.
Younger grade levels need a lot of phonics materials. The Lexia computer program was a great addition. Student workbooks and teacher editions for EVERY student with what we should be expected to teach	Specific targeted curriculum that supports Tier 2 and Tier 3 with appropriate materials for both online and face to face learning. There should also be appropriate/enough teacher tools (TE editions, manipulatives) for teachers to carry out the expected curriculum with fidelity.

Resources that target the specific skill the student is deficient in.	More administration support: i.e., pulling of groups. Standard based curriculum
Phonics and Phonological lessons	Any materials that focus on the individual need of each student. Example: fluency passages or comprehension passages.
Data sheet	at least three data points to track progress (i.e., pre and post assessment), differentiated material based upon student need
I need supplemental materials outside of the general curriculum to use during Tier 2 instruction. I also need materials for my students who are on Tier 3, as they all have different needs. It would be nice to have more guidance on what materials to use, especially for the Tier 3 students that are below grade level. It's not easy to find "good" materials for a student who is on a grade level that I have never taught before.	

Appendix E

Professional Development Suggestions

Teacher Responses	
Training on a specific program and how to implement the program	PD on the MTSS process and exactly how to chart progress/graph would be beneficial
Professional Development on how to gather and graph the data, do's, and don'ts of interventions at each level, the structure of MTSS (when does it switch from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3).	Specific training on how to implement interventions that provide clear expectations.
How to differentiate within the reading and tier model.	It would be helpful to see some examples of how other teachers are using the MTSS process in their classrooms
Would be nice for lower grades to get trained on teaching phonics.	I think there should be a school wide MTSS PD that provides with specific steps, grouping, curriculum, tier information etc. for everyone to have a clear idea and vision of the expectation. I think there should also be Tier 3 PD on how to best service these students. There is a short amount of time that we work with these kids, so we want to make sure it is productive. We do not want the gap to widen for these kids.
I would like a professional development that teaches how to find out what area of reading a Tier 3 student needs most help in. Often times, I have had a student who is on Tier 3 for phonics, but it doesn't specify which area of phonics and I don't know where to start with them.	Ideas for successful novel studies during MTSS.

Appendix F

Instructional Support

Examples on how MTSS should look like	I need materials and resources for the different tiers
The support needed is extra resources so that teachers are not reinventing the wheel to help their students	We have a great instructional support for teachers, but it would be helpful to have more support to pull struggling students
Professional development on how to gather and graph the data, do's and don't of interventions at each level, the structure of MTSS and when to switch from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3.	Workbooks, supplemental online materials
A person who is available to answer questions and model the process for teachers, Communication is very important so that teachers are aware of the expectations. I know what do to because I have been teaching a long time, but I feel new teachers would be lost.	We do not have a set reading program to use for MTSS, it is just kind of up to us to figure it out and it is not consistent across all grade levels.
It would be great to have "all hands-on deck" from the admin team to assist in the classroom with MTSS.	It would be helpful for the students if there was a designated "Tier 3" person to pull out the students who needed more intense instruction in specific areas.
Additional paras or support from the front office. I've heard of schools where everyone in the front office has an FBS group. So numbers don't sky rocket in the high groups and the higher kids don't get neglected.	I do believe there is a lack of support for MTSS. There is very little directions on expectations such as tracking progress, the proper instruction for Tier 3
Additional personnel, resources, and space	More people to pull students so the groups are smaller and more students are reached during the FBS time
More resources	General ed teachers and academic coaches
It would be great to have a supporting Tier 3 teacher to pull students for Tier 3 instruction to bring down the number of students in Tier 3 in my class. I currently have 6 students.	

Appendix G

Strategies and Action Chart

Strategies	Actions

Create a sense of urgency	• Meet with school administration team (principal and assistant principal)
	    ❖ Share teacher survey results
	    ❖ Discuss teacher concerns
	    ❖ Data from my program evaluation
	    ❖ Present research from Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports at the American Institutes for Research (https://mtss4success.org/)

Build a guiding coalition	• The school-based administration who supports teachers with MTSS will form the guiding collation. This team includes the principal, AP, district level coach and two experienced teachers

Form a strategic vision and initiatives	• The guiding coalition will develop a strategic vision for MTSS implementation:
	    ❖ The school leadership will develop a school-wide plan which will be used by all grade levels
	    ❖ Professional development will be held for teachers on how to use the MTSS resources
	    ❖ Teacher leaders will develop a plan of support to assist teachers

Enlist a volunteer army	• Experienced school-based retired teachers, retired MTSS coaches and retired university professors will work with teachers to provide support with the implementation of MTSS
Enable action by removing barriers	• Inconsistent MTSS District Implementation • School-wide issue • The barrier of not providing enough support to teachers will be replaced by having one on one support from teacher leaders • The barrier of teachers not understanding how to use MTSS materials will be replaced by professional developments on how to use the materials with specific steps • The barrier of implementation struggles will be removed and replaced with implementation support • Inconsistent school wide MTSS plan replaced with consistent MTSS plan

	• Teacher leaders not having depth of knowledge about MTSS will be solved by attending monthly training about MTSS foundation
Generate short-term wins	• Establish monthly structured MTSS meeting with administration team, teacher leaders and teachers for check-ins to analyze student achievement data, progress monitor, answer MTSS questions/concerns
Sustain acceleration	• Provide consistent support with implementation on a weekly basis • Provide professional developments in the beginning, middle and end of the year for teachers on how to use the resources • Review/analyze data monthly for student achievement (and moving students between tiers as needed) • Monthly check-in on teacher leaders by the principal to ensure MTSS support is adequate and meeting the needs of the teachers properly

Institute change	• State level department of education and university professors will meet to review MTSS framework and develop a consistent plan for each district
	• District guiding coalition will meet to follow state plan and all schools will follow same plan of implementation
	• Consistent Professional development
	    ❖ To include state level and district level
	    ❖ To include school leaders and teachers

Appendix H

As Is and To Be Chart

Competencies

AS IS	TO BE
• Teachers are knowledgeable about MTSS	• Teachers remain knowledgeable about MTSS
• Teachers need support with school's MTSS structure	• A school wide MTSS structure will be established for the teachers
• Teacher leaders have a lack of depth in their MTSS foundational knowledge	• Teacher leaders will have the depth of foundational knowledge for MTSS
• Teachers need support on identifying specific skill targets for students	• Leaders will provide MTSS sessions to the teachers who need help in identifying specific skill targets for students
• Teachers are not trained on how to specifically use intervention materials provided by school leaders	• School leaders will ensure teachers are properly trained to use MTSS materials
• Teachers lack necessary skills for graphing and charting student progress	• Teachers will understand how to graph and chart student progress through professional development provided by teacher leaders.

Conditions

AS IS	TO BE
• Lack of resources for students in Tiers 2 and 3	• Resources will be provided for all students within each MTSS tiers
• Teacher roles are not explicitly defined	• Teacher roles will be explicitly defined
• Teacher leader roles are not understood by teachers	• Teacher leader roles will be explicitly defined for teachers
• Time is allotted daily for MTSS	• Time will be allotted daily Time will be allotted daily for MTSS (district guideline)

Culture

AS IS	TO BE
• MTSS is valued as a method of identifying students for ESE services by leaders	• MTSS is valued as an instructional framework for academic improvement for all students.
• Lack of communication between school MTSS leaders and teachers (Disconnect between what teacher leaders think teachers need and what teachers actually need)	• Teacher leaders and teachers will communicate
• Teacher leaders are only responsible for the MTSS administrative duties	• Teacher leaders will be partners in helping teachers implement MTSS.

Context

AS IS	TO BE
• Teacher leaders group students, monitor data, move students between tiers, ensure compliance with graphing	• Teacher leaders group students, monitor data, move students between tiers, ensure compliance with graphing
• Teachers lack guidance from leaders as to how they want MTSS implemented.	• Leaders will guide teachers in how to implement MTSS
• Teachers do not feel supported in implementation by leaders.	• Teachers will be supported in implementation by leaders
• Teachers are not involved in making MTSS decisions for students other than submitting progress monitoring charts	• Teachers will have input in the MTSS process for each student and will be involved in making decisions placement in tiers for students
• MTSS is fully implemented as per district guidelines.	• Keep the same