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INTRODUCTION

I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness.

—Thomas Jefferson, “Letter to George Wythe”

The United States was founded on the belief that knowledge among the citizenry was essential for the pursuit of happiness and the preservation of the fledgling democracy. More than 200 years later, what knowledge to disseminate and to whom and how to disseminate that knowledge continue to be topics of debate. Particularly contentious topics are the manner in which disenfranchised students might be engaged, the purpose of secondary schools, and the means to increase student outcomes. Although democracy and the education system might not have reached ideal forms, education remains the most powerful institution in which to challenge inequities and promote social justice (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). With both trepidation and hope, I practice psychology with the goal of supporting the ability of school systems to promote positive outcomes for all students.

I have applied my knowledge of school psychology to develop a model of change that builds on and supports the development of all students’ strengths

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Empowered Learning in Secondary Schools: Promoting Positive Youth Development Through a Multitiered System of Supports, by C. E. Hazel

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in secondary schools. This model, positive youth development–multitiered system of supports (PYD-MTSS), uniquely integrates the strengths-based philosophy of positive youth development (PYD) with the structure of a multitiered system of supports (MTSS). PYD seeks to develop the whole person, not just academic skills. This involves cultivating multiple strengths (competence, confidence, connection, character, caring and compassion, and contribution, referred to in this book as the “six Cs”) in multiple developmental domains (academic, vocational, emotional, and social—the AVES domains). PYD provides the vision, and MTSS provides the system for achieving that vision. Through involvement on a leadership team and on several student-centered teams, students work alongside parents, teachers, and administrators to design and guide the school’s support structures. The teams work through multiple phases to do this work. Because of its high level of student leadership and strong commitment to developing the whole student, PYD-MTSS is a paradigm shift for most secondary school communities—a true example of empowered learning in secondary schools. Figure 1.1 presents a visual depiction of the model.

The purpose of this book is to present the theoretical foundations of the PYD-MTSS model as well as practical instructions and case examples to illustrate the model’s application. The book is intended for all those committed to enhancing the ability of secondary school communities to support the positive development of students. This includes not only school psychologists and counselors but also administrators, teachers, student and family members, and community professionals who work with secondary schools.

In the following sections, I describe three key concepts of the PYD-MTSS model: the domains of development, PYD, and MTSS. I conclude the chapter with an overview of this book.

DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

This book presents a model of school change that is based on the assumption that secondary schooling should promote student development in four critical domains—academic, vocational, emotional, and social (the AVES domains of development).¹ Each of these critical domains is described in the following sections.

¹Two other domains of development are equally critical: the physical and the spiritual. However, I worry that most school personnel would feel even less prepared to support students in these domains than in the AVES domains. For this reason only, this book focuses on the AVES domains. If your school community is ready to integrate one or both of these additional domains into your PYD-MTSS work, I expect that you will achieve even better student outcomes.

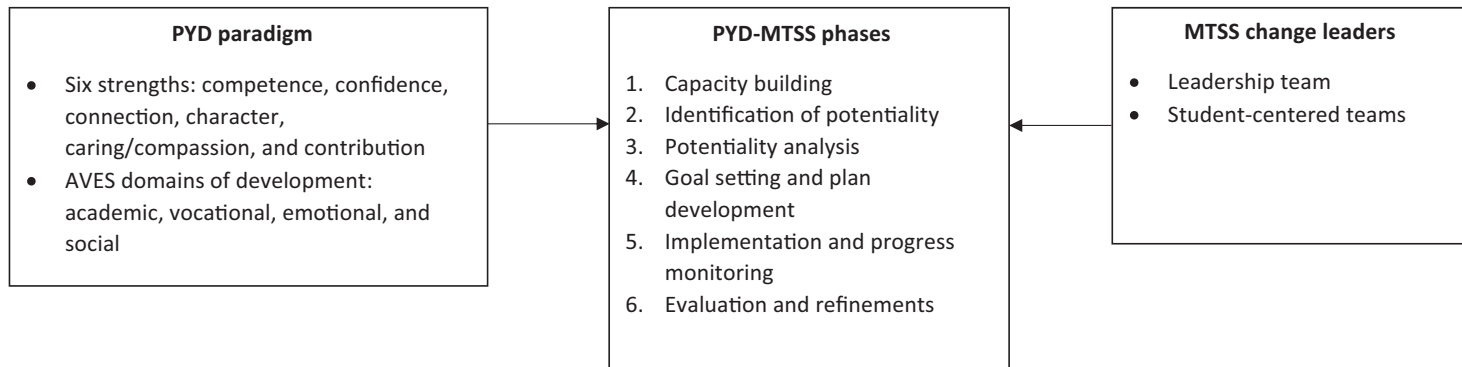


Figure 1.1. A model of change for secondary school students: The positive youth development–multitiered system of supports (PYD-MTSS). The PYD paradigm of developing students' six strengths combines with the MTSS structure for schoolwide change to form the PYD-MTSS model.

Academic Development

For this book, *academic development* is defined as achievement in core competencies and course success. Development in the academic domain is what society and most school community members agree is the “main” work of schooling. Academic development encompasses competency in core subjects and successful progression through school, leading to on-time graduation. Academic development is an extremely important task of schooling. As was made starkly clear through the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and can still be seen from reports on academic outcomes (Snyder & Dillow, 2015), U.S. schools continue to provide some students with educational environments that meet their academic needs; students in suboptimal environments are much less likely to be successful academically. Using comparisons with other nations, Darling-Hammond (2010) argued that our disproportionate attention to outcomes for students, based on demographic features, is a national crisis. Given increasing global competition, the United States cannot sustain economic vitality if it provides high-quality education only for certain groups of students. Often low-income children are placed in low-ability classrooms or on less rigorous tracks (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). These tracks are often impermeable, and it is very difficult for students in the less rigorous tracks to be admitted to, or prepared for, college after completing high school.

Historically, the psychological literature promoted a correlation between race and academic ability (see, e.g., Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Although subsequent research has shown that measurement error (Gould, 1996) and environment account for the differences evidenced by groups of students, the belief that race affects academic ability persists. Interestingly, researchers do not question measurement errors that perpetuate their belief systems (Gould, 1996); similarly, all people make implicit assumptions of which they are not aware about groups of people that can perpetuate negative stereotypes (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Gladwell, 2005). These stereotypes can be unconsciously communicated by the school community and internalized by students, which perpetuates inequitable educational outcomes. If one assumes that student demographics and privilege should not predetermine academic development, one must inevitably question (a) how the data are misrepresenting students’ knowledge and (b) how the learning environment is not meeting students’ needs.

Vocational Development

Secondary school education often reflects a one-size-fits-all mentality. With the exception of electives (which are often discounted), all students have been expected to show evidence of mastering the same curriculum in

the same manner and at the same rate. In a democracy, it is important that individuals share certain foundational understandings (Goodlad et al., 2004). However, it is equally important in a developed country that people perform disparate tasks, which require different skills. For instance, I am a psychologist and my husband is an engineer. We solve problems differently, and the knowledge we have is vastly different; however, we are both employable, contributing members of society.

For this book, I define *vocational development* to encompass a student's awareness of his or her vocational interests, opportunities to experience vocations, and the ability to reflect on matching individual strengths and interests with vocational options. Integrating vocational development into the educational environment encourages the promotion of individual talents while at the same time developing shared baseline competencies. A student may have academic skills but not have a clear vocational path. Conversely, clear vocational aspirations may help motivate a student to develop academic skills and be more engaged with school. Students who qualify for special education services are required to have school to work transition plans as part of their Individualized Educational Program. School counselors are usually charged with guiding general education students' vocational development; their work often results in advising students about course choices and postsecondary application requirements (e.g., when to take the ACTs, how to apply for financial aid). However, rarely are school communities designed so that students have real-world experiences or in-depth exploration of vocational interests, based on what is learned through vocational counseling.

In contrast to academic development, popular support for vocational development for students is contentious. Vocational education has a poor reputation and often is disregarded in secondary education. Historically, vocational education has been used for educational segregation and tracking, and is regarded by many only in those terms. During the 1900s, most segregated schools for students of color assumed that graduates would go on to trades, not college. Math, for instance, was taught as it related to sewing for girls or carpentry for boys (Russell, 2014). After desegregation, and even within racially, ethnically, and economically diverse schools, students were still segregated into tracks. In a tracking system, the student population is divided into fairly impermeable groups by assumed abilities. In this system, most poor students and students of color were tracked into vocational education; most affluent White students were tracked into college preparatory courses. Before and after desegregation, vocational education was used as a means to perpetuate power inequities and prepare students to assume their prescribed role in an unjust society.

However, these vocational education practices do not capture the purpose of vocational development. On the contrary, the intent of vocational

development is to allow each student to discover his or her passions, preferred activities, and interests and to teach students how to apply their strengths to tasks that are of utility to the broader community. Dewey (1916) explained why vocational aims should be included in education:

An occupation is the only thing which balances the distinctive capacity of an individual with his [or her] social service. To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. (p. 308)

Whereas academic development is designed to provide students with important general knowledge and skills, vocational development is intended to help students differentiate how they will use this knowledge and determine what academic skills are most pertinent to them. Dewey (1916) argued that “the only adequate training *for* occupations is training *through* occupations” (p. 310). So, vocational education suggests not only that students should have choice and direction in their educational studies but also that these studies need to be applied, and not just abstractions to be postponed to some future date. Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) argued that for adolescents to prepare for work, they must learn to enjoy persevering through challenges. When secondary students perceive activities as simultaneously play and work, they experience self-esteem, salience, positive affect, and enjoyment in the task. With enough of these experiences, they approach the task of career seeking with a better integrated and more optimistic attitude.

Emotional Development

In this book, *emotional development* refers both to the development of emotional wellness and the prevention and remediation of mental health risks. The emotional domain of development is often the least comprehensively and systematically considered by school systems (Kamphaus, Reynolds, & Dever, 2014). Approximately 20% of U.S. students have mental health issues that impede their school and developmental success (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). Many of those students are not identified and thus do not receive mental health supports. However, when students receive mental health supports in schools (provided by school or community mental health providers) rather than in community settings, they receive the supports with more consistency and show greater improvements. Furthermore, schools have historically underidentified students’ internalizing mental health needs (e.g., anxiety, depression) at an even greater rate than students’ externalizing mental health needs (e.g., anger management). Adolescence is the stage at which many mental illnesses are first evidenced. And growing numbers of mental health professionals have come to regard the promotion of mental health to be a critical component of managing mental illness. In this book,

emotional development is conceptualized as occurring along two continua: mental health risks, and emotional wellness and resilience.

Emotional well-being is increasingly recognized as a health concern. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014) conducted the national Adverse Childhood Experiences Study in which linkages were found among social, emotional, and cognitive impairments; adoption of health-risk behaviors; disease, disability, and social problems; and early death. Adverse childhood experiences include abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual); household members who are mentally ill, abuse drugs, or are incarcerated; separated or divorced parents; and witnessing domestic violence. Most respondents (60%) reported experiencing at least one such adverse event, and almost 10% had experienced five or more (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). The most commonly experienced adverse childhood event was household substance abuse (29%). In almost all categories, women were more likely to have experienced an adverse event in their childhoods than were men; in fact, 10% had five or more adverse childhood experiences (compared with 7% of men). The results for race and ethnicity were more nuanced, suggesting a culture–experience interaction. However, African American respondents were the least likely to have had five or more adverse childhood experiences (5%). Notably, many respondents who had not completed high school had experienced five or more such events.

With the increasing recognition that unmet childhood mental health needs can lead to pervasive health risks has come increased interest in schools as locations for supporting students' mental health and wellness. However, most school reform initiatives still conceptualize school change in terms of instructional and management changes and do not attend to the supports needed for students to be able to access learning and teaching (Adelman & Taylor, 2014). Psychologists who work in schools have advocated the adoption of public health perspectives in the provision of mental health promotion services in schools (Doll & Cummings, 2008; Hess, Short, & Hazel, 2012). Sadly, public health and child psychiatric professionals and school professionals have not yet collaborated extensively.²

Social Development

Schooling is a social enterprise, and school-based professionals work to prepare students to function effectively in other social environments. Often, discussions of students' social and emotional competences are combined and

²There are some promising exceptions. For example, the University of Maryland's School of Medicine has a Center for School Mental Health (CSMH) whose mission is to "bridge the differences across education and mental health to support youth" (CSMH, n.d.).

are usually based on the faulty assumption that social competence or incompetence is a reflection of mental health or illness (F. G. Miller et al., 2015). For that reason, the model I present in this book depicts social development as a separate domain.

The social domain of development encompasses three important and distinct aspects of students' social behaviors at school: attendance, prosocial behaviors, and engagement. Obviously, these three aspects of social development are highly correlated: Attending class is an example of a prosocial behavior, and engaged students have higher attendance. However, they are not perfectly correlated. Students can attend school regularly but exhibit other antisocial behaviors; similarly, students who attend are not necessarily highly engaged in all courses. Therefore, each of these aspects deserves attention to promote students' social development.

One of the most important social developmental tasks is the development of agency (Bandura, 2001):

To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence [is] exercised, rather than residing as a discrete entity in a particular place. The core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times. (p. 2)

An ultimate educational goal for students is that they take ownership of their learning and develop the capacity to adjust their behavior to changing social demands. According to Bandura (2001), the core features of agency are intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality is a proactive commitment to bring about future events. Forethought is a means of self-motivation to guide current actions in anticipation of future events. Self-reactiveness is a set of functions designed to refine behaviors to better achieve desired outcomes: self-monitoring, evaluation of performance against personal standards, and corrective self-reactions. Self-reflectiveness is the evaluation of one's motivation, values, and meaning of life pursuits. Self-reflectiveness is also utilized to prioritize conflicting activities that support various motives or values.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Quickly identifying students who are struggling is imperative to reversing trajectories; however, I believe strongly that the means of promoting development in all students is to work from strengths, rather than deficits.

Gomez and Ang (2007) provided the following definition of PYD in a school context:

Positive Youth Development (PYD) in schools concerns assisting adolescents in developing multiple areas of competence, personal confidence, social connections, personal character, and the ability to care and contribute to society, with the premise that achievement of the above developmental tasks will lead to increased adolescent psychosocial well-being and societal well-being. (p. 97)

The PYD model has been applied to schooling in only a limited fashion. However, application of the public health perspective to students' mental health and wellness needs (Doll & Cummings, 2008; Hess et al., 2012) paves the way to consider students' holistic development from a PYD lens.

The PYD perspective originated in comparative psychology and biology (J. V. Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). However, applied psychologists, who have adopted the PYD model, draw from adolescent development, resiliency, education, and prevention research (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003). The overarching belief is that every youth has the potential and capacity for positive development (R. M. Lerner, Brentano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002) when provided appropriate and differentiated supports (Damon, 2004). This perspective values youth as resources and change makers, as opposed to problems to solve. The PYD model espouses that students must have meaningful choices to promoting their learning (Pittman et al., 2003). PYD aims to proactively address the six Cs, or the six strengths. Initially, there were five strengths (Bowers et al., 2010; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; R. M. Lerner, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). This book includes the sixth strength (Hughes & Curnan, 2000; R. M. Lerner et al., 2002, Pittman, 2000; Pittman et al., 2003), which is more controversial because it supports agency in adolescents. An overview of the six strengths applied to school environments is provided in Table 1.1. The following definitions of the strengths are used in this book:

- Competence (in academic, vocational, emotional, and social development): *Competence* is a person's positive view of his or her actions in the four critical domains of development. The competence strength refers to a person's self-perception of competence for each domain rather than a global sense of personal competence. Academic competence includes success with grades, test taking, and other study habits. Vocational competence involves work habits, career exploration, and knowledge of personal strengths that could be capitalized on in occupational environments. Emotional competence is the ability to manage feelings and internal states, such as affect, stress, and

TABLE 1.1
The Six Strengths in Secondary Schools

Strength	Definitions	Examples of how a student might evidence this strength	Examples of how secondary schools can promote this strength
Competence	A person's positive view of his or her actions in the four domains of development: academic, vocational, emotional, and social	• School success • Effective study habits • Knowledge of personal strengths • Planning and decision making abilities • Emotional regulation • Strong interpersonal skills • Knowledge of essential life and vocational skills	• High academic expectations • Effective engagement strategies • Teacher support • Positive school culture and environment • Increased opportunities for student involvement
Confidence	A person's global positive evaluation of self-worth and self-regard (both current and future beliefs)	• Developing alternative pathways to goals • Vocational aspirations • Future planning • Academic and civic engagement	• Opportunities for civic engagement • Collaboration with community organizations
Connection	Positive bidirectional exchanges between a person and his or her peers, family, school, and community	• Positive peer relationships • Connections with teachers and staff • Family engagement and involvement	• Social groups, programs, and clubs • Mentorship between older and younger students or between teachers and students • Home visits by teachers or staff • Community outreach opportunities
Character	The adoption of a personal moral code	• Respect of societal and cultural rules • A sense of right and wrong • Integrity • Absence of or decreases in risk or problem behaviors	• Practices and behaviors that adhere to an explicit moral code • Having explicit behavioral standards and consequences for unfavorable behaviors • Encouraging student involvement in determining behavior expectations for students and adults

TABLE 1.1
The Six Strengths in Secondary Schools (Continued)

Strength	Definitions	Examples of how a student might evidence this strength	Examples of how secondary schools can promote this strength
Caring & compassion	Having a sense of sympathy and empathy for others	• Peer mentoring, tutoring, and collaboration • Prosocial behaviors • Ability to maintain positive friendships • Moral reasoning • Valuing diversity	• Adult guided/assisted opportunities for helping others in the school and community • Positive reinforcement for prosocial behaviors • Identifying role models who evidence great compassion
Contribution	The belief that one is able to make a meaningful difference in one's environment and that it is morally necessary to do so	• Motivation and active engagement • Taking initiative • Involvement in leadership activities • Motivation and active engagement	• Opportunities for students to collaborate with teachers and staff to create systems changes • Effective monitoring and facilitation of opportunities in which students are able to give input and take the lead on innovation execution

enthusiasm. Social competence is exhibited through interpersonal skills, such as conflict resolution and the ability to form friendships. Social competence also encompasses behaviors such as planning and decision-making.

- **Confidence (in one's identity and future):** *Confidence* refers to a person's global positive evaluation of self-worth and self-regard. Confidence encompasses both current and future beliefs. Positive psychology research with adolescents has found a similar construct, *covitality*, which encompasses a belief in self and others, emotional competence, and engaged living (Renshaw et al., 2014). Confidence is similar to covitality, in that it is grounded in a current belief in the self and the environment's ability to support the developing individual. Unlike covitality, however, confidence is both experienced currently and leads to confidence in the future. Confidence in the future—what is commonly termed *hope* in the positive psychology literature—has been shown to be predictive of students' abilities to develop alternative pathways

to important goals as well as life-satisfaction and well-being (Marques, Lopez, Rose, & Robinson, 2014). An adolescent's confidence in self and in his or her future will support engaged prosocial behaviors that are both immediately productive and promote future successes in all domains.

- **Connection (to self and others):** *Connections* are positive bidirectional exchanges between a person and his or her peers, family, school, and community. For a relationship to be viewed as a connection, both parties must contribute to the relationship. Bronfenbrenner (1979) referred to a bidirectional relationship that was of significance to the participants as a *primary dyad*; primary dyads are the most significant means by which development is supported. Therefore, connection enhances a student's ability to develop and learn in all arenas. Because these relationships are bidirectional, a student's sense of connection also has meaningful impacts on peer, family, school, and community members.
- **Character (associated with positive values, integrity, and moral development):** *Character* is the adoption of a personal moral code. It is evidenced in respect for societal and cultural rules, socially sanctioned behaviors, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity. Much public discussion has revolved around the appropriateness of schools attending to the development of character, morals, and values. I would argue that all settings have a moral code; therefore, all settings (including schools) are shaping students' character, morals, and values. Acknowledging that code will allow school professionals to challenge privilege-perpetuating values (Adams et al., 2013). The cognitive changes in late childhood and adolescence allow for the development of more advanced moral reasoning and altruistic tendencies (Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009). Therefore, secondary schools are ideal locations for working with students to develop their moral codes. When curriculum and service activities promote tolerance and concern for others, students develop civic engagement (Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009), which has been shown to predict civic engagement in adulthood. Character is evidenced in behaviors and the logic behind the behaviors; character promotes personal and societal well-being through the student's AVES development.
- **Caring and compassion (sympathy and identification with others):** *Caring* is sympathy and empathy for others. Sympathy in students has been shown to positively correlate to sharing

and helping (Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2014). Sharing and helping, especially when greeted with appreciation, have been shown to increase a sense of global well-being (Seligman, 2011). Reciprocally, the social competence that emanates from caring and compassion enhances connections (Strength #3). Similarly, sympathy, prosocial behaviors, and moral reasoning have been shown to be correlated (Eisenberg et al., 2009). Furthermore, this constellation of behaviors is also correlated with academic performance. Prosocial behavior is developed through adult-guided or adult-assisted opportunities. Secondary schools have the opportunity to promote caring and compassion in their students through adult-guided opportunities to understand the viewpoints of others, assist others, and receive reinforcement for these actions.

- Contribution (to self, others, and communities): *Contribution* can be understood as making a meaningful difference in one's environment. To many people, it is morally necessary to contribute. Including the contribution strength in the PYD framework transforms PYD from an individual strengths-building model to a political, action-oriented model. Many youth-serving institutions have been unwilling or unable to make the development of a sense of contribution as a target for PYD; when PYD occurs, adults and systems are transformed together with students (Benson et al., 2006, p. 4). Developing contribution in adolescents has a profound effect on all four domains of development (a topic that is further discussed in Chapter 9). The PYD-MTSS model outlined in this book embraces student contribution as one of the main levers of change. When PYD that includes student contribution occurs, adults and systems are transformed together with students (Benson et al., 2006). Researchers have argued that youth who develop the first five Cs are well-positioned to make meaningful contributions to society (the sixth C; see, e.g., J. V. Lerner et al., 2009). However, I would argue the reverse is also true: When adolescents make a meaningful difference in their environment, that experience of contribution enables them to develop the other strengths (competence, confidence, connection, character, caring and compassion).

In the above definitions, the first strength (competence) was discussed in terms of four specific domains, whereas the other five strengths (confidence, connection, character, caring and compassion, and contribution) were characterized as global constructs. However, self-efficacy research (Anderman & Anderman,

2010) demonstrates that individuals conceptualize their strengths in more specific terms. For instance, as a student I was confident in my math abilities, but not my spelling abilities (both part of the academic domain). Similarly, a student's sense of connection may be environmentally dependent: She may have communities in which she feels much greater membership than others. Each connection affects her strength of connection with others; however, her development of strengths could be promoted with greater specificity if we knew that she feels highly connected with her church community but much less connected to her school community. Therefore, it is important to consider the bidirectional influences of the domains of development, the six strengths, significant environments, and the student's individual characteristics to understand how to promote students' positive development.

MULTITIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

Multitiered system of supports is the latest term applied to a long-standing and intuitive concept: Different students require different supports across their educational careers to optimize their learning and development. These supports will constitute a continuum that can be conceptualized as forming multiple tiers. These multitiered supports should be organized into a system to make sure that the services operate in concert and that the needs of all students are considered. The Colorado Department of Education (2014) used the following definition for MTSS:

a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for EVERY student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems. (About MTSS section, para. 1)

The Kansas State Department of Education (2012) definition stressed the importance of continual monitoring in the MTSS process:

MTSS is a coherent continuum of evidence based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each Kansas student to achieve high standards. (Welcome section, para. 1)

The Kansas model stresses the importance of leadership, professional development, and an empowering climate to facilitate assessment, instruction, and curriculum. The Colorado model identifies six essential components: (a) shared leadership; (b) data-based problem solving and decision making; (c) layered continuum of supports; (d) evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices; (e) universal screening and progress monitoring; and (f) family, school, and community partnering. In most educational

circles, MTSS is conceptualized as an overarching framework for providing supports in two areas of functioning: (a) academic and (b) social, emotional, and behavioral. In the PYD-MTSS model, by contrast, four domains are considered across the six strengths, yielding a more nuanced and integrated understanding of students' development. The following sections provide a brief description of the integration of the traditional conceptualizations of educational supports into MTSS.

Academic Supports: Response to Intervention

In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education reauthorized the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which included the provision that a Local Educational Agency “may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation procedures” (Pub. L. No. 108-446). This statement was particularly relevant to the determination of learning disabilities, where a discrepancy between achievement and ability had been the model for qualification. This response to “scientific, research based intervention” was often referred to as *response to intervention*.

In its narrow definition, response to intervention was seen as an alternative process to determine whether a student with a learning disability should qualify for special education services. In broader definitions, response to intervention was a systematic method of making sure that the diverse needs of all learners were addressed. Burns and Gibbons (2012) stated that “RtI [response to intervention] involves four components: (a) systematic use of data, (b) efficient allocation of resources, and [sic](c) learning enhancement (d) for all students” (p. 6). Hoover (2011) defined response to intervention as a “process within multi-tiered instruction that determines the extent to which a learner responds to instruction (i.e., what is taught) and uses the RtI results as a basis for subsequent multi-tiered curricular decisions” (p. 5). Although most response to intervention models (such as Hoover’s) emphasized academic needs, some also stressed the importance of addressing students’ behavioral and social needs (e.g., Burns, Riley-Tillman, & VanDerHeyden, 2012).

Arising out of IDEA, response to intervention was perceived as an unfunded special education initiative that needed to be implemented by general education teachers. Because of this, it was met with more than a little resistance by many educators and in many school systems. Most response to intervention processes were designed, not to enhance learning for all students (Burns & Gibbons, 2012), but rather to provide differentiated supports for individual students who were struggling academically. Furthermore, the implementation of the response to intervention process was much better articulated for elementary schools than for secondary schools. Response

to intervention demands that appropriate evidence-based interventions be implemented with fidelity and the responding progress of a student be tracked. This is difficult for one elementary teacher to accomplish; it is even more difficult for a team of secondary teachers, across disciplines, to coordinate. Because of the need for collaboration, definitions of the *response to intervention process* at the secondary level often addresses systems change, as well as individual needs:

The primary purpose of [response to intervention] at the secondary level is to build the capacity of the school to meet the increasing demands for a diverse student population to meet rigorous standards for graduation. A secondary purpose is to ensure [that] appropriate instruction and intervention is provided to all students. A final purpose is to provide a system that will support continuous school improvement to improve outcomes for all students. (Johnson, Smith, & Harris, 2009, p. 3)

This systemic definition is ambitious but is still academically focused, does not mention the full development of the student (the AVES domains), and does not embrace the six strengths of PYD. Particularly in schools where a high percentage of students are at risk of not graduating from high school with their cohort or being prepared for postsecondary success, the response to intervention process at the secondary level seems difficult to actualize. For all the reasons discussed, most secondary school educators and staff regard response to intervention as an ill-defined, unrealized idea. The PYD-MTSS model extends response to intervention and provides a process to realize these changes, given the realities of secondary schools.

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports: Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports

Some students exhibit behaviors that obstruct their learning and the learning of others. Furthermore, sending students to the office (office discipline referrals) does not seem to improve these students' abilities to behave appropriately in class (Crone, Hawken, & Horner, 2015; Hulac, Terrell, Vining, & Bernstein, 2011; Simonsen & Myers, 2015). Therefore, many researchers and educators have called for a pro-active, positive system of behavior management. Positive behavior and intervention supports (PBIS) was designed as a proactive school and classroom management system that would reduce office discipline referrals, increase available time for all students to learn, and allow students with challenging behaviors to be supported in less restrictive environments. PBIS is a process of planning and problem solving that includes direct teaching of (and rewards for) appropriate social behaviors.

However, similar to response to intervention, PBIS is more difficult to implement in secondary school environments than in elementary schools. For one thing, most secondary schools have many more faculty members than do elementary schools. Therefore, it becomes more difficult to reach consensus among secondary school teachers and staff on the expected behaviors, what those behaviors look like in various environments, and how to teach the expectations and reward behavior. Second, most elementary teachers perceive their primary duty as educating students in a broad sense (including both academic and social/emotional development), but many secondary school teachers perceive that their job is teaching their content area exclusively, and that does not include teaching PBIS expectations. Furthermore, as secondary students are older than elementary students, it is commonly believed that they should already know how to behave and that it is inappropriate to reward secondary students for behaviors they should be performing regardless of consequences. Many elementary and secondary school personnel are concerned that the PBIS rewards system develops extrinsic, instead of intrinsic, motivation. For all of these reasons, PBIS has only functioned suboptimally in most secondary schools, and no comprehensive, positive, proactive system is in place to support appropriate social behaviors of secondary students. The PYD-MTSS model, based in developing student strengths across the AVES domains, integrates the attributes of PBIS and overcomes its historic limitations in secondary environments.

Integrating PYD With MTSS in Secondary Schools

In some schools, districts, and states, MTSS might be perceived as a rebranding of their existing comprehensive response to intervention and PBIS processes. However, for most secondary school communities, MTSS represents a radical shift in thinking and practice as their conceptualization of response to intervention and PBIS was narrow or the implementation was minimal. MTSS is a system of supports for all students, tiered to match differing needs, which are determined and refined through continual monitoring. From the PYD perspective, most response to intervention and PBIS definitions are problem-focused (an attempt to make someone “better”); in contrast, MTSS suggests there are competencies to be supported and does not carry an implication of deficits. A multitiered system of supports for all students would focus on fostering the strengths and talents of each individual as well as providing remediation. The PYD strengths provide a frame for understanding students’ strengths. The AVES domains provide a comprehensive view of the areas of development to attend to for all students. The PYD-MTSS model provides a structure for doing this work.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

My objective in writing this book was to link a theory of change with the practices of secondary schools. Secondary schooling continues to privilege and support some students over others. I believe that we can better promote all students' developments when we work from a strengths-based perspective to develop student abilities in four specific domains. I believe that students are not the problem; rather, students are vital to both the present and the future. Students are the greatest, underutilized resource in school change. Furthermore, I strongly believe that systems either impede or promote the abilities of individuals to form meaningful relationships that support each other's development. Therefore, systems level change is necessary to support adults and realize improved outcomes for all students. We have a moral imperative to improve the functioning of school communities, such that every student can realize his or her potential to be a fulfilled, contributing member of society. By developing changes that focus on strengths and enhance relationships, we make schools more rewarding and fun for all members of the school community.

This book is divided into three sections. Part I (Chapters 2–3) reviews the literature regarding a strengths-based, empowerment approach to supporting adolescent development. Chapter 2 reviews the historic inequities that have been perpetuated through secondary education and how these can be challenged through a PYD framework. Chapter 3 considers theories of adolescent development (psychodynamic, social learning, positive psychology, and neuropsychological) and what they suggest for working with secondary school students.

Part II (Chapters 4–6) presents the PYD-MTSS model in detail. Chapter 4 provides a thorough description of the model and its six phases. Chapter 5 dives into the role of the leadership team and their work in guiding school-level innovations. Chapter 6 describes the model as it would be implemented by student-centered teams and the interventions they will develop for subpopulations of the school's students.

Part III (Chapters 7–10) discusses how to implement the PYD-MTSS model. Chapter 7 discusses student data collection and analysis across the domains of development. Chapter 8 explains methods of incorporating student voice and leadership into secondary school communities. Chapter 9 is an overview of important considerations for this work. Chapter 10 presents two case studies representing the implementation of PYD-MTSS and some concluding thoughts.

I sincerely hope that this book guides you in the critical and difficult work of moving schooling and democracy closer to its ideals.