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Teacher Understanding and Perception of a Response to Intervention Program in a Rural, Western North Carolina School District

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Teacher Understanding and Perception of a Response to Intervention Program in a Rural,
Western North Carolina School District

By
Dwight Dean King

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Dwight Dean King under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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today.

To Aunt Kay and Uncle Joe Dan, you will never know how important you are to me. Even though you are not my parents, you willingly stepped into that role when you saw a person that needed support. You were always there for me when I needed you. I know that you will always support me in any decision I make in life. Thank you for opening your family up to mine.

Everyday my children remind me why I fought so hard as a teenager and why I continue that fight today. I look at you Mia, Bodie, and Macyn and realize I want to be everything for you. I can never let you down. Everything I do, I do for you. I can never get back the countless hours I missed while I was in school or working on my paper, but I'm finished now, so let's play.

Finally, to my wife Jan, I cannot begin to tell you what you have meant to me. While we dated, you allowed yourself to look past the person that I was to see the person that I could become. You loved me when no one else could. I cannot explain when, but at some point you changed me from being a person who would not allow myself to depend on anyone else in life to being a person who depends on you for life itself. Without you, I do not know where I would be. You have supported and loved me as I tried to understand my existence in life. I can only hope to provide that same support to you. I love you and always will.

For all those mentioned and the others who supported me in this process, thank you for your encouragement and your understanding. With your support, I have shown that a poor, trailer park kid with a bad reputation and no future can rise up and prove to himself and the world what he is capable of doing in life.

Abstract

Assessing Teacher Understanding and Perception of a Response to Intervention Program in a Rural, Western North Carolina School District. King, Dwight Dean, 2011, Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Response to Intervention/Response to Instruction/Special Education/Student Support Team/Problem Solving Model/Discrepancy Formula/Tier/Educational Leadership/Individuals with Disabilities Education Act/Responsiveness/Research-based Intervention/Instruction/Wait to Fail/RtI

Response to Intervention, aka Response to Instruction (RtI), is a multi-tiered instructional process designed to provide research-based interventions to struggling learners. It has recently gained increased popularity with the perceived failure of the discrepancy formula model of placing children in special education services and with the recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Because RtI is just gaining ground in the field of education, limited research regarding teachers' perceptions of the process is available. This research project utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining survey and interview data, to assess teacher understanding and perception of RtI in a rural North Carolina community. Both schools included in the study are currently piloting the RtI process. The results of the study found that even though most teachers seem to have a grasp on the roles and responsibilities associated with RtI, many teachers have substantial concerns regarding the implementation process. Most notably, teachers were concerned with the amount of time that was being dedicated to the RtI process and to the lack of available manpower. Teachers also noted improvements that could be made to improve the implementation process. Teachers specifically identified the importance of strong educational leadership within the school building as a factor in the success or failure of RtI within the schools.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Response to Intervention, termed Response to Instruction in North Carolina, is

currently gaining ground since passage of the most recent Individuals with Disabilities

Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) regulations in 2004. Designed as an alternative

solution to the placement of children in special education services according to federal

law, Response to Instruction has become a common talking point in schools. Of concern

is how to prepare and implement a strategy that will fulfill federal mandates as quickly

and efficiently as possible. Teachers, because they work with the children each day, are

crucial in ensuring that the goals of a Response to Instruction program are met.

Therefore, effective teacher preparation and understanding are important to the success of

Response to Instruction practices.

Response to Instruction was established as an alternative to discrepancy formulas

because formulas were believed to have many shortcomings (Bateman & Chard, 1995;

Schrag, 2000). Of the many formulas used in different states, the most common formula,

according to Schrag (2000), is standard deviation from the mean. Twenty-six states use

this type of discrepancy formula to diagnose a child as having a specific learning

disability (SLD). When standard deviation from the mean is utilized, a child is

considered to be learning disabled when he or she is discrepant from the established mean

of a test by more than a designated standard deviation, such as a 1.5 standard deviation.

Twenty-two states, including North Carolina, utilize a standard score comparison

(Schrag, 2000). When this type of formula is used, a child's score on one test, typically a

test of ability, is compared to the child's score on another test, typically an achievement

test. In order to do this properly, both tests should have the same mean and standard

deviation. If there is a large enough discrepancy between ability and achievement (15

points in North Carolina) and the ability score is the higher score, the child is said to have a learning disability.

Regression formulas are used in 17 states (Schrag, 2000). Schrag explained that a regression formula is used to correct some of the inherent problems in standard score comparison models and suggested, that given a specific intelligence score, a child should score in a set achievement range. This formula also looks at the impact of regression to the mean on the test scores.

Schrag (2000) also discussed other formulas used by the states including verbal vs. performance discrepancies (four states), grade-level discrepancies (three states), and comparisons across achievement areas (three states). When utilizing a verbal vs. performance discrepancy formula, a child's ability levels as ascertained by an intelligence test are evaluated, rated, and broken down to determine verbal skills and performance skills. When using a grade-level discrepancy approach, a child is believed to be learning disabled if he/she differs from the actual grade level by a predetermined level. A child is believed to be learning disabled when using cross achievement area comparisons when he/she has higher skills in one academic area, such as reading, than in another academic area, such as math.

Research has called into question these types of regression formulas for many reasons (Bateman & Chard, 1995; Schrag, 2000). First, all of these regression formulas attempt to quantify a child's behavior. Numbers are then used to describe and define who a child is and how they perform in the classroom. This nullifies inherent learning characteristics and personality characteristics inherent in every child because numbers cannot describe these types of traits. According to Obringer (1998), "no mathematical formula can clearly describe human characteristics" (p. 3). Lerner (1997) also supported

this belief and suggested that human factors cannot be plugged into a formula.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 sought to alleviate many of the concerns associated with discrepancy formulas by suggesting alternative means of identifying children for special education services. This new mandate required schools to transition to a Response to Instruction program which assesses a child's learning ability by evaluating first their response to general education instruction, and then their response to intensive instruction.

Statement of the Problem

Response to Instruction (RtI) is a fairly new concept and school systems are trying to implement the strategies without sufficient research guiding their attempts. Researchers noted the difficulties of implementing a Response to Intervention program and the limited research addressing RtI (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). It is not known whether classroom teachers have an in-depth understanding as to what Response to Instruction is or how to implement it. Of concern is that teachers are largely responsible for the process but they may lack the foundation and understanding of Response to Instruction purposes/strategies to be successful in their attempts at implementation. This understanding of the Response to Instruction process needs to be assessed to ensure that teachers can follow through with the goals and processes associated with RtI.

The school system represented in this study was still in the early stages of Response to Instruction implementation at the time of this study. It began implementation of RtI 2 years prior in two pilot schools. However, due in part to changes within the administrative leadership, school-based administrators have not yet committed their schools to the process. Five years after passage of the reauthorization, this school

system is continuing to adapt to the mandates. The system needs to take advantage of the available information from the pilot programs in order to quicken the transition process for the other schools.

Purpose of the Study

Dunn and Mabry (2008) noted in their research that "school personnel are the primary managers of RtI implementation in their schools, yet their perspectives are noticeably absent from current published records" (p. 3). The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' understanding of Response to Instruction including the goals, practices, and roles of those involved. This information could be valuable in assisting educators in beginning the process of transitioning from discrepancy formula placement to RtI practices. The data provided by the teachers will help identify areas that need to be emphasized during the training and development stages. Teachers may also be able to provide insight on how to avoid pitfalls associated with initial introduction into the process.

Demographics

The setting for this study took place in the foothills region of North Carolina. The school system served 17,599 students in its 27 schools. The school system boasted a strong academic record with 25 of 27 schools making expected growth and 18 of 27 schools making adequate yearly progress. At the time of this study, two elementary schools were piloting Response to Instruction with plans on widespread expansion of Response to Instruction services in 14 more schools the next school year. Both schools piloting Response to Instruction were included in this study.

School A was a rural school serving 459 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. This school was in its second year of existence as an elementary school and was

led by an experienced administrative staff. Recent state testing showed School A as a school of high growth, meaning 60% of the students tested performed at expected growth. Staff experience varied with 45% of the staff having less than 10 years of experience. Staff members with 11-20 years of experience made up 27% of the population while staff with more than 21 years of experience made up 28% of the staff population.

School B was also rural serving 705 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The school was led by a less experienced administration with the principal serving her second year in the position. The assistant principal was also in her second year in the position. The school performed at the high growth level based on state testing last year. The staff of School B was more experienced than School A with 42% of the staff having at least 21 years of experience. Thirty-one percent of the staff had 11-20 years of experience and the remaining 27% of the staff had less than 11 years of experience.

Although a school psychologist in this district, the examiner did not serve School A or School B. The examiner's goal was to assess teacher understanding of Response to Instruction goals and practices. This knowledge could then be used by the school system to improve their RtI training program while still in its infancy.

Limitations

One limitation involved the development of the Response to Instruction process in the school system. The two schools represented in this study piloted the program last school year. They were currently in year 2 of RtI practice. Typical Response to Instruction accreditation at the state level requires at least 4 years of experience before a school system can apply to the state to be considered a Response to Instruction school. Although part of the design of this project included researching schools in the early

stages of the process, a school farther along in the process may have been able to provide richer information due to more exposure by a larger percentage of the teaching staff. Although ultimately not a concern that was encountered, the examiner may have found that many teachers were not involved firsthand in the Response to Instruction process because the school was in the earliest stages of development. There were also concerns over the generalization of the research design based on the population researched. The results may not generalize for two reasons—the lack of diversity of the population and the limited number of respondents.

Delimitations

Delimitations also existed in that the researcher purposively focused on schools that were early in the Response to Instruction process.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do elementary teachers have basic knowledge of the purpose, goals, and process associated with taking a child to the Response to Instruction team?

2. To what extent do elementary teachers understand who is involved in the Response to Instruction process and their roles?

3. To what extent do elementary teachers understand the tiered system associated with Response to Instruction?

4. To what extent do elementary teachers know why school systems are enacting Response to Instruction practices?

5. What problems or concerns have teachers encountered in their attempts to implement Response to Instruction strategies?

6. What suggestions for improvement could teachers offer based on their experience with Response to Instruction implementation?

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this study and providing definitions for each term will allow for a common understanding of the concepts in this study.

Discrepancy formula. A general term for a multitude of formulas currently used by the states in the assessment and classification of students who may need Exceptional Children's services.

Response to Instruction (aka Responsiveness to Intervention, Responsiveness to Instruction, and Response to Intervention). An early intervention concept that allows for monitoring of a student's progress through tiered stages including screening, classroom instruction, research-based intervention within the classroom, and possible placement in the Exceptional Children's Program.

Specific learning disability. The term means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. As defined by IDEIA (2004), the term includes many conditions, such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. IDEIA (2004) also suggested that a learning disability can be identified in the following areas: (1) oral expression, (2) listening comprehension, (3) written expression, (4) basic reading skills, (5) reading comprehension, (6) reading fluency, (7) math calculation, and (8) math reasoning.

Standard score comparison formula. A popular discrepancy formula that requires a child's score on two performance measures, typically an intelligence test and an achievement test, to be compared to assess discrepancies between ability and achievement. This has been the traditional discrepancy formula used in North Carolina.

Waiting to fail. A common complaint of discrepancy formulas because children must progressively underperform until a discrepancy formula would suggest the need for Exceptional Children's services.

AIMSweb. A commercial progress monitoring tool that utilizes quick assessment probes and allows data obtained from the probes to be graphed.

Summary

The Response to Instruction process was legislated according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 as an alternative means of identifying children for placement in the Exceptional Children's Program. Since that time, school officials have been attempting to implement these processes successfully within the schools. However, the educational system had been utilizing a number of different discrepancy formula processes for almost 30 years. This transition from discrepancy formulas to Response to Instruction has not been an easy one. One area that has made this transition difficult is a lack of research into the teacher's understanding of his/her role in the process. The teacher, who works with the student every day, is an important cog in the process and should have an understanding of his/her role and of the processes that dictate Response to Instruction.

Outline of Information

Chapter 1 offered an introduction into the problem associated with implementation of a Response to Instruction program. This chapter briefly explained why lawmakers believed it was important to legislate RtI practices in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act revision in 2004. It highlighted the problem associated with enacting the legislation and the research questions that were to be answered through this process, along with suggestions on how to improve the preparation and implementation

process. Chapter 1 also briefly introduced the demographic setting where this research took place.

Chapter 2, the literature review, will provide an historical basis for special education, particularly the concept of a learning disability and the processes for identifying children with a learning disability. The many concerns associated with identification will be discussed leading to the reasoning behind Response to Instruction processes. Response to Instruction, including tiered services and progress monitoring, will be described in detail. This chapter will conclude with an assessment of the successes and failures of the process. Because Response to Instruction is still in its infancy and limited research is available, many of the studies examined will focus on programs similar to Response to Instruction. Recently published articles directly evaluating Response to Instruction will also be discussed when evaluating the successes and failures of the process.

Chapter 3, the methodology, will provide details concerning the mixed-methods research design and why the design is appropriate for this research project. A more defined view of the setting and the participants will be introduced. A discussion of data collection and procedures will help the reader understand the process from which all data was collected during this research. Finally, the data analysis process will define how the data was evaluated and the research questions will be answered.

Chapter 4, which involves data collection and analysis, will include a review of all collected data in terms of how the data can be used to answer the research questions inherent to the study. Quantitative data will be described in terms of descriptive statistics. This information obtained from surveys will be reported in terms of frequency counts and percentages. A trend analysis of interview data will complete the qualitative

portion of the mixed-methods design.

Chapter 5, which includes results, conclusions, and recommendations, will be an evaluation of all collected data. Data was used to answer the research questions proposed in the study. Implications and recommendations for further research will also be included.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review will focus on the early history of the concept of a learning disability, the concerns associated with assessing a learning disability, and the birth of the Response to Instruction model. Studies assessing the effectiveness of Response to Instruction will also be examined.

Historical Perspective of a Learning Disability

As Ofiesh (2006) reported, Samuel Kirk first used the term *learning disability* in 1963. However, there was no understanding at that time of what constituted a learning disability (Ofiesh, 2006). A few years later, in 1966, a task force under the direction of S. D. Clements started a discussion about the construct of a learning disability. This discussion ultimately led to the creation of the National Advisory Council on the Handicapped by the United States Department of Education. That advisory council created the federal definition of a specific learning disability that remains greatly unchanged even 40 years later (Ofiesh, 2006). The definition they proposed included any disorder in a basic psychological process involved in understanding or in using language. This included deficiencies in the ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations (Ofiesh, 2006).

The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) of 1975 used the advisory council's definition and legislated identification and services of children with learning disabilities. Since the enactment of PL 94-142, educators have struggled to agree on classification procedures for labeling a child as having a specific learning disability (Schrag, 2000). Although federal guidelines set forth the definition of a learning disability, they did not define qualification procedures that should be followed. Leaving this up to the states has resulted in a multitude of formulas used to quantify the

term *severe discrepancy* described in the definition of a specific learning disability.

These formulas have not come without continued scrutiny. In response to the concerns of

using formulas to diagnose specific learning disabilities, committees and forums have

suggested the use of other assessment practices such as *responsiveness to intervention*,

first described by Gresham (1991). Responsiveness to intervention was first defined by

Gresham (2001) as, "the change in behavior or performance as a function of an

intervention" (p. 1). Although responsiveness to intervention has undergone many name

changes and variations, such as Response to Intervention, Response to Instruction, and

Responsiveness to Instruction, the concept has gained increasing popularity as an

alternative to discrepancy-based formulas.

Even when PL 94-142 underwent a revision in 1997 and was renamed the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), concerns with qualifying a specific

learning disability continued. IDEA (1997) retained that original definition created in

1966 by the National Advisory Council and defined a specific learning disability as a

disorder affecting a basic psychological process involved in understanding or in using

language which hinders the ability to read, think, speak, write, spell, or do math. IDEA

(1997) also stated that certain conditions, such as visual difficulties, hearing difficulties,

mental retardation, emotional/behavioral difficulties, motor deficiencies, and

cultural/environmental disadvantages, must be ruled out when considering whether a

child had a learning disability. Qualification procedures under IDEA (1997) also

remained vague and included terminology such as achieving commensurate with same

age peers and severe learning discrepancy.

Much of the contention centering on qualification procedures for SLD revolve

around the concept of a severe learning discrepancy and how to measure or quantify that

discrepancy. States, without the support of federal guidelines, sought ways to establish the severe learning discrepancy described in the federal guidelines. The results of their efforts led to numerous different assessment techniques designed to quantify or diagnose a learning disability, including regression formulas, standard score comparison, standard deviation from the mean, verbal vs. performance discrepancies, grade-level discrepancies, and comparisons within achievement areas. Research has suggested that each of these discrepancy formulas have concerns that would question their appropriateness for qualification determination (Bateman & Chard, 1995; Schrag, 2000). Schrag (2000) stated that

> The use of a discrepancy formula, as a method of documenting a severe
> discrepancy for identifying the presence of a learning disability and for the
> purposes of special education eligibility determinations, is outdated and ill
> advised. Specifically, there is a need for procedures that focus on how the student
> is performing in the classroom, in the general curriculum, and in district and
> statewide assessments. (p. 6)

As researchers highlighted the concerns associated with using discrepancy formulas to identify students with a specific learning disability, other researchers, such as Gresham (1991), studied alternatives to discrepancy formulas. Gresham (1991) suggested the concept of Response to Instruction, first described in 1982, as a possible alternative to many of the inherent concerns in discrepancy formulas.

A Critique of Discrepancy Models

School systems, required by Public Law 94-142 to serve this population, utilized many discrepancy formulas in order to label individuals as having a specific learning disability. However, these formulas received much criticism for how they went about

determining if an individual had a disability and for the processes involved. The

criticisms ranged from concerns of psychometric properties of testing to a lack of

information provided by the standardized testing. Using formulas to place children was

also criticized for the overrepresentation of minorities in special education (Daly,

Martens, Barnett, Witt, & Olson, 2007; Harris-Murri, King, & Rostenberg, 2006;

Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003; Obringer, 1998). Intelligence tests have been

questioned in the past regarding their applicability to minorities because experience is

inherent in all forms of testing. The belief is that minorities may not have the same

experiences as nonminority students thus causing them to perform poorly on intelligence

and academic testing which might lead to a higher rate of qualification among minority

students (Harris-Murri et al., 2006). The current system using discrepancy formulas also

requires teacher referral of children who might need to be considered for special

education. According to Donovan and Cross (2002), as cited in Fletcher, Coulter,

Reschly, & Vaughn (2004), teacher referral has been shown to be bias against both boys

and African Americans. Donovan and Cross (2002) suggested that the current referral

process was not adequate because the teacher referrals may be based more on behavior

management concerns in the classroom rather than true skill deficits between students.

Cultural bias is another concern with standardized testing. Children do not have

all of the same experiences as other children. Standardized tests cannot account for all of

the different experiences that children may or may not have. Cultural concerns might

exist between children of high or low income. Concerns have also been expressed based

on racial differences, with some individuals suggesting that different races of people have

experiences specific to their race that could affect their performance on standardized

tests. Obringer (1998) studied nonminority and minority student placement rates in the

Exceptional Children's Program in Mississippi and suggested that Mississippi's IQ-achievement discrepancy formula be reevaluated due to the overrepresentation of minorities in the program.

Another problem associated with quantifying a child's behavior is that it is limited when plugged into discrepancy formulas. Discrepancy formulas compare one score to another score. When a child is evaluated for the Exceptional Children's Program, a multitude of tests are utilized to try to gain a true picture of the child's current level of performance and functioning. The concern is that only two scores can be used in the discrepancy formula. The question then becomes which two scores best summarize a whole child? Bateman and Chard (1995) equated this to putting two dots on a graph and trying to gain an understanding of how a child learns and performs based on those two dots. When several test scores have been obtained, an evaluator must be able to decide which two scores best define who that child is without error. Under these circumstances, the question would always be whether the scores are indicative of the child's true abilities and skills.

Concerns regarding discrepancy formulas also exist because of the inherent problems with psychometric tests. All psychometric tests have a degree of error defined as the standard error of measurement. This is in place because many factors come into factor when testing, including rater biases and response sets. Due to this concern, many tests offer a range of scores that suggests that a person's true score might fall between the upper and lower limit. As discussed earlier, however, discrepancy formulas do not allow a range of scores to be plugged into the formula. Instead, discrepancy formulas require a single score when many test developers realize their test's own weaknesses. Schrag (2000) suggested that these psychometric concerns often lead to false positives or false

negatives.

Discrepancy formulas are inherently *waiting to fail* models (Dykeman, 2006). A child must be in school receiving instruction and must continually fall farther and farther behind until a discrepancy formula shows a discrepancy. By the time the formula shows a discrepancy, the child might be more than 2 years behind grade level. The Exceptional Children's Program is then left with the task of trying to catch the child up to expected standards based on No Child Left Behind (2001) regulations. With testing pressure seemingly at an historical high, school officials cannot allow students to fall further and further behind before providing them services designed to remedy educational concerns.

For these reasons, the discrepancy formula model has been called into question. It no longer seems appropriate to allow a student to fall behind in hopes of them getting so far behind that they will show a severe discrepancy using a discrepancy formula that inherently has validity issues. Researchers have called for a new perspective on the placement of children into the Exceptional Children's Program for many years (Batemen & Chard, 1995; Obringer, 1998; Schrag, 2000). The hope has been to discover a process to correctly identify a child for the Exceptional Children's Program based on their classroom performance as measured against curriculum standards rather than discrepancy formulas. Research also supports the need to provide children with assistance and accommodations as soon as their performance in the classroom identifies them as a child in need rather than waiting for them to fail as measured by discrepancy formulas (Gresham, 2001).

Although the discrepancy between ability and achievement traditionally has been used as the sole basis for qualification reasoning, that was never supposed to be the case. Instead, the discrepancy formula was supposed to be only part of the decision process

(Ofiesh, 2006). Another aspect of the construct that is often overlooked is the idea of appropriate educational opportunity. The IQ-achievement discrepancy does not assess the amount of opportunity a child has experienced. Instead, it looks only at an individual's scores on two tests. Because of the simplicity of the discrepancy process it has been over relied upon and the impact of educational opportunity has been forgotten (Schrag, 2000). However, due to concerns regarding the validity of discrepancy formulas and the alarming growth of students being placed into special education, researchers began studying alternatives to traditional models (Marston et al., 2003). Several reports, including the National Research Council report on minority overrepresentation in special education and a report from the Fordham Foundation and the Progressive Policy Institute titled *Rethinking Special Education,* evaluated how individuals are labeled as having a learning disability (Fletcher et al., 2004). Fletcher et al. (2004) also discussed the Learning Disabilities Summit by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education and noted that all four reports agreed that the overall number of individuals labeled as having a learning disability could be reduced if classroom instruction was improved. Fletcher et al. (2004) also suggested that this concern over classroom instruction and its correlation with placement in special education may explain part of the overrepresentation of minorities in the Exceptional Children's Program.

Current Concerns in Identification Procedures

In addition to lack of instruction, other concerns have heightened criticisms of the current process used to identify individuals for the Exceptional Children's Program. A survey by the National Center for Learning Disabilities in 2002 showed that 54% of parents and 72% of teachers felt that the system for labeling children as disabled took too

long, often delaying interventions for children in need (Fletcher et al., 2004). Other information from the report stated that 84% of teachers knowledgeable of the system felt the system could be improved (Fletcher et al., 2004).

The current model, described as a *wait to fail* model, has undergone continuous challenges for its perceived ineffectiveness (Marston et al., 2003). It is a commonly accepted belief that under the current system of special education classification, a child often does not show the necessary discrepancy between IQ and academics before the third grade (Brown-Chidsey, 2007). This means that a child must continue to struggle and fail through the first 3 or 4 years of his/her education before placing into the Exceptional Children's Program and receiving remediation services. At that point, the students have missed many of the key building blocks needed to promote academic success. Fletcher et al. (2004) suggested that the losses that occur while waiting for a child to meet the current criteria may never be recovered, even with intense academic intervention. Fletcher et al. (2004) also suggested that children who are allowed to continue to fail do not attain the content knowledge or vocabulary of high achievers which slows their acquisition of new knowledge and leads to difficulties in fluency. According to Fletcher et al. (2004), "Not surprisingly, the 'wait to fail' model that exemplifies identification practices for students with LD does not result in significant closing of the achievement gap for most students placed in special education" (p. 310). Fletcher et al. (2004) believed that the current system allows children to fail to a point they may never recover.

Based on the concerns associated with discrepancy formulas, there was a need to research alternative means to evaluate whether a child was experiencing a learning disability. Research supported a proposal that allowed a child to receive intervention

services before they had failed beyond repair (Fletcher et al., 2004). This same research

studying reading had already shown the importance of gaining the early building blocks

of reading on future learning. Allowing a child to bypass the building blocks of

education in hopes that they might one day qualify for help when they could be receiving

help now perplexed many researchers. This put fire into researching alternative practices

that led to the concept of Response to Instruction.

Response to Instruction (RtI)

Response to Instruction was first conceptualized in a 1982 report by the National

Academy of Sciences in its report evaluating the overrepresentation of minorities in

special education (Daly et al., 2007). This report suggested that three criteria must be

used to judge the validity of a special education classification (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

The first criterion asks whether the instructional program is strong enough that adequate

learning could be expected. The second criterion asks whether the special education

program can promote improved student outcomes. The question is whether a child will

benefit from placement in the Exceptional Children's Program. The third criterion

evaluates whether the evaluation process used for special education identification is

accurate. The first two criteria ask questions about the instructional practices a child

might encounter while the final criterion is an assessment of the instructional practice.

This new concept puts the emphasis back on classroom instruction and curriculum-based

measurement rather than standardized, national norm-referenced testing which was the

staple of traditional learning disability placement.

As much as Response to Instruction is valued for the process for which it leads to

classification of children for the Exceptional Children's Program, it is also valued for its

preventive function which provides intervention services for children before they need

special education services. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) described Response to Instruction as a multi-tiered, prevention program in contrast to a remediation program which is how special education is currently described. It was designed to prevent long-term academic failure rather than correct academic failures which the research has shown to be more difficult (Daly et al., 2007). According to Fletcher et al. (2004),

> Eligibility determination is, therefore, supported by systematic efforts at enhanced instruction and progress monitoring, not from a protracted evaluation process that takes place in isolation from the classroom and has historically proven to have no benefit for those deemed eligible. (p. 311)

With Response to Instruction, a systematic process is used that can rule out any questions that exist regarding an individual's instruction before they can be considered for placement in the Exceptional Children's Program. Fuchs (1995) put into operation the process first conceptualized in 1982. In the Response to Instruction process, a child goes through tiers of research-based instructional and intervention support and must prove unable to respond to these treatments before any eligibility decisions can be made. The first tier involves school-wide instruction of all students using a research-based curriculum. At this level, all students receive instruction and are assessed. If a significant portion of the student population performs below standards, the classroom instruction may not be appropriate and needs to be reevaluated. Vaughn and Fuchs (2003) noted if greater than 20% of the students in Tier 1 are not making acceptable growth when compared to other comparison classes, then the decision should be to intervene at the classroom level rather than at an individual child level.

If most students are meeting expectations, the classroom instruction is considered sound and low performing students are labeled at risk and receive additional interventions

designed to be based on their needs and proven researched strategies. This would be

considered Tier 2. Students in Tier 2 receive supplemental instructional opportunities

designed to remediate the skill deficits discovered in Tier 1. For example, the

intervention might include small group instruction where the child can receive more

individualized instruction. During this phase, children are continuously monitored and

tracked to gauge their response to the interventions. After a set period of time, typically 4

to 8 weeks, the decision is made to cease the intervention if it is successful or to tweak

the intervention if there is progress being made. If the intervention was successful in

correcting the deficiency, the student is considered disability free and is returned to the

overall, general education environment and no longer receives ongoing interventions

(Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). If the intervention is not succeeding, the child is moved to the

third tier which involves more intense intervention. In Tier 3 the child might receive

intervention treatments using a different research-based program or a child might receive

more frequent treatment (Daly et al., 2007).

Tier 2 and Tier 3 are designed to evaluate whether a child can be successful in the

regular classroom or whether he/she might need support services outside of the classroom

(Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). As the interventions take place, concerns over instruction are

eliminated as possible reasons for a child's difficulties. In the process of Response to

Instruction, a child can move in and out of tier services as needs arise without ever

getting the label associated with special education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). However, if

the child has gone through all three tiers of instruction and intervention without success,

the Response to Instruction team convenes and discusses placement in special education

(considered Tier 4). At this point, the team has enough information to rule out lack of

educational opportunity or poor instructional practices before they make a decision

regarding possible services. They also have the opportunity to request additional

information that might aid in the decision-making process. Fletcher et al. (2004)

described this process as *treat and test* rather than the more traditional *test and treat*

model which has not been shown successful in past research.

The value of this process is in its preventative nature. Individuals can get

interventions early, when they need them most (Fletcher et al., 2004). Vaughn and Fuchs

(2003) described this process as a risk model rather than a deficit model as it was seen in

the historical discrepancy process. The focus becomes the classroom instruction and

intervention rather than future failure. A child's progress can also be continuously

monitored through the process resulting in a graph of their skill attainment or need.

Johnson and Smith (2008) suggested that the alignment between instruction and

intervention that occurs throughout this process results in a more cohesive program that

can lead to a better understanding of a child's need which should result in higher student

achievement. Educational opportunity can now be evaluated whereas before it could

only be surmised. Under this process, a child's failure to respond is evidence that the

concern is within the child rather than external (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

Brown-Chidsey (2007) suggested that fewer children will place in the special

education program based on Response to Intervention because they will be receiving

intervention services before deficits become catastrophic. This also means fewer children

will be labeled as disabled which is often seen as a weakness in the Exceptional

Children's Program. This process also takes away other factors such as the teacher

referral process which has been characterized with concerns. The National Joint

Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) report titled *Responsiveness to Intervention

and Learning Disabilities* (2005) noted the following benefits:

1) earlier identification of students with LD, possibly eliminating the "wait to

fail" situation that occurs when a ability-achievement discrepancy is utilized, 2)

reduction in the number of students referred for special education and related

services, by distinguishing between students whose achievement problems are due

to a Learning Disability (LD) and those who are due to other causes such as

inappropriate instruction, 3) reduction in the over identification of minority

students, be reducing the bias in the assessment of students from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds, 4) provision of more instructional relevant

data, through the use of curriculum-based measurements, student portfolios,

teacher observations, and criterion-referenced achievement measures, 5) focus on

student outcomes with increased accountability for all learners, and 6) promotion

of shared responsibility and collaboration among general education and special

education teachers, teachers of English Language Learners, related service

personnel, administrators, and parents. (p. 14)

Research Showing Successful Response to Instruction Implementation

Although the concept of Response to Instruction has just gained the federal

backing that it needed through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

reauthorization in 2004, several studies have evaluated its implementation in varying

settings. Some of these studies involved programs with similar characteristics to the

Response to Instruction program while other studies evaluated the success of an intact

Response to Instruction model.

Considered one of the pilot sites for the problem-solving model characteristic of

Response to Instruction, the Heartland Area Education Agency of Iowa began using the

problem-solving model with their children in the early 1990s. Similar to the Response to

Instruction process, their program involved direct assessment, intervention, progress monitoring, and outcome evaluation (Grimes, Kurns, & Tilly, 2006). Since enacting the problem-solving model in their schools, the Heartland Agency has witnessed considerable decreases in the number of initial special education placements, with as much as a 41% decrease in kindergarten placements (Bender & Shores, 2007).

Pennsylvania was also at the forefront of the problem-solving movement in education. Starting in 1990, Pennsylvania enacted a tiered instructional support system that included problem-solving teams to identify student concerns in 1,700 elementary schools across the state. The first tier of service occurred within general education and included benchmark assessment where baseline information on a child's ability was collected. Tier 2 involved the creation of individualized intervention based on data gained through the problem-solving process. The final tier, placement in special education, was implemented if the student did not respond to the interventions within Tier 2. In their evaluation of the Pennsylvania problem-solving model, Kovaleski and Glew (2006) noted that the schools using the model witnessed one-third fewer referrals for the special education program when compared to the schools not using the problem-solving model. The schools in the pilot also noted an 84% success rate in providing preventative measures to their students (Kovaleski & Glew, 2006).

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Hollenbeck (2007) studied Response to Instruction in first and third grade mathematics classes to assess Response to Instruction's effectiveness in the area of math. In the first grade, 41 classrooms across 10 schools were followed using a control group and treatment group. All children in the study were identified as at-risk for the development of math disabilities. The treatment group was provided tutoring services and computer practice while the control group received regular classroom instruction.

The results showed that students in the treatment group performed comparably or superior to control group students on computation, concept application, and story problem skills and supported the use of Response to Instruction processes as a preventative measure in elementary math.

Another study conducted by Fuchs et al. (2007) assessed math problem-solving skills in third grade. One hundred twenty classrooms across 13 schools were evaluated and divided into three groups—traditional, Tier 1 support, and Tier 2 support. The traditional group received conventional teacher-led instruction while Tier 1 students received validated instruction using a research-based computer program. Tier 2 used the same computer program but more often and with longer sessions. The results showed that many of the students in the traditional control group did not respond to the instruction. Those children at Tier 1 services performed substantially better on problem-solving skills and Tier 2 individuals performed even stronger. Fuchs et al. (2007) used the information from this study to suggest that valid, coordinated intervention services in the area of math can reduce failure in problem-solving skills.

Research on the effect of RtI on reading fluency, rate, and accuracy was conducted by Tucker (2010) and found that students who participated in reading interventions demonstrated significantly more growth in the areas of reading fluency, reading rate, and reading accuracy when compared to students who received no intervention. Tucker's (2010) research included 20 students who were identified as at risk in the area of reading. The group was split into a control group that received only the general curriculum instruction within the regular classroom. The experiment group was provided supplemental reading instruction using a reading program in addition to the instruction they were getting in the regular classroom. The data collected showed that the

students who received the interventions under the guidance of RtI increased their overall reading achievement in all areas.

Johnson and Smith (2008) evaluated the usefulness of Response to Instruction in the middle school. Among the many benefits they noted from their study was the cohesiveness for which teachers collected and analyzed data. This led the teachers of Cheyenne Mountain Middle School to evaluate their teaching practices and adopt a more differentiated instructional program. Because the teachers became a more cohesive unit, resources were managed more judiciously. Cheyenne Mountain also experienced less referrals to special education as a result of implementing Response to Instruction. The belief was that children were identified earlier and intervened with before they fell too far behind. Consistent with the Johnson and Smith (2008) study, McNamara and Hollinger (2003) studied 80 elementary and urban intervention teams that require the Response to Intervention staples of progress mentoring and data collection. In their study, McNamara and Hollinger (2003) noted a reduction in inappropriate referrals when using progress monitoring and data collection.

The Minneapolis Public School District enacted a problem-solving model comparable to Response to Instruction in their schools in 1994 and noted several positive benefits of the program (Marston et al., 2003). Teachers in the district steered away from strict curriculum guidelines and offered a more differentiated program that assessed the needs of all students. Teachers in the regular education and special education departments worked together more collaboratively. School psychologists, no longer bound by high testing loads, were afforded the opportunity to work with teachers on preventative measures rather than corrective measures. They also noted that less children were being labeled by the Exceptional Children's Program as learning disabled. The

Minneapolis project also addressed local concerns of disproportionate minorities in the Exceptional Children's Program. Whereas they were over identifying minorities before enactment of this problem-solving model, within a few years of implementation a black student was no more likely to be labeled with a disability than a white student.

Myers (2008) utilized the Response to Intervention process to enhance adult behavioral outcomes. Myers (2008) suggested that teacher professional development could be enhanced by the Response to Intervention process just as a child's reading could be improved through the process. In Myers's (2008) study, the school was enacting a school-wide positive behavior support program with hopes of increasing positive communication between the teachers and students. Teachers were given initial training in positive behavior support but not all of the teachers met the desired expectations after initial training. Those teachers were given additional intervention designed to enhance their ability to enact the positive behavior support ideals. Those teachers were monitored and some teachers needed more directed intervention in order to understand the goals and ideals of positive behavior support. This school followed the principles of Response to Intervention with the teachers rather than the customary students being the beneficiaries. At the conclusion of the study the teachers who were involved praised the process. Specific notations discussed the benefits of being monitored and being able to review their progress. In her discussion, Myers (2008) noted the flexibility of the RtI model and the ability to move from phase to phase as needed as being beneficial to the success of the program.

Concerns with the Response to Instruction Process

As positive as the future looks for RtI, implementation does not come without several question marks. Researchers noted that, partly due to it being a new concept,

there is a limited supportive research base (Addressing Barriers to Learning, 2006; Tilly, 2003). Much of the research suggested that the roots of practiced Response to Instruction began in the 1990s with the Iowa problem-solving model or through the Pennsylvania instructional support programs (Kovaleski & Glew, 2006; Tilly, 2003). However, although these programs used concepts similar to the Response to Instruction project, they were not consistent with the entire multi-tier package that encompasses Response to Instruction (Batsche et al., 2006). Kovaleski (2008) noted that new research needs to be geared to evaluating Response to Instruction as an entire package rather than evaluating individual components, such as problem solving or progress monitoring, as past research has done. Other challenges that continue to surface in research include teacher buy in, fidelity of implementation, and lack of resources (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Hall, 2008).

In her study of rural schools in Texas, Brendle (2008) noted several concerns in regard to Response to Intervention implementation. She cited insufficient professional staff and the lack of resources needed to purchase intervention programs as concerns. She also noted that teacher time is devoted to working with students from diverse backgrounds and there is little time available for extra responsibilities. Ormsbee and Haring (2000) also noted concerns for rural districts who are attempting to implement Response to Intervention. They suggested that rural districts are typically relegated to nonindustrial areas often void of universities or colleges. Therefore, rural districts are not supported by the ongoing research and development opportunities that suburban or city districts are afforded.

Another area of concern noted in the research involved teacher readiness, or the teacher's abilities to navigate a child through the Response to Instruction process. This

process asks teachers within the regular classroom to evaluate research interventions, apply interventions, and monitor the results. Many researchers felt that teachers may not be ready for these tasks without extensive training (Addressing Barriers to Learning, 2006; Aitken, 2007; Duffy, 2007). Aitken (2007) explained that

> The work often falls back on the individual teachers to do, which limits the
>
> effectiveness of RtI to the individual teacher's skills at using research-based
>
> interventions and collecting appropriate data about the effectiveness of the
>
> interventions. As one educator explained about RtI, when the teacher lacks the
>
> ability to create and implement various interventions, the RtI model may fall apart
>
> for that teacher's students. (p. 8)

Porter (2008) noted in her study of problem-solving teams that often teachers are given interventions to be implemented in their classroom but the interventions are never implemented. Another related barrier in her study is that the interventions are often put into place by people who are not trained in the area of difficulty. For example, reading interventions were being enacted by individuals without sufficient expertise in reading.

This concept of intervention fidelity has been discussed in the research (VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007) and suggested that a breakdown in the Response to Intervention process will most likely occur at the intervention phase. This research suggested that teachers are not prepared to enact the strategies that are suggested to them. In support, Lee-Tarver (n.d.) found that the majority of teachers in her study of intervention teams received no intervention implementation training. There also seems to be little monitoring of the actual intervention to ensure it is implemented as designed while at the classroom level (VanDerHeyden et al., 2007). The inability of teachers to effectively implement the provided strategies with fidelity is a barrier well defined in the

research (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Shinn, 2007).

Dunn and Mabry (2008) interviewed multiple individuals involved in the implementation of RtI in two northwestern school districts and found that the two school districts shared many of the same concerns regarding the implementation of RtI. Although subject perspectives varied somewhat, two themes were identified in the research. First, there were multiple layers of confusion impacting RtI implementation, and second, the available resources affected local perceptions and buy in to the program. Some subjects noted that they did not feel they implemented the strategies with fidelity because they lacked the necessary understanding. Needs identified by the participants included more resources, professional development, and knowledge about the model.

Thompson (2010) surveyed school psychologists in Nebraska using both quantitative and qualitative designed questions to gain insight into their perspectives on RtI implementation. Even though they did respond that there are some benefits of RtI, including early intervention, problem-solving approach, and improved instruction, they also noted many concerns with implementation. These concerns, as reported by the participants, included a lack of fidelity in the implementation, a lack of training and guidelines, a lack of resources (time, money, staff, etc.), a lack of research-based support, and inconsistencies in practice. Mike (2010) supported many of the concerns suggested by Thompson (2010) and noted a need for professional development, lack of teacher preparation, lack of support staff, and intervention fidelity as concerns.

Dimick (2009) supported other research and found that significant concerns exist in terms of leadership, training, communication, and teacher buy in. Teachers in Dimick's (2009) research suggested that although strong teachers could afford change within the school, a strong administrator could create universal, lasting change. Dimick's

(2009) research supported the importance of having a strong administrator when a school begins implementation of RtI practices so that teachers will have guidance, support, and vision.

Further research has suggested the importance of administrative leadership in the successful implementation of RtI practices in the schools. Administrators are held accountable for providing the framework to ensure ongoing professional development, sufficient materials, and resources to support the initiative, and a system that monitors the fidelity of implementation (Mellard & Johnson, 2008). According to Dupuis (2010),

> Administrators play a crucial role in the effective implementation of RtI at the
> school level. It is important that there is a vision, plan, and climate of mutual
> respect between general and special educators. Administrators need to identify
> key staff to engage others to buy-in to the model and allow staff to express
> concerns. Time, scheduling, and resources must be carefully planned
> for….Teachers must be given the skills, knowledge and time to feel confident in
> implementing interventions. (p. 45)

Further research conducted by Sailor (2009) again supported the need for administrators to get teachers to buy in to RtI before implementation can begin. Sailor (2009) stated,

> If a critical mass of teachers in a school do not buy in to the systems change effort
> proposed by the principal or, more likely, the district central office, the plan will
> not proceed in a desirable direction. Buy-in is often an artifact of empowerment.
> (p. 134)

Research has been conducted on student support teams, which are similar to Response to Instruction teams. These teams were designed to provide assistance to teachers in order to keep students in their least restrictive environment. These teams

were created in the mid 1980s and share some of the same features as current Response to Instruction teams (Lane, Mahdavi, & Borthwick-Duffy, 2003). By design, both groups were created to provide teachers a resource for attaining suggestions or interventions to improve the academic achievement of struggling students. Research of these student support teams was not always favorable. Slonski-Fowler and Truscott (2004) found that teachers were often dissatisfied with the pre-referral process that was the foundation for the student support team. In their study, Slonski-Fowler and Truscott (2004) noted that teachers had little input and felt devalued, and that teachers believed many of the intervention offerings by the team were useless and were never monitored. Walls (2005) concurred with this study and noted that teachers often were not provided worthwhile suggestions or prepared to initiate effective interventions to students struggling with academics.

Inman and Tollefson (1988) studied the relationship between teacher experience and their perception of intervention teams. In their study, teachers with 6 years or more of experience had more negative ratings of the intervention team and believed their years of experience were sufficient in order to decide if a child needed special education services. The teachers in this study also believed the interventions provided by the intervention team had already been attempted in the classroom and were unsuccessful. Overall, teachers in this study were not supportive of the intervention team process.

Aitken (2007) noted that this concept of readiness also translates to the school itself. Different schools have different readiness levels based on available resources. Many of the research-based intervention programs are costly making it more difficult for schools in poorer communities to access the same interventions as other schools.

Truscott, Cohen, Sams, Sanborn, and Frank (2005) also studied school

preparedness by studying the pre-referral intervention teams that are designed to implement the strategies of Response to Intervention. Truscott et al. (2005) surveyed 225 individuals from schools across the 50 states. The study found that clear practices and goals did not exist across the schools. They also noted a lack of training in procedures and in understanding of interventions. Respondents stated that interventions provided to teachers were often simple and required little to no alteration of the classroom instruction. This suggested that intervention teams are not adequately prepared to implement the strategies inherent to Response to Intervention. Truscott et al. (2005) recommended additional training in evidence-based interventions and additional staff development in the pre-referral intervention process.

Interestingly, in a study of Response to Instruction efficacy, Kucera (2008) compared the academic achievement of two schools, one of which was undertaking the Response to Instruction process and another school within the same school district which was not. The school not involved in the Response to Instruction process utilized its traditional reading program throughout the year. The schools were chosen for the study due to their overwhelming similarities. After analyzing results on the year-end reading assessment, Kucera (2008) noted no differences in the academic achievement of the two schools. Students who took part in the Response to Instruction practices showed no significant differences than the students who took part in the regular reading curriculum. Other factors, such as referral or placement in the Exceptional Children's Program, were insignificant when comparing the two schools. This study questioned earlier research (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gresham, 2002; VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Barnett, 2005) on the effectiveness of Response to Instruction that suggested improved student achievement and reduced referral and placement in the Exceptional Children's Program.

Summary

Since the inception of Public Law 94-142 in 1975 school systems have struggled with how to place and serve children with disabilities. Traditional discrepancy formulas have been seen as the best available format to evaluate children for possible services. However, concerns of disproportionate minorities, lack of suitable tests, and student failure, have suggested that current practices may not be sufficient. Soon after states began to authorize use of discrepancy formulas, researchers began to question the practice (Schrag, 2000). Researchers studied and diagnosed the concerns with the old discrepancy formula models and attempted to theorize new ways to identify children who were in need of Exceptional Children's services (Bateman & Chard, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Gresham, 1991; Obringer, 1998; Schrag, 2000).

The search for alternative means of intervention and placement in special education started quickly. Just a few years after PL 94-142 was passed, the concept of Response to Instruction was first conceptualized in a 1982 report by the National Academy of Sciences (Daly et al., 2007). However, it was 13 years later, in 1995, when Fuchs (1995) first put into operation the idea of Response to Instruction and created the tiered system of service delivery.

Even though the concept is fairly new, early research seems to be favorable and suggests that Response to Instruction may be the answer that many of the critics of discrepancy formula have searched for over the years (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Hollenbeck, 2007; Johnson & Smith, 2008; Myers, 2008). Response to Instruction is seen as preventative in nature. This concept puts the emphasis on the general classroom instruction and only intervenes when a student shows that they cannot be successful even with intensive remediation strategies. It counters the traditional wait to fail model and

supports the idea that early remediation, while students are trying to build their academic foundations, is crucial to success in school. Still in its infancy though, there is more research to be done not only on its effectiveness but also on the perceptions of those who must make the major change from previous procedure to current practice. The current research base, because Response to Instruction is such a new concept to educators, is insufficient and needs to be expanded in order to facilitate a smooth transition from traditional discrepancy formulas to the new Response to Instruction model.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Since enactment of The Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, the

predominant means of classifying children as learning disabled in the Exceptional

Children's Program has been use of a discrepancy formula. Due to ongoing concerns

with the various discrepancy formulas, educators and researchers evaluated alternative

means for helping low-performing children. One of the faults of traditional discrepancy

formulas was their wait to fail mentality which relied on years of failure before a child

would qualify for EC services based on the discrepancy model. Many researchers hoped

to correct the concerns inherent in a wait to fail model by introducing a different

approach to remediation services. The revised Individuals with Disabilities Education

Improvement Act of 2004 set these ideas into place by suggesting an alternative process

that suggested children should be provided intervention services earlier, before they

failed beyond correction. Placement into the Exceptional Children's Program could then

be justified based on a student's response to these research-based instructional practices.

Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' understanding of the

Response to Instruction process. Specifically, the research questions were as follows:

1. To what extent do elementary teachers have basic knowledge of the purpose,

goals, and process associated with taking a child to the Response to Instruction team?

2. To what extent do elementary teachers understand who is involved in the

Response to Instruction process and their roles?

3. To what extent do elementary teachers understand the tiered system associated

with Response to Instruction?

4. To what extent do elementary teachers know why school systems are enacting

Response to Instruction practices?

5. What problems or concerns have teachers encountered in their attempts to implement Response to Instruction strategies?

6. What suggestions for improvement could teachers offer based on their experience with Response to Instruction implementation?

The answers to these questions can be used in the formative process to improve the school's adaptability to the mandates suggested in IDEIA 2004.

Research Design

The methodology for this research was a mixed-methods approach. According to Creswell, Fetters, and Ivankova (2004), mixed-methods approaches involve pulling together quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in a single research study. This means more than just collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The information obtained through both techniques must then be integrated and analyzed during the process. Creswell et al. (2004) suggested that

> The underlying logic of mixing is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient in themselves to capture the trends and details of the situation. When used in combination, both quantitative and qualitative data yield a more complete analysis, and they complement each other. (p. 7)

Creswell (2003) also noted that mixed-methods approaches are effective in controlling the drawbacks of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data is effective at attaining information from a larger group through the use of surveys or questionnaires but because these data collection techniques are predetermined, quantitative approaches lack the ability to assess unexpected themes. Qualitative approaches allow themes to be explored but because the sample sizes are so small the

results are typically difficult to generalize to other groups. The mixed-methods approach is seen by many researchers as beneficial because it cancels out these weaknesses.

Several premises of this project dictate that a mixed-methods approach be implemented. According to Morse (1991),

> Characteristics of a qualitative research problem are: (a) the concept is "immature" due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research; (b) a notion that the available theory may be inaccurate, inappropriate, incorrect, or biased; (c) a need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory; or (d) the nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to quantitative measures. (p. 120)

The qualitative approach was appropriate as a research design in this case for several reasons as described by Morse (1991). Implementation of Response to Instruction practices has only been in existence since 2004 and there seem to be few studies researching early implementation of the process. This makes other methodologies not practical for this study. Because research on Response to Instruction was still in its infancy, the research process was more exploratory and the examiner did not know what themes to expect until data analysis began. The interview format of data collection, which allows for interactive conversation, is also better adapted to qualitative measurement (Creswell, 2003). A qualitative approach allows the examiner to extend interview questions to attain a more in-depth understanding of unexpected responses. This process allows the examiner to gain a better understanding of why something happened. Merriam (1998) contended, "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 1).

In order to gain meaningful insight into the implementation of Response to Instruction, individual teacher perspectives need to be analyzed to assist in understanding. Qualitative methodology is most appropriate for this type of inquiry. Merriam (1998) also explained that "the key philosophical assumption…upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (p. 6). In the case of this study, the information gained was expected to be individually relevant to each respondent's experiences with the implementation process. This type of data makes qualitative research, which allows the examiner to explore and deviate from scripted interview questions, paramount in order to better understand the situation.

As informative as the interview format of the process was, the obvious drawbacks included difficulty generalizing the outcomes to other populations and inherent biases to this process. Data collection through interviews requires an interviewer to make judgment calls which introduces examiner bias. Qualitative data also present an inability to generalize the findings of the research. By incorporating quantitative procedures in the process, examiner bias can be reduced and the results are more readily generalized to a larger population. Survey information was beneficial in triangulating data so that the results were more credible. The credibility comes from attaining data in more than one format, thus reducing biases (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Sieber (1973) stated that with the growth of mixed-methods designs it became more commonplace to combine traditionally quantitative data, such as surveys, with qualitative data often gained through interview or observation.

The system of inquiry was based on a phenomenological research tradition. The phenomenological approach, as described by Gall et al. (2003), was "the study of the

world as it appears to individuals when they place themselves in a state of consciousness

that reflects an effort to be free of everyday biases and beliefs" (p. 481). It includes the

individual's perception of reality. This approach was first founded by Edmund Husserl

and suggested that "the starting point for knowledge was the self's experience of

phenomena, which are the various sensations, perceptions, and ideations that appear in

consciousness when the self focuses attention on an object" (Gall et al., 2003, p. 481). In

this research, the participants were asked to describe their understanding and experiences

within the Response to Instruction process.

Participants

The population was comprised of staff from two schools located in a rural

foothills region of North Carolina. Both schools were consistently rated as high growth

by state accountability standards but both were in their infancy in Response to Instruction

implementation. School A served 459 K-6 students and had 23 certified homeroom

teachers who participated in direct instruction. Staff experience varied with 7% of the

staff having 3 or less years of experience. Staff members with 4-10 years of experience

made up 50% of the population while staff with more than 10 years of experience made

up 43% of the staff population. The teaching staff included 22 female teachers and one

male teacher, all Caucasian. Forty-seven percent of the teachers at School A carried

advanced degrees and eight of those were Nationally Board Certified.

School B also served K-6 but had 30 certified homeroom teachers who were

involved in direct instruction of the 705 students. School B was comparable to School A

in years of experience. Fifty-five percent of the staff of School B had at least 10 years of

experience, 31% of the staff had 4-10 years of experience, and the remaining 14% of the

staff had 3 or less years of experience. This staff was also primarily female with only one

male teacher. Thirty-three percent of the teaching staff had advanced degrees with 10 of those staff members being Nationally Board Certified. The teaching staff represented in this study were all Caucasian. However, unlike School A who implemented Response to Instruction through all kindergarten through sixth grades, School B only implemented Response to Instruction practices in kindergarten through fourth grade. Therefore, of the 30 certified homeroom teachers at School B, only 21 homeroom teachers were involved in the Response to Instruction implementation.

These sites were purposively chosen because they were in their developmental stage in the Response to Instruction process. Response to Instruction as a process was in its early stages. One goal of the study was to examine the participants' understanding of the process while they were in the early learning stage.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two formats. Surveys were conducted of the staff from each school. Each regular education homeroom teacher was asked to complete a survey. After analyzing the data from the survey, the researcher created an interview guide and performed interviews at each school. The analysis of the survey included searches for apparent inconsistencies in response or confusion regarding the roles or processes associated with Response to Instruction practices. The interview was guided by the questions but opportunities were available during the interview to expand on responses in order to clarify themes or responses that came forth.

Data Instrumentation

The survey document that was utilized for this research was adopted from a 2008 Georgia study assessing teacher perceptions of Response to Instruction (see Appendix A). The researcher created a survey document in order to gain quantitative data that could be

used to "understand [the teacher's] perspective of the RtI process in the areas of knowledge, procedures, roles of team members, and staff development" (Stollar-Bolinger, 2008, p. 1). Before conducting her research, Stollar-Bolinger (2008) researched Response to Instruction and related topics in order to identify themes that could be evaluated through research. In her research, Stollar-Bolinger (2008) noted that little information was available on the topic and few assessment tools were available. The researcher created her own survey document based on five central themes: (1) description of basic knowledge of the RtI process, (2) description of RtI procedures, (3) general education teacher's role, (4) staff development training, and (5) demographic information (Stollar-Bolinger, 2008). According to Stollar-Bolinger (2008), "the five basic themes of this survey will provide insight as to what the teachers know about the processes, procedures, and the various roles involved in the RtI process" (p. 70). The survey was designed as a closed-item measure that does not allow for explanation of responses. Instead, respondents were asked to choose between possible responses.

Stollar-Bolinger (2008) conducted a pilot test of her survey, as suggested by Gall et al. (2003). The researcher contacted a pilot group and asked for criticisms and recommendations for improvement. Specifically, the researcher asked for feedback on "flow, structure, clarity, wording, and time for completion" (Stollar-Bolinger, 2008, p. 69). The researcher asked 10 general education elementary teachers to review the document in both paper and web format. The pilot group was complimentary of the document (Stollar-Bolinger, 2008). Completion time varied between 7½ minutes to 8½ minutes, depending on whether the web-based or paper-based survey was being completed. The pilot group was able to understand the questions and could follow the thought processes of the questions (Stollar-Bolinger, 2008). Only minimal suggestions

were offered. The resulting product after the pilot test was a 35-item survey which included five questions concerning knowledge, nine about procedures, 12 regarding teacher roles, three concerning staff development, and six on demographical information.

Both reliability and validity were established for the document. According to Gall et al. (2003), "A questionnaire that measures attitudes generally must be constructed as an attitude scale and must use a substantial number of items, (usually at least 10) in order to obtain a reliable assessment of an individual's attitude" (p. 229). To satisfy the need for an attitudinal scale, the designer of the survey typically used either 3- or 5-point rating scales. Three-point rating scale items were answered by marking items as *major, minor*, or *not a goal*. Five-point rating scales allowed the participant to respond to questions by marking *always*, *frequently*, *occasionally*, *sometimes*, or *never*. Some items did not require attitudinal scales and could be marked yes or no or through other similar ratings as seen in Appendix A.

In addition, Stollar-Bolinger (2008) noted that inter-rater reliability was established through the pilot test. Experts made recommendations to remove some initial open-ended questions to keep the content of the instrument more reliable. Nardi (2003) suggested removing open-ended questions, stating that "open ended questions require content analysis and raise an issue of reliability and whether interpretation of the content would be consistent" (p. 65). A cover letter and instructions were also created to aid in reliability.

The examiner established content and construct validity during the formulation of this research document. According to Stollar-Bolinger (2008), "content validity of the questions was established by obtaining feedback from experts in the areas of special education, pre-referral interventions, the Student Support Team and Response to

Intervention systems, as well as curriculum procedures, statistics, and survey development" (p. 74). The experts analyzed the document and made more suggestions to improve the survey before it was distributed to respondents. Further, as suggested by Gall et al. (2003) and Creswell (2003), codes were assigned to each school to assure validity of the survey document.

To analyze the collected data, Stollar-Bollinger (2008) most commonly used frequency counts and percentage data. While most items were described using frequency distribution tables showing frequency counts and percentage data, a few questions regarding demographic data were analyzed using measures of central tendency and measures of variability. Stollar-Bollinger (2008) believed frequency distribution tables were the most appropriate means of analyzing and reporting the data inherent to her research.

Procedures

After obtaining permission from the school system's Internal Review Board, the researcher met with the principals of the two schools to discuss the purposes of the research and to schedule an opportunity to speak with the school staff. After describing to the teachers the purposes and intent of the study, anonymous, written surveys were handed out which included an informed consent (see Appendix B). Teachers were given the opportunity to complete the survey at that time or to complete it at a later time. A folder was maintained at the school so that teachers could return the survey. Reminder emails thanking the staff for their participation were sent to the school staff 1 day after the meeting and again as needed until at least 70% of the survey forms were returned or the passage of 1 week. The surveys were examined using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency counts and percentage data and interview questions were created to

expand on the themes that came forth from the survey results. A randomized sample of five teachers at each school was chosen using a random number generator. Narrowing down the population of teachers to a randomized sample was necessary so the qualitative responses could be evaluated in depth. Qualitative information from a possible population of 44 respondents would have been too difficult to analyze effectively. Teachers selected through the randomization procedure were allowed an opportunity to opt out of the study. If a teacher opted out of the study, the next teacher according to the randomization chart was selected. Those individuals included in the study were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix C) that further described the intent of the study.

Data were collected through survey and standardized interviews. Both forms of data collection sought to gather information from a sample of the population. The examiner attempted to schedule interviews within 2 weeks after survey results were analyzed. All interviews were conducted at the participant's school if possible and occurred after student hours or at the time available to the teacher. A series of open-ended interview questions were posed to each participant. Interview notes and audio taping were maintained by the interviewer during the interview. Interview notes were maintained for two reasons: The notes served as a backup in case of mechanical difficulties during audio taping, and also as a reflective practice for the interviewer to assist in the formation of impromptu probing during the interview. The probes served to clarify responses to the open-ended interview questions. Audio taped recordings were transcribed after the interview was concluded. Copies of transcribed notes were sent to the participant in order to confirm the accuracy of the notes. After confirmation of the interview notes, the examiner hand coded the information in search of themes that might

assist in the data analysis process. The mixed-methods approach also added validity to the study through triangulation which helped enhance the accuracy of the study. It involved collecting different types of data from different sources and using different ways to collect and analyze the data (Creswell, 2005). Collecting data through different techniques allowed the exploratory examination of information that hopefully allowed better understanding of the topic.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to assess teacher understanding of Response to Instruction goals and practices and to improve the training process for schools that have not yet undergone training in implementation of Response to Instruction. To answer the research questions, information was obtained from the teachers using a survey and personal interviews. Data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency counts and percentage data. To obtain the frequency counts, the responses to each item were tabulated to determine how many respondents responded to each possible item response. Frequency information is valuable as a descriptive statistic because it allows a researcher to determine which characteristics of Response to Instruction were most commonly prevalent as reported by the respondents. This information can be used to generalize information and predict future responses to similar survey items. In addition, frequency information can be used to predict communication patterns between individuals. This information was translated into a percentage of response that could be used to describe the percentage of respondents who believed their response was most appropriate for the survey item. This information was then presented using frequency distribution tables.

Interview data was analyzed by reducing responses down to common themes that

became apparent. The open-ended nature of interview questions allowed the teachers to expand on the questions and resulted in some themes and perceptions not expected by the examiner. Performing this transcript analysis by hand and without the aid of a computerized program allowed the researcher an opportunity to again review the interview and recall the teachers' feelings as they participated in the interview. Because perception is an important part of this research, the researcher believes it is important to understand not only what the participants were saying but also in what context. A computer program may be able to search for key words or phrases, but computer programs cannot comprehend and understand feelings that come out in an interview. Although this process may introduce some examiner bias to the study, the researcher understands the importance of this data to the study.

To assist in the theme analysis, the researcher utilized different color highlighters. Interviews were first read and expected themes were highlighted in different colors as they were indicated. An additional review was conducted after all interviews were read with the specific task of searching for themes that were less obvious or not previously indicated in past research.

Summary

Chapter 3 focused on the methodology that was used to answer the research questions that ultimately provided insight into answering the problem associated with this study. This chapter began by reintroducing the research questions and then suggested a mixed-methods research design that could be used to collect data. The research participants and setting were again discussed so the reader could evaluate whether the results would generalize to another setting. Data collection types, including surveys and interviews, were evaluated in regards to their appropriateness for this research. The

survey document was described and analyzed for its appropriateness of use in this study.

Procedures for data collection were also defined in order to facilitate study replication in

the future. Finally, the data analysis section explained how the collected data was

evaluated.

Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis

This research project was designed to ascertain teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the Response to Instruction (RtI) process in order to assist in the transition from classical discrepancy formula placement of children into special education to a placement process that gauges a child's Response to Instructional practice. The belief was that teachers who are already experiencing or piloting this process change could be instrumental in the transition of other teachers who have not yet begun this process. The teachers involved in the RtI pilot process could be surveyed and interviewed regarding not only their knowledge of the core beliefs of RtI but they could also be questioned concerning the pitfalls they have encountered along the way.

This research involved a mixed-methods approach utilizing surveys and randomly selected interviews including elementary teachers from two schools in one school district who were responsible for piloting the transition from discrepancy-based formulas to the Response to Instruction process. A mixed-methods approach to research allows the examiner to answer many types of questions that may not be easy to answer using only a quantitative or a qualitative design approach. In this research the examiner hoped to answer six research questions. Specifically, the research questions were as follows:

1. To what extent do elementary teachers have basic knowledge of the purpose, goals, and process associated with taking a child to the Response to Instruction team?

2. To what extent do elementary teachers understand who is involved in the Response to Instruction process and their roles?

3. To what extent do elementary teachers understand the tiered system associated with Response to Instruction?

4. To what extent do elementary teachers know why school systems are enacting

Response to Instruction practices?

     5. What problems or concerns have teachers encountered in their attempts to implement Response to Instruction strategies?

     6. What suggestions for improvement could teachers offer based on their experience with Response to Instruction implementation?

While the first three questions could be answered using data from the survey found in Appendix C, the examiner was able to gain further understanding of teacher knowledge by following up survey information with interview questions. The last three research questions were answered using qualitative interviews which allowed for open discussion between the examiner and the interviewee.

This chapter of the research project will briefly reintroduce the research design and methods and will present the findings based on the surveys and interviews.

Description of Setting

This study took place in a rural school district in the foothills of North Carolina. The school district had 28 kindergarten through 12th grade schools with approximately 17,500 students. Of these 28 schools, 16 were elementary schools serving kindergarten through sixth grade.

Description of Participants

The participants in this study included teachers convenience sampled from two schools who piloted the Response to Instruction transition within the school system. School A had 23 certified homeroom teachers responsible for the daily implementation of Response to Instruction, while School B had 21 certified homeroom teachers responsible for implementation. All certified homeroom teachers responsible for the daily implementation of the Response to Instruction process at School A and School B were

given the opportunity to participate in the study via the survey and interviews.

Survey Data

Although not for identification purposes, participants were asked to complete some demographic information as part of the survey. These items included current grade-level teaching, number of years at current grade level, number of years at current school, and total years of teaching. This information was used to determine which teachers completed the survey and to assess their experience level with teaching in general and within their current grade.

Forty-four surveys were handed out to teachers at School A and School B. The span of grades at School A ranged from kindergarten to sixth grade with no more than four and no less than three teachers at each grade level. There were 23 teachers at School A who were asked to consider participating in the study, while 21 teachers at School B, spread from kindergarten to fourth grade, were asked to participate. School B did not include Grades 5 and 6 because Response to Instruction implementation had not begun in these grades. At School B there were no more than five and no less than four teachers at each grade level.

Of the 44 surveys handed out, 32 surveys were completed and returned for a return rate of 73%. School A had 17 out of 23 surveys returned while School B had 15 surveys returned out of a possible 21. There was little variation in the number of surveys returned by grade level. At School A, the number of surveys returned by grade level ranged from one to four, while School B ranged from two to four returned surveys per grade level. Although most surveys were responded to completely, a few surveys had items that were skipped. These items were included in the results and were analyzed using the appropriate sample size based on number of responses to each question.

Of the survey respondents, experience levels of the teachers included in the study varied across all levels. Teachers were asked to respond whether they had less than 1 year of experience, 1-5 years of experience, 6-10 years of experience, 11-15 years of experience, or 16 or more years of experience. Respondents at School A had overall more experience in the teaching profession with the majority of teachers having 11 or more years of experience. Recognizing that no participants reported less than 1 year of experience, the experience level of School B was spread fairly even across the other options. Although no teachers reported less than 1 year of experience, five teachers reported only 1-5 years of experience. Three teachers reported 6-10 years of experience. Four teachers reported 11-15, while the final three respondents reported 16 or more years of experience.

Based on this information, 18.75% (N = 6) of respondents had 1-5 years of experience, while 12.50% (N = 4) had 6-10 years of experience. Teachers with 11-15 years of experience (N = 12) made up 37.50% of returned surveys and teachers with 16 or more years of experience (N = 10) made up 31.25% of the survey sample.

Additional questions on the survey evaluated teachers' years of experience at their current school and years of experience at their current grade level. The data suggested that all 17 respondents from School A had from 1-5 years of experience at School A. While it appears School A had no teachers with more than 5 years of experience at their school it must be noted that the school district underwent reorganization during the 2005-2006 school year which established School A as an elementary school for the first time. So although it appears everyone who responded to the survey was new to School A, all employees of School A reported 1-5 years of experience or less. On the other hand, School B also appeared to have many teachers new to the school without an explanation

like School A. Eleven of the 15 respondents (73.33%) had been at the school for 5 years or less. Three respondents (20%) had been at the school between 11 and 15 years. One respondent (6.67%) had been at the school for 16 years or more.

Respondents of the survey were also asked how many years of experience they had at their current grade level. There were some differences noted between School A and School B regarding their experience at their current grade level. The majority of teachers at School A had 11 or more years of experience at their current grade level; 35.29% (N = 6) of teachers at School A noted 16 or more years of experience at their current grade, while 29.41% (N = 5) noted 11-15 years of experience. While 11.76% (N = 2) of teachers at School A reported 6-10 years of experience at their current grade, 23.52% (N = 5) reported only 1-5 years of experience. In contrast, School B results suggested less experience at their current grade level. Two of the 15 respondents (13.33%) at School B noted less than 1 year of experience at their current grade, while six out of 15 (40%) noted 1-5 years of experience. Teachers with 6-10 and 11-15 years of experience each represent 20% of the School B sample. Only one out of the 15 respondents (6.67%) at School B reported having 16 or more years of experience at his/her current grade.

Interview Data

After surveys were collected and reviewed, the examiner created a list of interview questions that were used to guide the interview process. The interview questions were designed to garner additional specific information regarding teacher understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with Response to Instruction. The questions also served the purpose of probing areas where apparent confusion was noted after analyzing the survey data. For instance, when survey respondents noted

multiple varied responses to an item, an interview question may have been designed to further clarify their thought process. The interview questions also served as a means of methodological triangulation, as described by Denzin (1978). Denzin (1970) defined triangulation as a means of combining two data methods, sources, theories, or investigators to study a single concept. Denzin (1978) suggested triangulation makes a research study stronger by improving validity and reliability. When coupled with the survey items, the interview questions allow the information to be obtained through both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Before conducting the interviews, a randomized sample of five teachers was chosen from each school using a random number generator. Because surveys were completed anonymously, each teacher who was eligible to complete the survey was also eligible to be chosen for an interview. Each of the five teachers at School A and School B were contacted via email and asked to participate in an interview. All contacted teachers were instructed that participation was completely voluntary. Eight of the 10 teachers responded within 2 days that they would participate. The final two respondents did not reply to the initial email or a follow-up email sent 2 days later. Therefore, two additional teachers were determined using the random number generator. Both of these individuals agreed to participate. All interviews were scheduled based on teacher availability and were conducted over a period of 3 weeks.

Interviews were conducted at the teachers' schools and were typically conducted in the teacher's classroom at the end of the school day. One teacher opted to participate in the interview during her planning period. As an introduction to the interview process each teacher was asked to sign an informed consent form. All interviews were conducted using a list of predesigned interview questions (Appendix D). However, there was an

opportunity for the examiner to ask additional questions based on participant response and prevailing themes. See Appendix E for a list of unstructured interview questions. Because of this possibility, the researcher conducted all interviews in order to maintain consistency.

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. In addition, the examiner took notes during the interview to assist in the formation of additional questions as the interview progressed. Interviews ranged in time from 22 minutes 22 seconds to 67 minutes, with the average interview time being 47 minutes 23 seconds. Interviews were transcribed from the recordings with the help of a research assistant. The researcher provided the assistant with a list of possible acronyms and names that she might encounter to assist in her transcription. After all interviews were transcribed by the research assistant, the researcher checked the reliability of transcription by completing another independent transcription. Any variances in transcription were reviewed by the researcher and assistant. This process of transcription provided further triangulation to the research study. This form of triangulation, known as investigator triangulation, increases the value of a study by reducing examiner bias and improving the reliability of data (Denzin, 1978).

Data Analysis

Survey and interview data will be discussed in regards to their ability to answer the six research questions as defined by the study. The first three research questions were answered using quantitative data collected through the surveys. The final three questions were answered using qualitative data collected through the interviews. The analysis will begin by reviewing survey items before the analysis will move to the qualitative material obtained from the interviews.

Research Question 1: Do elementary teachers have basic knowledge of the

purpose, goals, and process associated with taking a child to the Response to

Instruction team? Participants began the survey by answering several questions

regarding their basic knowledge of Response to Instruction practices. This portion of the

survey is described as Part One: Description of Basic Knowledge of RtI Processes. The

first question in Part One, designed to evaluate their knowledge of goals associated with

RtI, asked the participants to respond whether presented goals were major goals, minor

goals, or not a goal of RtI. Table 1 reports the teachers' perceptions regarding the goals

of RtI.

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions of Response to Instruction Goals

Goal	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
To provide teachers with strategies to help students achieve at a higher level.	Major	25	78.13%
	Minor	4	12.50%
	Not a goal	3	9.38%
To create an interdisciplinary team to problem solve student needs.	Major	29	90.63%
	Minor	2	6.25%
	Not a goal	1	3.13%
To provide students with research-based interventions.	Major	30	93.75%
	Minor	2	6.25%
	Not a goal	0	
To keep students out of the special education system.	Major	15	46.88%
	Minor	4	12.50%
	Not a goal	13	40.63%
To prevent inappropriate placement of students into special education.	Major	29	90.63%
	Minor	2	6.25%
	Not a goal	1	3.13%
To provide another avenue to determine a student's educational needs.	Major	29	90.63%
	Minor	2	6.25%
	Not a goal	1	3.13%

Table 1 identifies not only the number of respondents for each answer choice but also the percentage of responses for each answer choice. All 32 respondents responded completely to this survey question. When considering whether providing teachers with strategies to help students achieve at a higher level is a major or minor goal of RtI, the majority of teachers (78.13%) believed it is a major goal. Four respondents (12.50%) believed providing teachers strategies is a minor goal and 9.38% believed it is not a goal. Twenty-nine (90.63%) of the 32 respondents believed creating an interdisciplinary team to problem-solve student needs is a major goal while only two (6.25%) respondents believed it is a minor goal. One respondent believed it is not a goal of RtI to create an interdisciplinary team to problem-solve student needs. The largest percentage of respondents (93.75%) believed a major goal of RtI is to provide students with research-based interventions. Only two respondents (6.25%) believed that providing research-based interventions is anything less than a major goal of RtI. Interestingly, when considering whether a goal of RtI is to keep children out of the special education program, respondents were split in their response. Fifteen of the 32 respondents (46.88%) believed keeping children out of the special education program is a major goal while four respondents (12.50%) believed it is a minor goal. Thirteen respondents (40.63%) believed it is not a goal of RtI to keep students out of the special education system. Of the 32 responses, 29 (90.63%) believed it is a major goal of RtI to prevent inappropriate placement of children in special education. Two respondents (6.25%) and one respondent (3.13%) believed it is either a minor goal or not a goal of RtI to prevent such inappropriate placements, respectively. The majority of respondents (90.63%) also agreed that a major goal of RtI is to provide another avenue to determine a student's educational needs. Two respondents (6.25%) believed that it is only a minor goal of RtI

to provide another avenue to determine a student's educational needs. One respondent

(3.13%) believed providing another avenue to determine a student's educational needs is

not a goal of RtI.

The second survey question assessed teacher understanding of the members of the

Response to Instruction team by having respondents rate the involvement of various

personnel on the RtI team. Respondents rate whether various personnel are always,

frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never a part of the team. Table 2 expresses the

respondents' ratings when considering RtI team membership. Of note, not all items were

answered completely. Therefore, the table also includes the number of responses to each

item.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of RtI Team Membership

Member of RtI Team	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Student (N = 31)	Always	5	16.13%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	2	6.45%
	Sometimes	10	32.26%
	Never	14	45.16%
Regular education teacher (N = 31)	Always	25	80.65%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.23%
	Sometimes	5	16.13%
	Never	0	
Special education teacher (N = 30)	Always	6	20.00%
	Frequent	2	6.67%
	Occasional	8	26.67%
	Sometimes	10	33.33%
	Never	4	13.33%
Parent (N = 31)	Always	17	54.84%
	Frequent	5	16.13%
	Occasional	5	16.13%
	Sometimes	4	12.90%
	Never	0	
Grade chairperson (N = 30)	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	5	16.67%
	Sometimes	16	53.33%
	Never	8	26.67%
Counselor (N = 31)	Always	18	58.06%
	Frequent	4	12.90%
	Occasional	7	22.58%
	Sometimes	2	6.45%
	Never	0	
Principal (N = 31)	Always	12	38.71%
	Frequent	8	25.81%
	Occasional	5	16.13%
	Sometimes	4	12.90%
	Never	2	6.45%
Assistant principal (N = 31)	Always	6	19.35%
	Frequent	9	29.03%
	Occasional	9	29.03%
	Sometimes	7	22.58%
	Never	0	

Member of RtI Team	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
School psychologist (N = 31)	Always	4	12.90%
	Frequent	2	6.45%
	Occasional	10	32.26%
	Sometimes	12	38.71%
	Never	3	9.68%
School social worker (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	4	13.33%
	Occasional	9	30.00%
	Sometimes	14	46.67%
	Never	3	10.00%
Speech therapist (N = 29)	Always	0	
	Frequent	1	3.44%
	Occasional	6	20.69%
	Sometimes	18	62.07%
	Never	4	13.79%
RtI coach/teaching assistant (N = 31)	Always	22	70.97%
	Frequent	8	25.81%
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	1	3.23%
	Never	0	

When evaluating a student's involvement in the RtI team process, five of the 31 respondents (16.13%) reported that the student is always considered a member of the RtI team. Two respondents (6.45%) suggested that the students are involved occasionally, while 10 (32.26%) suggested that students are only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. Fourteen of the 31 respondents (45.16%) suggested that the student is never a part of the RtI team.

Twenty-five of the 31 respondents (80.65%) reported that the regular education teacher is always considered a member of the RtI team. One respondent (3.23%) suggested that classroom teachers are involved occasionally, while five (16.13%) respondents suggested that they are only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. When evaluating the special education teacher's role in the RtI team process, six

of the 30 respondents (20%) reported that the special education teacher is always considered a member of the RtI team. Two respondents (6.67%) suggested that the special education teacher is involved frequently. Eight respondents (26.67%) reported that special education teachers are members of the RtI team only occasionally, while 10 (33.33%) suggested that special education teachers are only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. Four of the 30 respondents (13.33%) suggested that the special education teacher is never a part of the RtI team.

Respondents reported at a rate of 17 of the 31 respondents (54.84%) that the parent is always considered a member of the RtI team. Five respondents (16.13%) suggested that the parent is involved frequently and five more respondents (16.13%) reported that parents are members of the RtI team only occasionally. Four respondents (12.90%) suggested that special education teachers are only sometimes involved as members of the RtI team.

When evaluating the grade chairperson's role in the RtI team process, one of the 30 respondents (20%) reported that the grade chairperson is always considered a member of the RtI team. Five respondents (26.67%) reported that the grade chairperson is a member of the RtI team only occasionally, while 16 (33.33%) suggested that the grade chairperson is only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. Eight of the 30 respondents (13.33%) suggested that the grade chairperson is never a part of the RtI team.

Respondents also rated the counselor's involvement in the RtI team process. Eighteen of the 31 respondents (58.06%) reported that the guidance counselor is always considered a member of the RtI team. Four respondents (12.90%) suggested that the counselor is involved frequently. Seven respondents (22.58%) reported that the school counselor is a member of the RtI team only occasionally, while two (6.45%) suggested

that the counselor is only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team.

Twelve of the 31 respondents (38.71%) reported that the principal is always considered a member of the RtI team. Eight respondents (25.81%) suggested that the principal is involved frequently as a member of the RtI team. Five respondents (16.13%) reported that principal is a member of the RtI team only occasionally, while four (12.90%) suggested that they are only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. Two of the 31 respondents (6.45%) suggested that the principal is never a part of the RtI team.

When considering the assistant principal's role in the RtI team process, six of the 31 respondents (19.35%) reported that the assistant principal is always considered a member of the RtI team. Nine respondents (29.03%) suggested that the assistant principal is involved frequently, while another nine respondents (29.03%) reported that the assistant principal is a member of the RtI team only occasionally. Seven respondents (22.58%) suggested that the assistant principal is only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team.

According to four of the 31 respondent ratings (12.90%), the school psychologist is always a member of the RtI team. Two of the 31 respondents (6.45%) reported that the school psychologist is frequently considered a member of the RtI team. Ten respondents (32.26%) reported that the school psychologist is a member of the RtI team only occasionally, while 12 (38.71%) suggested that he/she is only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. Three of the 31 respondents (9.68%) suggested that the school psychologist is never a part of the RtI team.

When evaluating the school social worker's role in the RtI team process, four of the 30 respondents (13.33%) reported that the school social worker is frequently

considered a member of the RtI team. Nine respondents (30%) reported that the school

social worker is a member of the RtI team only occasionally, while 14 (46.67%)

suggested that the social worker is only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team.

Three of the 30 respondents (10%) suggested that the social worker is never a part of the

RtI team.

One of 29 respondents (3.44%) reported that the speech teacher is frequently

considered a member of the RtI team. Six respondents (20.69%) reported that the speech

teacher is a member of the RtI team only occasionally, while 18 (62.07%) suggested that

he/she is only sometimes involved as a member of the RtI team. Four of the 29

respondents (13.79%) suggested that the speech teacher is never a part of the RtI team.

Respondents were also asked to rate the RtI coach/RtI teaching assistant's

membership on the RtI team. Twenty-two of the 31 respondents (70.97%) reported that

the RtI coach or RtI teaching assistant is always considered a member of the RtI team.

Eight respondents (25.81%) suggested that he/she is involved frequently. One

respondent (3.23%) reported that the RtI coach is a member of the RtI team only

sometimes.

A third question in Part One of the survey assessed the respondent's views

concerning who oversees the RtI process at each school. Respondents were asked to rate

whether various school personnel were always, frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or

never in charge of overseeing the RtI process. Table 3 provides a visual describing the

teachers' perceptions concerning this survey item.

Table 3

Respondent's Views as to Who Oversees the RtI Process

Overseer of RtI Process	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Counselor (N = 31)	Always	8	25.81%
	Frequent	3	9.68%
	Occasional	9	29.03%
	Sometimes	6	19.35%
	Never	5	16.13%
Grade chairperson (N = 31)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	4	12.90%
	Sometimes	5	16.13%
	Never	22	70.97%
Regular education teacher (N = 32)	Always	15	46.88%
	Frequent	7	21.88%
	Occasional	3	9.38%
	Sometimes	3	9.38%
	Never	4	12.50%
Special education coordinator (N = 31)	Always	0	
	Frequent	3	9.68%
	Occasional	7	22.58%
	Sometimes	10	32.26%
	Never	11	35.48%
Principal (N = 31)	Always	11	35.48%
	Frequent	7	22.58%
	Occasional	6	19.35%
	Sometimes	1	3.23%
	Never	6	19.35%
Assistant principal (N = 31)	Always	0	
	Frequent	9	29.03%
	Occasional	5	16.13%
	Sometimes	14	45.16%
	Never	3	9.68%
RtI coach/teacher assistant (N = 32)			
	Always	23	71.88%
	Frequent	7	21.88%
	Occasional	1	3.13%
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	0	

When considering whether the school counselor is responsible for overseeing the

RtI program in the schools, 25.81% of respondents, or eight of the 31 respondents,

suggested that the counselor is always in charge of monitoring the process. Three

respondents (9.68%) suggested that the counselor is frequently involved in this role.

Nine respondents of the 31 (29.03%) reported that the counselor is only occasionally

considered the overseer of the process. Six respondents, at a rate of 19.35%, believed the

counselor is responsible for RtI sometimes, while another 16.13% of respondents, or five

respondents, suggested that the counselor is never considered the overseer of the RtI

process.

While no respondents believed that the grade chairperson is always or frequently

in charge of the RtI process, four of the 31 respondents (12.90%) believed that the grade

chairperson is occasionally in control of the RtI process. Five respondents (16.13%)

believed the grade chairperson is only sometimes considered the overseer of the RtI

process. Twenty-two respondents (70.97) agreed that the grade chairperson is never

considered the individual in charge of the RtI program in the school.

The regular education teacher is considered in charge of the RtI process according

to 46.88% of respondents' ratings. This equates to 15 of the 32 responses. Another

21.88% of respondents, or seven respondents, believed that the homeroom teacher is

considered the overseer of the process frequently. Three respondents (9.38%) reported

that the classroom teacher is responsible for RtI occasionally, while another three

respondents believed the teacher is only sometimes considered the overseer of the

process. Four of the 32 respondents (12.50%) believed the regular education teacher is

never considered the overseer of the RtI process.

Survey respondents were also asked if the special education coordinator could be

considered in charge of the RtI process. While no respondents believed that the special

education coordinator was always in charge, three of the 31 respondents (9.68%) believed

the special education coordinator is frequently responsible for the RtI process. Seven more respondents (22.58%) suggested that the special education coordinator is responsible for RtI occasionally. The majority of responses suggested that the special education coordinator is only sometimes (32.26%) or never (35.48%) considered the overseer of the RtI process.

Eleven of the 31 respondents (35.48%) who completed this section of the survey suggested that the principal is always considered the overseer of the RtI process. Another seven respondents, or 22.58%, believed the principal is frequently considered the overseer of the RtI process. Six respondents (19.35%) reported that the principal is only occasionally responsible for the RtI process. One of the 31 respondents (3.23%) believed that the principal is considered the overseer of the RtI process sometimes while the final six respondents (19.35%) believed the principal is never responsible for the RtI program.

Another member of the building administrative team was also rated in regards to his/her responsibilities within the RtI process. When considering the assistant principal (AP), no respondents believed the assistant principal was always considered the overseer of the RtI process. However, nine of the 31 respondents (29.03%) reported that the AP was frequently considered the individual responsible for control of the RtI process. Another five respondents (16.13%) believed the AP was occasionally considered the overseer of RtI within the school. However, the majority of respondents (14), for a rate of 45.16%, suggested that the AP is only sometimes responsible for the RtI process. The remaining three respondents (9.68%) believed the AP is never considered the person responsible for RtI.

Overwhelmingly, respondents suggested that the RtI coach, or RtI teaching assistant, was considered the person who oversees the RtI process in the schools.

Twenty-three of 32 returned surveys (71.88%) suggested that the RtI coach was the person responsible for RtI at the school, while another seven respondents (21.88%) believed the RtI coach was frequently that person. The final respondent (3.13%) reported that the RtI coach was only occasionally the individual responsible for RtI in the schools.

Interview responses supported the belief that the principal is typically the overseer of the RtI process in the schools. Interviewee 8 stated, "I think [the principal] has been a very strong advocator for this program and really has stuck with it and showed or tried to help people…" Likewise, Interviewee 4 reported that "[the principal] is always involved in every level in some way, shape, or form." Interviewee 4 went on to say,

> We put our data in and she goes thru every single child every week looking at our data on her master computer and she will have dialog with us. If for some reason they are at dot 4 and we have not moved a tier she will come by or call us or email and ask you to explain what you are thinking…kinda letting us take the lead but she is always…she knows always what tier they are on. She always has suggestions for interventions if we are having trouble and this kind of thing and just that kind of thing… Today I typed her an email about four different kids and within 30 minutes she has sent back what to do. She is fantastic. She runs it.

The basic knowledge of Response to Instruction was assessed in question four of the survey by asking respondents about the methods used to monitor student progress within the RtI model. Respondents were asked to consider 14 sources of information and rate whether those methods were used in the progress monitoring stages when evaluating the success of the interventions introduced to students. The response choices were yes, no, or don't know. The numbers of respondents for each item are noted on Table 4 which portrays the information obtained by this question.

Table 4

Methods for Monitoring Student Progress

Methods of Monitoring student Progress	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Work samples (N = 31)	Yes	22	70.97%
	No	5	16.13%
	Don't know	4	12.90%
Graphs (N = 32)	Yes	32	100.00%
	No	0	
	Don't know	0	
Standardized test scores (N = 31)	Yes	20	64.52%
	No	5	16.13%
	Don't know	6	19.35%
Curriculum-based measures (N = 30)	Yes	27	90.00%
	No	2	6.67%
	Don't know	1	3.33%
Scientific-based programs (N = 31)	Yes	26	83.87%
	No	2	6.45%
	Don't know	3	9.68%
Computer-based assessment programs (N = 31)	Yes	28	90.32%
	No	0	
	Don't know	3	9.68%
Report card grades (N = 31)	Yes	18	58.06%
	No	10	32.26%
	Don't know	3	9.68%
Anecdotal notes (N = 31)	Yes	24	77.42%
	No	6	19.35%
	Don't know	1	3.23%
Teacher comments (N = 31)	Yes	27	87.10%
	No	4	12.90%
	Don't know	0	
Intervention summary (N = 31)	Yes	26	83.87%
	No	3	9.68%
	Don't know	2	6.45%
Behavior report card (N = 30)	Yes	17	56.67%
	No	9	30.00%
	Don't know	4	13.33%

(continued)

Methods of Monitoring student Progress	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Notes from RtI meetings (N = 30)	Yes	23	76.67%
	No	4	13.33%
	Don't know	3	10.00%
Attendance and tardies (N = 31)	Yes	21	67.74%
	No	6	19.35%
	Don't know	4	12.90%
Grade-level interventions (N = 30)	Yes	22	73.33%
	No	6	20.00%
	Don't know	2	6.67%

The data showed that the majority of respondents believed all of the monitoring options can be used as methods for progress monitoring within the RtI model. There were only four sources of information that did not garner at least a 70% response of yes and one source was confirmed by every respondent who completed the survey. That item was *graphs showing data*. All teachers agreed that this method can be used to monitor student progress within the RtI process. Another item that the vast majority of respondents answered yes to was *computer-based assessment programs*. Twenty-eight of the 31 respondents (90.32%) reported that computer-based assessment programs are methods that are acceptable for monitoring student progress. The other three respondents noted that they were not sure if computer assessment programs could be used for progress monitoring but no one stated they could not be used.

As for the sources that did not garner at least a 70% yes response, *standardized test scores* and *attendance and tardiness* drew yes responses at a rate of 64.52% and 67.74%, respectively. Although *report card grades* (58.06%) and *behavior report card* (56.67%) were not as overwhelmingly agreed upon as the other items, the majority of

respondents still noted that they were acceptable methods for monitoring student progress within the RtI model.

The fifth question in Part One of the survey asked the respondents to assess their own conceptual understanding of Response to Instruction. Twenty-seven of the 32 respondents (84.38%) believed they do understand the concepts associated with RtI. However, three respondents (9.38%) reported they do not understand RtI and another two respondents (6.25%) reported that they have only heard of RtI but do not understand how to implement the model. Table 5 represents the teachers' perceptions of their own understanding.

Table 5

Respondent's Conceptual Understanding of Response to Instruction

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Do you understand the concept of RtI? (N = 32)	Yes	27	84.38%
	No	3	9.38%
	Have heard of but do not know how to implement	2	6.25%

Although teachers seemed confident when replying to this question on the survey, the subjects who participated in the interviews were not as confident and noted some confusion and apprehension. Interviewee 3, after being asked about her understanding of RtI concepts, answered, "…we are all kind of confused about what it is and what it does. We don't really know."

Research Question 2: Do elementary teachers understand who is involved in

the Response to Instruction process and their roles? Research Question 3: Do elementary teachers understand the tiered system associated with Response to Instruction? Part Two of the survey was designed to gain a more in-depth understanding of how teachers view RtI procedures. The types of questions in this portion of the test asked about RtI responsibility, interventions used during the RtI process and how decisions are made regarding interventions, team membership at different tiers, progress monitoring, and the referral process. These questions helped examine if the teachers portray the RtI process in the same way or if there appears to be some disconnect concerning the processes and goals associated with RtI.

The sixth question of the survey considered who is responsible for varying tasks common to the RtI process. Teachers were asked to report from five different choices who was primarily responsible for a given task. The choices included administration, the regular education (RE) teacher, RtI coach or RtI teacher assistant (TA), the parent, or another member of the RtI team (Table 6).

Table 6

Teacher Understanding of Staff Responsibility

RtI Task	Staff	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Determine if RtI meeting is needed (N = 31)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	21	67.74%
	RtI coach/TA	10	32.26%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Set up meeting(s) (N = 31)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	19	61.29%
	RtI coach/TA	7	22.58%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	5	16.13%
Notify parents/team members (N = 31)	Administration	1	3.23%
	RE teacher	18	58.06%
	RtI coach/TA	7	22.58%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	5	16.13%
Gather information on student (N = 31)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	26	83.87%
	RtI coach/TA	5	16.13%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Observe student in RE classroom (N = 31)	Administration	1	3.23%
	RE teacher	21	67.74%
	RtI coach/TA	3	9.68%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	6	19.35%
Taking notes during meeting (N = 30)	Administration	6	20.00%
	RE teacher	14	45.16%
	RtI coach/TA	5	16.67%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	5	16.67%
Develop interventions (N = 31)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	21	67.74%
	RtI coach/TA	10	32.26%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	

(continued)

RtI Task	Staff	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Implementing interventions (N = 32)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	27	84.38%
	RtI coach/TA	5	15.63%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Make sure interventions are being implemented (N = 32)	Administration	4	12.50%
	RE teacher	18	56.25%
	RtI coach/TA	10	31.25%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Evaluation of interventions (N = 31)	Administration	1	3.23%
	RE teacher	20	64.52%
	RtI coach/TA	10	32.25%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Monitor student progress (N = 32)	Administration	2	6.25%
	RE teacher	27	84.38%
	RtI coach/TA	3	9.38%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Conduct assessments/screenings (N = 31)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	19	61.29%
	RtI coach/TA	11	35.48%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	1	3.23%
Determine if RtI services are needed (N = 31)	Administration	1	3.23%
	RE teacher	14	45.16%
	RtI coach/TA	16	51.61%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	0	
Make referrals for special education evaluation (N = 31)	Administration	11	35.48%
	RE teacher	5	16.13%
	RtI coach/TA	12	38.71%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	3	9.68%
Maintain files (N = 31)	Administration	0	
	RE teacher	22	70.97%
	RtI coach/TA	8	25.81%
	Parent	0	
	Other member	1	3.23%

The first task is to determine if an RtI meeting is needed. Twenty-one of the 31 respondents (67.74%) suggested that this is primarily the job of the RE teacher while the other 10 respondents suggested that this is the responsibility of the RtI coach/TA.

When considering who should be responsible for setting up meetings, 19 of the respondents (61.29%) believed that the regular education teacher should be responsible for that task while seven of the respondents (22.58%) believed it should be the RtI coach/TA. Five respondents (16.13%) suggested that some other member of the RtI team rather than those choices provided should be responsible for setting up RtI team meetings.

One of the 31 respondents (3.23%) believed that administration should be responsible for notifying parents/team members of any concerns regarding RtI. Eighteen (58.06%) believed the regular education teacher should be responsible for all correspondences with parents or team members. While seven of the respondents (22.58%) believed the RtI coach/TA should be responsible for this task, another five respondents felt some other member of the RtI team (16.13%) should be responsible for all correspondences.

Overwhelmingly, 26 of the 31 respondents (83.87%) believed the regular education teacher should be responsible for collecting and gathering information on any students in the RtI process. The final five individuals (16.13%) who responded suggested that the RtI coach/TA should be responsible for gathering data.

Observations of the students within the general education classroom are an important part of the RtI process. Twenty-one of the 31 respondents (67.74%) believed this task should be conducted by the regular education teacher. One respondent (3.23%) suggested that observations should be the responsibility of an administrator, while three

respondents (9.68%) believed this task should be left to the RtI coach/TA. The final six respondents (19.35%) believed another person should be responsible for these observations.

When considering who should be responsible for taking notes during meetings, six respondents (20%) believed the administrator should be in charge of keeping meeting notes, while 14 of the 30 respondents (45.16%) believed the regular education teacher should be responsible for this task. Five respondents (16.67%) reported the RtI coach/TA should be responsible for note-taking, while another five respondents (16.67%) believed another member of the team should be responsible for meeting notes.

The development of interventions is also considered a prime component of the RtI process. The majority of respondents, 21 of 31 (67.74%), reported this is the responsibility of the regular education teacher. The other 10 respondents (32.26%) believed this responsibility falls to the RtI coach/TA. Most respondents (84.38%) agreed that the regular education teacher is responsible for implementing the interventions, but a few (15.63%) believed the RtI coach/TA is responsible for implementing interventions.

Monitoring the interventions to fidelity was seen more as a responsibility of someone outside of the classroom when compared to developing or implementing interventions. Four respondents (12.5%) believed the administration is responsible for making sure the interventions are being implemented to fidelity while 10 respondents (31.25%) believed the RtI coach/TA is responsible. The rest of the responses (56.25%) suggested that the regular teacher is responsible for making sure interventions are implemented to fidelity. Likewise, the evaluation of interventions was also seen as an activity likely to be completed by someone outside of the regular classroom. Even though 20 of the 31 responses (64.52%) suggested the regular education teacher is

responsible for evaluating interventions, 10 respondents (32.25%) suggested that the RtI coach/TA is responsible for this task. One respondent (3.23%) believed this is the responsibility of the administration.

Monitoring student progress was largely seen as an activity that should be conducted by the regular classroom teacher as opposed to someone outside of the classroom. Twenty-seven of the 32 respondents (84.38%) to this question believed the regular education teacher is responsible for monitoring student progress. Two respondents (6.25%) believed the administration is responsible for this activity while the final three respondents (9.38%) suggested the RtI coach/TA should monitor student progress.

Nineteen respondents (61.29%) believed it is the responsibility of the regular education teacher to conduct assessments and screenings. Eleven of the 31 respondents (35.48%) reported the RtI coach/TA should handle this duty while one respondent (3.23%) suggested another member of the RtI team should complete screenings or assessments.

Unlike many of the tasks that the respondents agreed are the responsibility of the regular education classroom teacher, the majority of respondents (51.61%) believed the RtI coach/TA should be responsible for determining if RtI services are necessary. Fourteen of the 31 respondents (45.16%) believed the regular education teacher should be responsible for this decision. One respondent (3.23%) suggested the administration should be responsible for determining if RtI services are needed.

Respondents tended to disagree when considering who should be responsible for making referrals for special education evaluations. Many respondents (38.71%) believed the RtI coach/TA should be responsible for this task while almost as many respondents

(35.48%) believed administration should be responsible for making this decision. Five of the 31 respondents (16.13%) reported that the regular education teacher should be responsible for making special education referrals, while three respondents (9.68%) believed some other member of the RtI team should be responsible for making referrals.

Lastly, when considering who should be responsible for maintaining files, 22 of the 31 respondents (70.97%) reported the regular education teacher should be responsible for maintaining files. Eight respondents (25.81%) believed this should be left to the RtI coach/TA, while one respondent (3.23%) believed some other member of the RtI team should maintain all files necessary for RtI.

The focus of Response to Instruction is on providing early intervention strategies before an individual falls too far behind to benefit from these interventions. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have an understanding of the interventions that may be used in the process. The seventh question of the survey assessed teacher understanding of interventions that may be used during the RtI process. The question asked the respondents to choose one possible response from a list of choices when asked what type of intervention needs to be in place when using RtI. The choices included basic interventions, modified work within the room, removing the student from class for remediation, research-based programs different from regular classroom strategies, or other types of interventions.

An analysis of the responses suggested that 12.90% of respondents (four out of 31) believed basic interventions are the type of interventions that would be encountered with RtI. Two respondents (6.45%) believed removing students from the classroom to receive remediation is the appropriate intervention under RtI. Twenty-two respondents of the 31 (70.97%) who responded suggested that research-based programs different from

what is being used in the classroom are most often encountered in RtI. The final three

respondents (9.68%) noted that some other type of intervention not described in the

survey would be most often encountered when using RtI strategies. The data concerning

teachers' perceptions on interventions used in RtI is displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Teachers' Perception of Interventions Used Within the RtI Process

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
What type of intervention needs to be in place when using RtI? (N = 31)	Basic interventions	4	12.90%
	Modified work within the classroom	0	
	Student removal from class for remediation	2	6.45%
	Research-based programs different from what is being used in class	22	70.97%
	Other	3	9.68%

The eighth question of the survey assessed the respondents' views concerning

who is involved in the Tier 1 RtI meeting. Respondents were asked to rate whether

various school personnel were always, frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never

considered part of the Tier 1 meeting. Table 8 provides a visual representation of the

data obtained on this test item.

Table 8

Teachers' Perception of who is Involved in the Tier 1 RtI Meeting

Who should be included in the Tier 1 RtI meeting?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Student (N = 29)	Always	1	3.45%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	21	72.41%
	Never	7	24.14%
Regular education teacher (N = 32)	Always	31	96.88%
	Frequent	1	3.13%
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	0	
Special education teacher (N = 30)	Always	5	16.67%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	6	20.00%
	Sometimes	2	6.67%
	Never	17	56.67%
Parent (N = 32)	Always	31	96.88%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	1	3.13%
Grade chairperson (N = 31)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.23%
	Sometimes	7	22.58%
	Never	23	74.19%
Counselor (N = 31)	Always	2	6.45%
	Frequent	2	6.45%
	Occasional	2	6.45%
	Sometimes	10	32.23%
	Never	15	48.39%
Principal/assistant principal (N = 31)	Always	6	19.35%
	Frequent	2	6.45%
	Occasional	4	12.90%
	Sometimes	9	29.03%
	Never	10	32.23%

Who should be included in the Tier 1 RtI meeting?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
RtI coach/TA (N = 30)	Always	12	40.00%
	Frequent	2	6.67%
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	10	33.33%
	Never	5	16.67%
School psychologist (N = 30)	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	2	6.67%
	Sometimes	6	20.00%
	Never	21	70.00%
School social worker (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	10	33.33%
	Never	19	63.33%
Speech therapist (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	2	6.67%
	Sometimes	7	23.33%
	Never	21	70.00%
Literacy specialist (N = 30)	Always	2	6.67%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	12	40.00%
	Never	15	50.00%
Special education program specialist (N = 30)	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	7	23.33%
	Never	21	70.00%
Student support team (N = 30)			
	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	1	3.33%
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	6	20.00%
	Never	21	70.00%

When considering whether the student is considered part of the Tier 1 RtI team,

one of the 29 respondents (3.45%) who completed this survey item suggested that the

student is always part of the Tier 1 team. Twenty-one respondents, at a rate of 72.41%,

believed the student is sometimes part of the RtI team while in Tier 1 discussions, while another 24.14% of respondents, or seven respondents, suggested that the student is never considered part of these initial meetings.

Thirty-one of the 32 respondents (96.88%) believed that the regular education teacher is always considered part of the Tier 1 RtI team, while the other respondent (3.13%) believed the classroom teacher is only frequently part of this team.

The special education teacher is always considered part of the Tier 1 team according to five of the 30 respondent ratings (16.67%). Another 20% of respondents, or six respondents, believed that the special education teacher is considered part of the team only occasionally. Two respondents (6.67%) reported that the special education teacher is only sometimes considered part of the Tier 1 team. Seventeen of the 30 respondents (56.67%) believed the special education teacher is never considered part of the Tier 1 RtI team.

Similar to the regular education teacher, survey respondents overwhelmingly believed the parent is always part of the initial RtI meetings. Thirty-one of the 32 respondents (96.88%) believed the parent is always part of this team. The other respondent (3.13%) suggested the parent is never part of the Tier 1 team.

While no respondents believed the grade chairperson is always or even frequently part of the Tier 1 RtI team meetings, one of the 31 respondents (3.23%) who completed this section of the survey suggested that the grade chairperson is occasionally considered part of this team. Seven of the 31 respondents (22.58%) believed that the grade chairperson is considered part of the Tier 1 team sometimes while the final 23 respondents (74.19%) believed the grade chairperson is never part of the Tier 1 team meeting.

When considering the school counselor, two respondents (6.45%) believed the counselor is always considered part of the Tier 1 team. The same number of respondents (6.45%) suggested that the counselor is frequently considered part of the Tier 1 team during the RtI process. Two more respondents (6.45%) believed the counselor was occasionally considered part of the Tier 1 team. The majority of respondents suggested that the counselor is only sometimes or never part of Tier 1 discussions. Ten of these respondents (32.23%) suggested that the counselor is sometimes part of the team, while the final 15 respondents (48.39%) noted the counselor is never considered part of the Tier 1 team.

Survey results indicated that respondents varied in regards to their understanding of the relationship between the administration and the Tier 1 team. Six of the 31 respondents (19.35%) believed the administration (principal/assistant principal) is always part of the Tier 1 RtI team. Two respondents (6.67%) suggested administration is frequently part of the team while one other respondent (3.33%) believed administration is only occasionally part of the Tier 1 team. Ten respondents (33.33%) believed administration is only part of the Tier 1 RtI team just sometimes, while the final five respondents (16.67%) noted that administration is never part of the Tier 1 RtI team.

Twelve of the 30 respondents (40%) suggested that the RtI coach or RtI teaching assistant was always considered part of the RtI team. Two respondents (6.67%) suggested that the RtI coach/TA is frequently part of the Tier 1 team, while one other respondent (3.33%) suggested that person is part of the team only occasionally. Ten of the 30 respondents (33.33%) reported that the RtI coach/TA is only sometimes part of the RtI Tier 1 team. The final five respondents (16.67%) believed the RtI coach/TA is never part of the Tier 1 team.

One respondent of the 30 (3.33%) who answered this test item reported that the school psychologist is always part of the Tier 1 RtI team. Two respondents (6.67%) suggested that the school psychologist is only occasionally involved while six other respondents (20%) believed the school psychologist is only sometimes involved. The majority of respondents, 21 of the 30, (70%) suggested that the school psychologist is never part of the RtI Tier 1 team.

Similarly, most respondents reported that the school social worker is not typically considered part of the RtI Tier 1 team. Specifically, 19 of the 30 respondents (63.33%) to the item believed the school social worker is never part of the process at Tier 1. Another 10 respondents (33.33%) believed the social worker is part of the Tier 1 team only sometimes. The final respondent (3.33%) reported that the school social worker is part of the Tier 1 team only occasionally.

Twenty-one of the 30 respondents (70%) reported that the speech therapist is never part of the RtI Tier 1 team, while seven other respondents (23.33%) believed the speech therapist is part of the team just sometimes. The final two respondents (6.67%) reported that the speech therapist is part of the Tier 1 RtI team only occasionally.

Literacy specialists are another group of individuals often considered important to the overall success of RtI. Again though, most respondents reported that the literacy specialist is not typically considered part of the Tier 1 team. In fact, 15 of the 30 respondents (50%) believed the literacy specialist is never part of the Tier 1 RtI team. Another 12 respondents (40%) believed the literacy specialist is part of the team only sometimes. One respondent (3.33%) suggested the literacy specialist is part of the Tier 1 team occasionally. With a differing opinion, two respondents (6.67%) suggested the literacy specialist is always part of the RtI Tier 1 team.

Twenty-one of the 30 respondents (70%) believed the special education program specialist is never considered part of the RtI Tier 1 team. Seven more respondents (23.33%) suggested that the program specialist is only sometimes considered part of the team, while one respondent (3.33%) reported that the program specialist is part of the team only occasionally. The final respondent believed the special education program specialist is always considered part of the RtI Tier 1 team.

When considering whether the student support team (SST) should be involved in Tier 1 meetings, one of the 30 respondents (3.33%) suggested that the SST should be part of the Tier 1 process. One other respondent (3.33%) suggested that the SST is frequently involved with Tier 1, while another respondent (3.33%) suggested only occasional participation. The majority of respondents reported that the SST is only minimally or never involved in Tier 1 team meetings. Twenty-one of the respondents (70%) suggested that the SST is never part of the Tier 1 team meeting while the other six respondents (20%) noted that the SST is only sometimes involved in Tier 1 meetings.

As noted earlier, responses collected from the interviews support the belief that the regular education teacher and the parent will always be part of a Tier 1 RtI meeting. When asked what two people would always be part of a Tier 1 meeting, interview subjects unanimously responded that the teacher and the parent would be those two individuals.

The ninth question of the survey asked respondents who they believed to be essential to the RtI team during the second tier of services. The respondents again consider a wide range of individuals who might be considered part of the RtI Tier 2 team (Table 9).

Table 9

Teachers' Perception of who is involved in the Tier 2 RtI Meeting

Who should be included in the Tier 2 RtI meeting?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Student (N = 30)	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	1	3.33%
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	19	63.33%
	Never	8	26.67%
Regular education teacher (N = 31)	Always	30	96.77%
	Frequent	1	3.23%
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	0	
Special education teacher (N = 30)	Always	3	10.00%
	Frequent	3	10.00%
	Occasional	2	6.67%
	Sometimes	6	20.00%
	Never	16	53.33%
Parent (N = 31)	Always	29	93.54%
	Frequent	1	3.23%
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	1	3.23%
Grade chairperson (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.33%
	Sometimes	9	30.00%
	Never	20	66.67%
Counselor (N = 30)	Always	5	16.67%
	Frequent	6	20.00%
	Occasional	8	26.67%
	Sometimes	8	26.67%
	Never	3	10.00%
Principal/assistant principal (N = 31)	Always	13	41.94%
	Frequent	3	9.68%
	Occasional	6	19.35%
	Sometimes	7	22.58%
	Never	2	6.45%

Who should be included in the Tier 2 RtI meeting?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
RtI coach/TA (N = 31)	Always	22	70.97%
	Frequent	4	12.90%
	Occasional	3	9.68%
	Sometimes	1	3.23%
	Never	1	3.23%
School psychologist (N = 30)	Always	3	10.00%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	3	10.00%
	Sometimes	9	30.00%
	Never	15	50.00%
School social worker (N = 30)	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	4	13.33%
	Sometimes	12	40.00%
	Never	13	43.33%
Speech therapist (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	3	10.00%
	Sometimes	15	50.00%
	Never	12	40.00%
Literacy specialist (N = 30)	Always	7	23.33%
	Frequent	3	10.00%
	Occasional	4	13.33%
	Sometimes	10	33.33%
	Never	6	20.00%
Special education program specialist (N = 29)	Always	2	6.90%
	Frequent	1	3.45%
	Occasional	1	3.45%
	Sometimes	11	37.93%
	Never	14	48.28%
Student support team (N = 29)	Always	3	10.34%
	Frequent	2	6.90%
	Occasional	2	6.90%
	Sometimes	7	24.14%
	Never	15	51.72%

For the first item on this question only one respondent (3.33%) suggested that the

student is always part of the team while one other respondent (3.33%) suggested that the

student is frequently considered part of that team. Another respondent (3.33%) suggested

occasional involvement. The majority of respondents, 19 of the 30 (63.33%), reported that the student is sometimes part of the Tier 2 team during RtI discussions. The final eight respondents (26.67%) believed the student is never part of the Tier 2 team.

The regular education teacher is seen as an important part of the Tier 2 RtI team. Thirty of the 31 respondents (96.77%) believed the classroom teacher is always considered part of the RtI team during Tier 2 discussions. The other respondent suggested frequent involvement.

Respondents are more varied when considering how the special education teacher is involved during Tier 2. Three of the 30 respondents (10%) believed the special education teacher is always part of the Tier 2 team while three more respondents (10%) believed the special education teacher is frequently involved at this stage. Two respondents (6.67%) believed the special education teacher is occasionally considered part of the RtI Tier 2 team. Six respondents (20%) reported involvement only sometimes while the final 16 respondents (53.33%) believed the special education teacher is never involved in Tier 2 team meetings.

Similar to the regular education teacher, most respondents agreed that the parent is very involved during the Tier 2 stage of services. Twenty-nine of the 31 respondents (93.54%) believed the parent is always part of the Tier 2 process, while another respondent (3.23%) believed the parent is involved frequently. One final respondent (3.23%) believed the parent is never part of the Tier 2 team.

In contrast, grade chairpersons are not believed to be essential to Tier 2 services. Twenty of the 30 respondents (66.67%) believed the grade chairperson is never part of the Tier 2 team, while nine more respondents (30%) suggested that the grade chairperson is only sometimes involved in Tier 2 meetings. One respondent (3.33%) reported that the

grade chairperson is occasionally part of the Tier 2 team.

When considering the school counselor, respondents have differing views on how the counselor is involved at Tier 2. Five of the 30 respondents (16.67%) suggested that the counselor is always involved while six more respondents (20%) believed the counselor is involved frequently. Eight respondents (26.67%) reported that the counselor is occasionally involved, while eight more respondents (26.67%) suggested that the counselor is sometimes involved during Tier 2 team meetings. The final three respondents (10%) believed the counselor is never involved.

Similarly, respondents have differing opinions when considering the school administration. Thirteen of the 31 respondents (41.94%) returned surveys suggesting that the administration is always part of the RtI Tier 2 team. Three respondents (9.68%) reported that administration is part of this team frequently. Six more respondents (19.35%) suggested that administration is occasionally part of the Tier 2 team, while seven other respondents (22.58%) reported that administration is sometimes part of this team. The final two respondents (6.45%) reported that administration is never part of the Tier 2 team during the RtI process.

Respondents were in agreement concerning the RtI Coach/TA. Twenty-two of the 31 respondents (70.97%) stated that the RtI Coach/TA is always part of the Tier 2 team. Four respondents (12.90%) reported that the RtI Coach/TA is frequently part of this team and another three respondents (9.68%) suggested occasional membership in this team. Of the two remaining respondents, one respondent (3.23%) reported that the RtI Coach/TA is never part of the Tier 2 team, while the other respondent (3.23%) reported the RtI Coach/TA is sometimes part of this team.

When considering the school psychologist, three respondents (10%) believed the

school psychologist is always considered part of the RtI Tier 2 team. Three more respondents (10%) believed the school psychologist is occasionally part of the Tier 2 team, while another nine respondents (30%) believed the school psychologist is only part of the team sometimes. The final 15 respondents of the 30 (50%) who responded to this item suggested the school psychologist is never part of the RtI Tier 2 team.

Similar to the school psychologist, the majority of respondents reported that the school social worker is not very involved in Tier 2 discussions. In fact, only one respondent (3.33%) believed the social worker is always involved in Tier 2 service delivery and another four respondents (13.33%) believed the social worker is only involved occasionally. However, 12 of the 30 respondents (40%) suggested that the social worker is involved in Tier 2 only sometimes, while the final 13 respondents (43.33%) believed the social worker is never part of the RtI Tier 2 team.

The majority of respondents concluded that the speech therapist is not an integral part to Tier 2 discussions. Twelve of the 30 respondents (40%) reported that the speech therapist is never part of the Tier 2 team, while another 15 respondents (50%) reported that the speech therapist is only sometimes part of that time. Three more respondents (10%) suggested only occasional inclusion in Tier 2 team meetings.

Respondents have differing views when considering the literacy specialist in the school. Seven of the 30 respondents (23.33%) believed the literacy specialist is always part of Tier 2 discussions. Another three respondents (10%) believed they are frequently involved at this level. Four respondents (13.33%) reported the literacy specialist is occasionally involved in Tier 2. Ten individuals suggested that the literacy specialist is only sometimes involved in Tier 2, while the final six respondents (20%) believed the literacy specialist is never part of the Tier 2 RtI team.

Returned surveys suggested that respondents have a more unified opinion of the special education program specialist's role in Tier 2 with the majority suggesting limited involvement. In fact, 14 of the 29 returned surveys (48.28%) suggested that the program specialist is never part of the Tier 2 team, while another 11 respondents (37.93%) suggested that the program specialist is just sometimes involved at Tier 2. One respondent each (3.45%) suggested either frequent or occasional involvement at this stage. The final two respondents (6.90%) believed the program specialist is always part of the RtI Tier 2 team.

When considering the student support team (SST), three respondents (10.34%) reported that SST is always part of the Tier 2 team. Two more respondents (6.90%) suggested frequent involvement, while another two respondents (6.90%) believed SST is occasionally involved during these team meetings. Seven respondents (24.14%) reported that SST is involved in Tier 2 sometimes and the final 15 respondents (51.72%) suggested that SST is never part of Tier 2 team meetings.

Data collected from the interviews suggested that respondents were not as certain who should be involved once a child moves beyond Tier 1 of services; although there is no clear answer to this question because the individuals included in a Tier 2 meeting are dependent on the child's individual needs. For example, if the student has deficits in fluency, the additional staff in the meeting would be expected to be experts in the area of reading fluency. The concern with the interviews when asked who might be included in the Tier 2 meeting was the lack of confidence. When asked about the team membership at Tier 2, Subject 6 questioningly noted, "the reading teacher, the parents, and maybe members of our SIT team?" Interviewee 3 didn't seem to recognize that additional people should be at the Tier 2 meeting and stated, "Again it was only me and the parent."

Interviewee 7 went on to admit that she doesn't even have the parent come in for the Tier 2 meeting. Her response to this question was, "we don't have to do anything but a phone call."

The tenth question of the survey went on to further ask about team membership while in the Tier 3 stage of RtI. Again, each respondent was asked to rate whether various school personnel were always, frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never considered part of the Tier 3 team. Table 10 provides a visual representation of the data obtained on this test item.

Table 10

Teachers' Perception of who is Involved in the Tier 3 RtI Meeting

Who should be included in the Tier 3 RtI meeting?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Student (N = 30)	Always	1	3.33%
	Frequent	1	3.33%
	Occasional	7	23.33%
	Sometimes	13	43.33%
	Never	8	26.67%
Regular education teacher (N = 31)	Always	31	100.00%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	0	
Special education teacher (N = 30)	Always	11	36.67%
	Frequent	4	13.33%
	Occasional	3	10.00%
	Sometimes	7	23.33%
	Never	5	16.67%
Parent (N = 31)	Always	30	96.77%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	1	3.23%
Grade chairperson (N = 29)	Always	1	3.45%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	1	3.45%
	Sometimes	9	31.03%
	Never	18	62.07%
Counselor (N = 31)	Always	20	64.52%
	Frequent	5	16.13%
	Occasional	2	6.45%
	Sometimes	4	12.90%
	Never	0	
Principal/assistant principal (N = 31)	Always	28	90.32%
	Frequent	2	6.45%
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	1	3.23%
	Never	0	

Who should be included in the Tier 3 RtI meeting?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
RtI coach/TA (N = 31)	Always	31	100.00%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	0	
School psychologist (N = 30)	Always	9	30.00%
	Frequent	4	13.33%
	Occasional	2	6.67%
	Sometimes	11	36.67%
	Never	4	13.33%
School social worker (N = 31)	Always	4	12.90%
	Frequent	4	12.90%
	Occasional	7	22.58%
	Sometimes	11	35.48%
	Never	5	16.13%
Speech therapist (N = 29)	Always	4	13.79%
	Frequent	4	13.79%
	Occasional	3	10.34%
	Sometimes	12	41.38%
	Never	7	24.14%
Literacy specialist (N = 31)	Always	9	29.03%
	Frequent	5	16.13%
	Occasional	4	12.90%
	Sometimes	11	35.48%
	Never	2	6.45%
Special education program specialist (N = 31)	Always	9	29.03%
	Frequent	7	22.58%
	Occasional	1	3.23%
	Sometimes	6	19.35%
	Never	8	25.81%
Student support team (N = 30)	Always	9	30.00%
	Frequent	4	13.33%
	Occasional	2	6.67%
	Sometimes	5	16.67%
	Never	10	33.33%

When considering whether the student is considered part of the Tier 3 RtI team, one of the 30 respondents (3.33%) who completed this survey item suggested that the student is always part of the Tier 3 team. Another respondent (3.33%) suggested frequent

involvement at this stage. Seven more respondents (23.33%) suggested that the student is part of the Tier 3 team occasionally. Thirteen respondents, at a rate of 43.33%, believed the student is part of the RtI Tier 3 team sometimes, while another 26.67% of respondents, or eight respondents, suggested that the student is never considered part of these meetings.

While all 31 respondents believed that the regular education teacher is always considered part of the Tier 3 RtI team, the ratings were not as unanimous when considering the special education teacher. The special education teacher is always considered part of the Tier 3 team according to 11 of the 30 respondent ratings (36.67%). Another 13.33% of respondents, or four respondents, believed that the special education teacher is considered part of the team frequently. Three more respondents (10%) suggested only occasional inclusion at this stage. Seven respondents (23.33%) reported that the special education teacher is only sometimes considered part of the Tier 3 team. The final five respondents (16.67%) believed the special education teacher is never considered part of the Tier 3 RtI team.

Similar to the regular education teacher, survey respondents overwhelmingly believed the parent is always part of the Tier 3 RtI meetings. Thirty of the 31 respondents (96.77%) believed the parent is always part of this team. The other respondent (3.23%) believed the parent is never part of the Tier 3 team.

When considering the grade chairperson, one of the 29 respondents (3.45%) who answered this item suggested that the grade chairperson is always part of the Tier 3 RtI team meetings. One respondent (3.45%) who completed this section of the survey suggested that the grade chairperson is occasionally considered part of this team. Nine of the respondents (31.03%) believed that the grade chairperson is considered part of the

Tier 3 team sometimes, while the final 18 respondents (62.07%) believed the grade

chairperson is never part of the Tier 3 team meeting.

Twenty of the 31 respondents (64.52%) believed the counselor is always

considered part of the Tier 3 RtI team. An additional five respondents (16.13%) believed

that the counselor is frequently considered part of the Tier 3 team during the RtI process.

Two more respondents (6.45%) believed the counselor was occasionally considered part

of the Tier 3 team. The last four respondents (12.90%) suggested that the counselor is

sometimes part of the Tier 3 team.

Survey results indicated that, for the most part, respondents agreed in their

understanding of the relationship between the administration and the Tier 3 RtI team.

Twenty-eight of the 31 respondents (90.32%) believed the administration

(principal/assistant principal) is always part of the Tier 3 RtI team. Two respondents

(6.45%) suggested administration is frequently part of the team while the final respondent

(3.23%) believed administration is only sometimes part of the Tier 3 team. Respondents

were even more in agreement when considering the RtI coach, or RtI teaching assistant.

All 31 respondents reported that the RtI coach/TA was always considered part of the RtI

Tier 3 team.

Nine of the 30 respondents (30%) reported that the school psychologist is always

part of the Tier 3 RtI team, while four more respondents (13.33%) reported frequent

involvement at this stage. Two respondents (6.67%) suggested that the school

psychologist is only occasionally involved while 11 other respondents (36.67%) believed

the school psychologist is only sometimes involved. The final four respondents (13.33%)

suggested that the school psychologist is never part of the RtI Tier 3 team.

Similarly, respondents vary in their understanding of the relationship between the

school social worker and the Tier 3 RtI team. Four of the 31 respondents to the item

(12.90%) believed the school social worker is always part of the process at Tier 3.

Another four respondents (12.90%) believed the social worker is part of the Tier 3 team

only frequently. Seven respondents (22.58%) reported occasional involvement at this

stage. Eleven respondents (35.48%) reported that the school social worker is part of the

Tier 3 team sometimes and the final five respondents (16.13%) reported that the school

social worker is never part of the Tier 3 team.

In their consideration of the speech therapist, four of the 29 respondents (13.79%)

reported that the speech therapist is always part of the RtI Tier 3 team, while another four

respondents (13.79%) believed the speech therapist is part of the team frequently. Three

more respondents (10.34%) reported occasional involvement at this stage of RtI. Twelve

of the 29 respondents (41.38%) believed the speech therapist is only involved at Tier 3

sometimes, while the final seven respondents (24.14%) reported that the speech therapist

is never part of the Tier 3 RtI team.

Literacy specialists are another group of individuals often considered important to

the overall success of RtI. Again though, respondents vary in their understanding of how

the literacy specialist is involved with the Tier 3 team. Nine of the 31 respondents

(29.03%) believed the literacy specialist is always part of the Tier 3 RtI team. Another

five respondents (16.13%) believed the literacy specialist is frequently part of the team.

Four respondents (12.90%) suggested the literacy specialist is part of the Tier 3 team

occasionally. Eleven of the 31 respondents (35.48%) who completed this item suggested

that the literacy specialist is part of the Tier 3 team sometimes and the final two

respondents (6.45%) suggested the literacy specialist is never part of the RtI Tier 3 team.

Nine of the 31 respondents (29.03%) believed the special education program

specialist is always considered part of the RtI Tier 3 team. Seven more respondents (22.58%) suggested that the program specialist is frequently considered part of the team, while one respondent (3.23%) reported that the program specialist is part of the team only occasionally. Six respondents (19.35%) believed the special education program specialist is considered part of the RtI Tier 3 team only sometimes. The last eight respondents (25.81%) believed the program specialist is never part of the Tier 3 team.

When considering whether the student support team should be involved in Tier 3 meetings, nine of the 30 respondents (30%) suggested that the SST should be part of the Tier 3 process. Four more respondents (13.33%) suggested that the SST is frequently involved with Tier 3 while another two respondents (6.67%) suggested only occasional participation. Five of the respondents (16.67%) suggested that the SST is part of the Tier 3 team meeting sometimes, while the other 10 respondents (33.33%) suggested that the SST is never involved in Tier 3 meetings.

Interview data indicated a better understanding of team membership at Tier 3. The general consensus was that Tier 3 would include several additional staff members. This might include the administration, counselor, teacher, parent, and an RtI coach or someone familiar with interventions.

The eleventh question of the survey assessed teacher understanding of the intervention process. In particular, the question asked how long an intervention should be in place before any decision should be made in regards to the success or failure of the intervention. The choices given in the survey included monthly increments from 1 month to 6 months. Table 11 represents the findings based on teacher response.

Table 11

Teachers' Perception of Intervention Length

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
How long is an intervention implemented with a student before success or failure can be determined? (N = 30)	1 month	15	50.00%
	2 months	5	16.67%
	3 months	5	16.67%
	4 months	0	
	5 months	1	3.33%
	6 months	4	13.33%

The 30 teachers who completed this survey item varied greatly in their responses. Fifteen respondents (50%) reported that a decision can be made regarding an intervention's success or failure at 1 month. Five more respondents (16.67%) suggested it would take 2 months to make any decision. Five respondents (16.67%) believed it takes 3 months to make any decision regarding an intervention's success or failure. One respondent (3.33%) believed it takes 5 months and the final four respondents (13.33%) stated that it takes 6 months in order to make any decisions concerning the intervention.

The next item on the survey, question 12, asked teachers what they believe happens when an intervention is not successful in correcting a child's presenting concerns. Teachers are given options including continuing present interventions, implementing different interventions, placement in RtI services, special education referral, and removal of the student from the RtI process. Table 12 represents the findings of this survey item.

Table 12

Teachers' Perception of What Happens if Interventions are not Successful

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
If the student's problem was not fully resolved during the tier process, what happened next? (N = 31)	The same interventions were continued.	1	3.23%
	Different interventions were implemented.	14	45.16%
	The student was placed in RtI services.	3	9.68%
	The student was referred for special education services.	13	41.93%
	The student was removed from the RtI process.	0	

Of the 31 respondents to this survey item, one respondent (3.23%) suggested that

the same interventions should be continued with the child. Fourteen respondents

(45.16%) suggested that a different intervention needs to be implemented. Three

respondents (9.68%) suggested that the child should be placed in RtI services. Thirteen

respondents (41.93%) felt the student should be referred to special education for an

evaluation. No respondents believed the child should be removed from the RtI process

when the interventions are deemed unsuccessful.

The next item on the survey, question 13, asked teachers how many monitoring

points need to be plotted on a progress monitoring chart before progress can be

determined. Each point on a graph represented one progress monitoring assessment of

the child in the RtI process. Teachers chose between 3 points, 4 points, 6 points, 10

points, 12 points, and 15 points. Three progress monitoring points would suggest that the

child has been evaluated three times to assess his/her progress. In addition to monitoring

the child's academic progress, the points on the graph in turn can be used to assess the

success or failure of the intervention that is being utilized under the RtI process. Table

13 illustrates the information regarding this survey item.

Table 13

Number of Monitoring Points Needed before Progress can be Determined

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
How many monitoring points	3 points	22	75.86%
need to be plotted on a progress	4 points	5	17.24%
monitoring chart before	6 points	1	3.45%
progress can be determined	10 points	0	
about the student? (N = 29)	12 points	0	
	15 points	1	3.45%

The majority of respondents, 22 of the 29 who responded to this item (75.86%),

suggested that three points on a progress monitoring graph is sufficient for making

decisions regarding the success of an intervention. Five more respondents (17.24%)

believed that at least four points, or four assessments, are sufficient to make decisions.

One more respondent (3.45%) suggested that six progress monitoring points are needed

to chart a student's progress under RtI. The final respondent (3.45%) believed it takes 15

progress monitoring points to make an informed decision regarding the success or failure

of an intervention and the child's progress.

Question 14 of the survey asked teachers to consider how they use the progress

monitoring information after it has been charted. To limit the teachers, response choices

were provided and the teacher was asked to rate whether each option is an appropriate

use of progress monitoring data. Teachers were also given an opportunity to report that

they do not know if one of the options is an appropriate use of data. Table 14 represents

their ideas as to how charted progress monitoring information can be used.

Table 14

Perceptions of How Progress Monitoring Information Should be Used

What should be done with the results of a student's progress monitoring after it is graphed?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Student should be given instruction different from the general education curriculum. (N = 31)	Yes	12	38.71%
	No	15	48.39%
	Don't Know	4	12.90%
Differentiated instruction should occur within the general education classroom. (N = 32)	Yes	28	87.50%
	No	3	9.38%
	Don't Know	1	3.13%
Student should be placed in special services, such as Title 1. (N = 31)	Yes	9	29.03%
	No	14	45.16%
	Don't Know	8	25.81%
Student should have access to special education services. (N = 31)	Yes	4	12.90%
	No	20	64.52%
	Don't Know	7	22.58%
The student should continue learning using scientific-based instruction. (N = 32)	Yes	28	87.50%
	No	3	9.38%
	Don't Know	1	3.13%

The first option under this survey item asked if giving the student different

instruction from the general curriculum is an appropriate use of progress monitoring data.

Twelve of the 31 respondents (38.71%) who considered this item suggested that it is an

appropriate use of the information while 15 respondents (48.39%) believed this is not an appropriate use of progress monitoring data. The other four respondents (12.90%) were not sure how to respond to this item.

The second option under this item asked teachers to consider whether or not progress monitoring data should be used to differentiate instruction within the general education classroom. Overwhelmingly, 28 of the 32 respondents (87.50%) agreed that this is an appropriate use of data. Three respondents (9.38%) did not agree and believed that this data should not be used to make decisions regarding differentiated instruction. One final respondent (3.13%) answered that he/she did not know if this was an appropriate use of progress monitoring data.

Another option considered by teachers was whether or not progress monitoring data should be used to place children in special programs, such as Title 1 reading services. This option did not include special education services which were asked about specifically in a later option. Nine of the 31 respondents (29.03%) to this test item believed that this is an appropriate use of test data while 14 of the respondents (45.16%) did not feel like this is a correct usage of monitoring data. Eight respondents (25.81%) did not know if this is an appropriate use.

The next option considered by teachers was whether this information should be used to provide special education opportunities for the child. Of the 31 respondents who considered this option, four (12.90%) believed progress monitoring data should be used to provide special education opportunities for children. However, 20 respondents (64.52%) did not agree and believed that this data is not sufficient to make special education decisions. Seven other respondents (22.58%) were not sure how to respond to this option.

The final option under this survey item asked teachers to consider if progress monitoring data should be utilized to continue scientific-based instructional opportunities. The majority, 28 of the 32 respondents (87.50%), believed it is appropriate to use charted progress monitoring information to decide whether to continue scientifically-based instruction. Three (9.38%) of the remaining four respondents believed that this is not an appropriate use of progress monitoring data. The final respondent (3.13%) was not sure how to respond to this item.

Question 15 of the survey asked teachers if there were appropriate support services in place at the school level to create positive outcomes within the RtI process. Teachers were given the opportunities to respond that there are support systems in place, more support is needed, or they do not understand enough about RtI to know what is needed for RtI to be successful. Table 15 illustrates the teachers' responses to this test item.

Table 15

Are Support Systems in Place to Create Positive Outcomes?

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Are appropriate support systems in place at the school level to create positive outcomes within the RtI process? (N = 31)	Support systems are in place.	16	51.61%
	More support systems are needed.	10	32.26%
	I do not understand enough about RtI to determine the support needed for the program to be successful.	5	16.13%

Of the 31 respondents who considered this item, 16 (51.61%) suggested that appropriate support systems are in place. Ten other respondents (32.26%) suggested that more support systems are needed. The final five respondents (16.13%) felt that they did not understand RtI well enough to know what might be needed to ensure success of the process.

As part of the survey, teachers were asked on question 16 to consider why they had started children in the RtI process. Teachers were provided options and then asked to answer yes or no as to whether the provided reason was a reason they had referred a child. Table 16 represents the different options available to the teacher and their response to each option.

Table 16

Teachers' Reasons for Referring Students for the RtI Process

Why have you referred students for the RtI process?	Response	Number of Respondents
Academic difficulties (N = 29)	Yes	25
	No	4
Poor attendance (N = 29)	Yes	0
	No	29
Incomplete assignments (N = 29)	Yes	1
	No	28
Behavioral issues (N = 29)	Yes	12
	No	17
Physical concerns (N = 29)	Yes	0
	No	29
Poor study habits (N = 29)	Yes	0
	No	29
Lack of family support (N = 29)	Yes	0
	No	29
Language skills (N = 29)	Yes	9
	No	20
Organizational skills (N = 29)	Yes	1
	No	28
Parental request (N = 29)	Yes	1
	No	28

Twenty-five of the 29 respondents reported that they had referred children for RtI

services when a child was experiencing academic difficulties. Even though 12

respondents reported that they had referred children due to behavioral difficulties and

nine respondents reported that they had referred children due to language issues, the majority of teachers reported that they did not refer children based on either of these concerns. Teachers also considered poor attendance, incomplete assignments, physical concerns, poor study habits, lack of family support, poor organization skills, and parental referrals, and overwhelmingly reported that these were not reasons they had referred children for RtI services.

Part Three of the survey aimed to assess the regular education teachers' understandings of their role in the RtI process. The first item in this part of the survey, question 17, asked teachers how many students they have referred for RtI support. Table 17 illustrates the findings of this item. Seven of the 30 respondents (23.33%) to this test item reported that they had not referred any children for RtI services. Five respondents (16.67%) reported that they had referred either one or two children for services while one more respondent (3.33%) reported referring three or four children. Six respondents (20%) reported that they had referred five or six children while the final 11 respondents (36.67%) reported that they had referred seven or more children for RtI services.

Table 17

Number of Students Teachers Have Referred for RtI Support

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Number of students you have referred for RtI support? (N = 30)	0	7	23.33%
	1-2	5	16.67%
	3-4	1	3.33%
	5-6	6	20.00%
	7-up	11	36.67%

Using question 18, teachers were also asked how many of their students continue to receive RtI services. Six respondents (19.35%) reported that they had no children receiving RtI services. Four respondents (12.90%) suggested that they had one or two children who continued to receive RtI support, while five more respondents (16.13%) reported that three or four children were currently receiving services. Five respondents (16.13%) reported that they had five or six children who were currently receiving RtI support. The final 11 respondents (35.48%) reported that they had seven or more children who continued to receive RtI support services.

Table 18

Number of Students Who Continue to Receive RtI Services

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Number of those students receiving	0	6	19.35%
RtI services? (N = 31)	1-2	4	12.90%
	3-4	5	16.13%
	5-6	5	16.13%
	7-up	11	35.48%

Question 19 of the survey asked teachers to consider why they have not used the RtI process if, in fact, they had not taken a child through the process. Teachers had five options to consider. Since most teachers had taken a child through the RtI process there were only a couple of responses to this item. Both individuals who answered this item reported that they did not feel comfortable using the RtI process due to lack of information concerning the process.

Question 20 of the survey also asked teachers to consider their role in developing

RtI plans. Options were provided and the teachers were asked to pick one of the options to describe their understanding of the general education teacher's role in RtI planning. Table 19 illustrates the respondents' views concerning the general education teacher's role. Six of the 32 respondents (18.75%) reported that the general education teacher's role is to present information about the student's progress and answer questions. Six more respondents (18.75%) believed the role is to help other members develop the interventions. Eighteen respondents (56.25%) stated that the teacher needs to assume a leadership role in developing an intervention plan. The final two respondents (6.25%) reported that the general education teacher does not have an important role in developing student intervention plans.

Table 19

Teachers' Perception of their Role in Developing RtI Plans

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
What do you feel is the general education teacher's primary role in developing an RtI plan? (N = 32)	The teacher presents information about the student's progress and answers questions.	6	18.75%
	The teacher helps the other members develop the interventions.	6	18.75%
	The teacher assumes a leadership role in developing an intervention plan.	18	56.25%
	The teacher does not have an important role in developing student intervention plans.	2	6.25%

During their completion of the survey, teachers responded to question 21

regarding the extent to which they typically agree with the developed RtI intervention

plans. Teachers were given the option of choosing agree, partially agree, undecided,

partially disagree, or disagree completely. Table 20 shows how teachers responded to

this survey question.

Table 20

Teachers' Agreement with RtI Intervention Plans

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
To what extent do you	Agree	14	43.75%
usually agree with the	Partially agreed	12	37.50%
developed RtI plans?	Did not agree or disagree	1	3.13%
(N = 32)	Partially disagree	4	12.50%
	Disagreed completely	1	3.13%

Fourteen of the 32 respondents (43.75%) reported that they typically agree with

the intervention plans while another 12 respondents (37.50%) said they partially agree

with the plans. One respondent (3.13%) reported that he/she does not agree or disagree

with the plans. Four more respondents (12.50%) reported that typically they partially

disagree with the plans, while the last respondent (3.13%) reported that he/she usually

disagrees completely with the proposed RtI intervention plans.

Question 22 of the survey asked teachers to consider if they were primarily

responsible for the implementation of the intervention plan and if they followed through

with the plan to fidelity. Teachers were given the options to respond that they had

followed through completely or partially, that they did not follow through, that they had

started but stopped, or they never had the responsibility. Table 21 illustrates how the teachers responded to this survey item.

Table 21

Teacher Follow Through with the Intervention Plan

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
If you were primarily responsible for implementation of the interventions, did you follow through with the plan? (N = 32)	Completely	23	71.88%
	Partially	4	12.50%
	Did not follow through	1	3.13%
	I started, but stopped	0	
	I never had this responsibility	4	12.50%

Twenty-three of the 32 respondents (71.88%) reported that they followed through with the intervention plan completely, while another four respondents (12.50%) reported that they followed through with the plan partially. Only one respondent (3.13%) reported that he/she did not follow through with the plan. Four respondents (12.50%) reported that they never had the responsibility of implementing the intervention plan.

Question 23 of the survey asked teachers to consider if they did not follow through with the prescribed intervention plan or if they had started implementing the interventions and stopped. Only six participants responded to this item. Two respondents reported that the intervention took too much time. Two more respondents suggested that they did not have enough training or background knowledge to implement the intervention. The final two respondents reported that another strategy was used in place of the prescribed intervention.

In assessing the general education teacher's role in the RtI process, the survey,

utilizing question 24, asked teachers to consider their knowledge and understanding of

the available research-based programs. Sixteen of the 32 respondents (50%) reported that

they do have knowledge of the programs that can be used to assist struggling learners,

while 15 others (46.88%) reported that they have at least some knowledge of what is

available. One respondent (3.13%) reported that he/she does not know what is available

to assist struggling learners. Table 22 serves as a visual representation of this

information.

Table 22

Do Teachers have Knowledge of Available Programs?

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Do you have knowledge and understanding of research-based programs available within the school or district that can be used to help students who are not achieving at grade level? (N = 32)	Yes Some No	16 15 1	50.00% 46.88% 3.13%

The general education teachers were also asked on question 25 if they felt

comfortable discussing the pros and cons of different research-based interventions in

relationship to a student's ability level. Table 23 represents a visual of the collected data.

Just as in the last survey item, 15 of the 32 respondents (46.88%) reported that they

would feel comfortable discussing the pros and cons of available intervention strategies.

However, 13 respondents (40.63%) reported that they would need additional training

before they felt comfortable having those conversations. Four respondents (12.50%)

reported that they are not at all prepared to discuss the pros and cons of different

strategies.

Table 23

Teachers' Confidence Discussing the Pros and Cons of Available Interventions

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Are you capable of discussing the pro and con of different research-based interventions in relationship to a student's ability level? (N = 32)	Yes	15	46.88%
	No	4	12.50%
	Need more training	13	40.63%

Using survey question 26, general education teachers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the current RtI process. Teachers could respond that they were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or dissatisfied. There was considerable variance in their response to this item with all possible choices well represented. Table 24 illustrates the findings of the collected data.

Table 24

Teachers' Satisfaction with the Current RtI Support System

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
As a teacher, are you satisfied with the current RtI support systems? (N = 32)	Very satisfied	5	15.63%
	Somewhat satisfied	11	34.38%
	Satisfied	5	15.63%
	Somewhat dissatisfied	6	18.75%
	Dissatisfied	5	15.63%

Five of the 32 respondents (15.63%) reported that they are very satisfied with the

current RtI process, while another 11 respondents (34.38%) reported being somewhat

satisfied. Five respondents (15.63%) reported that they are satisfied with the current

system. Six respondents (18.75%) reported being somewhat dissatisfied with the current

RtI system, and the final five respondents (15.63%) reported being dissatisfied.

Teachers were also given the opportunity on question 27 to consider how much

input they had on improving the present RtI process. Table 25 serves as a visual

representation of the findings. Of the 32 responses to this survey item, nine teachers

(28.13%) reported that they do have input on improving RtI. Eighteen respondents

(56.25%) said they have no input on improving the current RtI process. The final five

respondents (15.63%) did not know whether they are given any input.

Table 25

Do Teachers Have Input on the Present RtI System?

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
As a teacher, do you feel there is a system in place for teachers to have input on improving the present RtI system? (N = 32)	Yes	9	28.13%
	No	18	56.25%
	Don't know	5	15.63%

Question 28 on the survey asked teachers to consider if there was a committee in

place to update RtI procedures and convey information to teachers (Table 26). Teachers

could answer yes, no, or don't know to this item. Of the 31 respondents to this item, 17

(54.84%) stated that there was a committee in place to discuss such matters. Nine

respondents (29.03%) reported that there was not a committee in place to discuss updates

and convey information. The remaining five respondents (16.13%) were not sure if such

a committee existed and responded that they did not know.

Table 26

Is There a Committee in Place to Update RtI Procedures?

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Is there a committee in place at your school to update RtI procedures and convey information to teachers? (N = 31)	Yes	17	54.84%
	No	9	29.03%
	Don't know	5	16.13%

The survey, using question 29, asked teachers to report whether or not they had

received staff development on the RtI process (Table 27). The majority of respondents,

27 of the 31 (87.10%), stated that they did receive staff development training on RtI,

while the other four respondents (12.90%) reported that they did not receive training.

Table 27

Did Teachers Receive Staff Development on RtI?

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Have you received staff development concerning the RtI process? (N = 31)	Yes	27	87.10%
	No	4	12.90%

Survey question 30 asked the teachers if they believed additional staff

development would be helpful in their understanding and use of the RtI process (Table

28). Twenty of the 32 respondents (62.50%) reported that they believed additional staff

development would assist them in their understanding and use of RtI. Eleven other

respondents (34.38%) reported that additional training would not assist them in their

understanding of RtI. The final respondent (3.23%) responded that he/she did not know

if additional training concerning RtI procedures would assist in the understanding or use

of RtI.

Table 28

Is Additional Staff Development Needed?

Question	Teacher Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Do you feel additional staff development would be helpful in your understanding and use of the RtI process? (N = 32)	Yes	20	62.50%
	No	11	34.38%
	Don't know	1	3.23%

Question 31 asked regular education teachers to consider who within the school

they could go to when they needed assistance with RtI questions or procedures. Teachers

were asked to consider several individuals within the building and respond whether they

would go to that individual for assistance. The answer options included always,

frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never. Table 29 provides a visual representation

of the survey question findings.

Table 29

Who Provides Needed Assistance for RtI Issues?

Who do you go to for assistance concerning the RtI process?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
A grade-level teacher (N = 31)	Always	2	6.45%
	Frequent	9	29.03%
	Occasional	10	32.26%
	Sometimes	6	19.35%
	Never	4	12.90%
A teacher at another grade level (N = 31)	Always	0	
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	2	6.45%
	Sometimes	11	35.48%
	Never	18	58.06%
Administrator (N = 31)	Always	8	25.81%
	Frequent	10	32.26%
	Occasional	6	19.35%
	Sometimes	1	3.23%
	Never	6	19.35%
Mentor (N = 28)	Always	0	
	Frequent	4	14.29%
	Occasional	2	7.14%
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	22	78.57%
RtI coach/TA (N = 32)	Always	16	50.00%
	Frequent	10	31.25%
	Occasional	2	6.25%
	Sometimes	3	9.38%
	Never	1	3.13%
Counselor (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	5	16.67%
	Occasional	2	6.67%
	Sometimes	12	40.00%
	Never	11	36.67%
Special education program specialist (N = 30)	Always	0	
	Frequent	1	3.33%
	Occasional	5	16.67%
	Sometimes	5	16.67%
	Never	19	63.33%

(continued)

Who do you go to for assistance concerning the RtI process?	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
I do not know who can answer questions concerning the RtI process. (N = 17)	Always	1	5.88%
	Frequent	0	
	Occasional	0	
	Sometimes	0	
	Never	16	94.11%

Of the 31 respondents, two respondents (6.45%) responded that they would go to a grade-level teacher when they had questions concerning RtI. Nine respondents (29.03%) suggested that they would frequently go to a grade-level teacher for assistance. The majority of respondents (N = 10 for 32.26%) reported that they would go to another grade-level teacher occasionally. Six more respondents (19.35%) reported that they would ask a grade-level teacher for assistance sometimes. The final four respondents (12.90%) reported that they would never go to a grade-level colleague for assistance on RtI procedures.

When considering this survey question, the majority of teachers reported that they would rarely go to a teacher from another grade level. In fact, 18 of the 31 respondents (58.06%) responded that they would never go to a teacher from another grade level for RtI assistance. Eleven other respondents (35.48%) reported that they would only sometimes go to a teacher from another grade level. The final two respondents (6.45%) reported that they would occasionally go to a teacher from another grade level when they had questions concerning RtI.

When considering whether or not they would go to an administrator when they had questions concerning RtI, eight teachers (25.81%) responded that they would always go to the administrator for help. Ten respondents (32.26%) reported that they would

frequently go to an administrator when they had questions and six more respondents (19.35%) said they would go to an administrator occasionally. One teacher (3.23%) suggested that he/she would go to an administrator for assistance only sometimes. The final six respondents (19.35%) reported that they would never go to an administrator when they had questions regarding RtI.

Overwhelmingly, teachers reported that they would not go to their mentor for assistance with RtI. Of the 28 respondents, 22 (78.57%) said they would never go to a mentor for help. Two more respondents (7.14%) suggested that they might go occasionally to a mentor to get questions answered. By responding with frequently, just four respondents (14.29%) reported that they would routinely go to a mentor for help.

Unlike going to a mentor, respondents reported that they routinely go to the RtI coach/TA when they have questions concerning RtI. Sixteen of the 32 respondents (50%) reported that they always go the RtI coach/TA when they have questions, while another 10 respondents (31.25%) reported that they go to the RtI coach/TA frequently. Two respondents (6.25%) reported that they go to the RtI coach/TA on an occasional basis. Three more respondents (9.38%) reported that they sometimes go to the RtI coach/TA, while the final respondent (3.13%) reported that he/she never goes to the RtI coach/TA.

The teachers in the study agreed that they do not typically go to the counselor when they have questions regarding RtI. Eleven of the 30 respondents (36.67%) reported that they would never go to the counselor and 12 more respondents (40%) reported that they would go to the counselor only sometimes. Two respondents (6.67%) reported that they would go to the counselor for help and the final five respondents (16.67%) reported that they would go to the counselor frequently.

Similar to their consensus regarding the counselor, the majority of teachers in the study reported that they do not routinely go to the special education program specialist when they have RtI questions. Nineteen of the 30 respondents (63.33%) reported that they never go to the program specialist when they need answers to RtI questions. Five more respondents (16.67%) reported that they go to the program specialist only sometimes and another five respondents (16.67%) reported that they go to this source occasionally. Just one respondent (3.33%) reported that he/she would frequently go to a special education program specialist for assistance with RtI.

The final option on this survey item allowed the teachers to report if they did not know who to go to for assistance. Sixteen of the 17 respondents (94.11%) reported that this is never the case, suggesting that they know who they would go to for assistance. The other respondent (5.88%) reported that he/she frequently does not know who to go to for assistance when he/she has questions concerning RtI.

The final three questions inherent to this study will be examined using qualitative data from the interviews. These questions are better explained through an interview format because the range of responses would be too great to encompass in a survey. Interview scripts were analyzed to find trends of responses that could be used to answer the final three research questions.

Research Question 4: Do elementary teachers know why school systems are enacting Response to Instruction practices? The fourth research question is best answered using qualitative information from the conducted interviews. Interview participants were each asked if anyone had ever discussed with them during the initial training phases why RtI was first established or why the school system decided to implement the strategies. The common theme among most interviewees was that little

time was spent on the historical basis. Subjects consistently noted that they had minimal training concerning how or why Response to Instruction was established. Interviewee 1 noted that, "we were basically given a pamphlet and explained very minimal…it wasn't taught or explained like it should have been." Interviewee 2 confirmed that evaluation and noted that, "it was just an overview of what it is and why we are having it." Further comments from Interviewee 3 included, "I don't really remember hearing anything about it."

However, even though the majority of interview subjects suggested that little time was spent explaining the background of RtI and the associated underpinnings, many of the teachers seemed to have some limited understanding of why schools are enacting RtI procedures. Interviewee 2 stated, "We are going to be using this to track and maybe pinpoint problem areas in children. That way they don't fall behind in the No Child Left Behind type of era." Interviewee 4 responded that, "it was presented to us as a research-based way to assist children. It's almost like you're providing interventions for children who are EC [Exceptional Children] children but they're not labeled EC." Another subject, Interviewee 5, noted that, "RtI basically puts more onus on the classroom teacher to make sure they are doing everything they can before they just push the child toward the EC department." All of these comments suggested that many of the teachers understand that RtI is designed as an early intervention strategy that avoids the traditional wait to fail model inherent to discrepancy testing. This theme was prevalent throughout many of the questions designed to assess the purpose of Response to Instruction.

However, a few teachers showed a lack of understanding of the reasons RtI processes were being put into place. Many of these failed understandings relate to the relationship between RtI and special education. For example, "[the relationship between

RtI and EC] is a gray area that I think a lot of people are confused about. We can't tell if it is something for identifying for EC down the road" (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 5 stated that RtI is "a way to get children into EC, if needed, without strictly going through the evaluation process with standardized tests."

Another point of understanding that failed to be discussed by the majority of interview subjects is the relationship between RtI and the discrepancy model. Only two of the 10 subjects interviewed discussed the role of discrepancy testing in the birth of RtI. Interviewee 1 noted that,

> …as the laws have changed, we are trying to replace the discrepancy model. In order to replace that we need to have something that takes care of all the issues that we were facing with discrepancies, such as reliability, validity, moving from state to state or town to town. So we chose a model, or should have chosen a model, based off of RtI that replaced what the discrepancy formula didn't do.

Likewise, Interviewee 5 reported,

> …this gives a child who may not test well, like on the standardized tests that put you in EC… they may not get there that way but if there is some need, it will find it and you will have the documentation by working through the RtI system, the level, the tiers.

Research Question 5: What problems or concerns have teachers encountered in their attempts to implement Response to Instruction strategies? A trend analysis of the interviews found that teachers identified multiple concerns or problems with the current RtI process. In fact, six different areas of concern, or themes, were noted on multiple interview scripts. The themes identified through the analysis include concerns with time, manpower/personnel, training, progress monitoring tools, excessive student

removal from class, and parental involvement. In addition to the data that will follow,

Appendix F provides additional excerpts taken in complete context from the interviews

that highlight teacher concerns with the RtI process.

Time

Time appeared to be the most prevalent theme identified by those interviewed

based on the number of times it was discussed. Every teacher mentioned time as being a

concern at some point during their interview. Interview Subject 2 encompassed the

common feeling when she stated,

> …it's the time involved in preparing and being sure. The actual information is
>
> great but it is time consuming. Very, very time consuming. You are printing and
>
> putting in scores and looking at it and doing tier paperwork and …there is a little
>
> twinge in you that goes "Oh gosh, I have to write up paperwork because this kid
>
> is going to Tier 2." It is not a bad thing but it is almost like… yeah the paperwork
>
> is fine. I understand you have to have proof but my goodness we can't get our
>
> lesson plans done because we are doing so much…we are really struggling trying
>
> to get it all done in a regular day.

Teachers routinely discussed all of the different procedures associated with RtI in

debunking the belief that progress monitoring and RtI implementation can be conducted

within short periods. For example, progress monitoring probes are designed to take

approximately one minute for each child. However, the reality is that it takes much more

than 1 minute per child when you consider all that has to be done with each child.

Teachers discussed the preparation time in getting probes together and evaluated for their

appropriateness, then the actual time to do the probe, and then the time it takes to

evaluate the child's performance on the probe and entering data into the computer.

Interviewee 3 reported that,

> Everybody jokes about it and says, "Oh, it only takes a minute." But it really
> does take more than a minute. You can't …if you've got 10 kids you're not going
> to be done in 10 minutes. You know, everybody's like "Piece of cake. It's a
> minute." The probe is a minute. It takes more than that. It just does. Like to get
> them over there, to get the stuff out, you know, it's just …it takes more than a
> minute. Everybody thinks it's not a big deal but it is…on top of everything else
> that you have. And I know that other grade levels feel the strain that we do down
> here with the lack of assistants this year. So that just compounds it even
> more…the crunch for time that you feel and everything. You feel like you're not
> getting anything done. You feel like you're not doing enough. And sometimes
> you think you're not doing anything well, you know.

Interviewee 7 also discussed the time associated with progress monitoring by
stating,

> I thought this is going to be wonderful because it sounds really good. It is going
> to be wonderful. This takes a lot of time. You pull the probes that they need. You
> go through your big thick book and you go through each page. You pull the
> probes you need for the week. You take the probes to the office. You copy them.
> You bring the original probe back and you file it back… You find the sheet where
> it goes. You put it back in the page. You take time out during the day to probe
> then you score them. Then you put them on the computer. Then you file them in
> their folders. Then you keep up with the Tier 1 papers. That is a lot of
> paperwork. That is a lot of time we spend for something that I personally at this
> point of time I am disappointed in…

Interview Subject 7 continued with this same thought later in her interview when she stated,

Don't make me have to take my time out. It takes me 20 minutes every Thursday morning minimum to get everything pulled and in order to probe them when they do come in the door. It takes me another 15 minutes to score them. Another 10 minutes to put them in the computer. And not even when you set the whole thing up…that's a lot longer when you set the whole thing up. Then you count the Tier 1 paperwork, the Tier 2 paperwork. It is two and three sheets. That's a lot of work.

These statements support the beliefs put forth by those individuals interviewed in concluding that time is a major concern for teachers. Those individuals who consented to the interview unanimously suggested that they do not have enough time to do all of the things that are being asked of them, and to continue to add more duties to an already overburdened schedule is not working. The theme of time was discussed in detail by every subject who participated in the interview phase of the study.

Manpower/Personnel

Another theme that became apparent in the analysis of the interview data suggested that personnel issues are a concern. This issue appears to be related to the time issue. Multiple respondents suggested that personnel issues are a concern when considering RtI practices. The relationship exists because most of the discussion centered around the fact that teachers seem to be getting less and less help in the classroom to remediate and intervene. School B alone lost approximately 10 teaching assistant positions school wide at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. The result was that teachers were being asked to continue all of the previous services while adding

additional responsibilities, all with a reduction in force. Interviewee 6 presented a

consensus of many of those interviewed when she stated, "I don't understand how that's

going to work with less and less help but more and more piled on our plates."

Interviewee 4 also highlighted this issue by saying,

> It's short staffed as far as manpower or help with the program. Does that make
>
> sense? …the whole thing about delivering it with fidelity which is obviously the
>
> most important part….without the manpower to watch the kids…it's pretty much
>
> a futile effort. So I think just the manpower and that is, personally for me, the
>
> biggest issue.

Some of the concerns related to manpower/personnel issues not only relate to not

having enough positions but what is being asked of the people who are in those positions.

According to Subject 6,

> This is supposed to be focused, you know, highly effective interventions. But at
>
> our school …at least for the fourth graders, they're getting this expert intervention
>
> from a TA. That has been a concern. Who…and this is her first…I don't know
>
> her very well and she's nice as she can be but I don't know if she …I guess she
>
> probably had to have an associate's degree. I don't know if she was a TA
>
> somewhere else before. I, you know, am just thinking…I don't know. It doesn't
>
> feel like the experts are…

Similarly, Subject 1 also discussed personnel issues and looked at who

was being asked to perform the different functions associated with RtI.

> You would have to have more people who can lead the interventions who are
>
> trained. Getting trained people in here to do the interventions would cost more
>
> money because they would be experienced people. Like now, a TA is responsible

for many of the interventions and she hasn't been trained in reading. She doesn't cost much in terms of salary but she isn't really trained in reading interventions.

This loss of manpower was not only limited to school staff. Interviewee 7 further suggested,

This year in my environment in my classroom I have no parent volunteers, absolutely none. So I don't even have that extra help. You know that they could be doing even anything with them. So that's been a downfall this year for me. I have no parent volunteers.

Another issue associated with personnel involved looking at who is getting hired to fill the RtI coaching and RtI teaching assistant positions. Several of those interviewed did not appear to see those individuals in those positions as experts in the field of RtI. Subject 7 reported,

…another thing is the RtI personnel that they are bringing in, if you want the truth, are certified teachers who didn't have a job at another school. For example, might be a sixth grade teacher and she really loved teaching sixth grade. Her job was taken at that school and in order to have a job she had to be the RtI person. That happens in almost every school. That is not their choice of job. They are being put in that position in order to have a job. To have a job, they had to take that position. They are qualified because they are a certified teacher. Is that what they want to be doing? No. They are learning it from scratch. So this was our third year. This was our RtI person's first year. So she had to learn the program before she could come in and lead us. And so many times she would say, "You tell me. You have done this longer than I have." And that is not her fault either. She was being honest. She didn't know…. That just shocks you when they are

putting so much faith and money in a program that they are going to pull in

teachers that have lost their jobs at other schools because positions were gone or

other reasons and say if you want a job for [school district], this is the job we have

available. You want it?

Another interview participant (3) discussed this same issue and noted,

I feel like our head…and I don't understand the chain of command. Maybe I

don't completely understand the chain of command or how they were hired or

what their background is. So I can't really speak …if [RtI TA] is just an assistant

and I understand she was put in this position and she's just trying to learn about

RtI like everybody else. But I feel [RtI Coach] understands it much better than

[RtI TA]. They are both nice as can be but I just feel like, I am almost to the point

where like I am thinking why am I even asking them? Why am I asking [RtI TA]

anything because it is just …I don't think she knows. And I am just like why did

I ask her that? You know, because I just don't think she knows yet. I don't know

what she did before. For all I know this is her first year with RtI. I don't know.

Maybe I have more experience even. I don't know…. But if her background is

not really in RtI, it's not fair of us to be pounding her with all of these questions.

The concerns with who was holding the RtI positions in the schools were also

discussed in terms of staff turnover. Interviewee 3 noted in her interview, "If we could

not have so much turnover who's in the position, I think that would be great." Although

this concern was noted by teachers at both schools, it seemed to be more of a problem at

School B. It was explained during the interviews that none of the same individuals who

held RtI positions in the school were still in those positions the current school year. In

fact, one of the individuals left School B to go to School A. So, while School A seemed

to have more experienced RtI staff, School B RtI staff was completely new to RtI.

Personnel issues were a theme that became apparent as the data were being analyzed. Although many of the respondents did not directly relate this concern with the issue of time, many other participants openly discussed lack of time and lack of manpower as if they were one concept.

Training

Training was another theme discussed during the interviews. Many of the respondents cited a lack of sufficient initial training concerning RtI procedures and processes which seemed to lead to confusion. Subject 1, when asked about her concerns, suggested,

> Obvious first concern was not the correct training, or information…but definitely the knowledge is not there. Not just with classroom teachers but I also feel like administrators… and I also feel like some people at the county office. I don't really know if anybody knows how it is supposed to be run. We are all doing different things.

When reporting her concerns for the implementation of RtI, Participant 6 stated,

> I have lots of concerns…I …the training was rushed and it wasn't differentiated based on how much experience you already had with the program because two teachers in fourth grade this year…they got all…a tremendous amount of training and support last year. They were in third grade but then the other two of us had never seen it or dealt with it before so it was kinda… I felt like those of us who it was the first year the training should have been a little differentiated. And we should have gotten a little more training than what we did.

Interviewee 7 noted,

And I feel like that needs to be better explained at the beginning of the year, at a

time when you have my attention. And usually the first day back at school when

you are in the faculty meeting for half of a day might not be the best time to do it.

If that makes sense.

Similarly discussing the lack of training at the beginning of the year, Participant 3

noted, "Even if something didn't make sense, you don't have time to ask it. …I don't

think [the training] is working when it is in such a crunch time." That same subject later

discussed how the trainings are rushed and crammed into the teachers' planning periods

as well.

This theme concerning lack of training was discussed by about half of those

individuals who were interviewed and suggested that teachers believed more and better

staff development needed to be in place before they were asked to implement these

strategies in their classrooms.

Progress Monitoring Tools

Many of the interview respondents noted concerns with the tools used to track and

monitor the students' progress under RtI. These concerns seemed to filter around the

AIMSweb progress monitoring probes and cutoffs and how they do not appear to match

other curriculum measures used to assess children. For example, Participant 4 noted,

But in February, Christmas, or whenever we did the mid year and all of a sudden

the yellow kids had to have a 102 on fluency and we were fighting that tooth and

nail because the literacy test is nowhere near a 102. It's like two different

standards and that's not fair to those kids. And that's really setting them up to fail

because they don't even have to have that on the end of the year. On the end of

the year to be a second reader you don't even have to have a 102 by the county

standards on the new literacy test.

Interviewee 8 also reported the discrepancies between AIMSweb fluency cutoffs and other curriculum measures by stating, "I know we have been concerned with the cutoffs for fluency because they are so drastically different from the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) fluency cutoffs." Similarly, Subject 10 suggested,

…in third grade my biggest concern is they focus, it focuses so much on fluency, and I don't know if that's the AIMSweb part of it or if it's the RtI. We use the AIMSweb program and that's how we are placing them in the RtI and it focuses a great deal on fluency and to me you've got to be a fluent reader but…I don't see as much growth because we're just nailing that one area that kids have struggled with for so long. Whereas they're missing all of the other, you know, the comprehension and the things like that. We focus so, so much on the fluency. And that's my concern as a testing grade that we're focusing so much on kids reading so fast that some kids are not going to read...ever read that fast. I mean, there are some kids that comprehension wise, they've got it, but they're just not speedy readers.

Other concerns regarding progress monitoring tools include the actual AIMSweb probes themselves and how they might not be appropriate under certain conditions. Subject 9 suggested that you check selections for their appropriateness before using them with students by stating,

…make sure it is appropriate, you know, because some of the selections aren't really and that is like going to be way too much. None of them will do good on it. Not that you want to pick easy ones but you can tell which ones where they are not going to be successful. None of them will be. You've got to proofread the

probe. Make sure it is going to be appropriate for them.

This thought was supported by Interviewee 4 when she stated,

> That's why we feel a lot of it has to do with the inconsistencies in the probes. Just the fact that they say they are second grade level some are harder than others. They just are… full of words and maybe diagraphs and blends and things that even though we are teaching them we are just not there yet and you can only put so much in kids that are far behind. So we feel like the probes have a lot to do with it.

Another respondent (5) suggested that the AIMSweb probes may not be assessing what they are designed to assess. Instead, she stated, "So she wanted to make sure they were testing what she knew rather than her ability to take the test….And again these tests…a lot of them don't test the knowledge. They test the test taking skills."

The concern with the progress monitoring tools was a broad-based theme that incorporated several different viewpoints. While there were concerns with the cutoffs used by the AIMSweb progress monitoring tool, there were also concerns regarding the appropriateness of some probes and the validity of the AIMSweb program.

Excessive Student Removal from Class

Another theme that became apparent in the analysis of data centered on the amount of time children were being removed from the general education classroom in order to receive RtI interventions. Although the teachers appeared to see this as a concern for different reasons, it was a commonly held belief that kids are pulled out of the classroom too often. For example, Subject 8 recognized the importance of reading but did not seem convinced that reading instruction should be at the sacrifice of other curriculum areas. In her explanation she noted,

…sometimes we feel like we are intervening more than we are teaching. We are

missing out on content because we are spending so much time intervening. And

when you are in upper grades, especially fourth and fifth when you have three

tested areas, that's a real concern because there is nothing you can let go of. I

can't let science slide because there is a test next year. I've got writing. I've got

reading. I've got math. The only other thing is social studies and if they don't get

North Carolina then they are not going to get it again but one more time and it's

got to be in there too and so that's hard when you are doing so much intervention.

We have struggled because a lot of our intervention is pull out. We change

classes in the morning. We go to block. We go to lunch. They come back. We

have pull out. There is only an hour in the day that we have to teach writing,

science, and social studies. And that's been some frustration for us. And now

that we have started remediation we don't even have that time. There is not a

time of the day right now that I am in the room on remediation days that all of my

children are in the room. And so that is a little frustrating…

Interviewee 6 also recognized how pulling students out of their classroom makes it

difficult for them to receive other instruction based on the curriculum. She noted,

I have students that go to RtI four days a week for 30 to 40 minutes per time and

they are not getting any better and they are missing you know that much of other

instruction…. There is definitely a lack of collaboration so then there is

resentment on the part of the classroom teachers that their students are being

pulled so much from other subjects that they have to give them grades in and that

they are responsible for teaching them this curriculum as well and they don't

really…they aren't really informed about what for or they don't really feel like

anybody seeks out avenues to support what they are missing thru RTI…. Well

they are going all the time and they are not getting any better…. I'm sick of so

and so getting pulled from my class this many times a week, you know, that's the

…that's the big one…the big concern.

Subject 10 also believed that students are being pulled from their classrooms too

often, but also recognized that in addition to missing other instructional opportunities,

many of these students may be getting too much reading instruction. In addition, she

recognized that the sense of stability is lost when children spend so much time out of

their classroom. In her interview she stated,

I think that sometimes it almost feels like we are intervening these kids to death.

There are some kids, in my opinion and I know that other people think the same,

that we are cramming it down their throat so much that it is almost a burn out with

some of them. And they're missing some of the other experiences like science

and social studies and things like that because they are being pulled. Well these

are areas they might could excel in or enjoy and that some of this reading is

burning out the kids and they are kinda stifled. So at some point, I feel like we

are intervening them to death. I mean you get 2½ hours a day of reading

interventions for a child then…I mean that is a lot for an 8-year old. I almost feel

like there is some burn out that goes on…. Now I feel like that they definitely

need extra help but I think that some of them are being pulled too much that

there's almost a lack of stability for some of them because they're gone and gone

and gone. I know in one point in my day I have 12 kids gone from my room. As

a classroom teacher, if you're missing 12 then you've got 10. It's just tough. My

feelings are that we are taking away the people, like the stability of the people,

from the kid and trying to implement the programs when it's really about the

people…

Although this theme may not have been as prevalent as some of the other

concerns discussed during the interview stage, those teachers who did discuss this

concern were very vocal in their belief that children were being pulled out of their

classroom too often.

Parental Involvement

The final concern, or theme, discussed by those involved in the interviews

involved parental involvement. As part of the RtI process, many parents are asked to

become more involved in their child's education than they may have been in the past.

According to those teachers involved in the interviews, some parents have been more

open to these prospects than others. Some parents appear to resent being called upon to

fill a large role in their child's education. Participant 4 stated,

> It is aggravating trying to get the parents in because, clearly understanding that
>
> you need parent communication….but it is possible you have a child as you know
>
> that you do Tier 1…three maybe four dots later because she gives you a little
>
> leeway to use our teacher judgment. So you're talking okay you get them in, and
>
> they are having trouble. Okay, they've had trouble for a month, you get them in.
>
> get them off work, whatever…or you stay here until 5/6:00, and then potentially a
>
> month later if they're really not hugging the line at all there just WOOO…you got
>
> to get them in and then potentially you got to get them in again. Potentially you
>
> got to get them in once a month if they're really just nose-diving and that's a lot
>
> of meetings after school. You can't ask…you just can't ask parents to get off from
>
> their job once a month for 3 or 4 months. You just can't do it and it gets to be a

real hassle. I hate to use that word but it just came out. It's just a hassle and I

don't know what can be done about that because understandably this is their

child…. We've had some parents that have gotten so aggravated with constantly

being called in that they refuse to come in. I mean, "We're not coming in. We're

going to lose our job." You know that kind of thing. So while you're trying to

keep the parents on board and have good school communication some of these

parents are …it's like an opposite effect. So I don't know if there is any way to

keep parents informed and cut out some of these meetings. I mean that is killing

us. Absolutely killing us.

Interviewee 7 recognized that parents can bring a lot of value to the RtI process

but also recognized that often the children with the most needs come from the families

with the least parental support. She stated,

But then the parent goes home and I don't feel like…if they're not an above

average parent they really don't do anything more than they normally would do.

It's hard. And it's hard to say that you and I are in charge of the improvement in

your child when you're the only one really doing anything. And inevitably, the

Tier 3 children are from the parents who don't work with them anyway. So

you're preaching to the choir but the choir children are fine…if that makes sense.

And the children who are in Tier 3 are not getting that homework that they

need…the help at home that they need. That's the saddest part about the whole

thing.

When asked if a school PTO program would be beneficial in getting parents involved,

Interviewee 7 was quick to point out, "The parents that you need won't even show up for

conferences. You beg and plead and borrow just to get them in for a normal conference."

Interviewee 8 also recognized the difficulty in getting some of her parents in for conferences and noted, "I have had one or two parents who I heard groaning about having to come up here again. But those are probably the parents that we would have struggled with to get in for conferences with anyway."

Research Question 6: What suggestions for improvement could teachers offer based on their experience with Response to Instruction implementation? The final research question sought to learn from the teachers who were involved in the piloting of RtI in the school district. The goal was to collect ideas that might make it easier for other schools to begin RtI implementation. The teachers interviewed provided some suggestions that might assist new schools in this endeavor. The themes that surfaced typically involved leadership suggestions, opportunities for collaboration, guidance, and knowledge. Interestingly, those individuals interviewed often pulled leadership back into the discussion even when talking about ideas of collaboration, guidance, and knowledge. The overpowering theme that became apparent was that the leadership might be the most critical aspect of the success or failure of the Response to Instruction process in the schools.

Research Question 1

Survey items from Part One of the survey were used to answer the first research question regarding purpose, goals, and processes associated with RtI. The first of these survey items asked participants to consider possible goals of RtI. Of six provided goals of RtI, respondents considered five major goals. These included providing strategies, creating an interdisciplinary team, proving research-based interventions, preventing inappropriate placement of children in special education, and providing another avenue to determine student needs. The majority of respondents did not feel that keeping students

out of special education was a goal of RtI.

The second survey item asked participants to consider who is typically involved in the RtI team. The general consensus was that the regular education teacher, parent, counselor, principal, and RtI coach are always part of that team while other individuals had varying participation in RtI team matters.

When asked who oversees the RtI process in the school, respondents identified three individuals who might be considered the overseer. These individuals, the regular education teacher, principal, and the RtI coach, were recognized on a majority of completed surveys as always leading the RtI process.

Question 4 of the survey asked participants to consider what methods can be used to monitor student progress within the RtI model. Several methods were noted by at least 80% of the respondents as being methods that could be used to monitor student progress. These areas included graphs showing data, curriculum-based measurements, scientific-based measurements, computer-based assessment programs, teacher comments, and intervention summaries. The majority of respondents also noted that work samples, report card grades, anecdotal notes, behavior report cards, notes from meetings, attendance reports, and grade-level interventions could also be used to monitor student progress but not to as high of a degree.

The final question in Part One asked respondents if they felt like they understood the concept of RtI. Twenty-seven of 32 respondents, or 84% suggested that they do understand the concept.

Research Question 2 and Research Question 3

Part 2 and Part 3 of the survey, description of RtI procedures and general education teacher's role, were used to answer research questions 2 and 3. These two

questions evaluated individual roles and more in-depth tiered processes. The questions in these sections of the survey evaluated responsibility for tasks, interventions, team membership at each tier level, progress monitoring, support systems, and the regular education teacher's role.

The second research question looked at who is involved in the RtI process and the roles associated. To answer this question, the survey included items concerning responsibility for RtI tasks and the general education teacher's role. Survey item 6 asked teachers to rate who is primarily responsible for certain RtI related tasks. The tasks being considered ranged from setting up meetings to monitoring student progress to developing interventions. Based on responses, the regular education teacher is generally considered responsible for gather information on the student, observing students in the classroom, developing and implementing interventions, making sure interventions are being implemented, evaluating interventions, monitoring student progress, conducting screenings, and maintaining files. Respondents noted that the regular education teacher shared the responsibility of determining if meetings needed to be held, setting up meetings, notifying parents, taking notes during meetings, and making referrals for special education.

When asked about the regular education teacher's primary role in developing an RtI plan, respondents had varying responses; 18.75% of respondents believed the teachers should present information about the student's progress and answer questions; another 18.75% believed the teacher helps the other members develop the interventions; 56.25% believed the teacher should assume a leadership role in developing an intervention plan; and the final 6.25% believed the teacher does not have an important role in developing student intervention plans.

Respondents considered their role in implementation of interventions and 71.88% noted that they followed through with intervention plans completely, while another 12.50% suggested that they followed through with plans partially. The remaining respondents reported that they either did not follow through with plans or it was not their responsibility.

After evaluating their role in discussing the pros and cons of different interventions that might be used within an RtI plan, only 46.88% felt confident they could discuss the positives and negatives associated with an intervention plan; 40.63% of respondents felt they would need more training; while the final 12.50% believed they would not be capable of discussing the pros and cons of any RtI intervention plan.

Research question 3 asked teachers to consider the different tier levels as a child progresses through RtI in terms of team membership and expectations at the different levels. Survey items asked respondents to evaluate how the team membership changes as a child moves from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3. Interventions were also discussed in terms of how they might look throughout the tier process.

When evaluating team membership, respondents were provided a list of individuals who might be part of an RtI team and asked who should be included. Respondents could rate each individual as always, frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never included at each tier level. At Tier 1, 96.88% of respondents suggested that the regular education teacher and the parent would always be included. Similarly, at Tier 2, 96.88% and 93.54% of respondents believed that the regular education teacher and the parent are always involved, respectively. However, the RtI coach took a substantial jump from 40% to 70.97% by response. At Tier 3, the regular education teacher (100%) and the parent (96.77%) are still considered major contributors to the team. But now

respondents also reported that the principal (90.32%) and the RtI coach (100%) are always involved in the Tier 3 meetings.

When considering the interventions during the tier process, the majority of respondents (70.97%) recognized that research-based programs, different from the typical classroom instruction, should be used in the classroom as an intervention piece. These interventions, according to 50% of respondents should be in place for at least 1 month, while another 33.33% believed the interventions should be in place for either 2 or 3 months. One month coincides to approximately three or four points on an AIMSweb graph, which was identified by 93.10% of respondents as being the appropriate amount of probes before a decision can be made as to the effectiveness of the intervention. After graphing all information, 87.50% of respondents suggested that differentiated instruction using scientifically-based interventions should continue to occur in the classroom. If the interventions do not fully resolve the student's concerns, 45.16% of respondents believed that different interventions should be implemented, while another 41.93% of respondents suggested that a special education referral should be made.

Qualitative Data from Interviews

The remaining research questions could not be incorporated into the survey because of the open-ended nature of the responses that were expected. These questions were designed to gain information involving knowledge of background, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. Interview participants were led through the interview using a list of preset questions. However, the interviews allowed the examiner and participants to expand on thoughts or ideas as the interviews were progressing. After the conclusion of the interview, all information was transcribed, reviewed by the participants, and hand evaluated for themes. The examiner decided to refrain from computerized

theme analysis because hand analysis afforded an opportunity to again review the

interview and recall the teachers' feelings as they participated in the interview. Because

perception was an important part of this research, the researcher believed it was important

to understand not only what the participants were saying, but also in what context and the

feelings they portrayed during the interview. Hand analysis made it easier for the

researcher to put himself back in the context of the interview and feel what the teacher

was feeling when they discussed RtI. To facilitate this process, the researcher utilized

different color highlighters. Interviews were read and expected themes were highlighted

in different colors as they appeared. An additional review was conducted after all

interviews had been read with the specific task of searching for themes that were less

obvious.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked participants to consider why schools are

adopting RtI practices. During the interview, participants were asked if they had been

given an historical perspective on RtI or had discussed the relationships between RtI and

special education. The general theme that became apparent after the interviews were

analyzed was that too little time was spent on the history of RtI. Respondents had a

limited understanding of the relationship between RtI and special education or the

discrepancy formula. However, they did have some recognition of RtI being an early

intervention program.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question asked subjects about their concerns or the problems

they had faced while transitioning their school toward the RtI process. Even though

participants generally considered one question during the interview involving their

concerns, respondents tended to intersperse their concerns throughout the interview suggesting that *concerns* was a considerable talking point. Lack of time seemed to be the most prevalent theme identified by respondents. The general consensus of the participants was well described by Interviewee 2 who stated, "I think sometimes we are overwhelmed with the time it takes." Other areas of concern, or prevalent themes, included lack of manpower/personnel, inadequate training, misguided progress monitoring tools, excessive student removal from class, and poor parental involvement.

Research Question 6

The final research question was designed to garner the teacher's experience and allow them to provide suggestions to those schools that were not as far along in the RtI process as the pilot schools. Teachers were asked what advice they may have for a school that was considering implementing RtI strategies at the beginning of the next school year. Trend data suggested four areas of consideration that might assist a school considering RtI procedures. These areas included leadership suggestions, opportunities for collaboration, guidance, and knowledge. Even though these areas seem as if they could be independent of each other, participants often related them back to a central theme of strong leadership. While they explained their responses, participants often related how strong leadership could provide the support and guidance that was needed to successfully enact RtI practices.

Summary

Chapter 4 of this research project provided analysis of survey and interview data collected from two schools who have piloted the RtI process in the school district. Thirty-two out of a possible 44 surveys were completed and returned for analysis for a return rate of 73%. Survey items were analyzed using descriptive data and were discussed in

terms of frequency counts and percentage data. In addition, 10 subjects, five from each school, were randomly chosen using a random number chart and asked to participate in approximately one hour long interviews. During the interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on survey items as well as respond to questions that were difficult to include in a survey-type instrument because the responses were expected to be more elaborate. Interview data were evaluated using a theme analysis.

The purpose of the survey and the interviews was to assist the examiner in answering six research questions. The first three questions were answered using survey data while the final three questions were answered using interview data. The research questions were as follows:

1. To what extent do elementary teachers have basic knowledge of the purpose, goals, and process associated with taking a child to the Response to Instruction team?

2. To what extent do elementary teachers understand who is involved in the Response to Instruction process and their roles?

3. To what extent do elementary teachers understand the tiered system associated with Response to Instruction?

4. To what extent do elementary teachers know why school systems are enacting Response to Instruction practices?

5. What problems or concerns have teachers encountered in their attempts to implement Response to Instruction strategies?

6. What suggestions for improvement could teachers offer based on their experience with Response to Instruction implementation?

Chapter 5: Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This research project was designed to evaluate Response to Instruction practices in the developmental stages in two pilot schools in a rural, western county of North Carolina. The necessity to transition to Response to Instruction was born after the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was overhauled in 2004. The new law legislated that individuals could no longer be placed in special education based solely on discrepancy formulas traditionally used by state education boards. Instead, students must undergo a process whereby they receive intense instructional opportunities using scientifically-based interventions before any decision regarding special education can be made. According to Fletcher et al. (2004),

Eligibility determination is, therefore, supported by systematic efforts at enhanced instruction and progress monitoring, not from a protracted evaluation process that takes place in isolation from the classroom and has historically proven to have no benefit for those deemed eligible. (p. 311)

Summary of the Findings

Thirty-two of a possible 44 surveys were completed and returned to the examiner for analysis. This information was used to answer the first three research questions.

Research Question 1: Do elementary teachers have basic knowledge of the purpose, goals, and process associated with taking a child to the Response to Instruction team? Teachers who participated in this study recognized many of the generally accepted goals of Response to Instruction. The majority of teachers responded that providing teachers with strategies to assist student achievement, creating a team of experts, providing research-based interventions, preventing inappropriate placements of

students in special education, and providing another avenue to determine student needs were all major goals of the process. However, less than half of the teachers recognized that RtI also serves a major role in keeping children out of the special education system by serving as an early intervention program.

RtI team membership was also evaluated by allowing the participants to consider how involved certain individuals were in the process. As expected, respondents rated that the regular education teacher, the parent, the counselor, and the RtI coach were the most common members of the RtI team. Because the RtI team is more fluid in its membership based on student needs, any of those individuals included in the survey item might be expected to be a member at some point. However, the regular education teacher and the parent will always be a member of the RtI team. The RtI coach, who is often considered the intervention expert in the school, would also be a common contributor to the RtI team. The person considered in charge of the RtI process is most often described as the regular education teacher or the RtI coach.

When asked what information could be used to monitor student progress under an RtI model, the most common responses were graphed data, curriculum-based measurements, and computer-based assessment programs. Because the school system in this study was using a prepackaged progress monitoring program that incorporates these methods, these responses were not unexpected. However, the participants did recognize that there are many other methods to monitoring student progress outside of prepackaged programs.

An overwhelming majority of respondents reported that they understood the concept of Response to Instruction. This belief was supported by an analysis of their responses, which suggested that they did have an understanding of the roles and

processes associated with RtI. Teachers who participated in the study recognized the goals of RtI and who should be included in the team. They also recognized different methods that could be used to evaluate students involved in the process.

Research Question 2: Do elementary teachers understand who is involved in the Response to Instruction process and their roles? To answer this research question respondents were first asked to consider several tasks related to the process of Response to Instruction. They were then asked to consider who might be responsible for those tasks with possible choices including the administrator, the classroom teacher, the RtI coach, the parent, or another team member. Most respondents reported that it is the regular education teacher's responsibility to gather information on the student, implement interventions, monitor student progress, and maintain files. However, only about half of those who responded suggested that the teacher is also responsible for determining if an RtI meeting is needed, setting up meetings, notifying team members, observing students in the classroom, developing interventions, making sure interventions are implemented, evaluating interventions, and conducting assessments. In fact, there were only three areas of responsibility that respondents reported were anyone else's responsibility more than the teacher's. These areas included taking notes during meetings, determining if services are needed, and making referrals to special education. Understanding that RtI is a general education initiative that takes part in the classroom, it is not surprising that respondents recognized the heavy burden placed on teachers to enact the RtI process.

In addition, teachers recognized the pressures of providing sound intervention strategies in the classroom. About half of the respondents rated that the regular education teacher should be a leader in the development of those interventions used as part of an RtI plan. Respondents also knew that the interventions needed to be research based and

beyond what they would typically do as part of their normal curriculum. Most respondents reported that they follow these plans completely. Respondents also understood that these interventions must take place over a long amount of time so that progress over time can be monitored, analyzed, and reported. However, the teachers did not appear as confident in their understanding of the interventions in terms of positives and negatives associated with each type of intervention. Most respondents suggested that they either could not discuss the pros and cons associated with different interventions or they would at least need more training.

Research Question 3: Do elementary teachers understand the tiered system associated with Response to Instruction? To answer this research question teachers were asked to report how team membership changes as a child moves through the different tiers associated with RtI. In addition, respondents answered questions regarding interventions and progress monitoring within the tiers.

When evaluating team membership, respondents were provided a list of individuals who might be part of an RtI team at the first three tiers of services and asked who should be included. Respondents rated each individual as always, frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never included at each tier level. As expected, respondents suggested that the regular education teacher and the parent would always be included at Tier 1 of RtI services. Similarly, at Tier 2, respondents again believed that the regular education teacher and the parent are always involved. However, respondents noted that the RtI coach became much more involved as a child moved from Tier 1 to Tier 2. Understanding that this school district hired RtI coaches as intervention and paperwork specialists, this increase in participation between Tiers 1 and 2 would be expected. Tier 1 is considered your normal curriculum experience within the classroom while Tier 2

requires the introduction of strategic interventions to help rectify any concerns. As the

intervention specialist for the school, there would be an expectation that the RtI coach

would be pulled in at this stage. At Tier 3, the regular education teacher and the parent

are still considered major contributors to the team. But now respondents also reported

that the principal and the RtI coach are almost always involved in the Tier 3 meetings.

As noted earlier, because of his/her role as an intervention specialist one would expect

the RtI coach to continue as a major contributor to the RtI team. Likewise, the principal

becomes a major contributor due to his/her role as a leader and decision maker. At this

point, the regular classroom instruction is not working for the child and, even though

interventions will continue within the classroom, the team has to start considering other

options within the school. The principal may be able to provide access to these other

services.

When considering the interventions during the tier process, the majority of

respondents recognized that research-based programs different from the typical

classroom instruction should be used in the classroom as an intervention piece. These

interventions, according to half of the respondents should be in place for at least 1 month,

while another third of the respondents believed the interventions should be in place for

either 2 or 3 months. One month, which corresponds to approximately three or four

points on an AIMSweb graph, was identified by the majority of respondents as being the

appropriate amount of probes before a decision can be made as to the effectiveness of the

intervention. After graphing all information, the majority of respondents suggested that

differentiated instruction using scientifically-based interventions should continue to occur

in the classroom. If the interventions do not fully resolve the student's concerns, many

respondents believed that different interventions should be implemented or that a special

education referral should be made. Based on their responses to survey questions, teachers seem to have a strong grasp on the processes associated with RtI in each tier of services.

Research Question 4: Do elementary teachers know why school systems are enacting Response to Instruction practices? The fourth research question is best answered using qualitative information from the conducted interviews. After the majority of respondents first reported that little time was spent on the historical basis of RtI, it became apparent that they appeared to have a grasp on the *why* of RtI. They generally recognized that RtI could incorporate a problem-solving model that could help pinpoint and define student difficulties associated with poor academic performance. Some respondents reported that RtI was an alternate way of placing children in special education when traditional discrepancy formulas had proven fruitless. In addition, some of the respondents stated that they preferred the RtI process because they could provide children interventions while they were struggling rather than waiting for them to fail academically beyond repair.

However, some respondents reported confusion as to why the schools were incorporating RtI strategies other than the fact that their principal told them they would be moving toward this process. This became more evident as concerns were discussed with a common theme thrusting forward that more training, knowledge, and historical information is needed for individuals to buy into the change.

Research Question 5: What problems or concerns have teachers encountered in their attempts to implement Response to Instruction strategies? During the interview, respondents had no difficulty openly discussing their concerns with RtI implementation. Although their concerns were many, the overriding concern was a lack

of time. The teachers included in the interview explained how their day has become so regimented that they no longer have time to go to the bathroom or to even help a child tie their shoes for fear of losing a minute of time when they should be doing something else as dictated by the school system, the principal, or the curriculum. A commonly used word by many of the respondents was "overwhelming." That's not only how they described RtI mandates but also how they described their responsibilities in their classroom. Discussions of too much paperwork or not enough hours were commonplace. One teacher reported that she had to provide interventions with her RtI children while they ate their snack because there was no other time. Another respondent talked about letting some of the children go to the bathroom in pairs so that she could stay behind in the classroom and try to get a single probe completed. Several respondents noted that if they fell behind on even a single task it might take days to catch up. One subject, suggesting an issue with time, reported that RtI was an "absolute bear." In fact, every individual included in the interviews reported time as being a major concern when considering the implementation of RtI strategies.

Tied to the concept of time was a lack of manpower or personnel issues. Both schools included in this research had lost multiple positions within the last year. In fact, one respondent, not exactly sure of the number, reported that her school had lost either 9 or 11 teaching assistant positions at the beginning of the school year. Although these individuals were not always seen as reading experts who could provide the RtI interventions, at least they could monitor a class while the classroom teacher pulled aside those children who needed interventions or probes. This reduction in force left many teachers without any assistance in their classrooms and they were left to shoulder the burden alone. This was a major issue for respondents in this research.

Likewise, respondents were also concerned about who was being placed in certain positions or being asked to do the interventions. While other job positions were being lost, government stimulus money was offered to assist schools with early intervention. This money was used to hire RtI coaching positions at each school. The concern was that people who were losing their jobs in the classroom were being offered these jobs even though they did not appear to have the expertise for such a position. One respondent from School B noted that their newly hired RtI coach was a physical education teacher at another school that had been displaced due to job loss.

Similarly, respondents were concerned that people who were not trained in reading instruction were being held responsible for the delivery of reading interventions. For example, teacher assistants, most of whom hold only an Associate's degree, were being asked to work with the children who seemed to be struggling the most with reading instruction. One respondent noted that this seemed to be backwards and insinuated that the teacher needed to be delivering the intervention for the struggling readers while the TA led the rest of the class in instruction.

Other concerns voiced by respondents included inadequate training, progress monitoring tools, excessive student removal from class, and parental involvement. Respondents reported that they did not feel prepared going into RtI implementation and often cited how they could have received more training, not only on the process, but also on the interventions and progress monitoring tools. For example, as discussed in an earlier research question, many respondents do not feel comfortable explaining why one intervention strategy might be chosen over another strategy or the pros and cons of one strategy over another. Likewise, they felt like some of the initial confusion could have been avoided if they knew what the progress monitoring tool was going to look like

beforehand and how the children were going to be assessed.

The progress monitoring tool itself was a concern because the tool did not always seem to match other assessment tools that continued to be used by the school district. For example, the Informal Reading Inventory, which has been used by the district for many years, might suggest that a child should be able to read 60 words per minute by the end of his/her first-grade year, while the RtI progress monitoring tool might require a child to read 100 words per minute at that same juncture. One teacher described it as a "disconnect" between different tools.

Respondents also complained about the amount of time children were being pulled out of their class to receive reading interventions. Many of these teachers are in testing grades that require children to receive end-of-year testing in certain areas. They felt like their instruction was being overrun and often complained of children being "over-intervened." One respondent noted that one of her children was getting 2½ hours a day of reading instruction when all of the regular and intervention time was added together. The problem was that the student was missing other instructional opportunities in the classroom while he was out receiving his reading intervention. Another respondent noted that she could not see significant gains even though one of her children spent a considerable amount of the day being pulled out of class to receive intervention.

Concerns with parental involvement was another trend that stood out after analysis of the interview data. Respondents noted that parents were beginning to get upset with all the meetings they were being asked to attend. Parents were beginning to complain about being pulled away from their jobs in an already stressful economic environment. One parent told his child's teacher that it was the school's job to teach his child and not his. Teachers complained that the parents who were least involved with

their child's education seemed to have the children with the most academic difficulties, therefore hampering parental involvement even more.

Respondents were quick and open to discussing their concerns with the RtI process. Even though time was the obvious, most often referred to concern, they highlighted many other areas of concern that interfere with the day-to-day operations of a school and the implementation of new programs like RtI. Many of these concerns are not limited to just RtI but are general concerns within a school environment. However, teachers at this point clearly described their feelings toward RtI as "an absolute bear" or "overwhelming."

Research Question 6: What suggestions for improvement could teachers offer based on their experience with Response to Instruction implementation? The teachers interviewed for this research were able to provide some suggestions that might assist new schools in this process of implementation. These ideas typically involved leadership ideas, opportunities for collaboration, guidance, and knowledge. Interestingly, those individuals interviewed often pulled leadership back into the discussion even when talking about ideas of collaboration, guidance, and knowledge, suggesting that a strong leader may be able to provide all of the things a school might need to begin RtI implementation. For example, a strong charismatic leader who is knowledgeable of the RtI concept and practices might be able to inspire teachers or get them to buy into the program more easily. A knowledgeable leader can benefit the staff because they have a better understanding and possibly experience with how the process will unfold in a school as it begins implementation. This knowledge can allow a leader to better prepare for pitfalls that often pop up when new programs are being considered. A strong administrator can take advantage of personnel opportunities and build a team of

knowledgeable individuals who can work together to guide and assist teachers as they initiate these strategies in their classroom. Respondents suggested that it is important to have a knowledgeable person in charge so they always know their questions will get quick and correct responses. Respondents also felt the need for collaboration between teachers and those individuals responsible for RtI in the schools so that easier paths to implementation may be discovered. They see the value of taking ideas and suggestions from others to contradict some of the concerns that they have faced, such as lack of time or lack of manpower. The consensus from many of the respondents in this research pointed to a strong leader as being one of the most important concepts behind a successful implementation of RtI practices. They see this leader as a person who is capable of using their knowledge to guide and inspire teachers to work together to ensure a successful campaign.

Conclusion

As those who play a significant role in the success or failure of a child within a school environment, teachers can provide an introspection often overlooked by school leaders. When decisions are being made, too often the department directors for a school district come together and try to gain understanding without the benefit of those in the trenches. This research was designed as an opportunity for the teachers, who are being held responsible for piloting the strategies set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, to use their knowledge as an opportunity for those who will soon be following in their steps.

This research involved two rural, western North Carolina school districts who were piloting RtI instructional practices. Forty-four classroom teachers were given the opportunity to complete surveys designed to assess knowledge, procedures, roles, and

training pertaining to RtI implementation. Thirty-two surveys were completed for a return rate of 73%. After analysis of survey data, five participants from each school were randomly chosen and asked to participate in interviews that would be used to collect data regarding further knowledge, concerns, and suggestions for improvement.

The data obtained from the surveys and interviews can be used by the school system as other elementary schools prepare to begin the implementation process. Based on the data, teachers appeared to have an understanding of the purposes and goals associated with RtI and they seemed to understand how the process works as a child moves through the different tiers associated with RtI. However, this knowledge does not come without considerable concerns, including lack of time and manpower, poor progress monitoring tools, and parental involvement issues. Some of these concerns are supported in the literature and expressed by Dupuis (2010) when she stated, "In these fiscally challenging times, teachers are being asked to do more with less resources and increased class sizes" (p. 52). However, teachers were able to pool their experience and make suggestions that would assist the next school as they begin this same process. Recommendations centered around having a strong leader who can provide the staff with appropriate training, guidance, and opportunities to learn from each other. These findings are supported by the research that says, "In order to increase the likelihood that RtI methods will be successful for students, a planned and sequenced program of teacher training is needed" (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 141).

Recommendations for Future Research

This research evaluated teacher knowledge of procedures, roles, and practices associated with the implementation of RtI using closed-ended survey questions. In addition, randomly chosen subjects were asked to participate in an open-ended interview

session where they were asked about their experiences, concerns, and possible suggestions for other schools who may find themselves in the same position. The following recommendations may assist future researchers as they continue with this topic:

1. Research which includes a larger sample base may assist in the generalization of quantitative data.

2. Consider performing this research with a school system that is farther along in their experience with RtI and generalizing that data to a different school system who may gain from another's knowledge.

3. Consider research involving other individuals within the school who may be able to share insight into the processes of RtI. These individuals might include counselors, administrators, RtI coaches or assistants, literacy specialists, or school psychologists.

4. Researchers might consider an analysis of leadership styles in the perceived success of RtI programs in various schools within a school system.

Recommendations for Practice

1. District-level leadership, understanding the pressures placed on school-based educators, should carefully consider leadership traits of the administrators they place in schools. Respondents in this research were quick to suggest the value of a charismatic leader who could enthusiastically provide training and get teachers to buy into a program.

2. Before a school begins implementation of RtI practices, school staffs should be trained, not only in the processes of RtI, but also more in-depth training should include progress monitoring tools and techniques. This training should be specific enough that teachers will know exactly what is expected of the children during assessments before

benchmarks are established at the beginning of the year.

       3. Schools should consider scheduling issues to decrease the stress of time in schools. While evaluating the schedule, administrators need to plan how other core areas will be protected during the school day so that children do not miss other educational opportunities.

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Appendix A

Response to Instruction Questionnaire

· This survey should take approximately 15 MINUTES to complete.

· Your participation is voluntary - you may refuse to participate, answer questions, or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

· Your responses will not be identified and confidentiality will be maintained in any report of these findings.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Please place your completed survey in the envelope labeled RtI SURVEYS which will be located beside the teacher mailboxes.

PART ONE: DESCRIPTION OF BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF RtI PROCESSES

1. Goals of Response to Instruction (Indicate one answer per each line.)	Major	Minor	Not a Goal
a. To provide teachers with strategies to help students achieve at a higher level.	☐	☐	☐
b. To create an interdisciplinary team to problem-solve student needs.	☐	☐	☐
c. To provide students with research-based interventions	☐	☐	☐
d. To keep students out of the special education system.	☐	☐	☐
e. To prevent inappropriate placement of students into special education.	☐	☐	☐
f. To provide another avenue to determine a student's educational needs.	☐	☐	☐

2. Member of RtI Team (Indicate one answer per each line.)	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
a. Student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Regular Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Special Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Grade Chairperson	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Counselor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
h. Assistant Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. School Psychologist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. School Social Worker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Speech Therapist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. RtI Coach/Teaching Assistant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Who Oversees the RtI Process (Indicate one answer per each line.)

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
a. Counselor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Grade Chairperson	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Regular Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Special Education Coordinator	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Assistant Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. RtI Coach/Teacher Assistant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. What methods can be used to monitor student's progress within the RtI model? (Indicate one answer per each line.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Work samples	☐	☐	☐
b. Graphs showing data	☐	☐	☐
c. Standardized test scores	☐	☐	☐
d. Curriculum-based measurements	☐	☐	☐
e. Scientific-based programs	☐	☐	☐
f. Computer-based assessment programs	☐	☐	☐
g. Report card grades	☐	☐	☐
h. Anecdotal notes	☐	☐	☐
i. Teacher comments	☐	☐	☐

j.	Intervention summary	☐	☐	☐
k.	Behavior report card	☐	☐	☐
l.	Notes from RtI meetings	☐	☐	☐
m.	Attendance and tardiness	☐	☐	☐
n.	Grade-level interventions	☐	☐	☐

5. Do you understand the concept of Response to Instruction?
(Check one)

_____ No

_____ Yes

_____ I have heard about RtI, but do not understand how it is implemented.

PART TWO: DESCRIPTION OF RtI PROCEDURES

6. Who is primarily responsible for the following RtI tasks?
(Check one for each line)

RtI Task		Admin.	RE teacher	RtI Coach/TA	Parent	Other Member
a.	Determine if RtI meeting is needed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Set up meeting(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Notify parents/team members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Gather information on student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Observe student in general education classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Taking notes during meeting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Develop interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Implementing interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Make sure interventions are being implemented	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Evaluation interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
k. Monitor student progress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Conduct assessments/screenings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Determine if RtI services are necessary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Make referrals for Special Education evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Maintain files	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. What type of intervention need to be in place when using RtI?
(Choose One Answer)

_____ Basic interventions, such as repeat directions or extended times.

_____ Modified work within the classroom.

_____ Student is removed from the classroom for remediation.

_____ Research-based programs different from what is being used in the classroom.

_____ Other

8. Who should be included in the Tier 1 RtI meeting?
(Choose one for each line)

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
a. Student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Regular Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Special Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Grade Chairperson	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Counselor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Principal/Assistant Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. RtI Coach/TA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. School Psychologist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. School Social Worker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Speech Therapist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
l. Literacy Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Special Education Program Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Student Support Team (SST)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Who should be included in the Tier 2 RtI meeting?
(Choose one for each line)

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
a. Student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Regular Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Special Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Grade Chairperson	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Counselor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Principal/Assistant Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. RtI Coach/TA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. School Psychologist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. School Social Worker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Speech Therapist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Literacy Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Special Education Program Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Student Support Team (SST)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Who should be included in the Tier 3 RtI meeting?
(Choose one for each line)

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
a. Student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Regular Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Special Education Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Grade Chairperson	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Counselor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Principal/Assistant Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. RtI Coach/TA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. School Psychologist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. School Social Worker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Speech Therapist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Literacy Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Special Education Program Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Student Support Team (SST)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. How long is an intervention implemented with a student before success or failure can be determined? (Circle one)

1 Month   2 Months   3 Months   4 Months   5 Months   6 Months

12. If the student's problem was not fully resolved during the tier process – what happened next? (Choose One)

_____ The same interventions were continued.

_____ Different interventions were implemented.

_____ The student was placed in RTI services.

_____ The student was referred for special education services.

_____ The student was removed from the RTI process.

13. How many monitoring points need to be plotted on a progress monitoring chart before progress can be determined about the student? (Circle one)

3 points   4 points   6 points   10 points   12 points   15 points

14. What should be done with the results of a student's progress monitoring after it is graphed? (Choose one for each line)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. The student should be given instruction different from the general education curriculum.	☐	☐	☐
b. Differentiated instruction should occur within the general education classroom.	☐	☐	☐
c. The student should be placed in special services, such as Title 1.	☐	☐	☐
d. The student should have access to special education services.	☐	☐	☐
e. The student should continue learning using scientific-based instruction.	☐	☐	☐

15. Are appropriate support systems in place at the school level to create positive outcomes within the RtI process?

_____ Support systems are in place

_____ More support systems are needed

_____ I do not understand enough about RtI to determine the support needed for the program to be successful.

16. Why have you referred students for the RtI process?
(Choose Yes or No for each reason)

	Yes	No
a. Academic difficulties	☐	☐
b. Poor attendance	☐	☐
c. Incomplete assignments	☐	☐
d. Behavorial issues	☐	☐
e. Physical concerns	☐	☐
f. Poor study habits	☐	☐
g. Lack of family support	☐	☐
h. Language skills	☐	☐
i. Organizational skills	☐	☐

j. Parental request   ☐   ☐

PART THREE: GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER'S ROLE

17. Number of students you have referred for RtI Support? (Circle one)

     0   1 – 2   3 - 4   5 – 6   7 – up

18. Number of those students receiving RtI Services? (Circle one)

     0   1 – 2   3 - 4   5 – 6   7 – up

19. I did not use the RtI process because: (Only answer if applies to you)

_____ I am a first year teacher

_____ I have never had a student who needed RtI services

_____ I have used other support services

_____ Other teachers have discouraged me from using the RtI process

_____ I do not feel comfortable using the RtI process due to lack of
      information concerning the process.

20. What do you feel is the general education teacher's primary role in developing an RtI plan?

_____ The teacher presents information about the student's progress and answers
      questions.

_____ The teacher helps the other members develop the interventions.

_____ The teacher assumes a leadership role in developing an intervention plan.

_____ The teacher does not have an important role in developing student intervention
      plans.

21. To what extent do you usually agree with the developed RtI plans? (Choose one)

_____ Agreed   _____ Partially Agreed

_____ Partially Disagreed   _____ Disagreed Completely

_____ Did not agree or disagree

22. If you were primarily responsible for implementation of the interventions, did you follow through with the plan? (Choose one)

_____ Completely   _____ Partially

_____ Didn't follow through   _____ I started, but stopped

_____ I have never had this responsibility

23. If you didn't follow through, or started but stopped, with the interventions, what was the primary reason? (Choose one)

_____ The interventions took too much time.

_____ The interventions were not appropriate.

_____ The interventions were not fair to the other students.

_____ I did not have enough training or background knowledge to implement the intervention.

_____ Another strategy was used in place of the intervention.

24. Do you have knowledge and understanding of researched-based programs available within the school or district that can be used to help students who are not achieving at grade level? (Choose one)

_____ Yes   _____ Some   _____ No

25. Are you capable of discussing the pro and con of different research-based interventions in relationship to a student's ability level? (Choose one)

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ I feel that I need more training in the area of research-based interventions.

26. As a teacher, are you satisfied with the current RtI support systems? (Choose one)

_____ Very Satisfied   _____ Somewhat Dissatisfied

_____ Somewhat Satisfied   _____ Dissatisfied

_____ Satisfied

27. As a teacher, do you feel there is a system in place for teachers to have input on improving the present RtI system? (Choose one)

_____ Yes   _____ No   _____ Don't Know

28. Is there a committee in place at your school to update RtI procedures and convey information to teachers? (Choose one)

_____ Yes   _____ No   _____ Don't Know

PART FOUR: STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

29. Have you received staff development concerning the Response to Instruction process? (Choose one)

_____ Yes   _____ No   _____ Do Not Know if Available

30. Do you feel additional staff development would be helpful in your understanding and use of the RtI process? (Choose one)

_____ Yes   _____ No   _____ I do not know if it was available

31. Who do you go to for assistance concerning the RtI process?
(Choose one on each line)

	Always	Frequent	Occasional	Sometimes	Never
A grade-level teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A teacher at another grade level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administrator	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mentor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RtI Coach/TA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Counselor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special Education Program Specialist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I do not know who can answer questions concerning the RtI process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART 5: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
(Choose one answer for each item 32-35)

32. Grade level currently teaching: K   1   2   3   4   5   6

33. Number of years teaching at grade level:

< 1   1 – 5   6 – 10   11 – 15   16+

34. Total years teaching at this school:

< 1   1 – 5   6 – 10   11 – 15   16+

35. Total years teaching:

< 1   1 – 5   6 – 10   11 – 15   16+

Your support and participation for this study on the RtI process is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your input. Please place the questionnaire in the envelope located beside the teacher mailboxes. If you would like a copy of the results from the study or have any questions or concerns – contact me by email: kingdean19@hotmail.com

Survey adapted with permission from:

Stollar-Bolinger, T. (2008). The perspectives of general education teachers at the elementary level concerning the Response to Intervention - student support team process. Ph.D. dissertation, Capella University, United States -- Minnesota. Retrieved November 11, 2008, from Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection database. (Publication No. AAT 3315237).

Appendix B

Response to Instruction Research Project
Informed Consent – Survey

This project has been designed to help the examiner learn about the general education classroom teachers' perceptions and understanding of the Response to Instruction (RtI) process within their school. The information will be gathered through the use of surveys (for all regular education teachers involved in RtI) and randomly selected interviews (approximately four or five teachers). The data will be used to enhance the professional development opportunities for those schools and teachers who have not yet moved to implementation of the Response to Instruction process. All information obtained through this research will be kept confidential. No names, including names of schools, will be identified when the findings are reported. All information will be coded during data analysis so that identification of variables, including the different schools, grade levels, individual teachers, etc., will be obstructed. Your participation will give the study insight as to how the school system can better prepare new teachers or schools new to the RtI process.

· The survey will take approximately 15 MINUTES to complete.

· Your participation is voluntary - you may refuse to participate, answer questions, or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

· Your responses will not be identified and confidentiality will be maintained in any report of these findings.

· You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey.

Those individuals randomly chosen to participate in the interview process should expect the interview to take no more than ONE hour. Again, your participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time to discontinue your participation in the interview. You will be asked at the beginning of the interview to sign an informed consent release. However, this will not affect your ability to discontinue the interview at any time. All information in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your participation in this study. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Dean King, School Psychologist. My email address is kingdean19@hotmail.com

Appendix C

Response to Instruction Research Project
Informed Consent – Interview

This project has been designed to help the examiner learn about the general education classroom teachers' perceptions and understanding of the Response to Instruction (RtI) process within their school. The information will be gathered through the use of surveys (for all regular education teachers involved in RtI) and randomly selected interviews (approximately four or five teachers). The data will be used to enhance the professional development opportunities for those schools and teachers who have not yet moved to implementation of the Response to Instruction process. All information obtained through this research will be kept confidential. No names, including names of schools, will be identified when the findings are reported. All information will be coded during data analysis so that identification of variables, including the different schools, grade levels, individual teachers, etc., will be obstructed. Your participation will give the study insight as to how the school system can better prepare new teachers or schools new to the RtI process.

· The survey will take approximately 15 MINUTES to complete.

· Your participation is voluntary - you may refuse to participate, answer questions, or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

· Your responses will not be identified and confidentiality will be maintained in any report of these findings.

Those individuals randomly chosen to participate in the interview process should expect the interview to take no more than ONE hour. Again, your participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time to discontinue your participation in the interview. All information in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Please consider the following options below in regards to your willingness to participate in the research project. This agreement states that you have received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Subject:_____Date:_____

Subject name (printed):_____

Signature of Researcher:_____Date:_____

Thank you for your participation in this study. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Dean King, School Psychologist. My email address is kingdean19@hotmail.com

Appendix D

Structured Interview Questions

1. Demographics
   a. What grade level do you currently teach?
   b. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
   c. How many years of experience have you had with RtI?

2. Has anyone ever presented to you or have you ever researched why schools have adopted the RtI process? Explain your understanding of how RtI came about.

3. Can you explain the relationship between RtI and special education?

4. A common response on the survey suggested that keeping students out of special education was not a goal of RtI. Can you tell me how you feel about that statement and if you agree.

5. What concerns have you experiences as your school has attempted to pilot the RtI program.

6. Discuss how the RtI team changes as a child moves from Tier to Tier.

7. If you could list two people who will always be involved in any RtI team meeting, who would you include?

8. How can teachers use progress monitoring to guide decisions regarding the tier process?

9. Do you feel RtI has been a success or failure at your school?

10. Who do you think at your school has been the most instrumental in the success of your RtI program?

11. Survey questions suggest that few respondents are completely satisfied with the current RtI process. What do you believe teachers are missing that would fulfill their expectations?

12. If you had an RtI support team at your school, what suggestions do you have to improve the current process?

13. If additional staff development opportunities were going to be offered, where would you suggest these opportunities focus?

14. What advice would you give to a school just implementing the RtI process?

Appendix E

Additional Unstructured Interview Questions

Note: Not all questions were asked of all interview participants. These questions were impromptu based on discussions during specific interviews.

1. If you have a question regarding RtI, who do you go to in your school to answer that question?

2. Do you feel like the process of RtI is different having been in both first grade and third grade?

3. Do you think the success of RtI can be contributed to the problem-solving approach or the use of scientifically-based research interventions?

4. If you have a child that is not making growth, does that make you question the interventions or do you believe it is a case of not understanding the problem?

5. Do you ever include the student in Tier meetings?

6. How do you choose who is involved in a Tier meeting?

7. Who does the probing for your classroom?

8. Who administers the interventions at your school?

9. How long do you feel an intervention should be administered to a child before you can say that it is successful or not?

10. Do you feel like a concern for you as a teacher is that your kids, if they had everything they needed in the classroom, they wouldn't need to get pulled out for interventions?

11. Do you feel like we would be better off keeping kids in the classroom or having specialists pull them out of class to provide interventions?

12. If there has been a case where a kid was a borderline kid who was struggling, do you feel like you are better off keeping that child in your classroom or do you feel like the RtI process is worthwhile enough to send that kid through the process?

13. Should the focus be on people or the programs?

14. Do you feel like your school is adequately supported by the central office?

15. Who provided the RtI training to your school staff?

16. How do you handle a situation where a child's progress on the monitoring piece is sporadic or inconsistent?

17. How do you handle a situation where the parents are reluctant to come in for a meeting?

18. Do you feel like parents have bought in to the RtI process?

19. Do you feel the school has made an effort to educate parents on what RtI is and how they can help with the process?

20. How would you describe the principal's role in RtI?

21. Do you feel like the staff morale is high at your school?

22. What concerns have you heard from other teachers concerning RtI?

23. Is RtI a regular topic at grade-level meetings?

24. Do you feel like the other teachers at your school are comfortable with the process and know who to ask to get answers for RtI questions?

25. Do you feel like RtI is worth the time that we are devoting to it?

26. Do you feel like RtI is better served as an early intervention tool or as a process to place children in special education services?

27. Who at your school is responsible for finding interventions?

28. Do you feel like, knowledge wise, you are where you need to be or do you feel like you need to know more?

29. Do you think it is possible for a school to productively implement a program like RtI when you have a few teachers throughout the building who aren't taking the interventions to fidelity?

30. Why do you feel like progress monitoring tools are not matching what we are doing in the classroom?

31. Do you feel like the probes we are using are a god measure of what we are asking students to do in the classroom?

32. What kind of issues have you encountered with the progress monitoring probes?

33. Does the staff have an opportunity to voice concerns regarding RtI?

34. How many support individuals do you think a school of your size would need to be successful?

35. Do you feel like there is confusion in your school regarding RtI?

36. Do you feel like RtI will just go away like many other programs come and then go away?

Appendix F

Interview Excerpts Highlighting RtI Concerns

An excerpt from the Respondent 3 transcribed interview:

Researcher: Now on the survey one of the questions was basically asking you know how satisfied you are with the current RtI program. And there were choices. Well at this school there was a wide range of responses from somewhat satisfied, which is next to the highest, all the way down to completely dissatisfied. What do you feel like maybe some of the teachers here at this school are missing that keeps them from being satisfied with what is happening with RtI?

Respondent 3: I think, kinda what I…it's kinda been the theme the whole time is just not really knowing who to go to about things for answers. I think that is frustrating when you go to someone and you feel like the answer doesn't make any sense. That's frustrating because then you're thinking what am I doing and why am I doing this. But then also, you know it always goes back to what teachers always say, "All this probing is taking away from my instructional time." I mean I can guarantee you that is what other teachers are saying. I mean I can't really complain about that because they are doing our probes for us in kindergarten.

Researcher: Is that just kindergarten?

Respondent 3: Just kindergarten. But I can assure you that the other grades are not happy about taking their instructional time to do probes. Everybody jokes about it and says "Oh, it only takes a minute." But it really does take more than a minute. You can't …if you've got 10 kids you're not going to be done in 10 minutes. You know, everybody's like "Piece of cake. It's a minute." The probe is a minute. It takes more than that. It just does. Like to get them over there, to get the stuff out, you know, it's just …it takes more than a minute. Everybody thinks it's not a big deal but it is…on top of everything else that you have. And I know that other grade levels feel the strain that we do down here with the lack of assistants this year. So that just compounds it even more…the crunch for time that you feel and everything. You feel like you're not getting anything done. You feel like you're not doing enough. And sometimes you think you're not doing anything well, you now. I would say that that is it.

An excerpt from the Respondent 2 transcribed interview:

Researcher: Suppose you had a team here, five people who…these are the people I go to when I have concerns about rit. If you had a concern right now, what would you tell them is your biggest concern with rti?

Respondent 2: My biggest concern…there is a lot…my biggest concern is time management of doing…of implementing the interventions and doing the probes and we do not have the support that we used to. I don't see my children moving thru tiers as fast because we do not have… last year when I had a full time TA [teacher assistant] she knew that she worked with these kids two days and I had them on a schedule and I knew…and then the probe day she would cover my reading lessons so I could get my

probing done. I am speaking for other people right now because I know in about a week I will be back to not having a TA, I mean not having a student teacher and it is hard getting that time. TAs are spread thin and when they come over you are trying to get them to do a lesson real quick. By the time you sit down, something happens and then your probe time has been used because somebody threw up and you don't have the…it's the time involved in preparing and being sure. The actual information is great but it is time consuming. Very, very time consuming. You are printing and putting in scores and looking at it and doing tier paperwork and …there is a little twinge in you that goes "Oh gosh, I have to write up paperwork because this kid is going to Tier 2." It is not a bad thing but it is almost like…I know [Exceptional Children] people are really overwhelmed with paperwork but we are in the classroom and, yeah, the paperwork is fine. I understand you have to have proof but my goodness we can't get our lesson plans done because we are doing so much…we are really struggling trying to get it all done in a regular day, especially us who have little kids at home and who can't really do it as much.

An excerpt from the Respondent 4 transcribed interview:

Researcher: Survey questions suggest that few respondents are completely satisfied with the current RtI process…there were levels. Remember they went from completely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, …virtually there was nobody completely satisfied. Everybody was in different stages. What do you believe teachers are missing that would fulfill their expectations?

Respondent 4: I'm just beating a dead horse, just beating it to death but if we were not a Title 1 school and we were trying to figure out the interventions and deliver them and do all this other stuff, I mean I don't know how people are doing that. Because like I said, the times [the RtI coach] said "Okay this is the intervention you need to deliver…." What little bit I have to do of that part of it, it has just been an overwhelming task. When I had to do the Mazes and then I had a child who made it all the way through who also needed interventions in math and writing. So that was more pull out time so to pull him aside plus do the kids Mazes …it's just overwhelming because we don't have anybody to watch our kids. I guess it is a time management issue…. The parts that I have had to do and try to deliver one-on-one or one-on-two or whatever, it's just crazy. I mean at one point we had snack groups where literally when kids were eating snack that is when they were getting their interventions. There was no other time to do it. I mean that is what we referred to it as…snack group. We had Monday, Wednesday, Friday snack group and we had Tuesday/Thursday snack group. Serious as a heart attack. There was no other time to do it. Because like you say, if they need something that 's outside of what is going on in the hour and a half of reading …you can't pull them during writing or math or social studies or you're just defeating the purpose because then they are missing that. Seriously they have snack every day from 10:00 to 10:15 ish and we have snack group.

Researcher: So there is somebody there leading an intervention with a little small group of kids while they are eating their snacks?

Respondent 4: Oh yeah. There's no other time to do it.

An excerpt from the Respondent 10 transcribed interview:

Researcher: Now another one of the survey questions talked about how satisfied are you with the current RtI system and there were like 5 choices from completely satisfied all the way down. I would say that the majority of responses from this school were kind of on that next to highest level…we call it somewhat satisfied. What do you feel that it would take for teachers at this school to get to that completely satisfied level? What do you feel maybe teachers aren't quiet getting that they want before they can make that jump.

Respondent 10: Well it is an awful lot to keep up with and I guess with everything, extra help…well longer than 30 or 40 minutes of aid time. I guess that would be…I think that sometimes it almost feels like we are intervening these kids to death. There are some kids, in my opinion, and I know that other people think the same, that we are cramming it down their throat so much that it is almost a burn out with some of them. And they're missing some of the other experiences like science and social studies and things like that because they are being pulled. Well, these are areas they might could excel on or enjoy and that some of this reading is burning out the kids and they are kinda stifled. So at some point I feel like we are intervening them to death. I mean you get two/two and a half hours a day of reading interventions for a child then …I mean that is a lot for an 8 year old. I almost feel like there is some burn out that goes on. I think that as a whole anyway we are trying to add so many more programs and so many more interventions and differentiate it to where we are picking it apart and there's truly not …I mean in my opinion if you give me a full time TA and some stability for the kids then they are going to be a little bit more successful. Well then, if we pick them and pull them and here and there and here and there trying to pinpoint and we get too specific with them.

Researcher: So, do you feel like a concern for you as a teacher is that your kids if they had everything they needed in the classroom they wouldn't need to get pulled out?

Respondent 10: No, I feel like they definitely need extra help but I think that some of them are being pulled too much, that there's almost a lack of stability for some of them because they're gone and gone and gone. I know in one point in my day, I have 12 kids gone from my room. As a classroom teacher if you're missing 12 then you've got ten. It's just tough. My feelings are that we are taking away the people, like the stability of the people from the kid, and trying to implement the programs when it's really the people that are going…

Researcher: So the focus should be the people, not programs?
Respondent 10: That's my opinion and I do think the RtI program is a good program and I do appreciate that it pinpoints and it gives me a better focus and gives me a better path and direction. But personally, I would rather have somebody full time in here where we can focus on a group of kids and focus on exactly what we need for them and have that plan and progress monitoring for the benchmarks so we can see who is struggling where and do it ourselves all day. I guess to plan our classroom around the needs of our kids

instead of having them pulled here and there.

An excerpt from the Respondent 8 transcribed interview:

Researcher: Survey questions suggested that few respondents are completely satisfied with the current rti process. What do you believe teachers are missing that would fulfill their expectations?

Respondent 8: Well, you also have to consider that we have different grade levels at different levels. Our K-1 they are now in their third…is it their third year. Does that sound right? I think it is their third year and they have picked up math this year so there has never been that year to say "Oh I know what I am doing." Every year it is another piece to it. Second thru fourth grade has picked up Maze this year and 5 and 6 have picked up Fluency. And so this is their first year of implementation and so everybody has something new and so I think that may be part of it. The other thing is with budget cuts we are spread as thin as we possibly can with our teacher assistants and sometimes, especially in K-2, finding the time for that intervention. For some kids, Title 1 is part of their intervention but theirs is broken down into so many parts. It's not just fluency and comprehension the way that we are. I think it is harder to get interventions for everybody. And this child needs this and now they are out of it and we are going to pick up this and…I think that juggling has been hard for them. Our concern…I think what we have been irritated with is…we went thru everything was fine. Our kids were fine we had maybe six kids who were still in RtI in the grade level. We hit winter benchmark and we had like 45 kids and that was that concern about what is the fluency level and I think that is part of our irritation. And sometimes we feel like we are intervening more than we are teaching. We are missing out on content because we are spending so much time intervening. And when you are in upper grades, especially fourth and fifth, when you have three tested areas, that's a real concern because there is nothing you can let go of. I can't let Science slide because there is a test next year. I've got writing, I've got reading, I've got math. The only little thing is social studies and if they don't get North Carolina, then they are not going to get it again but one more time and it's got to be in there too and so that's hard when you are doing so much intervention. We have struggled because a lot of our intervention is pull out. We change classes in the morning. We go to block, we go to lunch, they come back, we have pull out. There is only an hour in the day that we have to teach writing, science, and social studies. And that's been some frustration for us. And now that we have started remediation, we don't even have that time. There is not a time of the day right now that I am in the room on remediation days that all of my children are in the room. And so that is a little frustrating…

An excerpt from the Respondent 7 transcribed interview:

Researcher: Discuss with me kind of how in your mind you vision a child moving through the tier process. What does the team look like as you go from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and so on. What do the interventions look like as you go from Tier to Tier to Tier?

Respondent 7: Tier 1, you just do your normal teaching. And you probe weekly and when they have reached their Tier or their level… I'm not thinking of the word right now … three weeks in a row they're through with that Tier but if they don't, they go to Tier 2 after so many weeks then that is a problem too, You don't really know how many weeks that they're not really, um, where they need to be because we are using different percentages. We are starting with 25% and moving to 50% so it's confusing to me as to where that percentage is. I'm never really sure where I need to be at a certain point. So when they are not reaching their goals, they are staying in the Tier longer than I think they should. Then at Tier 2 when we first started this we could…we had teacher assistants that could help us with remediation. I would work through all …I would give her everything to do....all the, um, prompts to say, all the materials that she needed and give her the time to remediate. That is when I saw the most progress. Now only the Tier 2s spend maybe 20-30 minutes a week with our RtI personnel and it doesn't seem to be quite enough because we are …we have been given an assistant for half a day which when you really get down to it that's about an hour and a half with the children in the classroom, counting lunch and playtime and, uh, block time. I really only have help an hour and a half during a day's time. And I haven't been using her for that remediation because we were told that we weren't to do that. We use our RtI personnel. So that is concerning because I don't feel like the children are moving as quickly as they could if we had extra help in the classroom.

Researcher: How is that different from last year? How much TA time did you have last year?

Respondent 7; We had the same amount of time last year because we shared a TA. And it was hard to see the progress that I saw the first year. It was hard and when you've seen that much progress in the 1st year it hurts when you don't see as much progress the next two years when you don't have the help. Last year I had some parent volunteers and I would just let them do little exercises with them. Didn't mention RtI but we would work on certain things. This year in my environment in my classroom I have no parent volunteers, absolutely none. So I don't even have that extra help. You know that they could be doing even anything with them. So that's been a downfall this year for me. I have no parent volunteers.

Researcher: Has the school…do you feel like the school has made an effort to educate parents on what RtI is and how they can help with that process?

Respondent 7: When we bring them in and they sign the paperwork, it is a partnership. It is plain as day that the teacher verbalizes with the parent that we are in a partnership. Your child is weak in this area and here are some things you can do and here are some things I am going to do and we are going to work together to bring that child where we need to be. But then the parent goes home and I don't feel like…if they're not an above average parent…they really do anything more than they normally would do. It's hard. And it's hard to say that you and I are in charge of the improvement in your child when you're the only one really doing anything. And inevitably the Tier 3 children are from the parents who don't work with them anyway. So you're preaching to the choir but the

choir children are fine…if that makes sense. And the children who are in Tier 3 are not getting that homework that they need…the help at home that they need. That's the saddest part about the whole thing.

Researcher: Do you feel like…and this school may have…but do you feel like that RtI would be more successful if maybe there was like a …like a PTO type program where it was discussed and how you can help and …

Respondent 7: Well the reason I don't is because our PTO programs …the history of our PTO programs… have been parents whose children are in the program that night. And you're preaching to the choir again. And I hate to keep using that term but when we even have open house, or reading night, or math night, it's the parents that come that are of the above average children that show up. And they're usually not the ones that are in Tier 1 and Tier 2. And I don't mean to hammer on that but that's just life. They're not the parents that you need to have there anyway.   The parents that you need won't even show up for conferences. You beg and plead and borrow just to get them in for a normal conference.