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Leveraging CA MTSS to Support English Learner-Classified Students: Insights from Three CA Districts

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The Landscape of Language
Learners in California's MTSS

Leveraging CA MTSS to Support English Learner-Classified Students:

Insights from Three CA Districts

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SUMMARY

This brief is part of the Landscape of Language Learners in California's MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support). **This brief highlights findings from a study focused on how California's Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS) framework serves English-Learner (EL) classified students¹.** Our findings are based on analyses of interview data with district- and school site-based educators from three districts in California that are relatively successful in serving their EL-classified student populations and are diverse in their geographical locations, size, and linguistic demographics.

Key findings include:

- **Existing EL-related services were difficult to incorporate** into the framework of tiered supports;
- **Advocacy for EL-classified students was important** within MTSS planning processes to encourage shared responsibility for these students;
- **Engaging parents, families, and caregivers of EL-classified students in meaningful relationships** was easier at the Tier 2 level; and
- **EL-classified student density within a district or school** affected how MTSS structures were organized.

These and other findings are described in more detail within the report. We conclude with recommendations for state-level policymakers and district leaders.



¹ We understand the deficit-laden connotations of the label "English-Learner classified students" and acknowledge that in other research we have used other terms such as emergent bilinguals or dual language learners. For purposes of this brief, we refer to students as English Learner classified students (EL) to refer to the actual classification and not to the person.

ABOUT THE SERIES

California is home to the nation's largest EL population, with over 1.1 million students designated as English Learners.² This represents roughly 19% of California's 5.9 million public school student population. With the expansion of the CA MTSS framework intended to impact the educational experiences of *all* students, it is important to consider how MTSS might benefit this population of students.

This brief is part of a series of reports that summarize the current trends in enrollment and representation of EL students across the state of California and how these trends have changed over the last decade. These trends are contextualized in an overview of current policies and persistent challenges in EL education. In each brief, we discuss the landscape of California ELs and the possible policy implications for CA MTSS. To better understand how CA MTSS has and can be used to support EL-classified student success, it's necessary to understand the challenges and trends that describe this population of students. As such, this series summarizes findings on the enrollment rates, language diversity, ethnicity, geographic density, and reclassification status of EL students.



INTRODUCTION

California's Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS) framework is defined by the Department of Education as an approach that schools and districts can use to integrate academic, behavioral, and socioemotional support for students within districts and schools. The purpose of this framework is to help districts and schools organize their resources and instruction more effectively to ultimately improve outcomes for all students. As CA MTSS rapidly expands across the state, it is important to understand how it might impact subgroups of students whom schools have historically struggled to support. In this report, we focus on the intersection between CA MTSS implementation and EL-classified student support.

This brief is intended to provide insight for state policymakers and district leaders to draw on as they develop guidance for the implementation of CA MTSS. Existing guidance for considering EL-classified students in the implementation of MTSS is limited and tends to focus narrowly on their literacy needs. To build on this body of knowledge, we first highlight existing literature on the academic, relational, and organizational challenges that educational organizations have historically faced in serving EL-classified students. We then turn to our findings from qualitative interviews that we have conducted with district leaders, school administrators, staff, and teachers who are currently implementing CA MTSS in three districts with high proportions of EL-classified students and relative track records of success. In these findings, we focus on what their experiences reveal about how CA MTSS can be leveraged to make schools more accessible and responsive to EL-classified students.

Common challenges for educational organizations serving EL-classified students

Prior studies have found that EL-classified students are often taught by teachers with less experience who feel underprepared to differentiate their instruction for these students (*Buenrostro & Maxwell-Jolly, 2021; Callahan, 2013; López & Santibañez, 2018; Santibañez & Gándara, 2018*). Teachers and schools have reported difficulties in navigating cultural and linguistic differences to build relationships with the parents, families, and caregivers (PFC) of EL-classified students (*Gándara et al., 2005; Santibañez & Gándara, 2018; Sugarman & Lazarín, 2020*). In addition to these instructional and relational difficulties, EL-classified students are often



“tracked” into less rigorous and meaningful learning opportunities. Existing research has found that this tracking has negative academic and socioemotional impacts as a result of perpetually holding students back from accessing the same depth of learning as their peers (*Callahan, 2005; Lee & Soland, 2023; Umansky, 2016*).

Research has also identified various structural difficulties in supporting EL-classified students. For example, while the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) has been an important mechanism for increasing funding for resources that support EL-classified students (*Santibañez & Umansky, 2018*), researchers have urged caution in interpreting the statewide data dashboards that are intended to be used for making decisions about how to allocate this funding (*Lavadenz et al., 2018*). Moreover, many districts and schools have struggled to ensure access to high-quality learning opportunities without tracking EL students into less rigorous instruction. This is particularly true in districts with smaller EL-classified student populations and thus fewer resources specifically earmarked for supporting these students (*Hill et al., 2019*). Together, this research suggests that the difficulties related to supporting EL-classified students are complex and extend beyond the need for literacy instruction and intervention.

CA MTSS and EL-classified students: possibilities and limitations

CA MTSS has the potential to address some of these difficulties. For example, CA MTSS requires that schools have universal screeners for identifying students in need of tiered support and encourages educators at all organizational levels to break data into student subgroups to understand where there are disparities in outcomes. The ongoing use of data broken down by student subgroups for decision-making also has the potential to help educational

organizations notice and respond to disparities (Teranishi et al., 2020). CA MTSS also encourages educational organizations to develop, implement, and continuously assess the effectiveness of evidence-based practices and interventions. Furthermore, the three-tiered framework that requires most students be served by Tier 1 instruction, expecting only some students to access Tier 2 instruction, and few students to require Tier 3 instruction, discourages tracking by framing interventions as limited and distinct from Special Education. Finally, CA MTSS encourages collaboration among administrators, teachers, families, and community partners which are important relationships for ensuring that students are provided with culturally and linguistically responsive instruction (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017).

At the same time, MTSS does not replace existing programs, routines, and accountability structures for the support of EL-classified students. In California, schools and districts are required to use certain sources of data for reclassifying students out of the EL label, such as ELPAC scores (English Language Proficiency Assessment of California). Educational organizations are still required to provide designated and integrated English Language Development (ELD). ELD instruction is informed by a set of standards that guide students' development of language that allows them to participate fully in mainstream learning. Additionally, schools and districts are required to organize English Learner Advisory Committees made up of teachers, staff, parents, families, and caregivers that allow community members to provide input about programming for EL-classified students. Furthermore, funding that is earmarked for EL-classified students, such as through LCFF, is still tied to specific reporting processes.



KEY FINDINGS: INSIGHTS FROM THREE DISTRICTS

Our interview research was conducted in three districts. These districts were selected based on publicly available data that showed their EL-classified student population was performing better than state averages.³ Our findings point to a need to support districts and schools with greater guidance about how EL-classified students can be served through the implementation of CA MTSS. Even when interviewees knew that we were focused on how CA MTSS serves EL-classified students, at times it took some prodding to encourage them to articulate how their planning and practices served these students specifically and, in some cases, it seemed it was the first time they had tried to articulate this intersection. Still, educators we interviewed across districts revealed insightful and promising strategies for centering these students. Here, we present some of the challenges of and strategies for ensuring that CA MTSS implementation considers EL-classified students.

1. Existing EL-related compliance structures were difficult to incorporate into the framework of tiered supports.

CA MTSS can be a useful framework for bringing together existing programs and practices (*Farkas et al., 2021*). However, at these districts, there was little consensus about the place of designated ELD within the tiers of MTSS. When asked how ELD fits into the tiered framework of CA MTSS, educators had widely varying responses. Some asserted that ELD would count as Tier 1 because it is “core,” evidenced by its own set of standards just as with other core subjects. Others said that while it is required, ELD is only for some students or it might happen outside the classroom in a pullout model, and thus it would not count as Tier 1 instruction but could be Tier 2. Others believed that ELD should not be considered within the tiered structure because it was part of separate compliance structures for these students. This lack of clarity of the role of ELD contrasts to the relative ease with which educators described using EL-specific data, such as ELPAC scores, in Tier 2 decision-making. Indeed, many told us that this data point is one of the “many factors” that are considered when referring, or not referring, students to more intense interventions.



³ More information about these districts and our selection process can be found in the Appendix.

The confusion around the role of ELD within the tiered structure may only be exacerbated by how ELD and the EL classification function in contrast to how educators conceptualized MTSS interventions. Tier 2 interventions were always described as temporary and focused on how students were “progressing” instead of their ability to meet benchmarks. On the other hand, ELD is a much more permanent resource for EL-classified students. Their exit from the label and this intervention requires that they meet benchmark assessment scores. The hesitation of educators in responding to our question about ELD and the ways that they describe the nature of tiered interventions revealed consequences of a lack of guidance for how existing instructional routines such as ELD can or should fit into the MTSS model.

2. Educators who were knowledgeable about best practices for supporting EL-classified students and the cultural diversity within this student subgroup helped encourage shared responsibility among educators for these students through advocacy within MTSS planning processes.

Supporting EL-classified students requires specialized knowledge, including specific pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural knowledge (*Faltis & Valdés, 2016*). Prior research has found that teachers often feel underprepared for supporting these students, particularly when they do not have specialized training (*López & Santibañez, 2018*). Furthermore, spreading such specialized knowledge is important for ensuring that all educators support these students, rather than pushing responsibility primarily onto specialists (*Fenner, 2014*). Our findings here suggest that ensuring that specialized EL knowledge is represented throughout MTSS processes might be helpful for disseminating that knowledge across districts and schools, empowering educators to take responsibility for their EL-classified students' outcomes.

The educators we interviewed in this study demonstrated multiple ways in which they were knowledgeable about EL-classified students. Some were familiar with best practices for literacy instruction; some had extensive experience in developing organizational programming such as dual language programs; and others had close cultural and linguistic ties with the EL-classified student populations in their communities. They used this knowledge to help their districts and schools make instruction and services more accessible to EL-classified students.

One way that this specialized knowledge permeated MTSS structures was through the district level planning of MTSS. For example, at Districts One and Two, there was intentional collaboration across departments at the district level. This meant that while there were specific individuals leading MTSS implementation, individuals from multiple departments regularly collaborated in MTSS planning processes, such as districtwide data analysis. For example, an administrator in District Two noted that district leadership had recently begun to be more intentional in considering EL-classified students in their MTSS planning after the hiring of a multilingual learner coordinator. She shared that



4 More information about these districts and our selection process can be found in the Appendix

5 CLAD strategies focus on scaffolding language and content through the use of visuals and other media. More can be learned on the Project GLAD website..

this coordinator helped draw attention to instructional practices, such as the distinction between English Language Arts and English Language Development instruction⁴, that then became a focus for MTSS planning and training. On the other hand, at District Three, where there was less collaboration between departments at the district level, there also seemed to be less coherence in framing how all educators could serve EL-classified students. For example, one intervention specialist believed that there was significant variance in the quality of other specialists in the district because their role, and thus their responsibility for subgroups of students, was unclear.

Another way that EL expertise was shared through MTSS was through the positioning of knowledgeable educators at the school level where they could provide ongoing support for their colleagues. For example, a counselor in District Two shared that she frequently reminded her colleagues of the diversity of experience and ability that EL-classified students represent. Additionally, a teacher in District One who had been recognized for her Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD)⁵ strategies was moved into an EL specialist position where it was her responsibility to provide coaching and professional development in GLAD strategies for other teachers. While this expertise may be present across schools, putting these educators intentionally into positions where they were expected to provide guidance about tiered supports encouraged them to spread this knowledge beyond their own practice.

3. Engaging parents, families, and caregivers of EL-classified students in bidirectional relationships was more common for schools to do at the Tier 2 level.

We know from other research that engaging with parents, families, and caregivers (PFC) in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways is important (*Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017*), particularly for families of EL-classified students who are recent immigrants learning a new educational and social systems (*Jaffe-Walter & Miranda, 2020*). Districts in this study were all attentive to fostering PFC-school relationships. For example, each district had some version of home-school liaisons who were tasked with communicating with PFC, and who were distributed across schools depending on their language expertise and the language demographics of school communities.



At the Tier 1 level, these relationships were often focused on getting information to PFC, rather than asking PFC to contribute their expertise in the development of Tier 1 routines and structures. For example, educators described translating information to send home to PFC about informational events and student progress. In District Three, an administrator told us that some schools trained PFC in Tier 1 interventions to help differentiate for students more effectively within classrooms. One educator in District One attributed the low PFC involvement at the Tier 1 level to the need to discuss confidential student data and thus to restrict Tier 1 planning to school employees.

Alternatively, educators at all districts described a more bidirectional relationship with PFC at the Tier 2 level. In Tier 2, PFC input was more intentionally sought out to inform the interpretation of their individual student's data and referral to specific interventions. For example, many teachers and other school staff discussed the importance of knowing students' experiences in their home life to accurately diagnose and gain insight in order to respond to their needs.

4. The concentration of EL-classified students within schools and districts affected how MTSS was organized.

Research is mixed regarding the connection between EL-classified students' concentration within a school or district population, and their academic outcomes (*Hill et al., 2019*). In terms of organizing the tiered instruction of MTSS, however, greater concentrations of EL-classified students

⁶ Compliance structures could include the English Language Development (ELD) framework or the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Practices existing outside of those structures would include specific pedagogical strategies that might be used within ELD instruction, for example, but are not explicitly required by federal- or state-level policy.



seemed to be helpful for administrators to conceptualize tiered supports that specifically served these students, especially at the school level. For example, at one school in District Two, when we asked how EL-classified students were considered in referral processes, the principal responded that those students are at the center of everything they plan because they make up 90% of the student population.

In District One, district leaders were often explicitly focused on EL-classified students within their development of MTSS. These leaders considered how the resources they procured and structures they planned would serve generic EL needs, so that schools could use their additional monetary resources to adapt support for more specific needs in their community. For example, a school with an especially large population of newcomer EL-classified students was able to develop newcomer-specific programming because it had sufficient resources from the district to attend to the needs of the broader EL-classified student population.

At the same time, having a higher proportion of EL-classified students did not always make it easier for schools and districts to support these students. For example, educators in all districts described how it was difficult to ensure that they had appropriate linguistic resources given either significant language diversity or small numbers of EL-classified students in a specific language category. The EL director in District Three shared that they had only three district employees who spoke Farsi, Dari, and Pashto, meaning that as this EL-classified student population grew, their expertise was spread thin across the large district. Additionally, the EL specialist in District One highlighted

the labor that goes into translating materials for Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking populations, given that many instructional materials are available only in English or Spanish. That is, while having many EL-classified students in a district ensures these students are visible and considered while developing the MTSS structure, districts can still struggle to develop appropriate supports.

5. Focusing on EL-classified students when developing tiered academic instruction may also benefit non-EL-classified students.

When considering instructional practices specifically developed for EL-classified students, but existing outside compliance structures⁶, districts seemed to define them more easily within their MTSS tiers. For example, District One emphasized that they had provided professional development for all of their teachers to learn GLAD strategies specifically to serve EL-classified students within Tier 1. The EL specialist in this district who provided much of this GLAD training asserted that these strategies also improved learning and engagement for non-EL students in her own teaching experience and when she observed teachers' classrooms.

A principal in District Two and a behavioral specialist in District Three discussed the issue of trauma in immigrant populations who were coming from dangerous or high-conflict areas. In District Three, the behavioral specialist discussed how a series of professional developments focused on trauma-informed teaching allowed educators to incorporate socioemotional and behavioral instruction in their academic instruction and connect better with all of their students. Indeed, educators at a middle school in District Two noted that they had seen signs of trauma in EL-classified and non-EL-classified students who had grown up in their surrounding community. To this end, approaches such as trauma-informed teaching have the potential to address needs that cut across student categories.

6. Educators primarily focused on academic tiers when considering how they support EL-classified students.

Because the EL classification is based primarily on academic language and literacy measures, many individuals who we interviewed only considered how academic instruction and interventions would serve EL-classified students. However, newcomers might have experienced trauma in their home country or immigration journey and there is

evidence that the experience of being labeled as an EL itself can be discouraging to students (Flores et al., 2015; Lee & Soland, 2023), suggesting that it is important to consider their socioemotional learning as well. School counselors in these districts tended to assert that they treated all students the same and that the EL classification was irrelevant to the socioemotional support they provided students. At the same time, these counselors described considering students' language and immigration experiences in their practice. For example, one counselor described creating counseling groups made up of only recently arrived immigrant students as a strategy for creating a supportive community.

District Two provided an example of what it could mean to ensure that behavioral instruction is accessible to all students, including EL-classified students. Most schools in this district began their implementation of MTSS by developing schoolwide expectations for behavior. This process was led by a team of educators who represented various areas of expertise and teachers from each grade level. Buy-in was essential for this process. At schools where teachers felt this process was meaningful, the team was consistently seeking input from other school community members and adapting these expectations to feedback they received. In this way, schools developed expectations that represented the values and resources of their community. Furthermore, they created visual aids to support students'

learning of these expectations. One teacher noted that because these expectations have been so well communicated throughout the community, new students are able to quickly adapt by observing consistent modeling by their peers.

7. Community partnerships were valuable for supplementing Tier 2 instruction when students' needs changed rapidly.

Research on community schooling has established that schools' partnerships with community organizations can improve students' outcomes and access to expanded opportunities (Maier et al., 2017). While most district leaders and school personnel did not identify relationships with community organizations as a resource in their MTSS planning, the director of EL services in District Three highlighted the value of these relationships. She noted that the district had recently seen an influx of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. Though the district had experience serving Spanish-speaking EL-classified students, it had to adapt quickly with limited knowledge for serving these new students. She described how community centers for these refugee populations outside the school were an essential linguistic and cultural resource for her to consider how the district could meaningfully support this new population. This was also an example of how community partnerships could help foster more meaningful relationship-building with PFC.



CONCLUSION & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The educators interviewed in this study provided important insight into how districts and schools might use CA MTSS to provide support for EL-classified students. Their experiences highlight ways in which this task can be difficult but also that it is possible to integrate the tiered framework of CA MTSS with strategies appropriate for equitably serving these students. Notably, they highlighted that putting these students at the center of MTSS can make instruction accessible more broadly for all students. These findings lead us to offer the following five policy recommendations for state- and district-level policymakers.

State of California

1. **Provide more detailed guidance about how EL-specific funding, accountability, and programmatic structures can be conceptualized within the MTSS framework.** A variety of existing policies mandate guidelines for supporting EL-classified students, such as mandates for providing ELD. However, these mandates were difficult for districts to conceptualize within MTSS frameworks and thus, in some cases, meant that EL systems of data, instruction, and intervention were siloed. This undermines the potential of CA MTSS to streamline support and ensure that organizational resources are used effectively. Furthermore, we are concerned that without more guidance, some districts may delegate EL-classified student support to specific educators instead of taking on shared responsibility for these students.
2. **Provide more guidance about how EL-classified students fit into the tiered structure, given varying populations of EL-classified students from one school or district to another.** In these schools and districts where there were many EL-classified students, it was relatively common for educators to discuss practices that serve EL-classified students at the Tier 1 level. Furthermore, many educators shared observations that practices that served EL-classified students well also served non-ELs well. In schools and districts with smaller populations of EL-classified students, it might be easier

to think of these students as being served at Tiers 2 and 3 if they comprise “some” or “few students.”⁷ However, this might also mean that this subpopulation of students could be tracked, which goes against the principles of CA MTSS that discourage tracking by student subgroups.

3. **Provide more resources for districts and schools to think about how to make socioemotional and behavioral instruction culturally and linguistically relevant for EL-classified student populations.**

Students are given the EL label and reclassified out of the label based on academic measures. We saw that this discourages educators from considering how this label might also have implications for their socioemotional and behavioral needs. Schools demonstrated that making services accessible by translating behavioral expectations and providing home language resources for socioemotional learning was one way to think about EL-classified students outside of their academic needs.

Districts

1. **Ensure that all departmental areas are integrated in MTSS planning processes.** CA MTSS is a framework that intends to bring together what are often siloed instruction, intervention, and resources to prevent redundancies. Thus, it is essential that CA MTSS implementation brings together the various departments that exist at the district level. We saw that more intentional and frequent collaboration across departments at the district level translated into more coherent messages about expectations for educators in schools.
2. **Consider what academic, socioemotional, and behavioral supports can benefit all schools, so that individual schools can use their own resources to develop tiered supports that are tailored to their specific populations.** Just as districts must adapt the guidelines of CA MTSS to serve their specific population, schools must also be able to develop their own localized MTSS that serves their hyper-local community. It is important that districts provide all schools with a common set of resources so that they have a strong base from which to build. At the same time, some schools may need more of these districtwide resources than others in the name of equity, such as more socioemotional resources in a school that does not have access to community mental health agencies.

⁷ Language used in the description of CA-MTSS tiers.

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APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The districts in our study were selected based on five criteria defined by publicly available data. First, we identified districts where EL-classified students made up at least 19% of the student population. Second, we ensured that each district represented both elementary and secondary schools. Third, we identified districts where EL-classified students were consistently progressing in their language proficiency in both elementary and secondary schools. We used the California Department of Education’s English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI) for this criterion. Fourth, the district’s overall rate of Free and Reduced Priced Lunch was at or above the state average of 60.3%, indicating average or higher levels of low socioeconomic status. Finally, for each of the districts that met these first four criteria, we searched each district website for evidence that they were engaged in CA MTSS implementation. Many districts mentioned CA MTSS on their webpages, but fewer demonstrated strong evidence of implementation. What we considered “strong evidence” included having an MTSS director or coordinator position or having information about MTSS that the district itself produced. This resulted in a list of 20 districts. From that list, we recruited three districts to participate in interviews, representing multiple geographic areas, levels of urbanicity, and degrees of language diversity.

We recruited interview participants in each district primarily through snowball sampling. At each district, we began by interviewing district personnel who self-identified as being knowledgeable about MTSS implementation, EL-classified student supports, or both. Some of those district employees identified colleagues

who they believed would provide useful context given our research and interview questions. Those district personnel then connected us with school leaders, teachers, and other school-site educators in schools that they felt represented multiple experiences and stages of MTSS implementation. In all, we interviewed 29 educators across the three districts.

Characteristics of Districts

District One is a small district in Southern California, with 19 schools, 18 of which were classified as suburban. District Two is also in Southern California but is larger, with 34 schools, 25 of which are classified as suburban, six as urban, and two as rural. District Three is the largest district in the study, located in Northern California, with 52 schools in all, 25 of which are classified as suburban and 20 as urban. Table 1 shows the proportion of students in each district classified as EL and the distribution of the top three most common languages spoken by that population.

Interview Participants

At each district, we interviewed multiple district- and school-level educators. Table 2 summarizes the roles of our interview participants across the three districts.

Data Collection

In this study, we utilized semi-structured interviews to probe educators’ understanding of CA MTSS, their role within MTSS implementation in their district, and their knowledge about whether or how EL-classified students in their school or district were served through MTSS processes and resources. All interviews lasted 30 to 80

Table 1: Language characteristics of the three participating districts

District	Proportion EL-classified	Most Common Language of EL-classified Students	2nd Most Common Language of EL-classified Students	3rd Most Common Language of EL-classified Students
District One	26%	Spanish (33%)	Mandarin (31%)	Cantonese (21%)
District Two	21%	Spanish (95%)	Arabic (1.5%)	Vietnamese (1%)
District Three	25%	Spanish (50%)	Russian (15%)	Ukrainian (7.5%)

minutes. We developed separate protocols for district personnel, school leadership, and teachers or specialists in order to ask questions that would reflect their varied responsibilities within the district organization. Each participant was told at the beginning of their interview that we were focused on (1) how districts and schools implement CA MTSS in ways that address the particular needs of their EL-classified student populations, and (2) if they do not focus their CA MTSS efforts on EL-classified students, how we should understand why that is. Even though interviewees knew that we were focused on how MTSS serves EL-classified students, at times it took some prodding to encourage them to articulate how their planning and practices served these students specifically and, in some cases, it seemed it was the first time they had tried to articulate this intersection.

Data Analysis

We attended to within- and across-district patterns in our analysis. We began with a set of 11 a priori codes based on essential elements of MTSS implementation identified by the Orange County Department of Education (Guide to Understanding California MTSS, n.d.). The initial a priori codes were the following:

1. Academic Instruction
2. Behavioral Instruction
3. Socioemotional Instruction
4. Integrated Organizational Structure

5. LEA (District) Policy Framework
6. LEA / School Relationship
7. Engaged Site Leadership
8. Educator Support System
9. Positive School Culture
10. Community Partnerships
11. Family Partnerships

Applying these codes using the qualitative analysis software Dedoose allowed us to identify the ways that districts were conceptualizing and implementing MTSS, and pinpoint areas where they attended (or did not attend) to EL-classified students within this framework. After applying this set of codes, we then examined excerpts within each code group, looking for and naming patterns that we found. For each pattern, we also looked for how it was similar or different across districts, between a district office and their school sites, and across school sites within a district. An example of a pattern within the LEA Policy Framework code was siloed vs. collaborative departments. Examples of patterns within the Family Partnerships code were bidirectional learning from families for interventions and creating awareness of resources and student progress. In our further examination of these two themes within Family Partnerships, we found that the first was primarily found in discussions of Tier 2 processes and interventions, while the second was primarily found in descriptions of Tier 1 practices.

Table 2: Interview participants by role type and district

Role	District One	District Two	District Three
District - MTSS	1	0	1
District - EL	1	0	1
District - General Instruction	2	3	1
School - Principal or Admin	2	2	0
School - Coach or Specialist	1	1	4
School - Counselor	0	4	0
School - Teacher	0	5	0
Totals	7	15	7