

CHAPTER 1

Core Features of Family–School Collaboration and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

OVERVIEW OF FAMILY–SCHOOL COLLABORATION AND MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Family–school collaboration involves families and school personnel working as coequals in supporting the learning and social–emotional development of children and youth. Within the context of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework, family–school collaboration focuses on families and educators working together within and across the tiers of support to agree on educational and social–emotional supports for students and to connect school practices to home and community settings. At Tier 1, this involves sharing in the development of two-way (school–home) communication strategies, developing sustainable data systems to monitor family–school and student outcomes, examining school practices for disproportionate impact, and promoting a feedback loop with families and educators about school systems and practices. At Tier 2 and Tier 3, families and educators work together to design, implement, and evaluate academic and social–emotional supports for students experiencing targeted or intensive services. These core components are described in more detail in the sections that follow, after a review of theory and research that support family–school collaboration in MTSS.

Please note that editors of this book have developed the Family–School–Community Alliance (FSCA; see <https://fscalliance.org>) to promote ongoing change from the common scenario of very limited family engagement and leadership in schools to families and youth collaboratively co-creating the educational environment with educators and other staff. The FSCA followed the development of an e-book (Weist et al., 2017) on enhancing family engagement and leadership within positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), with support from the national center on PBIS (see www.pbis.org). The vision of the FSCA is to

promote family, youth, and community engaged partnerships in research, practice, and policy to improve prevention and intervention in the systems and practices of positive

behavioral interventions and supports and related multitiered systems of support toward improvement in valued outcomes. (FSCA, 2019)

The FSCA seeks to impact research, practice, and policy (and interconnections among these realms) to create genuine family engagement and leadership in schools toward improved social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for students and families. The current book builds from the work of the FSCA as well as research and collaborations to enhance family engagement/leadership within schools' MTSS. In the next section, we review theoretical underpinnings for this work, building toward recommended strategies for future policy, practice, and research directions found in this book.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretical underpinnings for family–school collaboration and MTSS have shared and distinct areas of emphasis. Theoretical support for family–school collaboration is derived from theories that describe a set of overlapping ecological systems within which a child develops. Ecological systems theory includes proximal microsystems, such as home and school, that are primary influences on child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem refers to the connections between microsystems and is the primary system that captures parent and educator interactions. Extending out from the mesosystem, the exosystem includes neighborhoods and community organizations. Next, the macrosystem refers to the broader social and political context that influences systems and practices in the exosystem and microsystem. An ecological framework can also be applied to schools, where individual-level influences are proximal influences on child learning and development, and broader school-level factors, such as school climate, influence how systems and practices are implemented and experienced by students (Domitrovich et al., 2008).

Two other theories relevant to family–school collaboration are the multiple worlds typology and the phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory. Multiple worlds typology captures how messages within and across home, school, and community settings can influence child development. Multiple worlds typology specifically describes how different messages within settings can be challenging for students, particularly when messages in one setting, such as school, do not align with messages in their home and community settings (Phelan et al., 1991). This can be particularly problematic for students who come from minoritized communities and who are in schools that do not reflect their culture and experiences. The phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory has specific implications for adolescent identity formation by addressing the social, historical, and cultural context in which youth develop (Spencer et al., 1997). These principles are explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

MTSS is a prevention framework applied to education from public health (Walker et al., 1996). The MTSS framework has been refined over time and operationalized through frameworks such as PBIS. A focus on promoting social behavior within MTSS has been conceptualized as a systems-level application of applied behavior analysis (Horner et al., 2005). This behavioral orientation provides a context for applying a set of antecedents to support academic and social behavior, behavior teaching strategies to build skills, and consequent

strategies to reinforce skill development. This scoped and sequenced approach to support academic and social behavior may at times be in conflict with family values and routines. Thus, an integrated approach to family–school collaboration within MTSS may require working with families at Tier 1 to identify ways to promote collaboration and partnership building in the context of a behavioral process that historically has been implemented within a specific scope and sequence.

Research Support for Family–School Collaboration

The influence of family–school connections on student outcomes has been studied for decades. A line of correlational research has examined associations between family educational involvement and student social behavior and academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This line of research has suggested that increased family educational involvement is associated with positive outcomes for students (e.g., attendance). These correlational studies conclude that family involvement in education matters for students, and the findings have been documented in primary studies as well as meta-analyses (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2012).

In addition to correlational studies, a line of more rigorous intervention research using randomized controlled trials has shown that students experience positive outcomes when their family participates in a family–centered or family–school partnership intervention (Sheridan et al., 2019). These findings are documented across elementary school and secondary school settings (Sheridan et al., 2012; Stormshak et al., 2011). These family-centered and family–school interventions typically include a consultant or school clinician working with a family and educator to support the design and implementation of home and school supports for an individual student. Findings from these studies suggest that students on average experience positive outcomes as a result of family and educator participation (Sheridan et al., 2017). In addition, positive impacts are documented for families, educators, and the family–school relationships. For example, parents and teachers who have a child with emotional and behavior concerns report improvements in the parent–teacher relationship, that improved relationship is partially responsible for improvements in student behavior (Sheridan et al., 2012).

“I want teachers and administrators to know me by name, know that I really care, that I am not checked out. I feel like just showing up and being in the school, they know that I’m serious and I just feel like it’s better for my kids when I do that.”

A Logic Model to Define Family–School Collaboration in MTSS

A logical model for family–school collaboration in MTSS can be helpful in defining key systems and practices, along with proximal and distal variables to articulate how theoretical underpinnings can be combined with research findings to describe integration and impact on outcomes. Figure 1.1 depicts conditions, context variables, core variables, mechanisms, and outcomes. Conditions and context variables establish the conditions to support adoption and sustained implementation of core variables. Core variables have proximal impacts on mechanism, which in turn leads to improved outcomes.

4 FAMILY–SCHOOL COLLABORATION IN MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

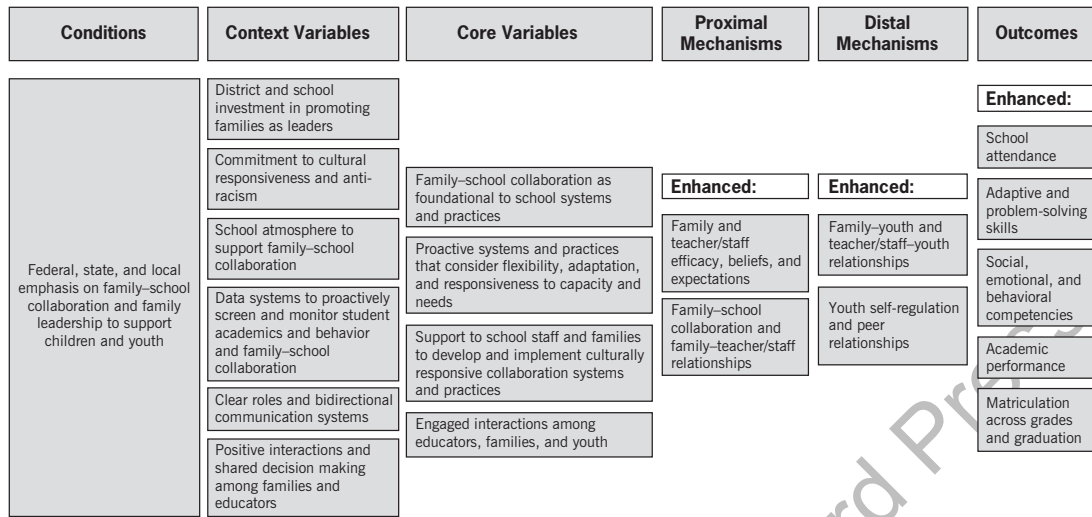


FIGURE 1.1. Conceptual model of family–school collaboration.

Figure 1.1 displays a conceptual model for family–school collaboration. We offer this conceptual model to organize the key variables associated with family–school collaboration and demonstrate key mechanisms of action to promote student well-being. This modeling approach has been used in education research (Horner, 2016), family-centeredness (Stormshak & Dishion, 2009), and family–school collaboration (Garbacz et al., 2017).

Figure 1.1 illustrates conditions, core variables, mechanisms, and outcomes. Conditions include the federal, state, and local emphasis on family–school collaboration that can set the stage for or facilitate family–school collaboration in schools. For example, federal education policy that mandates two-way communication among schools and families can be operationalized at the state and local levels to clarify and impact educators’ work with families. Context variables can occasion specific family–school practices. As one example, a school atmosphere that is developed with families can create a welcoming, culturally responsive, inclusive, and supportive orientation to parents and help promote collaboration between families and educators to develop school systems and practices (Bal & Perzigian, 2013; Ishimaru, 2020). Alternatively, school atmospheres that are created by educators alone may be prone to reflect a narrower range of opportunities for families to be involved and limit involvement to tokenistic approaches. Turning from core variables to mechanisms, the key pathways to change become clearer. Research suggests that when parents and teachers collaborate to support a student’s social, emotional, and behavioral competencies, collaborative process leads to improved parent–teacher relationships.

“Even though educators are educators, parents know their children in a way that can make educators’ jobs easier.”

Through improvements in the parent–teacher relationship, students experience improved competencies (Sheridan et al., 2017). Thus, the parent–teacher relationship is a key mechanism to target within family–school collaboration to promote positive student outcomes.

Family–school collaboration is inherently a strengths-based process, focused on recognizing, identifying, celebrating, and encouraging family strengths, leveraging family strengths to empower and develop capacities of individuals and systems, and supporting families’ use of their strengths to overcome challenges. However, education systems are often not developed in ways that recognize the strengths of minoritized families (Powell & Coles, 2021). In fact, institutional systems and practices have marginalized minoritized families, further separating schools and families and harming children (Williamson et al., 2005). The emphasis on family–school collaboration must integrate the necessary core variables of cultural responsiveness and anti-racism (Proctor et al., 2017). Thus, in the conceptual model, the outcomes, which reflect various dimensions of family, school, and student well-being, can only be realized when all families are included, and no one is excluded. Co-equal relationships among families and schools, where families are valued as leaders and key decision makers, benefit educators, families, and students. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the key conditions and practices that drive implementation and sustainment.

! “Parents should be seen as allies, not just partners.”

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Informed by public health approaches, education has shifted to tiered prevention and intervention systems intended to allow for efficient and effective use of resources aligned with and targeted to students’ needs (Domitrovich et al., 2010). MTSS frameworks emphasize the proactive and integrated use of academic, behavioral, and social–emotional assessment and intervention strategies to improve related student learning outcomes. Various terms and frameworks under the MTSS umbrella have become associated with particular emphasis on students’ academic, behavioral, or social–emotional needs, including response to intervention (RTI; Jimerson et al., 2016); positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2002a); and interconnected systems frameworks (ISF; Eber et al., 2019; Weist et al., 2018).

The key components of multi-tiered systems of supports can often be organized under three broad domains including data (i.e., screening, progress monitoring, fidelity), systems (i.e., multilevel prevention and intervention systems; teams), and practices (e.g., communication, collaboration; Bailey et al., 2020; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). School leadership teams are organized to plan and implement screening and monitoring systems based on direct assessments of students’ academic, behavioral, and social–emotional learning needs to inform interventions and supports that effectively address and improve student skills and performance outcomes.

Tiered prevention frameworks begin at the universal level (Tier 1), wherein student data are used to inform curriculum and instructional supports and strategies to maximize outcomes for *all* students. Through effective programming and regular monitoring of student progress using universal screening approaches and quarterly assessments, high quality instruction provided to all students at Tier 1 reduces proportion of students requiring supplemental interventions (Gibbons et al., 2019). Regular review of student progress proac-

tively identifies students that may benefit from additional intervention and supports at the selected (Tier 2) level. At the Tier 2 level, student interventions are intensified by increasing the amount of time, repetition with skills, or direct instruction through smaller ratios of staff to student groups (Batsche et al., 2005). Some students who demonstrate the greatest need require intensive, individualized supports at the indicated (Tier 3) level. Through proactive and systematic monitoring of student learning data, schools can maximize the effectiveness of instruction and curriculum at Tier 1, and free-up resources and supports for students demonstrating elevated risk and the greatest need to ensure the success for all. Various systems and practices, such as professional development and coaching, teaming, and collaboration, are essential for schools to successfully implement tiered systems of support.

Core Domains of MTSS

Drawing from research on effective implementation of innovations and systems change, various measures and conceptual frameworks have been adopted to outline the core features of MTSS among schools, often including six domains: (1) leadership, (2) building capacity and infrastructure for implementation (e.g., master schedules), (3) communication and collaboration, (4) data-based problem solving, (5) tiered prevention and intervention frameworks, and (6) evaluation (e.g., self-assessment of MTSS implementation; Stockslager et al., 2016). These domains that advance MTSS can be operationalized at a school and district level. For example, each school builds capacity and infrastructure for implementing a certain innovation, such as PBIS, establishes processes for collaboration and communication, creates data-based problem-solving systems, and puts into place evaluation systems and practices. Similarly, these domains are operationalized at a district level as well. A key distinguishing feature of MTSS at a school and district is the level of implementation. For example, at a school level, capacity and infrastructure might support coaching of teachers to support implementation, teaming at the schoolwide as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels, and procedures to screen and progress monitor data for all students in the school and students within certain groups (e.g., students at risk for serious emotional and behavior concerns). At the district level, implementation of an innovation would focus across schools and could include providing professional development (training and coaching) to schoolwide teams in adopting and implementing PBIS. At the district level, implementation data and student outcome data can focus across schools or within certain schools.

Research on MTSS

Research examining MTSS frameworks has investigated implementation and outcomes. In the context of the PBIS framework, factors influencing district adoption include district size and the geographic area of the district is located (Kittelman et al., 2019). Among school administrators who were initially opposed to or not supportive of PBIS, administrators identified several factors as helping promote their implementation (McIntosh et al., 2016). These factors included learning from others, networking with implementing schools, talking with other administrators, and learning about how PBIS aligns with personal values. In terms of

factors that might help schools sustain MTSS, school personnel in schools implementing PBIS noted school buy-in, administrator support, and consistency as factors that promoted sustainability (Pinkelman et al., 2015). Regarding outcomes, implementation of PBIS is associated with decreases in restraints and seclusions in alternative education settings (Grasley-Boy et al., 2020). In addition, findings suggest that implementation of PBIS is associated with reductions in school discipline and increased academic achievement (Lee & Gage, 2020). MTSS frameworks for promoting enhanced core reading instruction have also been examined (Smith et al., 2016). Findings associated with implementation of a framework that included Tier 1 and Tier 2 reading instruction and intervention suggest improvements on student literacy skills (Fien et al., 2021).

Promoting Uptake in Schools

Despite advances in evidence-based practices in K–12 education settings associated with improved student outcomes, the impact of the knowledge and research on student outcomes has yet to be realized. Furthermore, efforts to advance tiered prevention frameworks continue to articulate siloed areas of focus (e.g., behavior or mental health) while truly *integrated* MTSS implementation is less common in practice (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Within this chapter we provide an overview of key considerations for promoting uptake in schools. These principles are explored in more depth in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

Growing interest and support for better understanding of the processes and mechanisms to select, implement, and scale-up evidence-based practices in schools has resulted in a growing support for implementation science to inform K–12 settings (George et al., 2018; McIntosh et al., 2013). To underscore the role of implementation science in adopting and implementing evidence-based practices with fidelity in educational settings, the term *usable innovations* (Fixsen et al., 2013) has been used interchangeably with evidence-based practices. Active implementation frameworks (Blase et al., 2012; Fixen et al., 2005; Fixen et al., 2013) and common implementation science frameworks for K–12 settings purport that implementation happens in discernable stages (i.e., exploration, installation, initial implementation, full implementation), and there are common components of successfully implemented programs (i.e., leadership, competency, organization). The drivers underscore the role of leadership in developing competency and organizational drivers to advance the system through implementation stages from exploration, adoption/installation, and initial implementation to full implementation resulting in improved practices and outcomes in schools. Active implementation methods incorporate best practices related to the stages of implementation and implementation drivers (Fixen et al., 2013).

Implementation Drivers

Competency drivers refer to the selection, training, coaching, and fidelity monitoring mechanisms that support staff efficacy and use of evidence-based practices. Organizational drivers refer to the leadership, communication and feedback loops, policy and procedural mechanisms, and external support mechanisms that uphold educational environments conducive to adoption of evidence-based practices (e.g., data systems for decision making).

Together, these drivers are often referred to as an organization's *capacity* for supporting implementation of evidence-based practices with fidelity (Horner et al., 2017).

Growing tiered prevention models advance evidence-based practices to improve student outcomes; however, these are often advanced as siloed frameworks affecting academic performance (e.g., RTI) or social behavior (PBIS). The ISF (Eber et al., 2019) interconnects social behavior support within PBIS and social–emotional supports to promote mental health for all. In addition, McIntosh and Goodman (2016) advanced an approach for improving integration of academic and social behavior supports. However, in practice truly integrated MTSS continues to be primarily aspirational. Furthermore, measures to support uptake and fidelity of evidence-based practices are often siloed, resulting in districts or schools requiring multiple yet similar assessments of similar components or features of implementation necessary for any evidence-based practice (e.g., coaching, data use). Efforts to advance integrated assessments of school-level capacity and fidelity are available (e.g., Tiered Fidelity Inventory [TFI]; Algozzine et al., 2014; McIntosh et al., 2016), yet the degree of specificity offered by these assessments to improve school practices requires additional information more specific to an evidence-based practice or framework (e.g., Benchmarks of Quality [BOQ] for PBIS; Reading TFI for literacy; Martin et al., 2015).

Given the role of district capacity in school-level fidelity and outcomes of implementing evidence-based practices (McIntosh et al., 2013; George et al., 2018), Ward and colleagues (2015) recently published findings on efforts to provide districts with a comprehensive assessment of their capacity for supporting implementation of evidence-based practices in schools). Their work provides a reliable, valid and efficient tool for districts to regularly assess capacity for supporting school's selection, scale-up, and sustained implementation of evidence-based practices (Ward et al., 2021). The District Capacity Assessment (DCA) is a 27-item measure completed by district leadership teams assessing features aligned with implementation drivers of the district's ability to support school-level implementation of evidence-based practices specific to a content area (e.g., behavior, literacy) in three broad domains (i.e., leadership, competency, and data systems). Results are then used to guide district planning and improvement efforts (Ward et al., 2021). At the time of this publication, authors of the DCA noted evolving nature of research and will update the tool once information on the validity of the DCA as an effective, valid tool to assess and improve district capacity for supporting implementation of usable innovations among schools becomes available.

Even with these recent advancements in district and school-level integrated assessments to determine capacities for supporting and implementing evidence-based practices, these decisions and input on the assessments are often limited to the perspectives of educational staff, with little to no input from families or communities. Furthermore, the degree to which family–school collaboration is a central component to MTSS implementation or scale-up varies across conceptual models and locations. Many times, states, districts, and schools wait to get their internal processes and practices sorted out before opening up conversations about MTSS with families. This contradicts research underlying the importance of educators and families in co-creating and co-implementing innovations and further reinforces family–school collaboration as an add-on component to implementation of MTSS. This has resulted in miscommunications and misunderstanding about the intent and pur-

pose of MTSS implementation among families, with many feeling that the approach delays the support for students in need.

“You [educators] might not be an expert in how the school works, but you’re [parents] an expert in your child.”

However, there have been efforts to advance family–school collaboration within MTSS and even fully developed tiered approaches to family–school collaboration that have resulted in the foundational research needed to better understand key systems and practices required for integration within MTSS.

Family–School Collaboration

MTSS frameworks include a clear set of systems and practices for establishing systems of support to promote academic performance, social behavior, and mental health. When implementing these frameworks, students experience positive outcomes (Fien et al., 2021; Lee & Gage, 2020). One limitation of common frameworks advanced within MTSS is a lack of or minimal attention to families and the family–school connection (Garbacz et al., 2016). Typically, family–school collaboration systems and practices are implemented in a siloed manner similar to academic frameworks, social behavior frameworks, and school mental health frameworks (Garbacz, McIntosh, et al., 2018). Aligning and integrating family–school collaboration within MTSS has several advantages (Weist et al., 2017). Integrating family–school collaboration within MTSS frameworks can help improve implementation of family–school collaboration systems (Garbacz, McIntosh, et al., 2018). Such integrated implementation can amplify outcomes for students. Indeed, research findings suggest that family–school interventions are associated with improved academic and social–emotional outcomes for students (Fan & Chen, 2001; Sheridan et al., 2019).

MTSS frameworks offer a useful set of organizing features (data, systems, practices) that can support implementation of family–school collaboration in the context of academic, social–behavioral, and mental health supports. Learning from active implementation frameworks and the stages of implementation, schools would be better equipped to implement contextually relevant family–school collaboration approaches by including families as true partners in the exploration stage. When exploring evidence-based practices to meet the needs of all students, partnering with families to explore the best approaches moving forward increases the chances for developing truly collaborative partnerships and ensures fit and feasibility for students’ culture and context. Partnering alongside families and providing them with opportunities to voice perspectives and provide input throughout all stages of implementation can assist educational systems in partnering with families as competencies are developed and organizational mechanisms are adjusted to support implementation and outcomes.

Participatory Approaches within Family–School Collaboration

Family–school interventions often include a participatory component that emphasizes the voice and perspective of families when considering organizational change in schools (Bang &

Vossoughi, 2016; Ishimaru, 2019). Such an approach allows for a family-driven process that is responsive to contextual needs of the school and neighborhood. When used in the context of active implementation frameworks, participatory approaches hold promise for fundamentally reshaping the connections between families and schools within MTSS. These frameworks integrate collective learning from youth and families, allowing for improved beliefs and skills among educators to better partner with historically marginalized and excluded families (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Brooks et al., 2020; Lac & Cumings Mansfield, 2018). Continuing to investigate generalized design frameworks that center on local voices and contextual fit within the design and research process offers replicable family–school collaboration strategies that show promise for improving family–school relations particularly for historically marginalized families (Ishimaru, 2020).

When families are treated as equal partners throughout the stages of implementation, family voices are elevated, including the voices of historically marginalized and excluded families. Such perspectives are integrated within school systems and practices. Integrating family perspectives into school decision making can help reduce outcome disparities by race/ethnicity and improve school climate. Within an active implementation framework, continuous improvement cycles can be leveraged to advance continuous improvement in trial-and-error approaches alongside families and educators to advance family–school collaboration (Ishimaru, 2020).

Competencies and feedback loops are important components of active implementation framework drivers. Social capital, or the degree to which families have connections and relationships with others, is a predictor of student success (Goddard, 2003; Sheldon, 2002). Integrating family–school collaboration within MTSS holds promise for expanded connections with educators. In addition, family-to-family connections within an MTSS framework hold particular promise for improving social support and community connections, essential for promoting positive school climate. Future research should investigate the role of various forms of social capital for historically marginalized and excluded families including intergenerational relations between schools and families (Garcia, 2019) as well as relationships among families within the school. Creating accessible, respectful, and equitable opportunities for families to learn about family engagement behaviors from one another normalizes the challenges of parenting, supports student success and well-being, and reinforces the importance of these behaviors. Increasing equitable parental ties with other families of children enrolled at the school offers a potential strategy to increase equitable family–school collaboration (Goddard, 2003; Sheldon, 2002).

Moving toward Integration

Integrating family–school collaboration within MTSS requires study of the school and community context, as well as systems and practices germane to the specific MTSS framework. For example, a framework supporting instruction and intervention for literacy skills might focus family–school collaboration on shared book reading at home. In all instances, family–school collaboration emphasizes a consideration of family culture and values and integrating those cultures and values in the school community. In addition, integration of family–school collaboration emphasizes systems and practices at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3,

differentiating family–school collaboration for prevention and early intervention, targeted approaches, and intensive support strategies. When these factors are considered within a school and district teaming process with school and district administrative support, one can expect improvements in implementation of family–school practices and enhanced valued outcomes (Garbacz, Hirano, et al., 2018).

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

In this book, we strive to provide multiple perspectives about advancing family–school collaboration in a scoped and sequenced manner. We hope that this book works as a guide for school teams in aligning and integrating family–school collaboration within their existing systems and practices. With that in mind, we acknowledge that each school is at different places in their implementation journey—with schoolwide frameworks like MTSS and family–school collaboration—hence this book works as a resource to read from cover to cover and each chapter can stand alone. For example, for a school that is newer to their family–school collaboration journey, it may be helpful to read the book from cover to cover. Other schools may choose to use different chapters as resources as they strengthen their Tier 1 systems and build their Tier 2 systems.

We have included Chapters 2 and 3 early in the book because equity and educational justice are critical to every facet of family–school collaboration. Chapter 2 provides a review of key principles and practices that underscore equity and justice; Chapter 3 provides an orientation to practical strategies teams can implement. After reviewing the key equity and justice considerations, the book moves to a discussion of assessments in family–school collaboration in Chapter 4, which provides foundational ideas and examples of assessments school teams can use to take stock of their practices (baseline) and monitor the impact of their work over time. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 address alignment and integration of family–school collaboration at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3, respectively. In Chapter 8, we include primary strategies or facilitators school teams can consider to overcome challenges to their work with families and communities. The book concludes with Chapters 9 and 10, which provide examples of district and school cases to clarify how principles and practices included across other chapters can advance in practice.

Key Themes across Chapters

Chapters within this book provide a comprehensive orientation to the key issues for promoting family–school collaboration within an MTSS framework. We identified five primary themes across chapters that are important to consider when adopting and integrating family–school collaboration practices.

Theme 1: Findings from Research Studies Support Family–School Collaboration

Research grounding family–school collaboration suggests that when families and school staff collaborate, there are benefits for families, students, and schools. These findings

point to the importance of focusing on families' experiences and strength, and using those strengths as a primary way to support goal-directed change. In addition, strengthening the parent–teacher relationship is a primary avenue to support positive student outcomes.

Theme 2: There Are Challenges to Integrating Family–School Collaboration in School Practices

School staff and families experience challenges in their work together. School systems are often not set up to promote family–school collaboration. Moreover, school staff and families may not have had uniformly positive experiences working together. Indeed, some families and school staff may have had negative experiences with each other in the past. These challenges can be overcome by reaching out to families proactively to better understand their experiences and ideas and use those experiences and ideas when creating or refining school systems and practices. When problems arise, families and school staff can work together to develop a shared understanding for the nature of the problem, focusing on their shared interest in promoting student success to develop plans to address concerns.

Theme 3: Tier 1 Practices Promote Tier 2 and Tier 3

Strong Tier 1 family–school systems can promote Tier 2 and Tier 3 services. For example, family–school approaches to social–emotional support at Tier 1 can be integrated into Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions plans to promote continuity across settings. In addition, family engagement in Tier 2 and Tier 3 can be promoted through clear communication systems at Tier 1. Incorporating family and student feedback into schoolwide practices is essential to advance Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 systems and practices.

Theme 4: Schoolwide Teaming Is Critical to Align and Integrate Family–School Collaboration

A schoolwide Tier 1 team can anchor family–school practices and support alignment and integration across systems. Schoolwide teaming should include multiple avenues for families and students to provide input on schoolwide systems and practices. Schoolwide teams should have a documented procedure for incorporating family and student feedback into school systems. School teams should also include community connections, building and strengthening community partnerships with youth- and family-serving organizations. School teams can use these connections to better understand family experiences and to establish collaborative relationships with families.

Theme 5: Training and Ongoing Coaching for School Staff Is Essential to Strengthen Family–School Systems and Practices

School staff often do not have explicit preparation or training in collaborating with families, but they do have well developed skill sets that can apply to family–school collaborative practices. School teams may find it useful to collect data on school staff attitudes and expe-

periences about working with families. Teams can use these data to determine a training and coaching plan to support school staff in their work with families. For example, teams might organize a training to orient school staff to youth- and family-serving organizations in the area. In addition, teams can provide practical guidance to school staff about how to incorporate family ideas into their classroom practices, such as positive notes home to families about student social and behavioral successes at school. Ongoing coaching may be helpful to support school staff in problem solving their practices or adding depth to their plans for including families when building behavior support plans for students.

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