

# Multi-tiered System of Supports Plans for Bullying Prevention for Students with Disabilities:

## *Perspectives from an Elementary Teacher Professional Development*

### Background

Students with disabilities (SWDs) are involved in bullying at higher rates than their non-disabled peers. Teachers are the primary stakeholders in bullying prevention and intervention. The current study examines qualitative responses from teachers during an online bullying prevention professional development.

### Findings

#### 1) How do teacher perceptions of SWDs in their context influence the development of a MTSS-based bully prevention plan?

- Teachers indicated at Tier 1 a lack of respect from non-disabled students towards SWDs in their school and that SWDs experienced a decreased sense of belonging and self-advocacy as a result. At Tiers 2 and 3, general education teachers specifically reported a lack of awareness about Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and social-emotional strategies for SWD to prevent bullying prior to the escalation of bullying involvement.

#### 2) Who do teachers identify as key stakeholders in an MTSS-based bullying prevention plan?

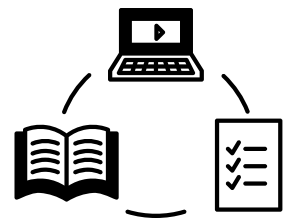
- Teachers identified themselves as primary stakeholders, followed by administrators and other staff members in Tiers 1, 2, and 3. However, at Tier 3 teachers were explicit that active collaboration between special educators and parents/guardians is critical to facilitate bullying prevention.

#### 3) What potential barriers do teachers propose when planning to implement an MTSS-based bullying prevention plan?

- Overall, teachers identified significant challenges in implementing their MTSS bully prevention plan, including time constraints, limited parent participation, and the severity of the disability.

### Methods

- Teachers (N = 36; 83% female) from three elementary schools in the southeastern U.S.
- 80.6% Caucasian, 66.7% Hispanic, 13.9% African American, 11.1% Haitian, 2.8% Asian American, and 2.8% other race (checked all that apply).



The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R324A190103 to the University of Florida. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, contact Principal Investigator, Dr. Dorothy Espelage ([espelage@unc.edu](mailto:espelage@unc.edu)).