The ASCA Model and a Multi-Tiered System of Supports: A Framework to Support Students of Color With Problem Behavior

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The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model and a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) both provide frameworks for systematically solving problems in schools, including student behavior concerns. The authors outline a model that integrates overlapping elements of the National Model and MTSS as a support for marginalized students of color exhibiting problem behaviors. Individually, the frameworks employ data-driven decision making as well as prevention services for all students and intervention services for at-risk students. Thus, the integrated model allows schools to provide objective alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) that are being assigned to students of color at a disproportionate rate. The manuscript outlines the steps within the integrated model and provides implications for school counselors and counselor educators.

Keywords: **ASCA National Model, multi-tiered system of supports, school counselors, marginalized students, students of color**

Educational disparities are well documented for students of color in the United States (Delpit, 2006; Ford & Moore, 2013; U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2014). Today's students of color are facing lower graduation rates, overuse of exclusionary disciplinary action, overrepresentation in exceptional education programming and school policies that negatively impact students of color rather than support them (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008; USDOE, 2014; R. Palmer & Maramba, 2010; Toldson & Lewis, 2012). School discipline policies based on a framework of zero tolerance have not reduced suspensions or expulsions as initially intended. Instead, these policies have resulted in more students being excluded from the classroom due to reactive disciplinary action (Skiba, 2014). Bernstein (2014) posited that these policies are increasing the educational achievement gap and negatively impacting the development of students of color. What then can be done as an alternative to or as a measure to prevent exclusionary disciplinary actions such as suspensions and expulsions?

A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a systematic data-driven program designed to address academic concerns and problem behavior by utilizing both prevention and intervention strategies (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Specific to behavior-related concerns, MTSS programs offer a structured method for providing both universal and individual support for students and present data-driven alternatives to suspension and expulsion. School counselors are uniquely positioned to play a critical role in the implementation of such programs due to their training in data analysis, program development and direct service delivery. Moreover, MTSS programs align well with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2012a).

The ASCA National Model has themes of social justice, advocacy and systemic change infused throughout, as comprehensive school counseling programs are designed to remove barriers to

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student success and help students reach their potential in the areas of academic, career, social and emotional development (ASCA, 2012a). With these themes in mind, integrating the National Model with the objective and data-driven framework of MTSS may offer one solution for systemic educational disparities such as the school-to-prison pipeline. The purpose of this article is to describe a model for integrating elements of the ASCA National Model within the MTSS framework. The authors will describe steps involved in the process and will provide context for how such an intervention can specifically benefit students of color.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

More than 6.8 million individuals were under supervision of the adult correctional system in the United States at the end of 2014, a rate of 1 in 36 adults (Kaeble, Glaze, Tsoutis, & Minton, 2015). Of those under correctional supervision, over 1.5 million were held in state and federal correctional facilities (Carson, 2015). Although these numbers mark a slight decrease in the correctional population since 2007 (Kaeble et al., 2015), the American incarceration rate has quadrupled since the 1970s (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014). The growth of incarceration in the United States over the past four decades has largely affected the Black and Latino communities, both of which are disproportionately represented among individuals involved with the correctional system (Carson, 2015). Scholars in multiple academic disciplines have linked American drug policy and enforcement with mass incarceration of primarily individuals of color (Alexander, 2010; Travis et al., 2014). In education, however, a parallel cause has contributed to the expansion of the correctional system in the United States. Increasingly punitive discipline policies marked by *zero tolerance* approaches have created a pipeline from schools to prisons where exclusion from the educational environment and criminalization of student misbehavior contribute to school dropout and involvement with the juvenile justice system (Fowler, 2011).

The effects of this school-to-prison pipeline have been particularly detrimental for students of color, who are disproportionately suspended, expelled or otherwise excluded from the academic setting. Starting in preschool, Black children are suspended at a higher rate than their White counterparts (USDOE, 2014). Whereas 5% of White students are suspended, three times as many Black students are suspended on average (USDOE, 2014). Additionally, American Indian and Native-Alaskan students, who are less than 1% of the population in American schools, account for 2% of out-of-school suspensions and 3% of expulsions. Both gender and disability intersect with race and ethnicity, resulting in disproportionate suspensions of boys and girls of color and students with disabilities (USDOE, 2014). Among students with disabilities, those with emotional-behavioral disorders are most likely to experience academic exclusion and to experience such exclusion multiple times (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2011). Double minority status can increase the likelihood of exclusion, such as with Black males who are consistently over-identified in special education (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2002; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2011; Ferri & Connor, 2005).

Similar disparities exist among the rates of arrests and referrals to law enforcement for Black students and students with disabilities. Although only 16% of the student population, Black students account for 31% of school-related arrests and 27% of referrals to law enforcement (USDOE, 2014). Similarly, students with disabilities, which comprise about 12% of the student population, represent 25% of students arrested or referred to law enforcement (USDOE, 2014). School-related arrests and referrals to law enforcement can place students at risk for future involvement with the juvenile justice system and ultimately prison. Carmichael, Whitten, and Voloudakis's (2005) investigation of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system of Texas indicated that students with a disciplinary history were more likely to be involved with juvenile justice. Although this was the case for youth in all categories of race and ethnicity, both Latino and Black youth had more frequent contact with

the justice system than White youth (Carmichael et al., 2005). Demonstrating the cumulative effect of involvement with the juvenile system, Natsuaki, Ge, and Wenk's (2008) longitudinal study of young male offenders identified age of first arrest as an indicator of criminal trajectory with a younger age producing a steeper cumulative trajectory. Additionally, for those first arrested early during their adolescent years, the pace at which they committed criminal offenses was not slowed by completion of high school (Natsuaki et al., 2008). Hence, when school discipline policies result in the exclusion of students from the educational setting and involvement with law enforcement, students are likely to be involved with the justice system as juveniles and adults (Natsuaki et al., 2008; USDOE, 2014; Wiesner, Kim, & Capaldi, 2010).

The American School Counselor Association National Model
ASCA developed a National Model (2012a) in order to provide school counselors with clear guidelines on how to meet the needs of all students. The ASCA National Model boasts a comprehensive, data-driven approach to meeting the needs of students and focuses on addressing students' academic, personal, social and career needs. The model is driven by a key question: "How are students different as a result of what school counselors do?" Considering the data presented on the school-to-prison pipeline, this question is significant in ensuring that school counselors are providing students of color with the necessary support systems in order to foster more positive academic and social outcomes.

The National Model highlighted a collaborative approach centered on incorporating the efforts of teachers, administrators, families and other stakeholders in developing a comprehensive school counseling program. With school counselors at the helm, the model provided a new vision for the profession and emphasized school counselor accountability, leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change (ASCA, 2012a). That is, the focus shifted to elevating the function of the school counseling program to align more readily with the mission of the school at large.

As a result of this new vision, school counseling programs have been able to observe significant improvements in students' academic as well as social performance. For instance, L. Palmer and Erford (2012) found increases in high school attendance and graduation trends as the school counseling program implementation was increased. L. Palmer and Erford also reported positive changes in the academic performance of high school students, particularly improvements on Maryland State Assessment English and algebra scores. These results suggested optimistic influences of utilizing a comprehensive school counseling program as promoted by the National Model. Similarly, Carey and Dimmitt (2012) reported positive associations between the delivery of the comprehensive school counseling program and student performance; most specifically, rates of student suspensions and other disciplinary actions decreased, attendance increased, and math and reading proficiency improved. Dimmit and Wilkerson (2012) found that minority students were less likely to have access to comprehensive school counseling programs in their schools but noted correlations between an increase in counseling services and improved attendance, a decrease in suspensions, and a drop in reports of bullying. Similarly, Lapan, Whitcomb, and Aleman (2012) noted that schools with low counselor-to-student ratios and fully implemented ASCA Model programming had lower rates of suspension and fewer discipline issues.

Although much has been written on the benefits of school counselors addressing academic, personal, social and career development of students, there appears to be a paucity of research studies focused on the topic of college and career readiness of students of color. In terms of recommendations for school counselors and career development, Mayes and Hines (2014) discussed the need for more culturally sensitive and gendered approaches to college and career readiness for gifted Black females,

including assisting these students in navigating through systemic and even social challenges that they may face. Similarly, Belser (2015) highlighted the impact that the school-to-prison pipeline has on career opportunities later in life for adolescent males of color. Considering the challenges that students face, especially those from marginalized populations, as well as the significant benefits of data-driven comprehensive school counseling programs, it seems appropriate that school counselors utilize the National Model as the foundation for stimulating more positive student outcomes.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Initially framed as Response to Intervention (RTI), the implementation of MTSS resulted from federal education initiatives after the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which called for more alignment between this policy and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Sugai & Horner, 2009). MTSS programs in schools are designed to provide a more systematic, data-driven and equitable approach to solving academic and behavioral issues with students. Within such programs, students are divided into three tiered categories based on the level of risk and need: (a) Tier 1 represents students who are in the general education population and who are thriving, (b) Tier 2 represents students who need slightly more intensive intervention that can be delivered both individually or in a small group setting, and (c) Tier 3 represents students who need intensive individualized interventions (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). The process involves universal screening or testing, intervention implementation and progress monitoring.

To combat problem behaviors, MTSS is often linked to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as an additional source of support for students. These programs have shown to reduce office disciplinary referrals and increase attendance (Freeman et al., 2016). Moreover, Horner, Sugai, and Anderson (2010) determined that PBIS programs are associated with reductions in problem behaviors, improved perception of school safety and improved academic results. Banks and Obiakor (2015) provided strategies for implementing culturally responsive positive behavior supports in schools, noting that doing so can reduce the marginalization of minority students and foster a safe and supportive school climate. With outcomes such as these, PBIS and MTSS programs have become known as best practices (Horner et al., 2010).

Several authors have noted the overlapping elements of MTSS and the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012a; Martens & Andreen, 2013; Ockerman et al., 2012). As both frameworks have yielded positive outcomes with the general population and minority students, it would appear that a coordinated approach would be beneficial for schools. However, existing discussions of how to integrate the two have not been comprehensive in their discussion or have not addressed the potential impact on students of color. In this manuscript, the authors have sought to provide a solution to this problem.

Putting MTSS and Comprehensive School Counseling Programs Into Practice

Integrating the ASCA National Model with MTSS involves strategic data-driven planning and decision making. The process begins with collecting baseline data on students via screening scales and surveys and then analyzing this data to group students into tiers based on indicated level of risk. A more objective approach driven by data could especially benefit students of color, who have historically been subject to disproportionate and—at times—unfair discipline policies (Hoffman, 2012). Once students have been placed in one of three MTSS tier groups, the decision-making team and school counselors can generate appropriate prevention and intervention strategies that fit with each tier and with students' needs. The process is cyclical, as progress-monitoring data is collected

periodically to determine future steps. Figure 1 outlines the process from start to finish, and the sections that follow will further highlight the phases of the process. In addition, the authors will address how these steps can affect students of color.
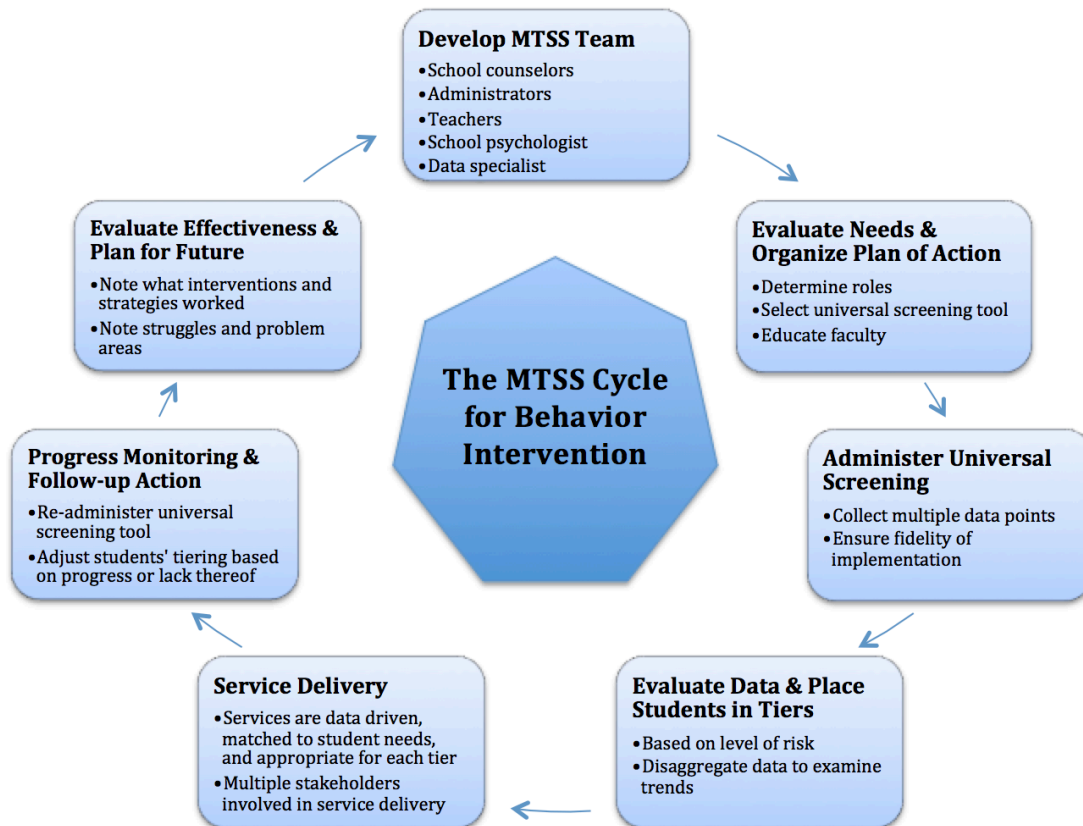

Develop MTSS Team
- School counselors
- Administrators
- Teachers
- School psychologist
- Data specialist

Evaluate Effectiveness & Plan for Future
- Note what interventions and strategies worked
- Note struggles and problem areas

Evaluate Needs & Organize Plan of Action
- Determine roles
- Select universal screening tool
- Educate faculty

The MTSS Cycle for Behavior Intervention

Progress Monitoring & Follow-up Action
- Re-administer universal screening tool
- Adjust students' tiering based on progress or lack thereof

Administer Universal Screening
- Collect multiple data points
- Ensure fidelity of implementation

Service Delivery
- Services are data driven, matched to student needs, and appropriate for each tier
- Multiple stakeholders involved in service delivery

Evaluate Data & Place Students in Tiers
- Based on level of risk
- Disaggregate data to examine trends

Figure 1. The MTSS Cycle for Behavior Intervention

Team Development and Planning

The process of providing MTSS services is not a job for a single person; rather, a team of stakeholders (e.g., school counselors, administrators, teachers) must be involved in planning, enacting and evaluating the services and interventions utilized. With the integration of the ASCA National Model within MTSS, school counselors can utilize elements of the model, such as the Advisory Council and the Annual Agreement, to aid in the planning process (ASCA, 2012a). Each member of the team provides a unique role, from direct service delivery to data management. School counselors should be mindful of their numerous other duties within the school and only take the lead on program components that are appropriate and directly relate to the role of school counselors in schools (ASCA, 2014; Ockerman et al., 2012).

In the planning phase, the team should examine preliminary discipline-related data to gauge what types of universal supports might be necessary; within this conversation, understanding the school's demographic data is crucial so the team can account for potential culture-bound concerns that may need to be addressed during the MTSS process. Additionally, the team should determine what instrument will be used for universal screening, a process that will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Once the team has a preliminary plan of action, including a timeline of key events,

this information should be presented to the entire school faculty to provide a rationale for the services and procedural information to boost fidelity of implementation, especially with program elements implemented schoolwide like universal screening.

Universal Screening

Data collection through universal assessment is a necessary step to the MTSS process (Harn, Basaraba, Chard, & Fritz, 2015; von der Embse, Pendergast, Kilgus, & Eklund, 2015). School counselors often rely on referrals from teachers, parents and students to match students with interventions; however, integrating a universal screening approach to comprehensive school counseling programs can help mitigate students falling through the cracks (Ockerman et al., 2012). Universal screening involves all students being evaluated using one instrument, such as the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS; Drummond, 1994), which allows a decision-making team to categorize students based on level of risk for the respective issue. Cheney and Yong (2014) noted that a universal screening instrument should be time efficient for teachers to complete and should be both valid and reliable; they further noted that the purpose of such a screening tool is to identify which students warrant interventions beyond Tier 1 supports (i.e., Tier 2 and 3 interventions).

Various instruments exist for universal screening of behavior or emotional risk (Lane, Kalberg, et al., 2011). The SRSS (Drummond, 1994) is one freely available screening instrument that allows teachers to rate an entire class of students quickly on seven behavioral or social subscales. This tool fits well into an MTSS framework as the scoring places students into a category of low, moderate, or high levels of risk (Lane et al., 2015); in addition, researchers have established validity and reliability for the SRSS at the elementary (Lane et al., 2012), middle (Lane, Oakes, Carter, Lambert, & Jenkins, 2013), and high school levels (Lane, Oakes, et al., 2011), as well as in urban elementary schools (Ennis, Lane, & Oakes, 2012). Other universal screening instruments that support the MTSS framework for behavior-related concerns include the Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BESS; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2007), the Systematic Screening for Behavioral Disorders (SSBD; Walker & Severson, 1992), and the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavioral Risk Screener (SAEBRS; von der Embse et al., 2015).

Procedurally, the process of conducting a universal screening at a school would need to be driven by a collaborative faculty team with heavy administrative support. Carter, Carter, Johnson, and Pool (2012) described steps that educators took at one school to identify students for Tier 2 and 3 interventions and beyond. Within their process, faculty members would complete the screening instrument on a class of students whom they see regularly (e.g., a homeroom class). Ideally, multiple faculty members would complete the instrument on a single class to provide multiple data points on each student as a means of reducing teacher bias; in such an instance, the scores could be averaged together. Once the screening process is complete, the MTSS team (or whatever team has been assembled for this purpose) can view the compiled data to identify at-risk students. The faculty team can then sort and view this data easily by students' scores on the instrument to reveal which students are most at risk based on the assessment. The final step in this process is to place students within one of the three MTSS tiers based on the results of the universal screening instrument. After this process is complete, the school counselors and the team can design interventions for students at each level. The faculty team may find it useful to consult other school discipline data points (e.g., office disciplinary referrals and suspensions) as additional baseline measures for students identified as needing Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. However, the team should keep in mind that these disciplinary actions have historically been applied to students of color, particularly Black males, at a disproportionate rate; thus, these data points may not be in line with the goal of using a more objective measurement strategy (Hoffman, 2012).

Tiering and Intervention

Whereas school counselors can be an integral part of the universal screening process, they can also be a driving force with direct service delivery for students at all three MTSS tiers (Ockerman et al., 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012a) highlighted the overlapping nature of the model's direct student services component to the three tiers of the MTSS model. The following sections will highlight the connections between the three MTSS tiers and the levels of service delivery within comprehensive school counseling programs; moreover, the authors will convey strategies and interventions that may be especially helpful for students of color facing social and behavioral concerns.

Tier 1. Tier 1 instruction or intervention takes place in the general education environment and is presented universally to students (Harn et al., 2015). Two programs commonly used at this level are PBIS and Social-Emotional Learning (Cook et al., 2015). However, Ockerman et al. (2012) noted that some elements of comprehensive school counseling programs (e.g., schoolwide interventions, large group interventions and the counseling core curriculum) fall within the first tier, as they are designed to target all or most students. For example, school counselors can partner with administrators and teachers to develop or adopt a data-driven PBIS program that integrates classroom lessons (e.g., character education) and schoolwide programming (e.g., an anti-bullying rally or positive behavior reward events). Additionally, school counselors can align their counseling curriculum with the goals of the MTSS or PBIS program and create lessons or units that support these goals. Potential topics for these lessons or units include social skills, conflict resolution, respecting diversity and differences in others, and managing one's anger. School counselors can gather needs assessment data from students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders to determine which topics may be of most benefit to students. Tier 1 interventions are designed to effectively serve approximately 80–85% of students (Martens & Andreen, 2013).

Tier 2. Tier 2 interventions are enacted for students whose needs are not being met by Tier 1 services and may include a variety of interventions such as the following: (a) targeted interventions, (b) group interventions, and (c) individualized interventions for less problematic behaviors (Newcomer, Freeman, & Barrett, 2013). School counselors may be involved with any or all of these types of interventions but are more likely to provide direct services to students through small group interventions and individualized interventions for minor problem behaviors. The MTSS decision-making team should evaluate data from the universal screening process to determine which students may need a Tier 2 support and what type of intervention that should be. For example, after the first author compiled data from the SRSS at his middle school, he and his team evaluated the scores of students who fell in the moderate risk range to determine what interventions (e.g., small group counseling, behavior contract, Check-in/Check-out) would be appropriate for each student. Unlike Tier 1 supports, Tier 2 interventions should not be one-size-fits-all, but driven by the needs of each unique student.

Small group counseling. As students of color have been subject to disproportionate use of exclusionary disciplinary actions (e.g., in-school or out-of-school suspensions), school counselors and the decision-making team should utilize Tier 2 interventions that promote alternatives to suspension and help re-engage students with prosocial behaviors. Group counseling interventions can be more psychoeducational in nature (e.g., anger management, social skills development, conflict resolution, problem solving) or can be geared more toward personal growth and exploration of students' feelings and concerns about everyday problems (Gladding, 2016). Regardless of the type of group, school counselors should foster an environment where students can openly express themselves and simultaneously work on an individual goal. Safety, trust and universality within the group may be especially helpful for marginalized students, as they can often feel disenfranchised from the school

environment because of exclusionary discipline practices (Caton, 2012; Gladding, 2016).

Individualized interventions. Some students are not appropriate for counseling groups or their presenting issues do not warrant a group intervention. For these students, an individual approach to Tier 2 interventions is necessary. Two commonly used strategies are Check-in/Check-out and behavior contracts. Check-in/Check-out is a structured method for providing students with feedback regarding their behavior with higher frequency (Crone, Hawken, & Horner, 2010). With this strategy, students "check-in" with a designated faculty member in the morning as a source of encouragement and non-contingent attention, receive a behavior report card that is carried with them throughout their day for teachers to record feedback, and "check-out" with the same faculty member at the end of the day to evaluate progress and possibly receive a reward. The report card can then be taken home to parents as a form of home–school collaboration (Maggin, Zurheide, Pickett, & Baillie, 2015). Check-in/check-out has been shown to be an intervention that successfully prevents escalation of student behavior and reduces disciplinary referrals (Maggin et al., 2015; Martens & Andreen, 2013). Moreover, it also helps students build a positive relationship with school staff members.

Behavior contracts have a similar approach but also take the form of a less intensive behavior intervention plan (BIP). With both approaches, the report card or behavior tracking form should be modified based on the developmental and behavioral needs of the student. The first author utilized an approach that integrated both of these interventions, and each identified student was matched with an adult with whom they had a trusting relationship who acted as their designated check-in/check-out person. Students receiving an individual intervention also may benefit from small group counseling as an additional support. If Tier 2 interventions are unsuccessful in mitigating students' problem behaviors, the team's attention should shift to Tier 3 interventions.

Tier 3. Tier 3 interventions are appropriate for students identified as highly at risk by the universal screening and students who have not responded positively to Tier 2 interventions. As with Tier 2 interventions, school counselors' roles with Tier 3 interventions may vary, ranging from a supporting or consultative role to directly delivering interventions. Counseling interventions at this level include individual counseling, one-on-one mentoring, or referrals to community agencies for more intensive services (Ockerman et al., 2012). School counselors should keep in mind that ASCA has identified providing long-term individual counseling as an inappropriate role for school counselors (ASCA, 2012a) due to time constraints and lack of resources. As such, referrals to community agencies may be most helpful in supporting students in need of more intensive one-on-one counseling services.

Behavior intervention plans are another Tier 3 strategy to mitigate more severe problem behaviors (Bohanon, McIntosh, & Goodman, 2015). Lo and Cartledge (2006) found that conducting functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and creating BIPs was a successful intervention for reducing problem behaviors and increasing replacement behaviors in elementary-aged Black males. Whether through counseling intervention or intensive behavior support, structured Tier 3 interventions can provide alternatives to suspensions, which is especially helpful for students of color as previously discussed.

Progress Monitoring

The MTSS process does not end with universal screening or service delivery; the decision-making team must have a clear and systematic plan for monitoring student outcomes. Carter et al. (2012) recommended administering the universal screening tool at least twice during the school year to evaluate progress. By taking such action, the decision-making team can determine which students are responding well to interventions and which students are not. Those students responding well to Tier 2 or 3 interventions may be moved down to Tier 1, whereas those not responding well to

Tier 1 or 2 may be moved up a tier. Students not responding to Tier 3 interventions may warrant additional behavioral or psychological assessment to determine if further services are more appropriate (Ockerman et al., 2012). Progress monitoring also can provide clues about the efficacy of an intervention or the fidelity of its implementation. For example, if only one student in a class is responding to a Tier 1 intervention, the team may want to evaluate the delivery of that intervention for that class or consider an alternative intervention. A primary benefit of utilizing a data-driven progress monitoring approach is that it allows for objective decision making based on data, rather than subjective decision making that may be influenced by bias.

Implications for School Counselors

In line with the ASCA National Model (2012a), school counselors are called to be advocates and agents of systemic change in their schools. Part of this calling includes implementing comprehensive school counseling programs that address inequities within the school and provide programming to address the achievement gap. As has been discussed previously, integrating MTSS and the National Model can be especially helpful for students of color who have historically been subject to bias within discipline policies and procedures, resulting in disproportionate rates of disciplinary action. School counselors acting as advocates and agents of change should be proactive in analyzing school data to determine whether these inequities are at play and must be vocal about the need to solve these problems if they do exist at their schools (ASCA, 2012b).

As such, school counselors should ensure that they are versed in best practices such as MTSS that have been shown to positively impact racial and cultural inequities. However, school counselors cannot solve the problem alone. The other two themes of the ASCA National Model (2012a)—leadership, and collaboration and teaming—are also critically important if school counselors are to implement such programs. With training in data analysis, program development and direct service implementation, school counselors are uniquely positioned to take on leadership roles with regard to MTSS programming. However, they also should recognize their roles as collaborators and team members for program elements that do not directly fall within the role of school counselors (Ockerman et al., 2012).

Implications for Counselor Educators and Researchers

As stakeholders charged with training the next generation of school counselors, counselor educators must remain versed in newer topics within school counseling and education. Although PBIS has been around since 1997, MTSS is still a relatively new concept, especially when integrated with the ASCA National Model. School counselor educators should ensure that coursework prepares future school counselors to engage in such programming. More specifically, school counselor preparation courses should include discussion and application of MTSS, data analysis, program evaluation, behavior interventions and other concepts that are vital to coordinating ASCA Model programming. At the same time, counselor educators also must empower graduate students to become advocates for marginalized students at their future schools and for themselves as professionals. Because there is little research available that evaluates the integration of MTSS and ASCA Model programming, it is imperative that school counselors and counselor educators collaborate to conduct such research.

Conclusion

Research on the school-to-prison pipeline has demonstrated an unfortunate link between the criminal justice system and K–12 disproportionate disciplinary practices faced by students of

color. An integrated system including a multi-tiered system of supports and the ASCA (2012a) National Model has been introduced in this manuscript to address disciplinary concerns in a more systemically balanced manner. MTSS and the ASCA National Model utilize a similar data-driven structured approach to solving issues related to academic and behavioral concerns. When integrated, the overlapping elements of each framework can provide an avenue for addressing key concerns for students of color exhibiting problem behaviors. Rather than relying on disciplinary procedures that may result in students being excluded from class, an approach integrating frameworks of prevention and intervention can provide a much-needed alternative. The framework provided herein details steps that school counselors and other educators can take to address the school-to-prison pipeline. In order to best support marginalized students, school counselors must heed the call to leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change given by the National Model; moreover, joining forces with other educators through collaborative efforts such as MTSS can only strengthen the effort to best support the success of all students.

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