

Special Issue: Research Perspectives on Multi-tiered System of Support

Cheryl A. Utley

University of Illinois-Chicago (USA)

Festus E. Obiakor

Valdosta State University (USA)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Evidence-based programs and interventions targeting special education programs fall within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) which consists of increased instructional time, interventions, and improved educational outcomes for students in general and special education. The NASP Position Statement, “Appropriate Behavioral, Social, and Emotional Supports to Meet the Needs of All Students” (NASP, 2009) recommends the MTSS comprehensive framework to address the academic and social, emotional, and behavioral development of children and youth. The MTSS framework consists of principles of response to intervention (RtI) and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and integrates a continuum of system-wide resources, strategies, structures, and evidence-based practices for addressing barriers to student learning and discipline. Successful implementation of MTSS requires schools to implement a continuum of systematic, coordinated, evidence-based practices targeted to being responsive to the varying intensity of needs students have related to their academic and social emotional/behavioral development (Harn, Chard, Biancarosa, & Kame`enui, 2011; Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010).

The first article by Harn, Basaraba, Chard, and Fritz presents information and data on a longitudinal study designed to accelerate first graders at-risk for reading difficulties until the end of third grade. Interventions and student outcomes, including data on students’ progress across each year and information on how many continued to need instructional supports across time were described. The study concludes with a discussion on students continuing to demonstrate significant reading difficulties even after this level of intensive support. Lessons learned and reflections were provided on how these efforts may have been improved through more coordinated academic and behavioral supports.

The second article by Weisenburgh-Snyder, Malmquist, Robbins, and Lipshin is a case study detailing the rapid progress of a class of students during using Precision Teaching (PT), a frequency building instructional intervention, which consists of a multi-level assessment system, combined with evidence-based practices of teaching and learning within a RtI framework. The implementation of PT results in the systematic acceleration of student progress in mathematics. In addition, this study showed that PT contributed to MTSS by creating a common language between and amongst students, teachers, families, and administrators. In this unique blended system, the data collected by administrators, teachers, and students were continuously assessed and used to inform instruction and teacher training needs.

Within a PBIS conceptual framework, the third article by Utley and Obiakor examined a targeted intervention, the *Cool Tool*, at the secondary prevention

level to address problem behaviors of elementary students in an urban school. Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner (2008) noted that targeted interventions are designed to “provide efficient behavior support for students at risk of more intense problem behavior” (pp. 46-47). Key elements in the targeted intervention included organizational systems, intervention practices, and data use. The *Cool Tool*, a social skills intervention, focused on (a) teaching students appropriate social skills, (b) when to use social skills, and (c) routines for using the targeted intervention. Multiple assessments included pre-posttest classroom observations to measure teacher praise vs. reprimand and students’ on versus off task behaviors.

The fourth article by Freeman, Miller, and Newcomer incorporated both RTI and School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) in the MTSS and describes the integration of several tiered implementation models into one coherent, combined system designed to address literacy and social competence (Lane, Menzies, Ennis, & Bezdek, 2013; McIntosh & Goodman, in press). These authors discuss the role of school district leadership as an essential component for successful MTSS implementation. District leadership in MTSS provides schools with political and administrative support, training and technical assistance, layered in-service curricula, data-based decision making systems for ongoing evaluation, and access to interagency relationships for supporting student health and wellbeing. This article addressed key district mechanisms that are used to integrate academic and behavioral interventions as school personnel learn new strategies for improving outcomes for students.

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NOTE FROM THE JOURNAL EDITORS

This edition also includes a paper by Kat D. Alves, Michael J. Kennedy, Tiara S. Brown, and Michael Solis on story grammar instruction with third and fifth grade students and one by Sara E. Witmer, Elizabeth Cook, Heather Schmitt, and Marianne Clinton on the read-aloud accommodation during instruction, which are not part of the special issue guest-edited by Cheryl A. Utley and Festus E. Obiakor.