RESEARCH ARTICLE

School counselors' leadership experiences in multi-tiered systems of support: Prioritizing relationships and shaping school climate

Emily Goodman-Scott[1] | **Jolie Ziomek-Daigle**[2]

[1] Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA

[2] Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia, Athens, VA, USA

Correspondence
Emily Goodman-Scott, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, 2128 New Education Building; Norfolk, VA 23529, USA.
Email: egscott@odu.edu

Abstract
Ample scholarship describes the importance of school counselors aligning their work with multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). However, there exists limited research describing school counselors' leadership in MTSS. Researchers conducted a phenomenological investigation of school counselors' experiences as leaders in MTSS ($N = 10$). According to the results, school counselors reported that their MTSS leadership prioritized relationships and shaped the school climate. Included is a literature review and discussion grounded in school counseling leadership theory.

KEYWORDS
leadership, multi-tiered systems of support, school counseling

School counselors are leaders in their school, implementing comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCPs) such as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (ASCA, 2019; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Similarly, scholars have also recommended school counselors' involvement and even leadership in multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), a framework widely used in K-12 education (Goodman-Scott, 2016; Ockerman et al., 2012; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Despite recommendations for school counselors as leaders in MTSS, there exists a dearth of research on school counselors' specific MTSS leadership roles. The present paper describes a phenomenological study of 10 school counselors' experiences with MTSS leadership.

Multi-tiered systems of support

MTSS are frameworks for addressing a wealth of K-12 student domains (i.e., the *whole child*), such as academics, behaviors, social/emotional, and even mental health (Bal, 2018; Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021b; Sugai et al., 2019). The MTSS is an overarching term often associated with the academically focused response to intervention (RTI) and the behaviorally guided positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS); as such, the term MTSS will be used in this paper to include both approaches. Specifically, a K-12 school-based leadership team guides MTSS implementation, aiming to improve student outcomes and school functioning through their school's interconnected (a) data (e.g., at the student and school level), (b) systems (e.g., school policies and procedures), and (c) tiered practices (e.g., Tier one prevention for all students and Tier two and three interventions for students with elevated needs) (Center on PBIS, 2021b). Through MTSS, schools use data to monitor student and school needs, implementing evidence-based practices at each tier. With the MTSS framework, care is given to ensure schools' data, systems, and practices are culturally responsive, address disproportionality, and prioritize changing systems to work toward greater social justice and equity (Bal, 2018). MTSS has been associated with a wealth of positive school-based outcomes in K-12 schools over years of implementation, including lower discipline referrals, suspensions, and truancy rates, as well as higher academic achievement and attendance (Kim et al., 2018; Pas et al., 2019; Simonsen et al., 2012). Relatedly, MTSS has been implemented across schools with diverse racial/ethnic student populations (Greflund et al., 2014; McIntosh et al., 2018), urban schools (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Lassen et al., 2006), and rural schools (Oyen & Wollersheim-Shervey, 2019; Steed et al., 2013). Overall, MTSS has

revolutionized K-12 public education in recent decades, routinely receiving large-scale federal funding; MTSS is implemented in nearly 30,000 schools in all states across the country (Center on PBIS, 2021a). The multi-disciplinary MTSS team comprises school-based professionals, such as administrators, teachers, support staff, and school counselors (Sugai et al., 2019).

School counseling

Due to the breadth and depth of MTSS implementation across the country, a number of scholars have suggested that school counselors' roles naturally align with the MTSS framework (Goodman-Scott et al., 2016, 2019, 2020; Ockerman et al., 2012; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). These claims have been backed empirically, as a number of scholars have demonstrated school counselors' role in MTSS (Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Cressey et al., 2014; Goodman-Scott, 2014; Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017a, 2017b). For instance, some studies found that school counselors may act as leaders in MTSS. In their descriptive case study, Betters-Bubon and Donohue (2016) described school counselors' roles in MTSS according to one elementary and middle school, noting that school counselors' MTSS involvement broadened their roles as school leaders. Goodman-Scott and Grothaus (2017a, 2017b) conducted a phenomenological study, asking school counselors in recognized ASCA model programs (RAMPs) designated schools about their experiences with MTSS. Findings highlighted the complementary nature of MTSS and the ASCA National Model, determining that through MTSS implementation, school counselors were able to implement collaboration, systemic change, leadership, and advocacy (the four themes found in previous iterations of the ASCA National Model). Thus, school counselors perceived that implementing both RAMP and MTSS enhanced their leadership in CSCPs and MTSS (Goodman-Scott, 2017b). Most recently, in a quantitative study ($N = 528$), Patrikakou et al. (2020) found that as school counselors' knowledge of MTSS increased, so did their positive perceptions of MTSS. Hence, as school counselors increasingly understood their role in MTSS, they could better perceive themselves as leaders in utilizing data, collaborating with allied professionals, and advocating on students' behalf. In summary, the school counseling literature has begun to illuminate school counselors as leaders in school-wide MTSS.

School counseling leadership

To further illuminate the discussion on school counseling leadership, the concept of school counselors as leaders emerged in the literature in the early 2000s, particularly toward the implementation of CSCPs (ASCA, 2019). During this time, school counseling was transitioning from *person* to *program*: from providing reactive, ancillary services

to *individual* students to preventatively and proactively running a comprehensive program across the school, to systematically serve *all* students. As a result, during this time, Dollarhide (2003) applied a four-part leadership model to school counseling: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic leadership. First, she outlined that in structural leadership, school counselors create and implement CSCP, focusing on building effective and sustainable programs. Second, according to human resource leadership, school counselors are responsible for empowering and inspiring followers by instilling trust and building relationships. Third, Dollarhide outlined that school counselors utilize political leadership by assessing the power and politics of their system, determining influential contacts and decision-making, which influence their advocacy, relationships, negotiation, and persuasion. Then fourth, using symbolic leadership, school counselors are models and visionaries (e.g., inspiring common goals and beliefs such as in devising vision and mission plans).

Not only has leadership been one of the four themes of the ASCA National Model over the years, but leadership has also been interwoven in all themes (ASCA, 2019). Most recently, in 2018, *Professional School Counseling* published a special issue dedicated to leadership, where editors described various school counseling leadership styles or theories: transformational, distributed, servant, and transformative leadership.

Transformational leadership

To start with, in transformational leadership, school counselors are visionaries who aim to understand their team members'/followers' needs (e.g., teachers, administrators, and families), and to then inspire them toward a common goal (e.g., facilitate school-wide changes and implement a CSCP) (Lowe et al., 2018). Specifically, transformational leadership is a long-term process in which school counselors immerse themselves in their school community to increase their understanding and awareness of the population and then apply that knowledge to work together with stakeholders, so all parties are motivated toward change or *transformation*. Hence, school counselors and stakeholders work closely together toward a common goal, and change can often occur at the school level, across the system (Lowe et al., 2018). According to Lowe et al. (2018), through transformational leadership, school counselors can increase rapport, trust, and communication with stakeholders, working together toward school-wide initiatives and frameworks, such as CSCPs.

Distributed leadership

Next, distributed leadership is highly collaborative across many members of the school community, sharing leadership based on each member's strengths, knowledge, and skills (Janson et al., 2009). In this model, leadership is not confined to one person or position, but distributed across many; thus, foci include interaction between leaders and prioritizing

the greater collective. An example of distributed leadership is a school counselor collaborating with their school leadership team to plan and implement a school-wide initiative or a parent/family workshop.

Servant leadership

Through the servant leadership lens, school counselors serve and prioritize the needs of their followers (e.g., students and teachers), demonstrating qualities such as empathy and empowerment (Harris & Hockaday, 2018; Young & Dollarhide, 2018). For instance, utilizing this approach could include school counselors empowering their students toward increased growth and development; focusing on relationships; assisting students, staff, and family depending on need and their culture; decreasing a traditional leadership hierarchy to instead a focus on community; and utilizing empathy, humility, and integrity (Harris & Hockaday, 2018; Young & Dollarhide, 2018). As such, through servant leadership, school counselors aim for their followers or stakeholders to eventually grow into servant leaders themselves.

Transformative leadership

More currently, transformative leadership utilizes a systemic, social justice perspective to advocate for equitable change in schools, based on values, context, and moral courage (Shields et al., 2018). As such, Shields et al. (2018) recommended transformative leadership aligns with and extends the ASCA National Model (2019), acknowledges diverse educational and community contexts, and deconstructs and rebuilds inequitable systems, including redistributing power toward greater equity. This leadership theory has been lauded as especially relevant compared with other school counseling leadership approaches, due to the emphasis on social justice, equity, and inclusive of those groups traditionally minoritized.

Overall, transformational, distributed, and servant leadership focus on the process or the *how* of leadership, while transformative leadership addresses the *what* or outcomes of leadership (Young & Dollarhide, 2018). Despite their differences, these four recent school counseling leadership approaches prioritize collaboration and serving and improving the school community.

RATIONALE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Overall, a multitude of researchers have studied school counselor leadership, finding the practice complex and variable by school counselor, based on priorities and time spent on a range of tasks and roles (e.g., administrative responsibilities, collaboration and relationships, systemic change, social justice advocacy) (Janson, 2009; Young & Bryan, 2015; Young et al, 2015). Researchers have also investigated concepts

related to school counselor leadership, such as emotional intelligence (Mullen et al., 2018), the integration of social motional learning (SEL) into school counselors' leadership practices (Bowers et al., 2018), and school counselors as mental health experts (Lambie et al., 2019), who advocate for social justice (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). Thus, the listed literature includes few of the many publications on school counseling leadership that have been developed over the last 20+ years. Despite the robust literature on school counseling leadership, absent from this conversation is school counselors' leadership in MTSS specifically.

MTSS is known as "the largest educational reform in recent history" (Patrikakou et al., 2020, p. 19). Given MTSS's highly prioritized national scope, the alignment between MTSS and CSCPs, and school counselors' multifaceted role as school leaders, school counselors are in an optimal position to also be leaders in MTSS. While some researchers described school counselors' leadership roles in MTSS, these studies were broad, examining a range of school counselors' MTSS roles and attributes, rather than focusing on leadership specifically (Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Cressey et al., 2014; Goodman-Scott, 2014). As a result, several researchers have suggested the need for future research to specifically and solely investigate school counselors' leadership roles in MTSS and provide a more precise and concentrated investigation of this phenomenon (Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017b; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018). Thus, the following research question guided this study: *What are the leadership experiences of school counselors in* MTSS*?*

METHOD

Phenomenological inquiry "provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 80) and is the most commonly used qualitative method in the counseling profession (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). Thus, to address the research question and the gap in the literature, researchers conducted a qualitative, phenomenological investigation to glean a rich, in-depth account of school counselors' MTSS leadership experiences, extending both the MTSS and school counseling literature, including a novel understanding to a well-studied construct: school counseling leadership. Such information may provide a rich, deep understanding of the essence of school counselors' MTSS leadership lived experiences across a sample of school counselors, with the potential to inform future school counseling practice; preparation and training; the conceptualization of school counseling leadership; and even policies and future research.

Reflexivity statement

Reflexivity statements are typically used in qualitative research to note researchers' background, and positionality

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). Both researchers in the present study distinguish as White, of European descent, cisgender, female faculty in counselor education graduate programs in the southern region of the United States; they both identify with the school counseling specialty first, and clinical mental health second. Specifically, the first researcher is an associate professor with previous experience as an elementary school counselor, in which they were an internal coach for their school's MTSS team. Their research interests center on MTSS and they have substantial experience conducting qualitative research. Relatedly, she prescribes to a collaborative, developmental leadership approach; relying both on tasks and process; examining, interrupting, and changing systems, especially inequitable and discriminatory systems; and largely flattening the leadership hierarchy. The second researcher is a professor with years of experience as an elementary and high school counselor. She too has experience with qualitative research and MTSS. In regard to her leadership philosophy, the second researcher describes leadership as a collaborative process of shared roles and responsibilities with representatives from various systems being present and participatory. Last, aligned with phenomenological inquiry, both researchers believe reality is subjective, varied, and contextual, and thus prescribe to a social constructivist perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flynn & Korcuska, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012).

Participants

Researchers obtained a purposeful sample of participants ($N = 10$) who met the inclusion criteria: experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). Specifically, to participate, individuals agreed they: (a) had been employed as a school counselor for at least one school year, (b) self-identified as a leader in MTSS, and (c) were willing to participate in the described study.

In terms of demographics, participants identified as female ($n = 8$) and male ($n = 2$); African American/Black ($n = 5$) and White ($n = 5$); and ranged in age from 31 to 57 years ($M = 43.8$; SD $= 8.48$). All participants were full-time school counselors, employed at the primary ($n = 1$), elementary ($n = 5$), middle ($n = 1$), and high ($n = 3$) school levels; and were employed as school counselors between 4 and 25 years ($M = 12.7$; SD $= 6.63$). The participants held the following terminal degrees: master's ($n = 4$), educational specialist ($n = 4$), and doctorate ($n = 2$) and reported having between one and four school counselors employed in their schools ($M = 2$).

Data collection and analysis

The present study was approved by the university human subjects review committee before recruitment or data collection. As little is known about the prevalence of school counselors with MTSS leadership experiences, and hence underscoring the need for this preliminary study, researchers aimed to maximize the recruitment of school counselors who met the inclusion criteria. Hence, they purposefully recruited from a state with strong MTSS efforts: Georgia. The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE, 2020) has a history of robust PBIS implementation, specifically, (a) PBIS implementation began in Georgia in 2008, and has grown exponentially to over 1300 schools presently; (b) the GDOE has a coaching infrastructure that comprises districts, regions, and states; and (c) the GDOE established a clearly articulated system of identifying levels of PBIS implementation in schools (e.g., *installing*: lowest degree of implementation; *emerging*; and *operational*: highest degree of implementation) As such, for recruitment purposes, a research team of three graduate students reviewed the GDOE website and gathered a list of schools listed as *operational* for the previous school year and recorded the names and email addresses of the school counselors in these schools. *Operational* schools were chosen due to increased PBIS implementation, which researchers anticipated would assist in illuminating the phenomenon in question. Then researchers emailed the listed school counselors, describing the study and inviting participation. Individuals interested in participating confirmed meeting the inclusion criteria; then researchers scheduled individual phone interviews to collect data.

All data collection with the noted sample comprises qualitative interview questions pertaining to MTSS leadership. For consistency, the first researcher conducted all interviews using semistructured interview questions, which are routinely found in phenomenological investigations and aligned with a social constructivist perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flynn & Korcuska, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). Thus, in tandem with a semistructured format, the first researcher asked participants broad, open-ended questions about their leadership experiences with MTSS, using flexible probes/questions based on participants' responses. Probing questions/prompts often included the following examples: (a) describe your definition of and experiences with leadership as a professional school counselor; (b) identify and describe your role in MTSS; and (c) as a school counselor, describe the leadership behaviors, attitudes, and practices you bring to your role in MTSS. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a secure transcription service.

In analyzing data, we utilized Creswell and Poth's (2018) steps to a phenomenological study, based on Moustakas's (1994) transcendental approach. (1) To start with, researchers described their prior experiences and biases with the phenomenon under investigation, as well as their reactions during the interview process; these in-depth conversations assisted researchers to bracket or set aside their assumptions and responses, in order to more readily focus on participants' lived experiences. (2) Next, to increase familiarity and immerse themselves with the data, both researchers individually read through all transcripts, making notes of their reflections, which were discussed in a research meeting. (3) After that, researchers systematically analyzed all data in alignment

with a phenomenological approach, beginning with narrow and moving to broader units of analysis. Specifically, the first researcher read a transcript, engaged in horizonalization (i.e., coding), noting statements of meaning. (4) Then, the second researcher read through the coded transcript, noting instances of agreement and disagreement. The researchers then met to consensus code/reach intercoder agreement (i.e., researcher triangulation): discussing discrepant horizons until reaching 100% consensus. This process was completed for all 10 transcripts, and horizons were added to a codebook. (5) At that point, both researchers individually reviewed the codebook and organized horizons into clusters (i.e., themes and subthemes) pertaining to *what* and *how* participants experienced the phenomenon (i.e. textural and structural descriptions). (6) At the next meeting, researchers met to compare their proposed organization of horizons, subthemes, and themes, which they discussed at length until reaching consensus. (7) Last, the first researcher wrote the overall *essence* (i.e., culmination) of the results. The second researcher reviewed and provided feedback on this *essence*, and both researchers reached a final agreement.

Establishing trustworthiness

Trustworthiness strategies are used to convey rigor in qualitative investigations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). For the current study, researchers utilized trustworthiness strategies commonly used in counseling qualitative research, and phenomenological inquiry in particular (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flynn & Korcuska, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). To start, researchers attempted to bracket their assumptions and biases through reflexive journaling and discussions during research meetings. Then, in the present paper, researchers described their background and positionality in a reflexivity statement and also provided a thick, rich, in-depth description of the method and results, to extend transferability and replication. To enrich confirmability, investigators engaged in researcher triangulation (i.e., intercoder agreement/consensus coding: reaching agreement on data analysis) as well as member checking and the use of an external audit. Specifically, researchers conducted member checking during interviews (i.e., reflecting and confirming participants' meaning), as well as on transcripts (i.e., requesting participant feedback and confirmation of transcript accuracy). Participant member checking feedback was minimal, primarily clarifying words or expanding on content. Further, an external auditor (i.e., an associate professor in counselor education with experience in qualitative research and expertise in MTSS, school counseling, and leadership) reviewed and provided feedback on the audit trail, field notes, coded transcripts, codebook, and the results. One primary recommendation from the auditor was to consider that participants self-identified as MTSS leaders, which could likely impact the results to be more favorable toward MTSS and leadership.

RESULTS

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in utilizing a phenomenological approach, researchers share the essence of the results in a composite description. As such, four overarching themes were identified in the present study: (a) prioritizing relationships, (b) shaping the school climate, (c) commonalities between school counseling and MTSS, as well as (d) benefits and challenges of school counselors' MTSS leadership roles. Important to note, as qualitative inquiry often produces large datasets, it is common for results to be shared across multiple yet distinctly different papers (Hunt, 2011). As such, the present paper reports one subset of findings (i.e., the first two themes listed earlier) from a larger qualitative dataset; all results across both papers stemmed from the same a priori research question, interview questions, and data analysis pertaining to school counselors' MTSS leadership experiences. Thus, in honoring a phenomenological approach, we are briefly sharing the overall essence of the results in this paper, while also providing an adequately thick, rich account of one set of results. For more information on the remaining themes, please see Goodman-Scott (under review). In addition, also necessary to mention, while the researchers asked about MTSS, participants responded with the terminology used in their school (e.g., PBIS, RTI, MTSS); this language is reflected in participant quotes.

When asked about their leadership experiences in MTSS, nearly every school counselor noted they were MTSS coaches in their school, overseeing MTSS planning and implementation. For example, two participants relayed,

> As far as being a coach, I would facilitate the meetings, send out emails, go to different trainings in our central office…. be my school's representative for PBIS at those meetings and find out [information] from the state department or the people that are in charge of PBIS at the district office level. Then make sure that it was implemented in our school. All surveys or trade ins that needed to be done I would coordinate and facilitate those (PA02).

> As far as multi-tiered systems, I serve on our leadership committee to implement positive change in the schools. I'm on our RTI team to determine what interventions or tiers are right for students, as well as helping develop the RTI policies and procedures in our schools. I've done that for 10 years, write the policies. I'm the PBIS coach, keeping the program running, and helping develop positive reward systems and behavior expectations for our students and our faculty. I schedule all the meetings for PBIS, come up with the agenda, what we need to discuss, what changes we need to make. I try to make

sure we have the right people on our team, the ones that are most focused on positive changes in our school, so that we're always moving in the right direction and coming up with new ideas that help motivate our children to do their best (PA04).

Next, when describing these leadership roles in MTSS, the following two themes were identified: (a) prioritizing relationships and (b) shaping the school climate.

Theme 1: Prioritizing relationships

According to participants, their leadership in MTSS was highly person-centered, prioritizing relationships. For instance, PA04 shared,

> I have to have a good relationship with my teachers so that they trust the ideas that I ask them to try. I have to have a good relationship with my administrators so that they know that they can trust the job that I do here. Parents have to know that I love their children. Children have to know that I want good things for them.

In a similar vein, PA06 ensured "students are the first and foremost[in] your school counseling program… I am available whenever I'm needed, with whomever I'm needed for… the students are first, but as far as the teachers, being there if there's anything they need." The three related subthemes are (a) intentionally collaborating with stakeholders, (b) gaining buy-in, and (c) advocating for students.

Subtheme: Intentionally collaborating with stakeholders

As part of prioritizing the relationships in their school community, participants noted their leadership roles included a very intentional collaboration with stakeholders. As such, according to PA03, "we involve stakeholders, whether they be community agents, students, parents, and teachers, and we try to build a school counseling program to support all those people in that system. School leaders should be doing that." Similarly, PA06 also highlighted this collaboration, "it's important that we work together… It's not my plan or your plan. It's *our* plan. This is *our* team, not *my* team… All of us have a part. As a school counselor, working closely with the administrators [and] teachers. Another participant described their leadership role as,

> Primarily as a collaborator. I work with all the stakeholders of the school. I'm with the parents, the teachers, the administrators, social workers, the students. All of that collaboration has to come together just for the student's success and

that's what I see as a lot of my leadership role (PA04).

Subtheme: Gaining buy-in

Another aspect of participants' relational leadership was seeking buy-in or support from stakeholder groups. Several participants encouraged students' feedback and buy-in, within MTSS efforts, "we changed our mission and vision statement last year, and we wanted to incorporate a lot of student voice and choice… they need to have their voices heard in what we're doing at school and what direction we're going in" (PA08). Similarly, PA02 conveyed, "I would give information to the students… let them develop some leadership skills and have a say in what they want to do or have happen at the school." Participants also solicited support from teachers and administrators, "when you build a team, you work with people who [share your enthusiasm]… Those teachers say, 'Okay, this is the team I want to be on'… we want to make sure they feel as if they have a part in our plan" (PA06). Another participant discussed, "I'm a coach… back in those early years of PBIS I had to be the one to pitch it to the administrators at the schools in my district. And some [said], 'Absolutely. Let's do this.'" (PA07).

Subtheme: Advocating for students

In describing their relational leadership, PA01 stated, "we're student advocates. That doesn't mean that you would say yes to everything, but also being able to make sure that this child is being given a fair shake at whatever is out there." Similarly, PA04 recalled a quote "every child deserves at least one adult who is irrationally committed to their success" and reflected, "I feel like that's my job as the leader, as a counselor. I have to be at least one person committed to the success of all my 900 babies in this building." According to PA05:

> As counselors, a part of our role is to empower the children, so that they know that they can be leaders. That will help them as a lifelong skill, as they develop into an outstanding citizen in their community… it gives them a drive, even into career choices as they get older into high school and then planning [the post-secondary transition].

PA05 continued, "we're providing opportunities for children to have that advocate at school. We want them to feel that from their teachers. However, we want them to also know that their counselor is their advocate as well."

Last, PA07 also valued their role as advocate,

> As a counselor, my role is to work with kids on what they have going, to help them overcome obstacles in order to be independent, successful citizens one day. I feel like the goal is the

same no matter whether you're looking at my role in PBIS or my role as a counselor. My goal at the end of the day is still the same thing: In hopes that you are teaching children how to grow up and just be the best person they can be, and hopefully learn how to treat one another and how to positively impact their community or their classroom or their family.

Theme 2: Shaping the school climate

In communicating their leadership experiences within MTSS, participants often emphasized impacting the culture and climate of their school, using a systems lens to view their work. Examples include, "if you take seriously your role in MTSS, then you see what you do with an individual kid as a piece of a larger [impact]… what I'm doing that's contributing to school culture and to PBIS effectiveness overall" (PA03) and "I enjoy doing activities to make Tier one run smoothly. The counselor plays an important role in making sure that the school climate is a positive one" PA09. Further, another participant conveyed,

> If I can impact the behavior of a whole school with [PBIS], [then] I'm going to do that. As a school counselor, you want to get the most bang for your buck. You don't always get one on one sessions with the kids [(PA08).

In regard to the second theme of shaping the school climate, three themes included, (a) providing their unique expertise, (b) cheerleading, and (c) doing whatever was needed.

Subtheme: Providing their unique expertise

Participants believed their specialized knowledge assisted them impact the culture and climate of the school, as MTSS leaders. According to PA01, school counselors "provide an expertise, a point of view that other teachers or administrators cannot bring to the table based on our coursework …. we may know about resources… delve into research that others may not know about." In a similar vein, another participant shared how they contributed their unique knowledge and skills, "my experience as a counselor… providing the staff and students and teachers with insight, training, resources on the emotional and mental health needs of kids. I like to think of myself as the feelings expert" (PA08). In addition, PA10 relayed that,

> Having that expertise in behavior, and knowing how students behave and why they behave the way they do makes a huge impact in my role as PBIS coach. I have a good insight on what will work at Tier one and if certain things don't work for certain kids, I have interventions that will work for them at Tiers two and three.

Subtheme: Cheerleading

As a leader in MTSS, participants appreciated their role as "cheerleader," or a positive influence in shaping school-wide culture and climate, such as "I was a cheerleader for PBIS across our school district, definitely within our school… being positive… to cheer it on to be sure that it is held as important" (PA07). Next, PA06 noted, "you're a cheerleader for positive behavior, because you're constantly getting out of the box, doing things that will motivate the students to continue to be on their best behavior, trying to find incentives… keeping the teachers' drive, and leading them." In addition, another participant highlighted their cheerleading,

> I try to keep the positive aspects going [in MTSS]. Sometimes we can get bogged down in the things that don't work very well. I try to be the one who's boosting us up… Keeping fresh ideas with our team and always adding something new that people know that you appreciate them, for our kids and our teachers (PA04).

Subtheme: Doing whatever was needed

When describing their leadership in MTSS, and influencing the school-wide system, participants often described a willingness to pitch in and assist with whatever was needed. Hence, PA03 depicted,

> I think we have to check that attitude of, "Oh, this is just another duty" at the door because we all have extra things to do that we don't necessarily think are particularly aligned with what we did in grad school. This [MTSS] is an opportunity for us to serve kids in a powerful way.

Relatedly a different school counselor shared their experiences assisting whenever needed, "I think counselors do that naturally. They jump in wherever needed. Whether it's related to your job or not, you just jump in when they need you" (PA08). Last, PA10 said,

> I have a tendency to jump in and do things when I see that [it] need to be done, whether it's my job or not… to me a good leader is one that sees something that needs to be done and they do it because they know it needs to be done.

DISCUSSION

School counselors are school-wide leaders facilitating CSCPs, and often are also involved in their schools' MTSS implementation. In examining school counselors' MTSS leadership experiences in one sample, using a

phenomenological inquiry, researchers learned that participants often described themselves as MTSS coaches, facilitating a team of school staff who shared responsibilities toward MTSS implementation. When expounding upon their MTSS leadership experience, school counselors expressed prioritizing relationships and shaping the school climate.

Prioritizing relationships

To start with, school counselors reported their leadership in MTSS as highly relational and cooperative. They valued collaborating with stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, and administrators) to gain their buy-in and support, which included creating and implementing the MTSS framework together. Thus, participants' collaborative leadership in MTSS parallels several types of school counseling leadership theories: transformational, distributed, servant, and transformative (Harris & Hockaday, 2018; Janson et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2018; Lowe et al., 2018; Young & Dollarhide, 2018), as well as school counselors' roles implementing CSCPs (ASCA, 2019). Overall, in tandem with previous literature, the current findings highlight the importance of school counseling leadership as intentionally collaborative, yet new to the literature also underscores school counselor's role in MTSS leadership specifically.

To start, similar to transformational leadership (Lowe et al., 2018), school counselors in the current investigation immersed themselves in the school culture to understand their stakeholders' needs and worked closely with a range of stakeholders. Relatedly, Lowe et al. (2018) recommended school counselors work with stakeholders toward a common school goal, such as CSCPs; the present study echoed these results, but unique to the present discussion, considers school counselors' MTSS leadership through the lens of transformational leadership (as a school-wide framework). The transformational leadership characteristics depicted in the present study were also noted through school counselors emphasizing trust, communication, and rapport with key stakeholders, throughout their MTSS leadership.

Next, in regard to distributed leadership theory: school counselors purposefully shared or distributed leadership responsibilities across a range of stakeholders, working toward a common goal (Janson et al., 2009). In particular, while scholars recommended school counselors' distributed leadership involve stakeholders to develop their CSCP, this same pattern was true in the present study, but toward MTSS. Hence, school counselors, as members of the MTSS team, shared MTSS leadership responsibilities with other MTSS team members. Through MTSS, the school counselors focused on a school-wide approach (i.e., the concept of the *collective*) through the highly interactive nature of distributed leadership.

To continue, aspects of servant leadership (Harris & Hockaday, 2018; Young & Dollarhide, 2018) were demonstrated in the present study through school counselors prioritizing students' needs and perspectives and helping develop students' leadership skills. Servant leadership was also portrayed through the purposeful focus on gaining stakeholder buy-in, cultivating trusting relationships, and designing and implementing MTSS together across stakeholders, and thus flattening a more traditional leadership hierarchy. Hence, the school counselors in the present study showcased their MTSS leadership as highly relational and nonhierarchical, focusing on promoting leadership skills for all, characteristics consistent with a servant leadership lens.

In a similar vein, school counselors in the present study also demonstrated relational, collaborative MTSS leadership through their committed advocacy for students. Specifically, they noted standing-up for and empowering students, helping them overcome obstacles, and providing opportunities. As such, this equity-focused, social justice leadership approach mirrors key tenants of transformative leadership (Shields et al., 2018). At the same time, school counselors' MTSS leadership from the present investigation appeared to be less robust than the transformative leadership as a whole, with less of an emphasis on deconstructing inequitable power structures, utilizing moral courage, and acknowledging diverse contexts and historically minoritized members of the school community. Hence, the present study may illustrate beginning or emerging stages of school counselors' transformative leadership specific to school counselors' leadership in MTSS.

Shaping the school climate

Relatedly, the school counselors in the present investigation appreciated advocating for students by taking a systems lens to shape school climate and culture. Through these results, it appears school counselors were applying their CSCP-recommended roles as advocate and systemic change agent to their MTSS leadership experiences (ASCA, 2019). Hence, also similar to transformative leadership, including the emphasis on advocacy and systemic change (Shields et al., 2018), the school counselors in the present study were mindful of the systemic nature of K-12 education and the need to advocate and make changes at the systems level. At the same time, there were also minimal statements related to multicultural competence or commitment, or discussions regarding power or privilege (which are common factors in transformative leadership).

Next, when discussing their MTSS leadership experiences, school counselors conveyed contributing their unique expertise to the MTSS leadership team, such as their background in SEL, mental health, knowledge of interventions and resources, and so forth. In particular, these findings are aligned with previous literature finding school counselors' leadership is positively related to emotional intelligence (Mullen et al., 2018); rooted in SEL (Bowers et al., 2018); as well as school counselors are mental health

experts who guide related school-based interventions (Lambie et al., 2019). In addition, the *unique expertise* findings in the present study also align with distributed leadership theory, in which each leader brings their distinctive skills and knowledge to the larger leadership team (Janson, 2009). In fact, part of that unique contribution was *cheerleading*: school counselors enthusiastically pitching in to support the MTSS team, as well as assisting to build and maintain positive momentum throughout the school. This MTSS *cheerleading* subtheme also parallels transformational leadership (Lowe et al., 2018), in which school counselors inspire and motivate their stakeholders toward a common goal (for the purpose of this study, that common goal was MTSS).

Thus, in describing their MTSS leadership experiences, a sample of school counselors described roles commonly associated with implementing CSCPs (i.e., collaboration, advocacy, and systemic change), as well as providing their unique perspectives (e.g., mental health and SEL) and applied those roles and skills to their MTSS leadership. As such, school counselors' experiences with MTSS leadership appears to demonstrate aspects of transformational, distributed, servant, and transformative leadership, theories that guide school counselors' leadership implementing CSCPs. When examining school counselors' MTSS roles previously, researchers found school counselors as leaders in MTSS (e.g., Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017a, 2017b; Patrikakou et al., 2020); however, those previous studies broadly examined a number of school counselors' MTSS roles, rather than MTSS leadership exclusively or even mainly. Hence, this is the first known study to purposefully and primarily examine school counselors' MTSS leadership experiences, and to then compare those experiences to school counseling leadership theory in the discussion, generating new insight into school counseling leadership.

Thus, the results provided novel insight: that school counselors' MTSS leadership roles demonstrate aspects of transformational, distributed, servant, and transformative leadership: types of leadership roles recommended as a current school counseling best practice. At the same time, there was also one substantial discrepancy in recommended leadership and the results of the current study. School counselors in the present study prioritized *doing whatever was needed* as an MTSS leader. Hence, many participants were content and even proud to assist with ancillary, nonschool counseling tasks to support MTSS's school-wide efforts: serving students in *any way*, rather than only through activities aligned with the implementation of CSCPs. This finding echoes outdated models of school counseling (e.g., prioritizing reactive, individual school counseling approaches), contradicting more current school counseling recommendations (e.g., running a proactive and preventative CSCP) (Dollarhide, 2003). Specifically, for years, the profession has advocated for school counselors to implement activities aligned with CSCPs, rather than *other*, or nonrecommended tasks (ASCA, 2019). In addition, a multitude of scholars have discussed that school counselors aligning their CSCP with MTSS can lead to more efficient and effective CSCP implementation and strengthen school counselors' advocacy for conducting their roles (Goodman-Scott et al., 2016, 2019, 2020; Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017a, 2017b; Ockerman et al., 2012; Olsen et al., 2017; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).

For instance, Goodman-Scott and Grothaus (2017a, 2017b) conducted a phenomenological study with school counselors at schools that recently achieved RAMP and implemented MTSS with high fidelity. These school counselors appreciated integrating CSCPs and MTSS, and reported that MTSS fit well with their school counseling role. In another study, Olsen et al. (2017) found that school counselors spending more time on CSCP-aligned activities was related to higher knowledge MTSS knowledge and skills, and school counselors who expressed needing more MTSS training also facilitated lower CSCP-aligned activities. Thus, the results of the present study suggest that this sample of school counselors with self-described MTSS leadership experiences had a willingness or comfort to implement nonschool counseling activities not necessarily recommended by the school counseling field. This finding begs the questions: could MTSS leadership detract from school counseling recommended roles? Or, as this finding is unaligned with previous research, could the results be unique to the present study?

A final consideration: in examining school counselors' leadership, Janson (2009) found that school counselors conducted operational/administrative leadership tasks, often to the detriment of system's change. As such, could the finding *doing whatever was needed* be a reflection of school counselor leadership in general, rather than specific to MTSS?

Limitations

The present study should be examined within the context of limitations. First, participants were selected from one state, as well as from school counselors who worked at schools with high levels of PBIS implementation, and thus the results may have limited generalizability to other states or schools, but rather should be examined as a thick, rich description of the present sample. Further, participants were largely comprised of school counselors at the elementary ($n = 5$), and high ($n = 3$) school levels, which could limit applicability to all K-12 school counselors. Last, it is possible that school counselors may have self-identified for this study based on their interest in leadership, which could also shape the results. In response to these limitations, qualitative research is often used for exploratory purposes to provide a detailed description of a phenomenon, when preliminary information is warranted (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). Thus, by nature, qualitative research may utilize examples of exemplary practice to generate initial knowledge and as a springboard for further research.

Implications and future research

School counseling is a field that has changed and evolved over time to reflect the most current and pressing educational and historical trends (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Thereby, CSCPs are flexible frameworks that encourage school counselors to evolve and grow, in order to best serve their students and K-12 setting. While previously, researchers have investigated school counseling leadership, the results of this study provide insight into a new dimension of school counselors' leadership: their leadership in MTSS, a widely implemented educational approach. Next, implications at the national and local levels as well as future research recommendations throughout will be presented.

At the national level, given the mounting scholarship showing overlap between CSCPs and MTSS, national school counseling associations and leaders may consider partnering with MTSS organizations (e.g., the Technical Assistance Center on PBIS), collaborating to serve the school counseling profession, and further enhancing school counselors' leadership in both frameworks. Next, given the results demonstrating the application of school counseling leadership theory to school counselors' MTSS leadership, the profession may consider expanding school counseling leadership theory and roles to also encompass school counselors' MTSS leadership. Further, school counselor educators and district-level leaders could provide preparation and training on school counseling leadership, including using an MTSS lens. Such educational content could also include representatives from MTSS networks. Next, the results of this study may provide practicing school counselors with greater knowledge on their possible MTSS leadership: whether validating, challenging, or expanding their current knowledge, beliefs, and practices. Future research on school counselors' MTSS leadership is warranted, including using a large, national sample with the purpose of generalizability. For instance, using survey research, researchers could compare the results of school counseling leadership inventories to school counselors' MTSS leadership roles.

Next, the school counselors in the present study voiced their commitment to systemic change and student advocacy, which are aspects of transformative leadership (Shields et al., 2018). Also common in transformative leadership is a focus on social justice, promoting greater school equity, moral courage, and so forth. In light of these findings, as well as the existing racial justice movement in the United States, and school counselors' roles as advocates for systemic change and closing equity and opportunity gaps (ASCA, 2019), future research could examine aspects of school counselors' MTSS leadership pertaining to social justice, racial justice, antiracism, advocacy, equity, and inclusion. This research can build off the present study, as well as previous research on social justice and culturally responsive/sustaining MTSS (Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

Last, several school counselors in the present study described their MTSS leadership as including "doing whatever was needed." Given this finding was in contradiction to professional recommendations and previous MTSS literature, we recommend more research is conducted on school counselors' perceptions and practices conducting such ancillary tasks. For instance, researchers could investigate the relationship between school counselors' CSCP implementation, MTSS leadership, and conducting these "other," nonrecommended tasks. Finally, separate from MTSS research, scholars may consider examining school counselors' preferences and experiences implementing administrative, "other" school counseling roles generally.

CONCLUSION

School counselors have a history of school-wide leadership: collaborating with stakeholders, creating systemic change, and advocating for equity and inclusion (ASCA, 2019). School counseling is also a profession that evolves with the current educational climate, ensuring school counselors are relevant leaders in student and school success, central to schools' mission and operations. Given the widespread implementation of MTSS in US schools, it is crucial to understand school counselors' relevant leadership within this framework and to consider directions for purposefully strengthening and improving that leadership role in the future.

REFERENCES

American School Counselor Association. (2019). *ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.). Author.

Bal, A. (2018). Culturally responsive positive behavioral interventions and supports: A process-oriented framework for systemic transformation. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 40, 144–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2017.1417579

Betters-Bubon, J., Brunner, T., & Kansteiner, A. (2016). Success for all? The role of the school counselor in creating and sustaining culturally responsive PBIS programs. *The Professional Counselor*, 6(3), 263–277. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1115904.pdf

Betters-Bubon, J., & Donohue, P. (2016). Professional capacity building for school counselors through school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) implementation. *Journal of School Counseling*, 14(3), 1–10. http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v14n3.pdf

Bowers, H., Lemberger-Truelove, M. E., & Brigman, G. (2018). A social-emotional leadership framework for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18773004

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2021a). About the TA Center. https://www.pbis.org/about/about

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2021b). Getting started. https://www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started

Cressey, J., Whitcomb, S., McGilvray-Rivet, S., Morrison, R., & Shander-Reynolds, K. (2014). Handling PBIS with care: Scaling up to school-wide implementation. *Professional School Counseling*, 18(1), 90–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x0001800104

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Dollarhide, C. T. (2003). School counselors as program leaders: Applying leadership contexts to school counseling. *Professional School Counseling*, 6(5), 304–308.

Flynn, S. V., & Korcuska, J. S. (2018). Credible phenomenological research: A mixed-methods study. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 57(1), 34–50. https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12092

Georgia Department of Education. (2020). *Positive behavioral interventions and supports.* https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Positive-Behavioral-Interventions-and-Support.aspx

Goodman-Scott, E. (2014). Maximizing school counselors' efforts by implementing school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: A case study from the field. *Professional School Counseling*, 17(1), 111–119. https://doi.org/10.5330/prsc.17.1.518021r2x6821660

Goodman-Scott, E., Betters-Bubon, J., & Donohue, M. (2016). Aligning comprehensive school counseling programs and positive behavioral interventions and supports to maximize school counselors' efforts. *Professional School Counseling*, 19(1), 57–67. https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-19.1.57

Goodman-Scott, E., Betters-Bubon, J., & Donohue, P. (Eds.). (2019). *A school counselor's guide to multi-tiered systems of support* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Goodman-Scott, E., Betters-Bubon, J., Olsen, J., & Donohue, P. (2020). *Making MTSS work* (1st ed.). American School Counselor Association.

Goodman-Scott, E. & Grothaus, T. (2017a). RAMP and PBIS: "They definitely support one another." A phenomenological study. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1), 119–129. https://doi.org/10.1177/330/1096-2409-21.1.119

Goodman-Scott, E. & Grothaus, T. (2017b). School counselors' roles in RAMP and PBIS: A phenomenological investigation. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1), 130–141. https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-21.1.130

Goodman-Scott, E., Hays, D. G., & Cholewa, B. (2018). "It takes a village:" A case study of positive behavioral interventions and supports implementation in an exemplary middle school. *The Urban Review*, 50(1), 97–122. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0431-z

Greflund, S., McIntosh, K., Mercer, S. H., & May, S. L. (2014). Examining disproportionality in school discipline for aboriginal students in schools implementing PBIS. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 29(3), 213–235.

Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2012). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program* (5th ed.). American Counseling Association.

Harris, P., & Hockaday, M. (2018). Integrating a servant leadership framework: Preparing teaching and school counseling students for collaboration. *Global Engagement and Transformation*, 2(1), 10–19. https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/joget/article/view/24393

Hays, D. G., & Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. Guilford.

Hunt, B. (2011). Publishing qualitative research in counseling journals. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 89(3), 296–300. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2011.tb00092.x

Janson, C. (2009). High school counselors' views of their leadership behaviors: A Q methodology study. *Professional School Counseling*, 13(2), https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0901300204

Janson, C., Stone, C., & Clark, M.A. (2009). Stretching leadership: A distributed perspective for school counselor leaders. *Professional School Counseling*, 13(2), 98–106. https://doi.org.106.10.5330/PSC.n.2010-13.98

Kim, J., McIntosh, K., Mercer, S. H., & Nese, R. N. T. (2018). Longitudinal associations between SWPBIS fidelity of implementation and behavior and academic outcomes. *Behavioral Disorders*, 43, 357–369. https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742917747589

Lambie, G. W., Haugen, J. S., Borland, J. R., & Campbell, L. O. (2019). Who took "counseling" out of the role of professional school counselors in the United States? *Journal of School-Based Counseling Policy and Evaluation*, 1(3), 51–61. https://doi.org/10.25774/7kjb-bt85

Lassen, S. R., Steele, M. M,, & Sailor, W. (2006). The relationship of school-wide positive behavior support to academic achievement in an urban middle school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43(6), 701–712. https://doi.org.10.1002/pits.20177

Lowe, C., Gibson, D. M., & Carlson, R. G. (2018). Examining the relationship between school counselors' age, years of experience, school setting, and self-perceived transformational leadership skills. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18773580

McIntosh, K., Mercer, S. H., Nese, R. N. T., Strickland-Cohen, M. K., Kittelman, A., Hoselton, R., & Horner, R. H. (2018). Factors predicting sustained implementation of a universal behavior support framework. *Educational Researcher*, 47(5), 307–316. https://doi.org/10.3102/%2F0013189x18776975

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage.

Mullen, P. R., Gutierrez, D., & Newhart, S. (2018). School counselors' emotional intelligence and its relationship to leadership. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18772989

Ockerman, M. S., Mason, E. C. M., & Hollenbeck, A. F. (2012). Integrating RTI with school counseling programs: Being a proactive professional school counselor. *Journal of School Counseling*, 10(15), 1–37. https://jsc.montana.edu/articles/v10n15.pdf

Olsen, J., Parikh-Foxx, S., Flowers, C., Algozzine, B. (2017). An examination of factors that relate to school counselors' knowledge and skills in multi-tiered systems of support. *Professional School Counseling*, 20(1), 159–171. https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-20.1.159

Oyen, K. A., & Wollersheim-Shervey, S. (2019). An examination of critical features of positive frameworks: Impact in rural environments for school-based practitioners. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 23, 388–400. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-018-0198-6

Pas, E. T., Ryoo, J. H., Musci, R. J., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2019). A statewide quasi-experimental effectiveness study of the scale-up of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Journal of School Psychology*, 73, 41–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.03.001

Patrikakou, E., Ockerman, M. S., Hollenbeck, A. F. (2020). Perceptions of leadership and clarity of roles within multi-tiered systems: A structured equation model. *The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 13(4). https://repository.wcsu.edu/jcps/vol13/iss4/7

Ratts, M. J., & Greenleaf, A. T. (2018). Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: A leadership framework for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18773582

Shields, C. M., Dollarhide, C. T., & Young, A. A. (2018). Transformative leadership in school counseling: An emerging paradigm for equity and excellence. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18773581

Simonsen, B., Eber, L., Black, A. C., Sugai, G., Lewandowski, H., Sims, B., & Myers, D. (2012). Illinois statewide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Evolution and impact on student outcomes across years. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 14(1), 5–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300711412601

Steed, E. A., Pomerleau, T., Muscott, H., & Rhode, L. (2013). Program-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports in rural preschools. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 32(1), 38–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/%2F875687051303200106

Sugai, G., La Salle, T. P., Everett, S., & Feinberg, A. B. (2019). Multi-tiered systems of support: The what, why, and how for school counselors. In Author (Eds.), *A school counselor's guide to multi-tiered systems of support*. Routledge.

Young, A., Bryan, J. (2015). The school counselor leadership survey: Instrument development and exploratory factor analysis. *Professional School Counseling*, 19(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.5330/%2F2156759x1501900104

Young, A., & Dollarhide, C. T. (2018). Introduction to the special issue: A case for school counseling leadership. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18772988

Young, A., Dollarhide, C. T., Baughman, A. (2015). The voices of
school counselors: Essential characteristics of school counselor leaders.
Professional School Counseling, *19*(1), 36–45. https://doi.org/10.5330/
%2F2156759x1501900101

Ziomek-Daigle, J., Goodman-Scott, E., Cavin, J., & Donohue, P. (2016).
Integrating multi-tiered systems of support into comprehensive school
counseling programs. *The Professional Counselor*, *6*(3), 220–232.
https://doi.org/10.15241/jzd.6.3.220