Chapter 1

Multi-tiered Systems of Support: The What, Why, and How for School Counselors

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Abstract

This chapter describes Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), with a specific focus on Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). When outlining MTSS, authors address how MTSS evolved as well as operating characteristics of the framework. MTSS is an prevention-based framework for enhancing the development and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based practices to achieve academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students. It can be designed and implemented to promote racial equity and healing in schools and is grounded in and shaped by a number of foundational influences. These influences include (a) supporting youth with disabilities and special education, (b) curriculum-based measurement and precision teaching, (c) teacher consultation and support, (d) prevention science, (e) behavioral sciences, (f) evidence-based practices, (g) direct instruction, and (h) innovation implementation research. School counselors can use MTSS to address root causes of discipline disparities and explicitly integrate action to advance racial equity into MTSS' implementation. This chapter discusses the rationale for why this work is critically important, and how to leverage MTSS work to achieve needed change.

Chapter 1

Multi-tiered Systems of Support: The What, Why, and How for School Counselors

Each year in the United States, educators in public schools teach over 50 million students, more than half of whom are youth with oppressed identities (e.g., racially and ethnically). Instruction is intended to establish **students' basic academic competencies (e.g., literacy, numeracy), build foundational knowledge** (e.g., physical and social sciences, technology, literature), and develop **specific skills** (e.g., music, art, sports). Yet educators also have critical influence in promoting students' social, emotional, and behavioral health in an ever-changing and diverse learning environment. One way educators can do this is by designing school environments to be positive, predictable, and safe for all students.

To create a positive, predictable, and safe educational space, educators must acknowledge that there are sustaining, systemic inequities in society. Racism is pervasive and considered a public health crisis (South-Paul et al., 2021), long influencing educational structures and outcomes for **youth with oppressed identities**. Compared to White students, these youth are at higher risk for grade retention (Giano et al., 2022), office discipline referrals (Nishioka, et al., 2021), and exclusionary discipline practices (Fisher et al., 2020; Gage et al., 2019; Sullivan & Proctor, 2016). Cook and colleagues (2018) synthesized research to propose root causes for such **disparities** including (a) teachers' implicit bias, (b) a lack of effective teacher professional development, (c) a lack of teachers' **multicultural awareness**, and (d) biased discipline policies. As such, students with marginalized identities may find school to be oppressive and disempowering instead of safe and supportive. It is therefore important for educators, including school counselors, to advance racial equity by creating a positive, predictable and culturally affirming learning environment for all students.

Given the responsibility to support and promote all students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral competencies, educators, including school counselors, must use every minute of the school day wisely to ensure that all students can experience maximum success. As such, school counselors must (a) select and become experts in the use of the best **evidence-based interventions** and practices available, (b) work as a team to maximize the impact of their collective strengths, and (c) explicitly and actively participate across classroom and non-classroom settings to ensure that every student has opportunities to maximize their academic and social development in a **culturally affirming environment**.

The overarching purpose of this chapter is to **highlight the important role that school counselors contribute to the success of every student** in every classroom within and across schools. Specifically, in this book, we provide new and veteran school counselors with information and resources to align and implement comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP)(e.g., the American School Counselor Association [ASCA] National Model, 2019) within a Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework.

In this chapter, we describe how a MTSS approach provides a working structure for maximizing the individual and collective competencies of school counselors. We specifically address five questions:

1. What is MTSS?

2. What influenced the development of MTSS?

3. What are the operating characteristics of MTSS?

4. What is considered when implementing MTSS within CSCP?

5. What is the role of school counselors in MTSS and CSCP implementation?

What is MTSS?

Since the publication of the first edition of this text, school personnel, students, and families have navigated an unprecedented health crisis that has exposed and exacerbated inequities in education. At the same time, the public has increasingly recognized the influence and power of systemic racism within schools and other institutions. The challenges of educating and supporting all students seem to have grown exponentially. School counselors are positioned to lead the urgent efforts to integrate and align systems to support students, their families, and school colleagues to conserve limited resources and to maximize efficient implementation of academic and social emotional behavioral supports. These school-wide systems and structures organize how schools organize and deliver instruction and interventions (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). While there is a recognition that systems and structures within schools can exacerbate vulnerability, they may also be leveraged to mitigate vulnerability and facilitate more equitable access to effective supports and enable enhanced social emotional behavioral and academic outcomes for all students (Coyne et al., in press; Fallon et al., 2021).

A Closer Look at the definition of MTSS

MTSS has been encouraged as a framework for effectively and efficiently organizing and delivering academic, social, emotional, and behavioral resources and supports, and is generally described as a *prevention-based framework (process, approach, organization) for enhancing the development and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based practices and*

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achieving academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students (McIntosh &

Goodman, 2016).

Box 1.1 A Closer Look at the Definition of MTSS

Overall, MTSS is best described as an overarching approach or "umbrella" for a range of tiered

systems of support. For instance, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an

MTSS application that specifically focuses on maximizing social, emotional, and behavioral

outcomes and supports CSCPs (Goodman-Scott et al., 2016; Positive Behavioral Interventions

and Supports, 2022). The guiding principles of PBIS, specifically, are often depicted in a

concentric circles diagram (see Figure 1.1). The four interlocking circles depict the importance

of (a) prioritizing **equity** as it is positioned in the middle of the graphic, (b) ensuring **student

outcomes** are a priority in all decision-making, (c) focusing on the implementation of a small

number of empirically-supported, culturally relevant **practices**, (d) using **data** (from screening,

progress monitoring, measurement of intervention fidelity) to make decisions, and (e) sustaining

an **efficient system** by supporting staff implementation.

[*Insert Figure 1.1 here*]

Figure 1.1 Guiding principles of PBIS

School counselors assume collaborative and leadership roles through CSCP and within MTSS to

support all students effectively and efficiently (ASCA, 2021). School counselors who engage in

MTSS expand their influence at the individual level through enhanced universal screening,

progress monitoring, and selection and use of **evidence-based counseling practices**. At the

systems level, school counselors become more involved in whole classroom and school-wide

improvement efforts through, for example, evaluating implementation fidelity, using data to

monitor student responsiveness, and participating in multidisciplinary teams. In fact, school

counselors appreciate that MTSS implementation expands their professional capacity to work

collaboratively on positive systemic reform and enhances their roles as advocates and change

agents (Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017).

<div align="center">**What Influenced the Development of MTSS?**</div>

Many influences have shaped the evolution and contemporary descriptions of MTSS. In this

section, we describe ten key MTSS influences. We recommend that school counselors pay

particular attention to the important historical practices and support systems (*italicized)* that are

still essential to MTSS, CSCP, and the success of school counseling.

1. **Disabilities and Special Education.** One of the biggest MTSS influences is legislation

related to the education of individuals with disabilities. Beginning in the 1960s, children and

youth with disabilities and their families were afforded due process rights and safeguards to

ensure access to individualized educational experiences that specifically considered the influence

of their disabilities on learning. **Public Law 94-142** (National Education Association of United

States, 1978) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its reauthorizations

codified educational principles related to, for example, free and public education, individualized

education plans, least restrictive environment, child find, early intervention, and data-based

decision making. Special education focused attention on students who, because of their

disability, did not have access to or were not benefiting from the general education curriculum.

A number of special education derived procedures are reflected in MTSS. For example, the

individual education program **(IEP)** planning process includes a number of MTSS related

elements: (a) planning must be *team based*, (b) long- and short-term *objectives and goals* must

be based on current level of functioning and consideration of disability, (c) *intervention decisions*

and instructional adjustments must be aligned with pre-determined goals and objectives and be

evidence-based, and (d) *student progress and responsiveness to intervention* must be monitored

with data continuously. In addition, a requirement called **"child find,"** established a routine and

expectation for regular screening for students who may have a disability that affects their

academic achievement. (See Chapter 9 on Universal Screening).

2. Curriculum-based Measurement and Precision Teaching. In the 1960s, Stan Deno and

Phyllis Mirkin led researchers and practitioners in the development and use of data assessment

and measurement procedures, known as ***curriculum-based measurement*** **(CBM)**, for improving

the quality of progress monitoring and instructional decisions for all students, with a particular

focus on students with disabilities (Deno, 2003; Deno & Mirikin, 1977). Focused on literacy and

numeracy, CBM highlighted the importance of using *brief precise measures* based on the local

(school and district) academic curriculum (Deno, 1985). Application of these measures occurred

regularly (e.g., weekly, monthly) to provide timely graphic indications of the student's

responsiveness to intervention and to enhance decision making (Deno et al., 2001).

Similar to CBM, an approach called precision teaching (PT) was developed to further the

applications of ***formative or continuous decision making***, especially for a broader range of

academic and behavioral targets for young children, youth, and adults in both general and special

education (i.e., mild, moderate, and severe disabilities). CBM and PT provide practitioners with

organizational guidelines to improve their decision making related to what data to collect, how to

collect information, and how to enhance decision making, especially for students who display the greatest difficulty in responding to instruction and interventions.

3. Teacher Consultation and Inclusionary Resource Room. Beginning in the 1970s, classroom-based and school-wide instructional approaches increased the attention on ***teacher-based consultation***, and ***resource room-based delivery system****s* became the preferred means for educating students with disabilities (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990; Chalfant et al., 1979; Colarusso, 1987; Graden, 1989; Idol, 1983; Pugach & Johnson, 1989; Zins et al., 1988). As a result, general and special education faculty and staff members, including school counselors and psychologists, *worked as teams* to provide a common and inclusive experience for all students and a collaborative process for developing and delivering specialized educational supports for students with learning and behavior difficulties.

This focus on ***all students and differentiated instruction for some students*** resulted in greater emphasis on general classroom instruction and behavior management (Darch & Kame'enui, 2004) and attention specifically on the mutually beneficial inter-relationship between ***academic achievement and behavioral competence***. With respect to classroom management, carefully considering the physical characteristics of the classroom, explicitly teaching and encouraging classroom routines, delivering high rates of specific praise, and actively supervising student activities became important in supporting academic success (Myers et al., 2011; Scott, 2017; Scott et al., 2017). Similarly, effective academic instruction emphasized direct instructional approaches, maximum opportunities to respond, and continuous progress monitoring (Simonsen & Myers, 2015).

These advances in teaching consultation and resource room approaches aided the development of

the MTSS emphasis on ***integrating academic and behavior instruction***, ***explicit teaching of***

academic skills and social behavior, ***delivering differentiated instruction in general classroom***

contexts and settings, *and* ***teacher-based teaming*** *and* ***consultation***. In particular, the roles and

responsibilities of specialists, such as school counselors and psychologists and special educators,

created opportunities for more collaborative, comprehensive, and efficient opportunities within

the general education context for all students.

4. Response to Intervention. In the 1990s, emphasis increased on the use of data to monitor the

progress and improve the evaluation of students with learning disabilities and decision making

relative to their responsiveness to instruction. Although initiated in special education, principles

of Response to Intervention (RTI; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Gresham et al., 2005; Sugai & Horner,

2009) were adapted to general education across academic content areas (e.g., early literacy,

numeracy), enhanced the roles and responsibilities of specialists (e.g., school counselors and

psychologists, speech and language pathologists), and included a number of important elements

that shaped the current MTSS approach.

First, ***universal screening*** procedures were used regularly to identify students with potential risk

for academic and/or behavior difficulties. Rather than wait for a student to fail or demonstrate a

lack of responding, the intent is to screen regularly for students who display characteristics (e.g.,

disability, language, sensory, behavior) that present a clear risk to their ability to benefit from

instruction (see chapter 9 for more information on Universal Screening).

Second, RTI increased the emphasis on the selection of ***evidence-based practices and their***

alignment with the current level of functioning for the student. The attention was on ensuring

that an accurate assessment of student functioning was used to select instructional and/or

behavioral practices that had research evidence of their effectiveness for achieving the desired

learning outcome.

Third, RTI emphasized the importance of monitoring and evaluating the ***accuracy*** and ***fluency of***

practice implementation (fidelity). Although educators typically examine how well required

instructions and procedures for a practice are being followed, they also must consider a number

of other implementation aspects. For example, aspects of an evidence-based practice may need to

be modified to accommodate differences in language, cultural backgrounds, disability, etc. In

addition, if students are not making adequate progress, educators might decide to (a) modify the

practice based on learners' response patterns, (b) continue to use the practice while carefully

monitoring learner responsiveness, or (c) replace the practice with a more appropriate one.

Finally, one of the most important contributions of RTI to MTSS is the emphasis on ***continuous***

monitoring of student progress and careful consideration of student responsiveness to

intervention. Rather than waiting until the end of a grading period or academic year, learner

progress is checked on a daily, weekly, and/or monthly basis so that educators can make timely

adjustments and decisions. Although RTI was initiated in the context of special education, the

basic principles have relevance to the instructional and behavioral programming of all students

and became an important developmental precursor to MTSS.

5. Three-Tiered Prevention Logic. MTSS emphasizes *prevention* to reduce the likelihood of problem development (incidence) and intensity, frequency, duration, etc. of existing problems (prevalence; Biglan, 1995, 2015). A prevention perspective means all students should be equipped with useful and effective academic and social skills. For students who display risk factors (e.g., disability, anxious or withdrawn behavior, attention), the prevention focus is on strengthening protective factors (e.g., social skills, peer support). For individual students who display high risk behaviors (e.g., aggression, elopement, depressed behaviors), the focus is on improving environments so triggers of problem behavior are removed and desired behaviors are promoted. An important prevention priority is to remove the excessive use of reactive, non-educative consequence responses (e.g., removal, seclusion, restraint, reprimands) that can promote rather than reduce the likelihood of problem behaviors, especially for students whose behaviors require additional (e.g., Tiers 2/3) supports. The focus on incidence and prevalence de-emphasizes the development and use of reactive responses (e.g., suspension) to presenting problems and serve as the base for many school-based disciplines, like school counseling, to emphasize *prevention*.

Hill Walker extended the prevention logic to educational service delivery for students with behavior disorders and was particularly influential in conceptualizing a *continuum-based approach* that is foundational to MTSS. Walker et al. (1996) developed a three tiered logic (Figure 1.2): (a) *universal or primary prevention* (Tier 1) that focused on strengthening the social, emotional, and learning competence of students who presented little to no risk for behavior disorders (incidence); (b) *indicated or secondary prevention* (Tier 2) that emphasized

solidifying protective factors and minimizing influential risk factors for students who present indicators of problem behavior (prevalence); and (c) *intensive or tertiary prevention* (Tier 3) that addressed the existence of significant risk and the absence of protective factors for students whose challenges require specialized and individualized supports.

[*Insert Figure 1.2 here*]

Figure 1.2 Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support

The **"triangle"** or continuum logic has become one of the most important defining elements of any tiered approach. Although usually presented in a three-tiered configuration, the continuum is best represented as an integrated continuum that organizes behavior, practices, and systems with careful consideration of cultural factors and contexts. For example, in Figure 1.3, a continuum of behavior responsiveness is illustrated for "Caesar." Whereas "anger management," "problem solving," "punctuality," and "work submission" require more intensive (Tiers 2/3) support, a number of other behaviors (e.g., "goal setting," "self-assessment," and "responding to adult requests" are acceptably responsive to general classroom practices and routines (Tier 1).

[*Insert Figure 1.3 here*]

Figure 1.3 A continuum of behavior responsiveness is illustrated for "Caesar"

An example of a continuum of **classroom management practices** is illustrated in Figure 1.4. "Ms. Antonette" has selected and implemented a range of intervention options in her classroom. In addition to the most "effective instruction" available, her students also experience "continuous active supervision," "frequent positive active engagement," and "contingent and specific positive reinforcement." A small group of students participates in a peer mentoring program to improve

their bystander response to teasing and bullying. A few of her students, like Caesar, have

individualized behavioral contracts that use a function-based intervention to address particularly

challenging behaviors.

[*Insert Figure 1.4 here*]

Figure 1.4 A continuum of classroom management practices

Spotlight on Practice

School-wide practices and systems at Ms. Antonette's school are also organized using the

same continuum logic. At South Maori School, all students are taught a small set of school-

wide behavioral expectations across all settings (including the classroom) by all staff and

faculty members throughout the school year. In addition, all staff and faculty members deliver

specific and contingent positive acknowledgements when observing and setting appropriate

displays of expected behaviors. To support this school-wide continuum, a leadership team

(which includes the school counselor) coordinates practice implementation. Data are reviewed

regularly (e.g., monthly for Tier 1 decision making, weekly for Tier 2/3 student

responsiveness), and a student support team (comprised of the school counselor and special

educator and district school psychologist and nurse) meet weekly to screen for students with

high risk behaviors, and monitor students on group and/or individual behavior plans.

Box 1.2 Spotlight on Practice

The continuum logic is foundational to MTSS, and has a number of essential features that are

particularly important to the roles, responsibilities, and functions of school counselors. First,

students are not "placed" and labeled within the continuum. Instead, practices and systems of

support are aligned and organized based on student responsiveness and cultural context and influences. Second, Tier 1 or universal supports are available and delivered to all students. Students whose behaviors require a more specialized assistance (Tiers 2/3) still participate within the classroom and school-wide systems (Tier 1); however, they require additional supports to address their academic and behavior needs. Third, although teams operate based on school-wide or individual student responsiveness, team members participate in delivery of practices across the full continuum. Finally, the development, implementation, evaluation, and adjustment of these continua are based on data collected on student responsiveness and practice or systems implementation fidelity (accuracy and fluency). School counselors participate in and make significant prevention and intervention contributions across all tiers for all students.

6. **Behavioral Sciences.** MTSS is grounded in the *behavioral sciences*, which aligns well with a prevention approach and an emphasis on empirically-based practices and strategies. A behavioral perspective acknowledges the influence of biology and prior learning history; however, the implementation of tiered systems of support (e.g., PBIS) emphases three important behavioral tenets: (a) behavior (academic and social) is learned, (b) behavior is predictably lawful, and (c) behavior can be taught and/or occurrences influenced through manipulation of environmental antecedent and consequence events (i.e., direct instruction and intervention) (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Cooper et al., 2019; Wolery et al., 1988).

7. **Evidence-based Practices.** Given the importance of (and opportunity to) promote academic achievement and behavior success, MTSS emphasizes the selection, adoption, and high fidelity *use of evidence-based practices*, strategies, and interventions. At Tier 1, the goal is to ensure that

most students (e.g., >80%) are maximally engaged, have high rates of academic engagement, and progress at rates that prevent falling behind. At Tiers 2/3, greater precision in practice selection and alignment with desired outcomes are needed because these students have risk factors and/or a failure to benefit from Tier 1 supports. That is, school counselors and educators must have high confidence in the effectiveness of their practice selection. Evidence-based practices are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12.

8. Direct Instruction. Another key influence on the development of MTSS has been the emphasis on a more explicit approach to teaching social skills, providing professional development, and developing practice and systems materials. First, *teaching and supporting social, emotional, and behavioral skills are approached in the same manner as academic skills* (Becker, 1992; Colvin et al., 1993; Colvin & Sugai, 1988; Engelmann & Carnine, 1991; Engelmann et al., 1988). For example, rather than assuming social skills are acquired through indirect and chance experiences at home, with peers, or by watching adult models, MTSS approaches develop specific and daily classroom and school-wide social skills lesson plans that have a specific yearlong delivery schedule, carefully selected setting and culturally appropriate teaching examples, structured practice to raise fluency, and specific feedback about correct skill use and corrective practice when errors are observed.

Similar to the direct approach for teaching social skills for students, an MTSS approach to professional development for school staff acknowledges that 1-time (e.g., in-service day) or episodic (e.g., quarterly communities of practice) professional development events are associated with limited change in classroom practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Latham, 1988; Showers &

Joyce, 1996). Similar to learning any new and/or complex skill (e.g., new social skills curriculum, multi-step problem solving system), efforts to change or *improve classroom and school-wide practices involves a direct instruction approach*: (a) rationale and knowledge, (b) models and positive and negative examples, (c) supervised fluency-building practice, (d) systematic implementation prompts, (e) positive error corrections, and (f) regular positive feedback on appropriate use.

Within MTSS, the direct instruction emphasis is also applied to the development of the materials and instruction experienced by students and the implementation of practices and systems used and experienced by all staff members, including school counselors. In general, MTSS materials and instruction (e.g., reminders, lesson plans, scripts) are designed to initiate and promote sustained use of desired or expected actions. For example, within PBIS, a one-page lesson plan (teaching matrix) is used to teach school-wide social skills. The example in Figure 1.5 includes (a) 3 school-wide expectations (we respect selves, others, and property), (b) range of relevant settings (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus), and (c) positive behavior examples for each expectation and setting (Robbie et al., 2022). General instructions for using the teaching matrix, correcting errors, and providing positive feedback for appropriate displays of the behavior examples are found on the back of the teaching matrix (Figure 1.6).

[*Insert Figure 1.5 here*]

Figure 1.5 A one-page lesson plan (teaching matrix) is used to teach school-wide social skills

[*Insert Figure 1.6 here*]

Figure 1.6 General instructions for using the teaching matrix

9. Innovative Implementation Research. The ninth influence that has shaped our current conceptualization and application of MTSS is the inclusion of innovation implementation research (Fixsen et al., 2005). As indicated above, MTSS is not an intervention, practice, or curriculum, but instead MTSS is a *framework or approach* for how any innovation, practice, system, etc. is implemented. First, classrooms, schools, districts, or any educational unit is characterized as an "organization." Instead of assuming that classrooms and schools, for example, change, MTSS frameworks consider the *organization as comprised of individuals* (students, teachers, specialists, administrators) whose individual behavior changes (Skinner, 1938). When the collective behaviors are similar in that they are directed toward a common end, goal, or objective, and represent an agreed upon approach, practice, or routine, then the organization is more likely to be effective, efficient, and relevant (Daniels & Bailey, 2014; Gilbert, 1978; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1992; Horner & Sugai, 2018; Horner et al., 2017).

Another important operating principle is that activities must be considered in light of the implementation *phase*. A general phase sequence is described in Figure 1.7. Because implementation is continuously changing, these phases are used as general process guidelines for organizing and restructuring operations (Fixsen et al., 2005). In other words, practice implementation is never done. During any hour, day, month, or year, priority levels may change, practice effectiveness may wane, implementation fidelity may decrease, new innovations may be identified, implementation resources may need to be shifted, etc.

[*Insert Figure 1.7 here*]

Figure 1.7 Stage Based Approach

10. Leveraging MTSS to Advance Equity. In recent years, implementation of MTSS to support student behavior positively and proactively has increased (Sugai & Horner, 2020), and the use of exclusionary discipline in schools has declined (Musu et al., 2019). However, as described in the Introduction, students from marginalized groups (e.g., racially and ethnically minoritized youth) remain disproportionately referred to the office, suspended, and expelled from school. This may be due to common implementation barriers associated with MTSS (insufficient resources, inadequate training). Yet, it is more likely because addressing root causes of discipline disparities is not always explicitly integrated into MTSS' implementation (Gregory et al., 2017). A root cause analysis can be done to understand why discipline disparities exist (see Osher et al., 2015 for a step-by-step guide), and results can inform how to act to reverse noted trends and support sustained implementation of MTSS to advance equity.

Although MTSS emphasizes the importance of the school environment for youth, it has been criticized for largely failing to consider the historical, economic, and institutional factors that have sustained the oppression of youth with oppressed identities (Sabnis et al., 2020). Fallon and colleagues (2021) noted that there has been a call for MTSS to be culturally affirming, but that it cannot be seen as an additional consideration and must instead be integrated into its conceptualization.

MTSS can be culturally affirming and leveraged to advance equity if integrative of supports for both youth and staff behavior. It can be a framework in which promotive and protective factors for youth development are integrated, especially for youth with oppressed identities, who may

experience negative developmental outcomes due to repeated racial discrimination (Neblett et al., 2012). This includes promoting and affirming racial identity (Leath et al., 2019) and nurturing supportive relationships youth have with caregivers, educators, and other school partners (Anyon, Atteberry-Ash, et al., 2018). In Figure 1.8, we present considerations for leveraging MTSS to advance racial equity including how to structure support for students and staff, as well as actions to take within the school, community, and profession. School counselors are encouraged to consider this guidance when designing and implementing MTSS.

In Sum

The purpose of reviewing these foundational influences, or *basics*, is to describe the evolutionary path and coming together of many best practices and systems that now represent and are still associated with MTSS. We learned that MTSS is the outcome of many conceptually sound, empirically grounded, and applied practices and processes. The guiding principles of the MTSS framework can be applied to many different practices, innovations, and initiatives across academic, social, emotional, and behavioral domains. In addition, we learned that no one discipline is responsible for developing and implementing MTSS. Instead, helping professionals trained in school counseling and psychology, general and special education, mental and public health, etc. work together to improve implementation fidelity of MTSS systems and practices and achieve important student outcomes.

Questions for Reflection

This section describes the ten key MTSS influences.

Were you already familiar with these influences? Which ones?

Which of these influences were new for you?

How might you utilize this knowledge in the practice of school counseling?

Box 1.3 Questions for Reflection

What are the Operating Characteristics of MTSS?

As a general framework (academic, social, emotional, behavior, etc.), MTSS is best described as

the "umbrella" for a range of tiered systems of support (e.g., RTI, PBIS, interconnected systems

framework, positive behavior for learning, integrated academic and behavior systems). As such,

MTSS has a number of operating characteristics that serve as the foundation for MTSS and

CSCP for all school staff, but school counselors in particular. In Table 1.1, seven characteristics

are described and PBIS examples are used.

Characteristic	Description	PBIS Example
Team-based	School teams comprised of faculty, students, family members, administrators, etc. are formed to develop, guide, monitor, and adjust an implementation action plan. These teams meet on a regular schedule and have representation from faculty and staff.	School-wide leadership teams (Tier 1) develop lesson plans for all staff to teach all students a common and small set of behavioral expectations (see Teaching Matrix). Specialized teams (Tiers 2/3) that support development, implementation, and evaluation of small group and individual behavior intervention plans.
Decision based data system	Specific data are collected and used by teams to make equitable decisions about practice selection, student progress or responsiveness to intervention, and practice implementation fidelity.	Six main school-wide PBIS questions are considered on a monthly basis: 1. How often are behavioral incidents being referred and recorded? 2. What behaviors are being referred and recorded?

		3. Where are behaviors being referred from and recorded? 4. When are behavior being referred and recorded? 5. Which students are associated with referred and recorded behavior? Simultaneously, PBIS schools annually assess the fidelity or accuracy of their practices implementation at all three tiers by using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Algozzine et al., 2014). If fidelity is >70% and student responsiveness is adequate, interventions are continued. If fidelity is <70%, a plan is developed to improve staff member implementation.
Universal Screening	On a regular schedule (e.g., monthly, quarterly, semester) student status is systematically reviewed to provide an initial identification of students who present existing, early, or at-risk indicators of academic and/or social behavior difficulties.	In school-wide PBIS, all teachers review (step 1) their class lists to identify students who display unusual or noticeable changes in one or more of the following behavioral concerns or risk factors over the current grading period: 1. Academic engagement and/or progress 2. Self-management 3. Attendance 4. Peer interactions 5. Adult interactions 6. Major office discipline referrals 7. Visits to counselor, nurse, or other school staff 8. Verbal statements (e.g., self-injury, violence) 9. Self-regulation (e.g., anxiety, withdrawal, sleeping, crying) If an identified student is determined to be possible priority, additional available information is collected and reviewed (step 2) to clarify need. If student is determined to be high priority, a team (Tier 2/3) is formed (step 3) to develop an intervention plan.
Continuous Progress Monitoring	Student responsiveness to specific academic instruction and/or social behavior practices and interventions is collected and analyzed on a frequent and regular (e.g.,	Continuous progress monitoring by teams occurs at all levels in a school implementing PBIS practices. At Tier 1, school-wide data (e.g., attendance, office discipline referrals) are reviewed on a monthly basis by PBIS leadership team. If a

	lesson, daily, weekly) basis to make, if indicated, timely and informed adjustments, for example, 1. Make instruction or intervention less/more difficult 2. Increase/decrease learning outcome 3. Provide professional development 4. Modify instruction or intervention 5. Transition to new learning or behavioral objective	specific intervention plan (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, entering/exiting the building) is being implemented, data relevant to specific behavior indicators (e.g., noise level, inappropriate language, in hallway after last bell) are reviewed weekly. If a group of students (Tier 2) or an individual student (Tier 3) are involved in more targeted interventions, student-specific behavior indicators are collected and reviewed on weekly, daily, and sometimes, hourly basis. Fidelity of intervention implementation is assessed more frequently at Tiers 2/3 (e.g., daily, weekly) than Tier 1 (e.g., annually).
Evidence-based Practices	Practices must be empirically sound, that is, sufficient replicated scientific support giving users confidence that the desired outcome can be produced.	The PBIS framework is populated with evidence-based practices, for example, ● Targeted social skills instruction ● Cognitive behavior therapy ● Functional behavioral assessment ● Behavioral contracting ● Positive reinforcement ● Active supervision ● Check In Check Out
Tiered Continuum of Practices and Systems	All students experience prevention-based and school-wide practices and systems that promote academic and behavior success by all staff members across all school settings (Tier 1). Additional practices, interventions, instruction, etc. (Tier 2/3) are aligned and integrated with Tier 1 to address the needs of students who require additional supports in groups (Tier 2) or individually (Tier 3).	Practices and supports within a PBIS continuum of supports have core elements or characteristics that when aligned and integrated support all students based on their risk factors and responsiveness to intervention. ● Tier 1: (a) common positively stated school-wide purpose or vision, (b) coordinating leadership team, (c) small number (3-5) positively stated behavioral expectations, (d) procedures for teaching and practicing these expectations across typical classroom and school settings, (e) hourly/daily positive and specific acknowledgements and feedback on displays of expected behavior, (f) continuum of corrective and reteaching consequences for norm-violating behaviors, and (g) regular review of data for implementation decision making.

		• Tier 2: increase in intensity, frequency, duration, etc. of Tier 1 core elements for small groups of students with similar support needs. Addition of evidence-based group-based practices (e.g., check-in check-out, targeted social skills and behavioral counseling) • Tier 3: increase in intensity, frequency, duration, etc. of Tier 1& 2 core elements; however, individualized for specific student challenges and strengths. Addition of specialized individualized evidence-based practices (e.g., function-based supports, behavioral contracts, cognitive behavior therapy, intensive social skills training, school-based mental health).
Implementation Fidelity	Collection, analysis, and decision making of data related to accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness of implementation of an intervention, practice, curriculum, etc. in the context of student responsiveness to intervention. Implementation decisions may include one or more of the following: (a) discontinue, (b) replace, (c) continue, or (d) modify (+/-)	Validated instruments are available to assess PBIS implementation fidelity (e.g., Tiered Fidelity Inventory – TFI, Benchmarks of Quality – BoQ, School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET). The TFI, for example, allows for review of practices and systems annually for Tier 1, monthly/weekly for Tier 2 (e.g., BAT, MATT), and weekly/daily for Tier 3 (e.g., ISSET, individualized BIP fidelity checklists). PBIS teams examine both practice implementation fidelity data and student data on responsiveness to intervention to make action planning decisions.

Table 1.1 MTSS core operating characteristics, descriptions, and PBIS examples

Overall, MTSS is a framework that organizes evidence-based practices and systems within an

integrated continuum of supports to enhance academic and/or social behavior outcomes for all

students. Regardless of where MTSS is developed and implemented (e.g., early literacy; social,

emotional, behavioral; secondary physics, physical education), core elements are represented

(i.e., universal screening, team-based implementation, continuous progress monitoring, evidence-

based practices, implementation fidelity, tiered continuum of practices, data-based decision making). In addition, the development, implementation, and evaluation of MTSS must be conceptually grounded, empirically supported, prevention-focused, and prioritize racial equity and healing in schools.

What is Considered When Implementing MTSS?

School counselors and most educators appreciate the importance of defining a problem, need, or concern; selecting a practice or intervention that directly aligns with that definition, and implementing that practice. However, less attention is given to the implementation fidelity, sustainability, and scaled or extended use of the selected practice (see implementation phases in Figure 1.7) (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2017). In this section, we summarize considerations and guidelines for implementing MTSS.

MTSS Implementation Considerations

Moving from exploration to scaled MTSS implementation is enhanced if school team members and leadership carefully operate from and consider the main drivers of an effective and efficient implementation plan or blueprint (Figure 1.9). Four main driver areas should be considered: (a) leadership teaming, (b) foundations, (c) implementation, and (d) demonstrations.

[*Insert Figure 1.9 here*]

Figure 1.9 Main drivers of an effective and efficient implementation plan

Leadership Teaming

Central to all implementation is having a group of individuals who have the authority, schedule, resources, and incentives to develop, implement, and monitor MTSS. This multidisciplinary team should have representation from key partners and groups across the school, for example,

school administrators, grade level teacher, department representative, special support staff (e.g.,

school counselors and/or psychologists, special educators, nurses, speech language therapists),

classified staff (e.g., paraprofessionals, office assistants, bus drivers), family and community

members, and students.

This team has two categories of responsibilities. *Executive functions* include responsibilities

related to securing and encouraging partner support, developing policy, maintaining funding, and

establishing local implementation capacity. *Implementation functions* involve organizing and

providing personnel training, coordinating coaching supports, and ensuring local specialized

behavior capacity.

School administrators (e.g., principals, vice/assistant principals, deans) are particularly important

participants on leadership teams for four main reasons. First, they have the *decision-making*

authority related to policy, calendar, curriculum, action planning, professional development, etc.

School teams are unable to implement MTSS practices and systems if faculty members do not

see that the team has the authority and support from leadership to engage in MTSS practices and

systems. Second, school leaders are important prompters, *models*, and encouragers for student

and staff member participation. If school leaders are actively and visibly engaged in the same

expected behaviors, practices, and professional development activities, students and staff

members are more likely to see the importance of their own participation and engagement.

Third, not only are school leaders responsible for encouraging and securing most (>80%) staff

member participation in MTSS implementation, they are also responsible for *supervising* and

supporting staff members who oppose or do not understand why they should be involved in MTSS. Analogous to the tiered support logic for students, the school leadership team works with, educates, and encourages all staff and faculty members with the goal of achieving >80% to participation in implementation. The school leader's responsibility is increasing participation by those who need additional encouragement to join the school-wide effort.

Finally, one of the most important functions of school leaders and members of the leadership team is providing frequent *positive recognition and acknowledgement* for staff participation and contributions to MTSS implementation activities. Like positive reinforcement for student expected behaviors, staff recognition should be authentic, socially and culturally relevant (privately in classrooms, and publicly when appropriate in meetings and activities), and frequent (e.g., daily, weekly). In usual MTSS fashion, school leaders and team members are responsible for recognition and acknowledgement for all (Tier 1) faculty, staff, and students; however, this responsibility is even more important for those who are unsure, reluctant, and/or resistant to participate in MTSS activities.

Executive Functions

The leadership team has four main *executive or administrative* responsibilities, which are portrayed in Figure 1.9. First, support for MTSS implementation goes beyond the classroom and school, but includes developing dynamic, reciprocal partnerships with families and other vested partners (e.g., parents, community members). For example, parents and family members are particularly important in defining, prompting, and reinforcing classroom and school-wide expectations at home and in the community. In addition to having a family member on the

leadership team, securing participation by parent-teacher associations, parent volunteers and

tutors, and special interest parent groups (e.g., clubs, special events) can be helpful. Partners also

include local businesses, non-profit agencies, and community service providers (e.g., law

enforcement, mental and public health, medical services). Examples of partner support include

"walkthroughs" (i.e., regular classroom and non-classroom visits), data review, fundraisers,

dissemination and visibility, as well as alignment with important priorities of the identified

partner.

Second, the leadership team should have access to adequate recurring *funding* to establish and

maintain MTSS implementation for three to five years. Although temporary funding (e.g., grants,

budget supplements) is useful for establishing readiness and initial implementation, having a

recurring budget line increases possibilities of MTSS implementation, and supports integration

and institutionalization in classroom and school-wide routines and operations. Similarly, initial

implementation should emphasize development of internal and local expertise (i.e., sustained

implementation capacity) rather than temporary hiring of personnel who are not supportable after

external funding ceases.

Third, development, implementation, and modification of MTSS *policy* are important leadership

team functions that promote institutionalization and sustainability. In particular, established

policy facilitates transitions in leadership, teaching faculty, and support staff and continued

practice and systems implementation fidelity. Policy development should be considerate of long-

standing inequities and promote non-biased decision-making using data. It should integrate and

align student, classroom, and school-wide needs. Youth can take an active role in developing

policy with educators and administrators. This can offer the opportunity for their voice to be

reflected in the design and delivery of supports.

Finally, to maximize practice implementation fidelity and sustainability, leadership teams have a

continuous responsibility to establish and maintain expert *workforce capacity*. Procedural guides,

new personnel orientation activities, regularly scheduled professional development events, and

guided practice and implementation fine-tuning are examples of structures and opportunities for

establishing and maintaining a competent and expert implementation staff and faculty.

Implementation Functions

In addition to executive functions or drivers, leadership teams are responsible for MTSS

activities and procedures that relate to (a) training, (b) coaching, (c) evaluation and performance

feedback, and (d) content expertise (Figure 1.9).

The *training* driver is focused on developing leadership team fluency on MTSS concepts,

practices, leadership functions, data-based decision making, and all staff training activities.

Rather than presenting content to faculty in typical one-time professional development events,

the leadership team develops a 2-3-year training action plan that emphasizes explicit lesson

plans, a calendar for regular training and implementation, supervised practice, continuous

prompting and coaching, regular data sharing, and regular monitoring of practice implementation

fidelity. Although outside trainers and/or consultants are often utilized during readiness and

initial implementation, the goal is to develop internal and local expert training capacity during

later implementation phases.

To design and implement MTSS to advance racial healing in schools, school counselors can also advocate for staff to receive requisite, high-quality professional development opportunities. This might be on topics related to structural and systemic racism, the deleterious effects of exclusionary discipline, how to assess culturally responsive educator practice, how to build trust with families and community members, and how to interpret and use data to promote equitable access to instruction. This professional development should be engaging and occur on an ongoing basis in tandem with the MTSS planning and implementation process. This is to ensure the design and delivery of MTSS promote equitable outcomes for all youth in schools.

The *coaching* driver is established to bridge and facilitate practice use between training and actual classroom and school-wide implementation. Generally, all leadership team members engage in coaching activities, for example, (a) providing prompts and reminders (e.g., practice use, data collection and decision making, team meetings); (b) reinforcing appropriate and correcting inappropriate practice use; (c) finding information and resources; and (d) team-teaching implementation activities. When feasible, both external and internal coaching capacity is established. Internal coaching is supported by members of the school leadership team, and external coaching is provided by members of district (regional, county) leadership teams or of neighboring school leadership teams. Individuals engaged in external coaching have responsibilities that bridge school and district supports, for example, training opportunities, demonstrations and exemplars in other classrooms and schools, communications between district and school leadership, specialized behavior supports (e.g., mental health, medical), dissemination and visibility, etc. Because of their flexible scheduling, school counselors, for example, can

participate in classroom activities, observe and provide feedback on implementation of

individualized practices, and demonstrate and model use of newly adopted strategies.

One of the main responsibilities of school and district leadership teams is providing *evaluation*

and performance feedback using local data to guide decision making regarding implementation

and executive functions. Focusing on both student progress and responsiveness to intervention

and implementation fidelity, leadership teams base feedback on (a) identifying and prioritizing

needs, questions, and decisions; (b) developing data collection procedures and schedules that

directly address needs, questions, and decisions; (c) analyzing data and providing actionable

recommendations; and (d) establishing communication and dissemination routines for sharing

and providing feedback. The objective is focused on improving implementation fidelity and

student progress. Additionally, leadership teams must share and interpret data with their staff and

vested partners (McIntosh et al., 2016)

The final leadership team implementation driver is related to ensuring that *content expertise* is

identified, established, and sustained within and across classrooms and schools. Content

expertise ensures that one or more individuals have knowledge of the specific domain, and is

linked directly to the implementation practice and its core features, essential implementation

steps, fidelity tools and measures, and progress monitoring procedures. Although one or two

individuals may have oversight responsibility for a specific practice, ownership and

responsibility for content expertise is shared across the leadership team to maximize durable and

accurate implementation across all faculty and staff members. Personnel, like school counselors,

are important for providing universal prevention-based practices for all students (i.e., Tier 1) and

targeted and intensive practices and interventions for students who require additional supports to be academically and behaviorally successful.

Implementation Demonstrations

The final MTSS implementation driver in Figure 1.9 is the development and use of implementation examples or demonstrations. As classroom and school-wide practices are fully implemented, leadership teams identify, support, make visible, and disseminate examples of sustained high-fidelity implementation. Demonstrations can range from individual student interventions to school-wide practices, from one tier to full continuum, from one classroom to whole grade levels, etc. Support for these examples is bolstered by data regarding student responsiveness and practice implementation fidelity. Leadership teams use and disseminate these examples to (a) enhance confidence in new implementers about pertinence, effectiveness, and relevance; (b) model implementation of core features for professional development; and (c) increase system-wide practice sustainability and scaling.

In conclusion, the MTSS blueprint serves as a general implementation roadmap for focusing the attention and priorities of leadership team action planning, which includes leadership team operations, executive and implementation functions, and implementation demonstrations. Leadership teams must ensure that action plan elements are appropriately adapted to local developmental, cultural, setting, and regional characteristics. To maximize individualized use, leadership teams should consider the guidelines included in Table 1.2

Question	Decision Making Guidelines
Will students benefit directly?	Shorten and straighten the pathway between practice implementation and student success.

Are you willing to bet your next month's salary on that decision?	Give priority to practice decisions that have empirical evidence supporting effectiveness.
Is this the smallest thing we can do that will be associated with the biggest effect?	Select the most efficient, actionable, doable, etc. practice that has the highest probability of producing the largest effect.
Is the practice (or practices) selected going to result in outcomes that are fair and equitable?	Consider culture, context, and learning history of students, school, family, and community when making practice selections, adaptations, and evaluations.
What 2 things can we replace or stop doing to enhance what we expect to do?	Evaluate and prioritize current practices when considering adoption of a practice with higher priority.
Are we doing this the right way every day?	Check regularly implementation fidelity and fluency when evaluating student progress.
Are all students getting what they need to succeed individually?	Ensure that most students are benefiting from classroom and school-wide supports (Tier 1) so that more specialized supports (Tier 2/3) can be provided for students with risk and/or difficulty in responding and learning.

Table 1.2 Leadership team implementation guiding questions

Questions for Reflection
Please see Table 1.2: there are many questions that guide MTSS implementation.
In a similar vein, please ask these questions regarding CSCP implementation.
What do you notice?

Table 1.4 Questions for Reflection

What Is the Role of School Counselors in MTSS Implementation?

Thus far, we have described the essential or core features of an MTSS approach with a general

emphasis on classroom and school-wide implementation. A common misconception is that the

primary role of school counselors is to provide direct supports to students outside the classroom

context, for example, individual and small group counseling, grade and school transitions,

college and career readiness, and attendance monitoring. School counselors actually are prepared

to work with the whole child directly and indirectly for academic, social, emotional, and
behavioral success (ASCA, 2019).

Within an MTSS approach, the actual roles and responsibilities of school counselors align and
integrate well with the focus on prevention, educating and supporting all students, and
supporting entire school communities. These include active involvement within and across a
continuum of evidence-based practices, coaching and collaborating with all school staff, and
collecting and using data to guide decision making (ASCA, 2021; Betters-Bubon et a.., 2016;
Sink, 2016; Sink & Ockerman, 2016; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).

In Table 1.3, the general role of school counseling is summarized with examples in the context of
the features of the MTSS implementation blueprint. Further, the next chapter provides
elaboration on the alignment between school counseling and MTSS (see Chapter 2).

MTSS Implementation Driver	School Counseling Role
Leadership Teaming	• Participating as active and equal member of school-wide leadership team • Facilitating and providing specialized group and individual supports • Incorporating school-wide leadership team members onto school counseling advisory council
Vested Partner Support	• Directly engaging and collaborating with key stakeholder groups (e.g., families, mental health, medical, juvenile justice)
Funding	• Coordinating and implementing specialized CSCP services with general school supports to ensure blended and balanced funding throughout both CSCPs and MTSS frameworks
Policy and Systems Alignment	• Aligning and integrating CSCP procedures, systems, and practices within MTSS continuum • Incorporating MTSS practices and systems into CSCP routines, procedures, and protocols

Workforce Capacity	● Participating in and contributing to counseling-specific school and district professional development events and with other related specialized disciplines (e.g., school psychology, nursing, special education)
Training	● Providing training to staff and faculty members on CSCP practices that are merged within and across training of full MTSS curriculum ● Participating in leadership team, staff and faculty member training activities
Coaching	● Prompting, reminding, modeling, and reteaching staff and faculty members' practice implementation ● Acknowledging and positively reinforcing staff and faculty members' practice implementation ● Providing specialized technical assistance (e.g., consultation and collaboration) to staff and faculty members who have been unresponsive to general professional development activities and opportunities
Evaluation and Performance Feedback	● Gathering and sharing CSCP student and school-wide data (process, perception, outcome) with MTSS leadership and specialty teams, staff and faculty members, students, and family members ● Conducting regular CSCP program evaluations and using those data to guide practice and system decision making and ensure equitable outcomes for all students
Content Expertise	● Demonstrating general knowledge practices for academic, career, social, emotional, and behavioral supports for all students (Tier 1) ● Demonstrating specialized knowledge and practices (Tier 2/3) for students with risk factors or who are unresponsive to general supports (Tier 1)
Demonstrations	● Preparing and disseminating examples or models of CSCP practice implementation ● Participating in classroom and schoolwide displays or presentations ● Identifying exemplars or models in other schools and/or districts

Table 1.3 School counselor role and MTSS implementation driver

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Questions for Reflection

Please see Table 1.3, where the school counselors' role is summarized within the context of the MTSS implementation blueprint.

What are your reactions to this conceptualization of the school counselors' role?

What questions do you have about the overlap between the school counselor's role in general and within MTSS?

Table 1.5 Questions for Reflection

In sum, the role of school counselors in MTSS implementation focuses on integrating and aligning CSCP practices, procedures, and systems into MTSS and vice versa, so the two frameworks are complementary and collaborative. School counselors support all students across all tiers and within and across all classroom and school settings. Through such alignment and integration, *all* students have increased opportunities for academic and behavior success.

The MTSS self-assessment (Table 1.4) can be used by school counselors and leadership teams to examine the alignment and integration of CSCPs and MTSS. Results from this examination can be the basis for action planning.

School Counseling and MTSS Self-Assessment	Self-Rating 5 high…..1 low
1. I am a member and active participant in school-wide *MTSS leadership team* (Tier 1).	5 4 3 2 1
2. I am a member and active participant in *targeted or indicated MTSS teams* (Tier 2/3).	5 4 3 2 1
3. My *CSCP/counseling practices and systems* are aligned with and integrated into MTSS practices and systems.	5 4 3 2 1
4. *MTSS practices and systems* are aligned with and integrated into my *CSCP/counseling practices and systems*.	5 4 3 2 1
5. I am active participant in MTSS *professional development* activities.	5 4 3 2 1
6. I directly *train and coach* others in becoming fluent users of CSCP and MTSS practices and systems.	5 4 3 2 1
7. I collect and develop descriptions, displays, and *demonstrate* examples of effective CSCP and MTSS practices and systems.	5 4 3 2 1
8. I align and integrate CSCP and MTSS school-wide *funding and policies*.	5 4 3 2 1
9. I collect and disseminate CSCP *data* to make decisions that will advance equity in my implementation of MTSS.	5 4 3 2 1
10. I consider MTSS *data* (e.g., universal screening and progress monitoring) when collecting and analyzing CSCP data.	5 4 3 2 1

11. I regularly assess the *implementation fidelity* of my counseling practices and systems.	5 4 3 2 1
12. My decision making emphasizes the use of *evidenced practices and data-based decision making*.	5 4 3 2 1
13. I actively recruit and prepare others on *CSCP/counseling practices and systems* within MTSS.	5 4 3 2 1

Table 1.4 School counseling and MTSS self-assessment

Questions for Reflection
Please see Table 1.4, and complete this MTSS self-assessment. As a result, please answer the following questions:
What are your reactions?
What are your strengths?
Which areas might you further develop?

Table 1.6 Questions for Reflection

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to provide school counselors with an overview of MTSS practices and systems with an emphasis on highlighting the benefit of aligning and integrating CSCP and MTSS. We highlight five main summary points:

Summary
● MTSS is a prevention-based framework for enhancing the development and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based practices to achieve academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students. It can be designed and

implemented to promote racial equity and healing in schools.

- MTSS is grounded in and shaped by a number of foundational influences: (a) disabilities and special education, (b) curriculum-based measurement and precision teaching, (c) teacher consultation and resource rooms, (d) response to intervention, (e) prevention, (f) behavioral sciences, (f) evidence-based practices, (g) direct instruction, and (h) innovation implementation research.

- MTSS has seven core operating characteristics: (a) team-based, (b) decision-based data systems, (c) universal screening, (d) continuous progress monitoring, (e) evidence-based practices, (f) tiered continuum of practices and systems, and (g) implementation fidelity.

- MTSS implementation considers (a) leadership teaming, (b) executive teaming functions (vested partners, funding, policy, workforce capacity), (c) implementation teaming functions (training, coaching, evaluation and performance feedback, content expertise), (d) implementation demonstrations or examples, and (e) guidelines for implementation effectiveness and efficiency.

- MTSS aligns and integrates with the roles and responsibilities of school counseling, such as implementing a CSCP, and vice versa to maximize school counselors' impact.

Action Steps

- Examine state department of education guiding documents on MTSS
- Use school data **(i.e., discipline, attendance, grades, enrollment)** to determine gaps in **student access and opportunities**
- Engage in **introspection:** take the MTSS self assessment (Table 1.4). Review your answers with a colleague or with your team.

- Identify your current continuum of interventions to support students' academic, social-emotional and career development.
- Examine how and whether **student and family voice** is incorporated into your MTSS implementation school

Table 1.7 Chapter Summary and Action Steps

Teaching Activity

Directions: The goal of this activity is for students to learn, first hand, about the challenges and rewards of implementing MTSS from a school counselor's perspective. Interview a school counselor about their MTSS implementation process. Invite them to take the MTSS Self-Assessment for School Counselors (Table 1.4). Review their responses and discuss what hurdles they have cleared and what they are hoping to accomplish this school year. Discuss the use of this assessment as a helpful tool while planning for effective MTSS.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **MTSS is best described as**
   a. An evidence-based practice
   b. A systems framework for improving student outcomes and implementation fidelity
   c. A curriculum for aligning and integrating school counseling with classroom and school-wide systems
   d. a & c
   e. a & b

2. **CSCPs should be**
   a. Aligned within and integrated across MTSS
   b. Considered primarily as a specialized resource for students requiring Tiers 2 or 3 supports
   c. Implemented as a supplement to academic and social behavior instruction
   d. Placed in a shared leadership position with the school principal
   e. None of the above

3. **Students receiving specialized counseling supports should be**
   a. Excluded from Tier 1 school-wide behavior supports
   b. Included to the greatest degree possible in Tier 1 classroom and school-wide activities and practices
   c. Receiving special education services
   d. Used as a demonstration of the integration of MTSS and school counseling
   e. Funded by community and mental health resources

4. **An integrated approach to school counseling and MTSS does NOT emphasize**
   a. Prevention
   b. Special education
   c. Practice implementation fidelity
   d. Evidence-based practices
   e. Behavioral sciences

5. **School teams leading the implementation of MTSS should include representation from**
   a. Classroom teachers and administrators
   b. Support staff, including school counselors and psychologists, and special education teachers
   c. Family members
   d. Community service providers
   e. All of the above

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