Empowering Teachers to Support MTSS Students: An Action Research Study

Sahalija Dentico

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EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO SUPPORT MTSS STUDENTS:
AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to the incredibly hardworking staff and students at CCE. I am inspired by the teachers’ commitment, energy, and genuine search for ways to help their students succeed, as well as by the students’ contagious smiles and inquiry that pushes educators to innovate.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends who have prayed for and inspired me throughout this process.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would most like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Currin. Throughout the doctoral process, you provided extensive feedback on all components. Quite simply, I would not have accomplished this without your guidance. I am deeply indebted to you for your level and quality of leadership. As someone who was fortunate enough to work under your leadership, I am extremely grateful from the bottom of my heart.

I also wish to thank my committee members who took the time to review my study, share their expertise, and give valuable feedback. Dr. McAdoo, thank you for showing your genuine interest and inquiry about education. Dr. D’Amico, your energy, and passion are contagious, and I value your input. Dr. Dickey, as someone who has had the pleasure to work alongside you, I appreciate what you have contributed to my professional and personal development.

Finally, I would like to send a special thank you to the 12 amazing teachers who participated in this study. Thank you for your candor and trust in my study. Your contribution was crucial in improving the MTSS model. I would also especially like to thank my husband, Chris, and my three children, Ava, Emma, and Ethan, who have respected and applauded my efforts these past 3 years. I am grateful for the prayers, inquiries, and support I have received from my family, friends, and church family throughout this journey. Thank you for your encouragement to reach my full potential.
ABSTRACT

In 2018, the elementary school where I serve as an instructional interventionist adopted a data-based multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). Although our process has evolved over the years, I saw room for improvement. Therefore, the purpose of this action research study was to improve the MTSS process at my school, specifically by addressing teachers’ lack of awareness of their role. Framing the study with a combination of social cognitive theory and curriculum ideologies, I explored 12 English language arts teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model, curricular views, and sense of self-efficacy. Through a two-phase, mixed-method approach, I investigated how sharing the teachers’ collective data impacted their perceptions. The findings of this study indicate that sharing data with teachers created an open dialogue leading to problem-solving, collaborative support, and action plans. Following this small-scale study, the next step is to expand the study to a larger scale and provide ongoing professional development to teachers.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR................................................................................. action research
CCE .................................................................................. Crowders Creek Elementary
CCSS ................................................................................ Common Core State Standards
ELA .................................................................................. English language arts
MTSS ................................................................................ multi-tiered system of supports
PD ...................................................................................... professional development
SCT .................................................................................. social cognitive theory
SEL .................................................................................. social–emotional learning
SIT ..................................................................................... Student Intervention Team
TSES ................................................................................ Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Through a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), schools can meet the needs of children with learning difficulties. When I noticed the system at my school, Crowders Creek Elementary (CCE), was not working as intended for teachers or students, I need to understand why before taking additional steps to improve the system. This dissertation is the story of my search for understanding.

My extensive special education background prepared me for a leadership role at CCE, and I have spent 14 years sharpening my skills. As an active participant in MTSS decisions, I understand the model is not a separate program or class, but a way of organizing instruction to help all students (Rosen, 2020). The triangular framework promotes high-quality support based on student needs, guiding educators to identify students who may benefit from additional academic and behavioral support and students who may need special education. Tier 1, the foundation, represents all students, whereas students in Tier 2, who need more support, may receive small-group intervention, additional time, or a narrowed instructional focus. Tier 3 students, at the top of the triangle, receive the most intensive support from individual problem-solving teams.

At CCE, interventionists screen all students who fall below the 25th percentile for their grade level on the Fall school-wide benchmark assessments to determine who needs additional support. In the past, our Student Intervention
Team (SIT) used a problem-solving process to serve these students by planning MTSS interventions and monitoring progress. Tier 2 small-group problem-solving teams included administrators, educators, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, instructional coaches, and intervention specialists. Tier 3 problem-solving teams included the same stakeholders but focused on an individual case, sometimes using individual diagnostic assessments to plan interventions. Over the course of this study, the SIT became the MTSS team, and we began meeting in smaller groups, made up of the teacher(s) and the interventionist, inviting other stakeholders as needed.

Students receiving MTSS services work with classroom teachers and instructional interventionists. The teachers, however, bear the bulk of the implementation responsibility even with Tier 3 students. When a student is referred to MTSS, teachers provide Tier 2 intervention, quality core instruction, and classroom management. They collaborate with the MTSS intervention meeting facilitator to complete data collection, necessary screening, and additional forms. They also communicate with guardians and other adults who interact with students to identify students’ needs and develop responsive strategies. Teachers are responsible for developing Tier 2 behavior plans, implementing interventions, and monitoring student progress. As a Tier 3 interventionist, I have witnessed teachers’ need for support with this process. Ultimately, MTSS becomes an additional burden on top of other duties, hindering their ability to meet the MTSS expectations.
Mindful of the need to improve students’ academic, social, and behavioral development, I saw a related need to improve teachers’ MTSS implementation. The shortcomings in our school’s use of the MTSS model affected teachers’ understanding of the MTSS model and related instructional decisions, ultimately affecting student outcomes. This trend was particularly evident among English language arts (ELA) teachers in Grades 3–5, who faced roadblocks to following the MTSS model with fidelity. As a critical MTSS member, I recognized the need to investigate and reveal the areas of weakness in our school’s MTSS process.

**Problem of Practice**

I am fortunate to work with a team of strong leaders and passionate teachers, but their interactions with MTSS students have been inconsistent. To be fair, the district introduced the MTSS model at our school in 2018 with minimal guidance and training. CCE’s growing student population and limited support staff complicated our ability to adhere to the model’s criteria and complexity, and the COVID-19 pandemic created additional implementation challenges.

As an interventionist, I support Tier 3 ELA students and assist their teachers with academic and behavioral support that extends to Tier 2 students. I also train teachers in instructional models, assessments, or progress-monitoring tools. Collaborating with ELA teachers for Grades 3–5 has fostered a trusting partnership for supporting our shared students. We collect and review quantitative and qualitative academic data. We share the skills, instructional tools, and methods we have each been implementing; we also analyze work samples and observations from our time with the student(s). In our collaborative
conversations, the teachers share their views of the many obstacles to getting to know their tiered students as readers and writers.

Action research (AR) enabled me to treat these obstacles as a problem of practice (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I observed how reaching out for support created additional tasks and responsibilities for teachers: changing their routines, teaching styles, and scheduled instructional plans. I saw their desire to support all students, yet I also recognized how overwhelmed they were. Nevertheless, teachers’ excessive tendency to recommend Tier 3 interventions was not in line with the MTSS model. A child with less reading proficiency may not receive the same or any reading or writing instruction after shifting to Tier 3 if the ELA teacher assumes I bear that responsibility as the instructional interventionist. Thus, students leaving for MTSS intervention were losing valuable time in the classroom and exposure to their teacher’s expertise.

In short, my problem of practice was my colleagues’ lack of awareness of how they fit into the MTSS process. When teachers know their role, they are empowered to find the tools and resources to meet their MTSS students’ behavioral and academic needs. To achieve that aim, I needed to address the factors preventing them from following the MTSS process. My initial observations and conversations indicated several root causes: lack of confidence, lack of time, lack of adequate training, lack of communication, and problematic behaviors.

**Lack of Confidence**

I suspected some teachers hesitated to follow the MTSS model because they believe some children’s challenges are outside their expertise. Teachers
may be too intimidated to seek help and collaborate with other professionals if they feel they cannot meet a student’s needs. Teachers may also believe they are ill-equipped to teach students who have not mastered prerequisite or foundational skills from previous grades. I knew they wanted to help but sensed they were not confident in how to do it.

**Lack of Time**

Another challenge teachers faced was a lack of time, exacerbated by their pacing guides. MTSS students may also leave the classroom for multilingual support, speech therapy services, or behavioral concerns, and ELA teachers must provide grades for such students without directly witnessing their writing and reading progress. Moreover, unexpected events and issues that arise throughout the day may prevent teachers from using allocated instructional time. Learning requires teachers’ active engagement with students (Hamre et al., 2012). Without the time to build this bond, especially with MTSS students, teachers are less likely to foster an optimal learning environment.

**Lack of Adequate Training**

I also attributed our school’s MTSS challenges to insufficient and ineffective training and teachers’ lack of exposure to the models, tools, and strategies. At team meetings, I witnessed teachers struggle to provide detailed information about students’ academic or behavioral patterns and abilities. Some admitted they lacked proper training. Others stated they needed additional training or a refresher from the district on how to address their Tier 2 or Tier 3 students’ needs. Few knew how to assess fluency, spelling, comprehension,
vocabulary, and grammar. During MTSS meetings, some teachers had very little to add to my report on the Tier 3 students with whom I work. They would give a broad statement, like, “Oh, they’re not a fluent reader,” instead of explaining how the child has difficulty decoding multisyllabic words or following punctuation. Such responses indicated they had not assessed or differentiated their instruction to get to the root of each child’s needs.

Lack of Communication

Teachers’ MTSS challenges also reflected inconsistent and insufficient communication, support, and guidance from the district, whose policies and criteria do not reach our teachers promptly. However, defining the roles and responsibilities of MTSS in SC begins at the state level (South Carolina Department of Education, 2022), so delayed communication from the state also seemed to be a factor. The state trains district leaders, who train school leaders, who train teachers, and then teachers extend those services to students and their families (South Carolina Department of Education, 2022). At the beginning of the year, administrators and teachers juggle multiple duties; therefore, duties with MTSS are not a high priority. Once the beginning-of-the-year deadlines and immediate requirements wane, MTSS requirements become rushed and stressful. Implementing new forms, assessments, and criteria; orienting transfer students; training our overwhelmed and underinformed new staff; and taking more time out of our returning teachers’ limited time conflict with effective communication of MTSS expectations. This inefficient delivery of information resulted in teachers’ disregarding the MTSS process or implementing it with very
little fidelity, and the disconnect in communication also fed frustration with the MTSS model.

**Problematic Behaviors**

In my observation, the behavioral challenges MTSS students can present constituted another factor contributing to teachers’ stress as they struggled to meet MTSS expectations. The school’s increasing enrollment added to teachers’ overwhelming demands, and unchecked behavior issues often brought them to their breaking point. Focusing more on instructional intervention, we lacked a clear system for addressing behavioral problems among MTSS students. Scholars have long documented that teachers are more inclined to—and better at—working with students who behave, are cooperative, and take accountability for themselves and their work while avoiding dealing with disruptive and oppositional students (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). Reflecting on the MTSS implementation at my school, I viewed this factor, like the others, as a considerable obstacle over which teachers had very little control.

**Theoretical Framework**

Sympathizing with the teachers, I identified two theoretical perspectives that would support my efforts to resolve my problem of practice. I briefly present the main ideas here, discussing further in Chapter 2 how they formed the lens through which I examined my problem, framed my research questions, and turned to professional development (PD) as a means of helping teachers recognize their vital role in the MTSS process. Consistent with the ongoing
nature of AR (Herr & Anderson, 2015), this framework will continue to support future improvement efforts as explained in Chapter 5.

Social cognitive theory (SCT), originally known as social learning theory, explains how personal factors—an individual's beliefs, knowledge, personality, motivation, and self-efficacy—shape their actions (Bandura & Walters, 1963). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy beliefs play a central role in explaining people’s motivation and emotions, reinforced by the environment, which includes situational and role factors, models, and relationships. Environmental factors like language; social values; family customs; and educational, social, and political practices influence people’s development, evaluation, and reflection on standards for behavior. In short, people imitate what they see.

SCT is particularly relevant to education, providing a practical framework for integrating cognitive and social aspects in professional learning (Watson, 2013). A teacher's level of self-efficacy, along with social and contextual factors, affects how that teacher applies pedagogical knowledge. By sharing and listening to other teachers' experiences, teachers may realize they are not alone in their struggle to meet students’ needs and experience enhanced self-efficacy. Voogt et al. (2015) explained that teachers who participate in collaborative design become agents of change as they develop curricula and materials to enhance student learning. Sharing knowledge, exchanging perspectives, and utilizing each other's expertise provide opportunities to learn. Such teachers are motivated, in part, because the reality of everyday teaching is so close to them, and they are empowered to address their challenges. Thus, SCT was useful for
resolving my problem of practice by illuminating critical issues the ELA teachers and I could address together.

The four curriculum ideologies Schiro (2013) identified played a complementary role in my study. As described in Chapter 2, they encompass philosophies about the purpose of schooling and curriculum, the student–teacher relationship, and teachers’ relation to society at large. Teachers’ unique views toward these issues impact their choice of instructional methods and their approach to interacting with students. Thus, any attempt to resolve my problem of practice through SCT had to account for my colleagues’ ideologies, which shaped their perceptions and interpretations of the MTSS model.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

AR yields a deeper understanding of the structures that promote change, as interactions with participants allow researchers to earn their trust, identify their values, and determine how those values shape perceptions (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Applying this process to my role as an interventionist, I sought to intervene with the teachers to ensure equitable opportunity and instruction for students at all tiers. My long-term goal is to empower teachers to address Tier 2 and Tier 3 students’ behavioral and academic difficulties using the MTSS model. The purpose of this initial AR study, to improve teachers’ awareness of their role in the model, was a pivotal step toward the broader aim of improving the MTSS process. The following questions guided my study:

1. What are ELA teachers’ perceptions of:
   a. the MTSS model?
b. curriculum?

c. their efficacy?

2. How does sharing the teachers’ collective views impact their perceptions?

Question 1 reflects my understanding that teachers’ views on curriculum and sense of their efficacy are related to their MTSS implementation. Therefore, the data I collected in response to the question illuminated what the teachers needed to implement MTSS more effectively. I presented these insights during collaborative sessions to begin to strengthen their ability to support MTSS students, as addressed by Question 2.

**Overview of Methodology**

This AR study took a mixed-methods approach, spanning two phases. I combined an initial survey, interviews, observational field notes, and a follow-up survey to collect a comprehensive set of data aligned with my aims. Chapter 3 describes my plan in detail, which began with an invitation letter to assure prospective participants I would maintain their anonymity on the surveys and that their participation throughout the study would be voluntary (Appendix A).

The initial survey comprised three open-access instruments aligned with Research Question 1. Panorama Education’s (n.d.) MTSS School and District Self-Assessment (Appendix B) facilitated exploration of teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model. Schiro’s (2013) Curriculum Ideologies Inventory (Appendix C) helped me determine their perceptions of curriculum. Woolfolk’s (n.d.) Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Appendix D) measured the teachers’ perceptions of their efficacy in terms of instructional strategies, student engagement, and
classroom management. I supplemented these primarily closed-response instruments with two qualitative methods: interviewing and observation.

An interview enables a researcher to understand another person’s perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), including feelings one cannot observe. Therefore, I interviewed the teachers one-on-one using a semi-structured protocol (Appendix E), which informed my approach to sharing the survey data with the group. I presented Phase 1 data from the surveys and interviews to participants during Phase 2.

As the facilitator of the group sessions during Phase 2, I collected observational field notes about participants’ perceptions, in part via Padlet, a web-based discussion tool. Observation provides first-person accounts that align with interviewing for a more holistic interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Combined with my field notes, my final set of data from a reflection form that served as a post-intervention survey (Appendix F) allowed me to assess the impact of my effort to resolve the problem of practice, thereby enabling me to answer Research Question 2.

**Positionality**

Positionality hinges on an action researcher’s background, experiences, and perspectives (Herr & Anderson, 2015). For this study, I was an insider collaborating with other insiders—my colleagues. The teachers’ lack of efficacy with the MTSS process limited my success as an interventionist, so I had a stake in the study. At the same time, despite being immersed in the setting, I was somewhat removed as a leader, trainer, and investigator. As a colleague, I had to
anticipate and try to avoid awkward or even threatening interactions with participants, as I discuss in Chapter 3. I also had to consider that my participants, like me, brought assumptions, biases, and beliefs into the study that may have impacted and limited my conclusions.

Investigating people’s perceptions puts them in a vulnerable state. Perceptions are intimate and personal, influenced by biases and emotions, so I wanted to ensure the participants felt safe in sharing their thoughts. Rather than collect sugarcoated data, positive for my benefit, I wanted everyone’s sincere perceptions without fear of how their responses would make me feel or reflect on my efforts as an MTSS team member. Conducting anonymous surveys enabled me to create this condition, but I inevitably had my own predictions of who may have made certain responses. My biases and beliefs played a role in these assumptions, based on my perception of the respondents’ character; years of experience; initial attitudes about the MTSS model; and interactions with me as a professional, colleague, and friend. Maintaining our partnerships was important for the long-term success of my AR.

Significance

This AR study is the first step toward improving our school’s MTSS process. To improve student outcomes, I had to begin by strengthening educators’ ability to contribute to students’ success. Ideally, I wanted to challenge participants’ perceptions of the MTSS model and enhance their collective efficacy to facilitate interventions in line with their curricular ideologies. Pre-intervention, participants had static perspectives on the MTSS model and limited awareness
of how self-efficacy and curricular views shape instructional decisions. From the seed planted in this study, I hoped to pique their interest in expanding their knowledge and enlist their help in designing ongoing PD opportunities.

I also anticipated this study could reveal other factors contributing to the challenges and current successes of MTSS implementation at CCE, which future AR may explore. Chapter 5 expands on this possibility and articulates how the teachers who participated may share their new understanding with other colleagues, further validating the authenticity and success of the study. Ultimately, I wanted them to feel empowered as MTSS leaders.

Although the findings in Chapter 4 pertain to one school, they may be transferable to other schools facing similar challenges with MTSS. Other instructional interventionists who oversee behavioral and academic support at their school may also benefit from pursuing a similar AR process. As indicated, I intend to continue pursuing my long-term goal, applying my participants’ refreshed perceptions, new knowledge, and self-reflection toward improving the MTSS process at my school.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of MTSS grew out of broader U.S. movements for social justice in the 1950s and 1960s, specifically by addressing disparate educational outcomes associated with quality of instruction (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2015; Feusner, 2020). Among specific legislative efforts to improve educational opportunities for marginalized students, the 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education overturned racial segregation, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty, provided funding for schools serving economically disadvantaged students and special education support (Jeffrey, 1978). No Child Left Behind, signed by George W. Bush in 2002, extended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and increased school responsibility for student achievement through government-sanctioned assessments and adequate progress monitoring centered on high standards (Feusner, 2020; Whitney & Candelaria, 2017).

Legislation explicitly addressing learning disabilities began in 1975 with the Education for Handicapped Children Act, reenacted in 1990 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Lee, n.d.). As Lee explained, the era gave rise to the concept of the least restrictive environment and established the educational rights of students with disabilities and their parents or legal guardians. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in
2004 included the concept of *response to intervention*, a stepwise approach to assessing learning difficulties that gauges social disparities vs. true disabilities before placing students in special education (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Another critical point in the growth of the MTSS model occurred with the Obama administration’s revisions to No Child Left Behind through the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act, which set higher student standards, called for evaluating teachers based on test scores, and expanded states’ power to ensure schools reach adequate progress, including by mandating MTSS implementation (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2015; Feusner, 2020).

As introduced in Chapter 1, this AR study arose as a vital first step in improving MTSS implementation at CCE. To better address Tier 2 and Tier 3 students’ behavior and academic difficulties, I needed to investigate the factors that impact the MTSS process at my school and engage my colleagues in a process of self-reflection. I thus proposed the following research questions:

1. What are ELA teachers’ perceptions of:
   a. the MTSS model?
   b. curriculum?
   c. their efficacy?

2. How does sharing the teachers’ collective views impact their perceptions?

As I described in Chapter 1, the data-based MTSS framework helps schools identify students with academic and behavioral challenges and support them with progressive levels of intervention (Rosen, 2020). However, it requires teachers to adapt their instruction while adhering to ever-changing regulations and policies.
(Goodman, 2011). Reflecting the tension between theory and practice, teachers struggle between encouraged or required policies and their classroom realities. Their perceptions, beliefs, and self-efficacy shape that struggle (Bandura, 2001).

To lay the groundwork for my AR, this chapter began with historical context for the concept of an MTSS. After elaborating on the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 1 and explaining how culture impacts education, I devote the remainder of the chapter to exploring pertinent literature on factors that may impede MTSS implementation, including studies of teacher efficacy, curriculum ideologies, and perceptions or assumptions. I conclude by discussing job-embedded PD as an evidence-based solution that shaped my initial efforts in this study and will continue to inform my future practice.

**Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework grounds a study by defining how to approach it philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). For my AR, I turned to SCT and curriculum ideologies to make sense of my problem and purpose. SCT accentuates the endless interplay of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental structures that shape people’s actions and perceptions (Gibson, 2004), and curriculum ideologies constitute one such structure. As Figure 2.1 illustrates, this framework aligned with my aim to explore teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy, and the social aspect of SCT validated my intention to use collective data-sharing as a means of encouraging participants’ self-reflection on their existing perceptions to help them adjust their instructional decisions in line with the MTSS model.
SCT evolved from Bandura’s (1986, 2001) work with social learning theory and emphasized internal and external forces’ influence on social interactions, suggesting people make assumptions and decisions based on how they interpret and understand social information. Specific to the context of my study, SCT could reveal how teachers perceive their position and purpose, curriculum, students, and ability to implement MTSS. Bandura (1986) found that teachers’ perceptions differed regardless of their shared school environment. In other words, their individual interpretation of the environment shaped their actions.

SCT's emphasis on reciprocal determinism is central to studying the relationship between self-belief and performance (Bandura, 1986; Williams & Williams, 2010). Essentially, SCT recognizes people as self-organizing,
proactive, reflective, and self-regulating organisms driven by internal impulses, rather than reactive organisms responding to environmental forces (Pajares & Usher, 2008). Reciprocal cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences thus people’s actions and perceptions.

Even more relevant to my study, SCT also addresses teachers’ self-efficacy (Allinder, 1995), which may explain teachers’ inconsistent MTSS implementation. According to Rotter (1966), individuals perceive outcomes differently when they see them as the result of their actions (i.e., internal control), as opposed to luck, fate, or other factors (i.e., external control). People’s interactions with the environment, such as receiving a reward after completing a task successfully, influence their perceptions—and by extension, their behaviors in future situations. Rotter’s early work on this theory inspired several scales for studying these influences, including the first measurement of teacher self-efficacy in the 1970s (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Building from Rotter’s (1966) work, Armor et al. (1976) measured teacher efficacy by the degree to which teachers believed their behavior could influence student learning and found that more effective teachers, whose students scored higher on reading tests, had a greater sense of internal control. Likewise, Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) argued that teacher efficacy contributes significantly to improved teaching and learning. People generally fear discomfort, including unwanted or unsuccessful results, whereas self-efficacy instills confidence, reinforcing an internal locus of control. Thus, teachers with low self-efficacy may
wish to avoid challenging MTSS interventions, while those with high self-efficacy
are more likely to take on new challenges.

Self-efficacy has clear implications for academic and behavioral
interventions, as it plays a vital role in teachers’ implementation of new strategies
presented through PD (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Metsala and
Harkins (2020) stated that instructors with strong efficacy accomplish more for
students with academic and behavioral challenges, owing to more optimistic
views on skill-based instruction and inclusion. These insights reinforced my
assumption that teachers’ self-efficacy plays a role in MTSS implementation.

**Curriculum Ideologies**

If SCT posits that individuals’ perceptions are central to how they interpret
their environment and choose to behave, for teachers, perceptions of *curriculum*
are key. Although definitions of curriculum vary depending on scholars’
theoretical and philosophical views (Oliva & Gordon, 2013), Schiro (2013)
explained four standard ideologies that shape instruction:

1. A scholar academic approach assumes students will emulate successful
   scholars’ behavior and thought processes.
2. A social efficiency approach emphasizes the need to prepare students for
   their roles in society.
3. A learner-centered approach emphasizes teacher–student relationships
   and rapport as integral to student achievement.
4. A social reconstruction approach emphasizes reshaping a broken society.
South Carolina’s statewide educational curriculum, which arguably incorporates these different ideologies, is known as the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, encompassing world-class knowledge, world-class skills, and life and career characteristics (South Carolina Association of School Administrators, n.d.). World-class knowledge refers to curricular standards, which align with the scholar academic and social efficiency ideologies (Schiro, 2013). World-class skills, like collaboration, teamwork, communication, creativity, and innovation, relate more to the learner-centered Ideology. Lastly, the life and career characteristics consist of self-direction, perseverance, and global perspective, which suggest a social efficiency or social reconstruction ideology.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) also reflect curriculum ideologies (Mnguni, 2021). To establish uniform standards across the United States, the CCSS specify knowledge and skills students should learn in all schools, regardless of their location. However, multiple interpretations of curriculum complicate that aim, according to Oliva and Gordon (2013), because curriculum specifies “what,” whereas instruction determines “how.” Consequently, a teacher’s perceptions of units, materials, and methods can affect students’ attitudes, which in turn can impact student success (Banks, 2016).

Because of teachers’ varying ideologies, changes to the curriculum can also impact school culture, resulting in inconsistent learning outcomes across different schools (Mnguni, 2021). Core programs are intended to ensure every teacher in a school or district uses the same materials and methods for all students (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2015), yet each school is a uniquely
complex social environment with staff and students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The constant interplay of curriculum ideologies and required standards impact teachers’ decisions about instructional tools and methods.

In the context of my study, to provide adequate tiered support, teachers must perceive the CCSS as aligned with the MTSS model and believe they can play an important role in the overall process. In addition to the curriculum they teach, educators should know what philosophical beliefs influence and inform their methods (Lauridsen, 2003). Therefore, my framework combined SCT, with an emphasis on self-efficacy, and curriculum ideologies.

**Culture’s Impact on Education**

In line with the social aspect of SCT, culture played a role in my effort to improve MTSS implementation at CCE. Culture can be defined as “the system in which people organize their perceptions of their environment and their lives” (Joseph, 2011, p. 16). Teachers must provide opportunities for students to engage in discourse and critical thinking about their lives outside the classroom, yet as Emdin (2012) asserted, such activities are insufficient if teachers are neither deeply knowledgeable about nor steeped in students’ culture. Teachers’ belief systems, shaped by “historical events, societal change, scholarly discoveries, and transformative moral discourse” (Joseph, 2011 p. 171), influence their interactions with diverse learners.

However, as this chapter’s introduction emphasized, public schools have struggled historically to support all students, including those with learning problems. As Wise (2011) suggested, the system was established not for equity
or justice, but for inequity. More optimistic, Blackburn (2008) encouraged recognizing the nature and impact of inequalities, including the inequitable distribution of resources, as a means of achieving social justice. If schools wish to serve all students, they must overcome long-standing limitations to the successful implementation of MTSS practices. Figure 2.2 demonstrates how reciprocal determinism, the interplay of environment, cognition, and behavior situated in a social, historical, and cultural context (Bandura, 1986; Pajares & Usher, 2008), can illuminate these persistent barriers to supporting all students.

**Figure 2.2 SCT's Emphasis on History and Culture as Related to the Problem**

**Challenges With Implementing the MTSS Framework**

A student may achieve academic success while struggling to cope with social situations, so MTSS implementation involves relying on data to identify and organize diverse resources that provide a wide range of academic and behavioral support. Integrating social–emotional learning (SEL) into the
framework further enables educators to support students in developmentally inclusive ways (Lane, 2007, as cited in Swift Education Center, 2020), yet MTSS implementation does not always function as designed. Building from Figure 2.2, this section explores environmental, cognitive, and behavioral hurdles related to MTSS implementation and discusses self-efficacy as an overarching concept. As Bandura (1986) theorized, the interplay of environmental, cognitive, and behavioral forces steeped in history and culture impacts teachers’ self-efficacy, which in turn, affects their perceptions and actions.

**Environmental Challenges**

In accordance with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2011), schools prioritize “using student growth measures in research as a validation of the kinds of practices that ought to make up performance assessment tasks” (p. 43). The data-driven MTSS model aligns with this aim by emphasizing student progress to ensure all students receive the instruction they deserve, but such efforts can fall short. For example, even when teachers prioritize social justice in their classrooms, they encounter obstacles outside their classrooms, embedded in the broader education system (Picower, 2011). In my experience, pressure to set high expectations to meet strict time limits in the pacing guides for general education students prevents teachers from fulfilling the central purpose and responsibility of MTSS implementation: providing quality instruction to all students.

School policies and practices can also hinder the development of socially just classrooms, especially when teachers fail to perceive the inequalities in such
system-wide features (Darder, 2015). As Darder explained, teachers may be unaware of coercive expectations and everyday practices that loudly signal to minoritized students that to succeed, they must accept dominant cultural values as their own. Existing power structures guarantee and create inequality in schools and society (Education at Illinois, 2014), yet educators and administrators who are aware of such inequities may feel their jobs are threatened if they do not conform to the pressures of school accountability (Picower, 2011). Reflecting SCT’s emphasis on reciprocal determinism, what people think can affect their actions and environments, actions can alter their thoughts and environments, and environments can influence individuals’ thoughts and actions (Woodcock & Tournaki, 2022).

Student behavior is another environmental influence. DuPaul et al. (2019) reported a critical gap in addressing chronic learning impairment due to the hyperactive, impulsive, and inattentive behavior associated with ADHD, noting that nearly one-third of students with the disorder do not receive any school-based interventions. For those who receive some form of support, educational support (62.3%) is nearly twice as prevalent as behavior management (32.0%). DuPaul et al. also concluded that this issue is particularly prevalent among youth from non-English-speaking and/or low-income families.

At CCE, most MTSS students have ADHD diagnoses or demonstrate behaviors associated with ADHD or ADD. In some cases, they may be receiving support on paper, but the interventions are ineffective. For example, focusing only on academic intervention ignores the crucial role of social support (Heiman
et al., 2014). Addressing ADHD—or failing to—can impact a child’s ability to form relationships with peers and adults (DuPaul et al., 2019), which affects their social capital (Dawson et al., 2019). Teachers’ uneven responses to this environmental challenge may reflect problematic perceptions.

**Cognitive Challenges**

As an initial step in the long-term process of improving MTSS implementation at CCE, my study focused primarily on the role of cognition: how teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS framework influence their commitment to the model. If they do not trust the process, they will not use it with confidence. The continuum of support aligns academics, behavior, and SEL, promoting a whole-child view of teaching and learning (Sailor et al., 2021). If teachers do not share this perspective or fail to consider the assumptions underlying their decisions and actions, MTSS cannot ensure educational equity (Sullivan et al., 2022).

Understanding how their perceptions align with their actions, which directly impact their students, “often necessitates questioning [their] culturally-based assumptions and biases about learning, teaching, behavior, wellness, development, and educational processes” (Sabnis et al., 2020, p. 5).

Aside from teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS structure, they may acquire a lack of trust and confidence in the process due to continued implementation challenges (Braun et al., 2018). Using interviews to document teachers’ understanding of the MTSS process and experiences with the tiered interventions, Braun et al. cited participants’ confusion due to frequent changes. The teachers admitted Tier 2 interventions were effective for students needing
limited assistance, but their schools struggled to intensify the interventions for students who did not respond. Seeing little to no progress despite teachers’ efforts can cause additional stress and frustration, which may impact job satisfaction (Karaçöp & İnaltekin, 2022).

Because practitioners are integral to systems change, and their perceptions play a role in school climate, Greene (2019) incorporated discussion groups to encourage educators to voice their opinions about MTSS implementation and work through anticipated successes and failures within their schools. The teachers concluded that clear administrative expectations are vital to the model’s success. As a school leader, I have a responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of training provided at CCE in relation to the quality of teachers’ implementation and promote active and effective communication in support of students’ academic, behavioral, and SEL success. Teachers need opportunities to learn about the MTSS model, verify their understanding, and clarify their misconceptions. As an initial step in that direction, my study is a bridge to more direct influence on teachers’ behaviors.

**Behavioral Challenges**

Teachers’ actions and reactions form the final component in the interwoven influences visible through the lens of SCT, and their approach to dealing with MTSS students who display problematic behaviors along with their learning difficulties may hinder equitable MTSS implementation. In my experience, teachers indirectly and unintentionally contribute to students’ responses to instructional expectations, such as when they misinterpret students
with ADHD and ADD. Without understanding the root causes of students’ behavior, they may struggle to respond effectively.

Chunta and DuPaul (2022) investigated teachers’ intervention choices for students with diagnoses like ADHD and specific learning disabilities. They found that despite the students’ identical academic needs, teachers endorsed academic interventions less often for children with ADHD. They concluded teachers need to be more aware of how intertwined a student’s attention, behavior, and learning can be. Reinforcing the reciprocal relationship of teachers’ thoughts and actions, understanding academic impairments associated with ADHD may help teachers identify factors that can shape their choice of intervention, thereby reducing biases.

According to Demir (2009), the quality of teacher–student interactions can affect student success. Students prefer friendly, tolerant, and patient teachers who do not discriminate or make assumptions based on race, social status, or intellectual or physical abilities, and the most effective teachers use various teaching techniques to engage all learners. In short, Demir emphasized that students’ positive impressions of school depend on teachers’ agreeable behavior. Similarly, Birch and Ladd (1998) found that quality interactions with other people in a child’s early years significantly affect the child’s social and psychological development.

Mindfulness refers to relating to all experiences—whether favorable, adverse, or neutral—in a way that reduces distress and enhances overall mental health (Jones, 2022). Illustrating this internal balance of thoughts and actions,
Rickert et al. (2020) measured teacher mindfulness as indicated by calm, clear, and kind feelings, suggesting “teacher expressions of mindfulness (as reported by students) are positively associated with students’ emotional and behavioral engagement, classroom belonging, involvement, value, and academic self-efficacy” (p. 17). Conversely, Jones (2022) investigated the challenge of achieving well-being as a balance of internal (i.e., cognitive) and external (i.e., environmental) states, concluding that achieving such harmony remains elusive, despite extensive research on meditation and the structure and functions of the brain. Likewise, I have witnessed teachers’ struggle to achieve well-being. Their overwhelming responsibilities and duties take a mental and physical toll, further illustrating the interplay of environment, cognition, and behavior.

**An Overarching Challenge: Self-Efficacy and Resistance**

As Figure 2.2 illustrates, self-efficacy is key to overcoming environmental, cognitive, and behavioral challenges to MTSS implementation. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy have fewer challenges with student misbehavior, are more satisfied in their jobs, and experience less job-related stress (Caprara et al., 2003). Moreover, while teachers with strong self-efficacy accomplish more for students who face academic and behavioral challenges, teachers with poor self-efficacy and less optimistic views about inclusion and skill-focused instruction will be less successful (Metsala & Harkins, 2020).

According to Bandura (2001), people tend to refrain from trying something challenging, uncomfortable, or unclear for fear of undesired or unsuccessful outcomes. Fear and discomfort are also root causes of resistance to alternative
perspectives (Goodman, 2011). Feeling threatened, people resist experiences or information that may cause them to question their worldview. To maintain self-confidence, people tend to become defensive, which can manifest in resistance to change (Darmawan & Azizah, 2020). Darmawan and Azizah’s examination of resistance to change identified the following factors: low self-efficacy, fear, low motivation, stress, lack of confidence, lack of information, lack of need for achievement, weak disposition, and low commitment. They also noted that situational factors could impact resistance.

To address resistance to change in the context of education, Wiltshire (2020) facilitated three dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion and analyzed how the conversations affected teachers’ cultural opinions and self-efficacy. The most impactful discussion was the last, which centered on cultural competence and cultural proficiency. The discussion method challenged participants to explore their resistance to and perceptions of culture, and Wiltshire concluded that people might feel blamed or unfairly obligated to accept things they cannot or are not ready to understand, submerged in conflicting thoughts and ideas to protect their independence.

Barni et al. (2019) also explored connections between teachers’ values and self-efficacy, positing that high self-efficacy creates a sense of fulfillment in one’s job, decreases workplace stress, and helps teachers feel more prepared to work with students with behavioral difficulties. The participants, 227 teachers from 16 Italian high schools, completed two surveys, including the TSES.
Findings showed that teachers’ independence and self-perception might determine their values, actions, and behavior, reinforcing their self-efficacy.

To summarize, teachers’ self-efficacy has a direct impact on their instruction and how they deal with students’ impeding behaviors. If teachers do not believe they can find productive approaches and successful outcomes with the MTSS model, they will be reluctant to apply the MTSS process with fidelity. Even with proper training and skills, low self-efficacy can result in hesitation. In addition to confirming the role of self-efficacy in shaping teachers’ practice, research also highlights the importance of cultural awareness.

**Addressing Challenges Through Job-Embedded PD**

In my experience, synthesizing the pieces of the MTSS model can be difficult, resulting in misconceptions about the process and interventions, which may reduce teachers’ self-efficacy. I viewed high-quality PD as a possible solution to this problem of practice. According to Zepeda (2019), grounding PD in “collaborative efforts . . . [and] a comprehensive learning model for adults allows teachers to purposefully connect their learning to their practices” (p. 4). This section reviews characteristics of effective PD, which gave me insight for initiating group conversations with my participants that could inform my long-range plan for improving MTSS implementation at CCE.

Collin and Smith (2021) recommended including four components when designing PD activities—building knowledge, motivating staff, developing teaching techniques, and embedding practice—to increase the likelihood of “positively impact[ing] pupil outcomes” (p. 30). However, some adults are
intrinsically motivated when learning to solve problems directly related to their lives (Hunzicker, 2011). Therefore, Hunzicker encouraged school leaders to treat adult learners as self-directed and task-oriented, preferring open-ended learning opportunities and autonomy over the pace and direction of PD experiences. These distinct views on adult motivation align with my understanding that most adults need to strive for something, whether they are intrinsically goal-oriented or need help identifying a driving force.

Scholars agree PD should be job-embedded, instruction-oriented, and continuous because addressing teachers’ current circumstances, needs, and concerns is more likely to result in changed behavior (Hunzicker, 2011; Zepeda, 2019). Hunzicker suggested the most effective PD may span several months or even years and recommended collaborative PD as a means of providing ongoing opportunities for reflection. Ultimately, PD should improve student outcomes (Patfield et al., 2021), and I designed my study as a step in that direction. As Bastian et al. (2016) illustrated, sharing relevant data can foster improvement by helping practitioners overcome their challenges, become aware of additional data they need to collect, narrow down the areas that need the most attention, and recognize the practices they should celebrate and maintain. To apply these insights during Phase 2 of my study, I focused on additional scholarship related to student behavior, collective efficacy, and school culture.

**Student Behavior**

Student behavior is a significant roadblock to MTSS implementation, yet Fallon et al. (2021) warned of race-based discipline disproportionality and urged
schools to incorporate racial equity and healing in MTSS practices. Specifically, they recommended PD as a means of helping teachers create equitable, nurturing learning environments. A holistic and integrated MTSS approach can promote equity by guiding teachers to consider social, cultural, sociopolitical, and ecological context (Sullivan et al., 2022).

Lloyd et al. (2023) also focused on the behavioral component of MTSS implementation, surveying 561 educators from nine different districts regarding their anticipated challenges with the framework, such as “securing school staff buy-in, maintaining staff interest over time, and the availability of resources (e.g., time commitments, funding)” (p. 12). They suggested knowing these perceptions in advance could assist in training and supporting stakeholders, thereby preventing, or minimizing barriers to implementation. Although their study was much larger in scope, I took a similar approach in my multi-phase AR.

**Collective Efficacy**

Drawing on Bandura’s work, Donohoo et al. (2018) explained that when educators believe they can affect student performance together, this collective efficacy results in greater success. The authors emphasized school leaders’ responsibility for creating a collaborative culture of teacher efficacy to shape teachers’ perceptions and behavior. Teachers are not solely responsible for solving students’ problems. Rather, every school has a variety of resources, including human resources. By collaborating with one another, educators can develop more effective strategies for meeting student needs. Especially in the
context of MTSS implementation, students can benefit from educators’ collective knowledge, skills, experience, perceptions, and ideas.

School Culture

Zepeda (2019) asserted that school leaders must develop a culture of learning that encourages teachers to take an active role in their learning alongside their colleagues yet warned of the considerable time and effort involved. For Zepeda, trust is at the core of successful PD, and a job-embedded approach is most conducive to building it, as it involves teachers’ ongoing, active participation. As I noted in Chapter 1, I had established rapport with my participants prior to the study. To maintain and build upon that foundation, I had to ensure the teachers felt comfortable being transparent in their responses, rather than withholding their true perceptions for fear of judgment.

Moreover, Zepeda (2019) noted how a teacher’s learning becomes a fundamental part of the classroom culture, which indirectly shapes the school culture. In that context, teachers’ awareness of students’ cultures can also impact MTSS implementation. Cultures are not “static monolithic entities” (Bandura, 2001, p. 15), yet common beliefs or stereotypes about cultural differences may contribute to teachers’ difficulties with MTSS interventions and hinder teacher–student rapport. Again, high-quality PD appears to be a promising solution. In an AR dissertation about elementary teachers’ perspectives on implementing culturally responsive practices, Hagens (2019) surveyed participants, implemented a PD module, and conducted a focus group to analyze their self-efficacy. Hagens concluded that participants wanted to learn more about their
interrelated beliefs, perspectives, dispositions, and instructional competencies with a diverse population of students. Yang and Montgomery (2011) also found that expanding teachers’ knowledge of racism, prejudice, white privilege, cultural differences, stereotypes, microaggressions, and other biases was crucial in achieving cultural competence. These studies thus gave me insight for future AR cycles, as I elaborate in Chapter 5.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter connected my problem of practice to broader conversations about teachers’ perceptions, the MTSS framework, curriculum, and teacher self-efficacy. Existing literature suggests collaboration among teachers and school leaders is crucial for increasing teachers’ self-efficacy so they can implement effective interventions to support MTSS students. Research also points to approaches to PD that include self-reflective opportunities, which can make teachers more aware of their perceptions of the MTSS model and their views on the curriculum. The next chapter applies these insights to my plan for this AR study to address the factors hindering effective MTSS implementation at CCE with a rapidly growing and diversifying student and staff population.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As a former special education teacher and current instructional interventionist, I know the MTSS model well enough to see room for improved implementation at my school, especially among ELA teachers. The previous chapters introduced my initial ideas about the problems and my intention to study them further through a mixed-method AR approach primarily framed by SCT. By exploring ELA teachers’ perceptions and sharing relevant data with participants, I hoped to improve their collective knowledge in ways they could transfer to their classrooms. AR can generate local knowledge that applies directly to the research setting as well as public knowledge that can transfer to other settings (Herr & Anderson, 2015). In this study, I aimed to gain insight of use to my school and district, guided by the following questions:

1. What are ELA teachers’ perceptions of:
   a. the MTSS model?
   b. curriculum?
   c. their efficacy?

2. How does sharing the teachers’ collective views impact their perceptions?

As the participants’ colleague, I intended to intervene with the teachers to ensure equitable opportunity and instruction for students at all tiers by making them aware of how their perceptions of the MTSS framework intersect with their
curricular views and self-efficacy and inviting them to reflect on their instructional decisions. This chapter describes my detailed plan for achieving these aims.

**Research Design**

Action researchers investigate practical problems to develop solutions (Creswell, 2014). As an instructional interventionist, I work with multiple teachers across multiple grade levels and have witnessed their challenges with effectively and consistently implementing the MTSS model, resulting in uncertainty. When implementing MTSS approaches with rigor and fidelity, districts see positive outcomes (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2011). For example, aligning resources, promoting collaboration, and following the process when students first struggle academically and behaviorally can lead to gains in math and reading assessments for all students (Bailey et al., 2020). My school’s struggle to experience the full potential of the MTSS model was thus a viable topic for AR.

Focusing on teachers’ perspectives and attempting to shift their views through PD warranted a mixed-methods approach. Data collection tools included anonymous surveys, interviews, and field notes. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described quantitative data as a “distribution of some attribute among a population” (p. 5). Along those lines, closed-response items on the initial surveys gave me an overall understanding of teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy, which enabled me to infer some of their challenges in implementing the MTSS model. Closed-response items on the final survey gave me a quick snapshot of the intervention’s impact, while qualitative methods, focused on how people find meaning in their lives and the world (Merriam &
Tisdell, 2016), gave me additional insight. I sought a deeper understanding of teachers’ perceptions by conducting one-on-one interviews and taking field notes during group data sharing. Whereas the quantitative measures facilitated anonymous self-reflection, these measures were personal and interactive, validating teachers' views and reinforcing our mutual trust.

Mixed-methods AR enables researchers to assess change over time while attending to credibility and validity as they triangulate or mix various data sets (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). Figure 3.1 illustrates how I applied this guidance. Interview data complemented the initial survey results and validated my interpretation in response to Research Question 1. I also incorporated open-ended questions in the surveys, including the post-intervention reflection form (Appendix F) instrumental to answering Research Question 2.

![Figure 3.1 Research Design Alignment](image-url)
Setting and Participants

CCE, a public elementary school in the Clover, SC School District, employs 65 teachers and serves approximately 1,200 prekindergarten through fifth-grade students. My target population was ELA teachers in Grades 3 through 5 (N = 12). All 12 teachers participated in the study to completion. I sought baseline data about their views of the MTSS process in our school, as well as whether they had worked in another school that used MTSS and any insights they gained from those experiences. I focused on ELA teachers because, like me, they teach reading and writing, so we already collaborate about shared students and teaching methods. Additionally, the number of MTSS students who receive ELA support is more than double that of students who need math interventions. Students often battle with ELA, demonstrating impeding behaviors to avoid difficult tasks across all core subjects. Recruiting a sample of ELA teachers aligned with the purpose of this AR study: to improve MTSS implementation by addressing teachers’ perceptions.

Before recruiting participants, I presented a comprehensive overview of my proposal to gain approval for the study from the university and the district. Then, I distributed the invitation letter in Appendix A. In addition to describing my research aims and the overall time commitment, I emphasized participation would be completely voluntary so the teachers could choose to discontinue at any time without consequences. In the case of withdrawal, I planned to exclude the participant’s interview recording and notes and mention such exclusions in my dissertation to maintain validity. No such withdrawals occurred.
The letter also noted the surveys’ anonymity and explained that completion of the surveys would indicate consent, as would attendance at interviews and group sessions. Given this intention to protect the teachers’ identities, I did not foresee any major risks involved in their participation. However, because AR often includes collaboration among stakeholders with multifaceted partnerships, which “leaves the positionality (insider or outsider) of the researcher open” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 3), I recognized I could make them uncomfortable by taking on a different role—one they may perceive as somewhat threatening. Because teachers are accountable for completing MTSS tasks, they may have viewed me as an evaluator, investigating their MTSS competency to report my findings to the administration.

Additionally, as one of two Latin American women in the group of participants, I could face microaggressions and stereotypes from other participants or reveal implicit biases and assumptions. For instance, one interview question asked teachers how their perceptions and experiences helped them work with students whose backgrounds differ from theirs (Appendix E). Some teachers may have felt uncomfortable or avoided being completely transparent in response, presuming I would judge them or take offense because of my identity. To address these concerns, I checked in with participants throughout the study, reinforcing the tone of my invitation.

I would have proceeded with at least eight participants, as I hoped for a diverse sample in terms of grade level and MTSS experience. Ideally, however, I wanted all 12 ELA teachers in Grades 3–5 to volunteer, seeking everyone’s
insight regarding solutions to the problem (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To monitor the target population and ensure everyone had a chance to consider participating, I sent a few reminders as I awaited the survey results. Fortunately, I achieved 100% participation, and I introduce the teachers in Chapter 4.

Data Collection Procedure

The study took place during the 2022–2023 school year, and as Table 3.1 illustrates, it consisted of two phases. During Phase 1, I collected baseline data in response to Research Question 1, establishing teachers’ current perceptions of the MTSS process in our school and areas in need of improvement, determining how their views and preferences aligned with various curriculum theories, and measuring their self-efficacy. I shared the Phase 1 data with the whole group during Phase 2 and collected follow-up data in response to Research Question 2.

Table 3.1 Data Collection Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>November 2022</td>
<td>Survey 1–3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November–December 2022</td>
<td>interview guide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January–February 2023</td>
<td>field notes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 2023</td>
<td>reflection form</td>
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Phase 1: Baseline Data

Phase 1 focused on teachers’ current perceptions because practices reflecting those perspectives could hinder MTSS implementation. To capture
areas where teachers needed the most support with the model, I administered three widely used measures for improving the MTSS process. The three surveys were administered anonymously via Google Forms. Teachers received all three links at once and had approximately 2 weeks to complete them. I supplemented the primarily quantitative survey data with qualitative data from individual interviews I conducted to discuss teachers’ unique perceptions.

Survey 1

The MTSS Self-Assessment for School Districts (Panorama Education, n.d.) in Appendix B enabled me to explore teachers’ perceptions of the intervention framework and measure their current knowledge and usage of the model. Greene (2019) used the same survey to form research groups that explored facilitators of and barriers to MTSS implementation. The 35-item survey has four sections: Leadership, Systems, Professional Development, Three-Tiered System / Intervention Model, and Communication and Collaboration. I expected it would take 10 minutes to complete and provide me with an overall understanding of participants’ perceptions of MTSS components.

Survey 2

The second survey, the Curriculum Ideologies Inventory (Appendix C), helped me determine teachers’ curriculum views and explore how their perspectives may impact their instructional decisions and practice (Schiro, 2013). I asked participants to review the four statements in each of the six parts (i.e., 24 statements in total) and rank them from 1 to 4 (i.e., most liked to least liked). I also expected this survey to take 10 minutes and anticipated it would enable me
to determine which ideologies were most influential, giving me an understanding of the teachers’ general views on education.

**Survey 3**

The third survey, located in Appendix D, contained questions from the TSES (Woolfolk Hoy, n.d.) that enabled me to measure teacher self-efficacy in academic and behavior interventions. The TSES measure was found to be reasonably valid and reliable according to a series of analyses conducted by Tschannen and Woolfolk (2001). The positive correlation of construct validity with other measures of personal teaching efficacy provides evidence of construct validity. Duffin et al. (2012) examined the TSES extensively, informing my use of the self-reflection tool for understanding teachers’ perceptions of their abilities and skills. Given my decision to maintain anonymity, I sought an overall picture of participants’ needs and strengths, which could inform the discussion in Phase 2 and my next steps as a leader. Like the other surveys, I expected the 24-question instrument to take 10 minutes.

**Interviews**

Phase 1 also included individual interviews, which enabled me to explore teachers’ perceptions of working with diverse groups of MTSS students and their struggles with the MTSS model. Our conversations followed a semi-structured format (Appendix E). My initial understanding of my problem of practice determined the short list of questions, but I let participants guide the discussion and ask any additional questions that arose. I allotted 15 minutes for each interview, and participants chose the most convenient time and method. Most
occurred face-to-face, but two were by phone. Qualitative studies often describe participants in detail, making deductive disclosures problematic for confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009), so I secured each participant’s permission before recording the interview. Rather than transcribing, I took notes by hand during the conversations, using the recordings to check my understanding. Upon completion of the study, I deleted the recordings and notes.

**Phase 2: Group Data-Sharing Sessions**

Phase 1 surfaced factors that might enhance or inhibit ELA teachers’ ability to implement the MTSS model. Phase 1 data then became the focus for the two group sessions during Phase 2. I conducted one session in January and one in February, facilitating teachers’ awareness of their collective views of the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy, along with opportunities for dialogue. Each session lasted 30 minutes and took place at school.

This phase included two additional types of data collection. During the group sessions, I recorded observational field notes to collect evidence of any shifts in their perceptions, which included their contributions to an anonymous Padlet wall. To determine the impact of the data sharing, I asked participants to complete a final survey. Both measures enabled me to assess how participants perceived the content and what they intended to do with the information. I also gained insight for designing future PD sessions.

Indeed, my literature review established that ongoing PD is most effective (Hunzicker, 2011), so Chapter 5 elaborates on my intention to continue this process beyond the study. Within the scope of my AR, I focused on PD’s role in
promoting self-efficacy (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003), applying the guidance that teacher beliefs should be a key element of PD because they impact student learning (Soine & Lumpe, 2014). I recognized the intervention could impact teachers differently, but I hoped to at least initiate dialogue in line with my long-term goal to improve MTSS implementation at CCE.

**Field Notes**

Like interviews, observation yields qualitative data that enable holistic interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, I recorded my firsthand observations of the data-sharing sessions as field notes, without using the teachers’ names. My notes, which also included teachers’ anonymous contributions to the Padlet wall, surfaced themes in the participants’ reactions to the Phase 1 data, as I illustrate in Chapter 4.

**Reflection Form**

As a final method of data collection, I asked participants to complete the reflection form in Appendix F after the second session, which further illuminated teachers’ challenges with the MTSS model and the impact of sharing the Phase 1 data. Covering the content, process, and context of the sessions, the survey had two parts: 12 closed-response statements participants answered with a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and five open-ended questions for participants to reflect on what they gained from the sessions and how they planned to implement their newly acquired knowledge and ideas. As with the other surveys, I expected it to take 10 minutes to complete and did not include demographic questions to ensure anonymity.
Data Analysis

The ultimate purpose of this study, to improve the MTSS process in my school, drove my analysis, as I sought to examine interrelationships among teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that data collection and analysis are recursive and dynamic, yet analysis continues—and becomes more intensive—when collection ends. Like data collection, my analysis occurred in two phases.

First, once teachers completed the initial surveys, I charted the results on Google Sheets, noting any outliers and my interpretations. I compiled the data into a presentation to share with the group during Phase 2, which allowed me to incorporate their thoughts and reactions into my field notes. I combined charts and tables exported from Google Forms into Google Sheets, and I used Canva to create graphic organizers, representing the data in a way that would help participants identify the commonalities and differences in their views. For example, I used color coding to designate high versus low scores or positive versus negative comments. I also used color coding to show common themes throughout the open-response questions.

As Figure 3.1 illustrated, I aligned specific types of data to each research question and looked across methods to determine whether the study succeeded. Upon completion of Phase 2, I organized my field notes based on the specific survey data presented. I color-coded comments aligned to teachers’ challenges in one color and comments alluding to perception changes in a different color for each survey. The reflection form results were also color-coded to reflect
strengths and weaknesses from Phase 2. First, I analyzed the quantitative data based on positive and negative responses. Then, I color-categorized the qualitative data based on common themes found in participants’ responses to each of the four questions.

Throughout the study, I endeavored to conduct high-quality AR. Cypress (2017) explained that a qualitative study’s validity lies in the researcher’s skills and sensibilities as a knower and an inquirer. In particular, my open-ended interviews with participants enhance the study’s validity. Some participants were teachers with whom I meet regularly for MTSS purposes. My background knowledge of their frustrations or skills related to MTSS implementation or personal situations that were impacting their mindset served me well during our conversations. Moreover, I have known and worked with most of the participants for several years, and the trusting professional relationships made the Phase 2 discussions very open and natural. Nevertheless, I remained vigilant to avoid any discomfort, such as their feeling bad about giving a negative response that could reflect on my efforts or lack of effort as an interventionist. To ensure their authentic participation, I chose to make the surveys anonymous. According to Beaulieu (2013), because action researchers aim to enhance human conditions, acquire knowledge to become better professionals, and develop solutions to identified problems, the process should occur with others, not on others. However, research limitations are inevitable, and I address the limited scope of this study in Chapter 5.

Chapter Summary
This chapter presented my plan to explore and shift teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model in service of the broader goal of helping them confidently work with MTSS students. I described and justified my two-phase, mixed-method approach and intention to use data from surveys, interviews, and observations. As Chapter 4 illustrates, the baseline data in Phase 1 informed the data-sharing sessions I facilitated in Phase 2 as I collected additional data to capture evidence of the sessions’ impact. All data collection and analysis methods aligned with the research questions supporting my overall aim.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The prior chapters established the need to improve MTSS implementation at CCE by exploring ELA teachers' perceptions of the model, curriculum, and their efficacy. Because the MTSS process is relatively new to our school, educators do not always follow it consistently. This learning period has exposed opportunities for improvement, prompting CCE teachers to question the process. As an action researcher, I sought to empower them to find the tools and resources to meet their Tier 2 and Tier 3 students' behavioral and academic needs. Therefore, I posed the following research questions:

1. What are ELA teachers' perceptions of:
   a. the MTSS model?
   b. curriculum?
   c. their efficacy?

2. How does sharing the teachers' collective views impact their perceptions?

These questions supported my aim to gain a better understanding of educators' perceptions that could inform future PD opportunities focused on their implementation of the MTSS model, which in turn could enhance teachers’ self-efficacy so they can provide adequate academic and behavioral support for all students. I enlisted 12 ELA teachers as participants because MTSS students who receive instructional support are more likely to require ELA interventions.
than math support. The 12 participants, who taught Grades 3–5 at the time of the study, vary demographically in terms of years of experience, age, and race, although all 12 identify as female. Three participants were or had the experience of being self-contained teachers, staying with one group of students all day and teaching all four core subjects: ELA, social studies, math, and science. The remaining nine teachers, like most in Grades 3–5, worked in a team-teaching model, covering ELA and social studies while sharing as many as 40+ students with a fellow teacher responsible for math and science.

Data collection tools included surveys, interviews, and field notes recorded during the data-sharing sessions that served as my intervention. I used this mixed-methods approach to ensure rigor, validity, and reliability. From the Phase 1 surveys, I obtained the teachers’ perspectives on the MTSS model and curriculum, as well as gauging their self-efficacy. The data showed which MTSS areas pose the most significant challenges. With the help of the one-on-one interviews, I gained a better understanding of teachers’ perceptions. These sources yielded initial answers to Question 1, and the Phase 1 data became the focus for the data-sharing sessions in Phase 2.

The first session focused on Survey 1 results. As I invited participants’ reflections, the ensuing open dialogue revealed additional factors affecting MTSS implementation, captured in my field notes. The discussion was so rich participants requested additional time to discuss the data during the second session, which included discussion of the remaining Phase 1 data and revealed even more barriers to MTSS implementation. Consequently, providing
reasonable solutions and ways to overcome these barriers was challenging within the limited time frame for my study. As this chapter illustrates, I realized some factors are beyond teachers’ control and warrant consulting administrators and district personnel.

This chapter expands on these insights by drawing from my field notes and the final set of survey data in response to Question 2. I begin by presenting and interpreting the survey data, followed by the interview data, to showcase how my analysis in Phase 1 informed my approach in Phase 2. Above all, this chapter demonstrates how I heard and validated the teachers’ voices, consistent with my overarching goal of improving teachers’ awareness of their views, which can directly impact the success of their MTSS students.

**Phase 1 Survey Results**

As I explained in Chapter 3, the data collection process began with three open-access surveys merged into one Google Form. The MTSS Self-Assessment for School Districts (Panorama Education, n.d.; Appendix B) allowed me to measure the teachers’ current perceptions of the MTSS model to understand how I could support them. The second survey, Schiro’s (2013) Curriculum Ideologies Inventory (Appendix C), highlighted how teachers’ perspectives may influence their instructional decisions. Finally, to measure teacher self-efficacy in academic and behavior interventions, I used the TSES (Woolfolk Hoy, n.d.; Appendix D). To ensure anonymity, the surveys did not include demographic questions. Therefore, I labeled the responses by the order in which I received the completed surveys.
MTSS Self-Assessment Data

The first survey was a Panorama Education (n.d.) self-assessment designed for schools to gather educators' perspectives on their MTSS programs. The instrument’s five sections emphasize key components of an effective MTSS: Leadership, Systems, Professional Development, a Three-Tiered System / Intervention Model, and Communication and Collaboration. I report the results by section, addressing both closed-response and open-response items.

Leadership Section Results

The first part of the assessment measured participants’ perceptions of school or district leaders’ vision for MTSS implementation. Regarding the clarity of the vision, four participants (33.3%) rated it Somewhat Clear, seven (58.3%) believed it Quite Clear, and one (8.3%) deemed it Extremely Clear. These results indicate some uncertainty about the school or district’s MTSS vision, perhaps because the procedures and expectations change almost every year. When asked about staff “buy-in” to leaders’ vision, five participants (41.7%) selected Somewhat, while seven (58.3%) responded with Quite Clear. No participants chose Extremely, suggesting CCE staff are not completely invested in what the MTSS framework offers, perhaps due to lack of trust in the model’s effectiveness.

As for the teachers’ perceptions of who is primarily responsible for carrying out interventions, 11 participants (91.7%) selected Interventionists, with the remaining respondent choosing Counselors, although all 12 participants also selected Teachers. These responses indicate accurate perceptions, and I was pleased that all 12 participants see themselves as partially responsible for MTSS
Even so, CCE could do a better job of explaining MTSS expectations, especially in response to the arrival of new teachers and changes to the criteria or process. When asked about the clarity of expectations, only one participant chose Extremely, while eight (66.7%) indicated Quite and three selected Somewhat.

Appendix G provides the full set of participants’ comments on their responses in the Leadership section. When asked to elaborate, most of the teachers conveyed positive views. For example, Participant 3 “really appreciate[d] how to direct the MTSS staff is when explaining the expectations,” citing “two required meetings where the MTSS staff has provided explicit direction and actual resources [for] use in the classroom.” These results are somewhat promising, but I also observed a need for improvement, as other participants voiced some concerns.

Participant 1 suggested the changing expectations are “a little challenging,” and Participant 2 expressed uncertainty regarding “the type of intervention to use for students’ individual needs.” Reflecting more broadly, Participant 11 asserted, “Everyone is not quite on the same page, especially for who should be referred.” Diverging from the positive comments, these three participants were transparent in indicating some ongoing challenges with the MTSS process, such as unclear information and inconsistent or changing procedures. Effective MTSS implementation requires consistent application of the criteria to all students, whereas the data for this survey section demonstrates that teachers continue to be unclear of their role in the MTSS process.
**Systems Section Results**

The Systems section measured participants’ perceptions of the procedures and interactive components of the MTSS model. One of the most crucial sections for my study covered decision-making, identifying and having access to appropriate interventions, analyzing data, and the effectiveness of our MTSS meetings. All these areas seem to cause confusion and inconsistency.

The responses to the first two questions related to decision-making for Tier 2 and Tier 3 had the same outcomes. Two-thirds majority of participants \((n = 8)\) stated the process of assigning Tier 2 (Question 1) and Tier 3 (Question 2) support at CCE was Quite or Extremely Clear, while the remaining third \((n = 4)\) deemed it Somewhat or Slightly Clear. From experience, I know teachers receive an unclear message when some students move to Tier 3 and others do not—in other words, when their recommendations for additional support are denied. Ultimately, there are more students in need than there are available spots.

In response to Question 3, however, more than 50% of participants \((n = 8)\) indicated the decision-making processes for moving students out of Tier 2 are Somewhat or Slightly Clear, while a third \((n = 4)\) described the processes as Quite Clear. For Question 4, more than 50% of participants \((n = 7)\) indicated the processes for moving students out of Tier 3 are Somewhat or Slightly Clear, while more than a third \((n = 5)\) described the processes as Quite or Extremely Clear. These results are not ideal, perhaps showing the teachers’ perceptions that the current decision-making process do not take their observations into account, such that students who need more support are overlooked.
The district provides a guide to assist with moving students into or out of a tier, yet teachers seldom refer to it when sitting in MTSS meetings and making these decisions. The survey results indicated they have a clearer understanding of the process of assigning students to Tier 2 and Tier 3 than moving students out of Tier 2 and 3. I suspect this disconnect reflects inadequate progress monitoring in Tier 2, including when students show academic growth but demonstrate impeding behaviors. Regularly sharing Tier 3 data with teachers is equally important, so they can assess their students’ progress alongside interventionists. Implementing the guidelines for every student requires analyzing multiple pieces of data and aligning them to the criteria for Tier 2 and 3.

Questions 5–6 of the Systems section focused on the time allotted for analyzing student data, and the results indicated participants perceived time as a major challenge. For Question 5, half \( (n = 6) \) were dissatisfied with the amount of time allotted to understanding the data, while the other half \( (n = 6) \) indicated Some or an Appropriate Amount of Time. The split results may be due to some teachers’ having more MTSS students in their classes than others. Because teachers are responsible for Tier 2 interventions and data, and interventionists are responsible for Tier 3 interventions and data, the number of students in either tier in a classroom may determine the amount of time needed to analyze student data. Thus, when Question 6 asked about the time provided to take apart multiple pieces of data to understand how different groups of students are doing, more than half of the participants \( (n = 7) \) were dissatisfied, while the remainder \( (n = 5) \) were moderately satisfied.
These data explain why teachers may view MTSS tasks as a burden. With insufficient resources and support to analyze the data, they cannot implement the model effectively. Additionally, without analyzing the data appropriately and thoroughly, teachers will not buy into the MTSS process. They need to be able to understand and examine the data to determine whether the interventions are effective. Although I am confident CCE teachers want the best for all students and are willing to put in the work to help them succeed, they might not perceive a need for more time if they had stronger data-analysis skills.

The teachers perceive identifying and monitoring the progress of interventions to be another challenge. In response to Question 7, seven (58.3%) indicated insufficient time to identify appropriate methods, while only 41.7% ($n = 5$) of responses to Question 8 indicated Some or An Appropriate Amount of time to monitor progress. Again, they may need stronger data-analysis skills to identify relevant and effective interventions. These challenges are interrelated: if a teacher has not fully analyzed student data to determine the area of need, identifying the right intervention is difficult. MTSS decisions may rely solely on low benchmark scores or failing grades, whereas dissecting multiple pieces of data, including the students’ perceptions or clarifications, can reveal additional factors. Moreover, teachers need to provide interventions to determine their effectiveness, yet some teachers may not abide by the expectation of 60 minutes per week of interventions for Tier 2 students. More than the time allotted for this process, the problem may be the lack of a procedure for holding teachers accountable for fulfilling the expectations. The district expects teachers to add
data points from their progress monitoring to determine if the interventions are working. However, some teachers are more consistent than others in terms of producing data, converting it into chart form, and being prepared to discuss such data during MTSS meetings.

Continuing the chain of logic, if teachers cannot see the progress students are making, they cannot gauge the effectiveness of interventions and determine the next steps. Along these lines, more than half \((n = 7)\) reported not having enough time to evaluate their interventions (Question 9) and determine the next steps (Question 10). This barrier makes supporting MTSS students even more challenging, compounding teachers’ daily responsibilities and frustrations. Further revealing the survey items’ interconnectedness, the challenges in determining the next steps based on student progress may reflect teachers’ inconsistent analysis of authentic data. I have also observed a need for additional informal testing of students to narrow down the targeted skill or gather more data points. Some teachers may be overwhelmed with the number of students or struggle with knowing how to analyze their data.

Questions 11–13 measured participants’ perceptions of collaborative MTSS meetings. Five teachers (41.7%) answered Question 11 by indicating a sufficient amount of meeting time spent on problem-solving, whereas more than half \((n = 7)\) described the amount of time as small or insufficient—perhaps teachers with many MTSS students or behavioral concerns, as my interview findings reveal later in the chapter. However, nine teachers (75%) indicated the MTSS meetings are Quite or Extremely Structured in response to Question 12,
with only three (25%) describing the typical agenda as Somewhat Clear. Again, some meetings may devote a longer amount of time to one student with significant behavioral or social–emotional challenges, which prevents the MTSS team from discussing other students within the allotted time. Teachers may perceive the overall agenda as clear while deeming the meeting unproductive.

Finally, the results for Question 13, about the balance of time for reviewing data versus defining interventions, were mixed. Five participants (41.6%) reported a greater amount of time reviewing data, four participants (33.3%) cited an equal amount of time for both tasks, and three teachers (25%) indicated more time spent defining interventions. These results raised an interesting point: whether teachers truly understand the interplay among data, intervention, and progress. The model promotes a consistent cycle of data analysis, gauging the effectiveness of interventions, and monitoring progress. Each component depends on the others, so if one component is missing or weak, teachers’ resulting frustration can impact their perception of the overall model.

As with the Leadership section, the Systems section invited teachers to elaborate on their responses. As the comments in Appendix G illustrate, participants were transparent, providing some eye-opening perspectives and feedback. Participant 2 suggested “less than two days of planning per week (on average - sometimes none)” was insufficient “to determine student needs or student growth.” Likewise, Participant 7 declared, “Our planning time is not enough, especially when we are discussing so many students,” and described the ideal as “at least 90 minutes to review data biweekly.” Participant 3 also
reflected on a lack of "adequate time to look at interventions and progress monitoring data," adding, "There is so much that is put on teachers during the school day that unfortunately, this is probably the area teachers push to the side most often." Participants’ perspectives on these challenges were enlightening, giving me a better understanding of some factors that impede teachers’ facilitation of MTSS procedures. In short, the open-response data echoed the closed-response results by revealing the need for additional training in data analysis and more effective sharing of student data.

Participant 9 provided especially helpful feedback, emphasizing the need for “an ample amount of time to ensure that the resources are effective,” given that “tier 2 is more informed and discussed than tier 3.” Indeed, MTSS meetings focus on Tier 2 data, and we rarely discuss Tier 3 students because interventionists are responsible for their data. Participant 9 made me realize that our meetings should not focus solely on completing our paperwork. I also agree with Participant 10, that quality discussions rely on “teachers [who] come prepared with data already inputted.” Teachers perceive MTSS meetings as ineffective if they leave feeling confused and frustrated with inadequate intervention plans. As Participant 11 reported, “Sometimes teachers feel [an] intervention does not match student needs,” which could lead to a lack of faith in the MTSS model.

**PD Section Results**

The next section measured participants’ perceptions of PD opportunities related to the MTSS process. The questions focused on the overall effectiveness
of their training, the teachers’ comfort with using data to inform interventions, and
whether they had received training related to specific tiers and areas of support.
In response to the first question, nine teachers (75%) suggested their training on
the model’s purpose and value was Quite or Extremely Effective. Similarly, eight
participants reported feeling Quite or Extremely Comfortable using data to inform
student support in response to Question 2. However, some teachers offered
alternative perceptions, with three (25%) rating PD opportunities as Somewhat or
Slightly Effective, and a third (n = 4) stating they were only Somewhat or Slightly
Comfortable analyzing data to inform interventions. In other words, a substantial
percentage of my sample remained unconvinced of the importance of the MTSS
process and uncomfortable analyzing data to drive interventions, suggesting the
need for additional PD sessions to build teachers’ skills related to analyzing data
and identifying effective interventions.

Table 4.1 presents results for the third question in the PD section
regarding participants’ training for each intervention tier related to designated
focus areas. Most participants indicated they received Tier 1 and 2 academic and
behavior support training. However, for Tier 3 students, only five participants
indicated they received training in academic support, and only a third (n = 4)
stated they received training in behavioral support. Nine teachers reported no
training related to attendance. For SEL, six teachers reported they received Tier
1 training, and five indicated they received Tier 2 training. Whereas multiple
participants reported academic and behavioral training, especially for Tier 1 and
2, attendance and SEL were areas for improvement.
Table 4.1 *Number of Participants Who Received MTSS Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Tier 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Tier 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Tier 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To make sense of these results, I turned to the open responses in Appendix G, which revealed clear areas of weakness. Participants 1–3 cited ineffective, unclear, and irrelevant intervention training, with Participant 1 emphasizing a lack of resources. Although the MTSS team has provided basic resources, some teachers may need more one-on-one sessions tailored to their unique needs. Participant 11 acknowledged such training but did not specify whether it was effective. Participant 6 was the only participant who exhibited confidence in meeting students’ intervention needs. Most indicated a lack of guidance and support and feeling unqualified to handle the behavior needs. The data thus indicates the need for ongoing PD sessions in smaller groups (e.g., by grade level) and intentionally designed to meet the teachers’ needs.

*Three-Tiered System / Intervention Model Section Results*

The next survey section directly measured participants’ perceptions of CCE’s MTSS model, including logistics of the tiers and focus areas and the size of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 populations. The section also asked participants to rate the effectiveness of the process for determining whether to proceed with an intervention or change course. Table 4.2 shows how many teachers were familiar with CCE’s three-tiered support and intervention systems for each focus area,
capturing their confident perceptions of the processes for academic and behavioral support. Echoing Table 4.1, however, most participants were unaware of supports or interventions related to attendance and SEL, which I expected because MTSS meetings prioritize academics and behavior. Even so, I viewed behavior as an area for improving the MTSS process in terms of the quality of the support for teachers and students with struggles in behavior. I also considered how MTSS meetings could do a better job of addressing attendance and SEL.

Table 4.2 Number of Participants Aware of MTSS Structures in Place at CCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section of the survey also asked participants to indicate how many students they think are receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. At the time of this study, the school had 1,118 students, 68 of whom (6%) received Tier 2 interventions and 92 (8%) received Tier 3 interventions. Seven of the Tier 2 students received more than one Tier 2 intervention, and 21 of the Tier 3 students received more than one Tier 3 intervention. Therefore, the number of Tier 2 and 3 students fell in the 5–10% interval. As Table 4.3 shows, 50% of participants (n = 6) accurately estimated the percentage for Tier 3. For Tier 2, one-third of participants answered accurately, with the others equally spread across the other middle intervals. These responses likely reflected the number of Tier 2 and 3 students in the participants’ classes (i.e., 10–50% of their students in
Tier 2). Teachers with a high percentage of tiered students should meet more than once every 6–8 weeks because the data for these students may warrant close examination and the teachers may need additional ongoing support in how to design and facilitate the Tier 1 curriculum so all students can access it.

Table 4.3 *Participants’ Perceptions of How Many MTSS Students CCE Serves*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Frequency of responses by the percentage of CCE students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to rate the MTSS process at CCE, four teachers (33.3%) perceived it as Slightly Effective, five (41.7%) viewed it as Somewhat Effective, and three (25%) deemed it Quite Effective. The lower ratings may be due to time constraints. Specifically, I have observed a disconnect between Tier 2 and Tier 3 data analysis. Tier 3 analyses demand constant accountability to indicate if a referred student qualifies for special education testing, whereas time limitations might prevent teachers from collecting and deeply analyzing Tier 2 data. Further, behavior data can be inconsistent when interventions are not in place.

Given an opportunity to elaborate on their answers in this section, the teachers provided the responses in Appendix G. Suggesting our systems could be more effective, Participant 7 noted, “Some students have been on MTSS for years,” and Participant 1 shared an experience when “moving a child off support” seemed “taboo.” Additionally, Participant 3 admitted to not feeling “super clear” about assessing interventions, explaining, “Obviously, you would look at data
from the progress monitoring, but I don’t know at what point it would show growth in a specific area.” These responses illustrate teachers’ struggle to trust the process. The district guide shows the criteria under a series of different academic and behavioral data points for determining a student’s tier, but MTSS meeting facilitators have not used it as much as we should when analyzing MTSS data.

I also have noticed students’ families, behavior, and attendance play a role in the inconsistency with the process and criteria. Some guardians who are very involved and academically invested in students may push for MTSS services to close academic gaps, while others may prefer their students to stay in the classroom, fearing they will miss out on regular instruction. Moreover, behavior has become a growing problem throughout the school and district beyond what teachers, counselors, and administrators have been trained to handle. Many students also need MTSS support because they miss a lot of instruction due to continuously being tardy or absent.

**Communication and Collaboration Section Results**

The final part of the first survey explored participants’ perceptions of MTSS communication and collaboration. When rating students’ potential to succeed, 11 teachers (91.7%) answered confidently, eight of whom reported feeling Extremely Confident, which was encouraging (Table 4.4). However, only five participants (41.7%) reported frequently checking for biases when creating and monitoring student interventions or using asset-based learning methods. This result suggests teachers may not pay attention to cultural differences, gender, personal interests, and cognitive ability when developing interventions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Once in a While</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you check for biases in the process of creating and monitoring interventions for students?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often does your team use asset-based (ensuring equity in the classroom by focusing on the strengths of diverse students) language when discussing observable needs and strengths of students?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you reach out to students and their families to share positive updates?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you provide feedback to improve your school or district’s MTSS process?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often is your feedback incorporated to improve your school or district’s MTSS process?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, only four teachers admitted to frequently sharing positive updates with parents and students, and when asked how often they provide feedback to improve the MTSS process and whether such feedback has been implemented, more than 50% responded Occasionally or Almost Never. Feeling unheard may discourage teachers from sharing concerns or ideas and hinder them from taking ownership of methods they are required to implement. In other words, this mentality can impact their perceptions of the overall model. Zepeda (2019) advised schools seeking “an effective and meaningful professional learning plan that positively impacts students and teachers [to] engage and solicit feedback from teachers throughout the journey” (p. 98). In Chapter 5, I discuss my intention to apply this advice in response to my data.

When teachers elaborated on these perceptions, as the responses in Appendix G illustrate, some cited a lack of opportunity to provide feedback. Participant 10 suggested, “We could do a better job of incorporating teacher feedback on not doing it on days that are busy,” and Participant 5 shared, “Teachers are overwhelmed and do not have time to give feedback.” Participant 9 simply asked, “When do we have opportunities to provide feedback on MTSS?” Given the perception that their contributions and concerns are not prioritized, teachers will struggle to be active and capable MTSS team members. They cannot take ownership of the model without feeling empowered to improve it. Although some participants indicated occasional or frequent opportunities to provide feedback and see it in action, most conveyed frustration with the current state of MTSS communication and collaboration at CCE.
Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Data

I administered the second survey to determine participants’ views on curriculum, encompassing the purpose of school, teachers’ role, learning, knowledge, childhood, and evaluation (Appendix C). The short, six-part inventory invited the teachers to rank the statements in each part from 1 to 4, aligned with the ideologies Schiro (2013) outlined: Social Efficiency, Scholar Academic, Learner-Centered, and Social Reconstruction. I determined each participant’s overall ideology based on the statement they ranked the highest most often within the six parts. The results in Table 4.5 derive from only 11 participants because one participant did not rank the statements, invalidating the data.

Table 4.5 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scholar academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purpose of school</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers’ role</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>childhood</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were least likely to align with statements exhibiting Scholar Academic and Social Reconstruction ideology across all six parts of the inventory, except for their views on childhood, where four participants each gravitated to the Social Efficiency and Scholar Academic statements, and the remaining three identified as Learner-Centered. Social Efficiency and Learner-Centered ideologies outranked the other views across most of the six
components in the curriculum, and the participants indicated nearly unanimous Learner-Centered views on evaluation. In fact, I identified seven of the 11 participants as Learner-Centered overall, whereas none of the participants landed in the overall category of Social Reconstruction.

Participants’ Learner-Centered mindsets were most evident in their views on the purpose of schools, worthwhile knowledge, and evaluation. For Part 1, 55% agreed schools “should be enjoyable, stimulating, child-centered environments organized around the developmental needs and interest of children as those needs and interests present themselves from day to day” (Schiro, 2013, p. 264). For Part 4, 64% indicated self-understanding and direct experience as most valuable. For Part 6, nearly all participants (91%) agreed on the need to assess children’s growth and adjust the learning environment accordingly.

Participants’ views related to Social Efficiency were more pronounced in the sections concerning teaching roles and learning. For Part 2, 55% of the teachers felt they “should be supervisors of student learning, utilizing instructional strategies that will optimize student learning” (Schiro, 2013, p. 264). In addition, 45% of participants responded in Part 3 that “Learning best proceeds when the student is presented with the appropriate stimulus materials and positive reinforcement” (Schiro, 2013, p. 264).

For Part 5, the teachers split ideologically across Scholar Academic (36%) and Social Efficiency (36%) views of childhood. From a Scholar Academic perspective, “Childhood is essentially a period of intellectual development highlighted by growing reasoning ability and capacity for memory that results in
ever greater absorption of cultural knowledge” (Schiro, 2013, p. 265). From a Social Efficiency standpoint, “Childhood is essentially a time of learning in preparation for adulthood when one will be a constructive, contributing member of society” (Schiro, 2013, p. 265).

Reflecting on the overall results of the inventory, I wondered why Social Reconstruction ranked lowest, given the perception I shared in Chapter 2 of the MTSS framework as related to movements for equitable education. Perhaps learner-centered PD experiences ingrained that view, reinforced by the district’s push for more learner-centered instruction and less focus on social injustice. With the passage of the recent state budget, South Carolina joined 20 other states that have enacted or are in the process of enacting restrictions on critical race theory in public schools (Chhetri, 2021). That none of the teachers scored the highest in Social Reconstruction, even on an anonymous survey, may suggest a climate of fear. Teachers who align with this curricular ideology may refrain from saying so to avoid the risk of incurring administrative or parental pushback.

**TSES Data**

The final survey in Phase 1 was the TSES (Appendix D), which measures teachers’ self-efficacy using three moderately correlated factors: student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management. The scale from 1 (Nothing) to 9 (A Great Deal) enabled me to determine participants’ perceptions of their everyday challenges and successes. I calculated subscale scores by computing the unweighted means of the eight items that aligned with each factor. Dividing the sum for each factor by the number of questions resulted
in an average for each participant, which I compared to the TSES means from Tschannen and Woolfolk’s (2001) study, as shown in Table 4.6. To further analyze the self-efficacy data, I conducted a question analysis for each factor by color-coding the three lowest scores (Nothing to Very Little), the three middle scores (Some Influence), and the three highest scores (Quite a Bit to A Great Deal) to represent the level of self-efficacy per question.

Table 4.6 Overall Survey 3 Results Compared to TSES Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Classroom Management</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.75</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSES mean</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Scores**

Based on the data in Table 4.6, 58% of participants \( n = 7 \) scored below the overall TSES mean of 7.1, yet three teachers scored well above average. Participant 10 outranked everyone with an overall score of 8.7, while Participant 3 scored the lowest with 5.8. Figure 4.1 illustrates this outcome. The anonymity of the survey prevents inferences based on years of experience, but overall, I
determined Participants 1, 3, 7, and 9 exhibited lower self-efficacy than Participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12, who scored within the average range, while Participants 10 and 11 consistently scored above average. Participants with lower perceptions of their efficacy may need more support, prompting my additional analysis related to the individual factors.

Figure 4.1 *Overall TSES Scores*

**Student Engagement Scores**

Isolating the student engagement items, again, 58% of the teachers scored below the TSES mean of 7.3, and Participant 10 scored the highest (Table 4.6). Participant 9 scored the lowest with a 5.9. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of results for these survey items by displaying the number of participants within specific ranges of scores. Most of the teachers scored between 5.9 and 6.5, indicating relatively low self-efficacy in terms of their capacity to engage students, while two participants scored well above average.
Based on my question analysis for the student engagement items, Question 6, which asked teachers to assess their capacity to get students to believe they can succeed, yielded scores in the highest range from all participants. Only two questions yielded scores in the lowest range. When asked how much they can do to get through to the most difficult students (Question 1), Participant 3 responded with a 2, and when asked how much they can do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork (Question 4), Participants 1 and 7 chose 3. Conversely, 50% of participants indicated some influence over student creativity, and all other responses for this factor fell between some or a great deal of influence. These results illuminate the histogram by highlighting teachers’ perceptions of their challenges related to motivation and behavior.

**Instructional Strategies Scores**

For instructional strategies, 67% of the teachers scored slightly below the average of 7.3, while three participants scored above 8, including Participant 10.
with the highest score of 8.6 (Table 4.6). Figure 4.3 further illustrates that most participants scored between 6.6 and 7.1. Whereas four teachers—Participants 1, 6, 10, and 11—scored above average, Participants 3, 7, and 12 scored the lowest. Overall, the participants seemed to doubt their ability to identify and implement effective instructional methods and tools.

Figure 4.3 TSES Results for Instructional Strategies

The question analysis added some nuance to these results, highlighting relatively high responses to individual items for all participants except one. When asked how much they can use a variety of assessment strategies (Question 18) and how well they implement different strategies in their classroom (Question 3), Participant 3 answered with a 3, while the other teachers’ responses ranged from 7 to 9. Overall, the participants exhibited lower self-efficacy related to differentiating instruction, whereas Participant 3 may need additional one-on-one support in using appropriate assessments and finding effective strategies to reach all students.
Classroom Management Scores

As Table 4.6 shows, the items related to classroom management yielded the lowest self-efficacy scores, consistent with the lower TSES mean of 6.7, although 67% of participants scored above average. Once again, Participant 10 scored the highest, and Participant 3 scored the lowest with 5.25. Figure 4.4 further illustrates Participant 3 as distinct from the rest of the group, although I recognize behavior management is an area for growth across the sample.

![Figure 4.4 TSES Results for Classroom Management](image)

Providing additional insight, the question analysis drew my attention to three teachers’ responses. Question 3 asked how much they can do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom, and Participants 1, 3, and 7 selected 2. Participant 3 also indicated lower self-efficacy by selecting 3 in response to Question 19, about keeping a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson, and Question 21, regarding how to respond to defiant students. All other
responses reflected some or even a great deal of influence, despite the teachers’ frequent challenges with disruptive behavior during instructional time.

**Summary of Phase 1 Survey Results**

The three surveys administered in Phase 1 gave me some insight into Research Question 1. Regarding teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model, I learned they want to buy into the MTSS model but need clarification on the overall policies versus practical logistics, especially related to interventions, data analysis, behavior, and assigning students to tiers. Moreover, their perceptions reflected a need for ongoing PD opportunities to improve their skills in analyzing data, managing behavior, and identifying effective interventions. Lastly, the teachers perceived a lack of opportunity to provide feedback on the MTSS model and minimal evidence of follow-through on their feedback. Essentially, school leaders need to ensure teachers can contribute to improving the MTSS model.

Regarding their views of curriculum, I discovered the Learner-Centered ideology was most prominent overall, as well as for statements related to the role of school, knowledge, and evaluation. This outcome reflects the influence of district-wide policies and PD initiatives prioritizing instructional trends. However, teachers’ personal views on the role of learning, childhood, and teachers also impact their practice, and these three areas ranked lowest in the Learner-Centered category and highest in Social Efficiency, except for childhood, where Scholar Academic and Social Efficiency ranked equally. Teachers’ varying perceptions across the inventory may allude to teachers’ lack of awareness of their role in the MTSS model.
Regarding their self-efficacy, most teachers’ responses were consistent across the three correlated factors. For instance, Participant 3 averaged the lowest scores for instructional strategies and classroom management, while Participant 10 averaged the highest scores in both domains. However, scores for Participants 1, 9, 11, and 12 varied across factors. Specific outliers related to engagement and classroom management, factors most related to behavior and therefore reinforcing other data indicating behavior management as an overall weakness. The results also demonstrate the range of strengths and weaknesses among participants, which has implications for the MTSS process at CCE, as I address in Chapter 5.

Overall, analyzing the Phase 1 survey data gave me a refined lens to identify teachers’ perceptions during the one-on-one interviews. I also decided to share these results with participants during Phase 2. I aimed to encourage open dialogue about the areas of focus, challenge some inaccurate perceptions, and provide opportunities for learning and reflection.

**Presentation of Interview Findings**

Qualitative data from individual interviews further developed my understanding in preparation for Phase 2. Consistent with Research Question 1, I used the semi-structured protocol in Appendix E to learn more about the teachers’ perceptions and examine similarities or differences across their MTSS experiences. Our conversations focused on the challenges of working with MTSS students, how to support diverse groups of MTSS students, teachers’ awareness of cultural differences, and the impact of our school context.
Struggles in Working with MTSS Students

I began each interview by inviting the teachers to share three main struggles in working with MTSS students. Every participant mentioned a lack of time and behavior management, reinforcing the Survey 1 results. Another theme across their responses was pinpointing the most effective ELA materials and resources to use with MTSS students and finding the right balance because of the overwhelming number of student needs.

**Lack of Time**

Every teacher reported facing unexpected factors that require immediate attention, ranging from behavior situations to unannounced fire drills. They also emphasized that covering the curriculum within an allotted time as expected is nearly impossible even without interruptions. One participant stated, “There is too much at once. We have intervention time that is carved out in our schedule, but there are a lot of unexpected interruptions and situations that require immediate attention.” Another said, “Most MTSS students are very slow workers, so everything seems to take them longer to complete, and they are the ones who are pulled the most.” When teachers get bogged down in other crises in the classroom, the intervention time is not sacred despite their best efforts, so this theme suggests a need to eliminate factors that impede productivity. For instance, the Survey 1 results included a suggestion for teachers and interventionists to have their data ready in student data sheets prior to the meeting. Improving efficiency would also allow more time for ongoing PD sessions to expand teachers’ understanding of how to analyze data.
Another factor limiting participants’ time to work with MTSS students was their struggle to find appropriate materials, resources, and interventions. Our conversations about the challenge of identifying the exact target area or need and the appropriate means for monitoring echoed the results from the Systems section of Survey 1. One participant described the process as “difficult to plan,” explaining, “Finding materials and progress monitoring tools in writing and grammar are areas that are a struggle. It is a challenge to find the balance between the MTSS students and the regular curriculum students.”

Furthermore, teachers’ instructional time with their students varies due to CCE’s team-teaching model for Grades 3–5, meaning each teacher has twice as many students as the self-contained teachers in the lower grades. One participant stated, “The level of struggles in intervention blocks is evident in team teaching vs. self-contained classes. Self-contained classrooms have a lot more flexibility in their time.” Again, this common perception in the interviews echoed the survey results, providing a clearer understanding of the problem.

**Behavior Management**

All participants also cited behavior management as a struggle. One teacher indicated, “We do not have the proper resources and personnel to deal with behaviors.” Suggesting “less time focusing on behaviors in MTSS” would result in “more time to better serve tier students academically,” the participant called for “school-wide consistency in dealing with behaviors.” Another participant also echoed the prior theme, lack of time, when they voiced, “We do not have time to get things done for the kids in need because of some of the behaviors
that are not handled in the classrooms.” The responses suggest the need for a better system, incorporating staff who can put their energy and expertise into addressing daily behavior issues. Administering actual MTSS behavior interventions is necessary for improvement, just like pulling Tier 3 students for reading and math support. To access the curriculum or navigate daily classroom routines, some students need specific strategies and coping skills.

**Materials and Resources in the ELA Curriculum**

According to participants, finding the right intervention resources, assessments, and progress-monitoring tools to target specific focus areas is also a struggle. Reiterating the struggle related to time constraints, they described the challenge of fitting progress monitoring into their schedules and cited specific difficulty related to finding writing and grammar materials. These remarks echoed results from the Systems section of Survey 1 and the Instructional Strategies section of Survey 3.

Moreover, reflecting how district-wide ELA materials are not always effective, one participant stated, “Tier 1 curriculum and instruction plan is not always solid and consistent, so when starting Tier 2 interventions with an inconsistent curriculum plan, there will be more holes and gaps for students in ELA.” Such curricular inconsistency results in further challenges, like determining the next steps for students who continue to struggle. The interviews also surfaced teachers’ challenge to find the balance between the MTSS students and the regular curriculum students (i.e., Tier 1) while monitoring everyone’s progress. A participant explained, “Without a solid curriculum plan, it is harder to
pinpoint ways to close [achievement] gaps.” Because the number of students in need is overwhelming, meeting everyone’s needs is a challenge. Again, I reflected that ongoing PD sessions would not only provide teachers with effective materials and resources to use with tiered students, but also increase their self-efficacy in instruction and engagement, especially if such opportunities included ample time for questions, modeling, and feedback.

**Interactions With Diverse Students**

I also asked the teachers about their perceptions and experiences that helped them work with students whose backgrounds differ from theirs. They shared lessons they have learned and now apply them to their interactions with culturally diverse students and families. Analyzing our conversations on this topic revealed several themes: experiences in Title I schools, building strong relationships, having an open mind, and embedding culture in instruction.

**Experience in Title I Schools**

Title I, according to the South Carolina Department of Education (n.d.), is intended “to help local educational agencies . . . improve teaching and learning in high-poverty schools and help children failing or most at-risk of failing to meet challenging state academic standards” (para. 1). Working in a Title I school taught participants about diversity—academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. One participant expressed, “Working in Title I schools taught me to not assume everyone who looks a certain way takes on the assumed customs and culture. I found that we have more similarities with most people than differences.” Another participant disclosed, “Coming from and teaching from an
area with a diverse background has helped me understand what students don’t know vs. what they do know. Their writing helps me gauge the exposure to literacy at home.” Another teacher affirmed, “Experience has shown that more intentional teachers come from diverse backgrounds.”

In addition to serving students from low-income families, Title I schools are known for serving racially and ethnically minoritized students (Cronin, 2017). In response to Question 2, five of the 12 participants acknowledged differences in cultural values and norms related to race and communicated their firsthand experience in Title I schools. Most of the other teachers asked for clarification of the question and did not mention race or cultural aspects. Some spoke about economic status, lack of parent support, and language barriers. I inferred they may have perceived “different backgrounds” related to race as a risky topic.

**Building Rapport**

Another theme was the role of building strong and trusting relationships with students and their families. My participants emphasized that making a conscious effort to get to know their students has helped them identify similarities that lead to more effective ways to present instructional tasks. As one expressed, “Teachers should get to know . . . students' backgrounds and interests, so they are intentional in creating activities and discussions in class [to] motivate all students to participate and contribute from their own cultures.” Another described establishing rapport as “a game-changer in behavior and motivation needs in the classroom.” These sentiments reinforce the survey results, specifically that most participants value teacher–student relationships as aligned with a Learner-
Centered ideology. Further, these comments confirm the teachers’ awareness of the interconnections among relationship-building, motivation, engagement, and behavior management.

**Open Perspective**

The interview data also surfaced participants’ perceptions of the need to be open to people of different races, genders, customs, and values. One teacher shared, “Communicating with parents can sometimes be a challenge when there are cultural differences between the students and the teacher,” adding, “More students and our transfers that are coming in are more diverse in culture in addition to academic and behavioral needs.” This influx of transfer students with immediate MTSS needs was a major motivation for this study.

Another participant cited “a need for mental adjustments” and the “challenge” of teaching “kids without any home support,” advising, “you have to be open yourself to understanding others and not judge.” A participant with a similar perspective shared, “Working with different kids that have very different parental support at home has helped me broaden my perception. Being a mom has helped with this too.” In short, supporting diverse learners requires teachers to develop and maintain an open perspective.

**Culture in Instruction**

A final theme in response to Question 2 was teachers’ perception that schools should implement culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment and teaching practices. One teacher stated, “Teachers need to clearly understand that students in [the multilingual learner program] struggle with
language and meaning; it is a barrier.” Another endorsed the strategy of embedding “culture and diversity through the books and other texts in ELA discussions.” Such perceptions align with calls to serve all students regardless of race, gender, language, or culture (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2015).

**Challenges for ELA Teachers**

Guided by the protocol, my conversations with participants turned to specific challenges unique to their subject area. The teachers expressed key struggles ELA teachers face that impede their adherence to the MTSS model. Looking across my notes revealed three main themes: the curriculum itself, bridging the gap, and testing and data.

**ELA Curriculum**

Participants perceived their work as more time-consuming and difficult than that of other subject teachers. The ELA standards, which have multiple levels of components embedded in instruction, require thoughtful planning and time. One participant reported, “Time is the biggest struggle to fit all the components in ELA—writing, reading, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, word study, root words, etc.—with students that have diverse areas of need, along with all the unexpected surprises that arise daily.” Another stated, “There is no way in the world to get all the components of ELA in the time given to ‘team teaching.’ Hitting on all the ELA standards is a never-ending struggle.”

Participants’ view of the MTSS model as an added task and responsibility reinforced this theme. As one teacher expressed, “Mastering how to read to learn as opposed to learning to read . . . is a HUGE learning curve and most MTSS
students are already at a disadvantage in accessing the curriculum.” In other words, when MTSS students are still learning to read in Grades 3–5, the ELA teachers face additional challenges and pressure. They perceive their role as requiring them to teach Tier 1 reading and writing curriculum while supporting students who are two or more reading levels behind. One participant wondered, “How do they expect us to cover all the different components of ELA, social studies, and required instructional tools that do not align to any of the students who are below grade level?”

**Bridging the Gap**

Another common theme, teachers’ concern about bridging the gap in ELA, reflected the expectation that students in Grades 2–3 should connect learning to read with reading to learn. Without merging these two crucial skills, students will struggle as curriculum expectations intensify. Two participants with experience teaching first and second grade brought up guided reading as a powerful tool for helping students see this connection. One wondered “how much guided reading is going on in the lower grades,” added, “I want to do some guided reading, but I cannot find the time in the day to do it. I do not know how to prioritize it.” This statement indicates teachers’ perception that structural constraints hinder their ability to implement proven practices.

**Testing and Data**

The final theme in response to this question echoed the survey data, illustrating the teachers’ struggles with the time-consuming and subjective nature of testing and data analysis in ELA. One participant reported, “Data collection is
difficult due to lack of time. This impacts the authenticity and validity of the data.”
Another agreed, “Assessments take an enormous amount of time during our time for instruction—especially in the beginning of the year while trying to establish student relationships, classroom management, team collaborations, and other important tasks.”

Participants also perceived the tests themselves as problematic. One noted a lack of “consistent ELA district-wide assessments,” suggesting, “The skills in ELA of the average child is more than was expected of us when we were students and even students 10 years ago.” Other teachers may share this view, yet ELA components are embedded in all core subjects, such that students’ struggles in the participants’ classes can impact their progress in other classes.

Environmental and Policy Impacts

The last question in my interview guide focused on how school policies and the overall environment may inhibit ELA teachers from following the MTSS model to their fullest potential. Teachers discussed the unintentional impact of regulations created to ensure everyone’s safety and growth. I identified three themes across their responses: consistency and trust, the instructional schedule, and the size of the school.

Consistency and Trust

The teachers noted how the MTSS process and policy have changed every year, calling for more consistency at the school and district level. At the same time, they celebrated a recent shift: the MTSS administrator’s increased trust of interventionists, facilitating smoother implementation at CCE. This shift
resulted from a collective effort of the administrator and the interventionists. As one participant stated, “This year, the MTSS process has been consistent, with predetermined meeting facilitators, dates, and expectations for the year. More ‘grace’ has been given this year.”

Balancing the teachers’ appreciation for consistency, they also pointed to policies they would like to change. Calling for the district to treat them as professionals, one participant shared, “Teachers should be entrusted with their best judgment, expertise, experience, and connection with the child to make the best decision for the child.” Distinguishing between policy and practice, participants recognized policies may have good intentions while asserting that those responsible for implementation should have more voice.

**Instructional Schedule**

Interviewees also referenced CCE’s school-wide schedule with locked-in 90-minute ELA and 30-minute intervention blocks. In some ways, they find this structured schedule helpful, but in other ways, it limits their instructional flexibility. One participant revealed, “Setting intervention blocks in the master schedule for the morning and the afternoon is essential. Without this built-in time, fitting in intervention time would be nearly impossible.” At the same time, I heard evidence that teachers do not always use their built-in intervention time as intended by prioritizing Tier 1 instruction, graded assignments, and assessments over interventions with Tier 2 students.

Reiterating how unexpected interruptions take time away from prioritized tasks, participants called for more flexible intervention times. One teacher
expressed a desire “for teachers to have more voice in how to create a schedule,” while recognizing no schedule will “please everyone.” Nevertheless, involving teachers in the creation of the instructional schedule is important, and the administration has taken a step in that direction by inviting teachers to join a committee tasked with creating next year’s schedule.

**School Size**

This study took place in one of the largest elementary schools in South Carolina, and the participants perceived the growth of the school community as overwhelming. Transfer students have come from all parts of South Carolina, the United States, and the world—many with language barriers, culture shock, behavioral difficulties, and large academic gaps. One participant reported,

Large schools face more predetermined schedules and expectations.
There is less flexibility and the teachers’ voices are hard to express.
Everything is laid out for staff. In addition, this is a high-achieving school, so a lack of urgency from teachers is developed. Even if our MTSS students don’t do well, our school will.

Like other participants, this teacher perceived a need to prioritize Tier 1 instruction. Confirming my problem of practice, teachers are aware of support for their work with Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, so they feel more pressure or personal responsibility for Tier 1 students’ growth.

Overall, the Phase 1 data revealed the ELA teachers’ perceptions of how the MTSS process supports them and their tiered students, while also demonstrating why the process lacks buy-in. Like Survey 1, the one-on-one
interviews disclosed participants’ MTSS challenges. Like Survey 2 and 3, the interviews also addressed the teachers’ personal and professional impact on their students. I looked across the survey and interview data to get a sense of the teachers’ collective views on the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy, in response to Research Question 1, and summarized the data in Google Slides to share with the participants during Phase 2. Figure 4.5 shows one of the slides I presented to the participants. This approach aligned with my ultimate purpose of improving MTSS implementation at CCE.

Figure 4.5 Example of a Data-Sharing Slide

**Phase 2: Data Sharing**

Phase 2 consisted of the data-sharing intervention I facilitated to expand my understanding of the teachers’ perceptions as well as to make them more aware of their views on the MTSS model, curriculum ideologies, and self-efficacy. To investigate how sharing their collective views impacts their perceptions (i.e.,
Research Question 2), I used the Google Slides I prepared at the end of Phase 1 (Figure 4.5) to encourage open discussion, hoping to challenge participants’ existing perspectives by introducing new knowledge or clarifying misperceptions of the MTSS model, as well as inviting feedback and reflection. I wanted them to see how the challenges they identified in Phase 1 were hampering their ability to follow the MTSS model faithfully. Shamsuddin et al. (2020) discussed how individuals’ perceptions of reality influence their attitudes and behavior. By increasing participants’ awareness, the data-sharing sessions could lead to more accurate perceptions and eventually, improved implementation.

This process of sharing reinforced my analysis from Phase 1 and revealed additional themes, which I captured in my field notes. I devoted the first session to the results from Survey 1 (Appendix B), the MTSS Self-Assessment. The second session covered the results from Survey 2 (Appendix C), regarding participants’ curriculum ideologies, and Survey 3 (Appendix D), regarding their self-efficacy, as well as key themes from the interviews. Each session lasted only 30 minutes, so I shared an anonymous Padlet wall for participants to post their thoughts after the session. This approach enabled me to respect participants’ face-to-face time while merging their voices with my field notes.

Session 1

When I presented the Survey 1 results, the participants were most surprised to see the overall number of MTSS students in the school, as compared to their estimates (Table 4.3). Appendix H highlights the takeaways they posted on the anonymous Padlet wall. Some participants may not have
posted their thoughts, some may have posted multiple times, and some responded directly to others’ posts. In this section, I draw on the Padlet data as well as my field notes to discuss overall themes in participants’ reactions to the Survey 1 results, organized by the survey sections.

**Responses to the Leadership Data**

When I shared the leadership data, teachers immediately reiterated their challenges with implementing the MTSS model, such as the lack of consistency in our process. Yearly changes in procedures and paperwork hinder their ability to keep up with expectations. Parallel to this study, CCE’s interventionists started ongoing MTSS sessions for 2022–2023 to address challenges teachers communicated in our MTSS meetings. During Session 1, I reassured my participants these sessions would continue, and I observed their relief. One participant expressed a preference for small-group or one-on-one opportunities to ask questions unique to their students.

The teachers also reiterated their lack of clarity regarding how to identify and use interventions and progress-monitoring tools, which I explained is a consistent problem across the district. When I mentioned a district-wide resource, some participants recommended helpful ways to organize such resources to avoid creating an overwhelming or confusing toolbox. Most of the teachers indicated their satisfaction with MTSS leaders’ effort to clarify key concepts.

However, the group noted some lack of clarity regarding the referral and support processes. I reminded them of the district’s guiding tool, which we admittedly do not use as we should. One of the participants requested to look at
the tool’s tier criteria and immediately recognized how it could help them identify additional MTSS students. Based on the number of data sources and criteria, another participant detected they may have referred students unnecessarily. In further discussion, the participants collectively realized the case-by-case nature of MTSS referrals. Additionally, they unanimously agreed the use of the guiding tool in future MTSS meetings is essential, although they noted some students may not fit the tool’s criteria. Our discussion of the tool also carried over to our discussion of the results from the Systems section of Survey 1.

**Responses to the Systems Data**

The system’s data sparked considerable discussion about the lack of time. Echoing their Phase 1 responses, the teachers communicated that lack of time impedes them from following the MTSS model and suggested modifying our school instructional schedule to protect intervention time, rather than placing it in the middle of their ELA and social studies time, which interrupts pacing and planning for the core subjects. One participant recommended starting every morning with intervention time for all students for 30 minutes, preserving the remainder of their time with the students to cover the curriculum. I reiterated what they said about having a blocked-out time for interventions, and I asked them what factors take away from this protected intervention time. The most common answer was similar to what I found in the interview data: planned and unplanned school events, overwhelming responsibilities and procedures, the large number of tiered students, and never-ending behavior issues.
Balancing their common challenges, the teachers also identified solutions. One participant shared that meeting with their MTSS meeting facilitator multiple times during the cycle of 6–8 weeks, which may seem inconvenient, helped them manage their large number of MTSS students. Instead of discussing 12 students in less than 40 minutes, they discuss three or four during planning, another set after school, and the others on another day. Another participant mentioned sharing data for their Tier 2 students prior to MTSS meetings, providing additional time to analyze and discuss the next steps or necessary changes. A third teacher resolved their struggle to find time for Tier 2 progress monitoring by meeting with the students during CCE’s morning holding-room time before instructional time begins. Attesting to the benefit of sharing their views, other participants reported their intention to try some of these time-saving approaches.

Returning to the survey items, one participant expressed confusion and lack of confidence in knowing how to target specific skills students need, investigate the most relevant intervention methods, and find a progress-monitoring tool to evaluate the intervention. A fellow participant immediately reminded them of CCE’s Intervention Toolbox, yet the participant responded that it is too overwhelming, expressing uncertainty about how to use it. A third teacher offered to help, and I assured them my fellow interventionists and I would be happy to review the tools one-on-one. A fourth participant expressed frustration with progress monitoring and intervention tools that do not seem to align with students’ needs. I explained that in such cases, a student’s data may warrant reanalysis to reveal the factor(s) impeding their learning.
Discussion of the systems data also highlighted CCE’s lack of staff to support student needs, specifically in terms of behavior. In addition to talking about the topic during Session 1, the teachers also commented about it on the Padlet wall, as shown in Appendix H. Their remarks gave me a clearer understanding of their perceptions of the MTSS model. For instance, one comment stated that everyone is doing the best they can with the available personnel and resources CCE has in place. However, they added that we do not have the proper resources and personnel to deal with behaviors. They added that a lot of time is spent dealing with behaviors limiting the time to address other tiered students’ needs. This comment suggests that teachers understand the situation that exists at CCE and that although the efforts and improvements in MTSS are evident, more is needed.

**Responses to the PD Data**

Whereas time and behavior were prominent topics in the Phase 1 data, a new—but not surprising—theme emerged in Phase 2 when I shared the results from the PD section of Survey 1. Continuing with the topic of CCE’s lack of staff to support student needs, participants voiced a strong need for additional training on managing behavior. Continuing the trend of identifying solutions, they suggested a whole-school behavior incentive could be modified for tiered students with ongoing school-wide PD. Noting the current behavior charts and data collection sheets are ineffective for most students, especially those with more severe and persistent problematic behaviors, they reiterated the need for a
behavioral interventionist who can recommend coping strategies to help teachers and students navigate behavioral and social–emotional struggles.

Multiple teachers acknowledged their prior training, but they described it as lacking consistency, clarity, and relevance. Reflecting on the survey items, they expressed confusion about how SEL and attendance relate to the MTSS framework. Many participants had always associated attendance with main office paperwork rather than the MTSS model. Likewise, they were aware of the district’s SEL initiative, with the expectation of daily practice, but they did not see an MTSS connection to SEL. Noting the need to address these perceptions in future MTSS PD sessions, I briefly explained how attendance plays a role in a student’s progress by driving the problem-solving process of making decisions for the student. I also emphasized how SEL influences MTSS team members’ efforts to ensure students’ social and emotional safety.

**Responses to Three-Tiered System / Intervention Model Data**

When we discussed the next set of survey results, the teachers recommended additional support in the lower grades to strengthen students’ foundational reading and math skills, which they felt would prevent the achievement gaps they perceive in the higher grade levels. Their shocked responses to the number of students needing MTSS support in Grades 1–3, evident in the Padlet comments (Appendix H), exposed their sense of urgency. For instance, a comment indicated that the data shared on the number of students on MTSS in first through third grades signifies that extra support is needed in those grade levels. The lack of extra support in these grades was
questioned in another comment. A third comment urged the need for immediate additional reading and behavior support at CCE. Because the rigorous third-grade curriculum does not target basic literacy, my participants expect students to develop fundamental reading skills in the early grades. They proposed several factors that may prevent this ideal: COVID, the change in district-proposed instructional materials, lack of training on how to teach students to read, and teacher turnover. One participant suggested focusing on mitigating the outcome of uncontrollable factors (e.g., COVID and teacher turnover) while addressing other factors, like the instructional materials and necessary training, more directly. Another participant suggested continuing MTSS sessions throughout the year and incorporating some of the unique training needs in each grade. These responses reaffirmed my long-term goal of improving the MTSS model at CCE.

**Responses to the Communication and Collaboration Data**

Sharing data from the Communication and Collaboration section of Survey 1 broadened participants’ awareness of their perceptions of their MTSS students and shed some light on their perceptions of opportunities to provide feedback on the model. Some teachers were surprised by the responses to Question 2, about checking biases when creating and monitoring interventions. One participant mentioned focusing more on the logistics of the goal (i.e., getting an intervention done), as opposed to ensuring the method and tool align with the student’s ability. They recognized this approach may in fact prevent the interventions from working. I noted that training prioritizes finding interventions that align with the
target skill but could focus more on the need to consider the student’s ability, especially to consider their strengths.

Along those lines, when discussing responses to Question 3, the participants admitted their lack of familiarity with asset-based learning, the practice of avoiding the tendency to “look at situations or people from a ‘deficit’ lens that prioritizes what’s missing or what’s wrong as opposed to strengths and potentials” (HERE to HERE, 2020, p. 3). Once I clarified the term, the teachers expressed a broader perspective. One indicated they had never paid attention to how they described MTSS students, suddenly recognizing how negative language whether verbalized or thought could influence their interactions with students. Hearing this self-awareness may have given other participants a new perspective, too.

Lastly, our discussion of this survey section exposed teachers’ relinquished desire to provide feedback on the MTSS model. Some of the new teachers were unaware of any opportunities to give feedback, while a few returning teachers recalled an MTSS survey from 1–2 years ago. One teacher doubted their feedback would be taken into consideration. These reactions, echoed on the Padlet wall (Appendix H), indicated teachers’ need for ample opportunity throughout the year to participate in improving the MTSS process at CCE. I noted the ongoing MTSS PD sessions should include specific discussions of feedback to reassure teachers their suggestions have been considered and implemented or justifiably rejected.
Although sharing the Survey 1 results took longer than I anticipated, the experience deepened my understanding of the teachers’ perceptions that align with the MTSS model. Through collective analysis of the data, the group discussed their common challenges and concerns, exchanged ideas, and proposed solutions to minimize the added burden the MTSS model had presented to most teachers. The conversation shifted from complaints to support and further inquiry on the next steps. Becoming more familiar with the components of the MTSS model empowered them to commit to being part of the change, joining me in my long-term goal of improved implementation.

**Session 2**

Continuing with the Google Slides (Figure 4.5), the second session focused on the results of Survey 2 and Survey 3, as well as my interview findings. I also devoted the last part of the presentation to sharing ideas and highlighting upcoming opportunities and resources for working with tiered students. Some participants reported being unfamiliar with the terms *curriculum ideologies* and *self-efficacy*, which did not seem relevant to their teaching. During Session 2, however, they began to perceive how these factors influence them as educators. Sharing the data made them more familiar with these concepts and heightened their personal awareness.

**Responses to the Curriculum Ideologies Data**

Participants were engaged and eager to understand the different views of the curriculum. Echoing my analysis of the Phase 1 data, one teacher inferred that the Learner-Centered ideology featured so prominently because of the
district's emphasis on personalized learning. After hearing me elaborate on the four ideologies, most participants agreed they aligned more with the Social Efficiency and Social Reconstruction views, even as they reiterated their perception of the district's push for learner-centered instruction. For example, one participant mentioned a district school piloting a Montessori approach. Conversely, participants perceived social reconstruction as potentially controversial. Although they expressed a desire for a more equitable society, they feared parents' disapproval of reflecting such views in the classroom. However, teachers may indirectly reveal their beliefs and values (Banks, 2016; Lauridsen, 2003; Oliva & Gordon, 2013).

Participants’ different perspectives on how ideology impacts instructional decisions were interesting. One teacher mentioned the decisions she makes when creating an environment conducive to learning. Another connected becoming a mother to her learner-centered views, evident in how she builds relationships with students. A third participant reflected on her successes in the classroom culture she created with students. Most participants were able to identify with the learner-centered view based on professional experiences and what comes naturally to them in their classrooms. Most also recognized students respond well to a motivating, whole-child approach. Participants' takeaways on the Padlet wall echoed these reactions (Appendix H). For example, one wrote, “Looking through the lenses of a teacher and a parent has also made me more student focused.”
In short, discussing the Survey 2 results helped participants see how their professional and personal experiences shape their perceptions and instruction. In their early days of becoming educators, curriculum ideologies were firmly embedded in their beliefs and continued to evolve over time. Their individual and collective reflection on these influences made them more aware of the connections between their beliefs and their practice.

**Responses to the TSES Data**

The TSES results surprised most participants. They were eager—yet unable—to identify which scores were theirs. Despite this setback, participants reflected in general on how self-efficacy impacts instruction and noted variation in the data set, especially as compared to the TSES means. For example, they were surprised their collective average exceeded the TSES mean for classroom management. Given the behavioral issues they experience, they did not believe their responses conveyed above-average self-efficacy. This realization underscored the collective teacher efficacy can have on student achievement (Donohoo et al., 2018). They began to perceive themselves as having the self-efficacy to manage behavior, but they reiterated a claim from Phase 1 and Session 1—that the number of students in their classrooms with impeding behaviors is more than they can manage. These comments reinforced my intention to recommend a school-wide behavior plan.

Without knowing which data points represented their responses, the participants speculated how their self-efficacy might influence their students. For example, they suggested modeling self-efficacy could transfer the disposition to
their students. I prompted them to connect this topic to the concept of a growth mindset, and one participant perceived self-efficacy as rooted in a growth mindset, building resilience and perseverance. The group echoed this view, emphasizing the value of teaching students that trials and other lessons can strengthen our self-efficacy. This discussion affirmed the teachers’ growth mindset and intention to promote and maintain a safe, engaging classroom culture for their students.

After the presentation, participants posted some takeaways on the Padlet wall. As Appendix H highlights, they continued to link their self-efficacy to their impact on students, describing self-efficacy in terms of life lessons they indirectly model. One post specifically mentioned motivation and performance. Thus, even from the anonymous results, they exhibited awareness of how their perceptions shape students’ academic, behavioral, and social–emotional skills.

**Responses to the Interview Data**

Sharing key points from the interview data synthesized the components of my study and granted participants an opportunity for additional reflection. Specifically, the teachers rehashed their major challenges related to MTSS implementation and gained a new perspective by inquiring into ways to make it work. This section, like the discussion, is structured according to the four questions from my interview guide (Appendix E).

**Struggles With MTSS Students.** When discussing their common challenges with time management, participants reiterated multiple factors that interfere with their ability to prioritize instruction and data analysis, such as
struggling to find materials, intervention tools, progress-monitoring tools, and other resources for tiered students. In response, one participant recalled a shared Google folder with relevant resources. I also explained that searching for resources requires a good grasp on the skill a student needs to strengthen; otherwise, the teacher may not see progress. In such cases, I emphasized reaching out to their MTSS facilitator to gain a better understanding of the students’ needs.

Moving to another major struggle evident in the interview data, we discussed the overwhelming number of students in need of academic and behavioral support. Shifting from the view in Session 1 that CCE is understaffed, the group realized the number of human resources they can access. If they do not reach out for help, their defeated feelings will persist. As a school leader, I also noted the need to develop a collective plan for mitigating unexpected situations related to specific students or classroom dynamics.

**Unfamiliar Student Backgrounds.** As we continued to review key points from the interviews, one participant recognized a comment they had made on a particular MTSS student’s situation that broadened their perspective. Whereas they always had parental support as a child, their MTSS students did not have the same level of support at home. This realization prompted the participant to propose a different plan of action for the student to succeed in their class by modifying—without lowering—expectations. This reflection encouraged other participants to elaborate on their experiences in Title I schools that heightened their empathy in similar ways.
This line of discussion prompted one participant to wonder “how parents and students view an educator who is of a different race.” Another encouraged modeling a genuine interest in diversity and intentionally choosing instructional materials that all students can connect to in some way. The group discussed building strong relationships with students through these and other means. In the context of the MTSS framework, their desire to make intentional connections and learn more about students' interests can help with engagement, motivation, and behavior. Therefore, the discussion was an opportunity to shift their perceptions of the model and their role in it.

**ELA Teacher Challenges With MTSS.** When discussing responses to the interview question about ELA teachers’ unique MTSS challenges, one participant elaborated on the struggle to cover all the curriculum components when students have diverse areas of need. The teachers perceived added pressure to facilitate their multilayered curriculum while closing major gaps in students' reading and writing skills that impair their ability to access other curricula. As they reiterated their perceptions of reading and writing as foundational skills, one participant recalled the Session 1 discussion of the number of MTSS students by grade level.

Continuing this thread, another teacher asked about MTSS support for the lower grades, and I explained that they have one reading recovery teacher who also facilitates guided reading MTSS groups for Grades 1–2. In years prior, Kindergarten and first-grade students had limited to no Tier 3 support, but this year one part-time interventionist started to support Kindergarten and first-grade
MTSS students. The participants suggested additional support in the lower grades would give students a better chance to access the curriculum in second and third grade. As the interview data highlighted, most third-grade MTSS students are still learning to read as opposed to reading to learn. They come into third grade at a disadvantage. Overall, discussing these transitions and the level of support in the primary grades appeared to change participants’ perceptions of their MTSS students as well as the relatable frustrations their lower-grade colleagues experience.

**Environmental and Policy Impact on MTSS.** Discussing responses to the final interview question, regarding how the school environment and various policies impact the MTSS process, instantly sparked comments about the size of CCE. One teacher pointed to a comment about the predetermined schedules and expectations, reiterating that being in a large school offers limited flexibility and makes expressing one’s voice difficult. Another highlighted the comment about the school’s high-achieving reputation that puts added pressure on teachers to hold all students, including MTSS students, to high expectations. They attributed the rigor and urgency to school and district policies. In their view, these factors, combined with their mind-boggling list of duties, cause mental exhaustion and defeat, preventing them from serving MTSS students as intended.

Further discussion surfaced a difference between policy and practice. The teachers admitted policymakers have research-based, legitimate intentions while emphasizing that implementation depends on those who actually work with students and families. Confirming my analysis of the Phase 1 data, they
expressed how they want an actual voice—more than another end-of-year survey inviting feedback on what policies or materials are and are not working. As one participant noted, every school is different, so a district-wide survey is not effective. The teachers expressed similar perspectives on wanting to know whether and how their feedback was implemented, echoing their reactions to the communication and collaboration data during Session 1.

We also conferred about district-mandated ELA materials, which participants perceived as subjective and cumbersome. One teacher added that their multilayered complexity is not suitable for second and third-graders who are still developing as readers, in addition to being hard to incorporate during the ELA block. Materials that need modification for Tier 1 students to access are not being used as intended. On a related note, another participant admitted a lack of confidence in their ability to teach students how to read, having only worked with students who are reading to learn. Overall, this discussion enhanced teachers’ perceptions of their common struggles.

**Looking Forward**

To remind participants of the responsive and supportive staff who want to help them support their students, I presented some final slides with ideas and resources from the school wide MTSS sessions throughout the year and facilitated a brief discussion about future opportunities. Participants contemplated integrating ELA and social studies, reflected on the district’s modified calendar for 2023–2024, and conversed about the new schedule committee that gives teachers a voice in instructional blocks. This will help teachers view scheduling
through a different lens because they will understand why it is impossible to satisfy everyone’s needs within a schedule this complex. I concluded Session 2 by inviting participants to reflect on both sessions, thus generating additional data I could use to answer Research Question 2.

**Reflection Form Results**

I used the reflection form in Appendix F to measure the sessions’ impact on participants’ perceptions. The first 12 questions used the same rating scale to capture teachers’ overall views after our group discussions: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Figure 4.6 shows a pie chart for the comparison of every item in the Likert scale. The results show that there were no negative slices and only one neutral slice. One teacher chose the neutral option regarding the allocation of time for deepening their understanding. This response suggests that teachers want to continue these discussions to gain a better perspective on the concepts covered in the sessions. Half of the participants strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of MTSS, learned new ideas and concepts, and know how to access resources and support. These perceptions and concepts fall in line with my research aim. Additionally, most participants strongly agreed (versus agree) that the sessions were useful and practical for their role as ELA teachers (item 3). Most participants agreed (versus strongly agreed) on the remaining items. Overall, these responses propose that teachers are interested in being included in the improvement process of MTSS.
Figure 4.6 *Reflection Form Responses to Likert-Scale Questions*

The reflection form also yielded qualitative data in response to four sentence starters that encompassed the new ideas participants gained, the most valuable aspects of the sessions, their plans to implement what they learned, and lingering questions or topics I could address in future sessions. Appendix I displays the full set of responses. Here, I discuss the teachers’ collective reflections, organized by each sentence starter.

**New Ideas**

Responses to Question 13 emphasized data, resources, self-efficacy, and overall MTSS knowledge. Three participants mentioned the data I presented as
beneficial. One was astonished at the number of MTSS students. Another encouraged sharing the data so CCE staff can “work together to lessen the number of students who require these services.” The third participant reported learning a lot from discussing the percentage of MTSS students by grade level. Anticipating their future students, they “reflected on how we can prepare for the high number of MTSS students and new referrals.”

Four teachers commented on resources, connecting the data-sharing sessions, especially the recap in Session 2, to the school-wide MTSS sessions implemented throughout the year. Our discussion helped them recall where to find resources for interventions and progress monitoring. Another credited our discussions for highlighting how to use the resources to help students achieve MTSS goals.

Two participants expressed that they gained knowledge about how self-efficacy and ideology can impact their instruction, especially with MTSS students. Learning about the school-wide data trends helped them perceive the process from a different lens as they considered how their self-efficacy influences student achievement. For instance, a participant explained, “I thought the most influential part of my decision-making was tied to the school-wide process for MTSS, but in reality, it is more in line with pedagogy.” Another suggested understanding different learning styles and personalities will impact their teaching practices.

Lastly, participants commented on their overall MTSS knowledge. One teacher reported learning “holistically about MTSS, the process, and the reasons behind the decisions,” adding that sharing the data illuminated the thought
process in a way that will improve their ability to implement it. A fellow participant recommended I scale up to school-wide PD on the information I shared, so everyone can be equally informed and aware. I elaborate on this suggestion in Chapter 5, discussing the implications of participants’ overall positive shift in their view of the MTSS process.

**Most Valuable Takeaway**

Several participants cited the recap of the MTSS resources and discussions as the most valuable aspect of our sessions. This finding is comforting because it is the focus of the next steps in the ongoing cycle of improving the MTSS model (further explained in Chapter 5). Participants also commented on the discussions about collaboration and working together to support student growth. To one teacher, the most valuable information was the evidence of a need for more instructional MTSS support. Another reflected on the different aspects of the MTSS process, stating, “Collaboration and discussion with one another are invaluable."

Another common theme was the participants’ emphasis on the value of self-reflection, especially regarding their curriculum ideologies. One teacher cited our discussion of how ideology affects instruction and the need to take an asset-based approach by focusing on positive traits related to student growth. Others commented on how our sessions compelled them to “reflect on . . . instructional decisions” or examine the “type of learner and educator they are so they can become more universal in their teaching.” Even with the anonymous survey data, participants seized the opportunity for self-reflection, recognizing the type of
teacher they want to be. As one teacher shared, “Reflection can help to check bias and make sure we are doing what is right for all students, even if that looks different from year to year.”

**Implementation of New Ideas**

Question 15 asked participants how they plan to implement what they learned, and they voiced intentions related to data analysis, goal setting, retaking Surveys 1 and 2 to get their results, taking time to dive into resources, organizing ideas, and becoming more effective with Tier 2 interventions. A few participants planned to apply the Session 2 discussion of ideologies and self-efficacy toward understanding themselves as educators and the priorities they set in their classrooms. Further alluding to how empowered these educators felt by the discussions that transpired from data sharing, two participants resolved to look deeper into MTSS data. One shared a specific goal to analyze skill deficits and search for relevant instructional tools. Another aimed to take more ownership in choosing appropriate goals for students. Such responses illustrated participants’ increased awareness of their role in the MTSS process, in line with my aim.

**Extending Knowledge**

Finally, Question 16 asked teachers what else they wanted to know. Participants reiterated the need for training related to behavior management, with one teacher advocating for hiring someone whose sole responsibility is behavioral support, so it does not fall on administrators, counselors, interventionists, and teachers. One teacher asked for more MTSS support across all areas of need. Another participant wanted guidance and help with strategies
for working with students with ADHD. Echoing responses to the prior question, two participants expressed an interest in retaking the surveys to learn more about self-efficacy and curriculum ideologies.

The remaining participants reported wanting to find ways to improve the MTSS process. For instance, one recommended assessing the effectiveness of CCE’s MTSS process and adjusting as needed. Another expressed an interest in monitoring how data changes in the program over the next few years. A third teacher wondered about MTSS data in other schools as compared to CCE, voicing curiosity about whether CCE should implement other schools’ ideas or approaches. Several participants commented on the overall value of data sharing, suggesting this study achieved its purpose.

**Summary**

I undertook this study to improve the MTSS process at CCE by exploring 12 teachers’ perceptions and facilitating discussion of their collective views. This chapter illustrated how I determined the ELA teachers’ perceptions of the MTSS model, curriculum, and efficacy before sharing the results in a way that could empower them to meet their MTSS students’ needs. Data from Phase 1 indicated key factors shaping their perceptions, and Phase 2 data illustrated how making teachers aware of these factors motivated them to become agents of change. In Chapter 5, I reflect on the outcomes of the study and my next steps as a practitioner to accomplish my long-term goal.
CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS

As communicated in the previous chapters, this study was an initial step toward improving MTSS implementation at my school. Before addressing my colleagues’ challenges with the model, I had to identify them. Enlisting ELA teachers in Grades 3–5 as participants, I explored their perceptions of the MTSS model, curriculum, and efficacy before facilitating group discussion of their collective views. In this final chapter, I reflect on the outcomes of my study in relation to existing literature. I also provide recommendations for practice and explain how I intend to implement those recommendations in my context. Finally, I reflect on my methodology to offer recommendations for future research related to the MTSS model.

Reflection on Existing Literature

The history of MTSS in Chapter 2 illustrated some progress toward meeting the needs of all students while highlighting the challenge of implementing new educational frameworks. Likewise, this study revealed holistic factors that impede teachers from implementing the MTSS process as intended at CCE. The environmental factors covered in Chapter 2 surfaced in the participants' responses. For instance, school policy and educational practice posed challenges, just as they have for other teachers (Darder, 2015). Specifically, the teachers mentioned barriers they associate with the MTSS
process like discrepancies between policy and practice, misaligned ELA materials, and unreasonable expectations for tiered students who continuously struggle. At the same time, echoing Bandura’s (1986) claim that teachers’ views differ despite their shared school environment, my participants’ perceptions related to their curriculum ideologies and self-efficacy data revealed scores that they were more competent than they originally projected in their open-ended survey responses. These initial perceptions suggest that environmental factors can negatively impact teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy and instructional practice.

SCT indicates that internal and external factors and social experiences influence perceptions and understanding, as well as decisions and behaviors (Rotter, 1966). My interview data and participants’ responses to the open-ended survey questions illustrate this cognitive, behavioral, and environmental interplay that influences their interpretations of the MTSS model and resulting instructional decisions regarding their tiered students. The teachers shared professional and personal experiences that aided or impeded their willingness to take on new challenges, interact with students from different backgrounds, and make confident instructional decisions. Their interview responses were especially illuminating in terms of their experiences working with diverse students in Title I schools, which shaped their choice of instructional materials or classroom décor. Conversely, Survey 1 and Survey 3 showed their hesitation or unclear direction in terms of finding appropriate interventions for their tiered students.

**Curriculum Ideologies**
Grounding my study in SCT, I recognized individuals’ perceptions play a significant role in how they interpret and behave in an environment. Further, I understood teachers’ perceptions of curriculum play a significant role in their instructional practice, hence my use of Schiro’s (2013) ideologies inventory as an additional lens. Lauridsen (2003) explained that educators should be aware of how philosophical beliefs influence and inform their methods as they construct the curriculum they teach. Participants gained a new perspective as they reflected on their understanding of the four ideologies. Viewing their collective data sparked reflection on the relationship between their perceptions and instructional decisions. When discussing the Survey 2 results, several participants noted, like Brown-Chidsey and Bickford (2015), that working in different schools highlighted the importance of addressing student needs by creating environments that are conducive to learning. One teacher shared that working with a variety of students in different environments helped them see the importance of creating environments that are conducive to learning.

As Oliva and Gordon (2013) explained, curriculum indicates “what” students learn, while instruction determines “how” a student learns. However, people’s interactions with the environment influence their perceptions and behaviors (Rotter, 1966). Participants’ reflections on their ideologies demonstrated these environmental influences. For instance, one participant’s shift in perspective as they moved from a Title I school to a different environment echoed Mnguni’s (2021) argument that schools have different achievement results due to teachers’ different ideologies. Additionally, another participant
shared that looking through the lens of a teacher and a parent, compared to their early years of teaching, made them more student-focused. Seeing that most participants rated the learner-centered statements highest was encouraging because that ideology aligns well with the MTSS model. Another participant recognized how “teachers’ beliefs impact their teaching behavior . . . and help guide their decision making and interactions with students.” This comment ties in with SCT and the interplay of cognitive and environmental influences on behavior (Gibson, 2004).

**Self-Efficacy**

As a component of the SCT framework (Bandura, 1986), self-efficacy influences people’s perceptions of their abilities and determines how they respond to their environment. In Phase 2, several participants recognized that their self-efficacy may affect MTSS students’ motivation and performance. The idea that observation and modeling play a role in how and why people learn (Bandura, 1986) gave them a new perspective on handling related challenges. In essence, a teacher’s mindset works very much like their students’. If MTSS is a consistent struggle to implement, they will perceive it in a negative way.

Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) claimed that teacher efficacy impacts teachers’ ability to improve their instructional practice. Similarly, my participants recognized students feed off their teachers, suggesting when teachers are passionate and confident in their instruction, they empower students to be passionate and confident in their learning. This dynamic is crucial for MTSS students who get discouraged. When teachers create an inviting and positive classroom culture,
students will show their full potential. As one participant stated during Phase 2, “When teachers have a strong sense of efficacy, they are empowered to make the best instructional decisions for their students.” Another participant emphasized that showing students they have the resilience to overcome obstacles teaches a crucial lesson in pursuing a productive life. Additionally, the teachers suggested recognizing students’ strengths can help them develop academically and socially.

**Recommendations for Practice**

My study revealed two important themes that administrators, district officials, and fellow interventionists need to consider. First, participants perceived the mandated instructional materials as too complex for use with MTSS students who are one or more levels behind in reading and writing skills. Second, they perceived the current behavioral support at CCE as ineffective. Administrators, teachers, and most importantly students are at a disadvantage as a result of these challenges.

**District Instructional Materials**

During Phase 2, several participants indicated the instructional materials the district purchases for ELA teachers do not always align with the standards. The materials’ complexity and rigor make them difficult to fit into limited instructional time and inaccessible to students. Participants noted Tier 1 students can barely master all the components within the pacing guide, which puts Tier 2 and Tier 3 students at an even greater disadvantage because of their existing challenges with ELA skills and strategies. One participant stated, “They are the
ones who are pulled out the most.” Another participant added, “MTSS students also tend to take the longest time to complete their work. With an already rigorous curriculum, MTSS students struggle to keep up or get ahead.”

Based on the Survey 2 results, the Learner-Centered ideology resonated with most participants, yet as learners change, educators must change their approach to addressing the required standards. Fluid teaching practices challenge ELA teachers because the social studies standards and curriculum recently changed. Moreover, the required ELA materials can hinder flexibility in Tier 1 instruction—let alone Tier 2 interventions. Teachers would be more willing to try innovative ways to present the curriculum if they were not bogged down by the required instructional materials and district policy. They feel obligated to use materials they know may not benefit some or most students in the allotted time.

My recommendation is to make the district aware of the misalignment between the standards and the materials, including how it impacts MTSS implementation. Interventionists need to assume the role of MTSS liaison by communicating teachers’ need for ample opportunities to provide feedback. In addition to communicating this need to district leaders, interventionists need to assure teachers their feedback has at least been considered. The type of feedback and approaches to improving MTSS may differ for every school, in accordance with each school’s unique MTSS components that are working well or need modification. District-wide, we should share what is working well so other schools can adopt the most promising ideas or processes. Interventionists throughout the district should have collaboration days with district officials to
report on the status of the MTSS process in their buildings, building accountability into the path to improving the MTSS model.

**Behavioral Support**

Another major theme that schools and district leaders need to acknowledge is CCE’s need for behavioral support—specifically, a consistent and effective behavior process within our MTSS model. Multiple participants suggested a whole-school behavior incentive. However, they primarily expressed the need for a full-time behavior interventionist—not just to pull MTSS students with behavior difficulties for the purpose of administering behavioral interventions, but also to support teachers in transferring behavior management skills to the classroom.

Ideally, behavioral support should hold students accountable for their learning and decisions. For some time now, we have been providing consequences and taking away privileges for unwanted behaviors, but we have not taught students how to achieve desired behaviors. Most students are aware of the expected behaviors, but they have not had consistent and ongoing interventions to teach them how to use coping strategies to demonstrate desired behaviors. Impulsive students especially need someone who possesses the skills to dig into the root of their decision-making. The responsibility is too much for teachers to bear alone. They lack the resources and support to achieve this level of problem-solving.

Additionally, student consequences rarely align with their behavior. For instance, silent lunch, in-school suspension, or walking laps will not fix the
problem of consistently leaving a mess in the bathroom or lunchroom, whereas helping the custodians clean up the mess and seeing the result of their actions may teach a lesson on empathy and help students understand why they need to make better choices. Imposing such an outcome for a full week may help students understand the difference between a punishment and a consequence, namely that being accountable for one’s behaviors and decisions is a consequence, not a punishment. Throughout this study, teachers communicated a constant struggle with MTSS behavior support. Therefore, in addition to hiring a behavioral interventionist who can put all their energy and time into behavioral needs, I recommend a schoolwide behavior system to cater to more than just Tier 1 students.

**Reflection on Methodology**

The focus of this study was to make teachers aware of the underlying factors that impact their ability to implement the MTSS model with fidelity. Initially, I envisioned a broader intervention to improve the MTSS model. However, some decisions along the way altered this plan. As intended, the data I gathered illuminated teachers’ perspectives on the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy, yet the anonymity of the data inhibited the kind of self-awareness that is “key to purposeful inquiry” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 50). Nevertheless, I believe my participants gained awareness and knowledge, planting a seed of curiosity about the MTSS model I can continue to nurture. In other words, this study served as a starting point for improving the MTSS model at CCE. Furthermore, the willingness of the 12 teachers to complete the surveys,
interviews, and the Phase 2 sessions contributed to the overall strength of the study.

I conducted the surveys anonymously because I wanted authentic and transparent data. I have worked with ELA teachers in Grades 3–5 for several years. I have a great rapport with all of them, but sometimes I suspect they are not fully honest about their needs and concerns because they do not want their frustrations to reflect on me or make me feel bad. In my view, anonymity enabled them to state their true perceptions without fear of being judged or questioned. In the one-on-one interviews, they shared their thoughts, but they each hesitated or held back a bit, especially when they granted me permission to record the interviews. I realized the teachers might fear judgment or rebuke.

Furthermore, using multiple pieces of data to identify the factors causing the challenges in complying with MTSS, sharing the data, and starting an action plan within the life of the study proved to be an ambitious goal. Because the complex MTSS framework comprises many unfamiliar and misunderstood components that require teachers’ diligence, I recognized the process of improving the MTSS model at CCE would extend beyond the life of this study. However, the data-sharing sessions within the study acquainted the participants with accepting new information, and they appreciated getting involved in the long-term pursuit of an improved MTSS model. Although I cannot prove a change in their individual perceptions, I can continue to seek such change through ongoing job-embedded PD. For now, I can celebrate the participants’ receptivity
to increasing their knowledge, which innately sparked a willingness to be active participants in the next steps of this ongoing AR.

The long-term goal of this initiative is to empower teachers at CCE to identify and implement the tools and resources to meet their MTSS students' academic and behavioral needs. However, I maintain that teachers first need the opportunity to voice their concerns, doubts, and questions. My study gave them this opportunity, and consistent with the principles of AR, they acquired insight they can apply toward enhancing their instruction (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I suspect the transferable knowledge this study ignited will continue to grow with ongoing, job-embedded PD.

In addition to PD opportunities related to behavior, I intend to continue offering general and academic-focused sessions throughout the year. In fact, I asked K–5 teachers to complete an anonymous survey requesting their feedback on this year’s MTSS efforts. The results, highlighting specific needs for each grade level, will drive the topics next year’s sessions cover.

Professional learning must be interactive, engaging, relevant, practical, transferable, teacher-driven, and ongoing (Matherson & Windle, 2017). This year’s opportunities at CCE, in harmony with the data-sharing sessions in my study, addressed general MTSS requirements and information, MTSS paperwork expectations, and analysis of multiple pieces of data. As the following section illustrates, I intend to build on this foundation next year.

Implementation Plan
AR is an ongoing cycle of improvement (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The problem driving this study was teachers’ lack of awareness of their role in the MTSS process. Considering my overall aim to improve the MTSS process at CCE, my research was a critical first step in the right direction, but I have more steps ahead of me. My vision is to expand the study to CCE’s MTSS teachers, improve the behavior support at CCE, and implement the recommendations made by participants. Some of these efforts are already underway.

**Conducting a Large-Scale Study**

In the midst of my study, I began transferring insights from my doctoral courses to my practice. In fact, CCE improved the MTSS model somewhat before I collected data, although there is room for more progress, and the themes of Phase 1 remain prevalent. I have taken on leadership roles that have presented new challenges and collaborative problem-solving opportunities. Although this study involved a small subset ($n = 12$) of the larger population of CCE faculty and staff ($N = 60$), I gained a better understanding of teachers’ needs and challenges. Therefore, I intend to conduct a large-scale version of my study in the context of the ongoing PD sessions already in place.

Lesh et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-method study of 300+ secondary administrators and teachers to explore their perceptions related to MTSS and recommended administrators and special education teachers should collaborate to lead relevant PD opportunities that build consensus around the MTSS model. Similarly, I plan to continue facilitating MTSS-related PD sessions that target specific grade-level needs throughout the year. I will provide a schedule with
dates and possible topics ahead of time. I envision the first two sessions as a large-scale version of my study, although I will switch to using confidential surveys to measure participants’ perceptions of the MTSS model, curriculum, and their efficacy. After sharing individual results with each teacher, I will present a collective (i.e., whole-group vs. grade-level) analysis of the results with each grade. My goal is to promote individual self-awareness and self-reflection to empower the group.

**Improving Behavioral Support at CCE**

In the past year, I have also examined the behavior management system at my school. Some resources and guidelines work. For instance, the behavior committee collaborated on a matrix that illustrates the school’s motto: seek intelligent solutions, be on board with learning, act responsibly, and respect others. They also created a flowchart to guide teachers through the steps for addressing problematic behaviors. However, the intensity and frequency of daily behavior problems that disrupt instructional time suggest a need to do more. Our current approach is practical for most CCE students but does not address the needs of all students.

Our school lacks ongoing training with the proper in-house MTSS support and coaching for our teachers who struggle to manage student behavior. Experts specifically recommend MTSS models with “systematic integration of mental health clinicians” (Stodden et al., 2023, p. 352). The official MTSS framework has a behavioral component to help educators identify and prevent problematic behaviors by teaching and reinforcing good behavior for all students and offering
additional support to those who need it (Condliffe et al., 2022; Lloyd et al., 2023). For CCE to implement the framework as intended, teachers and MTSS interventionists need training in effective and relevant strategies they can use to help their MTSS students cope with their behaviors. Just as instructional interventionists support students who struggle academically, we must also support students with impeding behaviors. MTSS was specifically designed to address the whole child by promoting academic, behavioral, and social–emotional skills. With the knowledge and tools to understand why problem behaviors occur and how to respond with empathy, teachers can react to student behaviors in more effective and innovative ways.

Zepeda (2019) emphasized several indicators of high-quality, job-embedded PD: relevance, feedback, inquiry and reflection, transfer of new skills into practice, reduced isolation, collaboration, ongoing growth, and open dialogue among colleagues and administration. I hope to provide opportunities for such professional growth and collaborative engagement at CCE. I will assess the effectiveness of this initiative with the reflection forms, field notes during the sessions, the products teachers share, and the comprehensive student data.

**Acting on Participants’ Recommendations**

We have received approval to hire a full-time behavior interventionist who provides pull-out and push-in interventions, in line with my participants’ recommendations. Although funding for an instructional assistant has been granted for this position, academic interventionists are prepared to support the person if we receive the same behavior training. This change will enable all
interventionists to analyze behavioral data that is relevant to each student’s social needs. By analyzing whole-school behavior data, we can identify patterns, such as the months with the highest and lowest number of incidents, and reflect on the nature of the events, such as whether the reports are more common for a particular grade level or in proximity to the most recent school holiday. I would also like to see the number of students designated for MTSS behavior interventions who received referrals. In addition, we could explore the number of students who have not been referred to MTSS for behavior but have repeated behavior incidents. Correlating types of behavior with individual students, grades, and classrooms would also be interesting.

Furthermore, we must assess whether the actions to address behavior problems were adequate in terms of whether the students began to cope, or their behavior worsened. Consequences should align with problematic behaviors, and interventions should align with desired behaviors. I want to explore the practical consequences that correlate with the most frequent behaviors. In addition, I would like to explore the proper intervention methods, strategies, and tools that can replace impeding behaviors.

Reflecting on the guidance I gleaned from my literature review, this investigation would occur in the form of ongoing, job-embedded PD (Zepeda, 2019). Building from the MTSS Self-Assessment I used in this study; I would focus on analyzing five critical components of behavior incidents to create an effective action plan by asking teachers five key questions:

- What behaviors are reported most frequently?
• Where are these behaviors being reported?
• When are these behavior referrals happening?
• Who are the students or groups of students demonstrating these behaviors?
• How often do these behavior referrals occur? (Panorama Education, n.d., p. 2).

These vital questions would enable us to delve into the patterns in our school behavior data.

I also propose administering surveys to identify students’ and teachers’ areas of need. Using resources from Panorama Education (2023), teachers could explore their perspectives on SEL and assess students’ grit, self-management, social awareness, self-efficacy, learning strategies, classroom effort, social perspective-taking, emotion regulation, and engagement. Sharing the results in a collective PD session may inspire teachers to buy into future sessions that align with their communicated areas of need.

Interventionists would be responsible for surveying teachers, and students will yield data for the first PD session, which I will treat as baseline data. Interventionists would also organize the data in preparation for presentation to teachers. I envision a four-session approach. I will focus on data-sharing in Session 1 and highlight the patterns and themes that surface in Session 2. Teachers will be trained to collect specific data related to students referred for behavior support. Using a list provided during Session 3, teachers will collect data on the problematic behaviors they witness, focusing on one to three
students daily for a 2-week period, and report their findings during the next session. Enlisting grade-level teachers in the collective analysis of the data will acknowledge the problematic behaviors they experience in their classrooms that are specific to that grade level and the students’ developmental stage. Session 4 will comprise collaborative data support. Teachers will list any patterns or themes in their data, and grade levels will report these analyses on poster paper. Lastly, teachers will complete a reflective Google Form. After all grade levels participate in Session 4, teachers will do a gallery walk to analyze the similarities and differences among the posters. A district behavior specialist or psychologist will visit quarterly to present ideas, resources, and strategies that align with teachers’ grade-level needs as communicated.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

For educators without MTSS experience, the framework is innovative, and research “has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). In that spirit, this section discusses future research topics related to improving the perceptions of the MTSS model. Although I was unable to conduct a large-scale quantitative study for my school during the life of this study, I recommend it for future research.

This small-scale study provided me with the opportunity to see the positive outcome in teacher perceptions by simply sharing relevant data with them. The open discussions were enriched with innovative ideas and a willingness to resolve the shared challenges that hinder the MTSS process from flowing as
intended. Rooting the study in SCT conveyed my understanding of the interwoven cognitive, environmental, and behavioral influences that affect MTSS implementation, and these forces were evident in my data. As a researcher, I gained an advantageous perspective on teachers’ needs simply by analyzing the pieces of anonymous data. However, I recognize that making the survey confidential as opposed to anonymous would have provided me as the researcher and each participant individualized data that could have ignited a different level of self-reflection. I must admit, if I could do it all over again, I would make the surveys confidential.

Nevertheless, the measuring tools were highly effective in providing data related to the three areas of focus in Research Question 1. Because the MTSS Self-Assessment covered all components of the framework, discussion of the Survey 1 results encompassed MTSS leadership, the distinct pieces of the system, how PD opportunities impact implementation, the system’s multi-tiered approach, and the necessity of ongoing and effective communication and collaboration. Analyzing a large-scale version of this survey could be overwhelming. Therefore, I recommend administering a confidential version and analyzing the results by grade level. In addition to yielding more manageable data sets, conducting the survey by grade level may align more with the overall goal of improving the MTSS process, and recognizing each grade level’s unique strengths and needs. In addition, it would be ideal for leadership teams within the district to use a self-monitoring system such as the Self-Assessment of MTSS
Implementation (SAM) to monitor the implementation of the MTSS model throughout the year.

I also recommend organizing the data by color-coding strong, neutral, and weak results. This approach will quickly highlight areas of need and strength for each teacher and the overall grade—or even the overall school. As researchers analyze the data they can prepare for data-sharing sessions by predicting where conversations may dwell and prevent problem-solving and ideas from flourishing. For instance, lack of time is a universal problem and may inspire negative tangents among participants. Preparing guiding questions based on the data can keep teachers focused on coming up with solutions.

Data sharing was a powerful component of the study. However, in future studies, teachers should know what set of data belongs to them to encourage further reflection on their responses. As in my study, sessions should be informal. Positioning the furniture in a way that communicates to teachers that the environment is safe and comfortable can ensure open discussion. Asking people to share their perspectives may put them in a vulnerable position, so I recommend respecting participants by not forcing them to share their results.

I also recommend using the other surveys in my study to foster participants’ professional and personal growth. A researcher could facilitate one session in which teachers complete and score their own surveys, providing support as needed. A follow-up session could focus on presenting and discussing the results. My approach exemplified in Figure 4.5 included instructional videos and visuals to help teachers understand the four curriculum
ideologies and the personal and professional impact of self-efficacy. As I observed, teachers may need background knowledge to understand these two concepts, improving the flow of discussion.

Finally, I also endorse the continued use of the reflection form with four key questions: new ideas, valuable takeaways, implementation of learning, and what else participants want to know. As in my study, I recommend collecting such data collection to design future PD sessions. Conducting analyses by individual teachers, grade levels, ELA versus Math teachers, schools, specific demographic domains, and other subgroups could be interesting.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, although I would like to report a decline in MTSS referrals and increased success with meeting instructional goals, including the percentage of students returning to Tier 1 instruction and a rise in MTSS student grades, I need to keep in mind that this AR occurred at a smaller scale, centered on ELA teachers’ perceptions. As the initial step to improving MTSS implementation at our school, my study can impact students down the road. AR is continuous, with every stage or cycle influencing the next (Beaulieu, 2013). This study was a pivotal first step in the right direction to improve the MTSS process at CCE. I plan to continue what I started as I advance my journey in the ongoing AR cycle toward improvement.
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Dear Educators,

As some of you may know, I am a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina, working with Dr. Elizabeth Currin. I invite you to participate in my dissertation study to bring awareness to the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) process at Crowders Creek Elementary School (CCE).

The study will examine teachers’ understanding and perceptions about how the MTSS model supports them in understanding and addressing student learning, impeding behaviors, and instructional effectiveness at CCE. You are eligible to participate in this study if you are an ELA teacher of third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade MTSS students. The study will occur in two phases. First, during October and November, I will ask you to complete three anonymous surveys via one Google Form, which should take approximately 30 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in one confidential one-on-one interview at school at a time convenient for you, which should last approximately 15 minutes. With your permission, I will record and transcribe the interview. Both the surveys and interviews will contain questions about MTSS, its use, and your views on what is and is not working in the MTSS process. After I learn about your understanding of and concerns about the MTSS process at CCE, the second phase, during January and February, will consist of two 30-minute professional development sessions held at school during a portion of your planning and designed to address the concerns and areas of weakness revealed in the overall responses from the surveys and interviews in Phase 1. In addition to group discussions about the content, the sessions will also include the completion of a brief reflection via Google Form.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may discontinue participation at any time. Your completion of the anonymous surveys via the Google Form will indicate your agreement to participate. Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,
Sahalja Dentico
APPENDIX B

SURVEY 1

MTSS Self-Assessment for School Districts (Panorama Education, n.d.)

Directions: Please click on the response that best describes your understanding of MTSS, regardless of whether you have ever used the MTSS model or experienced it in this school, this district, or a different district. If you are unsure about a question, please click what you think is the best response. Please fill out this survey independently. Remember, this survey is entirely anonymous, so please be honest. Thank you for your feedback!

Leadership:
1. How clear is your school or district’s vision for MTSS? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
2. To what extent are staff ‘bought in’ to leadership’s vision for MTSS implementation? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
3. Who is primarily responsible for carrying out interventions? (Interventionists, Counselors, Teachers, Other)
4. How clearly are expectations for MTSS implementation documented for staff? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
5. Open Response: Please elaborate on your answers above.

Systems:
1. How clear are decision-making processes for assigning students to Tier 2 supports? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
2. How clear are decision-making processes for assigning students to Tier 3 supports? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
3. How clear are decision-making processes for moving students out of Tier 2? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
4. How clear are decision-making processes for moving students out of Tier 3? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
5. How much time do appropriate staff have to understand student data? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)
6. How much time do appropriate staff have to disaggregate data to understand how different groups of students are doing? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)
7. How much time do appropriate staff have to identify appropriate tiered interventions? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)
8. How much time do appropriate staff have to monitor individual student progress? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)

9. How much time do appropriate staff have to gauge the effectiveness of interventions? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)

10. How much time do appropriate staff have to determine the best next steps for students based on their progress? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)

11. How much time do appropriate staff have to problem-solve challenges (constrained time, resources, etc.)? (An Appropriate Amount, Some Amount, A Small Amount, Not Enough)

12. To what extent are MTSS meetings structured with a clear agenda? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)

13. In student support meetings, how much time are you spending reviewing data versus defining interventions for students? (A Great Deal More, Somewhat More, A Little More, Equal, Less)

14. Open Response: Please elaborate on your answers above.

**Professional Development:**
1. How effective has training been so far on what MTSS is and why it's important for students? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All, We have not had training)
2. How comfortable are you using data to inform student support and interventions? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
3. Have you received training on how to carry out the following intervention types? Check all that apply. (Area: academics, behavior, attendance, social–emotional learning; Options: Tiers 1, 2, 3; no training; I don’t know).
4. Open Response: Please elaborate on your answers above.

**Three-Tiered System / Intervention Model:**
1. For which of the following areas does your school currently have established MTSS and intervention structures in place? Check all that apply. (Area: academics, behavior, attendance, social–emotional learning, other; Options: Tiers 1, 2, 3; I don’t know).
2. What percentage of students receive Tier 2 support in your school? (1–5%, 5–10%, 10–20%, 20–50%, 50%+)
3. What percentage of students receive Tier 3 support in your school? (1–5%, 5–10%, 10–20%, 20–50%, 50%+)
4. How effective is the process to know if an intervention is successful or needs to change course? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
5. Open Response: Please elaborate on your answers above.

**Communication and Collaboration:**
1. How confident are you that each student has the potential to achieve? (Extremely, Quite, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All)
2. How often do you check for biases in the process of creating and monitoring interventions for students? (Almost Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Once in a While, Almost Never)

3. How often does your team use asset-based (ensuring equity in the classroom by focusing on the strengths of diverse students) language when discussing observable needs and strengths of students? (Almost Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Once in a While, Almost Never)

4. How often do you reach out to students and their families to share positive updates? (Almost Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Once in a While, Almost Never)

5. How often do you provide feedback to improve your school or district’s MTSS process? (Almost Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Once in a While, Almost Never)

6. How often is your feedback incorporated to improve your school or district’s MTSS process? (Almost Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Once in a While, Almost Never)

7. Open Response: Please elaborate on your answers above.
APPENDIX C

SURVEY 2

Curriculum Ideologies Inventory (Schiro, 2013)

Directions: The following survey explores your views on curriculum. It is composed of six parts. In each part, you will find four statements with four ranking options. Read each statement carefully and then place:

1 for the statement that you like most
2 for the statement that you like second most
3 for the statement that you like third most
4 for the statement that you dislike the most

Use the numbers (1, 2, 3, and 4) only once in Part 1 of the inventory. For instance, there should only be one statement ranked 1, another statement ranked 2, another statement ranked 3, and another ranked 4. Please fill out this survey independently. Remember, this survey is entirely anonymous, so please be honest. Thank you for your feedback!

Part 1:

__ Schools should provide children with the ability to perceive problems in society, envision a better society, and act to change society so that there is social justice and a better life for all people.

__ Schools should fulfill the needs of society by efficiently training youth to function as mature constructive members of society.

__ Schools should be communities where the accumulated knowledge of the culture is transmitted to the youth.

__ Schools should be enjoyable, stimulating, child-centered environments organized around the developmental needs and interests of children as those needs and interests present themselves from day to day.

Part 2:

__ Teachers should be supervisors of student learning, utilizing instructional strategies that will optimize student learning.
Teachers should be companions to students, using the environment within which the student lives to help the student learn.

Teachers should be aids to children, helping them learn by presenting them with experiences from which they can make meaning.

Teachers should be knowledgeable people, transmitting that which is known to those who do not know it.

Part 3:

Learning best proceeds when the student is presented with the appropriate stimulus materials and positive reinforcement.

Learning best proceeds when the teacher clearly and accurately presents to the student that knowledge which the student is to acquire.

Learning best takes place when children are motivated to actively engage in experiences that allow them to create their own knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.

Learning best occurs when a student confronts a real social crisis and participates in the construction of a solution to that crisis.

Part 4:

The knowledge of most worth is the structured knowledge and ways of thinking that have come to be valued by the culture over time.

The knowledge of most worth is the personal meaning of oneself and of one’s world that comes from one’s direct experience in the world and one’s personal response to such experience.

The knowledge of most worth is the specific skills and capabilities for action that allow an individual to live a constructive life.

The knowledge of most worth is a set of social ideals, a commitment to those ideals, and an understanding of how to implement those ideals.

Part 5:

Childhood is essentially a time of learning in preparation for adulthood, when one will be a constructive, contributing member of society.
Childhood is essentially a period of intellectual development highlighted by growing reasoning ability and capacity for memory that results in ever greater absorption of cultural knowledge.

Childhood is essentially a time when children unfold according to their own innate natures, felt needs, organic impulses, and internal timetables. The focus is on children as they are during childhood rather than as they might be as adults.

Childhood is essentially a time for practice in and preparation for acting upon society to improve both oneself and the nature of society.

**Part 6:**

Evaluation should objectively indicate to others whether or not students can or cannot perform specific skills. Its purpose is to certify students’ competence to perform specific tasks.

Evaluation should continuously diagnose children’s needs and growth so that further growth can be promoted by appropriate adjustments to their learning environment. It is primarily for the children’s benefit, not for comparing children with each other or measuring them against predetermined standards.

Evaluation should be a subjective comparison of students’ performance with their capabilities. Its purpose is to indicate to both the students and others the extent to which they are living up to their capabilities.

Evaluation should objectively determine the amount of knowledge students have acquired. It allows students to be ranked from those with the greatest intellectual gain to those with the least.
APPENDIX D

SURVEY 3

Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Woolfolk Hoy, n.d.)

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by rating your level of ability for each question from 1 to 9:

1 if you feel your ability described in the question is that you can do “nothing”
2 . . . between “nothing” and “very little”
3 . . . that you can do “very little”
4 . . . between doing “nothing” and “very little”
5 . . . that you can have “some influence”
6 . . . between having “some influence” and doing “quite a bit”
7 . . . that you can do “quite a bit”
8 . . . between doing “quite a bit” and “a great deal”
9 . . . that you can do “a great deal”

Please fill out this survey independently. Remember, this survey is entirely anonymous, so please be honest. Thank you for your feedback!

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?
APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Preliminary Reminders: The interview will take under 15 minutes. I don’t anticipate any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to withdraw from the research anytime. Do I have your permission to record and transcribe?

1. What are your three main struggles in working with MTSS students?
2. How have your perceptions and experiences helped you work with students with backgrounds different from yours? Can you give me an example?
3. What challenges do you face in your role as an ELA teacher to adhere to the MTSS process and requirements? Can you give an example?
4. How do the school environment and the school policies impact your ability to follow the MTSS model to its fullest potential? Can you give an example?

Follow-Up: I will send you the transcript (if applicable) so you can correct any factual errors and refer to you with a pseudonym in my dissertation to maintain your confidentiality. Once I have completed the write-up, I will destroy the recording and my notes.
APPENDIX F

REFLECTION FORM

Directions: Please read each statement below and rate the MTSS professional development sessions as: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Agree. Please fill out this reflection form independently. Remember, this survey is entirely anonymous, so please be honest. Thank you for your feedback!

1. I have a better understanding of the MTSS process at my school.
2. I learned new ideas or concepts that I can apply to impact MTSS student learning.
3. These sessions were useful and practical for my role as an ELA teacher.
4. These sessions advanced my understanding of MTSS and how to engage in a continuous improvement cycle.
5. These PD sessions increased my capacity to use student data to improve my practice.
6. The facilitator presented appropriate instructional strategies and resources I can use with my Tier 2 and Tier 3 students.
7. The content and activities were relevant to my experiences and needs in my practice.
8. Time was allocated effectively to deepen my understanding of the presented material.
9. There were opportunities during the sessions to collaborate on shared activities and content.
10. The shared resources were relevant to my role and responsibilities in adhering to the MTSS process.
11. I feel more equipped to address the needs of my MTSS students.
12. I know who, what, where, and how to access the resources and support I may need to adhere to the MTSS process.
13. The new ideas I gained from these PD sessions are . . .
14. Of all the things learned in these sessions, the most valuable was . . .
15. I plan to implement these new ideas by . . .
16. I would like to know more about . . .
17. Questions, Comments, Concerns . . .
## APPENDIX G

### SURVEY 1 OPEN RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Systems</th>
<th>PD</th>
<th>Intervention Model</th>
<th>Communication/Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;MTSS has changed every year, so it makes it a little challenging to keep up with the expectations.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The longest part of the process for me is identifying and selecting an intervention. Selecting and writing the student’s goal takes a lot of time as well.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t want to ask for more training considering that we hardly have time for such things, but I do not feel equipped with the resources (or knowledge to select resources) for providing Tier 2 interventions.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;In the past, I have had data support moving a child off Tier 2, but no changes were ever made. It felt as though moving a child off support was ‘taboo.’&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I have only ever had the opportunity to provide feedback on MTSS at the end of a school year.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I am unsure of the type of intervention to use for students’ individual needs.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;There is less than two days of planning per week (on average - sometimes none) for teachers to plan interventions, analyze data or collaborate with interventions to determine student needs or student growth.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The training is mostly how to fill out forms, not how to actually implement the interventions.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I am not sure of the percent in the entire school, so I based my answers on my own classes.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Almost all students will be successful in a one-on-one or small group intervention. This does not frequently translate to independent or whole class instructions.&quot;</td>
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</table>
"I really appreciate how direct the MTSS staff is when explaining the expectations for teachers. For example, we have had two required meetings where the MTSS staff has provided explicit direction and actual resources we can use in the classroom."

"I don’t feel there is adequate time to look at interventions and progress monitoring data. There is so much that is put on teachers during the school day that unfortunately this is probably the area teachers push to the side most often."

"I appreciate the training we’ve had so far but sometimes it’s unclear what specific training we are receiving."

"I am not super clear I know the process to determine if an intervention is successful. Obviously, you would look at data from the progress monitoring, but I don’t know at what point it would show growth in a specific area."

"I am not sure how often feedback is incorporated to improve our school’s MTSS process or our district’s process."

"I feel like the MTSS leadership team does a good job of listening to our feedback."

"I think that because we have so many students who are in our system, it is hard for teachers to know what to do. Our MTSS team and interventionists try their hardest to help us and provide resources, but they have a full load themselves that puts so much work and effort into connecting with them."

"I feel like I struggle most with knowing what to do for behavior students who are Tiered 2 and 3. They are technically supposed to be receiving support outside the classroom or in my classroom at certain times of the week. Who is doing that? How do we actually get that done? We have worked hard to come up with a plan but it is a work in progress to understand and implement."

"I never know how/where to put my data and I always need help making decisions about how to move forward. This may be because I am a new teacher!"

"I love being able to communicate positively with parents."
Several PDs are done throughout the year to address concerns and implementation of MTSS. Each teacher or shared teachers meet with one representative of the MTSS team to discuss students and other questions that arise. This allows teachers for more one on one support and the team really gets to know the students.

More time is spent on adding students and coming up with goals. Putting data in the spreadsheet also takes up most of the time.

I have not necessarily received training but resources and ideas on how to carry out interventions in the areas of academics, behavior, and SEL. Attendance has not been addressed and SEL is my least comfortable.

There are several data points that are looked at to determine if progress is being made.

Teachers are overwhelmed and do not have time to give feedback.

I feel as if I have enough knowledge of my students and guidance to help me meet their intervention needs.

I believe the meetings that we have to review data help us to know if what we are doing is working or not.

I know we have discussed attendance and SEL in the school setting, but I do not remember discussing those topics as it relates to MTSS.

I do not think we have the most effective measure to determine if an intervention is successful because some students have been on MTSS for years.

I feel so overwhelmed trying to keep up with all the other daily demands, making recommendations for MTSS is a low-level priority.
and answer questions about MTSS implementation."

8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and interventionists work together to make sure the students are getting what they need from MTSS. Teachers and interventionists often have meetings to make sure teachers have resources and help with their students on the different tiers.</td>
<td>&quot;There is time to collaborate on data, but it would be nice to have time on a half day to really dive deep into this for the students.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We have had training, but some parts of behavior and SEL are not very clear.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Behavior and SEL are in need of some clarification.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Reaching out to parents and school team members is important.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Friday trainings during the first semester of school were helpful to teachers to know how to document, where to find resources, and information about upcoming meetings.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Those that implement MTSS need more time to analyze student data and correlate the appropriate resources to progress monitor. There should be an ample amount of time to ensure that the resources are effective. Further, there needs to be an ample amount of time to make the appropriate changes to resources and progress monitoring tools. Not enough time is given dedicated to doing these things for our tired students. For teachers, tier 2 is more informed SEL tier 1 is our new curriculum, but what interventions are in place for tier 2 and 3 students that need more support? I have not been trained in the attendance component. We have started discussing behavior interventions, but there are not enough resources to implement this, including personnel. Universal behavior supports have not been consistently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Not sure teachers are aware of when to change resources or intervention type.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;When are there opportunities to provide feedback on MTSS?&quot;</td>
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<td>Text</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Expectations are set at the beginning of the school year. The MTSS team gave presentations at the B.O.Y to help support staff with how MTSS works.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Some teachers come prepared with data already inputted and discussions can take place about interventions. When teachers do not have data inputted more time is spent looking at data and progress of students.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Not as familiar with SEL and attendance. This is more of an office thing for attendance.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“If students are making good progress or are regressing, we are able to look at data to determine if they need to fade interventions or increase them.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I feel like we could do a better job of incorporating teacher feedback on not doing it on days that are busy. I know this doesn’t always happen.”</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Everyone is not quite on the same page, especially for who should be referred.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Sometimes teachers feel intervention does not match student needs.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There have been some overview training and some training outside this district.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We do not all have the same understanding.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t often give feedback.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The MTSS program has transformed in the past few years at our school. The PD sessions really help to make things more clear on the expectation for the teacher. I feel like the responsibility of MTSS is much more shared now between everyone. Mrs. Dentico and Mrs. West do an absolutely amazing job with our”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We split the time defining where students are and reviewing their data. It is very appropriate.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I feel behavior interventions is our weakest area. The plans set in place for students with behaviors need to be more specific.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“This is easier said than “I feel like our MTSS team is always looking for feedback.”</td>
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</table>
MTSS program and it has truly evolved within the past five years that I have been working here.
APPENDIX H

PADLET RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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</thead>
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| Survey 1 Results | What is a piece of data or comment that stood out to you? Explain.                                   | After looking at the data presented, I have had time to conclude that everyone is doing the best we can with the resources and staffing we currently have. We are doing great considering the lack of staffing we have with our growing school. I think the sharing of this type of data needs to continue to be shared with staff, admin, and the district. Effective communication is a huge factor to make the changes we need to continue to see growth in our students in all areas - academics, behavior, and emotional intelligence. It is the only way we will be able to prepare our students for the inconsistent world they will be leading soon.

Unfortunately it seems money allocations in this district are focusing on the latest and greatest (Curriculum, Lucy Calkins, technology, etc). As opposed to “bubble” students’ academic needs. We need a redistribution of funds to meet the growing demands of students.

We do not have the proper resources and personnel to deal with behaviors. If we spend time focusing on behaviors in MTSS, we would have more time to better serve tier students academically. We need school wide consistency with dealing with behaviors.

100%!!! Why are we putting kids on MTSS for behavior when there are literally no resources to support them? No one knows what this is supposed to look like. This is the blind leading the blind.

We need to have support on the district level looking at our numbers and the percentages of students on MTSS. So much of what we teach builds upon the learning that students have acquired prior. If they are struggling, and do not receive the support they truly need, it will impact every grade going forward.

More time is needed across the board. |
We need to have MORE people…. more interventionists, another behavior interventionist, another reading recovery teacher STAT!

Very interesting that there are the most students who are in MTSS in 1st-3rd grade. Why do we not have extra support in these grade levels?

I think it needs to be considered whether curriculum is contributing to this. Are we unintentionally creating gaps for our students? It would be interesting to see if this is also a trend at other schools (in response to above post).

I was shocked to see the percentage of students school-wide on MTSS. Additionally, the high number of students on MTSS that are in first through third-grade.

I was surprised to see the percentage of students who were in the MTSS system.

I have always been taught that MTSS is supposed to be for “a minute,” not long term. Because then once it is long term what is really happening is providing a student sped. Based on our data for numbers across grade levels, I am curious to track how long we keep students in this program; is this continuation the effects of being overstretched? How does the duration of a student being in MTSS play into the efficacy of our intervention?

Yes! I have seen both sides of this issue--I have had the data to support moving a kid from Tier 3 to Tier 2, but my request was ignored. I have also been asked to pick kids to tier down (without data to support the move) because Tier 3 groups are full. If we are making decisions about selecting which students to serve based on how big the groups are, we are doing a disservice to students (in response to above post).

Survey 2 Results
Do you think your curricular ideologies and beliefs impact your instructional decisions?

100%! I believe that all students can learn and that creativity and excitement about what I teach are the best motivators (among many other things). I see patterns in my classroom where students are more successful when I am looking at them like they can do anything in the world, and when they think they can do anything in the world, where they actually start to succeed more frequently. I also see patterns that when I am excited about what I am presenting, they are excited. They don’t disrupt as much, are more engaged and motivated, and question me less. Those are just a few examples, but absolutely yes.

How I teach is fueled by what I believe about education. A thought I have had quite frequently lately is that if I believed one thing and then taught a totally different way (which we can so easily get stuck in doing—worksheets are easy to copy!!) I would be leaving totally unfulfilled—not to mention I would be living hypocritically. I would be so burned out if I was teaching in a way I didn’t believe in! When we see new
creative ideas that may take more time and energy and we are feeling down about teaching, trying them is typically just what we need to get back into loving it- and when we love it, we are reaching more kids.

My curricular ideologies shape my instructional decisions. My experience in teaching over the years helps to shape those ideologies. Working with a variety of students in different environments has helped me see the importance of student needs and creating environments that are conducive to learning. Having an abundance of empathy and understanding of all situations can guide instructional decisions in a way that optimizes learning.

I feel that our learners today are so different. They do not access the curriculum the way learners did back when I was a kid or even ten years ago. Educators need to change their approach and how they present the information to the standards that are required for us to teach. This is especially difficult for ELA teachers when the social studies standards and curriculum recently changed. In addition to this, we have required ELA materials that need to be used in the ELA curriculum. This ties us down in some ways because it prevents us from being able to be more flexible in our tier 1 instruction- let alone tier 2 interventions. I think teachers would be more willing to try innovative ways to present the curriculum if they were not bogged down by the required instructional materials that take an incredibly long time to complete and use as they are intended to be used. The “package” deal sounds and looks wonderful, but once you open and reveal the tons of components involved- it can become incredibly overwhelming to teachers. They feel obligated to use materials that they know may not benefit some or most of their students in the given allotted time.

Most definitely! I believe that my experiences working with students from a variety of backgrounds in both title-one and more privileged school districts, have lead me to take on a more learner centered approach. Building relationships with students and involving their interests is crucial to impact instruction.

Yes, my curricular ideology impacts my beliefs and instructional decision-making. My educational experiences and my initial teacher training formed my current ideology. My ideology evolved over the years based on policies, professional development, and experience as an educator. Although I do not know what specific ideology aligns with me, my educational philosophy aligns most with learner-centered because my daily decisions for my classroom involve thinking about how to make the activity enjoyable and how to motivate students to see their intellectual potential.

My curriculum ideology does play a major part in my instructional decisions. I try to expose students to different points of view and look for interesting topics to read, discuss and write about. I appreciate all the technology and personalized learning opportunities we have, but sometimes I think simple, to the point,
and structured lessons are more beneficial for most learners. This is especially true with foundational skills, which many students don’t seem to have mastered yet.

Yes, I definitely teach differently now than when I first started. With experience in Title One schools, changes in my personal life (becoming a mom) and continuing my education in general, they have all had an impact on my instructional decisions. Now I feel I am more learner based teaching and making connections rather than just having students regurgitate facts.

Yes! I believe that my curricular ideologies and beliefs impact my instructional decisions. A teachers’ belief impacts teaching behavior, learner development, and helps guide their decision making/interactions with their students.

Yes, I definitely believe my curricular ideologies impact my instructional decisions! I especially believe that having a learner centered view on evaluation should encourage us as educators to have our view on assessment be constant flow of adjustment and student focus... not comparison to other children.

I believe what I have learned over the years from teaching in many different types of schools have impacted the way I teach. Looking through the lenses of a teacher and a parent have also made me more student focused. Thinking back to what I thought was the best way through my initial education to what I have experienced as a parent moved me to see what students need and how it is important to give book knowledge in a way that fits the learner.

I absolutely believe my curricular ideologies impact my instructional decisions. I am a student centered learner. Therefore, I am sure I place less emphasis on social efficacy and how I am preparing the students for the workforce as opposed to meeting the students where they are in their learning.

Survey 3 Results

Do you think having a strong sense of efficacy can help students? Explain.

Absolutely. It’s the concept of practicing what you preach. Kids can see right through us. So, if we don’t believe we are being effective, then we won’t be. If we don’t believe these kids are getting what we need them to, then they won’t care, and they won’t get what we need them to!

Yes, when teachers have a strong sense of efficacy they are empowered to make the best instructional decisions for their students. They also are modeling what it takes to work hard towards a goal in order to be successful. Showing you have the resilience to overcome obstacles is crucial to a productive life.

Of course! Students feed off their teachers! They can sense when their teacher is passionate and confident. This is a game changer in empowering kids and building confidence in their learning and passions.
Absolutely, you have to have the belief in the change for the change to happen. If you don’t think you can make a difference in a student’s mindset or growth then you probably won’t.

Yes, I think if students feel confident in their teacher’s ability, they feel more comfortable to try new things and work harder. If you show them that no one is too difficult to teach and that you are not going to give up on them, eventually they stop giving up on themselves (hopefully). “All for One, and One for All” atmosphere can give students a sense of responsibility or duty to do their best for the group. I tell my kids, “I will not allow you to fail. I’ll work your fingers to the bone... but you will not fail.”

I believe that having a high self-efficacy affects your motivation and performance. When students see a teacher who is motivated and engaged I think they see this and want to do well for their teacher. I think this can also play a role in having a positive impact on student achievement. It’s like teamwork. One can affect the other.

Having a strong self efficacy as a teacher will encourage students. It’s important for students to see their teacher be confident in their ability to teach. This helps students understand how they can be a more confident learner.

Knowing your strengths in your efficacy can definitely help student development both academically and socially. What you as a teacher place the biggest emphasis on, is what you will see the most of in the classroom. The more you know about student engagement and learning strategies can only improve your classroom environment and management.

Yes, I definitely think having a strong sense of efficacy can help students. As a teacher you can model your own self efficacy to your students. As we share with students where we have struggled and overcome and then encourage them to do the same, we are displaying how we have grown. As we encourage them and share how much we believe in them, that can also help increase their own visions and goals for them.
# APPENDIX I

## REFLECTION FORM RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resources for intervention time and progress monitoring</td>
<td>The MTSS site with resources, steps, etc is extremely helpful.</td>
<td>I plan to review student data and progress and analyze skill deficits and search tools for interventions.</td>
<td>Behavior…who do teachers seek for support other than admin and guidance counselors, what resources/personnel do teachers have to manage behaviors effectively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Where to find progress monitoring tools.</td>
<td>How and what to set goals on taking more ownership in choosing appropriate goals.</td>
<td>Resources for progress monitoring.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel like I learned so much holistically about MTSS, the process, and the reasons behind different choices teachers and learners make within MTSS system. I believe this will help me better understand moving forward how to implement MTSS better and understand the thought process through MTSS.</td>
<td>Curriculum Ideologies</td>
<td>I am going to use the teachers’ sense of efficacy scale to better understand myself as an educator and what priorities I place in the classroom. I want to be a holistic teacher, so making sure I work on the curriculum ideologies I do not normally emphasis.</td>
<td>How the curriculum ideologies effect our curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I appreciated the resources that are in the MYSS google folder. We are all in this process together. Collaboration and discussion with one another is invaluable in this process. Taking specific time to dive into these resources. I also plan to share them with colleagues on my team.</td>
<td>Self efficacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How to use the resources I have to help my students achieve their goals. Behavior Resource Videos Watching the videos to help me connect with my students.</td>
<td>Behavior Resources</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The number of students in MTSS. Reflecting on the instructional decisions I implement in my classroom. Using graphic organizers and sentence frames.</td>
<td>Improving focus for ADHD kids.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>So much! Thank you! Learning that more interventionists are needed to meet the needs of our Tier 3 students! creating a plan and organizing it!</td>
<td>How can I help advocate for additional interventionist positions at CCE?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We could have more school-wide PD like this that gets everyone more on the same page. Considering different aspects of the process. Looking deeper into data.</td>
<td>How we can assess the effectiveness of our MTSS process and make adjustments as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>More data about the MTSS sessions from our school and how we can work together to lessen the number of students who require these services. The data from our school! Wow... I want to work more closely to plan tier II opportunities better.</td>
<td>How our data changes in the program over the next few years. And how can we get more awesome interventionists like you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I learned a lot from looking at the percentages of students on SIT at each grade level. Looking at the kids coming up--I reflected on how we can prepare for the high number of SIT students/new referrals. Curriculum ideologies and how it affect my instruction--finding a balance or using all ideologies in some way, Having activities throughout the year that reflect each one.</td>
<td>SIT data at other schools and how it compares to CCE. What are other schools doing that we are not? Should WE be doing those things too? Just curious...</td>
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I learned a lot from the PD sessions. The most valuable information I gained from the PD sessions are, learning about the school wide MTSS data trends and learning about the correlation between MTSS processes for the school, my self-efficacy and student achievement. For instance, I thought the most influential part of my decision making was tied to the school wide process for MTSS, but in reality, it is more in line with pedagogy.

The most valuable takeaway was learning about myself as an educator. Although I did not know what type of pedagogy style matched with my survey response, I do recognize the type of teacher I want to be. Ultimately, we need more time to reflect on pedagogy style. I do believe it changes based on the cohort, however reflection can help to check bias and make sure we are doing what is right for all students, even if that looks different year to year.

I want to purposefully take opportunities to reflect on my teaching practice and less on checking an MTSS procedure box. I want to get to a point in my career in which it’s less about what is comfortable for me as an educator and do what is best for each individual child.

School-wide MTSS data and exploring scheduling options to meet student needs.

Understanding different learning and personality styles and how they effect our teaching practices

What type of learner and educator I am so I can become more universal in my teaching

Becoming more effective in my tier 1 & 2 teaching by providing instruction that meets more than one learning style

Better ways to connect with interventions and classroom instruction