

SCHOOL OF LIFE FOUNDATION

Architecture of Grace • Master Documents Series

MTSS CROSSWALK

How the Architecture of Grace Aligns with the Multi-Tiered System of Supports

An Alignment Statement for AoG, Not a Comprehensive MTSS Manual

DOCUMENT 6 OF THE MASTER DOCUMENTS SERIES

MTSS Coordinator Edition

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CONFIDENTIAL • FOR DISTRICT REVIEW AND MTSS TEAM USE

A Note to the MTSS Coordinator

This document is written for a specific reader: the district MTSS coordinator, the school-based MTSS team lead, the school psychologist responsible for SEL/behavioral supports alignment, or the curriculum director responsible for ensuring that adopted programs interface coherently with the district's tiered supports system. It is not written for the senior reviewer of Document 2 (Master K–12 Architecture) or the clinical reviewer of Document 5 (Trauma-Informed Practice Statement). Its register is technical and operational.

MTSS for academics is well-codified. MTSS for SEL and behavior is less well-codified — districts vary widely in how they conceptualize Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEL supports, what universal screening looks like for SEL, and how data-based decision-making operates outside the academic context. This document does not attempt to resolve that variation. It documents the Architecture of Grace's Tier 1 alignment in detail, then provides guidance on how Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports should interface with the framework — recognizing that Tier 2 and Tier 3 content remains appropriately district-specific.

How to Read This Document

Eleven chapters. Read in order if you are evaluating AoG for adoption. Skip to Chapter 6 if you are configuring an MTSS team's response to AoG already adopted. Use Chapter 11 as the working alignment summary for ongoing implementation review.

Three Things This Document Is Not

- It is not a comprehensive MTSS manual. Districts have those, calibrated to their state regulations, their particular tiered systems, and their data infrastructures. This document interfaces with those manuals; it does not replace them.
- It is not a behavior-management curriculum crosswalk. The Architecture of Grace is an SEL framework, not a positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) program. Where the two overlap (regulation skills, repair protocols, restorative practices), the overlap is named explicitly. Where they do not overlap (token economies, behavior contingencies, function-based behavior support), the framework defers to the district's existing PBIS or behavioral supports system.
- It is not a Tier 2 or Tier 3 specification. The framework is a Tier 1 universal program. Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEL supports remain district-specific. This document specifies the interface — how Tier 1 AoG hands off to district Tier 2 and Tier 3 — not the content of those tiers.

MTSS is not a curriculum. MTSS is the institutional architecture districts use to organize how all student supports — academic, behavioral, social-emotional — fit together. This

document documents how the Architecture of Grace fits into that architecture as the Tier 1 universal SEL component.

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Chapter 1 • MTSS in Brief

The working vocabulary

This chapter is for readers who need a brief refresher on MTSS terminology before reading the alignment chapters. Readers operating fluently in MTSS practice may skip to Chapter 2.

The Three-Tier Structure

MTSS organizes student supports into three tiers, defined by the proportion of students they serve and the intensity of support they provide:

Tier 1 • Universal	Approximately 80% of students. Core instruction and universal supports delivered to every student in the building. Designed to be effective for the typical learner without additional supports. The Architecture of Grace is delivered as Tier 1 universal SEL — every student in every grade band receives the calibrated 28-lesson curriculum.
Tier 2 • Targeted	Approximately 10–15% of students. Small-group, supplemental supports for students who require more than Tier 1 but less than intensive intervention. Often delivered by school counselors, social workers, or specialized SEL personnel. Tier 2 SEL content varies widely across districts.
Tier 3 • Intensive	Approximately 5% of students. Individualized, intensive interventions — often delivered by clinical professionals (school psychologists, licensed therapists) and frequently extending into community mental health partnerships. Tier 3 supports are typically clinical in nature and exceed the scope of any classroom curriculum.

The Five MTSS Components

Beyond the three tiers, MTSS is operationalized through five interlocking components. The framework's alignment with each is documented in subsequent chapters:

Universal Screening	Brief, periodic assessment of all students to identify those who may need additional support. AoG includes pre/post self-report instruments and observational tools; districts typically supplement with validated SEL screeners (DESSA-3, BASC-3 BESS). Documented in Chapter 4.
Tiered Instruction & Intervention	Tier 1 universal instruction (the AoG curriculum), Tier 2 targeted small-group supports (district-specific), Tier 3 intensive intervention (typically clinical and outside framework scope). Documented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Progress Monitoring	Ongoing assessment of student response to instruction and intervention. The framework's Teacher Reflection, Family Engagement Survey, and pre/post pilot instruments contribute. Validated supplementary instruments (DESSA-3) provide the more frequent monitoring MTSS typically requires. Documented in Chapter 5.
Data-Based Decision-Making	MTSS team review of student data to determine response, escalation, or de-escalation across tiers. Documented in Chapter 9.
Fidelity of Implementation	Ensuring that what is delivered matches what was designed. AoG includes specific fidelity instruments (Teacher Reflection, walk-through protocols). Documented in Chapter 8.

MTSS for SEL • Why It Differs from MTSS for Academics

MTSS for academics has decades of operational maturity. MTSS for SEL is younger and operates under specific constraints:

- SEL outcomes are slower to manifest than academic outcomes. A student's response to SEL instruction may take a full year to surface meaningfully — unlike reading or math fluency, where weekly progress monitoring produces interpretable data.
- SEL self-report instruments carry distinctive measurement challenges. Students with significant interior dysregulation may underreport or overreport in patterns that complicate interpretation.
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEL supports often blur into clinical territory in ways Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic supports do not. This is why the framework defers Tier 2 content specification to districts and defers Tier 3 entirely to clinical professionals.
- MTSS for SEL is more politically sensitive than MTSS for academics. Districts vary in how they discuss SEL with families, what data they share, and what consent structures they require. The framework's PPRA-compliant family communication is calibrated for this reality.

Chapter 2 • The Architecture of Grace as a Tier 1 Universal Program

The Architecture of Grace is delivered as a Tier 1 universal SEL program. Every student in every grade band receives the same calibrated curriculum — 28 lessons across four units (Identity • Self-Compassion • Empathy & Forgiving Others • Grace), delivered across the school year. This chapter documents how the framework operates within Tier 1 specifications and what makes it specifically a universal program rather than a targeted intervention.

What Makes a Program Tier 1

MTSS specifications for Tier 1 universal programs require five characteristics. The framework meets all five:

1. Delivered to all students	Every student in every grade band receives AoG. No screening for eligibility. No opt-in based on need. The framework is universal in delivery, not selective.
2. Designed for the typical learner	Calibrated to age-appropriate developmental milestones. The lesson architecture (Opening Ritual → relational engagement → direct instruction → application → reflection → bridge) is designed for typical adolescent and child cognition, not for clinical populations.
3. Delivered by general education staff	Classroom teachers deliver AoG. Counselors support delivery (briefing, on-site for ★/★★ lessons, consultation) but do not deliver curriculum content as their primary role. This distinguishes AoG from Tier 2 targeted SEL programs delivered by counselors directly.
4. Embedded in core instructional time	AoG lessons run during the standard school day in protected blocks. They are not pull-out programming. They are not before-school or after-school enrichment. They are core curriculum.
5. Designed to prevent rather than remediate	AoG builds foundational interior architecture before clinical interventions are needed. Its primary mode is preventive — building shame resilience, regulation vocabulary, repair skills, and grace as practiced postures across thirteen years.

What Tier 1 AoG Does NOT Try to Do

Tier 1 universal programs operate at universal scope. The framework explicitly defers the following to Tier 2 or Tier 3:

- Targeted small-group SEL intervention. Students who require more than universal support receive it through district-specific Tier 2 mechanisms. AoG's Tier 1 lessons are not adapted into small-group interventions.
- Individualized behavioral support planning. Students who require behavior support plans receive them through the district's PBIS or behavior team, not through curriculum modification.
- Clinical intervention. Students who require clinical support receive it from licensed clinical professionals — school psychologists, social workers in clinical roles, community mental health partners. AoG's help-seeking protocol (taught explicitly in Book 5 U2 L3) is the framework's bridge to Tier 3 clinical care.
- Crisis response. AoG's Disclosure Protocol routes acute concerns immediately to clinical professionals, not to AoG instruction.

The Universal Posture • Why It Matters

The framework's Tier 1 universal posture is an institutional commitment, not a structural accident. Three reasons:

First, the developmental work the framework does — building shame resilience, regulation vocabulary, repair skills — is work all students benefit from, not work specifically targeted at students with identified need. Targeting the work would imply that students without identified need do not require interior architecture, which is empirically and clinically false.

Second, universal delivery prevents stigma. Students who would otherwise be flagged for SEL intervention because of family situation, behavioral history, or visible distress are not differentiated. Every student receives the curriculum. The student processing a family loss sits next to the student preparing for a college visit, both doing the same lesson.

Third, the compounding effect of the K–12 architecture (documented in Document 2 Chapter 2) requires universal delivery to operate as designed. A program that delivers Books 4 and 5 only to identified students cannot produce the thirteen-year compounding the architecture is built for.

Tier 1 universal SEL is the framework's institutional commitment that interior architecture is universal infrastructure — not targeted intervention. Every student needs the vocabulary. Every student needs the regulation skills. Every student needs the practiced postures of self-compassion, charitable interpretation, and grace. The framework's universal delivery is the operational expression of that commitment.

Chapter 3 • CASEL Alignment Documented at Every Grade Band

MTSS-aligned SEL programs are typically expected to demonstrate alignment with the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework — the most widely adopted institutional standard for SEL in U.S. K–12 education. The framework's CASEL alignment is documented at every grade band; this chapter consolidates the alignment as a single reference for MTSS team review.

CASEL's Five Core Competencies

CASEL identifies five core SEL competencies. The Architecture of Grace builds all five across thirteen years:

Self-Awareness	Recognizing one's own emotions, thoughts, values, and how they influence behavior across contexts. AoG primary alignment: the Identity Strand (documented in Document 1) — Identity Web (K–2) → Identity Web Recapitulated (3–5) → Owning Your Narrative (6–8) → Identity Shield (9–10) → Compass of Integrity (11–12).
Self-Management	Managing emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. AoG primary alignment: the Self-Compassion Strand and the Regulation & Repair Strand — Inner Coach work, Window of Tolerance, Recovery Arc, Compassionate Witness practice, the five Strand Touchpoints in Books 4 and 5.
Social Awareness	Understanding the perspectives of and empathizing with others, including from diverse backgrounds and cultures. AoG primary alignment: the Empathy Strand — Why People Hurt People, Impact vs. Intent, Three Sides of Every Story, Charitable Interpretation, Contextual Empathy, Global Empathy.
Relationship Skills	Establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups. AoG primary alignment: the Forgiveness Strand and the Grace Strand — the Repair Protocol, Forgiveness vs. Trust vs. Reconciliation, the Boundary of Peace, Calling In vs. Calling Out, Grace Culture, the Class Legacy.
Responsible Decision-Making	Making caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. AoG alignment is distributed across all six content strands — the Agency of Choice (6–8), the Integrity Anchor (9–10), the Compass of Integrity (11–12), the Living Amend, the Mentor Path.

CASEL Alignment by Grade Band

The framework's grade-band books each declare primary and secondary CASEL alignment. The alignment is concentrated rather than diffuse — most lessons advance two or three competencies meaningfully rather than touching all five superficially.

GRADE BAND	PRIMARY CASEL EMPHASIS	SECONDARY EMPHASIS
K-2 (Book 1)	Self-Awareness · Self-Management	Social Awareness · Relationship Skills
3-5 (Book 2)	Self-Awareness · Self-Management	Relationship Skills (Repair Protocol)
6-8 (Book 3)	Self-Awareness · Social Awareness	Self-Management (Internal Critic) · Relationship Skills (Letter of Release)
9-10 (Book 4)	Self-Awareness · Self-Management	Relationship Skills (Boundary of Peace) · Responsible Decision-Making
11-12 (Book 5)	Responsible Decision-Making · Relationship Skills	All five competencies integrated

CASEL Indicators Within Lessons

Each lesson's master document specifies CASEL indicators. The framework declares specifically which competency-level outcomes the lesson advances — not just which broad competency. This level of specification is required for Tier 1 universal SEL programs seeking CASEL alignment recognition.

MTSS coordinators reviewing AoG for adoption should expect to find, in each lesson's master document, a specific 'CASEL Alignment' section naming the competency-level outcomes addressed. This is operational specification, not aspirational alignment.

Note: CASEL alignment is conceptual, not certified. The framework has not been formally reviewed by CASEL. Districts seeking CASEL-certified programs should verify CASEL's current SAFE Program Guide listings; AoG is not currently on those listings, as the framework is in pilot phase.

Chapter 4 • Universal Screening

What AoG includes and where it defers

MTSS requires brief, periodic universal screening of all students to identify those who may need additional support. SEL screening is less mature than academic screening; districts vary widely in their implementation. This chapter documents what AoG includes natively, what AoG explicitly defers, and what supplementary instruments are recommended for districts seeking comprehensive SEL screening alongside AoG implementation.

What AoG Includes Natively

The framework includes three native instruments that contribute to universal screening:

Pre/Post Self-Report Instrument	Administered at the start and end of every grade-band year. Twenty items calibrated to grade-band developmental level, covering vocabulary recognition, distinction holding (guilt/shame, forgiveness/trust), and self-reported regulation skill use. Disclosed as AI-developed and unvalidated working drafts for the pilot year.
Teacher Observation Form	Completed by the delivering teacher at three points across the year (end of Unit 1, mid-year, end of year). Captures teacher observation of student engagement patterns, vocabulary uptake, and regulation skill use during lessons. Not a student-rating instrument; it is a delivery-quality instrument with student-pattern observation embedded.
Family Engagement Survey	Administered to families twice annually. Captures family observation of vocabulary use at home, family-level engagement with Family Grace Audits, and family-perceived shifts in student interior life. Voluntary; non-response is non-punitive.

What These Instruments Are NOT Designed to Do

- They are not designed to identify students for clinical referral. The instruments are not psychometrically calibrated for that purpose. The Disclosure Protocol (documented in Document 5 Chapter 6 and this document Chapter 10) is the framework's mechanism for identifying students who may require clinical attention.
- They are not designed to predict trauma history. SEL screening instruments that claim to identify trauma-affected students risk both false positives (stigmatizing students who do not require additional

support) and false negatives (missing students whose trauma is not captured by the screener's specific items).

- They are not designed to drive Tier 2 placement decisions. Tier 2 placement should be made based on multiple data sources reviewed by the MTSS team, not based on AoG's native instruments alone.

Recommended Validated Supplementary Instruments

Districts seeking psychometrically validated SEL screening alongside AoG implementation are directed to validated instruments. Document 2 Chapter 9 provides the full list; the following are most relevant for MTSS universal screening purposes:

DESSA-3	Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (3rd edition). K–12, teacher-rated, 40 items, ESSA-evidence-based. Measures strengths and protective factors aligned with CASEL competencies. Most commonly adopted SEL universal screener in U.S. K–12. Three administrations per year typical.
SSIS-SEL	Social Skills Improvement System — SEL Edition. K–12, both teacher and student-report, CASEL-aligned. More comprehensive than DESSA-3 but more time-intensive.
BASC-3 BESS	Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3). K–12, brief universal screener (25–30 items). Identifies students at elevated risk for behavioral and emotional problems. Used widely in MTSS universal screening for behavior.
Neff SCS-SF	Self-Compassion Scale, Short Form. Grades 7–12, validated. Specifically calibrated to the self-compassion construct that is central to AoG's most clinically important work. Recommended for districts with capacity for one targeted scale.

Universal Screening Recommendations

For districts implementing AoG with full MTSS universal screening:

- Three administrations per year of a validated screener (typically DESSA-3) for all students K–12.
- AoG's pre/post self-report at year-start and year-end as supplementary data.
- AoG's Teacher Observation Form three times per year as fidelity data.
- AoG's Family Engagement Survey twice per year as triangulation data.

This combination provides the validated screening MTSS requires alongside AoG-specific data that the validated instruments do not capture (vocabulary uptake, distinction holding, regulation skill use).

Chapter 5 • Progress Monitoring

The framework's data architecture

MTSS requires ongoing progress monitoring — periodic assessment of student response to instruction. Academic MTSS often uses weekly or biweekly monitoring; SEL MTSS typically operates at quarterly or trimester intervals because SEL outcomes manifest more slowly than academic outcomes. This chapter documents the framework's progress monitoring architecture.

The Three Monitoring Channels

AoG operates three progress monitoring channels in parallel:

Channel 1 • Lesson-Level Reflection

Every framework lesson includes a Teacher Reflection prompt completed within 24 hours of delivery. The Reflection captures: lesson fidelity (did all components occur as designed), student engagement patterns (high engagement, neutral, low engagement, refusal), notable student responses, and any concerns warranting counselor follow-up.

Lesson-level Reflections accumulate into unit-level patterns. The MTSS team has access to pattern-level data (e.g., "30% of students showed disengagement in Unit 2 Lesson 3") but not individual student-level Reflection content unless specifically flagged.

Channel 2 • Unit Transition Assessment

At each of the four unit transitions per grade-band year, students complete a brief Unit Reflection (3–5 items, age-calibrated). The Unit Reflection captures self-reported vocabulary use, self-reported skill application, and one open-ended carry-forward intention for the next unit. The instrument is private; aggregate patterns are reviewed but individual content is not collected for grading.

Channel 3 • Year-Level Pre/Post

The Year-Level Pre/Post (administered at year-start and year-end) provides the framework's primary outcome data at the cohort level. Pre/Post comparison is the framework's most institutional progress indicator. The instrument is disclosed as AI-developed and unvalidated for the pilot year; validation is part of the multi-year evidence pathway documented in Document 11.

Cohort-Level vs. Individual-Level Data

MTSS progress monitoring traditionally generates individual-level data — each student's response to instruction tracked over time. The framework operates differently:

- Cohort-level data (aggregate patterns across a class or grade) is collected, reviewed, and used for fidelity and program-quality decisions.
- Individual-level data is collected only at year-level Pre/Post (not lesson-level or unit-level). Individual journal content is never collected. Individual disclosure history is maintained by counselors, not by the MTSS team.
- Tier 2 placement decisions, when needed, are made by the MTSS team using the validated supplementary instruments (DESSA-3 or equivalent) — not from AoG's individual-level data.

This approach is institutionally specific to AoG. The framework's commitment to journal privacy and the never-collected status of personal artifacts (Identity Web, Identity Shield, Compass of Integrity, Backpack Audit) means that individual-level monitoring of those artifacts is structurally impossible. The framework treats this as a feature, not a limitation: a journal the institution owns is a journal the student edits for the institution.

Progress Monitoring Cadence

Recommended cadence for districts implementing AoG with MTSS-standard progress monitoring:

Lesson-level (weekly)	Teacher Reflection completed within 24 hours of each lesson. Aggregate review at unit transitions.
Unit-level (4x/year)	Student Unit Reflection completed at each unit transition. Aggregate patterns reviewed by MTSS team.
Quarter or trimester	MTSS team review of validated supplementary instrument data (DESSA-3 typically). Individual-level patterns reviewed.
Year-level (2x/year)	AoG Pre/Post at start and end of year. Family Engagement Survey at mid-year and year-end.
Multi-year (annual)	Cohort-level outcome trajectory review. Multi-year cohort comparisons begin at Year 3 of implementation.

What Progress Monitoring Cannot Tell You

Three limits the framework explicitly acknowledges:

- Progress monitoring cannot tell you whether a student is doing the deepest interior work of the framework. Some of that work is, by design, private. The Identity Shield in a student's journal is not collected; the Letter of Release is not read; the Compass of Integrity travels with the student into adulthood. The work happens; the data does not.

- Progress monitoring can produce false-negative results for trauma-affected students who suppress self-report data, mask interior states, or develop sophisticated coping that does not appear in screener responses. Validated instruments mitigate this; they do not eliminate it.
- Progress monitoring cannot tell you whether the framework is working in the long-term sense the framework cares about — the Grade-12 mastery indicators documented in Document 1. Those indicators manifest at adult thresholds, not at quarterly check-ins.

Chapter 6 • The Tier 1 to Tier 2 Interface

Recognizing the threshold

The transition point between Tier 1 universal AoG and Tier 2 targeted SEL support is one of the most institutionally consequential interfaces in the MTSS system. This chapter documents how a school recognizes that a student needs more than Tier 1 universal support, what the appropriate hand-off looks like, and what the framework expects from Tier 2 in return.

Tier 1 to Tier 2 Indicators

A student may benefit from Tier 2 SEL support — supplementing rather than replacing AoG's Tier 1 universal delivery — when one or more of the following patterns appears:

Sustained Disengagement	The student consistently disengages from AoG lessons across multiple units. Disengagement is differentiated from opt-out (which is institutionally protected via the Reflection Pass) — disengagement is sustained non-engagement without active opt-out, often accompanied by visible disconnection from the classroom community.
Validated Screener Elevation	DESSA-3, BASC-3 BESS, or equivalent validated screener indicates elevated need across multiple administrations. Single-administration elevations alone are not sufficient — MTSS specification requires pattern over time.
Disclosure Pattern	The student has had two or more Type 2 disclosures (within normal range but personal share) across the year, suggesting Tier 1 universal support is not sufficient to meet the student's needs.
Family-Reported Concern	The Family Engagement Survey or direct family communication identifies sustained interior struggle that AoG vocabulary alone is not addressing.
Teacher Observation Pattern	The Teacher Observation Form across three administrations indicates patterns that warrant additional support — withdrawn engagement, signs of regulation difficulty during routine instruction, or apparent struggle to access AoG vocabulary in real-life situations.
Cumulative Multi-Source	No single indicator above is dispositive. The MTSS team's decision to move a student from Tier 1 to Tier 2 supplementation should be based on at least three of these sources triangulated, not on any single source alone.

What Tier 2 Should Look Like Alongside AoG

The framework cannot specify the content of district Tier 2 SEL programming — that is appropriately district-specific. The framework can specify what Tier 2 should NOT do:

- Tier 2 should not replace Tier 1 AoG. Students in Tier 2 SEL support continue receiving AoG's universal lessons. Tier 2 supplements; it does not substitute.
- Tier 2 should not contradict the framework's commitments. A Tier 2 program that requires forgiveness, that violates journal privacy, or that operates outside trauma-informed practice will work against AoG's Tier 1 architecture.
- Tier 2 should not adopt the framework's metaphors as borrowed therapeutic content. The Heavy Backpack, the Mask vs. Mirror, the Compassionate Witness — these are framework-specific metaphor systems calibrated to specific developmental moments. A Tier 2 small-group counselor borrowing these metaphors without their full contextual scaffolding risks both diluting the framework and confusing the students.

What Tier 2 SHOULD Do

Three institutional recommendations for district Tier 2 SEL programs operating alongside AoG:

First, Tier 2 should reinforce the framework's vocabulary as part of normal practice. When a Tier 2 group worker uses the framework's terminology consistently — guilt vs. shame, forgiveness vs. trust, identity vs. behavior, regulation vs. management — the student receives the same precision instruments across both tiers. Vocabulary discipline is non-negotiable in Tier 1 (Document 2 Chapter 8). It should hold in Tier 2 as well.

Second, Tier 2 should respect the framework's safety architecture. The Reflection Pass exists in Tier 1 because consent in interior work must be genuine. Tier 2 supports should operate with comparable consent structures — students participate voluntarily, they are not required to disclose, and refusal is non-punitive.

Third, Tier 2 should communicate appropriately with Tier 1 delivery. The classroom AoG teacher does not need to know what is happening in Tier 2 small-group support — that is appropriately confidential. But the classroom teacher should know that a student is receiving Tier 2 support so that classroom-level differentiation can be calibrated. The MTSS team manages this communication; specific content remains confidential.

The Hand-Off Itself

When the MTSS team determines that a student would benefit from Tier 2 supplementation, the hand-off follows a specific protocol:

- Family communication. Tier 2 placement requires family awareness, with the framework's standard non-stigmatizing framing — 'we want to make sure your student has additional support around X.'
- Continuation of Tier 1 AoG. The student continues attending all AoG lessons. Tier 2 happens during a separate period, typically counselor-led small group.
- Coordination meeting. The classroom AoG teacher and the Tier 2 worker meet briefly (15 minutes) to align on approach. The classroom teacher learns what general area of support is being provided; the Tier 2 worker learns what AoG content is current.
- Quarterly review. The MTSS team reviews the student's response to Tier 2 every 9–12 weeks. Continuation, escalation, or de-escalation is determined based on validated screener data and observation patterns.

Tier 1 universal AoG is not a low ceiling above which more support stacks. It is a foundation that all students benefit from, with Tier 2 supplementation for students whose needs exceed universal scope. The two work together; they do not substitute for each other.

Chapter 7 • The Tier 2 to Tier 3 Interface

Where the framework defers entirely

Tier 3 intensive intervention is, in nearly every district context, clinical territory. Students at Tier 3 require individualized, intensive support — typically delivered by school psychologists, social workers in clinical roles, or community mental health partners. The Architecture of Grace defers Tier 3 entirely to clinical professionals. This chapter documents what that deferral means operationally.

What the Framework Does at Tier 3

Three things, none of which are intervention delivery:

First, the framework continues. Students receiving Tier 3 intensive intervention continue attending Tier 1 AoG lessons unless the MTSS team determines otherwise based on student-specific clinical input. Tier 3 supplements both Tier 1 and Tier 2; it does not replace them.

Second, the framework provides shared vocabulary. A clinical professional working with a Tier 3 student who is also receiving AoG can leverage the framework's vocabulary — guilt vs. shame, the Internal Critic, the Compassionate Witness, forgiveness vs. trust vs. reconciliation — as shared language that the student already holds. This accelerates clinical work; it does not replace it.

Third, the framework's help-seeking protocol (taught explicitly in Book 5 U2 L3) prepares students for Tier 3 engagement. By Grade 12, students have been taught to recognize when their toolkit has reached its design limits and to engage with clinical support without resistance or shame. This is the framework's contribution to Tier 3 effectiveness.

What the Framework Does NOT Do at Tier 3

- Treat trauma. Trauma treatment requires licensed clinical professionals. AoG's regulation skills are protective and educative, not therapeutic.
- Diagnose. The framework does not screen for, identify, or label clinical conditions. Diagnostic functions belong to licensed clinicians.
- Substitute for therapy. Students requiring sustained clinical support require licensed clinicians outside the school's universal program scope.
- Manage acute crisis. Crisis response operates outside curriculum frameworks entirely. The framework's Disclosure Protocol routes acute concerns to clinical professionals immediately.

The Tier 2 to Tier 3 Hand-Off

The decision to escalate from Tier 2 to Tier 3 is a clinical decision, not a curriculum decision. The MTSS team escalates when:

- Tier 2 supplementation has been delivered with fidelity for at least one quarter without observable response.
- Validated screener data shows sustained or worsening elevation across multiple administrations.
- Disclosure or observation indicates clinical concern that exceeds Tier 2 scope (active suicidality, signs of acute mental health crisis, patterns suggesting clinical-grade depression or anxiety).
- The student or family explicitly requests clinical-level support.

What the AoG Teacher Does Not Know

AoG teachers do not have access to Tier 3 clinical information. This is institutionally appropriate — clinical confidentiality protections apply. The classroom teacher knows that a student is receiving Tier 3 support (so classroom-level differentiation is possible) but does not know what the clinical content is.

This boundary is non-negotiable. A teacher who breaches it — by attempting to learn clinical detail, by treating the student as fragile, or by altering instruction inappropriately — undermines both the framework's universal posture and the student's clinical care. The framework's institutional commitment: at Tier 3, the teacher's role is to deliver Tier 1 AoG with fidelity, while leaving the clinical work to clinical professionals.

Chapter 8 • Fidelity of Implementation

How AoG's Tier 1 status is maintained

MTSS specifications require fidelity of implementation — the ongoing institutional verification that what is delivered matches what was designed. Tier 1 universal programs are particularly vulnerable to fidelity drift because the universal nature of delivery can lead to abbreviation, substitution, or improvisation across many teachers and many classrooms. This chapter documents the framework's fidelity architecture.

The Three Fidelity Channels

Channel 1 • Teacher Reflection (Weekly)

Every framework lesson includes a Teacher Reflection completed within 24 hours of delivery. The Reflection is two-fold:

- Delivery fidelity items: did the Opening Ritual occur, was the direct instruction segment delivered as designed, did the application activity run, was the Reflection segment included, was the bridge to the next lesson addressed.
- Quality items: teacher's self-assessment of delivery quality, any modifications made, reasons for modifications, observations of student response.

Reflections are kept by the teacher, aggregated quarterly into the school's MTSS fidelity record. Patterns of consistent skipped components or systematic modification trigger MTSS team review.

Channel 2 • Walk-Through Observation (Quarterly)

The MTSS team or the framework's lead implementer observes one or more delivering teachers per quarter. The walk-through uses a brief observation protocol (10–15 minutes per visit) capturing: did the lesson open with the Opening Ritual, was the direct instruction substantively delivered, did students appear engaged, was the lesson environment trauma-informed (Reflection Pass available, journal privacy honored, never-required forgiveness language present where applicable).

Channel 3 • Annual Fidelity Audit

Once annually, the school's MTSS team conducts a fidelity audit covering: percentage of designated lessons delivered, percentage of ★/★★ lessons delivered with required counselor presence, percentage of family communications sent on schedule, fidelity to the Disclosure Protocol when activated, fidelity to journal privacy commitments, fidelity to the never-required forgiveness commitment.

Common Fidelity Risks

Five fidelity risks the framework names explicitly:

- Lesson abbreviation. Teachers under time pressure may compress 35–40 minute lessons to 20 minutes. The Opening Ritual is most often the casualty. The framework's institutional position: the Opening Ritual is not optional. It is the brainstem-level entry point that makes the rest of the lesson possible (Document 5 Chapter 4).
- Worksheet substitution. Teachers may substitute their own worksheets for the framework's calibrated artifacts. The framework's institutional position: signature artifacts (Identity Web, Identity Shield, Compass of Integrity, the four Strand Cards) are calibrated developmentally; substitution undermines the longitudinal architecture.
- Risk-designated lesson modification. The most clinically sensitive lessons (★ and ★★) are sometimes modified to feel safer. The framework's institutional position: modification of risk-designated lessons is the highest-stakes fidelity violation. The lessons are designed to be delivered with full institutional infrastructure — counselor briefing, counselor on-site, mandatory same-day debrief. Modification compromises the safety architecture, not the lesson content.
- Vocabulary drift. Teachers may use "forgiveness" interchangeably with "reconciliation" or treat the guilt/shame distinction as informal. Vocabulary discipline is non-negotiable (Document 2 Chapter 8).
- Privacy breach. Teachers may collect, read, or grade journal entries despite the journal-privacy protocol. This is the fidelity violation that most directly compromises the framework's interior work and is treated as institutionally serious.

The Fidelity-Violation Response Protocol

When fidelity violations are identified through Reflection patterns, walk-through observations, or audit findings, the MTSS team's response is calibrated to severity:

Minor Fidelity Drift	Lesson abbreviation, worksheet modification, occasional vocabulary slippage. Response: coaching conversation with lead implementer; refresher PD for affected teachers.
Moderate Fidelity Concern	Sustained Opening Ritual omission, repeated risk-designated lesson modification without counselor coordination, vocabulary discipline lapses. Response: structured coaching plan, observation schedule increase, MTSS team review.
Serious Fidelity Violation	Journal-privacy breach, never-required forgiveness commitment violation, ★★ lesson delivered without counselor on-site. Response: immediate institutional response — administrator involvement, formal coaching, documentation in personnel record where applicable, possible removal from delivery responsibility

	pending remediation.
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Fidelity is not a paperwork concern. It is the institutional commitment that what students experience in their AoG classroom matches what the framework was designed to deliver. Without fidelity, AoG is not AoG. Districts adopting the framework are adopting the fidelity infrastructure as well, not selecting from a menu.

Chapter 9 • Data-Based Decision-Making for the MTSS Team

MTSS specifications require data-based decision-making — the institutional practice of reviewing student data systematically to determine response across tiers. This chapter documents how the MTSS team uses AoG-related data alongside validated supplementary instruments to make tier-level decisions.

The Three Decisions the MTSS Team Makes

Data-based decision-making in MTSS is structured around three decisions:

1. Tier Placement Decisions	Should this student remain at Tier 1, move to Tier 2 supplementation, or escalate to Tier 3 clinical support? Data sources: validated screener data, AoG Teacher Observation patterns, family input, disclosure history.
2. Tier-Level Response Decisions	Within a given tier, is the support working? Should approach be modified, intensified, or de-escalated? Data sources: progress monitoring data over time, validated screener trajectory, observed behavioral patterns.
3. Program-Level Decisions	Is the Tier 1 universal program working at the cohort level? Is the Tier 2 program working? Are tier hand-offs operating as designed? Data sources: aggregate fidelity data, cohort-level outcome trajectories, MTSS audit findings.

How AoG Data Contributes (And Where It Defers)

AoG-specific data contributes to MTSS decisions in specific ways, with specific limits:

AoG Data Contributes To:

- Cohort-level program evaluation — is AoG producing the engagement, vocabulary uptake, and skill use the curriculum is designed to produce.
- Fidelity oversight — is AoG being delivered as designed, by which teachers, with what consistency.
- Pattern-level disclosure tracking — are particular lessons surfacing disclosure rates that warrant counselor capacity attention.
- Family engagement assessment — are families participating with the framework at expected rates, with what quality of feedback.

AoG Data Defers To:

- Validated supplementary instruments (DESSA-3 or equivalent) for individual-level tier placement decisions.

- Clinical professional judgment for Tier 3 escalation decisions.
- Family-informed decisions where family engagement provides ground-truth observation that the framework's instruments do not capture.
- Counselor judgment for individual-level disclosure response decisions.

The MTSS Team Meeting Cadence

Recommended meeting cadence for MTSS teams in districts implementing AoG:

Quarterly Tier Review	MTSS team reviews tier placement for all students who currently appear in Tier 2 or Tier 3 supplementation. Approximately one hour per grade band per quarter.
Annual Program Review	MTSS team reviews aggregate AoG fidelity, cohort-level outcome data, and tier hand-off effectiveness. Approximately three hours annually.
Mid-Year Coordination	Brief touch-base in January, particularly to coordinate counselor capacity for second-semester ★/★★ lessons. Approximately one hour mid-year.
Pre-Year Planning	Annual planning meeting to schedule the year's risk-designated lesson dates, block counselor calendars accordingly, confirm PPRA notification timeline. Approximately two hours, pre-school-year.

What the MTSS Team Does NOT Do

Three institutional boundaries the framework explicitly maintains:

- The MTSS team does not review individual journal content. Journals are private instructional materials. The Disclosure Protocol governs individual disclosure flow; the MTSS team works at the pattern and program level.
- The MTSS team does not conduct clinical assessment. Tier placement decisions involve validated screening; clinical assessment is the work of licensed clinical professionals at Tier 3.
- The MTSS team does not modify the AoG curriculum based on data review. Curriculum modification, when needed, comes through the framework's revision cycle and the School of Life Foundation. The MTSS team's role is to evaluate fidelity to the curriculum-as-designed and to align district supports around it.

Chapter 10 • The Disclosure Protocol's Place in MTSS Architecture

The framework's Disclosure Protocol (documented in detail in Document 5 Chapter 6) is one of the most institutionally distinctive elements of AoG. It is also the element MTSS teams most need to understand because it operates as the primary mechanism by which Tier 1 universal delivery surfaces individual student information that may warrant tier escalation. This chapter documents how the Disclosure Protocol interfaces with the MTSS architecture.

The Four Disclosure Types • A Brief Recap

Type 1 • Emotional Resonance	Visible response to lesson content, no verbal disclosure. No mandatory counselor brief.
Type 2 • Personal Share Within Normal Range	Voluntary share of difficult material, not crisis-level. Same-day informational counselor brief; counselor determines follow-up.
Type 3 • Past Harm or Significant Distress	Voluntary disclosure of significant past trauma, ongoing struggle, or material that does not meet mandatory reporting threshold but warrants clinical attention. Mandatory same-day counselor brief; counselor determines clinical follow-up.
Type 4 • Active Safety Concern	Active or recent abuse, current suicidality, threat to self or others. Activates six-step Disclosure Response Protocol immediately. Mandatory reporting may apply.

How Disclosure Connects to Tier Decisions

Disclosure is not the same as tier placement. A Type 2 disclosure does not place a student in Tier 2; a Type 3 disclosure does not place a student in Tier 3. Disclosure is the entry point into the MTSS team's review process, not the placement decision itself.

The relationship between disclosure and tier placement:

- Single Type 1 or Type 2 disclosures rarely change tier placement. They are recorded by the counselor; the student continues at Tier 1.
- Patterns of multiple Type 2 disclosures over a quarter may indicate that Tier 1 universal support is not sufficient. The MTSS team reviews; tier supplementation may follow.

- Type 3 disclosures activate counselor clinical judgment. The counselor determines whether Tier 2 supplementation, referral to community mental health, or some combination is warranted. The MTSS team is informed; the clinical decision remains the counselor's.
- Type 4 disclosures activate the six-step Disclosure Response Protocol immediately. Tier placement is secondary; immediate safety is primary. After acute safety is addressed, the MTSS team and clinical professionals collaborate on appropriate ongoing support.

Disclosure Confidentiality and MTSS Information Flow

Disclosure information flows in specific patterns within the MTSS architecture:

Counselor receives	All disclosure types. Counselor maintains the institutional record of disclosures.
Classroom teacher receives	Acknowledgment from the counselor that the disclosure was received and is being addressed; teacher is informed if classroom-level differentiation is appropriate. Teacher does not receive disclosure detail unless professionally necessary.
MTSS team receives	Pattern-level data — aggregate disclosure frequency by lesson, cohort patterns suggesting program-level concerns. Individual-level data only when tier placement decisions are under review, and then only the information the team requires for the placement decision.
Family receives	Family communication is governed by FERPA, mandatory reporting requirements, and clinical judgment. The framework's general posture is family-informed when appropriate, family-respectful when family involvement is contraindicated, and clinically led in all cases.

What Districts Often Get Wrong

Three patterns of MTSS-Disclosure misalignment the framework warns against:

First, treating disclosure as MTSS placement data. Disclosure is clinical-counseling information that may inform MTSS placement decisions, not the data MTSS placement decisions are made from. Districts that treat disclosure as the primary placement signal misunderstand both the Disclosure Protocol and MTSS architecture.

Second, breaching clinical confidentiality through MTSS information flow. The MTSS team's role is to coordinate supports across tiers, not to access clinical detail. Districts where MTSS team meetings inadvertently surface clinical-level disclosure detail need to recalibrate information flow.

Third, treating high disclosure rates as program failure. The framework's most successful delivery — interior-honest classrooms with regulated teachers — produces disclosure. A program that produces no disclosure is not a successful Tier 1 SEL program; it is one in which students do not feel safe enough to surface what is real for them. The MTSS team should expect disclosure as an indicator of program working as designed, not as an indicator of program failure.

Disclosure is the framework's quality signal, not its failure signal. A classroom that surfaces honest material in age-appropriate amounts is the framework working as designed. The MTSS team's role is to receive that signal appropriately, route it through the Disclosure Protocol's institutional architecture, and coordinate ongoing supports — not to suppress disclosure or treat it as evidence of program risk.

Chapter 11 • The Working Alignment Summary

One-page reference for the MTSS team

This final chapter consolidates the document into a single working reference. Print this chapter for the MTSS team's recurring use; the rest of the document is supporting context.

AoG's Place in the MTSS Architecture

Tier 1 • Universal	Architecture of Grace delivered to all students at all grade bands. 28 lessons per grade-band year across four units. Classroom-teacher-delivered. Counselor-supported. Trauma-informed. CASEL-aligned across all five competencies.
Tier 2 • Targeted	District-specific small-group SEL supports. Continue Tier 1 AoG alongside. Use AoG vocabulary as shared precision instrument. Respect AoG safety architecture. Triggered by validated screener pattern + observation pattern + family input triangulation.
Tier 3 • Intensive	Clinical territory. AoG defers entirely. Continue Tier 1 AoG alongside (unless clinically contraindicated). Help-Seeking Protocol (Book 5 U2 L3) prepares students to engage. Clinical professionals lead; AoG provides shared vocabulary as resource.

Framework's MTSS Components at a Glance

Universal Screening	AoG native: pre/post self-report, Teacher Observation Form, Family Engagement Survey. Recommended supplementary: DESSA-3 (most common), BASC-3 BESS, SSIS-SEL, Neff SCS-SF.
Tiered Instruction	Tier 1: AoG. Tier 2: district-specific (with framework interface guidance). Tier 3: clinical professionals.
Progress Monitoring	Lesson-level Teacher Reflection (weekly), Unit Reflection (4x/year), Year-Level Pre/Post (2x/year), supplementary validated screener (3x/year).
Data-Based Decision-Making	Quarterly tier reviews • annual program review • mid-year coordination • pre-year planning meetings.
Fidelity of Implementation	Teacher Reflection (weekly), walk-through observation (quarterly), annual fidelity audit. Three-tier violation response protocol.

The Six Non-Negotiables for MTSS Implementation

A district adopting the framework within an MTSS architecture must commit to the following:

1. Tier 1 universal delivery to all students. AoG is not delivered selectively to identified students.
2. Counselor on-site for all ★★ lessons. No exceptions.
3. Journal privacy in every classroom. Journals are not collected, not graded, not read.
4. Never-required forgiveness. The framework's most consequential ethical commitment.
5. Three-Tier Opt-Out Framework, non-punitive at all tiers. Family communication delivered on schedule.
6. Vocabulary discipline as institutional standard. Tier 1 AoG and Tier 2 SEL supports use the framework's vocabulary precisely or do not use it at all.

The MTSS Coordinator's Decision Frame

Should we adopt AoG within our MTSS framework?	Adopt if your district can commit to all six non-negotiables, has counselor capacity for ★/★★ lessons, has a validated supplementary screener (DESSA-3 or equivalent) operational, and has a Tier 2 SEL infrastructure or development plan. Defer adoption if any of these are absent.
What if our Tier 2 SEL infrastructure is weak?	Adopt with explicit Tier 2 development as part of the implementation plan. Document 9 (Three-Year District Implementation Roadmap) includes Tier 2 development guidance for districts whose existing Tier 2 SEL infrastructure needs strengthening.
How do we handle the gap between AoG and our existing PBIS program?	AoG and PBIS operate in different but complementary territories. PBIS addresses behavioral expectations, contingencies, and school-wide behavior support. AoG addresses interior architecture — identity, self-compassion, empathy, forgiveness, grace. The two should reinforce each other; neither replaces the other.
What about Tier 3 cases already on our caseload?	Continue Tier 3 clinical support as designed. AoG is delivered alongside; the help-seeking protocol prepares students for ongoing clinical engagement. Tier 3 caseload size is not a contraindication to adoption.

MTSS is the institutional architecture that organizes how all student supports fit together. The Architecture of Grace fits into that architecture as the Tier 1 universal SEL component — preventive, foundational, vertically integrated across thirteen years. Its fit is calibrated, its boundaries are honest, and its commitments are non-negotiable. Districts that can hold those commitments will find AoG strengthens their MTSS system. Districts that cannot should not adopt — or should defer adoption until the necessary infrastructure can be developed.

— END OF MTSS CROSSWALK —