00:04

Hi, everyone, this is Katie Novak, and you're listening to the education Table, a micro podcast where I answer your questions about inclusive education. Today I'm going to tackle the question, what is a multi tiered system of support from a teacher perspective? We're going to discuss the importance of a tier one foundation advocate for professional learning and collaboration, and talk about the critical role of data collection and innovation. So let's dive in. As an administrator, one of the most rewarding experiences for me was when teachers came to me with a well defined problem of practice. And goodness knows, I'm sure it wasn't easy to come to me as an administrator and say something like, ugh, my students are really struggling with writing stamina.

00:56

Let me share the curriculum materials and my process and what I've already tried, and then I want to show you the results. And teachers would come to me and they would share what they tried, the data they collected, and their proposal to try something different. And I always welcomed educators to do this with me. Essentially, these teachers in almost every case, were doing exactly what we asked them to do, and the data simply didn't reflect the growth they expected. And these moments were always so powerful because they showed that dedication and database decision making and innovation are so necessary if we want all students to make effective progress in a multi tiered system. And I was always so on board with these proposals because they were grounded in data and then a really clear understanding of what students needed.

01:46

So this proactive approach highlights the importance of having a really strong foundation and embracing teaching as a craft to figure out what works best for all students in tier one. So often we think of mtss as being interventions and solving problems, but we really want to hone in on tier one because without quality core instruction, it's really difficult to intervention our way out of it. So we're going to zoom into how do you create this culture of problem solving, this culture of error, this culture of innovation, to make tier one as strong as possible as the foundation of a multi tiered system of support. So let's dive into some research. MTSS focuses heavily on creating strong tier one instruction, which is first and best instruction for all students.

02:44

Research indicates that when tier one instruction is robust and inclusive, the need for additional interventions decreases significantly. So the most important component of MTSS is a strong foundation in tier one. According to the National center on Response to Intervention, effective tier one instruction can meet the needs of approximately 80% of students, reducing the number of students who are required more intensive supplemental intervention. Now there is a lot more to mtss than this, but from a teacher's perspective, I want to zoom in to the foundation of tier one and what all educators can do, regardless of the support they're receiving from their school, to create a more inclusive tier one environment. Now, it's important to note that MTSS is not only about these three tiers of support.

03:36

It's really about a system where all learners and all educators have what they need to teach and learn at high levels. And in a well developed, multi tiered system, educators can design instruction that meets the needs of students academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. And goodness knows that is not an easy task and many of us, myself included, do not have a skillset for that yet because students are changing and our skillset is evolving. But that's okay because professional learning and collaboration are critical components to a successful tier one environment. A study published in the Journal of Educational Psychology found that teachers who engage in ongoing professional development and collaborative practices are much more effective in implementing inclusive instructional strategies, which that is not going to surprise any of us.

04:33

The research underscores the importance of providing educators with the tools and support they need to create engaging and effective learning environments for all students. We also know from research from the Learning Policy Institute that teachers who have sustained professional development up to 49 hours a year can significantly increase the outcomes of learners. Now, what if the district does not provide that much pd? Well, in the next section, we're going to talk about how to take matters into your own hands. Another really important aspect of MTSS is data culture. The data quality campaign highlights that data driven decision making can significantly improve student outcomes because teachers can figure out what works, so they can replicate it and figure out what doesn't so they can try something different.

05:23

And goodness, that is a gift to not have to continue to bang your head against the proverbial frustration wall because you get to innovate and try something else. By collecting and analyzing data, teachers can advocate for the support they need to enhance tier one instruction and ensure that all students are making progress. So let's dive into how to create strong tier one instruction. It is essential to focus on a few key drivers. The first is to prioritize your own professional learning. Always engage in ongoing professional development opportunities focused on inclusive practices and evidence based instructional strategies. Advocate for instructional rounds with your colleagues. Ask your library media specialist to order professional development books. Listen to podcasts like this. Thank you. Kudos to you. And if you're struggling, consider the story that I started this episode with.

06:23

Go to your mentor or your department head or your instructional coach or your administrator and say something like, I know that we are working towards the vision of being more inclusive of all students and I definitely want to make it work, but I'm not feeling super prepared yet when it comes to or these are some things I've tried already and it hasn't been successful yet. And then ask what PD is available to support you because districts are required to create these multi tiered systems that support the competency of educators. So see what is available to you. Collaboration is also vital. Work with your colleagues to share best practices, co plan lessons and support each other.

07:07

So when I taught 7th grade English, there were two of us who were teaching 7th grade English in my school and sometimes we would just pull our classes together and have one teach and one support simply so we could observe each other because we didn't have the sub coverage. But working together is a form of professional development. The next concrete thing we can do is to embrace data collection and analysis. And I know that this is a little bit hard to hear, might be nightmarish hearing the words data because it feels like we don't care about kids. But what we're doing here is we're thinking about the impact we have on kids. So regularly collecting data to inform instruction is one of the most important things we can do.

07:49

When you have concrete data on your methodology of what you tried and the impact on students, you can advocate for resources and support that you need to provide the best possible learning environment for your students. Basically, you can argue, I tried these practices, this was my methodology and here was the impact on students. And when it is successful, it is a tremendous way to scale practices. On the flip side, if you try something with integrity and it isn't effective, you can say, I tried to implement these practices and I would love more support as these outcomes don't align with the research. So again, it's super important that we're always collecting all different types of data, academic achievement data, student perception data, student work. But this is the epitome of professional vulnerability.

08:45

When we can come forward and say, I want to solve this problem, I believe in data driven decision making and I would love your support. Now, the last thing is to always be open to trying new approaches, just like the teachers who came to me with their data and their proposals. Do not be afraid to innovate and experiment with something that is not in the research base yet. Right now we know what is effective inclusive practices and mtss because of research. But research has a lag. It's a little slow to get to us as practitioners. So the best practices right now may not be in the evidence base for a couple of years. So we need to embrace this culture of trying new things and making mistakes, not only through our teaching practices, but through our assessment practices and listening to students.

09:37

But ultimately, we have to ask students about their experiences and our learning environment. We have to ask them what they need to be successful. We need to ask them what is working already and what is not working yet, and ideate amazing things to try and try them, because you could be the case study that we're all reading two years from now. So again, the willingness to adapt and change is so critical for meeting the needs of all students in tier one. And as much as we think of mtss as providing tier two and tier three intervention, there's a a lot of micro problem solving that we can do to make tier one as successful as it can be while advocating for the system support we need by working with colleagues and working with data to truly make an impact on students.

10:27

And again, being amazing at teaching is not a destination, it is an ongoing journey. So remember, strong tier one instruction is the foundation for mtss. Ensure that your core instruction is as engaging and inclusive and effective as possible, and by focusing on these practices, we can reduce the need for more intensive interventions and create an environment that brings back love of teaching and high levels of student learning. One of my favorite sayings in the world is you cannot intervention your way out of week tier one and leveraging professional development and advocating for that, using data to make decisions and being innovative and trying new things are three variables that definitely can help you move forward. So to wrap up mtss, zooming in from a teacher's perspective is really about working together to create strong tier one instruction.

11:30

Advocating for ongoing professional learning and collaboration, and using data to drive decisions. Advocate for support and innovate in beautiful ways. By focusing on these areas, we can really build a foundation that works much better for learners and for us as educators. Thank you so much for joining me at the education table. If you love what you're listening to, please subscribe and be sure to listen next time. Onward.