An Action Research Project Addressing the Perception of Strengths and Barriers to Communication at the Onset of the MTSS Initiative within the High School Setting

Taliah Ziyad-Nau

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AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT ADDRESSING THE PERCEPTION OF STRENGTHS AND BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION AT THE ONSET OF THE MTSS INITIATIVE WITHIN THE HIGH SCHOOL SETTING

A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY
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AUGUST 2019
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. (Philemon 1:6)

To my witnesses above, family and support, thank you.

Thank you to my dissertation committee Dr. Fenning, Dr. Pesce and Dr. Newell.
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ABSTRACT

The issue that this study addresses is the communication of the MTSS initiative within the high school setting. The MTSS process will allow access to evidence based intervention programs for student social, emotional (SE) support. The study consists of parallel interview protocols to understand the perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses in the communication of how to access the student support services. The results of interviewing a sample of staff and parents to understand how to improve access to social, emotional supports within the high school setting indicated that the strength of the MTSS initiative was staff awareness that SE supports existed within the high school. The weaknesses related to the consideration that the information received about how to access social emotional supports was not fully understood and lacked fidelity. Findings from the current study are consistent with existing RtI/MTSS literature documenting the challenges with stakeholder communication about MTSS in high school settings. The conclusion provides recommendations for improved communication as the process moves forward from the initial stages of implementation.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Topic Background

The purpose of this study is to identify barriers to providing consistent, social, emotional, behavioral interventions and tiered supports within the academic setting. The study of teacher, staff and parent perceptions of student access to social, emotional and behavioral interventions within the building will be specifically explored by examining how the services are communicated to these key stakeholders. The study will look specifically at communication structures for social, emotional, learning (SEL) systems, services and processes as part of a multi-tier systems of support (MTSS) that is currently beginning within a high school setting.

For the purposes of this study, communication of services relates to staff, teachers and parents acquiring an understanding of what social-emotional services are available in the building and how they may access them. National research documents that coordination of services within the high school setting has not been easily navigated (Freeman, Miller & Newcomer, 2015; Maras, Thompson, Lewis, Thornburg, & Hawk, 2015). Response to intervention (RtI) and positive behavior intervention systems (PBIS) have come together to form multi-tiered services of support (MTSS) (Eagle, Dowd-Eagle, Snyder, & Holtzman, 2015; Weisenburg-Snyder, Malmquist, Robbins, & Lipshin, 2015). MTSS may be defined as a system of multiple evidence based practices utilized to
achieve outcomes (Weisenburgh-Snyder et al., 2015). MTSS is parallel to RtI which was initially developed to focus on academic progress and outcomes. PBIS is a parallel process which has been used to promote social development and prevent the development of significant challenging behavior (Harn, Basaraba, Chard, & Fritz, 2015). The term RtI will be utilized interchangeably with MTSS throughout this document.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of the study is to identify strengths of current practices for communication of services and identification of communication barriers to accessing services for social, emotional and behavioral supports within the high school building.

**Research Question**

What are teachers, staff and parents’ perceptions of strengths and barriers specific to communication in accessing social emotional and behavioral supports in the building?

**Definitions**

In order to describe and understand individual experiences, this researcher has chosen to utilize a qualitative (Creswell, 2016) research approach. According to Flannery, Fenning, McGrath, and McIntosh (2014) full implementation of behavioral practice is estimated to occur within five to eight years at the high school level, compared to three to four years at the elementary and middle school levels. This qualitative study may be able to facilitate understanding of barriers in communication about SEL supports at the high school level and therefore anticipate and lessen the uncertainty during the length of time before there is change. Additionally, the intention is to increase the longevity of change as well as examine how strengths may be replicated, expanded and
supported. The rationale for using qualitative research is to understand the perceptions of a representative sample of research participants and to identify strengths and remove barriers to communication necessary for accessing social, emotional and behavioral supports. This knowledge allows service providers to respond from an informed perspective to improve services for students by improving communication about them with staff and parents, who are key stakeholders in accessing services for adolescents. If communication with key stakeholders is increased, then barriers in accessing SEL services will be reduced.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The RtI model has become more common within many schools, in part, due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Bineham, Shelby, Pazey, & Yates, 2014; Rowe, Witmer, Cook, & daCruz, 2014). In addition, according to the Illinois State Board of Education Guidance Document 12-04 (2012) within an RtI Framework, students must exhibit significant deficiencies based on progress monitoring data to be determined eligible for special education. Considering schools may utilize RtI for part of their process for the identification of students with learning disabilities, RtI has become more widely implemented (p. 19). RtI consists of the core component of moving struggling students through interventions that have been research based and implemented with fidelity (Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015). Consequently, educators are able to identify areas of student academic weakness. Universal screening, progress monitoring and quality instruction are delivered within a tiered framework. This review of literature will include the components of response to intervention, stakeholders’ perceived strengths and barriers of RtI implementation, support for program improvement and awareness of implementation science and how communication about practices impacts RtI (also known as MTSS). While this study focuses specifically about communication of SEL supports, it is being implemented within a MTSS framework, which is analogous to RtI and is a system of support in which behavioral, academic and
social-emotional supports are provided to students along a continuum and in an integrated fashion (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). MTSS will be the term to represent the combined effort of RtI and PBIS within this document and is the framework by which social emotional learning supports are being implemented in the school setting studied in this project.

**Implementation of MTSS**

Response to Intervention (RtI) was developed as a tiered approach to systematically structure academic supports, initially for reading (Harn et al., 2015), with more intense interventions utilized for students with increasing needs, beginning with Tier 1 (universal/core instruction delivered on a system wide basis) to the delivery of Tier 2 (group/supplemental) and/ or, Tier 3 (individualized and most intensive supports) when supports at the universal level are not effective, as determined by progress monitoring (Albrecht, Mathur, Jones, & Alazemi, 2015). MTSS is also used as a comprehensive framework that integrates the delivery of social-emotional learning, academic and behavioral supports to students along a tiered continuum (Eagle et al., 2015; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) is a commonly implemented behavioral system under the auspice of MTSS used to encourage social skills while preventing behavioral issues and struggles through the direct teaching and acknowledgement of behaviors on a universal/Tier 1 basis (Harn et al., 2015). RtI and PBIS have come together to form a multi-tier systems of support (MTSS) that allows a learning environment to promote academic progress and behavioral success in an integrated manner (Albrecht et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2015).
At the Tier 1 level, all students will receive a universal screening to identify and determine the necessity for early interventions and to evaluate the efficacy of the “core/universal” curriculum and system wide supports. This approach promotes preventive strategies, increases the robustness of the core/universal curriculum and helps determine the need for more immediate attention towards more intensive behavioral and social emotional supports (Dowdy et al., 2015). Universal screeners allow newly acquired data and interventions to be incorporated into systems of support already in place.

In addition, information about student strengths may be determined. The universal screening tool is valuable for the wider population of students, typically 75% to 85% (Dowdy et al., 2015; Harn et al., 2015). System level tools are useful for contributing to decision making that is based on data collected with all students in the population. Universal screening is utilized to determine the success of the student’s capacity to acquire the curriculum standards as intended for the overall general population of students, whether academic, behavioral or social-emotional supports are the focus of the support. Universal screening drives Tier 1 instruction and interventions for all students (Regan et al., 2015). High quality, differentiated instruction informs student social, emotional and academic practices. Towards the effort to meet the needs of all students, teachers are expected to differentiate instruction within Tier 1. Tier 1 is intended to provide high quality research based core instruction that is routinely evaluated by progress monitoring (Preston, Wood & Stecker, 2016). When a student is not making adequate academic growth in Tier 1, planning and problem solving are used
to identify interventions that will result in positively impacting student achievement. This progress monitoring (Preston et al., 2016) of student achievement is used to assess the intervention for effectiveness before deciding to modify the intervention and/or tier of support. For example, a new plan may require modification of Tier 1 supports or a determination that Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 supports are needed, in addition to what is provided at Tier 1 on a universal basis. While the example provided above is related to academics, this process is followed for social emotional and behavioral support implementation as well.

A Tier 2 intervention is applied as a secondary level of support, targeting strategic interventions most often considering 10% to 15% of all of the students (Harn et al., 2015; Utley & Obiakor, 2015). Tier 2 interventions should be affordable, efficient to carry out, readily accessible and should not require individualization to meet student needs. Behavioral interventions that have the components of explicit skill instruction, structured prompts for desired behavior, and practice within the school setting, including feedback that is frequently available, are ideal for a supplemental/Tier 2 support (Rodriguez, Campbell, Falcon, & Borgmeier, 2015).

**Support for Mental Health Services**

MTSS structures have been increasingly applied to the behavioral and social-emotional realm as well, but there is less implementation evidence supporting its use compared to MTSS in the academic domain (Maras et al., 2015). There are advantages to students having access to school-based tiered behavioral and mental health services aligned with a MTSS/RtI framework. Further indications are that when students
experience interventions that increase their range of emotional and behavioral (Day, Ji, DuBois, Silverthorn, & Flay, 2015) resilience, the effectiveness is evident across a range of environments beyond schools. The school may serve to increase the realm of strategies provided by determining student’s strengths, combined with identifying particular weaknesses, which may benefit all students (Kim, Furlong, Dowdy, & Felix, 2014). Interventions as tools for encouragement of behavioral expectations may be provided by practitioners who deliver group supports (Flannery et al., 2014). In the next section, some common interventions delivered as Tier 2 behavioral/social-emotional supports are reviewed.

**Social Emotional and Behavioral Supports**

**Check in Check Out**

Check in check out (CICO) is a Tier 2 behavioral intervention that is utilized to meet the individualized needs of students on a group basis for more efficiency in the service delivery and is often implemented in conjunction with schoolwide positive behavioral supports. According to a review by (Rodriguez et al. 2015), considering the immediacy of the availability of use of CICO, it has become more commonly used to gage success of student response to the implementation of interventions. While CICO is intended to inform practice through data, the process will look different across different settings. A challenge of CICO is that depending upon whether the student is a general education student or has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), services may “bridge and intersect” (Rodriguez et al., 2015, p. 226). In addition, a weakness recognized within the
literature is the need for more studies with CICO at the high school level (Rodriguez et al. 2015).

**Social Skills Training**

Social skills training may be utilized as a behavioral intervention. Social skills are considered a learned behavior (Utley & Obiakor, 2015). Social skills training or social skills groups may be implemented at the Tier 2 level. Some staff may not realize that some high school students have not learned socially appropriate skills (Flannery et al., 2014). At-risk urban students often experience interpersonal issues that negatively impact their capacity for academic achievement and appropriate behavioral functioning. At the Tier 3 level, intervention social skills training may be applied as a tertiary level of supports targeting intensive interventions most often provided for only 5% to 10% of all of the students in a school population (Harn et al., 2015) or 1% to 3% per other cited studies (Utley & Obiakor, 2015). More intensive Tier 3 interventions should be individualized, evidence based, include progress monitoring, teaming and evaluation for progress as well as implemented with fidelity (Harn et al., 2015; Utley & Obiakor, 2015).

The immediate context and setting has the goal of determining how best to meet the needs of students by electing the most appropriate method for gathering a team of individuals to formulate a tiered plan of interventions. Interventions are expected to contribute to an educational setting that supports student access to social, emotional, behavioral accommodations, while increasing their ability to further the academic curriculum with interventions, support services and family/community awareness.
Resources that are available for youth to offset the effects of developmental adversity are protective factors. Typically, low income disadvantaged communities experience greater exposure to depression and anxiety. Environments that have an increased rate of parental warmth, household organization, such as a structure for homework completion and higher levels of student school engagement for example, have protective factors against depression and anxiety (Day et al., 2016).

Staff who work with students may further support student mental health by maintaining cultural awareness and avoiding implicit cultural bias when implementing tiered supports. Implicit bias as retrieved from http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/, is a contributory subconscious assumption held by an individual that affects their mental constructs of other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age and appearance (Staats, Capatosto, Wright, & Jackson, 2016). According to the Kirwan Institute, structural racialization combined with implicit bias, impedes opportunities for housing, education, health and criminal justice. Professional development may serve to educate staff regarding how such awareness of implicit bias may promote school connectedness (Day et al., 2015) and an understanding of how staff unconscious bias may impact interchanges with students that result in behaviors being misinterpreted based on race (Staats et al., 2016).

**Challenges to MTSS and RtI Implementation**

There have been a number of challenges toward systematically determining a student’s response to treatment so that an intervention may be altered for intensity should the student demonstrate a lack of response to an intervention (Bineham et al., 2014).
Questions about how to implement interventions have been presented. Questions regarding practice, treatment fidelity and standardization of processes have been noted. When an intervention is consistently applied as intended to elicit a response based on a predetermined set of standards, then the intervention has been implemented with fidelity.

RtI/MTSS has many different models of implementation (Preston et al., 2016). A lack of time, a fast paced learning curve (Regan et al., 2015) an overwhelming accumulation of information and more work responsibilities are some of the noted barriers to RtI/MTSS implementation. There have not been any guidelines regarding the legislation for collaboration between general and special education. Furthermore, in an effort to support tiered interventions, teachers and staff have reported the need for continuous coaching, role clarification, allocation of responsibilities, instruction for collecting and analyzing data, direction for implementing interventions (Regan et al., 2015) and even procedural application. That is to say, an explanation and training regarding the who, what, when, where and how of the RtI framework is critical. According to the research of Flannery et al. (2014), another concern that impacts MTSS is the variable of the sheer size of the high schools. The number of staff and the organization of the various departments as well as the adolescent stage of development contribute to barriers present within the high school setting that directly impact how interventions are communicated to staff and parents.

**Implementation Literature**

Implementation science is a scientific study of the research findings that encourages the adoption of evidence based routines into professional practice (Foreman
et al., 2013) and policy for public consumption, which has applications for the delivery of social emotional supports within a MTSS structure. Implementation science research is applicable to this study because of its focus on examining a salient systematic issue that impacts the degree to which an evidence-supported intervention is implemented in practice as intended. Specifically, a major focus of this study is to examine potential barriers and strengths surrounding communication about SEL interventions with key stakeholders in a high school environment. Communication for accessing social, emotional health services may present a challenge when staff, teachers and parents are unclear about expectations, as explained by implementation science (Foreman et al., 2013). Use of core intervention components, local context adaptation, enhanced readiness through attention to the culture and climate of the community are integral. Various criteria are used to determine a definition of evidence based interventions (EBI). According to (Fixen et al., 2013) EBI are practices, specific to a setting, context and population that are provided within parameters that are known and may be held accountable to funders and communities. What works clearinghouse (WWC) applies the most stringent criteria to evaluate whether an intervention meets the standards as an EBI (WWW-https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Intervention/1241).

Implementation science has been offered as a way of explaining the concept of putting a practice into action within an organizational context (Foreman et al., 2013). In consideration for implementing EBI within the school setting, there are inherent challenges. According to the research of (Fixen, Blaše, Metz, & Van Dyke, 2013), paper implementation of policies such as putting new plans and procedures into place is
estimated to be prevalent as a demonstration of compliance for adopting a change. Such
efforts towards altering formal structures and systems will not create resulting change
that will benefit the community. Furthermore, performance implementation is the result
of a more thoughtful and purposeful plan, with the understanding that context is
important for successful attempts at change.

In relation to school context, the readiness of the school community needs to be
considered (Fixen et al., 2013). When stakeholders are able to provide input, engage in
collaboration and have been made aware of efforts, the range of preparation is favorable
for success. Communication of the methods for carrying out program expectations will
assist with informing stakeholders of program and policy changes. Having a better
understanding of how social emotional learning supports are communicated to key
stakeholders is the primary purpose of this study. Examples of communication about
implementation activities (Foreman et al., 2013), such as presenting information at staff
meetings, engaging professional learning communities (PLC), parent organizations, as
well as structuring teacher informational conversations, making room to meet, creating
student manuals, providing ongoing training and making adaptations that are most
appropriate for the school culture will assist with creating stakeholder satisfaction.
Difficulties with collaboration will be decreased with communication efforts across
district support personnel and leadership (Freeman et al., 2015).

The implementation process is considered to occur in stages. According to Fixen
et al. (2013), the stages are exploration and adoption (identifying the need through
interactions), program installation (consumption of resources in preparation for the new
evidence based program), initial implementation (change, it is noted that attempts at new practices may end here), full operation (as agreed upon practices are adapted and carried out), innovation (opportunities for refinement) and finally (Fixen et al., 2013), sustainability (long-term survival despite changing influences).

Implementation research is focused on understanding how Evidence Based Interventions (EBI) may be implemented and sustained. EBI are education programs that have evidentiary support about the effectiveness of a program (Efron & Ravid 2013). Barriers to implementation are finances, lack of time, negative beliefs about the intervention, other competing priorities, as well as laws and policies (Foreman et al., 2013). Positive influences for successful EBI implementation are teacher, principal, administrator support, technical assistance, program integration, school community planning, methods to accommodate staff and administrator turnover, quality training, technical assistance, alignment with school policies/goals, and visibility of the impact of the intervention.

In order to improve the accuracy of EBIs, implementors will need support (Foreman et al., 2013) to develop their competencies in implementation. EBI are likely to be adapted for efficiency, simplicity, experience, resources that are available and in response to participants, to name a few school contextual issues. Critical elements and adaptations should be documented and tested. Determining the minimum number of necessary elements to maintain fidelity are considered essential (Foreman et al., 2013).

The practice-to-policy communication loop (Fixen et al., 2103) is an option towards using communication to spread information including system goals and
functions. Interventions as treatment and efforts towards evidence-based practices that may benefit the community inform practice during implementation. At the systems level, open communication (Fixen et al., 2013) will assist with barriers at the onset of difficulties and is, therefore, the primary focus of this study.

In consideration for systems thinking (Senge, 2012), context is important for implementing program changes. Implementation drivers, as contextualized by implementation science, are factors such as staff selection, preservice/in-service training, coaching, consultation, program evaluation and administration support to facilitate systems interventions and encouragement of fidelity (Fixen et al., 2013). According to Fixen et al., a meta-analysis indicated that coaching in the classroom yielded an outcome rate of 95% likelihood when participants have knowledge and can demonstrate the skill within the setting, resulting in the participants using the skill in the classroom setting. Comparatively, there were much lower rates of usage when training components were theory and discussion rather than demonstration training and practice with feedback.

Desirable characteristics of a good coach and mentor are encouraging, supportive, sensitive, flexible, committed, respectful, diplomatic, enthusiastic, patient and willing to share credit, information and recognition (Fixen et al., 2013). In fact, Fixen et al. note, practitioners are the intervention in the field of human services. Time, reluctance to seek mentor assistance, role confusion, and inadequacy in self-perception, lack of availability of coaches and poor practitioner and coach match are detrimental.

Despite wide use in professional development and systems change work, providing information and training alone does not inform effective change
implementation (Fixen et al., 2013). Skills based performance and practitioners implementing programs with fidelity, aligning the organization with intended practice and sustaining efforts over time are contributory to effective practices and are the aspects of implementation science that are the most important potential contributions to be garnered. Information regarding what does not work is further advanced, instead of much needed research to determine what works (Fixen et al., 2013).

**Maintaining Resilience**

Reinforcing processes, a construct described by Senge (2012), focuses on how systems operate with feedback loops or a balancing process, which revert system change efforts to a prior state of normed expectation and status quo for the system. Described as a system that operates with an internal balancing for self-maintenance, working towards overcoming such an influence, would be within this cycle of barriers to overcome. Therefore, continuously checking and monitoring during MTSS implementation will positively assist in keeping SEL services viable in a system that will be inclined to revert to ineffective and/or non-existent routines according to systems change theorists such as Senge. Communication, the focus of this study, is an important consideration in keeping system change moving forward toward continued progress and sustainability. With the potential of adversity for implementing systems change, the practice of encouraging (Foreman et al., 2013) increasing levels of participant buy in through program adaptability, including consideration for cultural diversity and the promotion of quality teacher programing, visible and measurable improved student functioning and teacher success, will result in teacher motivation to correctly implement programming.
Stakeholder resilience throughout the stages of change within the implementation process (Fixen et al., 2013) can be promoted through viable communication processes, which is being evaluated under the auspices of the current study.

For this research project, barriers and facilitators to accessing tiered social emotional supports among educators will be examined with a specific focus on how communication systems and structures either encourage or discourage access. Barriers to accessing social, emotional and behavioral supports may include challenges to communication within the setting, which is the primary focus of this doctoral research project (DRP). The process by which staff can access student support and the communication regarding intervention follow through will be considered.

Communication is a barrier to accessing MTSS in high schools due to the inconsistent allocation of time for teacher and staff to confer about student concerns. Further, staff, teachers and parents may not be aware of the expectations (Regan et al., 2015) for themselves towards providing access to services for MTSS to students within the larger high school context. Given the time, teachers are capable of learning from one another through an open-door policy, idea sharing and gradual team building. Additional difficulties relate to the range of teacher, staff and parent familiarity with exactly what programs are available for students (Regan et al., 2015). Staff may not have the confidence (Fixen et al., 2013) for responding to student needs within the RtI/MTSS process. In addition to understanding how to access services, staff should be knowledgeable about the intervention (Fixen et al., 2013) as well as have the confidence to carry out the intervention. In the case of this study, staff and parents should be
knowledgeable about which SEL programs exist and how to access them on behalf of students. This knowledge is dependent on communication and understanding that SEL programs exist and how to access them.

School psychologists, school counselors and social workers are in a position to lead staff and administration towards an organized approach for a systemized service delivery model (Maras et al., 2015), which includes communication and collaboration with key stakeholders, such as parents and staff. Collaboration of the expected model for service delivery is required, as well as staff buy in and support from parents and administration (Freeman et al., 2015; Miller, Patwa, & Chafouleas, 2015). If students are to benefit from interventions, teachers and personnel who work directly with students (Fixen et al., 2013) will need to be capable of accessing and efficiently utilizing a variety of data driven and scientifically informed practices. Further, they need to know that SEL exists in the first place within their buildings in order to refer their students to them.

Summary

The implementation of MTSS services and programs may be met with some challenges within the high school setting, particularly in relation to how it is communicated and understood by key stakeholders such as the parents and staff who need to know these services are available, what they are and how to access them on behalf of young people when needed. Therefore, communication about SEL services with key stakeholders in an environment with limited resources and that serves students who face low income and a variety of challenges for social, emotional needs, typical of an adolescent population, is the focus of this study. The SEL services are being delivered
within an MTSS framework that integrates tiered behavioral and social-emotional supports within the building. The allocation of structured and timely communication regarding staff, parents and teacher feedback for service delivery and staff expectations are variables that contribute greatly to whether SEL programming, as part of MTSS practices, is successfully implemented, adopted and sustained. Nevertheless, it is possible to determine what impact the decisions that are made in relation to SEL program selection and implementation have on the system of services, and how one may positively affect programs, services, student, family and community outcomes by showing how the current communication structures are perceived by key stakeholders. Understanding the current state of the structures will facilitate recommendations to improved communication so that SEL practices are being implemented as intended.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

School District Context and Existing Practices

In the school district where this research was conducted, there is a team comprised of counselors, social workers, school psychologists and an administrator. As part of the foundation leading to the implementation of MTSS for social emotional supports to address student behavior, the group meets to discuss student Social Emotional Learning (SEL) needs, and to refer students to group counseling services and intervention programming. The team was created to bring service providers together to coordinate accommodations for students who may be exhibiting a need for closer monitoring to determine what specific social, emotional and behavioral services inside or outside of the immediate school setting would lead students toward a successful academic experience.

One example of an intervention program, currently offered at Tier 2 within the building is Think First (Larson, 2005), which is an evidence based, small group intervention, intended to direct anger and responsive aggression. The Think First program is intended to improve the student’s ability to maintain self-control and personal feelings of anger, increase the capacity for empathy, improve academic interest and provide the student with a useful method for ongoing problem solving, from a cognitive-behavioral orientation. Prior to working with students, group leaders are trained in cognitive behavioral therapy techniques and behavioral skills training. Student meetings are held
weekly. This pilot program was started to support student development and facilitate access to social emotional programing at the high school. Additional social-emotional and behavioral assistance implementation in the Fall of 2018 were Check-In-Check-Out (CICO) which allows students to access an adult for social, emotional encouragement (Rodriguez et al., 2015) and trauma counseling such as Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in schools (CBITS), which allows students to receive social, emotional support for their previous exposure to violence (Jaycox, 2004). Both interventions provide students with the opportunity to connect with school personnel who are capable of assisting them with the maintenance of their emotional health and well-being.

**Setting**

The research took place within one high school located in a Midwestern suburb, which is one of three high schools in a large school district. The district serves students from grades 9-12, with a total student enrollment of 4,430. Student characteristics include 2.9% White, 43.7% Black, 49.1% Hispanic and 41.7% Low Income. The overall attendance rate is 82.5%. Full time teacher racial/ethnic demographics are as follows: 67.9% White, 19.5% Black and 7.3% Hispanic. The graduation rate is 74.9% within four years and 80.7% within six years. Historically, post-secondary remediation has been 74.3% compared to 46.8 % statewide. Additionally, based on a reported 574 days of documented suspensions for various incidents at the high school level (Illinois Center for School Improvement, 2016), the need for structured SEL supports is warranted to address student behavior and mental health needs in a proactive manner.
In the current high school building setting being examined, the school strengths in SEL relate to the recent implementation of programs within the high school that are organized across tiers of support. Additional Tutoring for Students (ATS) is a Tier 1 support that is offered to all grade level students every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8:00 am to 8:50 for the first period of the day. As part of this academic focused intervention, students may report to the class of their choice to speak to a counselor, social worker, school psychologist or teacher for social emotional and or academic tutoring or remediation.

Towards encouraging wellness and social-emotional health, one classroom has been converted into a relaxation room. Students may go there to listen to music, exercise and leisurely utilize technology. Students may use the room to diffuse. Another classroom has been converted into a study room. Students may go there to complete academic assignments. The fragranced rooms have been decorated with donated furniture, positive signage, rugs, lamps and various spaces for students to sit alone or in a group. The rooms are supervised by teachers. Students at all grade levels may use the rooms before the start of school during ATS.

In addition, the high school is in the piloting stage of implementing a Tier 2 intervention, more specifically, Think First (Larson, 2005). School psychologists, counselors, social workers and two classroom teachers have been trained in the application of Think First. Also, various social skills training groups are facilitated by social workers as part of the Tier 2 social-emotional supports. According to RtI/MTSS
practices, these same staff received training for trauma counseling CBITS (Jaycox, 2004) and the continuation of Think First (Larson, 2005) during the Fall of 2018.

All students are able to access Tier 2 social, emotional and behavioral supports through the process of service providers teaming to recommend, allocate and refer students to an appropriate tiered intervention. Specifically, an evidence based, small group program intended to increase student’s capacity to regulate their problematic anger, Think First (Larson, 2005), is the initial tier 2 program being implemented in the building. CBITS (Jaycox, 2004) has also been introduced through staff service provider training and selected students have been given access to trauma counseling through the CBITS intervention.

Tier 3 behavioral and social-emotional interventions are available through interventionists that are partnering agencies housed within the high school building. Referral and access to partnering agencies for inside and outside of school, individual or family therapy are considered Tier 3 services and are accessed by counselor recommendation. Planning for programming and professional development, for continuation from the Fall of 2017 is in progress. Overall, to date, there has not been any formalized staff training for RtI/MTSS specifically, within the high school setting, nor has there been any training for how to refer students to SEL supports.

See Figure 1, graphic for the types of tiered behavioral and social-emotional supports available within the building.
Figure 1. Graphic of Available Social Emotional Interventions

Participants

The sample population for my qualitative research were certified high school teachers, and student support staff responsible for carrying out curriculum instruction for students in grades ranging from 9th though 12th. The parent participants live in the high school community, has or has had students attending the high school and are able to share their perceptions about the communication of the services provided within the high school. These randomly selected participants are representative of the teacher, parent and staff population at the high school. They were sought as participants because they can offer unique perspectives about strengths and barriers surrounding communication of the social, emotional and behavioral supports within the building.
The participants represented varied roles and perspectives within the school community and are all impacted by the delivery of SEL services in the building, either in a direct or indirect manner.

**Sampling Strategy**

**Participant Recruitment**

To recruit certified staff, all 94 certified staff and teachers in the building received a Loyola University Chicago Internal Review Board (IRB) approved script by email, requesting participation in the study. Those selected represented a sampling of participants that were chosen due to their status as certified staff, thereby potentially having implicit knowledge based upon their employment within the high school. All teacher and staff respondents were certified and represent the various programs and services available within the high school setting.

Of those 94 potential participants, the first six certified staff who expressed an interest in participating were contacted for an interview. All of the certified staff had roles as teachers in the building and provided consent prior to the interview.

In order to obtain parents for the study, the researcher attended a parent meeting held at the high school. The IRB approved script was read to invite parental participation in the research. Two parents immediately volunteered to participate. The two selected parents represented families and the community. One parent followed through to return to the school for the interview at a scheduled time. On a different day, a second parent present at the high school was randomly approached to obtain their consent to participate.
in the study. The parent agreed to be interviewed and provided consent before the interview began.

**Measures/Instrumentation**

An individual interview format was used. According to Creswell (2016), this technique will allow individuals to share their experiences regarding the research questions.

Within the one-on-one format, the researcher interviewed participants using a semi structured format. Participants answered open ended questions that were previously prepared, in the format of an interview protocol. The reader is directed to Appendix A and Appendix B for the interview questions. After answering the prepared, open-ended questions, participants were encouraged to raise concerns regarding the topic of study.

The data collection instrument was a clear and open-ended questionnaire that was administered by the researcher in a 1-1 interview format. The interviewer asked knowledge questions as well as questions to elicit perceptions of communication and understanding of social-emotional and behavioral supports within the building.

There were eight separate one-on-one interviews that allowed enough time for participants to fully answer interview questions. One-on-one interviews were chosen to encourage participants to respond from their personal perspective in a way that may be encumbered within a group. For example, a teacher may not feel comfortable sharing his/her perspective in front of a parent or administrator or a parent might not be comfortable disclosing information with other parents and/or their children’s teachers or
administrators (Fenning, personal communication, 2018). The one-on-one interview had the best potential for a rich and authentic exchange.

The interview protocol consisted of a series of open-ended questions. Questions presented to staff, teachers and parents measured the strengths and barriers of communication for accessing student services within the high school. Example questions were as follows: “Are social, emotional learning supports described to you in your school?” “Has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you? “Have you received information about tiered interventions at your high school?”

**Procedure**

**Participants**

In an effort to interview a random sample of individuals who were representative of teachers, staff and parents, participants received a one-on-one, semi structured interview to answer questions that explained their perceptions of the communication of student social-emotional services that are available within the high school.

Interviews were set up at a date/time that was convenient for participants. The researcher collected data by facilitating eight separate, one-on-one interviews within a private meeting room located at the high school. The participants provided informed consent before the interviews began. A participant number was assigned, personally identifiable information was not included in any of the data collection tools. Participant numbers were referenced during interviews. Individuals were not identified by name. If a participant inadvertently used their name or identified any one, the information was
removed from the audio file as well as written transcripts that were produced from the audio files. The participants were led by the researcher, through a 40 to 45 minute long (no longer than 60 minutes), facilitated interview from an open-ended interview questionnaire with a semi structured format that allowed a new area of focus or set of concerns to emerge from the interview. The participants completed the demographic data form, which appears in Appendix A and Appendix B. The researcher transcribed the answers given, including demographic information. The interview was audio recorded for later transcription.

**Data Collection Procedures**

This research utilized an interview format to interview a sample population of certified high school teachers (n=6) as well as parents (n=2) living in the high school community in a private office location at the school. Teachers and parents participated in the individual interviews to share their perception of the services offered within the high school setting. Questions about past practices as well as current practices were explored to understand and continue relevant and effective practices and customs. After consent was obtained, the interviews took place and were audio-recorded. Participants were asked to answer 13-15 questions to indicate the unique perspectives of what the strengths and barriers for the communication of social, emotional, behavioral supports are within the high school setting. The interviews lasted no more than 60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription company and were returned to the researcher who compiled and analyzed the findings.
Development of a Code Book

Each of the transcripts were read multiple times by the researcher. The individual participant responses to each of the questions was categorized into an Excel coding sheet. Each of the categories were distinguished by a definition. See Appendix C for the Teacher/Staff Coding Protocol and Appendix D for the Parent Coding Protocol. Coding of the responses was used to examine the unique views of participants and to determine the relevant data to answer the research question by examining the pattern of categories presented. Once the coding system was created and behavioral definitions finalized, each category of response for each question was tallied across teacher, staff and parent participants. From this, a percentage of each category was calculated. The responses were then summarized across participants to answer the research questions about communication of SEL structures. Creswell (2016) further expanded that summaries may be created from the major themes to interpret and make sense of text data. Research participant demographic data are listed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Utilizing chunks of information from the interviews made it possible to determine strengths and barriers to accessing services and making it possible to answer research questions. The strengths and barriers to accessing social, emotional and behavioral services emerged from the codes in the interviews completed by the participants. Recording the words of the participants, allows one to capture the richness of what was shared, according to Creswell (2016).
Table 1

**Teachers/Staff Participant Descriptive Statistics (n=6)**

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Table 2

**Parent Descriptive Statistics (n=2)**

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<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Researcher Biases**

Considering the researcher has an extensive involvement with the individuals within the school setting, it is important to acknowledge that there is some level of awareness that research results may have indicated a trend towards support for the successful implementation of a newly introduced plan for the high school students, staff/teacher success within the community as well as potential biases as a school psychologist within the district. A successful program initiative will bring stakeholders together toward a common purpose with a goal and understanding for the process. It is from this bias that questions have been designed.

The intention was to provide an awareness of themes within the communication about SEL practices. Acknowledgement of any weaknesses within the communication of the service delivery system may prompt steps to improve the communication format and follow through about SEL supports in the building. It is out of the bias for an improved communication of service delivery that the researcher has sought to address the weaknesses and encourage solutions for the areas of need for improvement. It is noteworthy to share that the researcher is capable of accurate research due to the nature of being embedded in the research environment, yet being internal to the system also brings biases forward. An additional bias and strength are familiarity with the certified staff who have been interviewed. Nevertheless, as the researcher has no authority over the participants, respondents were free to speak about their experiences regardless of the researcher having a dual relationship of also being a school based mental health professional in the building.
Analysis

The value of using qualitative research (Creswell, 2016) is to examine and understand the perceptions of a representative sample of research participants and to identify strengths and remove barriers to communication for accessing social, emotional and behavioral supports. This knowledge will provide reinforcement in encouraging service providers to respond from an informed perspective to improve service delivery for students by enhancing communication through increasing strengths and reducing barriers to accessing services. It is also important to examine the voices that are the most impacted by the SEL service delivery.

The demographic data was used to describe the interview sample participants. Research participant voice was heard through the use of quotes and rich descriptions (Lyons et al., 2013) that aligned with the codes developed directly from reading the transcripts.

Analytic Technique and Data Sources

While the constant comparison method was initially considered as the approach to utilize for analyzing the data for this study, ultimately, it was decided that the method of content analysis would be the approach to use instead. Described as a diverse method for the analysis of the data, Glasser (1965) has suggested the use of combining the explicit coding of “all relevant data” systematically with a second method of analysis for an analytic procedure comparable to constant comparison, encouraging the development of theory from a systematic approach will support an understanding of both strengths and barriers to improve communication about the services provided as well as the best or
preferred method for accessing supports. Determining patterns for understanding data and relationships regarding communication and recommendations from experts in the field of education will serve as a point of reference through a review of literature.

Fenning et al. (2012) utilized the content analysis method to analyze discipline policies from 120 high school-level policies collected from six states. Additionally, Efron and Ravid (2013) described the strategy of determining meaning from the findings. Towards Action Research, the researcher read the transcripts, created a spread sheet, determined categories on the basis of the responses, tabulated responses for each category by participant type (teacher-staff/parents) and determined the percentage of responses for each category.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Teacher Participants

Results of the qualitative research are based on teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of strengths and barriers to communication towards accessing social, emotional and behavioral supports in the high school. While the study was presented to all certified staff including, a school psychologist, counselors and social workers, the first respondents to volunteer for the study were teachers. Therefore, teachers were the only certified staff who participated in the study. The researcher will present the frequency tabulation of responses/results made by the teacher participants for each of the categories created in the codebook that correspond to each question. The format which follows presents each question from the interview protocol, followed by the percentage of the teacher participants who provided a particular response category for each of the questions. Rich quotes and descriptions are also included.

Teacher Perceptions

SEL Supports Described

In response to the question, “In what ways are social emotional learning (SEL) supports described to you in your school?” 4/6 or 66% of teachers said they received the information within a group meeting. A single teacher participant said that the description of SE supports was through written correspondence and a single teacher participant said
tiered supports were the way social supports had been described to him/her. Respondents answered, “There was a presentation done for a group, and you were a part of that group. But as an individual, you do not feel like it was described to you. I do not feel that if I had specific questions, who would I go to? Is there a person here that has been given that role”? Another respondent stated, “With the freshmen meetings we go to. Fridays we have a get together and they talk about social emotional supports”. Another stated, “Yes we’ve had some in-servicing events where they’ve been outlined for us. Another respondent indicated, “They are communicated via presentations during school institute or there are pamphlets handed out to teachers”. Another respondent, “The school has MTSS tiered support systems, they have social, emotional small groups for students with specific needs”. Another respondent stated, “The school doesn’t describe it, but my education is based off of it”.

**Communication Received about SEL Programs**

In response to the question, “What types of communication about SEL programs have been received”? 3/6 or 50% of those interviewed received communication about SEL programs from a group presentation. One of the three also said he/she received written communication in addition to the group meeting. Two participants indicated they were partially informed about the types of communication about SEL programs, while one participant said she did not receive information from the general school population. According to respondents, “Not sure, was it presented to me as; this is SEL related material, and this is how we plan to use it, and this is your involvement in the process? That was not relayed to me”. Another, “I didn’t. I do remember we did receive
something and there was a committee. They work with, I don’t know the name of it but they work with about 10 to 20 kids. I don’t remember.” Another response was, “We get a lot of information from these in servicing, so I imagine there’s been some handout that I have filed somewhere.” Another, “Just through presentation. I think it was institute (day).” One participant shared, “From social workers, there have been emails about specific groups and the purpose of the groups and when they meet.”

Facilitation of SEL Supports

In response to the question, “What are some ways in which communication about SEL supports could be facilitated?”, 3/6 or half of the respondents said written communication, 3/6 or half of the respondents said verbal communication, while 2/6 or 33%, a low frequency response, was that a group presentation was indicated as a way to facilitate communication about SEL supports. Responses were, “Make the process for referring a student clear by providing instruction such as a written handout”, “Provide small group discussion (dept or grade level) with the coordinator of the program”, “There are electronic forms the teachers use to refer students, and not every teacher knows how to access those forms” Another response was, “Smaller group discussion, one on one with the coordinator and participants as to specifics of their role. I.E. some clarification of what I should be looking for, what is expected of me. Should I involve the student? If so, what is the follow up and how is that done?” Another, “A written handout, that lays out the hierarchy of how you go about getting support and what's available. Something like a flyer, a descriptive flyer would be nice to have”. “By producing a general handout that would list the steps that need to be taken in order to provide support or ask if other
assistance is needed”. “You could have a PLC session”. “I think it needs to be addressed perhaps more at the department level, or even perhaps grade level, so that specific issues can be addressed, that teachers have in common, whether it be a student or a certain behavior”. Another, “More time spent educating mainstream teachers and other faculty about how to recognize significance or meaning of behaviors”.

Information about Tiered Interventions

In response to the question “In what ways have you received information about tiered interventions at your high school?” the majority of participants - 5/6 or 83% - said a group or school wide presentation was the way information about tiered interventions were received at the school. One participant said that verbal communication was the method in which information about tiered supports was received while one additional participant indicated having prior knowledge about tiered supports. A respondent stated, “During the presentation”. Another, “I believe the first week of school the deans passed some things out with tiers. It seems like it wasn’t quite complete though”. Another, “Power point presentations and brief one to two page handouts”. Another teacher responded, “There were very basic explanations that we are going to have a tiered intervention program, but I don’t believe they explained in detail what those tiers are or how they service our children, just that they’re available to our children. There’s a specific group that is focusing on that, not the entire faculty”. Another teacher reported, “Through staff professional development meetings and conversations with social workers”.


Understanding about Tiered Interventions

In response to the question, “What did you understand about the tiered interventions at your high school”? over half of the participants - 4/6 or 66% - said that they were informed with instructional steps, staff responsibilities, terminology and the availability of tiered supports. Participant responses were, “I already had a base knowledge of it, I did not learn it from this school” “I understood that the tiers were for kids that you couldn’t get going in the right direction from normal classroom interventions. So like the 20% that may...you should really get control of 80% and get them moving in the right direction, but that final 20% you could bump up to a second tier for ACADEMIC support”. Are we talking about behavioral intervention tiers or academic?” The researcher coded this finding as being “partially informed”, as there was a recollection that information was received, but it was not comprehensively understood. Another teacher responded “Information was incomplete, work in progress”. Please see definitions for each response category in the codebook, located in Appendix C and Appendix D.

Communication about Student Referrals

In response to the question, “How has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you?”, 4/6 or 66.6% of those interviewed said that a group or school wide presentation was used to communicate the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports. One participant said that verbal communication was used to share the process for referring students to social emotional supports. Two participants indicated they were
partially informed by the communication of the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports. Respondents stated, “Through a 10 min PLC presentation, as part of a staff meeting on the material, they referred us to forms and who to contact.” “I just don’t remember.” “I think it was the one breakout seminar at the beginning of the year, before school started”. “It was done in a group setting”. “Just a brochure, pamphlet, laminated protocol sheet (that says) you need to do this and this because teachers forget. That would be helpful”. “It wasn't fully communicated, we were told there is a referral process, but what is it, where do we find it?”

**Communication about Behavioral Supports**

In response to the question, “In what way is the communication of behavioral supports described to you in your school?” 4/6 or 66.6% of participants said the communication of behavioral supports were described to them in a group meeting. One person said behavioral supports were communicated by written means. One participant said they had a prior knowledge about the communication of behavioral supports in the school. Responses were, “A ten minute presentation, the dean came to a freshman meeting, staff in service, staff meetings, building institute type things”. “In a group setting”. “Emails from social workers.” Also, “Communication was not described in my school. I have received training since 18/19 years, going to school. Personal learning as a special educator.”

In response to the question, “Are there any questions that we should have asked you but didn’t?” There was no response provided by the teacher respondents.
Helpful Communication about SEL Programs Offered

In response to the question, “Why was communication about SEL programs offered helpful?”, 4/6 or 66.6% of the teachers considered communication about SEL programs helpful. Of the four that did, two participants said that teachers are provided with resources to assist with understanding and supporting students. One participant noted that he/she was informed regarding the steps and responsibilities for staff regarding tiers. While one other participant indicated being “partially informed” based on a response that the feedback was received, but not fully understood. Respondents reported, “The teacher feels supported”. “You get an understanding of vocabulary and who to contact”. “It helped me to understand those students have different emotional needs than other students”. “Mentally and emotionally, you feel supported to know that people are working behind the scenes”. “In helping understand the vocabulary that is in place, and a little bit of who to contact, that kind of information”.

Helpful Communication about SEL Programs Received

In response to the question, “Why was the communication about SEL programs received helpful?”, 3/6 or 50% of those interviewed said, communication about SEL programs was helpful in that teachers felt supported with resources to help students; 4/6 or 66.6% said they were partially informed. Respondents shared, “I understood that the students who needed help are getting help.” “The initial presentation gave me some idea, so I had an awareness, but the specifics of how it relates to my particular students, or me in particular, I did not feel was delivered”. “It just gets your mind to think about hitting that angle of motivating the students, so it puts your focus on that aspect of motivation.”
“Gives some strategies. I think it helped point towards some resources, some people at least to contact”.

Strengths in Communication about SEL Programs

In response to the question, “What are the strengths in the communication about SEL programs at this high school?”, 3/6 or 50% of those interviewed said having tiered supports are a strength in the communication about SEL programs at the high school. One participant said written communication was a strength of the communication. One participant said being partially informed was a strength. One participant said being informed about the procedures was a strength, while one participant said verbal communication was a strength of the SEL programs at the high school. According to respondents, “I guess it’s that they’re put out there. We at least got an introduction to them.” Another, “I think it’s obvious that some people have put in a lot of work to establish a framework.” Another respondent, “Well, there’s social workers available. I know they have the, oh my God, what is that called? That learning center that’s provided for the students if they have a need, and also when issues arise they always have a specialized area where students or teachers can go to talk. That social workers are available in a place where teachers can talk too.” Also, “It’s becoming stronger. It’s being addressed more, it wasn’t addressed in the past, and now it’s being addressed. That they’re actually sitting these faculty down as a whole, and they’re having somebody such as a social worker talk to the faculty about how to recognize, how to report and how to refer students who are in need.” Another respondent, “The communication has been
clear whether it’s been verbal or through email. I know who’s going for what group, when they’re going, and the purpose of the group”.

**Non-Helpful Communication about SEL Programs**

In response to the question, “Why was the communication about SEL programs NOT helpful?,” 3/6 or 50% of those interviewed said, communication about SEL programs was not helpful considering information was received, although not fully understood. Participants indicated that they were partially informed. Respondents stated, “The information was not understood, not-individualized.” "It was not helpful in that it could have been more robust, I think with more specific ideas maybe, more in depth training to really implement it fully”. “School did not provide information”. “The presentation was given to a group of people, all staff. I did not know how the info specifically involved me”. “I wasn't fully aware of the protocols?” “(My) knowledge was not provided by (this) school.”

**Weaknesses in Communication about SEL Programs**

In response to the question, “What are the weaknesses in the communication about the SEL programs at this high school?,” 4/6 or 66.6% of participants said they were partially informed. As described earlier, there were corroborated reports that the information was received, but not fully understood. Lack of follow through and inconsistency was noted by 3/6 or half of the interview participants. Teachers responded, “I would say specific involvement of the person. I.E., in my case, the teacher in relation to the student. A specific conversation with all parties involved, on the details of SEL and the role. I feel it’s a lack of specific communication to the specific role players.”
Another, “The implementation hasn’t been done with full fidelity or impact yet. So, I know it’s there but in a practical day-to-day basis, if I wanted to, if I had a kid that I felt was emotionally needy, I wouldn’t be sure what the first step, let’s say, would be. But I know there’s a step, I just don’t know what it is. I’m pretty confident that there is a step in place, but I’m not sure what it is”. Another, “I think the implementation of all the information is out there, it’s kind of hit and miss in that as a staff member, it feels like I have to go seek out that information as opposed to really being trained in how to use it or what to do”. “Not everyone knows the process to get students the help they need”. Another “The weakness is that it is just starting to happen. This should have been happening for a long time. Maybe they need to let it be known what the formal process is. They say that there’s a form to fill out, where is the form located, what does the form look like? We should have a sample form, and those who don’t understand, maybe they need to know how to fill out the form. Where do you find this information, how much information do you give”?

**Parent Participants**

The researcher will present the tabulation of responses/results made for each of the categories that correspond to each question. Results are based on the responses from two parents. Included are the frequency tabulation of responses/results made by the parent participants for each of the categories created in the codebook that correspond to each question. The format which follows presents each question from the interview protocol, followed by the percentage of the parent participants who provided a particular
response category for each of the questions. Rich quotes and descriptions are also included.

**Parent Perceptions**

**SEL Supports Described**

In response to the question, “In what ways are social, emotional learning supports described to you in your school?” Both parent respondents indicated that information about social, emotional learning supports were not provided. “It was mostly academic, the other ones not, the social and emotional support”. “No, I did not receive”

**Communication Received about SEL Programs**

In response to the question, “What communication about SEL has been received?” Both parent participants said they were unfamiliar with communication about SEL. “None”, was the response of both parents.

**Facilitation of SEL Supports**

In response to the question, “What are some ways in which communication about SEL supports could be facilitated?” While one parent participant said that she was unfamiliar with the SEL concept the other parent considered written communication and a group presentation were ways in which communication about SEL supports could be facilitated. “I can't answer that question”, said one respondent while another shared, “Letters should be sent home, have a meeting with the program coordinator and a meeting with students.”
Information about Tiered Interventions

In response to the question, “In what ways have you received communication about tiered interventions at your high school?” One of the two parent participants said, he/she did not receive communication about tiered interventions at the high school. One of the two parents said “All I know is (child) has a counselor”.

The other parent responded that he/she received information in the form of verbal communication and written communication. However, upon further explanation, it was determined that the parent received information about academic supports. Not social, emotional supports. The parent respondent answered, “I learned about the support system, the learning support system, not the emotional support, through the parent meetings, letters sent home, when I registered (child) for school, and parents at school day. We had another meeting with the principal, but I never learned anything about the emotional support”.

Understanding about Tiered Interventions

In response to the question, “What did you understand about the tiered interventions at your high school?” One parent said she was not familiar with tiered interventions at the high school. One parent participant said she was informed about curriculum. For example, who to contact regarding her student’s academic needs. However, when it was explained that the question was asking about social emotional learning, she indicated she was not familiar, she had misunderstood what the previous question was asking. “If I’m correct, understanding the services offered, social work,
supportive systems that the kids needing extra help with their work or falling behind in class, extra curricular, things like that.”

**Communication about Student Referrals**

In response to the question, “How has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you?” One parent was unfamiliar. While one parent shared that she is informed due to her student’s involvement with service providers through having an individualized educational plan (IEP). When the parent was queried for specific details, she described an IEP meeting. “Through the IEP and meetings with the team of the different disciplines. Meetings with the teachers, the social worker, the counselor, support services”.

**Communication about Behavioral Supports**

In response to the question, “Is the communication of behavioral supports described to you in your school?” Both parent participants said they were unfamiliar with the behavioral supports.

**Helpful Communication about SEL Programs**

In response to the question, “Why was communication about SEL programs helpful?” Both parent participants said they were unfamiliar with the helpfulness of communication about SEL programs.

**Non-Helpful Communication about SEL Programs**

In response to the question, “Why was communication about SEL programs NOT helpful?” Both parent participants said they were unfamiliar with the lack of helpfulness of communication about SEL programs.
Communication Received about SEL Programs

In response to the question, “What types of communication about SEL programs have been received?” One parent participant asked for clarification about the concept of SEL. The other parent was unfamiliar and even confused by the researcher’s inquiry because of a lack of understanding of what SEL programs are. “I’m sorry, I have not received any SEL programs offered, so no, I didn’t receive any communications.” “None. What are the social learning programs, do you know”?

Communication for Accessing Student Services

In response to the question, “How has the process for accessing the types of student services that are offered within the school setting been communicated to you”? 2/2 or both parents said they received written communication about the process for accessing the types of student services that are offered within the school setting, while one parent also indicated having received verbal communication in addition to written communication. It seems parents are referencing general communication that is not specific to SEL. Respondents shared, “The student website, the school website, like Powerschool (grade and attendance system)” “Through cell phone calls and the mail”.

Strengths in Communication about SEL Programs

In response to the question, “What are the strengths in the communication about the SEL programs at this high school?,” 2/2 or both parents reported being unfamiliar or unsure about the SEL concept. One parent respondent shared that a strength in the communication would be “Making me aware.” The other stated, “I don’t know because I don’t know what it is.”
Weaknesses in Communication about SEL Programs

In response to the question, “What are the weaknesses in the communication about the SEL programs at this high school?” One parent responded to indicate that he/she is unfamiliar with SEL communications. “There are weaknesses because I don’t know what they (SEL programs) are. The other, “There are no weaknesses”.

Communication about Student Referrals

In response to the question, “How has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you?” One parent was unfamiliar. While one parent shared that she is informed due to her student’s involvement with service providers through having an individualized educational plan (IEP). When the parent was queried for specific details, she described an IEP meeting. “Through the IEP and meetings with the team of the different disciplines. Meetings with the teachers, the social worker, the counselor, support services”.

Are there any questions that we should have asked you but didn’t? One parent was uncertain while the other said “You should have told me exactly what SEL was and what it consists of.” “No.”

Summary of Results

The results from the interview indicated that teachers consider the most common method for describing social emotional learning supports as formal group meetings that involve more than one staff member, such as professional learning communities and in-service. Neither of the two parents interviewed stated that SEL supports were described to them in the school. However, one parent made an inquiry to better understand the
topic background. Also, one parent who has a child with an IEP was able to describe the communications she received specifically relating to her involvement with the IEP.

When staff were further asked what information they received about tiered interventions, the most frequent response, of 83%, was a group or schoolwide presentation involving more than one staff member. In addition, 50% of staff received written communication such as e-mail or handout. Neither of the two parents interviewed considered they had received information about tiered interventions at the high school.

When teachers were asked what was understood about tiered interventions, 66.6% indicated that they understood the procedural steps for contacting staff and assisting students with finding SE supports. One parent considered that she had received information by verbal and written communication when in fact upon further clarification and questioning, she realized that she had confused academic learning supports for SEL supports. Thus, she reconsidered her response. Neither of the two parents were familiar with receiving communication about SEL at the high school.

When teachers were further asked what communication they received, the most frequent response, was that 50%, were unsure about SEL communications received and did not know how to answer the question. Neither of the two parents interviewed stated that communication about SEL had been received. Except one parent considered that she was aware of SEL due to having a child with an IEP.

Teachers considered communication about SEL programs was helpful at encouraging fellow teachers to feel supported, according to 50% of the teacher respondents. Sixty-six percent of teachers described being partially informed, while the
two parent respondents were unfamiliar. Teachers considered communication about SEL programs was not helpful for the 50% that indicated they were partially informed. One respondent explained, the communications “were not robust.” Furthermore, specifics about “how the SEL programs related to their students or to them in particular” was lacking. Of the parent respondents interviewed, neither were familiar.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The finding of this research indicated that stakeholders considered communication about SEL relevant for a healthy learning environment. The findings show that stakeholder knowledge about how to access services has not been consistent or from an informed perspective. Based on the results of this study, communication about SEL services should be presented in a manner that is clear and may be fully understood. While participants noted that most communication in the high school was received from a group meeting, usually held once per week, or once per month, several staff responded that they needed a more individualized approach. Group presentation followed by written communication were most often cited as the method for staff to receive information about SEL services. According to the research, Fixen et al. (2013), a more hands on rehearsal for how to respond to a learned task is helpful. In keeping with the practical and established routines within the high school setting, formalized training is warranted. Showing staff exactly what to do, is suggested.

The four stages of implementation science are, the exploration stage, when evidence based programs are considered for support. The installation stage, when new staff expectations are resourced, the initial implementation stage, when staff are adjusting to the novel way of performing at work and finally the full implementation stage, when
the new routines have become the standard. These stages describe expected experiences during the MTSS initiative as well as other new practices (Fixen et al., 2013).

Communication of programs and services available in the high school has an impact on the amount of time needed to advance from the exploration stage of MTSS implementation. According to Fixen et al. (2013), a common understanding and agreement for a decision to proceed through this stage which usually lasts one to two years depends upon the implementation drivers who are the resources such as the counselors, school psychologists and social workers.

Fixen et al. (2013) related that the next stage, installation, requires a change in roles. According to Freeman et al. (2015), skills and expertise of a variety are necessary as some training may be essential for MTSS roles, while other skills such as empathy and other personal attributes will make a candidate most suitable for a given role as coach, district coordinator or academic specialist. If evidence based interventions are to be delivered with fidelity, agreed upon changes and expectations must be clarified in order for service providers to perform the work consistently. Clear communication of expectations is needed (Freeman et al., 2015).

The initial implementation stage is when external supports such as Think first, CBITS and CICO are implemented. These evidence based programs require stakeholder buy in (Fixen et al., 2013). According to the observations during the research and according to the communication efforts, the current high school setting that is the topic of this research is in the initial stage. Stages are not static. Therefore, it is expected that implementation efforts are subject to day to day changes (Freeman et al., 2015).
Finally, according to Freeman et al. (2015), at the full implementation stage, more than half of the school staff are practicing interventions with fidelity.

Towards the effort of training adults with the skills to implement MTSS successfully, special education and general education teachers according to Leko, Brownell, Sindelar and Kiely, (2015) will need to be prepared to practice the profession of teaching from a competent, rigorous, strategic approach to accommodate the demands for teachers to work within the MTSS framework. Focus on issues of quality learning, immediate feedback for teaching with the use of scaffolding, structured, practice based, and meaningfully sequenced experiences, will address the learning needs of educators (Leko et al., 2015).

Further, from a practical approach and accommodating basic needs, build rapport by providing refreshments, within a comfortable, smaller setting. Provide staff with hands on computer training needed to access forms and documents. For example, some staff will need direct instruction and demonstration for how to use the shared drive. Using technology to access the required forms to fill out to receive trauma informed services would promote follow through. During instruction, support faculty may circulate among the staff to assist with providing clarity and individual understanding at the time new information is taught. According to Rodriguez et al. (2015), support personnel such as the school psychologist or counselor may work with staff to determine the severity of a disciplinary behavior. Staff may work together to gradually increase the range of skill for recognizing behaviors that will require social skills training for example. Given a range of scenarios, staff may be taught to recognize what behaviors
will need Universal supports compared to Tier 2 supports. Streamlining the process for staff and student expectations will further improve data accuracy and analysis.

Consistent with implementation literature, evidence based routines for accessing social emotional health services such as SEL tiered interventions should be communicated to all stakeholders (Foreman et al., 2013). A strength of the RtI initiative relates to the Tier 2 evidence based programs that have been implemented at the high school. Clearly, in order for the programs to be utilized, staff, students and stakeholders must be able to access the SE services and supports. According to research participants, a re-occurring response was that communication about SEL at the high school was fragmented and unclear. Questions to consider for future communication are, “Does the referral process meet the needs to allow all students to access SE support?” For example, a teacher and even a student utilizing self-referral should know how to access student referral forms as well as complete the referral form. “What is the expectation for follow up once the form has been completed?” To address this need, ongoing coaching should be facilitated until every critical stakeholder has demonstrated familiarity with accessing SE services by an intermittent demonstrated proficiency for using the forms.

According to the research, communication about SEL programs was considered helpful for providing teachers and staff with resources to assist student SE needs. However, communication about SEL programs was not helpful for staff considering the information was not fully understood. In addition, both parent participants indicated an overall need for clarity of information. The need for information that is received to be
fully understood through consistent follow through and fidelity would be a step towards improving communication of SEL supports, according to the research.

To assist with fidelity and quality of service delivery (Foreman et al., 2013; Freeman, Sugai, Simonsen, & Everett, 2017), related that it would be important to inform staff of the SEL services available through an avenue, that will allow practice and feedback. Considering RtI is based on the continual evaluation of data, including progress monitoring and implementation fidelity (Freeman et al., 2017), the role of the school psychologist could be expanded to accommodate the need. In addition to email, presentations, parent meetings and professional learning communities, ongoing department meetings with instruction regarding which students would be the most appropriate for the intervention and which students would not be appropriate for the intervention, may be useful. The school handbook would be a way to share details of expectations with families. A person who serves as a point of contact, to allow two way communication, as questions arise, such as the program implementer, would also support communication.

The school psychologist’s knowledge of differentiated support, would make a school psychologist an ideal candidate for the role of coach, consultant, trainer and coordinator of stakeholders for performance assessment and the fidelity of implementation through MTSS practices and systems expectations (Freeman et al., 2017).

One of the two parent research participants said communication could be improved by providing an informational group presentation for both parents and students.
This method of communication is typically utilized within the school setting. In addition, definition of the terms social, emotional learning would be helpful. However, there was no requirement of prior knowledge for participation in the interview, as the purpose of the interview was to determine the range of familiarity with the communication of SEL received. Nevertheless, future communications with parents should be sensitive to the need to define terms and concepts for an audience that may be unfamiliar to persons outside of the education field. It is possible that the school psychologist could provide the technical assistance and local content expertise as staff and parents develop the skills to enable students to be supported in accessing SEL services (Freeman et al., 2017).

**Future Directions and Limitations**

Study limitations relate to the small number of research participants. There is consideration that a larger number of research participants would provide more variety in the voices of concern for strengths and weaknesses of the communication of SEL at the initiation of MTSS within the high school setting. Nevertheless, the richness of voices that have contributed to the research have been inclusive of areas of strength as well as areas for growth and improvement. It may be considered both a strength and a weakness that the researcher is internal to the research site. Any potential bias that is present within the view of the researcher may be a potential weakness. Nevertheless, a strength relates to having an understanding and perspective that is internal to the system.

There is an overall expectation that the MTSS initiative will unfold slowly and evolve to demonstrate a successful program implementation that will represent support for continuing and expanding an increasingly more in depth and layered service delivery
model throughout the school. The use of evidence based practices legitimizes the continued request for funding. A future mixed methods approach to highlight program success may further lead to additional programs and services for students who have SE needs.

Outside of the formal interview process, there have been opportunities to gather additional details about the concerns that staff have for communication. Staff has mentioned that the process for sharing the details about programs, expectations and how to access services should be “streamlined”. For example, written communication, such as pamphlets and e-mail, should reflect a united message. All stakeholders should receive the same information. Staff are concerned that interest and motivation for SEL programs and supports will lose momentum if teachers are met with confusion, partial directions and incongruent expectations that impede follow through and the sense that their time used referring students for services is not time that has been utilized productively. An additional concern presented outside of the formal interview process related to the perception that MTSS will be a passing phase that will run its course and then as a school, “We’ll be on to the next thing”.

According to Fixen et al. (2013), staff and leadership changes are inevitable. Nevertheless, supports for the Implementation stages are critical for anticipating the level of buy in and maintenance for the change. Furthermore, when school-based service implementers’ perceptions are not fully considered, according to professional research by Regan et al. (2015), there is a danger that new initiatives will not be successfully sustained. As the high school that is the subject of the current research is at the initial
implementation stage, it is important to revisit communication for the maintenance of newly acquired skills necessary for performance of evidence based practices as part of the plan for sustainability. In addition to role confusion, Maras et al. (2015) related a caution for the perception that one professional over another, such as the social worker, counselor or school psychologist alone, could be a preferred single service provider. Such a perspective would not adequately address the needs and demands of the multi-tiered process within the high school setting. Integration of all the knowledge and skills would be the best option for a thorough and inclusive program of tiered services. Future research needs to address the role of the school psychologist beyond that of testing.

During the RtI initiative, there is consideration that MTSS may project RtI and PBIS as competing for the time of an already thinly stretched support staff Eagle et al. (2015). The school psychologist may provide particular assistance for the need in changing roles among staff within the high school. Contemplation of how the new initiative impacts service providers is warranted.

Consistency of communication among service providers would be another area to explore. I.E. What do service providers understand about their role in service delivery at the implementation of the MTSS initiative? How have the changes in role expectations been communicated? How may the inconsistencies be addressed to encourage service providers in their role of interacting with students to produce intended results Fixen et al. (2013)? According to the research of Fixen et al., failure of the RtI initiative has typically been the result of faulty implementation and not a weak intervention.
Furthermore, as staff are faced with the task of accommodating yet another new initiative, administration should undertake due diligence to remove time requirements from previously discontinued programs before adding another.
APPENDIX A

TEACHER/STAFF INTERVIEW
1. What is your role within the high school setting? Please indicate below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Certified Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How many years of experience do you have working in education?

__________________________________________________________________________

3. How many years have you worked at this school?

__________________________________________________________________________

4. How many years have you worked in your current position?

__________________________________________________________________________

5. Are social, emotional learning supports described to you in your school? Yes or No?
   If yes, in what ways?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

6. Have you received information about tiered interventions at your high school? Yes or No? If yes, in what ways?

__________________________________________________________________________

Did you understand the information about tiered interventions?

__________________________________________________________________________

What did you understand?

__________________________________________________________________________
7. Have you received communication about the types of SEL programs offered within the school setting? Yes or No?

________________________________________________________________________

What communication about SEL has been received?
________________________________________________________________________

Was it helpful?
________________________________________________________________________

Why or why not?
________________________________________________________________________

8. What types of communication about SEL programs have been received?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

If yes, was the communication about SEL programs helpful?
________________________________________________________________________

Why or why not?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

9. Has the process for accessing the types of student services that are offered within the school setting been communicated to you? Yes or No?

________________________________________________________________________

If so, how?
________________________________________________________________________
10. Are there strengths in the communications about the SEL programs at this high school? Yes or No?  

If yes, what are those strengths?  

11. Are there weaknesses in the communications about the SEL programs at this high school? Yes or No?  

If yes, what are those weaknesses?  

12. Has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you? Yes or No?  

How is the process communicated to you?  

Did you feel as if you understood it? Yes or No  

13. Is the communication of behavioral supports described to you in your school?  

Yes or No? If yes, in what ways?
14. What are some ways in which communication about social, emotional learning supports could be facilitated?

15. Are there any questions that we should have asked you but didn’t?

DEMOGRAPHICS

16. What is your age? _____

| 21-31 | 32-42 | 43-53 | 54-64 | 65-75 |

17. What is your gender?

| Male | Female |

18. What is your ethnic and racial background?

| Black | Hispanic or Latino | White | Two or More Races | Other |
APPENDIX B

PARENT/GUARDIAN INTERVIEW
1. What is your role within the high school setting? Please indicate below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Guardian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How many years has your child attended this school?

____________________

3. Are social, emotional learning supports described to you in your school? Yes or No?
   
   If yes, in what ways?

   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

4. Have you received information about tiered interventions at your high school?
   
   Yes or No? If yes, in what ways?

   ____________________________________________

   Did you understand the information about tiered interventions?

   ____________________________________________

   What did you understand?

   ____________________________________________

5. Have you received communication about the types of SEL programs offered within the school setting? Yes or No?

   ____________________________________________

   What communication about SEL has been received?

   ____________________________________________

   Was it helpful?
Why or why not?

6. What types of communication about SEL programs have been received?

If yes, was the communication about SEL programs helpful?________
Why or why not? ______________________________________________

7. Has the process for accessing the types of student services that are offered within the school setting been communicated to you? Yes or No?

If so, how?

8. Are there strengths in the communications about the SEL programs at this high school? Yes or No?

If yes, what are those strengths?

9. Are there weaknesses in the communications about the SEL programs at this high school? Yes or No?
If yes, what are those weaknesses?
________________________________________________________

10. Has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you? Yes or No?

How is the process communicated to you?
________________________________________________________

Did you feel as if you understood it? Yes or No?

11. Is the communication of behavioral supports described to you in your school? Yes or No? If yes, in what ways?

Was it helpful?

12. What are some ways in which communication about social, emotional learning supports could be facilitated?

13. Are there any questions that we should have asked you but didn’t?
**DEMOGRAPHICS**

14. What is your age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>21-31</th>
<th>32-42</th>
<th>43-53</th>
<th>54-64</th>
<th>65-75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. What is your ethnic and racial background?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question</td>
<td>Respondent</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b In what ways are social, emotional learning supports described to you in your school?</td>
<td>T2, T3, T4, T5</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, PLC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Tiered Supports</td>
<td>Counselor-Social Worker access, Think First, CBITS, Group Counseling, Student Referral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b In what ways have you received information about tiered interventions at your high school?</td>
<td>T1, T2, T4, T5, T6</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, PLC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with support staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Prior knowledge</td>
<td>Did not receive communication from the school, instead, participant had previous knowledge about tiered interventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3, T4, T5</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6d What did you understand about the tiered interventions at your high school?

<p>| T1, T4, T5, T6 | Informed | Procedural steps, who to contact and staff responsibilities, terminology, what's available, regarding tiers |
| T3 | Partially Informed | Information received was not fully understood |
| T6 | Prior knowledge | Did not receive communication from the school, instead, participant had previous knowledge about tiered interventions |
| T3 | Information Seeking | Respondent is making an inquiry to understand the interview question, school programming, terminology, topic background |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7b What communication about SEL has been received?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” PowerPoint (PPT))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, PLC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2, T3, T4</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications, are confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Prior knowledge</td>
<td>Did not receive communication from the school, instead, participant had previous knowledge about tiered interventions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7d Why was communication about SEL programs helpful?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1, T3</td>
<td>Teacher feels supported</td>
<td>Teacher is provided with resources to assist with understanding and supporting students’ SE needs (and their own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Partially Informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7d continued Why was communication about SEL programs NOT helpful?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2, T6</td>
<td>Partially Informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a What types of communication about SEL programs have been received?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1, T3, T4</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“handouts” PowerPoint (PPT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2, T5</td>
<td>Partially Informed</td>
<td>Information received was not fully understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Verbal Communication with admin/admin representation</td>
<td>Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with dean, chair or admin/admin representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with support staff such as social worker, counselor or school psychologist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8c Why was the communication about SEL programs helpful?

T1, T3, T6 | Teacher feels supported | Teacher is provided with resources to assist with understanding and supporting students’ SE needs |

T2, T3, T4, T6 | Partially Informed | Information received was not fully understood |

8c continued Why was the communication about SEL programs NOT helpful?

T2, T3, T5 | Partially Informed | Information received was not fully understood |

9b How has the process for accessing the types of student services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Identified Supports</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the communication strengths in the SEL programs at this high school?</td>
<td>T1, T4, T6</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Written Communication (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Partially Informed (Information received was not fully understood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T3, T4, T5</td>
<td>Tiered Supports (Counselor-Social Worker access, Think First, CBITS, Group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2, T3, T4, T5</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation (Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, PLC))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1, T4, T6</td>
<td>Verbal Communication (In person or by phone) with support staff such as social worker, counselor or school psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Verbal Communication with admin/admin representation (Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with dean, chair or admin/admin representation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2, T3, T4, T5</td>
<td>Tiered Supports (Counselor-Social Worker access, Think First, CBITS, Group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>Procedural steps, who to contact and staff responsibilities, terminology, what's available, regarding tiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with support staff such as social worker, counselor, school psychologist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11b What are the weaknesses in the communication about the SEL programs at this high school?

| T1, T2, T3, T5 | Partially Informed | Information received was not fully understood |
| T3, T4, T6 | Inconsistent execution | Lack of and/or slow follow through, fidelity, inconsistency as communicated |

12b How has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you?

| T1 | Verbal Communication | Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with support staff such as social |
| T1 | Written Communication | Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT) |
| T2, T3, T4, T5 | Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation | Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, group meeting, PLC) |
| T3, T6 | Partially Informed | Information received was not fully understood |
| T2, T3, T4, T5 | Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation | Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, group meeting, PLC) |
| T6 | Prior knowledge | Did not receive communication from the school, instead, participant had previous knowledge about tiered interventions |

13b In what way is the communication of behavioral supports described to you in your school?

T1

14 What are some ways in which communication
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>about SEL supports could be facilitated?</th>
<th>T2, T3, T5</th>
<th>Written Communication</th>
<th>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1, T2, T4</td>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Personal Conversation (In person or by phone) with support staff such as social worker, counselor, school psychologist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3, T6</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, PLC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Are there any questions that we should have asked you but didn't?</td>
<td>T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

PARENT CODING PROTOCOL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3b In what ways are social, emotional learning supports described to you in your school?</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b In what ways have you received information about tiered interventions at your high school?</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Tiered Supports</td>
<td>Counselor-Social Worker Access, Think First, CBITS, Group Counseling, Student Referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d What did you understand about the tiered interventions at your high school?</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Personal Conversation (live, in person or by phone) with support staff such as social worker, counselor or school psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Curriculum Informed</td>
<td>Academic Instructional steps,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>who to contact and staff responsibilities, vocabulary, what's available, regarding academic needs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5b</strong> What communication about SEL has been received?</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5d</strong> Why was communication about SEL programs helpful?</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5d continued</strong> Why was communication about SEL programs NOT helpful?</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response 1</td>
<td>Response 2</td>
<td>Additional Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a What types of communication about SEL programs have been received?</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b Why was the communication about SEL programs helpful?</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Information Seeking</td>
<td>Respondent is making an inquiry to understand the interview question, school programming, terminology, topic background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c continued Why was the communication about SEL programs NOT helpful?</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response 1</td>
<td>Response 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b How has the process for accessing the types of student services that are offered within the school setting been communicated to you?</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Written Communication Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Verbal Communication Personal Conversation (live, in person or by phone) with support staff such as social worker, counselor, school psychologist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8b What are the strengths in the communication about the SEL programs at this high school?</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Tiered Supports Counselor-Social Worker Access, Think First, CBITS, Group Counseling, Student Referral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9b What are the weaknesses in the communication about the SEL programs at this high school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10b How has the process for referring an individual student to social emotional supports at your school been communicated to you?</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional steps, who to contact and staff responsibilities, terminology, what's available, regarding tiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b Was the communication of behavioral supports that were described to you in your school, helpful?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 What are some ways in which communication about SEL supports could be facilitated?</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Any hardcopy correspondence (e.g., E-mail, pamphlet, questionnaire, “handouts” Power point (PPT))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Group or Schoolwide Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Any group meeting that involves more than one staff member, up to an inclusive of the entire school staff (e.g., in-service, professional development, PLC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Are there any questions that we should have asked you but didn't?</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Definition of SEL</td>
<td>“You should have told me exactly what SEL was and what it consists of.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Respondents are unfamiliar with SEL communications and/or concept, confused by the question or are unsure, don’t know how to answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCE LIST


VITA

Taliah Ziyad-Nau was born in the Midwest where she resides today. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, she attended Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Education. She attended Loyola University Chicago where she earned a Master of Education, Specialist level in School Psychology. She also attended Concordia University, where she received a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership.
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