

## TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF A MULTI-TIERED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM TO PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM EMIRATES AMERICAN SCHOOL, SHARJAH, UAE

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### ABSTRACT

The study explored teachers' perceptions of the contribution of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for professional development to pedagogical practices and professional performance at Emirates American School, Sharjah, UAE, offering a context-specific piece of evidence and demonstrating the possible benefits of differentiated teacher professional learning support from the teacher's perspective. While tiered systems of supports are common in educational environments, especially with students, and studies exploring their implementation with teacher professional development are still limited. The study, therefore, explored a three-level model of professional development support to deliver differentiated levels of support based on teachers' professional needs. A quantitative research design was used and a structured questionnaire was developed that consisted of three MTSS implementation levels: Tier 1; universal professional learning; Tier 2; targeted support and collaboration; and Tier 3; intensive individual coaching. The questionnaire was given to teachers and the data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results revealed teachers' positive perceptions of the contribution of the MTSS approach to their pedagogical practices and professional performance. Tier 1 was seen as fostering teachers' knowledge of typical instructions and general expectations as a whole school community. Tier 2 was seen as making important contributions to teachers' pedagogy in terms of collaboration, professional discussion and feedback. Tier 3 was felt to be personalized support for the application of pedagogical strategies. The findings suggest that a multi-tiered approach may provide a differentiated structure for organizing teacher professional development according to varying levels of professional support needs.

**Keywords:** *Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), teacher professional development, teaching performance, pedagogical practices.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Teacher Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is widely recognized as a means of improving educators' professional knowledge, skills, competencies, and practices. Recent literature, however, indicates that the effectiveness of PD is more complex, involving the design, implementation and relationship between the PD and the needs and contexts of teachers. Sims et al. (2025) highlight active learning, while Graham et al. (2024) identify continuity, relevance, reflection, and action orientation as important features of effective PD.

These studies also emphasize the importance of sustained professional learning and caution against a one-size-fits-all approach to PD. The effectiveness of an intervention is dependent on the teacher's experience, expertise, prior knowledge and professional needs; a teacher may not be as effective as another teacher at the same intervention. Graham et al. (2024) and Sims et al. (2025) are thus more nuanced and responsive than more rigidly interpreted responses. However, just differentiating isn't enough to be effective. It relies on the correct identification of teachers' needs and a match between the intensity and the type of the support and the teachers' needs. But, one thing that is important to remember is not only that teachers are receiving any kind of PD, but that they are receiving the right kind of PD at the right intensity.

### The Contribution of Professional Development to Teachers' Performance and Pedagogy

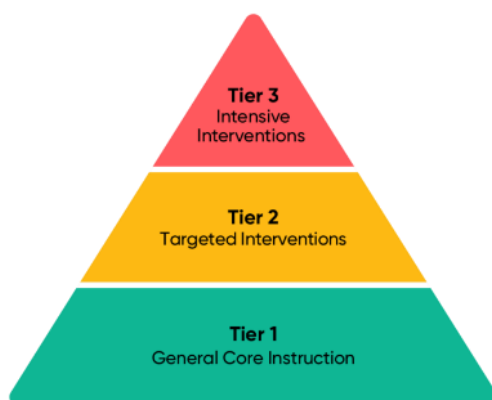
The research overall indicates that teachers benefit in knowledge, skills and pedagogies when the PD is well designed. For instance, Kahmann et al. (2022) discovered positive outcomes for teacher results when teachers were provided with differentiated-instruction PD, and when teachers received domain-general PD compared to those who received differentiated-instruction PD. Similarly, Sims et al. (2025) highlight opportunities for teachers to apply and use new learning and Graham et al. (2024) highlight practice, feedback, reflection, coaching and continuous support. De la Iglesia et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of collaboration and feedback from professionals. These studies clearly show that successful PD is more than the transfer of information and most of the time is the learning of an activity, it is relevant, it is group participatory, it is accompanied by feedback, it is accompanied by a period of reflection, and it is accompanied by support. However, much of the literature focuses on the characteristics of effective PD and not how various types and levels of support can be structured into a cohesive system that is responsive to the needs of individual teachers. This gives a justification for taking a multi-level approach.

### An overview of MTSS as a System for Teacher Professional Development

Typically, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) offers a succession of support tiers that are more and more intensive in varying degrees based on student needs and demonstrated success. This idea could be extended to teacher professional development as well-differentiated teacher professional support, instead of the one size fits all.

In the systematic review of 20 studies on responsive and tiered professional development, Bloomfield et al. (2024) provide very relevant evidence. They identified a clear pathway for provision which was universal and progressive with more specific and individualised provision where additional needs were identified. The reviewed studies however were very varied with regard to elements of intervention and processes for identifying additional support needs. The evidence, therefore, backs up the concept of responsive tiering, not a one size fits all three tier solutions.

One of the big gaps is this. MTSS teacher PD should not be considered a linear process as all teachers take part as Tier 1 to Tier 3. Rather, the tiers are in the order of responsiveness and intensity in terms of professional needs.



**Figure 1: MTSS Model (Multi-Tiered Support System)**

### **Tier 1: Universal Professional Development**

Tier 1 provides professional learning for all teachers about shared expectations of teaching and learning, curriculum expectations, school priorities, shared pedagogical practices, etc. In Bloomfield et al. (2024), universal group training was an often-used part of tiered PD models. Common language and objectives can be developed in Tier 1 but provision in all tiers may not be responsive to variation in teachers' prior experiences and needs. Thus Tier 1 is not the system itself but should be viewed as being part of a larger system of professional development.

### **Tier 2: Targeted Professional Development and Support**

In addition, Tier 2 will provide additional supports to teachers who require more than universal PD. The identified supports that Bloomfield et al. (2024) identified are all targeted instruction and practice, feedback, self-monitoring, and coaching. Teacher learning is also integral in collaboration and feedback as de la Iglesia et al. (2024) stated.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 is the specificity of the needs that are identified and the responsiveness to them. But, Bloomfield et al. (2024) reported that the data-based processes for determining which teachers need extra support varied. Theoretically, then, it can be agreed that the concept

of targeted PD is acceptable, and that context and circumstances of targeted PD is contextually dependent.

### Tier 3: Intensive and Individualized Professional Development

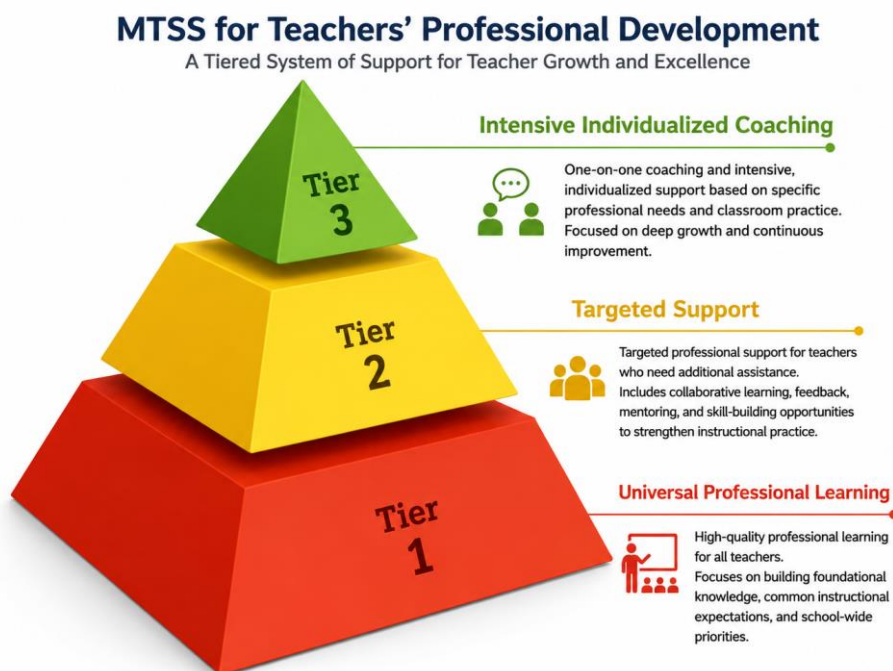
Tier 3 is the most intensive tier of support that may include individual coaching, observation, modelling, practice and feedback (Bloomfield et al., 2024). This support may be particularly useful if teachers require additional support to implement professional learning in the classroom.

Further, high intensity, individual PD takes up quite a bit of time and may not be “better” than the lower intensities. It will only be used to increase the intensity, when evidence is available that a lower intensity is not enough. This is a critical element of the idea of MTSS-support cannot be increased for all teachers.

### The MTSS Model as an Integrated Professional Development System

As such, delivering teacher PD can be conceptualized as a continuum:

Tier 1 - Universal Professional Learning; Tier 2 - Targeted Support; Tier 3 - Intensive Individualized Coaching



**Figure 2:** MTSS Model for Teachers' Professional Development

The significance of this model is that it relates the amount of professional support to teacher needs. Tier 1 is the minimum level of support and implementation; Tier 2 support is

provided in support of Tier 1 support based on evidence and Tier 3 support is intensive one to one support as required.

However, there is no one standardized model of 3-tiered teacher PD that has been identified from the existing research. Bloomfield et al., (2024) found large differences among tiering, aspects of intervention and decision making. Furthermore, numerous studies have investigated specific areas of PD such as; coaching or collaboration, feedback, or differentiated instruction rather than teachers' perception of a PD system that is three-tiered.

Thus, there is a need for more research to examine teachers' perceptions of an integrated MTSS-based PD model in relation to teachers' pedagogical practices and professional performance. The present study explores teachers' perceptions of Tier 1 universal, Tier 2 targeted, and Tier 3 intensive and individualized PD. In doing so, it provides context-specific evidence concerning the potential of MTSS as a responsive and differentiated system of teacher professional learning.

## **Research Questions**

- RQ1: How frequently do teachers receive professional development support through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at Emirates American School in Sharjah?
- RQ2: To what extent do teachers perceive Tier 1 professional development support as meeting their general professional needs and supporting their understanding of school-wide instructional expectations at Emirates American School in Sharjah?
- RQ3: To what extent do teachers perceive Tier 2 professional development support, including collaborative learning, professional discussion, and feedback, as contributing to their teaching practices and professional growth at Emirates American School in Sharjah?
- RQ4: To what extent do teachers perceive Tier 3 professional development support, including individualized coaching and intensive support, as contributing to their teaching performance and application of pedagogical strategies at Emirates American School in Sharjah?
- RQ5: To what extent do teachers perceive differences among the three MTSS tiers in their contribution to teaching performance and pedagogical practices at Emirates American School in Sharjah?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine teachers' perceptions of professional development support within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at Emirates American School (EAS), Sharjah, UAE.

The study examined the extent to which teachers perceived the three MTSS tiers contributing to their teaching practices, pedagogical practices, and professional performance. A quantitative survey was therefore appropriate for summarizing teachers' reported experiences and identifying response patterns across the three tiers.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

A structured teacher questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data. The questionnaire was sent electronically to teachers at EAS and was designed to gather standardized responses about the frequency and perceived contribution of professional development support through the 3 tiers of MTSS.

### **Sampling Strategy and Participants**

Purposive sampling was used because the study focused on teachers who were directly involved in the professional development and instructional support processes examined. The questionnaire was sent out to all of the 102 teachers at Emirates American School. Sixty-two completed questionnaires were received, giving a return rate of 60.8%.

The participants included different levels of experience, educational qualifications, school level, gender and age group.

### **The development and instrumentation of a questionnaire**

The researcher used the principles and three tiers of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to develop the Teachers' MTSS Professional Development Questionnaire. The instrument was specifically developed for the context of teacher professional development at EAS and kept within the scope of the teachers' perceptions of teacher support at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

### **Characteristics of Participants**

Sixty-two teachers responded to the survey. Most participants were female (80.6%) and 19.4% were male. The age group 30–39 years had the highest number of respondents with 56.5%, and the 40–49-year age group had the second highest number of respondents with 29.0%. In terms of educational qualifications 80.6% had a Bachelor's degree and 17.7% had a Master's degree.

Experienced teachers (more than 10 years) accounted for 53.2% while 27.4% of the educators reported that they had experience between 6 and 10 years. As far as level of education, 51.6% taught in the primary school, 21.0% in the secondary school, 17.7% at KG level, and 9.7% in the middle school.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Completed questionnaires were exported to Microsoft Excel and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' responses and describe teachers' perceptions of the three MTSS tiers.

The study did not measure actual changes in teacher performance, but rather reported perceptions of change; therefore, the findings were interpreted as reported teacher perceptions, and were not intended to be causal statements regarding the impact of MTSS on teacher performance.

In addition to descriptive analysis, the internal consistency and preliminary dimensional structure of the questionnaire were examined. The internal consistency of the 10 Likert scale items was determined by using Cronbach's alpha. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was also performed to determine the underlying structure of the questionnaire and how well the items shared a common construct.

To determine the appropriateness of the correlation matrix for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. The component matrix was examined to identify how the questionnaire items were associated with the extracted component.

### Scale Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the ten items on a 4-point Likert scale. The item-total correlation analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .951; the coefficient indicates high internal consistency among the items (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Reliability Statistics

| Reliability Statistics |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | N of Items |
| .951                   | 10         |

### Suitability for Factor Analysis

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were performed to see whether the data could be used for factor analysis.

The KMO value was .900, indicating adequate sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(45) = 558.904$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the correlation matrix differed significantly from an identity matrix and was suitable for factor analysis (see Table 2).

**Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

| <b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>                   |                    |         |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. |                    | .900    |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity                    | Approx. Chi-Square | 558.904 |
|                                                  | df                 | 45      |
|                                                  | Sig.               | <.001   |

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the preliminary dimensional structure of the 10-item MTSS questionnaire. The analysis revealed each of the 10 items loaded on one component, and all loadings were between .758 and .904.

Items with the highest factor loadings were: Individualized coaching and support and how it is perceived as contributing to teaching effectiveness (.904), Collaborative learning opportunities during Tier 2 support and teaching practices (.893), MTSS and pedagogical practices (.888), MTSS and overall professional performance (.884). The other items were also of relatively high factor loadings which ranged from .758 to .848.

The one-component structure indicates that the 10 items were strongly interrelated and may represent a common underlying dimension of teachers' perceptions of MTSS professional development support. The EFA provides preliminary evidence of a common dimensional structure among the questionnaire items; it should not, by itself, be interpreted as conclusive evidence of construct validity.

The findings are therefore interpreted primarily as teachers' reported perceptions of MTSS professional development support.

**Table 3: Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

| Items                                                                                                              |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 10. Tier 1 professional development addressed my general teaching needs.                                           | .758 |
| 11. Tier 1 support enhanced my understanding of school-wide instructional expectations.                            | .814 |
| 12. Collaborative learning opportunities during Tier 2 support enhanced my teaching practices.                     | .893 |
| 13. The discussion and feedback provided through Tier 2 support contributed to my professional growth.             | .848 |
| 14. Individualized coaching and support significantly improved my teaching performance.                            | .904 |
| 15. Intensive support sessions enabled me to apply pedagogical strategies more effectively.                        | .809 |
| 16. The combination of all three MTSS tiers positively improved my teaching performance.                           | .785 |
| 17. Teachers should be provided with different levels of support based on their professional needs and experience. | .788 |
| 18. MTSS improved my pedagogical practices.                                                                        | .888 |
| 19. MTSS contributed positively to my overall professional performance.                                            | .884 |

## Descriptive Statistics

**Table 4:** Descriptive Statistics

|                                                                                                        | N         | Minimum   | Maximum   | Mean      | Std. Deviation | Skewness  |            | Kurtosis  |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                                                                                                        | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic      | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| 1. Gender:                                                                                             | 62        | 1         | 2         | 1.81      | .398           | -1.590    | .304       | .545      | .599       |
| 2. Age Group:                                                                                          | 62        | 1         | 4         | 2.34      | .723           | .457      | .304       | .185      | .599       |
| 3. Educational Qualification:                                                                          | 62        | 1         | 4         | 1.23      | .525           | 3.023     | .304       | 11.876    | .599       |
| 4. Years of Teaching Experience                                                                        | 62        | 1         | 4         | 3.29      | .894           | -1.042    | .304       | .128      | .599       |
| 5. Grade Level Currently Teaching:                                                                     | 62        | 1         | 4         | 2.34      | 1.007          | .559      | .304       | -.765     | .599       |
| 6. Have you participated in a Multi-Tiered Training Support System (MTSS) program?                     | 62        | 1         | 2         | 1.06      | .248           | 3.634     | .304       | 11.577    | .599       |
| 7. How frequently do you receive support within the MTSS framework?                                    | 62        | 1         | 5         | 4.15      | .973           | -1.405    | .304       | 2.185     | .599       |
| 8. Which MTSS tier had the greatest impact on your teaching performance?                               | 62        | 1         | 3         | 1.87      | .586           | .021      | .304       | -.089     | .599       |
| 9. Which MTSS tier was most effective in improving your pedagogical practices?                         | 62        | 1         | 3         | 2.05      | .688           | -.062     | .304       | -.823     | .599       |
| 10. Tier 1 professional development addressed my general teaching needs.                               | 62        | 1         | 4         | 3.34      | .651           | -.840     | .304       | 1.361     | .599       |
| 11. Tier 1 support enhanced my understanding of school-wide instructional expectations.                | 62        | 2         | 4         | 3.31      | .531           | .161      | .304       | -.638     | .599       |
| 12. Collaborative learning opportunities during Tier 2 support enhanced my teaching practices.         | 62        | 2         | 4         | 3.42      | .588           | -.426     | .304       | -.673     | .599       |
| 13. The discussion and feedback provided through Tier 2 support contributed to my professional growth. | 62        | 2         | 4         | 3.42      | .588           | -.426     | .304       | -.673     | .599       |
| 14. Individualized coaching and support significantly improved my teaching performance.                | 62        | 2         | 4         | 3.47      | .535           | -.201     | .304       | -1.264    | .599       |
| 15. Intensive support sessions enabled me to apply pedagogical strategies more effectively.            | 62        | 2         | 4         | 3.47      | .593           | -.604     | .304       | -.548     | .599       |
| 16. The combination of all three MTSS tiers positively improved my teaching performance.               | 62        | 1         | 4         | 3.35      | .630           | -.849     | .304       | 1.736     | .599       |

|                                                                                                                    |    |   |   |      |      |       |      |        |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|------|------|-------|------|--------|------|
| 17. Teachers should be provided with different levels of support based on their professional needs and experience. | 62 | 2 | 4 | 3.50 | .536 | -.331 | .304 | -1.203 | .599 |
| 18. MTSS improved my pedagogical practices.                                                                        | 62 | 2 | 4 | 3.37 | .607 | -.392 | .304 | -.627  | .599 |
| 19. MTSS contributed positively to my overall professional performance.                                            | 62 | 2 | 4 | 3.45 | .563 | -.373 | .304 | -.846  | .599 |
| Valid N (listwise)                                                                                                 | 62 |   |   |      |      |       |      |        |      |

## Instrument Quality: Content Alignment, Validity, and Reliability

### *Credibility*

A structured questionnaire was developed from the MTSS framework and administered consistently to all participating teachers. It covered Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 professional learning supports and asked teachers to report their perceptions of these supports in relation to pedagogical practices and professional performance.

### *Validity*

The questionnaire items were aligned with the three MTSS professional development tiers to support content alignment with the constructs examined. The KMO value was .900 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(45) = 558.904$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the data were suitable for exploratory factor analysis. All 10 items loaded on one component, with loadings ranging from .758 to .904. These results provide preliminary evidence concerning the dimensional structure of the instrument but do not, on their own, establish construct validity.

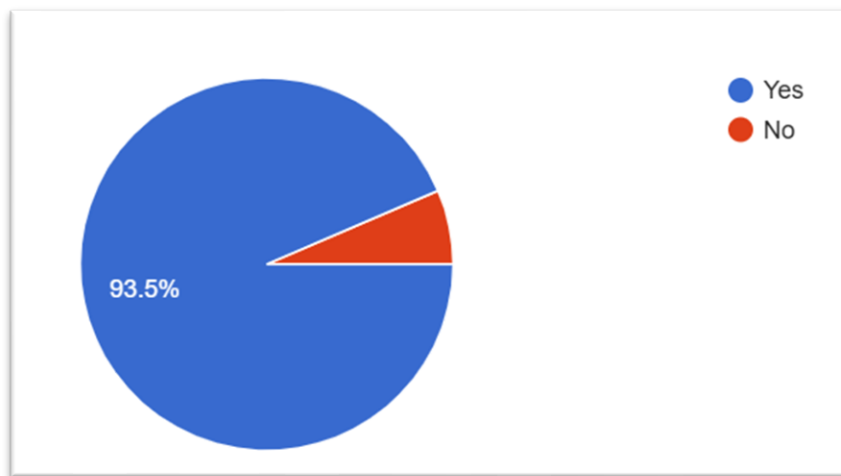
### *Reliability*

The alpha coefficient of the 10-item questionnaire was .951, indicating high internal consistency. This indicates a high level of interrelatedness among the items measuring teachers' perceptions of MTSS professional development support (see Table 1).

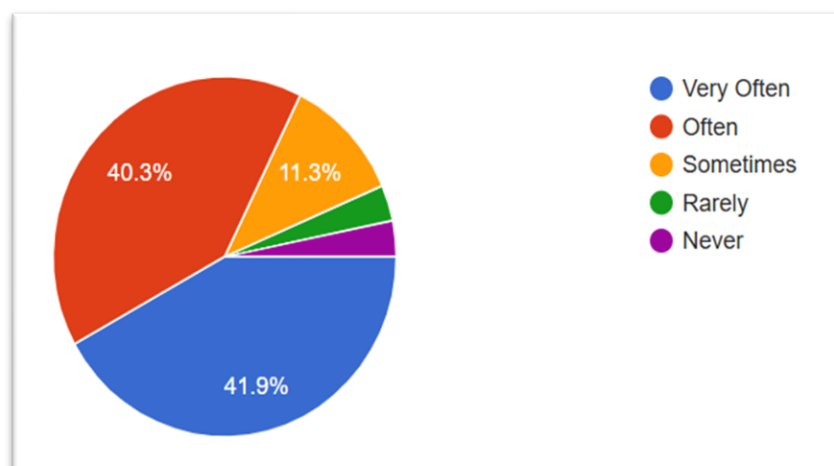
## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The findings are based on the teachers' survey conducted at Emirates American School from 29 May 2026 to 20 June 2026. Results are presented according to the five research questions and are interpreted as teachers' reported perceptions rather than as evidence of causal effects.

According to 41.9% of teachers, they receive MTSS very often. It also indicates that 40.3% of teachers receive the same often, 11.3% of teachers receive the same sometimes and 6.4% of teachers receive the same rarely or never. (see Figures 3 and 4).



**Figure 3:** Provision of MTSS



**Figure 4:** Frequency of MTSS Provision

### Perceptions of Tier 1 Professional Development

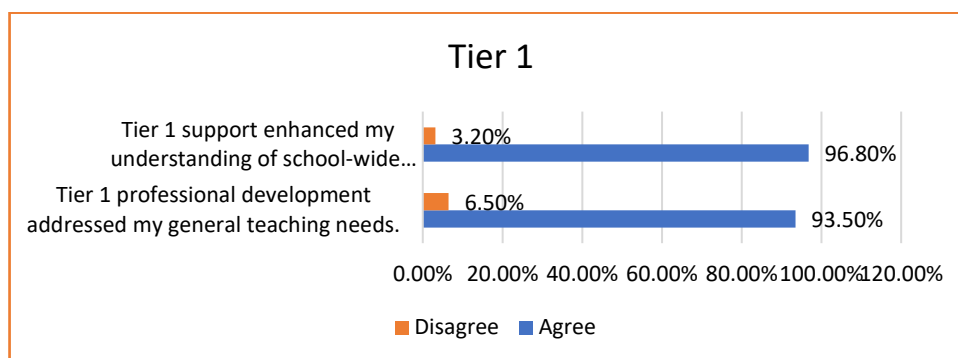
The second research question examined the extent to which teachers perceived Tier 1 professional development support as meeting their general professional needs and supporting their understanding of school-wide instructional expectations.

The survey results show that teachers generally perceived Tier 1 professional development positively. Overall, a large proportion of teachers (93.5%) agreed that Tier 1 professional learning focused on their overall teaching needs while 6.5% disagreed. The responses indicate that teachers generally perceived the professional development as relevant to their teaching needs.

Likewise, 96.8% of the respondents agreed Tier 1 support was perceived to support their understanding of the school-wide instructional expectations and 3.2% disagreed. The high

level of agreement indicates that teachers generally perceived Tier 1 support as useful for clarifying and reinforcing school-wide instructional expectations.

Overall, the responses indicate positive perceptions of Tier 1 professional learning, particularly in relation to general teaching needs and understanding school-wide instructional expectations. (see Figure 5)



**Figure 5: Tier 1 Professional Development**

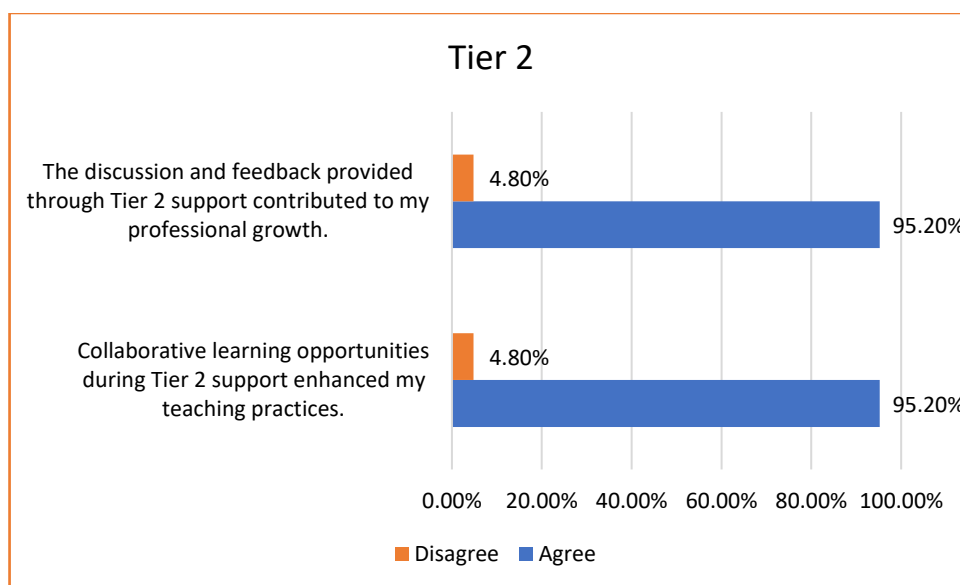
### Perceptions of Tier 2 Professional Development Support

The third research question examined the extent to which teachers perceived Tier 2 professional development support, including collaborative learning, professional discussion, and feedback, as contributing to their teaching practices and professional growth.

The survey results indicate that teachers generally perceived Tier 2 support positively in relation to professional practice and development. 95.2% of respondents responded yes to the question of collaborative learning opportunities during Tier 2 support being perceived as supporting their teaching practice; 4.8% responded no. The responses indicate that teachers perceived collaborative learning as a beneficial aspect of their professional practice.

Similarly, 95.2% of teachers agreed that the discussion and feedback through Tier 2 support facilitated their perceived professional learning, and 4.8% disagreed. The responses suggest that teachers perceived the dialogue and feedback as supportive of reflection and professional development.

Overall, the findings indicated that Tier 2 support is perceived positively in regard to collaborative learning, teaching practice and teachers' lifelong learning. (see Figure 6)



**Figure 6: Tier 2 Professional Development**

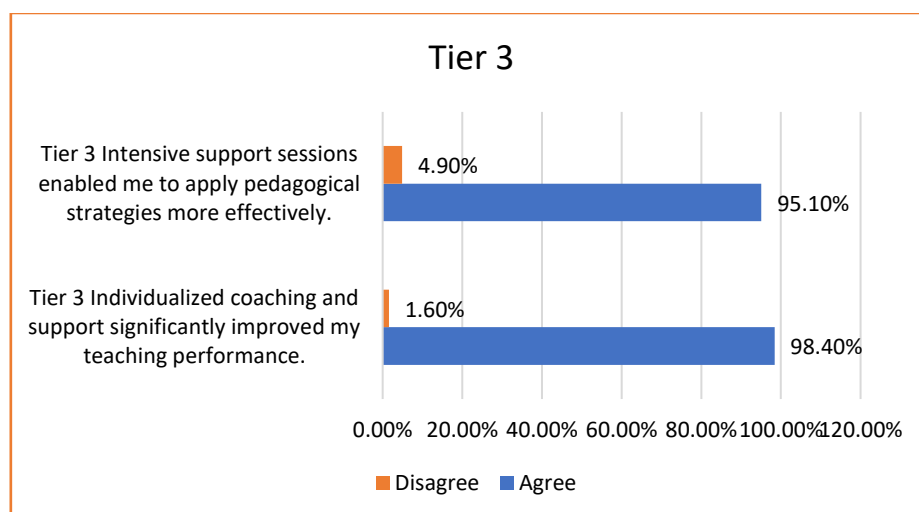
### Perceptions of Tier 3 Professional Development Support

The fourth research question examined the extent to which teachers perceived Tier 3 professional development support, including individualized coaching and intensive support, as contributing to their teaching performance and application of pedagogical strategies.

Teachers generally perceived individualized training and support (Tier 3) positively. Almost all respondents (98.4%) agreed that individualized coaching and support contributed to their teaching, while 1.6% disagreed. The responses indicate that teachers perceived individual coaching as supportive of their professional needs and practice.

In the same way, 95.1% of the respondents agreed that Tier 3 intensive support sessions were perceived as helping them use pedagogical strategies more effectively, with 4.9% disagreeing. That is, the intensive and focused Tier 3 support was seen as supporting the application of professional learning in the classroom and teachers' pedagogical practice.

Overall, the responses indicate positive perceptions of Tier 3 support in relation to teaching performance and application of pedagogical strategies, with more than 95% agreement on both items. (see Figure 7)



**Figure 7: Tier 3 Professional Development**

### Teachers' Perceptions of MTSS Professional Development Support

The fifth research question examined the extent to which teachers perceived differences among the three MTSS tiers in their contribution to teaching performance and pedagogical practices.

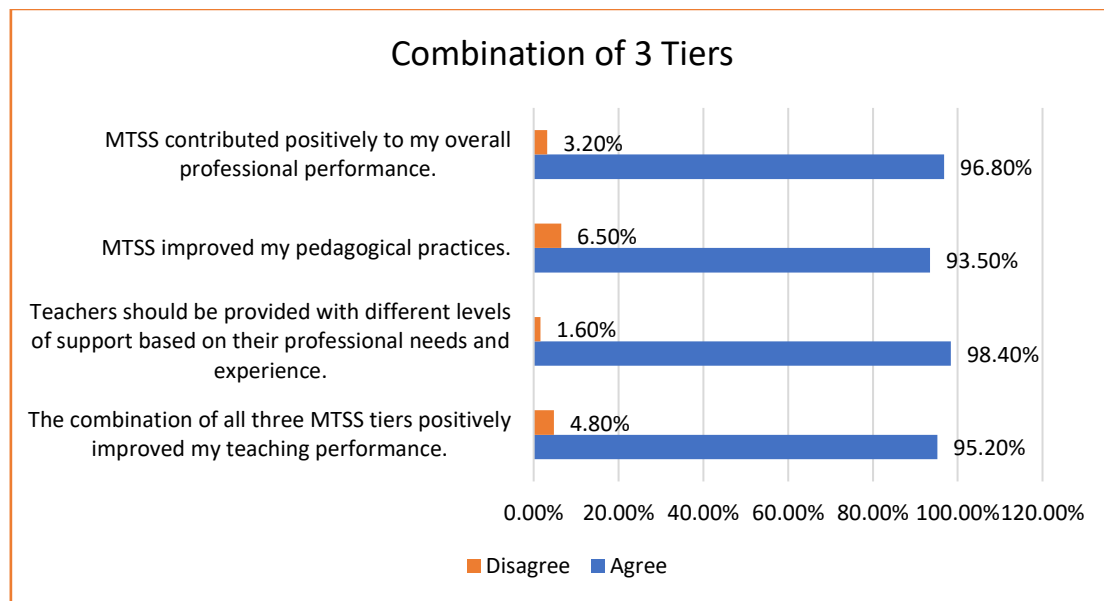
Overall, 95.2% agreed that the combination of all three MTSS tiers contributed positively to their perceived teaching performance, while 4.8% disagreed. This means that the integrated support of providing different levels of support was seen as supporting teachers' teaching.

The highest level of agreement (98.4%) was for providing teachers with different levels of support based on their professional needs and experience. Only 1.6% disagreed. This finding indicates that teachers are very aware of the need for professional learning to be individualized, based on their experiences and needs.

Also, 93.5% of respondents agreed that MTSS contributed to their pedagogical practices, while 6.5% disagreed. This implies that the multi-layered support system was seen as positive concerning teachers' instructional, pedagogical and other strategies.

Finally, 96.8% agreed that MTSS contributed positively to their overall professional performance, while 3.2% disagreed. Overall, agreement rates were very high (93.5% to 98.4% for each item), indicating that teachers have positive perceptions of MTSS.

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers perceived the tiered professional support model positively in relation to teaching practices, pedagogical practices, and professional development. (see Figure 8)

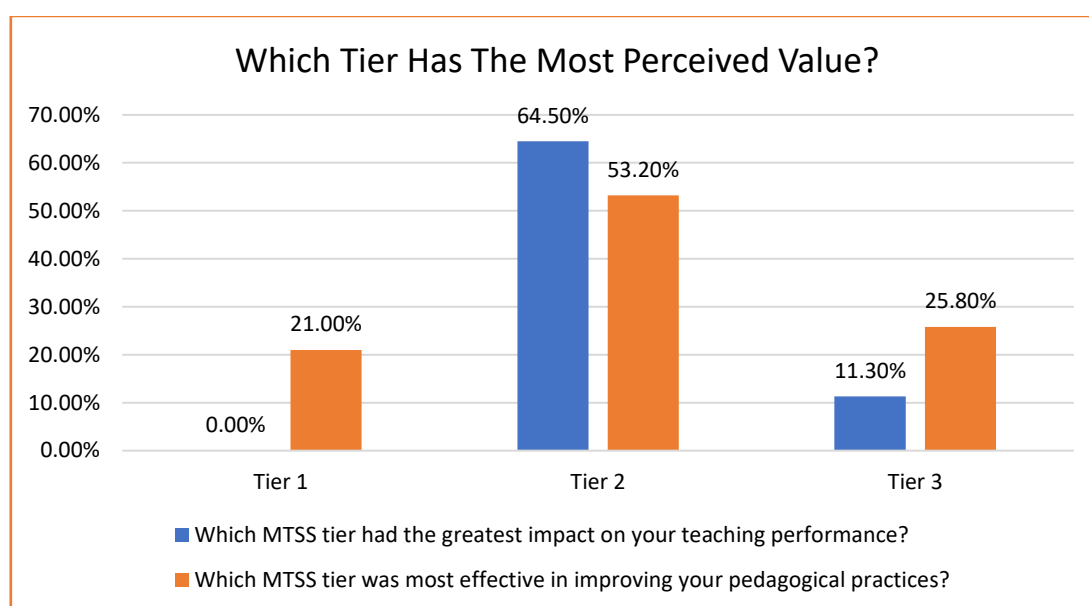


**Figure 8: Combined MTSS Tiers**

The results indicate that Tier 2 was the tier most frequently selected by teachers when asked which tier had the greatest perceived contribution to teaching performance and pedagogical practices. Regarding teaching performance, 64.5% of the respondents rated Tier 2 as the best tier, Tier 1 24.2% and Tier 3 11.3%. This pattern may reflect teachers' perceptions of the collaborative and targeted nature of Tier 2 support; however, the present study does not establish why respondents selected Tier 2.

This was true for pedagogical practices as well, as 53.2% indicated Tier 2 as most effective tier, Tier 3 25.8%, and Tier 1 21.0%. The higher percentage selecting Tier 3 rather than Tier 2 (pedagogical improvement) suggests teachers felt that personalized and intensive intervention was important and that they wanted to work on improving certain pedagogical strategies.

Overall, Tier 2 was the most frequently selected tier for perceived contribution to teaching performance and pedagogical practices. But the findings also suggest that the differentiated MTSS model is valued: a significant number of teachers felt Tier 1 and Tier 3 were the best options, suggesting that the intensity of the professional support delivered to an individual teacher should be aligned with their needs. (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** Tier with the Greatest Perceived Contribution

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that teachers generally perceived the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) professional development approach positively and viewed it as supportive of their pedagogical and professional practices. Data for all three tiers are positive indicators for providing professional learning in a continuum of supports not a "one size fits all" approach.

Based on Tier 1 findings, it is reasonable to conclude that teachers felt that universal professional learning was offering a common base and shared expectations for effective teaching and learning instruction. This pattern is consistent with literature emphasizing the importance of professional learning that develops teachers' knowledge and skills for day-to-day practice (Sims et al., 2025). Likewise, Bloomfield et al. (2024) reported that professional learning in the universal or group-based tier was the foundation of Tier 1 in responsive and tiered professional learning models.

The Tier 2 findings suggest that structured, focused support may be a useful component of a professional learning environment. Through collaborative learning, professional discussion and constructive feedback, there are opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice and to share experiences and receive guidance. This is consistent with a recent body of literature which suggests that a process of professional development is more likely to be successful if teachers have opportunities to practice and refine their skills as teachers, and are supported in the process of applying their new skills to their work at school (Sims et al., 2025). The findings also support the findings of Bloomfield et al. (2024) who emphasized the need for universal professional development and responsive and targeted support to educators' needs.

The percentages of teachers that reported Tier 2 making the greatest perceived contribution may indicate a specific need to have collaborative and targeted professional learning, which would give teachers additional support, but not as demanding as Tier 3.

Teachers can learn from peers, have professional conversations, get feedback and put what they've learned into practice while staying in touch with the larger standards of instruction from Tier 1.

The Tier 3 results indicate a perceived benefit of personalized professional development among respondents who reported receiving this form of support. There is a relatively high level of agreement for this, and support for the concept of professional development being responsive to individual needs. While there may be a few different challenges for teachers to implement the strategies into their instruction, individual coaching can provide direct guidance with a good connection to teachers' practice. The discovery is consistent with Bloomfield et al. (2024), who found that the higher levels of responsive professional development are characterized by more intense and individualized PD, such as coaching, performance feedback and individualized support based on professional needs. Likewise, Sims et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of scaffolding teachers in the use and adoption of effective practices into their practice.

The survey responses concerning all three tiers support the conceptualization of MTSS as an integrated approach to professional development. The findings are consistent with the principle that teachers may have different professional support needs. Professional development could be universal to help create a common foundation, additional professional development could be targeted to address the extra professional needs, and intensive individualized coaching could provide more help and support if necessary. Results show that the three levels are not separate interventions, but can be considered as part of a larger professional development system.

This is consistent with Bloomfield et al. (2024) in their systematic review who identified a progressive model with increasing and increasingly targeted and individualised professional support across the three tiers. The results also align with more recent research that indicates that professional development can be more effective in promoting teacher learning when it involves active learning, technique development, technique implementation, feedback, and continued support by teachers (Kahmann et al., 2022; Sims et al., 2025).

These findings are in line with the findings of Bloomfield et al. (2024) in their systematic review which revealed that there is a continuum of increasing professional support in the 3 tiers. The results also align with recent research that shows that professional learning is may be more supportive of teachers' practices if it allows them to learn through engagement, practice, feedback, and continued support of their professional learning.

The overall findings provide a context-specific example of how the MTSS framework may be organized for teacher professional development. Tier 1 universal, Tier 2 targeted, and Tier 3 is intensive individual coaching. They form a responsive continuum recognising the diversity of teacher needs as professionals and provide multiple pathways to professional learning.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was drawn from a single school and was selected purposively, with 62 completed responses from 102 teachers; therefore, the findings should not be generalized beyond the study context without further evidence. Second, the study used self-reported perceptions collected at one point in time, which may be influenced by recall or social desirability and cannot establish causal effects of MTSS on teacher performance. Third, the study did not include objective measures such as lesson observations, classroom performance indicators, or pre- and post-intervention comparisons. Finally, the questionnaire was developed for this study, and the reported reliability and EFA results provide evidence of internal consistency and preliminary dimensional structure but do not by themselves establish full construct validity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teachers perceived the three-tiered MTSS professional development model positively and reported that it supported their teaching performance and pedagogical practices. The findings suggest that teachers valued different levels of support and perceived the professional development approach as responsive to varying professional needs.

Tier 1 provided teachers with a general teaching needs training that was seen as reinforcing teachers' understanding of school-wide expectations for teaching, in a universal way, and was positively perceived by teachers. The findings support maintaining Tier 1 as a foundational component of EAS's professional development system. Professional development for Tier 1 activities should be consistent with school priorities, teachers' common needs, curriculum expectations, and evidence-based pedagogical practices.

At Tier 2, the findings showed the significance of collaborative learning, professional discussion and feedback. The findings support continued development of specific professional learning opportunities, particularly because Tier 2 was the most frequently selected tier for perceived contribution to teaching and pedagogical practice. These might be professional learning communities, collaborative planning, peer learning, focused workshops, mentoring, focused discussion and feedback sessions. These can provide teachers an opportunity to reflect on their teaching and request help more appropriate to their teaching needs.

Teachers perceived individual coaching and intensive support positively in Tier 3 and reported that these supports helped them apply pedagogical strategies more effectively. EAS might therefore wish to continue with a well-managed system of individual teacher professional support for those teachers who require more intensive support. This support may include classroom observation, instructional coaching, action plans, demonstration of effective practice, feedback and practice and reflection time.

The results also indicate that it is crucial to keep the three tiers together as a unified system instead of as individual professional development programs. Transitions between tiers should be based on a body of evidence regarding teachers' professional needs, instructional practices, and reactions to the previous tier. EAS might be able to set up clear procedures around identifying when teachers might need extra focused or intensive support. Importantly,

a teacher's movement from tier to tier should be considered as a responsive process of professional growth and not as an end state of classification.

EAS teachers perceived MTSS positively as a model that acknowledges that professional development is not the same for all teachers. In particular, a responsive system that supports universal learning for all, targeted support when needed, and intensive individual coaching when required can help foster a culture of continuous professional learning. However, since the paper examines only EAS teachers' perceptions of MTSS, a suggested next study could monitor the impact of MTSS on teachers' performance using systematic data from lesson observations. Observation evidence collected before and after MTSS implementation could offer more objective evidence of changes in instructional practice, pedagogical strategies, and classroom implementation, and may complement the self-reported findings of the present study.

Overall, the findings indicate that the MTSS approach was positively perceived by participating teachers as a differentiated and responsive model for professional development. The results indicate that there is a need for the school to not be just "one size fits all" when it comes to professional development but rather to implement a more systematic approach to continuous PD, with appropriate supports in place at the right time.

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